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A Life Of Prayer

By Andrew Murray From *Learning To Pray (With Christ In The School Of Prayer)*.

"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians. 5:16-18).

Our Lord spoke the parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that men ought to pray always and not faint. As the widow persevered in seeking one definite thing, the parable appears to refer to persevering prayer for some blessing when God delays or appears to refuse. The words in the Epistles, which speak of continuing in prayer and watching in the same, of praying always in the Spirit, appear more to refer to the whole life being one of prayer. The soul must first be filled with longing for the manifestation of God's glory to us and in us, through us and around us, and with the confidence that He hears the prayers of His children. Then the inmost life of the soul continually rises upward in dependence and faith, in longing desire and trustful expectation.

At the close of our meditations it will not be difficult to say what is needed to live such a life of prayer. The first thing is undoubtedly the entire sacrifice of the life to God's kingdom and glory. He who seeks to pray without ceasing because he wants to be very pious and good will never attain it. It is the forgetting of self and yielding ourselves to live for God and His honor that enlarge the heart, that teach us to regard everything in the light of God and His will, and that instinctively recognize in everything around us the need of God's help and blessing, an opportunity for His being glorified. Everything is weighed and tested by the one thing that fills the heart, the glory of God. Because the soul has learned that only what is of God can really be to Him and His glory, the whole life becomes a looking up, a crying from the inmost heart for God to prove His power and love and so show forth His glory.

The believer awakens to the consciousness that he is one of the watchmen on Zion's walls, one of the Lord's remembrancers, whose call really does touch and move the King in heaven to do what would otherwise not be done. He understands how real Paul's exhortation was, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit for all the saints, and for me," and "continue in prayer, withal praying also for us." To forget oneself, to live for God and His kingdom among men, is the way to learn to pray without ceasing. This life devoted to God must be accompanied by the deep confidence that our prayer is effectual. We have seen how our blessed Lord insisted, in His prayer lessons, upon nothing more than faith in the Father as a God who most certainly does what we ask. "Ask and ye shall receive," count confidently on an answer, is with Him the beginning and the end of His teaching (compare Matthew 7:8 and John 16:24).

In proportion, as this assurance masters us, and it becomes a settled thing that our prayers do tell and that God does what we ask, we dare not neglect the use of this

wonderful power. The soul turns wholly to God and our life becomes prayer. We see that the Lord needs and takes time because we and all around us are the creatures of time, under the law of growth. We know that not one single prayer of faith can possibly be lost, that there is sometimes a needs-be for the storing up and accumulating of prayer and that persevering prayer is irresistible. Prayer then becomes the quiet, persistent living of our life of desire and faith in the presence of our God.

O do not let us any longer by our reasoning limit and enfeeble such free and sure promises of the living God, robbing them of their power and ourselves of the wonderful confidence they are meant to inspire. Not in God, not in His secret will, not in the limitations of His promises, but in us, in ourselves is the hindrance. We are not what we should be to obtain the promise. Let us open our whole heart to God's words of promise in all their simplicity and truth. They will search us and humble us; they will lift us up and make us glad and strong. To the faith that knows it gets what it asks, prayer is not a work or a burden, but a joy and a triumph. It becomes a necessity and a second nature. This union of strong desire and firm confidence again is nothing but the life of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, hides Himself in the depths of our being, and stirs the desire after the unseen and the divine, after God Himself. Now in groanings that cannot be uttered, then in clear and conscious assurance. Now in special distinct petitions for the deeper revelation of Christ to ourselves, then in pleadings for a soul, a work, the Church or the world. It is always and alone the Holy Spirit who draws out the heart to thirst for God, to long for His being made known and glorified.

Where the child of God really lives and walks in the Spirit, where he is not content to remain carnal but seeks to be spiritual and in everything a fit organ for the divine Spirit to reveal the life of Christ and Christ Himself, there the never ceasing intercession life of the Blessed Son cannot but reveal and repeat itself in our experience. Because it is the Spirit of Christ who prays in us, our prayer must be heard. Because it is we who pray in the Spirit, there is need of time, and patience, and continual renewing of the prayer until every obstacle is conquered and the harmony between God's Spirit and ours is perfect. But the chief thing we need for such a life of unceasing prayer is to know that Jesus teaches us to pray. We have begun to understand a little what His teaching is. How does Jesus really teach? It is not the communication of new thoughts or views, not the discovery or failure or error, not the stirring up of desire and faith, of however much importance all this be. It is the taking us up into the fellowship of His own prayer life before the Father. It was the sight of the praying Jesus that made the disciples long and ask to be taught to pray.

It is the faith of the ever-praying Jesus, whose alone is the power to pray, that teaches us truly to pray. We know why. He who prays is our head and our life. All He has is ours and is given to us when we give ourselves all to Him. By His blood He leads us into the immediate presence of God. The inner sanctuary is our home; we dwell there. He that lives so near God and knows that He has been brought near to bless those who are far, cannot but pray. Christ makes us partakers with Himself of His prayer power and prayer life. We understand then that our true aim must not be to work much and have prayer

enough to keep the work right, but to pray much and then to work enough for the power and the blessing obtained in prayer to find its way through us to men. It is Christ who ever lives to pray, who saves and reigns. He communicates His prayer life to us. He maintains it in us if we trust Him. He is surety for our praying without ceasing. Yes, Christ teaches to pray by showing how He does it, by doing it in us, by leading us to do it in Him and like Him. Christ is the life and the strength for a never-ceasing prayer life.

It is the sight of the ever-praying Christ as our life that enables us to pray without ceasing. Because His priesthood is the power of an endless life, that resurrection-life that never fades and never fails, and because His life is our life--praying without ceasing can become to us nothing less than the life-joy of heaven. So the Apostle says: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks." Borne up between the never-ceasing joy and the never-ceasing praise, never-ceasing prayer is the manifestation of the power of the eternal life where Jesus always prays.

The union between the vine and the branch is in very deed a prayer union. The highest conformity to Christ, the most blessed participation in the glory of His heavenly life, is that we take part in His work of intercession. He and we live ever to pray. In the experience of our union with Him, praying without ceasing becomes a possibility, a reality, the holiest and most blessed part of our holy and blessed fellowship with God. We have our abode within the veil in the presence of the Father. What the Father says, we do; what the Son says, the Father does. Praying without ceasing is the earthly manifestation of heaven come down to us, the foretaste of the life where they rest not day or night in the song of worship and adoration.

O my Father, with my whole heart do I praise Thee for this wondrous life of never-ceasing prayer, never-ceasing fellowship, never-ceasing answers, and never-ceasing experience of my oneness with Him who ever lives to pray. O my God, keep me ever so dwelling and walking in the presence of Thy glory, that prayer may be the spontaneous expression of my life with Thee.

Blessed Savior, with my whole heart I praise Thee that Thou didst come from heaven to share with me in my needs and cries, that I might share with Thee in Thy all-prevailing intercession. I thank Thee that Thou hast taken me into the school of prayer, to teach the blessedness and the power of a life that is all prayer, and most of all, that Thou hast taken me up into the fellowship of Thy life of intercession, that through me too Thy blessings may be dispensed to those around me.

Holy Spirit, with a deep reverence I thank Thee for Thy work in me. It is through Thee I am lifted up into a share in the intercourse between the Son and the Father, and enter so into the fellowship of the life and love of the Holy Trinity. Spirit of God, perfect Thy work in me; bring me into perfect union with Christ my intercessor. Let Thine unceasing indwelling make my life one of unceasing intercession. Thus let my life become one that is unceasingly to the glory of the Father and to the blessing of those around me. Amen.