

PRAYING ALWAYS.

(From a letter to a Friend.)

Two things are essential to the nurture and maintenance of a fresh and healthy state of soul; the reading of the Word and Prayer: nor can we afford to neglect either the one or the other, if we desire that our hearts and lives may answer to the grace bestowed upon us. If the reading of the Word be neglected, there will be the danger of our prayers becoming the expression of mere natural desires instead of "intercession according to the will of God." We need to have our desires even for spiritual blessings formed in the atmosphere of the Word, in fellowship with the Lord himself, and by the power of His Spirit; while where this is lacking, the more earnest the soul is, the more danger will there be of a zeal that is not according to knowledge. An opposite danger, on the other hand, is that the reading of the Word without prayer, tends to a spirit of INTELLECTUALISM, ending in a cold, barren state of soul in which there is neither power nor joy, but abundance of spiritual pride. There is nothing more deadening to spiritual vitality than to have the mind occupied with Divine truth, while the heart and the conscience remain strangers to its power; and this is sure to be the case just in proportion as prayer is neglected. There can be no surer and more certain sign of a low, unhealthy spiritual state than the

absence of prayer, and there can be no better proof that a man is "filled with the Spirit," than to know that he "gives himself unto prayer."

Beloved brother, is there not a great lack of prayer amongst us? Alas! must we not confess that our closets, our households, our assembly meetings for prayer, bear witness to this and prove that we are oftentimes culpably indifferent to this high and holy privilege of expressing OUR interest in all that interests the heart of God, and affects the glory of His beloved Son.

Let us consider HIM—our blessed Example and Pattern. He commenced, carried on, and ended His ministry with prayer. We read of Him praying at the time of His baptism, Luke iii. 21; "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed," Luke v. 16: "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God," Luke vi. 12; "He was alone praying," Luke ix. 18; "He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray," Luke ix. 28; "He was praying in a certain place," Luke xi. 1; "He kneeled down and prayed," Luke xxii. 41; "He prayed more earnestly," Luke xxii. 44; and finally, at the very close of His marvellous life, amidst the agonies of the cross, He prays for His enemies, Luke xxiii. 34.

Consider Paul, who has exhorted us to be "followers of him even as he also was of Christ." When we think of his arduous and unremitting labours in connection with the ministry of the Word, while

pursuing at the same time, when necessary, his calling as a tentmaker, we almost wonder how he found any time for prayer, and yet as we read his epistles it seems as though he did indeed "pray without ceasing." See Rom. i. 9, x. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 7; Eph. i. 16, iii. 14; Phil. i. 4, 9; Col. i. 3, 9; 1 Thess. i. 2, iii. 10; 2 Thess. i. 11; 2 Tim. i. 3; Philemon 4.

Remember the repeated exhortations of the Word — "PRAYING ALWAYS with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men." "Continuing instant in prayer." "Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving." "Brethren, pray for us." "Praying in the Holy Ghost." "Pray without ceasing."

Think of the blessed results that have ever followed the expression of dependence upon God in united or individual prayer. The Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Ghost took place at the close of ten days spent in continued prayer and supplication. The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost, and made bold to speak the Word of God "after they had prayed," Acts iv. The angel of the Lord delivered Peter from prison in answer to the prayer which "was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him," Acts xii. Scripture

is full of instances of the prevalence of prayer. 2 Chron. xxxii. 20; and James v. 17, 18: are conspicuous examples. And without doubt when the history of the Church is surveyed from the glory, it will be seen that every wave of blessing to saints, and salvation to sinners, has been preceeded by the effectual fervent prayers of many whose labours are better known in heaven than on earth. Men and women like Epaphras, Col. iv. 12, who have prevailed with God in their closets, and like Jabez, 1 Chron. iv. 10, have had granted to them that which they required.

Again—and brother beloved, I would press this upon you with all the earnestness of which I am capable, *meditate upon the unspeakable need of the present moment.* Look at the appalling condition of the Church of God. That which was the wondrous subject of His counsels long before the world's foundations were laid—destined to be the magnificent display of His glory to admiring myriads of His unfallen creatures in ages yet to come—even now, in spite of its ruin, the object of His unceasing solicitude, and His measureless love. Oh! brother, think of the Church! Torn asunder by a hundred factions; paralysed by a practical infidelity; stupefied by the deadening influence of an indifference to Christ, which is as general as it is deplorable; bound hand and foot with tradition, organization, and human arrangement; desolated by worldliness; and shorn of that **HEAVENLY** aspect and beauty which is her own peculiar portion, she

nevertheless vaunts herself in the midst of her ruin, and is ready to say with the apostate whore, "I sit a Queen, and am no Widow." Awful picture! Then consider the state of individual souls. How few of those quickened by divine grace have settled peace with God! How few are personally in the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ makes free! How many doubts and fears are entertained by God's people to their own loss and His dis-honour! Dear brother, can we cease to pray? And are there not other things before our eyes at this time that surely might bring us to our knees in an agony of desire? Look at the twos and threes who have been gathered by the Holy Spirit in these last days to the confession of Christ's name out of the ruin of Christendom. *Is not that blessed hope, which came home to souls fifty years ago with such separating and purifying power, losing its hold upon us?* Are not the earthly-mindedness and the worldliness that so often and in so many ways are manifested, the "settling down" on the part of many, and the turning aside of many more to things which "minister questions rather than godly edifying," are not these things the sad and solemn proof that the doctrine and the hope have been dissevered, so that many are to be found boasting of the doctrine, whose lives are the standing witness that they are strangers to the HOPE, for wherever this exists it does and must necessarily produce its proper effects. 1 John iii. 3.

Lastly, remember that God is gathering out His

elect by the preaching of the Word, and ours is the blessed privilege of interceding for the salvation of the lost. The consideration of the realities of heaven and hell, a perishing world, a loving God, a waiting Saviour, and a world-wide gospel, surely should constrain us to *more prayer*.

The word is "Praying always," by which I understand that a believer, though not always in the act, should always be in the spirit of prayer. His constant state is one of dependence, therefore his constant spirit should be that of prayer. But there are special seasons when, either alone or with others the soul turns aside from all else to have to do with God himself, and pour out its desires and requests to Him. Suffer me, in conclusion, to beseech you to embrace every opportunity of thus continuing instant in prayer. Redeem every moment, and you will be surprised to discover how many opportunities for a few minutes of prayer you have hitherto suffered to pass idly away. Then, when a brother calls, or a few saints come together for a little fellowship, what a sweet opportunity for prayer. We can then plead the promise to "two of you," and blessed it is to do so. Such a privilege should never be neglected, and would there not be much more prayer than there is, if every coming together of saints was characterized by it?

Then the assembly meeting. Well, introduce me to saints who are much in private prayer, and given to social prayer, and I will shew you a gathering where the prayer-meetings are bright, fresh, and

happy; full of vigour, faith, power, and liberty. Where the prayer-meetings are cold, formal, and lacking in fervour and liberty, depend upon it the closet could tell a tale of indifference and negligence in respect to prayer, of which the more public barrenness is only the painful indication and the sad result.

THE SUPPER OF OUR LORD.

. . . I believe that the bread remains simply and absolutely bread, and the wine, wine—that physically there is no change whatever in the elements. To seek for material and physical things in such a precious institution of the Lord is, to my mind, a poor and miserable manner of regarding it. I have a charming portrait of my mother, which reminds me of her just as she was. If I am told of the canvas or the colouring, I should feel that those who spoke thus knew nothing about it. That would not be my mother. That which is precious in it to me is my mother herself; and they turn my attention from her to the means employed to recall her to me; and the reason is, that they have no idea what my mother is to me. The portrait has no value except as far as it is a good representation of her who is not there. I say, it is my mother. I could not throw it aside as a mere piece of canvas; I discern my mother in it. I cherish this portrait; I carry it with me; but if I stop

at the perfection of the painting as a work of art, the link with my heart is lost.

There is more than this in the Supper of our Lord, because the Lord is really present *with us* in it spiritually, according to the intention of the institution; and this is very precious. But it has pleased Him to give us a physical means by which we may be reminded of Him, so that I am authorized to speak of a portrait by way of comparison.

The Supper presents Christ in that which is so to speak, central; it presents to us a dead Christ; but this foundation of all, this precious truth, which could be a motive even for the Father Himself to love Christ—this fact, that it is a dead Christ which is presented to us, is the proof that we could not have a living Christ presented to us in the elements. This would be to deny the state of death, and to destroy the object and intention of the institution. This institution presents to us the death of Christ—a dead Christ—His body broken and His blood shed; but there *exists no dead Christ*. He desires that we should *remember* Him: “Do this in remembrance of me;” but I do not speak of the remembrance of Christ living in heaven. I live by Him, He is my life; I enjoy communion with Him; I dwell in Him; He dwells in me; there is no separation. If, through my folly, communion is interrupted, it is no question of remembering Him, but of being with Him anew—with a Saviour who manifests Himself to us as He does not to the

world.

Do we diminish the importance or sweetness of this institution? Quite the contrary; we hinder the materialising of it, and we insist that the spiritual realization, or that which it represents, be in the heart, instead of that which is called an *opus operatum*, (mere outward work) which is purely material. We are united to Christ glorified; this is the point of departure; there is no longer a dead Christ: death has no more dominion over Him. I enjoy communion with a glorified Christ; I am one with Him; I shall be like Him. I rejoice; my heart is full of love at the thought of seeing Him, at the hope of the glory of waking up in His likeness. Shall I, therefore, forget His death and His sufferings? God forbid! It is precisely this which binds us to Christ by the most tender affections. There where He had to suffer and to do everything, He was alone; my heart at least will be with Him. He does not ask me to be one with Him there; I could not have been. There He was willing to be alone—blessed be His name!—and He has accomplished all. But the heart which would give itself for me there is the same which thinks of me now, and which loves me. In remembering His death, His love, His sufferings, what shall I say?—divine though human! I am united in heart with Him there, where He is, on high, it is not another person, another love. Whether in the Supper, where we remember Him in such a peculiar and touching way, or whether at other moments, when I think

of His death, when I eat Him as dying for me, I am in communion with Him living, and I realize the love of Him who lives—that same love, that same heart of the Saviour; I dwell in Him, and He in me. It is not said exactly, “Do this in remembrance” of my death, but, “of Me.” Still we remember Him on the earth, in His incarnation, in His life of humiliation, and finally and specially as dead on the cross. I remember *Him!*—not Him in the heavens, but Him who lives in heaven as once humbled and dead for me: there is also a certain action of the heart—we eat. In John v. the Son of God quickens whom He will: here (chap. vi.) we eat the bread come down from heaven; we eat His body, and drink His blood.

It is most important to understand that it is a dead Christ, who in this state exists no longer, because we cannot have any relationship with a Christ living on the earth. If even as Jews we had had this relationship, we should have been obliged to say with Paul, “though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” Death hath put an end to all the relations of Christ with the world; according to the flesh, and He lives now as the head of a new race—the second Man. Thus then, in John vi. 53, the Lord lays down, as a necessary condition of life, the eating of his flesh, and the drinking of His blood—receiving Him in His death. Hence we remember Him before His resurrection; as He has said, “except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die,

it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Thus our union is with a Christ glorified; we do not know Him otherwise; but the most powerful spring of affection for the heart is a Christ, man in the world, and a dead Christ. I am nourished by this; I eat it, and I live by this; but if we wish to bring back, so to speak, a Christ such as He has been in this world, as present, we overthrow entirely the intention of this institution, and even Christianity itself. Every time that we eat this bread and drink this cup, we shew the Lord's death till He come: but if we will introduce a living Christ to animate this dead one, so to speak, we destroy Him. Why then is it said, "They discern not the Lord's body"? What body? His dead body. A perfect love, His accomplished work, an obedience which was arrested by no difficulty, present themselves to our eyes! Is there anything else there but a dead body? . . . If so, I know not where I am, nor what the Supper means. Do not animate it with the life that Christ had before death; His obedience was not yet finished, nor His work accomplished, nor His love perfectly demonstrated. Do not animate it with the life of a Christ now risen; you take Him from me as dead; death is no more there—death which is the basis of salvation, the proof of obedience, the glorification of God. Take not from me this death, this body *broken*, this blood for ever shed, which tells me that all is accomplished, and—through the love of my Saviour—that sin is put away for ever. If you

can lead me to grasp more firmly what is precious in this dead Saviour, in the death of Him who is the eternal Son of God ; if you can make me eat Him with more faith, more spirituality, more divine intelligence, more heart—ah ! I shall be very grateful to you ; but let it be my dear Saviour that is left to me ! When one is in communion with Him living, there is nothing so precious as His death ; yes, precious even to God. “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” For my spiritual intelligence it is the end of, or rather the proof and the consciousness that I have done with the first Adam ; that the first creation no longer exists—blessed be God !—for faith ; for the heart it is the tender and perfect love of the Saviour. I am no more either Jew or Gentile, or a man living on the earth ; I am a Christian. The death of Christ, Head of all, has put an end to the first creation. He has introduced us into a new creation as firstfruits united to Him.

I discern then the body of the Lord *broken*—His blood shed—His death. It is not an ordinary repast, a simple remembrance, if you will, but an institution that Christ has given to His own ; not that they may find in the element anything else than the bread and the fruit of the vine, but that their faith may, in the sweetest way, by the power of the Holy Spirit, nourish itself by Jesus, by that which He has been for them when He died upon the Cross—a work of which the efficacy remains eternally, even to the Father’s eye, but of which

the love is all for us. If I treat this memorial with lightness, I am guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, for it is that body and blood which are presented to me in it. I doubt if there is any one in the world who enjoys the Lord's Supper more than I do (though I doubt not that there is with many more piety); but that which makes me enjoy it is that it presents to me the body and blood of my Saviour dead, and consequently a perfect love and a perfect work. But He cannot be in His dead body, which I discern there by faith. He is in me, that I may enjoy Him: if He is introduced living, that which I ought to discern no longer exists. All this in connection with the fact of the entirely new position of the living Christ—a doctrine which Paul presents to us with such divine energy, and which the enemy has always sought to hide, even under the form of piety, and for the preservation of which Paul so contended. What anguish he suffered from the efforts of the enemy to draw souls back to Judaism, as if they were still living in the world! “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

May God give us to discern more the body of Jesus—to eat His flesh and to realize His death more! Yes: this death is precious. It meets us in our need just as we are, and it delivers us from it by introducing us there, where He is, in the power of a new life which by His death knows not the old.

I have written you at much length. I could wil-

lingly enlarge on this subject, for instead of thinking lightly of the Supper of the Lord, it is of all institutions the most precious to me ; only to be so it must be a dead Saviour that is presented to me in it. I am living with Him now in heaven.

LAYING A PILLOW FOR JESUS.

"And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow."—MARK iv. 38.

It might be that some kind hand had placed this pillow for Jesus. He had said on one occasion, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." And it is remarkable that Matthew (viii. 19-27) puts these words of Jesus just before His embarkation, though they were possibly uttered at another time. It may be that some loving hand arranged that pillow for Him, knowing that He was weary. It was evening when He entered the ship, probably after a long day's toil.

We may learn a lesson from that pillow. Jesus never asked for a comfort from any when He was down here. He *did* ask the poor Samaritan woman for a draught of water—not that He was seeking her care, but that He might draw out *her* need. Still, He gave opportunities to those who longed to show their love and attention to Him. Sometimes we may not have it in our hand to give when we have it in our heart. No matter ; He looks at the heart. Do not let us judge Him with man's judg-

ment, and say, "I cannot do so and so; then why need I wish to do it?"

It may be that the one who arranged that pillow (if such were the case) was gladdened afterwards to find that He had fallen asleep upon it. In any case, He accepted it then—yes; used it fully for Himself. It may be, too, that there was no one of all His disciples whose heart was open to give Him "the tribute money." If there had been one, He might have allowed that one to do it unto Him; but a *fish* must be the giver. Doubtless, if there had been one *at the moment* who would have longed to give Him the money, He would have sent Peter to such an one, and not to a fish. He displayed His lordship over creation in the act, of course; but would He not rather have had the need filled up from some loving heart which was looking for an opening to help? Could it be possible that at that particular moment not one on earth was longing to aid the Man of Sorrows? I say, "*at that moment*;" for it is not enough that life from God must be present in him who acts for Jesus; he must *also* be in a moral state of soul, in communion with God, ere Jesus will *ask* for his aid. The ravens fed Elijah. But if there is even a Sidonian widow, with nothing save a little oil and a handful of meal, she will have the blessedness of helping the servant of the Lord.

The Lord loves us to give to Him, but "*a cheerful giver*" is the one He wants. When He wanted the ass for His entry into Jerusalem, He knew well

who really was willing. There He sent, and *asked*. All that was needful to say was, "The Lord hath need of him." "*Straightway*" he would be sent. Perhaps the owners of that colt were anxiously waiting for some opportunity of service. If so, how it strengthened their faith to find that Jesus knew all about it!

In the case of the man with the pitcher of water (*Luke xxii. 10*) we see the same thing. The "good man" of that house may have been thinking of Jesus, and saying, "My room is a large one : how suitable it would be for the Lord and His disciples ! How I wish He would eat the Passover at *my house*!" If so, how his heart must have leaped when the two disciples, Peter and John, came into his very house to tell him that the Master was coming ! Little did the man with the pitcher know what his carrying the pitcher signalled. Anything, everything, can be used by God to accomplish His purposes.

But to return. We may say that we cannot lay a pillow for the head of Jesus now. I think we can lay many for Him. Is not every believer now a member of His body ? Many of those members need our pillows—so to say. The "Head" is in glory, and *as such*, He needs them not. But Saul could persecute *Him*—"Why persecutest thou me ?" Every word of comfort, then, every act of kindness, every little succour towards a saint, because he belongs to Jesus, is an odour of a sweet smell, Godward.