

"The Practice of Prayer"

by

G. Granger Fleming

It is one thing to desire, it is another to possess. Yet oft-times desire is more than halfway towards possession. It is so in regard to Prayer. When the benefits of Prayer come home to the heart, and the desire is created, the soul is not far from realization of its kingship and priesthood. Were the heart captivated with the possibilities, it would find a way to enter into possession of the power. It is the sluggishness of desire which keeps back from such entrance.

To the heart truly desirous of praying, there are two great things to do. The first is to **ASK**, and the second is to **PRAY**.

The first is to **ASK**, and by that is meant that in this particular matter direct request should be made. Too many people try to **attain** to a state of strength and power by resolution and strenuous endeavour. Instead of this, what they have to do is to **obtain** it from God.

This heart of prayer, this heart on fire, is a gift of God. We cannot light it ourselves. We may see the beauty of it, may realize what it could accomplish, may understand in some measure what loss its absence means, and yet we may not have it. Then usually we make good resolutions, and a course of action is resolved on. And yet the blessing tarries and we get weary and forget, until another reminder comes and again we set out in the quest.

All the time it belongs unto the Lord. It is one of His rare gifts, not rare in scarceness but rare in being of inestimable worth. And as such we must humbly seek it. We must get low before the Lord, confess the great unworthiness of our hard prayerless hearts, and ask Him graciously to give us the burning heart, the heart of faith, the heart of quiet confidence, the heart of the large vision, yea, the very heart of the Lord Himself. **And He will give it.**

Prayer is a definite factor, and to pray for the gift of Prayer is to accentuate the element of definiteness. If Prayer for prayer be not answered, then Prayer for aught else comes under suspicion. But it will be answered, for it is according to His holy mind and will, and everything so asked will be given. The promise here stands firm: "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Luke xi. 9). Ask for a spirit of prayer, seek for your Beloved, and ye shall find Him; knock at the portals of His great audience chamber, and He will open them Himself, and give you your heart's desire.

But besides the necessity of direct asking for this blessing, there is something else to do. That is to **PRAY**. By this is meant to give oneself to Prayer. To make a business of it. To go on praying despite the seeming discouragements, and notwithstanding what may seem to the soul the want [lack] of response from the Lord. He is never apathetic, but He does not give away His best gifts unless they are highly esteemed. He tests us, He sees if this is really what we set highest. Do we consider Him and His fellowship and what He can give in the way of power and endowment worth all else? Do we "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"? (Heb. xi. 26).

This is where our own direct action comes in. It were futile to endeavour to become strong men in Prayer simply by resolution and effort. It must be **the gift of God**. He must of His grace bestow the trend of mind and heart. But on our part we must give play to the mighty forces which He waits to set in motion. We must turn on the switch, and He will see to the power and the light. The power and light often do not come into operation because we omit to do our part of switching on the current. And the great thing which counts in this turning on of the current is simply to pray.

A subscriber to the telephone system could not understand why he was not able to send or receive any message in the early morning. On ordinary occasions in the daytime he could use the telephone all right, but during the night and early morning there was no response. He communicated with the head office, and an efficient operative was sent up. He took the receiver and transmitter to pieces and put them together again, but all to no purpose. Again was complaint made, and again he came up. Then at last the responsible foreman of the department came up himself, but he also could find nothing. They went into the roof space, and gradually tested the lengths of wire until they began to locate the fault. And at last they found it.

It was a place where the wire was broken in two but was held together by the outer covering. The space between the two ends of the wire was very small but it was sufficient to interrupt the current. When the heat of the day was on, the wire expanded and the two ends came together and the current got through. When the cold of the night came, or when a day was extremely cold, the wires contracted and contact was broken. It required the heat to bring the ends together.

And this is like our prayers. Here on earth our connection with Heaven is often of the nature of the broken wires. It is one of the joys of hope for the future that there will be no flaws in the connection. Here, however, there often is. We cannot "get through." We can neither send our messages to God nor get His from Him. What are we to do? It is **a matter of heat**. It is a matter of coming into such a frame of mind and heart that the communication is reopened. And to do this we must pray.

We must be resolute. We must wait on Him. We must not take "No" for an answer. We must deny the truth of appearances, and launch out on what we know to be true, viz., that God does hear, that His ear is not heavy, that no sigh or wish or aspiration or expression of ours will be useless. All are precious to Him, and He will answer them in His own magnificent manner.

And so the great simple rule is just to pray. Pray, *pray*, PRAY! Keep on praying. Stumble along as we did when we learned to walk as children. Push along somehow, as we did when we first learned to ride a bicycle. Strike out, as with fear we did when we first learned to swim. Keep at it, with resolution, with purposeful determination, and with readiness to sacrifice. For this is worth putting oneself out for. This is worth getting up early in the morning, so that we may see the face of God before we see those of our fellow men. This is worth cutting out of our reading much that is light and ephemeral, so that we may **enter into the presence of the Unseen**.

Here, then, are the two great secrets of successful Prayer--simple, childlike, humble, believing, asking for the grace; and resolute, definite, and self-sacrificing movement along the path of

Prayer.

Given these two, and more will follow.

There will come, to some more than to others, a developed system of Prayer, so that there will be no longer a mere jumble of ideas, but all will flow in sweet order. The mind and heart will also be on the alert. It will pick up guide-marks from books of devotion. It will eagerly get into conversation with ripe Christians, and find how they comport themselves in the presence of their Lord. It will study the record of the Master and of His apostles. It will yield itself to the gentle drawings of the Spirit, and learn to speak the Spirit language correctly. In fine [short] it will discover that here is a department of philosophy and activity both captivating and ennobling.

And as response comes in the personal life, and also in the lives of those prayed for; and as a deepening sense of God's presence is realized, the heart will yield itself yet more and more, and it will find its true home in His presence. Then will come the great yearning for the time when it shall continually abide in His courts, and when there shall be no interruption in the flow of its communion with Him. For thus it is written: "His servants shall serve Him: and **they shall see His face**" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4).

Chapter XXIII in *The Dynamic of All-Prayer* by G. Granger Fleming (Edinburgh: Oliphants LD., 1914).