

POWER OF PRAYER

This address was given over Station WNAC, Boston, Mass., on the morning of February 23, 1932, by Rev. Gilbert M. Laite, pastor of the First Evangelical Church, Cambridge, Mass.

I am speaking to you this morning on the Power of Prayer, and in dealing with this all-important subject, I wish to be clearly understood. There is but one condition in life through which God hears and answers prayer, and that is by the transforming power of the grace of God which brings purity of heart and life. David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." There is but one thing in our lives that can hinder prayer and that is sin. Sin is an obstruction to prayer and Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, would have all men to know the truth, and he says: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me." There is but one condition laid down in the Word of God through which we may have access to communion with God, and that is through his Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." My friends, if the desire of your heart is to do the will of God, then the accomplishment of that desire may be realized.

Milton used 8,000 words for poetic purposes, Choats used 11,000 for legal purposes, Shakespeare used 15,000 for dramatic purposes. If I had their vocabulary at my command, our language would be inadequate to describe to you the possibilities of divine grace and what can be accomplished through any life that is fully committed to God by prayer and intercession. Prayer towers above the wrecks of time, is the emblem of God's eternal revelation. Human philosophers have failed and have been carried to burial in the cemetery of the following centuries; kings and empires have boasted themselves of their own ingenuity, but they have crumbled to dust and ashes; scientists flushed with the promise of lasting permanency, but they silently sleep in a state of uncertainty; generals with the hosts tramped across the dying ages and shook the nations with their conquering tread, but decay seized their greatness and the tramp of their armies has become silenced in death; but the power of prayer is living on and it has done more to mold and transform human society and safeguard our government with integrity than any other power in all the universe. The power of prayer made kings and queens and monarchs tremble.

If the home is to be the right kind of a home, it must be a place of prayer.

"Prayer makes the darkest cloud withdraw.
Prayer climbs the ladder that Jacob saw,
Gives exercise to faith and life,
Brings every blessing from above."

A good many years ago, there lived in London a woman who had earned her living at the washtub and the ironing board. She had a son, John, who ran away from home when he was but in his teens. He followed the sea for years. His mother could not find out what had happened to him. People who knew him best declared that he was guilty of about every sin in the catalogue and pretty much every crime, but his mother, his best earthly friend, with bent form and gray hairs, hollow cheeks and stubby fingers, worked over the washtub year

after year, mingling her tears with the soapsuds as she prayed to God for her son, John, and, in the early hours of the morning, the passion and burden of her heart was so great that she was heard to cry out of the anguish of her heart, "Oh God, save my boy, save my boy," and God was pleased to hear and answer her prayer and, as a result of the same he gave to the world a man by the name of John Newton. In the diary of a godly mother were found these words: "I rise up very early in the morning and pray that my five sons might become ministers or missionaries for Jesus Christ." Her prayer was answered, and God gave to America that great preacher, Henry Ward Beecher. Beecher made a statement once in connection with prayer. He said, "We always knew when a revival was coming by the lint on father's knees." Men of mighty power have been men of spiritual might and, to my brethren in the ministry this morning, regardless of what denomination you may belong to, providing you believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only remedy for man's redemption, brethren, I am convinced as never before that we must be willing to bleed to bless and that the gospel of the broken heart demands the ministry of a bleeding heart and that Dr. Goodall was right when he said, "You can never heal the needs that you do not feel, and tearless hearts can never become heralds of passion." If we are to preserve an evangelical ministry and preach a saving gospel, and keep spiritual life and power upon the Church of Christ, and safeguard our government with integrity, we must erect our family altars and prize the privilege of prayer.

Scientists tell us that there is a place up in the air where a stone weighing a ton would weigh nothing because of the attraction of gravitation. That may be so or it may not be so as far as my knowledge is concerned, but I do know that there is a place in God where we can get to where the burdens of life will no longer bleed us of our spiritual powers, but that we can "mount up on wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint," and, mothers and fathers, I should like to ask you a question this morning. How long has it been since you have gathered your children about you and had your family prayer? Or how long has it been since you have shut the door behind you and prayed with passion and with power to Jesus Christ for the salvation of your children? You may be saying, "Well, preacher, that is an old-fashioned idea that you have." Yes, I take it that it is, for they tell us that one hundred years ago 90% of the families in America had family prayer—now less than 10%. This is in all probability the reason for having about 58,000,000 in America who are outside of the Church of Christ. We would do well this morning to call a halt in the mad rush of this twentieth century and "take time to be holy." Many a young man has gone out in life to reap the product of his own planting. He sinks his teeth into the apples of Sodom to find that they are full of ashes and, in later life, to wake up to the fact that "The way of the transgressor is hard," and such a scene may revert back to the home because there has been a low standard of parental influence until fathers and mothers' eyes have become dry, their ears heavy, their hearts cool, and their spirit passionless—

"Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer."

Sometime ago I knew of a man here in the City of Boston who was called to the bedside of his dying son in the West. As the father entered the room, the young man lifted his head and leaned over upon his elbow and said, "Father, I am so glad you have come. I am not ready to go into the presence of God and I want you to pray for me." The father looked into the face of his son with an expression of sadness and with a look of despair. Turning his back on his own son, he walked across the room and framed himself in a large window overlooking a beautiful lake. He clenched his nails into the palms of his hands until they buried themselves, and pressed his teeth into his lip until the blood was seen to ooze from the marks, and he was heard to say: "I would give all my possessions, yes, I would give all the world if it were mine to give, if I could only pray one prayer that would be acceptable to God for the salvation of my boy." The trouble with the father was that he was out of harmony with God.

The great need of the hour is praying fathers and mothers. What Nehemiah is there who surveys at night the desolate Jerusalem with his tears? What Moses is there who cries to God and says, "Save this people or blot my name out of the book." What Paul is there that warns the people, night and day, with tears and prayers, until he is heard to say, "I could wish myself a curse for my brethren and my kinsmen in the flesh?" What Fletcher is there that stains the walls of his room with the breath of prayer, What Knox is there that communes with God into the midnight hours until he is heard to say, "Give me Scotland, or I die?"

The richest experience that can come to the soul of man is that life of communion with God—

"Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care,
And bids me at my Father's throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief,
And oft escaped the Tempter's snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer."

Let us remember, my friends, as we move out into the daily activities of this day, that God hears and answers prayer.

THINGS PRAYER IS LIKE

- A pitcher—to carry the water of life.
- A chemist—that turns all life to gold.
- Incense—with which to worship God.
- A bow—to carry the arrow of our need.
- The porter—to watch the door of our lips.
- The guard—to keep the fort of our hearts.
- The hilt of the sword—to defend our hands.
- A master-workman — who accomplishes things.
- A barometer—to show our spiritual condition.
- A chariot—to hold our petitions, the Spirit being the wheels thereof.
- The tuning of an instrument—to get us in tune with Heaven's melody.
- A key to all religion—to wind nt up in the first place, and to keep it going each day thereafter.—Holiness Worker.

"What you possess at your death will belong to another; but what you ARE will be yours forever."—Van Dyke.