

PRAY ON!

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

["God is the *Rewarder* of those who diligently seek Him."]

THIS single precious promise is linked with every labor of love, with every act of obedience, and every effectual prayer. God rewards labor, and every pastor preaches His Gospel message, every mission school teacher teaches his or her class, and every conscientious parent tills the soil of her children's hearts, in this simple faith.

God rewards obedience. Every blow of Noah's hammer on the ark was an audible proof of his belief that God would be as good as His word. God rewards sincere prayer in all cases where the conduct of the petitioner proves that the prayer is sincere. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." On these promises the Christian plants his knees when he bows in fervent supplication.

But oh, to what long trials we are often subjected, when our Heavenly Father would test our faith, or else would strengthen our faith by its own exercise! Christ kept the Syrophenician mother at arm's length to try the measure of her faith. She won her case, and her Master's approval. Her success has encouraged millions of mother's and of wives to press their suit at the throne of grace.

"Prayer," said Phillips Brooks, "is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold upon God's willingness." His holding back of the blessing is often a blessing in itself, for it tests faith, deepens humility, and produces a submissive spirit. The Master's injunction to us is "to pray and not to faint," i.e., not to turn coward or lose heart. He does not forbid us to wrestle or to agonize, when the object for which we are praying is as dear to us as life itself.

"The grief that weighs me down," said a Christian mother, "is the fact that of my six children, not one of them loves Jesus. I am left alone." But she made her daily life an attraction towards Christ, and kept on praying. Five of the daughters were converted during a powerful revival. "Now, mother," said one of them, "let us have a day of prayer for our unawakened sister." They did so, and very soon the last bolted heart opened to the knocking Saviour. "The victory that overcame was faith."

Several years ago a godly woman in my church became very anxious for her husband's conversion. She sometimes talked with him about his soul—never scoldingly or in a hectoring fashion. It was her habit to conduct family worship, and her husband always attended the service very respectfully. One Sunday morning she determined to spend the whole day in prayer for her husband, without saying anything to him about it. She did so, and the woman of Canaan never laid hold on the Master with more importunity.

The next morning her husband came and took the Bible out of her hands, and very tenderly said to her, "Dearie, you have read this book long enough to us, now let me read it." He did so, while she listened with a sort of dazed delight. On the following morning he offered prayer himself, and at the next communion season he united with our church. The good woman prayed with her lips, and with her life also, and she "did not faint." She *believed in prayer*, and that is more than thousands of good people do, who talk very piously, and yet live and act in perfect contradiction to every empty prayer they offer.

I know well the severe strain that is often put upon the faith of parents as well as of pastors. Probably more than one Christian wife is reading this article, whose heart is often bowed down to the dust on account of the continued impenitence of that husband who is more than half of her own life. To all such I would say, *Pray on!* Never give him up. When you sit alone at the communion table, sundered from him whom your soul loveth, plead for him as a woman's heart only can pray. Keep his conversion before you as perseveringly as, in years gone by, Cyrus W. Field kept before his mind's eye the accomplishment of his ocean telegraph enterprise.

Not only ask God to convert your husband, but shape your life and conduct also to help convert him. Your prayers will not likely avail much if you contradict them with your repulsive conduct, or ill temper, or frivolous behaviour. Don't ask God to lead your husband towards the Cross, and then stand in his way. I don't believe that God ever grants a prayer to which we give the lie by our daily conduct. If you want your husband or your son converted, then *live for their conversion*. Not only pray for them, but draw them with the silken hawser of your affection, and strengthen that with the attraction of a sweet-tempered, consistent life. Practice a holy tact.

If your husband is more ready to hear the Gospel message in some other church than your own, don't quarrel with him; go where he is likely to receive a blessing. Watch the leadings of Providence and the motions of his heart, and then co-operate with the Holy Spirit.

I could name more than one godly wife in my church whose prayers for their husbands—continued through many years—were answered by the conversion of those men in the sick rooms from which they went home to heaven.

Pray on then, ye loving wives and ye faithful mothers and ye earnest teachers! Pray on with the importunity of love and the eloquence of a winsome life. Who can tell how soon it may be said to you, "Woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt!"

TRY INDIVIDUAL WORK.

IN every congregation there are souls who have been tarrying at the threshold for a long time. They are moral, thoughtful and earnest, but not religious. They have not hitherto been moved to consecrate themselves to Christ by the public services of the church, either ordinary or extraordinary. What remains to be done for them yet?

We have an answer in three words: *Try personal work*. Go to them, after diligent effort to put yourself in working mood, and after assuring yourself that you are in touch with him who alone can "give the increase." Seek a fitting season, and tenderly, prayerfully, anxiously, lay before them your sense of their duty and their danger. Seek to get the approval of their judgment, and to ally yourself with their conscience. With tact, with delicate consideration, in the spirit of Christ, in earnestness of soul, deal with them as you would want some courageous and faithful man or woman to deal with you, in similar straits. Moreover, put the burden of personal work upon half a score or more of others around you. Get them to go out after others.

Try it, brother pastor. Victory will follow. The services of the sanctuary alone often fail to bring men and women to Christ; supplement these services with individual work.—*Sel.*