

The Golden Bond of Prayer

What the Comradeship of Young Methodists May Do

REV. DR. FITCHETT

IT is said that there are 35,000,000 Methodists in the world to-day; if that is so, two-fifths—or 14,000,000—are under fifteen years of age. Three-fifths of them—or 21,000,000—are not yet twenty-one years of age. What a wonderful host of young and happy lives they make! My dear youths and maidens who read these words,—you ought to be, in virtue of your youth, rich in imagination. Try and call up a vision of the great army of the young to which you belong.

AN ARMY OF THE YOUNG.

You cannot see their faces, nor hear the music of their voices, and the tread of their feet. They are scattered over many continents and dwell under all skies. They are to be found in Great Britain, in the United States, in Canada, in India, in Australia and New Zealand, in Africa, in the West Indies. What a comradeship they make!—bright-faced, clean-blooded, with sunshine in their eyes and music on their lips. For they are the children of godly homes, nurtured in an atmosphere of love, of earth's very best. They have learned how to pray. They sing as they march, for they belong to a singing Church; and of all earth's children none have better reason for singing. They have great memories behind them, great hopes before them, and a great faith within them.

Now, you belong to this army! You wear its colours. You are counted in its ranks. Would you not like to see the great host of your comrades; to catch the sound of their laughing voices, to exchange some sign of love with them, if only a smile, a gesture, a wave of the hand?

THE MEETING PLACE.

Well, you will not see them, till you and they meet in that great multitude which no man can number before the throne of God in heaven. But there is one point at which, to-day, and every day, you can come into living, loving, personal touch with all the vast host of your comrades. There is, even on this rough earth, a place where "spirit with spirit can meet." It is at the feet of God, in the hush and sweetness, the mystery and the gladness of prayer.

You all believe in prayer. If there is one thing about which you are sure it is that God on His throne stoops to listen to the whispered, or unuttered, words of every sincere prayer. You have been taught to pray. Almost the very first words put upon your lips by the tender piety of your parents were words of prayer. An American statesman proposes, in order to celebrate that golden century of peace which, since 1815, has prevailed betwixt Great Britain and the United States, that on a given day in 1915 the whole population of both countries, 150,000,000 of English-speaking people on both sides of the Atlantic, shall, at an agreed moment, stop all their work, and stand for five minutes with bowed heads in prayer to God that He would keep peace betwixt at least these two nations for all time. That, if the plan is carried out, will be a wonderful spectacle: a prayer-meeting of 150,000,000 people.

But alas! in the population of these two countries there are many people who never pray. They have forgotten the

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divine art. Their lives are in quarrel with prayer. They are such simpletons that they do not believe in prayer.

But you are better taught! You were nursed in an atmosphere of prayer. Almost the first words you learned to utter were broken syllables of prayer. And, if you will, you may create, within the bounds of the Methodist Church, a better and more memorable prayer-meeting than Senator Root proposes.

THE BOND OF PRAYER.

Suppose that the whole vast army of Methodist youth agreed together that, every morning, for one brief minute, they would pray for each other; and would do it for all the days of the year, and all the years of their life; and so create a habit which will run like a thread of gold through the whole span of their earthly life! Such an agreement of prayer would be, in the presence and at the feet of God, a solemn act, an acknowledgment of your kinship with each other. If it only had the office of a gesture, a signal of love, extended across sea and land betwixt all the children of the great Methodist household, it would be worth doing. But in the sight of God it would be vastly more than this. It would be the creation of a new tie, strange, sweet, and divine—a tie which distance cannot weaken, nor time itself destroy—betwixt the young people of the great Methodist Church in every part of the world. And such a cloud of agreed prayer ascending from many lands, and from multitudes of simple and loving hearts, would have a power with God which no arithmetic can measure.

Tennyson pictures King Arthur saying to one of his Knights:

" More things are wrought by prayer,
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves, and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

This is certainly true. But those sixty seconds of prayer for each other every morning, here suggested, would bind the whole youth of Methodism closer to God, and to each other. It would help you to keep in mind the goodly fellowship—a better fellowship than that of King Arthur and his Round Table—in which you stand. The tender and enduring bond betwixt the young people of Methodism thus woven would strengthen immeasurably the Methodist Church. It would win wonderful answers from God Himself, answers that would enrich your lives, and enrich the life of the church to which you belong.

WILL YOU JOIN?

It only needs your consent! Come into that golden circle of prayer. Begin to-day. Make it a habit. Remember, as you pray for all your comrades, what a murmur of soft, youthful voices is going up at the same moment past the stars to God. Will you stand aloof, separating yourself from your kindred; refusing to pray for others while they are praying for you? You can strengthen the family tie of the whole Methodist Church by coming into this great bond of prayer.

Pray for each other! Pray for the Church of your fathers. Pray for Christ's Churches of every name. Pray for all Sunday-schools. Pray for the sad multitudes, yet sitting far off in heathen darkness. Nothing so enriches our own life and character as prayer for others.

A NEW METHODISM.

You may do great things for Methodism, and for the whole Church of Christ in the years to come. You will be its teachers and missionaries. Or if God calls you to a secular life you will give your money, the strength and skill of your hands, the knowledge of your brain, the power and quickness of your minds to the service of the Church. But begin to-day to render *this* service to all your comrades, taking them into the mystic circle of your prayers. The very effort to do this will teach you to pray in larger terms than you ever did before. Your faith will take a new and amazing sweep. And when you have learned to gather into the compass of your love and prayer all your youthful Methodist kindred, you will yourself be a better Methodist than you ever were before, and will help to develop a richer and nobler Methodism than the world has yet seen.