



Helps to Holiness

## Chapter 18 – SOUL-WINNERS AND THEIR PRAYERS

"The inwrought fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James v. 16, R.V.).

All great soul-winners have been men of much and mighty prayer, and all great revivals have been preceded and carried out by persevering, prevailing knee-work in the closet. Before Jesus began His ministry, when great multitudes followed Him, He spent forty days and nights in secret prayer and fasting (Matt. iv. 1-11).

Paul prayed without ceasing. Day and night his prayers and pleadings and intercessions went up to God (Acts xvi. 25; Phil. i. 3-11; Col. i. 3, 9-11).

The Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit and the three thousand conversions in one day were preceded by ten days of prayer and praise and heart-searching and Bible-searching. And they continued in prayer until, on another day, five thousand were converted, and "a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts ii. 4-6; iv. 4; vi. 4-7).

Luther used to pray three hours a day, and he broke the spell of ages and set captive nations free.

John Knox used to spend nights in prayer, and cry to God, saying, "Give me Scotland, or I die!" and God gave him Scotland.

Baxter stained the walls of his study with praying breath, and sent a tide of salvation through all the land.

Over and over again, Mr. Wesley in his Journals – which, for lively interest, are next to the Acts of the Apostles – tells us of half, and whole, nights of prayer, in which God drew near and blessed people beyond expectation, and then he and his helpers were empowered to rescue England



from paganism and send a revival of pure, aggressive religion throughout the whole earth.

David Brainerd used to lie on the frozen ground at night, wrapped in a bear's skin, and spit blood, and cry to God to save the Indians; and God heard him, and converted and sanctified the poor, ignorant, heathenish, quarrelsome, drunken beings by the scores and hundreds.

The night before Jonathan Edwards preached the wonderful sermon that started the revival which convulsed New England, he and some others spent the night in prayer.

A young man named Livingstone, in Scotland, was appointed to preach at one of the great assemblies. Feeling his own utter weakness, he spent the night in prayer, and next day preached a sermon, and five hundred people were converted. Glory to God! Oh, my Lord, raise up some praying people!

Mr. Finney used to pray till whole communities were put under the spell of the Spirit of God and men could not resist the mighty influence. At one time, he was so prostrated by his labors that his friends sent him on a voyage of rest to the Mediterranean Sea. But he was so intent upon the salvation of men that he could not rest, and, on his return, he got into an agony of soul for the evangelization of the world. At last, the earnestness and agony of his soul became so great that he prayed all day, till in the evening he got a restful assurance that God would carry on the work. On reaching New York, he

delivered his "Revival Lectures," which were published at home and abroad, and resulted in revivals all over the world. Then his writings fell into the hands of Catherine Booth and mightily influenced her; so that The Salvation Army is in part God's answer to that man's agonizing, pleading, prevailing prayer that God would glorify His own name and save the world.

There is a young evangelist in America who was saved from Roman Catholicism. Everywhere he goes a "revival tornado" strikes the place and hundreds of people are converted. I wondered wherein lay the secret of his power, till a lady at whose house he stopped said he prayed all the



time. She could hardly get him to his meals from his mighty wrestlings with God.

Before joining The Salvation Army, I was one day talking with Dr. Cullis, of Boston, that man of simple, wonder-working faith. He was showing me some photographs, and among them was one of Bramwell Booth, our Chief of the Staff.

"There," said the doctor, "that man leads the mightiest holiness meetings in all England."

He then told me about those famous Whitechapel meetings. When I went to England, I determined, if possible, to find out the secret of them.

"For one thing," said an officer, "Mr. Bramwell used to conduct young men's meetings at headquarters at that time, and he used to ask each saved young fellow to spend five minutes alone with God every day, wherever they could get it, praying for those Friday night meetings. One, who is a Brigadier now and was then employed in a large warehouse, had to squeeze himself into a great wicker packing-case to get a chance to pray for five minutes."

God has not changed. He waits to do the will of praying men.

Mr. Finney tells of a church in which there was a continuous revival for thirteen years. At last the revival stopped, and everybody feared and questioned why, till on day a tearful man arose and told how for thirteen years he had prayed every Saturday night till after midnight for God to glorify Himself and save the people. But two weeks before, he had stopped this praying, and then the revival had stopped. If God will answer prayer like that, what a tremendous responsibility rests on us all to pray!

Oh, for a holy soldier in every corps and a believing member in every church, who would spend half of every Saturday night in prayer! Here is work for resting officers, and for people who cannot go into Salvation Army work because of insurmountable difficulties. You can do some needed knee-work.



But let no one imagine that this is easy work. It is difficult and amounts sometimes to an agony, but it will turn to an agony of joy in union and fellowship with Jesus. How Jesus prayed!

The other day a Captain, who prays an hour or more each morning and half an hour before his evening meeting, and who is very successful in getting souls saved, was lamenting to me that he often has to force himself to secret prayer. But in this he is tempted and tried like his brethren. All men of much prayer have suffered the same. The Rev. Wm. Bramwell, who used to see hundreds of people converted and sanctified everywhere he went, prayed six hours a day, and yet he said he always went to secret prayer reluctantly. He had to pull himself up to it. And after he began to pray, he would often have dry seasons, but he persevered in faith, and the heavens would open, and he would wrestle with God until the victory came. Then, when he preached, the clouds would break and rain down blessings on the people.

One man asked another the reason why Mr. Bramwell was able to say such new and wonderful things, that brought blessings to so many people. "Because he lives so near the Throne that God tells him His secrets, and then he tells them to us," said the other.

The Rev. John Smith, whose life, William Booth once told me, had been a marvelous inspiration to him, like Bramwell, always spent much time in prayer. He always found it hard to begin, and then got so blessed that it was hard to stop. Everywhere he went, mighty revival waves went also with him.

This reluctance to secret prayer may arise from one or more of several causes:

1. From wicked spirits. I imagine the devil does not care much to see the majority of cold-hearted people on their knees in public, for he knows they do it simply because it is proper and the fashion. But he hates to see one on his knees in secret, for that man means business, and, if he perseveres in faith, is bound to move God and all Heaven in the interests he represents. So the devils oppose that man.



2. From the sluggishness of the body and mind, caused by sickness, loss of sleep, too much sleep, or overeating, which unduly taxes the digestive organs, clogs the blood, and dulls all the higher and nobler powers of the soul.

3. From a failure to respond quickly when we feel led by the Spirit to go to secret prayer. If; when we feel we should pray, we hesitate longer than is necessary and continue reading or talking when we could just as well be praying, the spirit of prayer will be quenched.

We should cultivate gladness at the thought of getting alone with Jesus in secret communion and prayer, as much as lovers expect pleasure and joy in each other's society.

We should promptly respond to the inward call to prayer. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," and, "Keep our bodies under, lest after having preached to others we ourselves should be castaways."

Jesus said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1); and Paul said, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17).

One dare-devil, praying, believing man can get the victory for a whole city or nation sometimes. Elijah did on Mount Carmel. Moses did for backsliding Israel; Daniel did in Babylon. But if a number of people can be led to pray in this way, the victory will be all the more sweeping. Let no one imagine, in a wicked heart of unbelief; that God is grudging and unwilling to answer prayer. He is more willing to answer those whose hearts are right with Him than parents are to give bread to their children. When Abraham prayed for Sodom, God answered till Abraham stopped asking (Gen. xviii. 22-33). And is He not often angry with us because we ask so timidly, and for such small blessings, just as the prophet Elisha was angry with the king who smote but thrice when he should have smitten five or six times? (2 Kings xiii. 18, 19).

Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace and ask largely, that our joy may be full! (Heb. iv. 16).