

# THE PRAYER LIFE

## Isaiah 59:9-17 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> “Therefore justice is far from us, And righteousness does not overtake us; We hope for light, but behold, darkness, For brightness, but we walk in gloom.

<sup>10</sup> We grope along the wall like blind men, We grope like those who have no eyes; We stumble at midday as in the twilight, Among those who are vigorous *we are* like dead men.

<sup>11</sup> All of us growl like bears, And moan sadly like doves; We hope for justice, but there is none, For salvation, *but* it is far from us.

<sup>12</sup> For our transgressions are multiplied before You, And our sins testify against us; For our transgressions are with us, And we know our iniquities:

<sup>13</sup> Transgressing and denying the LORD, And turning away from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, Conceiving *in* and uttering from the heart lying words.

<sup>14</sup> Justice is turned back, And righteousness stands far away; For truth has stumbled in the street, And uprightness cannot enter.

<sup>15</sup> Yes, truth is lacking; And he who turns aside from evil makes himself a prey. Now the LORD saw, And it was displeasing in His sight that there was no justice.

<sup>16</sup> And He saw that there was no man, And was astonished that there was no one to intercede; Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, And His righteousness upheld Him.

<sup>17</sup> He put on righteousness like a breastplate, And a helmet of salvation on His head; And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.”

## A witness from America

In 1898, there were two members of the Presbytery in New York who attended the Northfield Conference for the deepening of the spiritual life. They returned to their work with the fire of a new enthusiasm. They endeavored to bring about a revival in the entire Presbytery. In a meeting which they held, the chairman was guided to ask the brethren a question concerning their prayer life: “Brethren,” said he, “let us today make confession before God and each other. It will do us good. Will everyone who spends half an hour every day with God in connection with his work hold up a hand?” One hand was held up. He made a further request: “All who thus spend fifteen minutes hold up a hand.” Not half of the hands were held up. Then he said: “Prayer, the working power of the Church of Christ, and half of the workers make hardly any use of it! All who spend five minutes hold up hands.” All hands went up. But one man came later with the confession that he was not quite sure if he spent five minutes in prayer every day. “It is,” said he, “a terrible revelation of how little time I spend with God.” —**Andrew Murray**

## The cause of prayerlessness.

In an elder's prayer meeting, a brother put the question: "What, then, is the cause of so much prayerlessness? Is it not unbelief?"

The answer was: "Certainly; but then comes the question what is the cause of that unbelief?" When the disciples asked the Lord Jesus: "Why could we not drive it out?" His answer was: "Because of the littleness of your faith [unbelief.]" He went further and said: ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." ([Matthew 17:19-21](#)).

### [Matthew 17:19-21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?"

<sup>20</sup> And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you."

<sup>21</sup> ["But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."]

If the life is not one of self-denial—of fasting—that is, letting the world go; of prayer—that is, laying hold of heaven, faith cannot be exercised. A life lived according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit—it is in this that we find the origin of the prayerlessness of which we complain. As we came out of the meeting a brother said to me: "That is the whole difficulty; we wish to pray in the Spirit and at the same time walk after the flesh, and this is impossible."

If one is sick and desires healing, it is of prime importance that the true cause of the sickness be discovered. This is always the first step toward recovery. If the particular cause is not recognized, and attention is directed to subordinate causes, or to supposed but not real causes, healing is out of the question. In like manner, it is of the utmost importance for us to obtain a correct insight into the cause of the sad condition of deadness and failure in prayer in the inner chamber, which should be such a blessed place for us. Let us seek to realize fully what is the root of this evil.

Scripture teaches us that there are but **two conditions** possible for the Christian. **One** is a walk according to "**the Spirit**", the other a walk according to "**the flesh.**" These two powers are in irreconcilable conflict with each other. So it comes to pass, in the case of the majority of Christians, that, while we thank God that they are born again through the Spirit and have received the life of God—yet their ordinary daily life is not lived according to the Spirit but according to "**the flesh.**"

Paul writes to the Galatians: "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" ([Galatians 3:3 NASB](#)). Their service lay in fleshly outward performances. They did not understand that where "**the flesh**" is permitted to influence their service of God, it soon results in open sin.

So he mentions not only grave sins as the work of “**the flesh**”, such as adultery, murder, drunkenness; but also the more ordinary sins of daily life—wrath, strife, variance; and he gives the exhortation: “**...walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh**”... “**If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit**” ([Galatians 5:16, 25 NASB](#)). The Spirit must be honored not only as the author of a new life but also as the leader and director of our entire walk. Otherwise we are what the apostle calls “**carnal.**”

The majority of Christians have little understanding of this matter. They have no real knowledge of the deep sinfulness and godlessness of that carnal nature which belongs to them and to which unconsciously they yield. “**For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh**” ([Romans 8:3 NASB](#))—in the cross of Christ. “**Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires**” ([Galatians 5:24 NASB](#)).

“**The flesh**” cannot be improved or sanctified. “**Because the [carnal] mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so**” ([Romans 8:7 NASB](#)).

There is no means of dealing with "the flesh" save as Christ dealt with it, bearing it to the cross. “**Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him...**” in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin”([Romans 6:6 NASB](#)); so we by faith also crucify it, and regard and treat it daily as an accursed thing that finds its rightful place on the accursed cross.