

EXCERPTS FROM

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THE LINK

North Road Chapel (Evangelical)

BIDEFORD

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THE MINISTRY OF PRAYER

It is probably no exaggeration to say that the grey area in the lives of most Christians is their prayer life. If we are honest, most of us will have to confess that true earnest persistent prayer does not come easy; yet, prayer is not only one of the outstanding privileges of the Christian life, it is a glorious and mighty ministry in which we should all be engaged in an ever-increasing degree.

Prayer is the appointed means of actual access to God - for the soul to draw near unto his Maker, and the believer to commune with his Redeemer.

It is the channel through which we seek all needed supplies of both spiritual grace and temporal mercies. Prayer is also a ministry in which all are engaged and for which all are responsible. The brother or sister shut away and unable to attend the place of public worship still functions at the throne of grace, even though his movements may be somewhat restricted.

The exercise of prayer is of paramount importance if we are to maintain our spiritual health, and yet at times we find it so difficult. It is in such vital areas of the Christian life that Satan is most concerned: hence, the need for perseverance and development in this field. God in his Word gives us very such help and direction as to how to approach this matter.

SECLUSION "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Matt.6 v.6)

If we would avail ourselves of the new and living way which the Redeemer has consecrated for us, His people, and enter into the Holiest, and commune with the Holy, Eternal, Majesty, then we must retire from distraction, shutting out the sights and sounds which take our minds off the Holy One. Cf. (Heb. 10 v.19-20 and Chap.11 v.6). The shut door teaches even more than physical isolation, it signifies quieting of the mind, the calming of the spirit, the gathering together of our wandering thoughts. The unchanging requirement of the Eternal is that we "Be still and -know that I am God" (Ps. 46 v.10). The atmosphere in the world which so often induces

turmoil and disturbance in our minds, - is fatal to a spirit of communion. Did not Elijah withdraw to the top of Carmel (1 Kings 18 v.42) and our Lord himself to a mountain (Luke 6 v.12). for the very purpose of solitude.

REVERENCE How grievously have the words - "Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace" (Heb. 4 v.16) - been perverted. True it is that we have access by this "new and living way", but it is also true that we should come with "reverence and godly fear", and the scriptures abound with instructions and examples as to our approach. Never must we suppose that because, through His grace, we have been "made kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 5 v.10) that we can address the Sovereign of the universe as though we were His equals.

The classic example of reverence in prayer is to be found in John's gospel Chapter 17. where the Saviour, the One who was indeed equal with the Father, nevertheless, whilst on earth prayed thus: "Holy Father", "Righteous Father". How far removed is this from the YOU and YOUR approach of the present generation. (The arguments in favour of this language are not valid, as is shown in an article elsewhere in this magazine). If sinless seraphim veil their faces in His Presence (Isaiah 6 v.2), then surely it becomes sinful man to be as Abraham who said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes". (Gen.18 v.27).

When Daniel was given a vision of the glory of God, he said "there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption" (Dan. 10 v.8). If Moses was required by God even to take the shoes from off his feet ere he approached the burning bush, in which the Shekinah glory appeared, then we too must conduct ourselves in a becoming way: such as befits the Eternal Majesty.

FERVENCY A Christian must be earnest and ardent in the exercise of prayer. This does not mean shouting or emotional display. God grants our requests for Christ's sake, nevertheless, our praying should not be formal and cold; rather should it glow with warmth and be marked by deep reality and intensity of spirit.

Is not importunity one of the marks of true Biblical praying? Seeking, knocking, crying, striving, are all terms

used in the scriptures in connection with praying. Remember, Jacob wrestled with the Lord (Gen.32 v.24). David panted after God as he poured out his soul (Ps.38 v.10). Elijah prayed earnestly (James 5 v.17). Of Christ it is written "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5 v.7). "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22 v.44).

Half-hearted mechanical asking is not true prayer: it is "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much" (James 5 v.16).

WATCHFULNESS How often do we pray, yet are not expectant for God's answer. We are to ask in faith believing we shall receive: "Continue in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving (Col.4. v.2).

PERSEVERANCE This is probably the most difficult aspect of prayer: but the instruction is "pray without ceasing" (1Thess. 5 v.17). "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching there unto with all perseverance..." (Eph.6 v.18). Answers to prayer can be immediate, but more often they come after long, persistent and often agonizing prayer. Such was the persistency of Jacob who at length said "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" (Gen.32 v.26). The mode of the Psalmist's praying was, "I waited patiently for the Lord: and he inclined unto me and heard my cry." (Ps. 40 v 1). "Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isaiah 62 v.6-7).

Why we might ask, does our God require this perseverance of us? why, if it is His will, does He not answer immediately? It is for our good that He waits; it is for our development and that submission to His Holy will may be wrought in us. We can claim nothing from God; all is of grace, and we must wait His time and way. "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ... blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isaiah 30 v.18).

As we in patience wait for Him and continue instant in prayer, so in His good time will He turn toward us in His infinite grace and goodness and say "Great is thy faith, be it unto thee as thou wilt" (Matt.15 v.28).

"THOU", "THY", "THEE"

The farther translators depart from the style of the document they are translating, the more complicated does their problem become, the greater will be the variety in the translations proposed, and the greater will be the danger of the translation becoming an interpretation. Doctor Burrows lays down what we believe to be the true governing principle for all accurate translating, when he says "the translator can only follow his text, leaving it for the commentator to explain". Many of the difficulties in which our revisers have become involved are the direct result of their failure to observe this fundamental rule. An especially important example of this, because of its doctrinal implications, is their rendering of the second person singular where it occurs in the Greek text.

It is a well-known fact that in contemporary English the forms "thou," "thy," "thine" have almost disappeared from secular use. They are largely restricted to the language of religious devotion, in which they are constantly employed, and which is largely formed by and owes its peculiarities to the AV. Consequently, it is often asserted or assumed that the usage of AV represents the speech of 300 years ago, and that now three centuries later it should be changed to accord with contemporary usage. But this is not at all a correct statement of the problem.

The important fact is this. The usage of AV is not the ordinary usage of the early seventeenth century: it is the Biblical usage based on the style of the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures. The second part of this statement needs no proof and will be challenged by no one. It is undeniable that where the Hebrew and Greek use the singular of the pronoun the AV regularly uses the singular, and where they use the plural it uses the plural. Even in Deut. where in his addresses, and apparently for rhetorical and pedagogical effect, Moses often changes suddenly and seemingly arbitrarily from singular to plural or from plural to singular, the AV reproduces the style of the text with fidelity. That is to say, the usage of the AV is strictly Biblical.

The first part of the above statement is not quite so easy to prove, but there is abundant evidence to support it. According to the late Professor Lounsbury of Yale, the substitution of the plural for the singular in addressing an

individual "made its appearance in the English language toward the close of the thirteenth century ... In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the use of the plural steadily increased, and in the sixteenth century It became the standard form of polite conversation ... For some two centuries it may be said that in a general way they (the "thou" and "thee") were employed to denote affection or inferiority or contempt." If the correctness of Lounsbury's statement is admitted, it is quite obvious that AV did not attempt to make the usage of the Hebrew and Greek conform to the usage of the Elizabethan or early Jacobean period. It simply followed the Biblical usage, despite the fact that for some three hundred years the trend had been increasingly away from it.

The following words of A.T. Robertson are worthy of careful pondering in this connection: "No one today speaks the English of the King James Version, or ever did for that matter, for, though like Shakespeare, it is the pure Anglo-Saxon, yet unlike Shakespeare, it reproduces to a remarkable extent the spirit and language of the Bible." This is its great claim to distinction, the reason it has endeared itself to multitudes of English-speaking people for more than three centuries: it reproduces to a remarkable extent the spirit and language of the Bible.

The real issue seems clearly to be whether or not we are prepared to accept the singular of the pronoun entirely. There are two main objections to this. The first is that it gives up the attempt to retain in English a distinction which, is clearly drawn in Hebrew and Greek. The second is that it means that "thou" and "thee" and "thy" are to pass completely out of twentieth century English. The singular form of the pronoun is not even to be tolerated in the language of devotion and worship. It is to disappear from the Lord's Prayer (cf. "Your name be revered! Your kingdom come!"). Scores of our most familiar and best-loved hymns will then have to be discarded or more or less drastically edited; and the liturgies of the liturgical churches (e.g. the Te Deum) will need a thorough overhauling, if such a radical change is to be carried through successfully. If such a change is to be made, this is unquestionably the simplest and easiest way to make it. We do not believe the change is necessary'. Nor do we believe that the vast majority of Christian people desire it or will accept it.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF J. C. Ryle

"Our lot is cast in an age when truth is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to toleration, charity, and peace, falsely so-called."

"The Christian who would not be continually running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his channel well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions."

"Resist false doctrine, and not be carried away by fashion and bad example. Let us not flinch, because all around us are swept away like geese in a flood, before a torrent of semi-popery. Let us be firm and stand our ground."

"Search the Scriptures; ignorance of the Bible is the root of all error. Knowledge of the Bible is the antidote against modern heresies."

"Our noble Reformers bought the truth at the price of their own blood, and handed it down to us. Let us take heed that we do not basely sell it for a mess of pottage, under the specious names of unity and peace."

"Peace without truth is a false peace; it is the very peace of the devil."

To maintain PURE TRUTH in the church, men should be ready to make any sacrifice. To hazard peace, to risk dissension, and run the charge of division. They should no more tolerate false doctrine than they would tolerate sin."

"The dumb dog, and the sleeping shepherd are the best allies of the wolf, the thief, and the robber."

"Those who preach must cry aloud and spare not, and allow no false tenderness to make them hold their peace about the heresies of the day."

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

The Annual Church Meeting was held on Thursday 15th November. Following the hymn "Jesus Lord we look to Thee, let us in Thy name agree" Mr. Bennett led us in prayer and thanksgiving. This was followed by the reading of Psalm 133, and Mr. Molland gave a short address on "The duties of the members of a church to each other". He also pointed out from the scriptures that not only was it a tremendous comfort and blessing to be a member in a "SPIRITUAL FAMILY", but it was also a very responsible and serious matter, and that in these things we should be diligent and vigilant.

Mr. Bridge, in presenting the accounts for the year ended 30th September 1979, said the general position was satisfactory having in mind the inflationary trend and that there was much to thank God for in suppling our needs for another year.

The work of regular visitation of the sick and aged has been the particular responsibility of Mr. Bennett and Mr. Potter. Mr. Bennett in giving a brief report spoke of the importance of the personal aspect of this ministry and how they had been encouraged in it. He also spoke of the house-to-house visitation which is undertaken every two months to those in the vicinity of the Chapel, this being coupled with the distribution of leaflets giving particulars of the church services and a short Christian message.

Referring to the Bookstall, this is now established and one is encouraged by the interest shown, this being reflected in the amount of books sold. It is our aim to continue to make available books and literature which will edify and stimulate interest in all matters which are vital in our Christian pilgrimage.

In addition to books, cassette tapes are now available in respect of sermons which have been preached recently on "The Attributes of God" and also on the current series on "The Life of David" and "The Atonement". These may be purchased at £1. per cassette or may be had on loan. We believe that this can be of real practical help to many, and although it is early days, we have every reason to think this is a worth-while project.

Special meetings and visiting preachers for the current period are as follows:

Thursday	7 th Feb	Mr.M.J.Whyte	London City Mission
Thursday	6 th March	Mr.J.M.Cudmore	Soldiers & Airmen Scripture Readers' Association

Please Note: As is our usual practice, on the first Thursday of the New Year (3rd January), the whole of the service will be devoted to prayer, and held in the main chapel.

"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" Phil.3.20

"... as Caesar wished he had such soldiers as were in the time of Alexander the Great, so we may wish we had such saints as were in the primitive times, so just were they in their dealings, so decent in their attire, so true in their promises, so devout in their religion, so unblameable in their lives that they were living sermons, walking Bibles, real pictures of Christ, and helped to keep up the credit of godliness in the world."

Thomas Watson