

Call to Obedience #380
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The Cost of Prayer

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Recently I shared with you on the necessity of prayer: *Men ought always to pray*. Today I shall speak to you on the cost of prayer. The church of Jesus Christ has always been carried on the shoulders of the remnant: people who recognize that prayer does not come cheap as E.M. Bounds said: Prayer that costs nothing gets nothing. The remnant have counted the cost of it, and are willing to pay the price of regular, prolonged times of praise and intercession. They know that prayer is honorable work, indeed the most rewarding work; that prayer occupies itself entirely with the impossible; and that the Church of Jesus Christ has a monopoly on prayer. No one else has anything like it.

Go to the Revelation and see what really matters in the end. What gets the attention of our God more than anything else:

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake (Rev. 8:3-5).

Prayers are offerings to God. They are expensive, very precious offerings. God will not accept cheap half-hearted prayers said on the run. God is not content with leftovers anymore than He would accept a blemished sacrifice in the Old Testament. If a prayer is not an earnest offering to God, it is not an acceptable offering to God. If it is, it will rise as incense to the throne and will shake the world in its own way some day.

Let us now consider the cost of prayer in four ways: in terms of time, quality, abandonment and patience.

- 1. The cost of time.** *And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray (Mark 6:46).* You cannot just add prayer to all that you're doing now. You have to send something away. What is your offering to the Lord, my friend? Aspiring athletes and musicians do not hesitate to reorganize their lifestyles to reach their goal. Let us do no less.

Every additional minute in prayer costs more. Praying into the 30th minute costs far more than praying into the third minute. The more time you take for prayer; the more your lifestyle, comforts and habits are mutilated. The more you have to say “no”: “No” to friends, relatives, phone calls, outings and social gatherings; “no” to shopping, TV, the Internet and Facebook. If you give yourself to the necessity of prayer, if you start making the sacrifice: the sweet offering of time for prayer; even before you have prayed much, the sacrifice alone will change your life. There will be a different countenance on your face. There will be a more distant view in your eyes. Different things will make you smile. As you go along you find yourself more and more a stranger where you once were at home.

2. The Price of Quality of Life. When I talk about quality here, I do not refer to clothing, food or shelter. I am talking about spiritual quality. There needs to be holiness. A call to prayer is always a call to holiness. We need to come clean before we pray.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Pe. 1:15-16)

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully (Ps. 24:3,4).

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (Ja. 5:16b)

It is a waste of time to urge people to come to prayer who refuse to live holy lives. We need holy living to do holy work. Do not buy into the phrase: “everyone should be at prayer meeting” unless you add that every man should be holy. Those who have not forsaken all, those who have not crucified the flesh, only hinder prayer meetings. If they think that by being there, they do the church a favor, they are mistaken. Jesus had a prayer meeting at Jairus' house. His daughter needed to be raised up. Jesus had to send most of the people out the door before He could start the prayer meeting (Mk. 5:40). There were people there who were not right with God. Friend, *if there is iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us* (Ps. 66:18). Yet, never shut a God-seeker out of a prayer meeting. He might get saved.

Prayer is for the saints. The admonition is clear: *Lifting up holy hands* (1 Tim. 2:8). Holy hands are obedient hands. Indeed we need to go beyond obedience, beyond what is explicitly right as we see in this passage:

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 Jn 3:22).

3. The Price of Abandonment. Once you give yourself to prayer, letting it disrupt your current lifestyle; you will lose the honor of man. But you will not be sorrowful, rather you will wake up to the fact that honor has been a hindrance all along, holding you back in faith, because all those who seek honor from man cannot come to the power of faith.

Jesus said: *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (John 5:44)*

God's honor and glory become your new garments. You will be happy with them. It will not be long till your place of prayer becomes like a mighty fortress from whence you issue forth fiery missiles into enemy territory. The more you get into it, the more you will enjoy the battle. You will realize that your firepower, the quality of your weaponry and your General are far superior than anything the enemy can throw at you. And when you are worn out from the battle you have the assurance that reinforcements are never long in coming. Praise God!

4. The Price of Patience. Along with the new abandonment to the crucified life, giving more time to prayer, you will have to give up your passion for instant results. Many prayers are answered quickly, but more are not. They appear to have vanished into a black hole somewhere in the universe. Some will tell you that you are wasting your time and, at times, birds of doubt will try to settle on your head. Chase them away! For the overwhelming, uncontested, absolute truth is: no prayer of the righteous ever ends up in a dark hole, they all arrive safe and sound at the throne of God and only eternity will reveal what they all have accomplished.

Praying is not wasting time, not praying is. Nothing is accomplished without prayer. Jesus told us that without Him we could do nothing (John 15:5), that we ought to pray always (Luke 18:1). Therefore James said, *Ye have not because ye ask not (Ja. 4:2).*

If prayer were a waste of time:

1. Jesus would not have urged us to do it;
2. Jesus would not have sent things away to do it Himself; and
3. Paul would have been the greatest time-waster in all the church.

Rather to the contrary: mighty in prayer, Jesus and Paul alone, accomplished more in the world than any other two men put together. The reward of prayer is that when your works are tried in the fire of judgment they will pass through, they will not be burned up. Make prayer an important part of your life. You will never regret it. Oh, it feels so good to be more than a conqueror through Christ your Lord! Friend, once you get started it will change your life more than many trips to the altar.

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