

Devotional Thoughts :: The Kneeling Christian ~ Unknown**The Kneeling Christian ~ Unknown - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/9/4 20:16**

"GOD Wondered." This is a very striking thought! The very boldness of the idea ought surely to arrest the attention of every earnest Christian man, woman and child. A wondering God! Why, how staggered we might well be if we knew the cause of God's "wonder"! Yet we find it to be, apparently, a very little thing. But if we are willing to consider the matter carefully, we shall discover it to be one of the greatest possible importance to every believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else is so momentous -- so vital -- to our spiritual welfare.

God "wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isa. lix. 16) -- 'none to interpose' (R.V., marg.). But this was in the days of long ago, before the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ "full of grace and truth" -- before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, full of grace and power, "helping our infirmity," "Himself making intercession for us" and in us (Rom. viii. 26). Yes, and before the truly amazing promises of our Savior regarding prayer; before men knew very much about prayer; in the days when sacrifices for their sins loomed larger in their eyes than supplication for other sinners.

Oh, how great must be God's wonder today! For how few there are among us who know what prevailing prayer really is! Every one of us would confess that we believe in prayer, yet how many of us truly believe in the power of, prayer? Now, before we go a step farther, may the writer most earnestly implore you not to read hurriedly what is contained in these chapters. Much -- very much -- depends upon the way in which every reader receives what is here recorded. For everything depends upon prayer.

Why are many Christians so often defeated? Because they pray so little. Why are many church-workers so often discouraged and disheartened? Because they pray so little.

Why do most men see so few brought "out of darkness to light" by their ministry? Because they pray so little.

Why are not our churches simply on fire for God? Because there is so little real prayer.

The Lord Jesus is as powerful today as ever before. The Lord Jesus is as anxious for men to be saved as ever before. His arm is not shortened that it cannot save: but He cannot stretch forth His arm unless we pray more -- and more really.

We may be assured of this -- the secret of all failure is our failure in secret prayer.

If God "wondered" in the days of Isaiah, we need not be surprised to find that in the days of His flesh our Lord "marvelled." He marvelled at the unbelief of some -- unbelief which actually prevented Him from doing any mighty work in their cities (Mark vi. 6).

But we must remember that those who were guilty of this unbelief saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, or believe on Him. What then must His "marvel" be today, when He sees amongst us who do truly love and adore Him, so few who really "stir themselves up to take hold of God" (Isa. lxiv. 7). Surely there is nothing so absolutely astonishing as a practically prayerless Christian? These are eventful and ominous days. In fact, there are many evidences that these are "the last days" in which God promised to pour out His Spirit -- the Spirit of supplication -- upon all flesh (Joel ii. 28). Yet the vast majority of professing Christians scarcely know what "supplication" means; and very many of our churches not only have no prayer-meeting, but sometimes unblushingly condemn such meetings, and even ridicule them.

The Church of England, recognizing the importance of worship and prayer, expects her clergy to read prayers in Church every morning and evening.

But when this is done, is it not often in an empty church? And are not the prayers frequently raced through at a pace which precludes real worship? "Common prayer," too, often must necessarily be rather vague and indefinite.

And what of those churches where the old-fashioned weekly prayer-meeting is retained? Would not "weakly" be the more appropriate word? C. H. Spurgeon had the joy of being able to say that he conducted a prayer-meeting every Monday night "which scarcely ever numbers less than from a thousand to twelve hundred attendants."

My brothers, have we ceased to believe in prayer? If you still hold your weekly gathering for prayer, is it not a fact that the very great majority of your church members never come near it? Yes, and never even think of coming near it. Why is this? Whose fault is it?

"Only a prayer-meeting" -- how often we have heard the utterance! How many of those reading these words really enjoy a prayer-meeting? Is it a joy or just a duty? Please forgive me for asking so many questions and for pointing out what appears to be a perilous weakness and a lamentable shortcoming in our churches. We are not out to criticize -- far less to condemn. Anybody can do that. Our yearning desire is to stir up Christians "to take hold of" God, as never before. We wish to encourage, to enhearten, to uplift.

We are never so high as when we are on our knees.

Criticize? Who dare criticize another? When we look back upon the past and remember how much prayerlessness there has been in one's own life, words of criticism of others wither away on the lips.

But we believe the time has come when a clarion call to the individual and to the Church is needed -- a call to prayer.

Now, dare we face this question of prayer? It seems a foolish query, for is not prayer a part and parcel of all religions? Yet we venture to ask our readers to look at this matter fairly and squarely. Do I really believe that prayer is a power? Is prayer the greatest power on earth, or is it not? Does prayer indeed "move the Hand that moves the world"?

Do God's prayer-commands really concern Me? Do the promises of God concerning prayer still hold good? We have all been muttering "Yes -- Yes -- Yes" as we read these questions. We dare not say "No" to any one of them. And yet -- !

Has it ever occurred to you that our Lord never gave an unnecessary or an optional command? Do we really believe that our Lord never made a promise which He could not, or would not, fulfil? Our Savior's three great commands for definite action were: --

Pray ye
Do this
Go ye!

Are we obeying Him? How often His command, "Do this," is reiterated by our preachers today! One might almost think it was His only command! How seldom we are reminded of His bidding to "Pray" and to "Go." Yet, without obedience to the "Pray ye," it is of little or no use at all either to "Do this" or to "Go."

In fact, it can easily be shown that all want of success, and all failure in the spiritual life and in Christian work, is due to defective or insufficient prayer. Unless we pray aright we cannot live aright or serve aright. This may appear, at first sight, to be gross exaggeration, but the more we think it over in the light Scripture throws upon it, the more convinced shall we be of the truth of this statement.

Now, as we begin once more to see what the Bible has to say about this mysterious and wonderful subject, shall we endeavor to read some of our Lord's promises, as though we had never heard them before. What will the effect be?

Some twenty years ago the writer was studying in a Theological College. One morning, early, a fellow-student -- who is today one of England's foremost missionaries -- burst into the room holding an open Bible in his hands. Although he was preparing for Holy Orders, he was at that time only a young convert to Christ.

He had gone up to the University "caring for none of these things." Popular, clever, athletic -- he had already won a place amongst the smart set of his college, when Christ claimed him. He accepted the Lord Jesus as a personal Savior, and became a very keen follower of his Master. The Bible was, comparatively, a new book to him, and as a result he was constantly making "discoveries." On that memorable day on which he invaded my quietude he cried excitedly -- his face all aglow with mingled joy and surprise -- "Do you believe this? Is it really true?" "Believe what?" I asked, glancing at the open Bible with some astonishment. "Why, this -- " and he read in eager tones St. Matthew xxi. 21, 22: "If ye have faith and doubt not . . . all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' Do you believe it? Is it true?" "Yes," I replied, with much surprise at his excitement, "of course it's true -- of course I believe it."

Yet, through my mind there flashed all manner of thoughts! "Well, that's a very wonderful promise," said he. "It seems to me to be absolutely limitless! Why don't we pray more?" And he went away, leaving me thinking hard. I had never looked at those verses quite in that way. As the door closed upon that eager young follower of the Master, I had a vision of my Savior and His love and His power such as I never had before. I had a vision of a life of prayer -- yes, and "limitless" power, which I saw depended upon two things only -- faith and prayer. For the moment I was thrilled. I fell on my knees, and as I bowed before my Lord what thoughts surged through my mind -- what hopes and aspirations flooded my soul! God was speaking to me in an extraordinary way. This was a great call to prayer. But -- to my shame be it said -- I heeded not that call.

Where did I fail? True, I prayed a little more than before, but nothing much seemed to happen. Why? Was it because I did not see what a high standard the Savior requires in the inner life of those who would pray successfully?

Was it because I had failed to measure up my life to the "perfect love" standard so beautifully described in the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians?

For, after all, prayer is not just putting into action good resolutions "to pray." Like David, we need to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (Psa. li.) before we can pray aright. And the inspired words of the Apostle of Love need to be heeded today as much as ever before: "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and what soever we ask, we receive of Him" (I John iii. 21). "True -- and I believe it." Yes, indeed, it is a limitless promise, and yet how little we realize it, how little we claim from Christ. And our Lord "marvels" at our unbelief. But if we could only read the Gospels for the first time, what an amazing book it would seem! Should not we "marvel" and "wonder"? And today I pass on that great call to you. Will you give heed to it? Will you profit by it? Or shall it fall on deaf ears and leave you prayerless?

Fellow-Christians, let us awake! The devil is blinding our eyes. He is endeavoring to prevent us from facing this question of prayer. These pages are written by special request. But it is many months since that request came.

Every attempt to begin to write has been frustrated, and even now one is conscious of a strange reluctance to do so. There seems to be some mysterious power restraining the hand. Do we realize that there is nothing the devil dreads so much as prayer? His great concern is to keep us from praying. He loves to see us "up to our eyes" in work -- provided we do not pray. He does not fear because we are eager and earnest Bible students -- provided we are little in prayer. Someone has wisely said, "Satan laughs at our toiling, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." All this is so familiar to us -- but do we really pray? If not, then failure must dog our footsteps, whatever signs of apparent success there may be.

Let us never forget that the greatest thing we can do for God or for man is to pray. For we can accomplish far more by our prayers than by our work. Prayer is omnipotent; it can do anything that God can do! When we pray God works. All fruitfulness in service is the outcome of prayer -- of the worker's prayers, or of those who are holding up holy hands on his behalf. We all know how to pray, but perhaps many of us need to cry as the disciples did of old, "Lord, teach us to pray."

O Lord, by Whom ye come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us now to pray.

Re: The Kneeling Christian ~ Unknown - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/10/19 9:30

MUST I AGONIZE?

PRAYER is measured, not by time, but by intensity. Earnest souls who read of men like Praying Hyde are today anxiously asking, "Am I expected to pray like that?"

They hear of others who sometimes remain on their knees before God all day or all night, refusing food and scorning sleep, whilst they pray and pray and pray. They naturally wonder, "Are we to do the same? Must all of us follow their examples?" We must remember that those men of prayer did not pray by time. They continued so long in prayer because they could not stop praying.

Some have ventured to think that in what has been said in earlier chapters I have hinted that we must all follow in their train. Child of God, do not let any such thought—such fear?—distress you. Just be willing to do what He will have you do—what He leads you to do. Think about it; pray about it. We are bidden by the Lord Jesus to pray to our loving Heavenly Father. We sometimes sing, “Oh, how He loves!” And nothing can fathom that love.

Prayer is not given us as a burden to be borne, or an irksome duty to fulfil, but to be a joy and power to which there is no limit. It is given us that we “may find grace to help us in time of need” (Heb. iv. 16, R.V.). And every time is a “time of need.” “Pray ye” is an invitation to be accepted rather than a command to be obeyed. Is it a burden for a child to come to his father to ask for some boon? How a father loves his child, and seeks its highest good! How he shields that little one from any sorrow or pain or suffering! Our heavenly Father loves us infinitely more than any earthly father. The Lord Jesus loves us infinitely more than any earthly friend. God forgive me if any words of mine, on such a precious theme as prayer, have wounded the hearts or consciences of those who are yearning to know more about prayer. “Your heavenly Father knoweth,” said our Lord: and if He knows, we can but trust and not be afraid.

A schoolmaster may blame a boy for neglected homework, or unpunctual attendance, or frequent absence; but the loving father in the home knows all about it. He knows all about the devoted service of the little laddie in the home circle, where sickness or poverty throws so many loving tasks in his way. Our dear, loving Father knows all about us. He sees. He knows how little leisure some of us have for prolonged periods of prayer.

For some of us God makes leisure. He makes us lie down (Psa. xxiii. 2) that He may make us look up. Even then, weakness of body often prevents prolonged prayer. Yet I question if any of us, however great and reasonable our excuses, spend enough thought over our prayers. Some of us are bound to be much in prayer. Our very work demands it. We may be looked upon as spiritual leaders; we may have the spiritual welfare or training of others. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray enough for them (I Sam. xii. 23). Yes, with some it is our very business—almost our life’s work—to pray, Others—

Have friends who give them pain,
Yet have not sought a friend in Him.

For them they cannot help praying. If we have the burden of souls upon us we shall never ask, “How long need I pray?”

But how well we know the difficulties which surround the prayer-life of many! A little pile of letters lies before me as I write. They are full of excuses, and kindly protests, and reasonings it is true. But is that why they are written? No! No! Far from it. In every one of them there is an undercurrent of deep yearning to know God’s will, and how to obey the call to prayer amid all the countless claims of life.

Those letters tell of many who cannot get away from others for times of secret prayer; of those who share even bedrooms; of busy mothers, and maids, and mistresses who scarcely know how to get through the endless washing and cooking, mending and cleaning, shopping and visiting; of tired workers who are too weary to pray when the day’s work is done.

Child of God, our heavenly Father knows all about it. He is not a taskmaster. He is our Father. if you have no time for prayer, or no chance of secret prayer, why, just tell Him all about it—and you will discover that you are praying!

To those who seem unable to get any solitude at all, or even the opportunity of stealing into a quiet church for a few moments, may we point to the wonderful prayer-life of St. Paul? Did it ever occur to you that he was in prison when he wrote most of those marvelous prayers of his which we possess? Picture him. He was chained to a Roman soldier day and night, and was never alone for a moment. Epaphias was there part of the time, and caught something of his master’s passion for prayer. St. Luke may have been there. What prayer-meetings! No opportunity for secret prayer. No! but how much we owe to the uplifting of those chained hands! You and I may be never, or rarely ever, alone, but at least our hands are not fettered with chains, and our hearts are not fettered, nor our lips.

Can we make time for prayer? I may be wrong, but my own belief is that it is not God’s will for most of us—and perhaps not for any of us—to spend so much time in prayer as to injure our

physical health through getting insufficient food or sleep. With very many it is a physical impossibility, because of bodily weakness, to remain long in the spirit of intense prayer. The posture in which we pray is immaterial. God will listen whether we kneel, or stand, or sit, or walk, or work.

I am quite aware that many have testified to the fact that God sometimes gives special strength to those who curtail their hours of rest in order to pray more. At one time the writer tried getting up very early in the morning Å— and every morning Å— for prayer and communion with God. After a time he found that his daily work was suffering in intensity and effectiveness, and that it was difficult to keep awake during the early evening hours! But do we pray as much as we might do? It is a lasting regret to me that I allowed the days of youth and vigor to pass by without laying more stress upon those early hours of prayer.

Re: - posted by enid, on: 2006/10/19 9:51

Thought you were going to print the whole book!

I do have the book.

It is more than just thought provoking. It stirs you to action, and more besides!

We recently had a pastor from India come and preach at our church.

He said they have a ministry for the widows in his church. They pray. That is all they do. From 9am every morning until whenever they decide to stop.

Also, in India, the pastors are encouraged to fast every Saturday evening until after the Sunday morning service, because they want God to move as He will among them.

They are experiencing tremendous growth.

It is not surprising really, is it?

We know what to do, we just don't do it. Not yet anyway.

God bless.