

Call to Obedience #218
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The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of prayer. When we have him, we will pray!

“When Thou Prayest, Enter Into Thy Closet...”

By Reimar Schultze

It is the will of God that every Christian have a closet of prayer, a place where he is alone, cut off from family, friends, co-workers, and all things distracting to his time alone with God.

Hundreds of problems that go on and on would be solved that way. If everyone would frequent his closet for secret prayer, the burdens on pastors would be significantly lifted, and churches would have people come to worship in the joy of the Lord rather than in depression, discouragement, and weariness.

Do you do what Jesus asks you to do? Do you daily enter into your closet of prayer?

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (Ma. 6:6).

Why don't we take this admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ as seriously as others? Why don't we obey God? Have we any right to judge or to counsel or to find fault with our spouse, our minister, our brother or our sister without ourselves having obeyed by having consistently met with God in the closet of prayer?

Indeed, would we want to judge and find fault with anyone if we have been faithful in secret prayer? Would we really not, if we have spent a few hundred hours in prayer, discover that prayer has more power to change wrongs into rights than any words we could possibly speak?

Oh, what mighty works of God there are for us to receive in our homes, in our finances, in our health, in our churches if we would just mount up on wings of prayer. All things good are ultimately connected to believing prayer. By it, sons, daughters, and spouses have been saved. By it, the enemy has been confounded, diseases have disappeared, demons have been cast out, wicked governments have been overthrown, storms have been stopped, dry deserts have blossomed again, stalled machines have been made to run, money has come in from nowhere, closed job opportunities have opened, romances have been revived, men have been delivered from prison, and revival has come to the land.

Why don't men pray? Why don't men and women enter into their closets of prayer and, as they pray in secret, let God reward them openly? The greatest power for change, to change anything for any believer, is prayer.

There are many churches growing by great leaps and bounds. People are saved by the thousands and millions. But there is something wrong with many of these 'conversions'; they do not produce praying saints! They do not produce men and women who will enter the secret closet of prayer or attend church prayer meetings, if there are any.

Many pastors of these large churches who boast of their growing church attendance, of the many baptisms they have, never talk about their swelling prayer meetings. That is because many of them do not have the habit of entering into the closet of prayer on a regular basis themselves. Indeed, one of the most outstanding characteristics of this church age is prayerless Christians and prayerless churches. How many of those baptized are found in prayer meetings and prayer closets a month or year after their conversion?

Biblical Examples

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.”

Dear friend, where is your place of prayer? Where do you go each day to meet the Lord? Every godly, Bible character had the practice of meeting with God in some place of quietness.

Abraham had a closet of prayer. One of the most beautiful prayer passages in the Bible is Genesis 21:33: “And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.”

Abraham planted a grove. He planted a group of trees in a dry place. What for? So he could have a quiet, shady, private place of prayer. There was too much business, too much activity, in his tent. There were too many servants and their children with all their distractions. He planted a grove to make himself a closet of prayer. Planting a grove in this case speaks of a long-term commitment to prayer.

Jacob, when coming to the brook Jabbok, sent his wives and servants away in order to be alone

with God. “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (Ge. 32:24). Jacob was accustomed to the secret place of prayer. It is in those places where we can wrestle with God to receive the blessing that otherwise would not be ours.

David made many a hillside and valley his closet of prayer when he served as a shepherd. Later, as a fugitive, he prayed in caves. Oh, what tremendous prayer literature in the Psalms of David has come out of his secret closets.

Of **Daniel**, it is recorded: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Da. 6:10).

I like this word “aforetime.” Daniel not only had regular hours of prayer in times of crisis but he also had “aforetime” prayer. If you have “aforetime” prayers, you will be ready when the crises of life come, and you will not buckle in your convictions when it is time to stand, when others bow to worldly gods. If you have “aforetime” prayer, you will calmly face the lions and the fiery furnaces of life. If you have “aforetime” prayer, your counsel will excel the prayerless counselors surrounding you. If you have “aforetime” prayer, you will not be shaken by bad news. You will just calmly get back into your closet, knowing that God has a way out or through or around any problem in the world!

But **Jonah** apparently did not have his regular times of secret prayer. And so, unbeknownst to himself, he developed an attitude that stirred up the whole eastern Mediterranean Sea.

What all are you stirring up by not frequenting the secret place of prayer, by not building yourself a grove to meet there with God alone? What are you stirring up in your marriage, in your church, or on your job because you are prayerless?

Is God going to have to put you into the belly of a whale to get you to pray? Is God going to have to make you sick to get you into prayer? Is he going to have to withdraw your financial security to get your attention, or will he cause you to have to lose your wife to another man or your children to drugs in order to awaken you?

Daniel prayed “aforetime.” Jonah prayed “thereafter”: after he was thrown overboard, after he was swallowed by a whale. Then is when he prayed-- “thereafter”! Had Jonah only been a frequenter of the prayer closet, he never would have gotten into the wrong ship to start with. How many wrong ships have you been on because you have skipped and missed in your meeting with God? How many ships had to lose their cargoes because you were asleep when you should have prayed? How much cargo have you lost yourself because of prayerlessness?

Hanna had her place of prayer. As a woman in those days, she found it difficult to find a geographical place of prayer. But she was shut up in her soul and prayed silently, only her lips moving. And, yet, God heard her just the same and gave her the first prophet of Israel: Samuel.

Jesus knew the power of shutting himself in. He admonished us to do likewise. It was said of him, "And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray" (Mk. 6:46).

In this passage, Jesus sent the multitudes away. Why? Because it was time to pray. What are you willing to send away so that you might get to prayer? Something? No, it must be everything!

Cornelius prayed always. And **Peter** found a closet of prayer wherever he went. In Joppa, he found it on a rooftop: "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour" (Ac. 10:9).

Now, let us consider why people don't pray. There is little prayer because:

I. People Have Not Been Soundly Converted.

If people are soundly converted, they will pray. All of the conversions following Pentecost were sound conversions, and all of the converted prayed: "And they continued stedfastly...in prayers" (Ac. 2:42). "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..." (4:31).

Notice, they all prayed before they were filled with the Holy Ghost. And because they all prayed, they all were filled with the Holy Ghost, and then they continued in prayer..

The absence of prayer in the lives of converts in our churches is a sign that they have not been soundly converted.

II. People Are Backslidden.

If people don't deny Self consistently, their prayer-life suffers, lukewarmness sets in, and they find other things more pressing to do.

III. People Are Too Busy.

That is a cop-out. The real reason is that the Holy Spirit has left people's lives. When the Holy Spirit is in a believer's life, there is prayer. The Holy Spirit is a Spirit of prayer. The Holy Spirit is an intercessor: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Ro. 8:26).

If you are not a praying saint, the Holy Spirit has departed from you. There are things in your life--attachments, loves, sins, attitudes--that have caused the Holy Spirit to withdraw himself.

If you have the Holy Spirit, you will be a praying saint. If you love God, you are not too busy to pray. You are busy with God. Abraham had 318 servants; Daniel was prime minister; Moses was governor of a nation; Jesus dealt with multitudes; yet, all of them made time for prayer.

Friend, Jesus wants you to enter into your closet and pray. Will you?