

SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER

NO. 798

A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out to a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”
Luke 6:12.

IF any man of woman born might have lived without prayer it was surely the Lord Jesus Christ. To us poor weak erring mortals, prayer is an absolute necessity; but it does not at first sight seem to be so to Him who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” In some parts of prayer our Lord Jesus Christ could take no share. As for instance, in that most important department, namely, personal confession of sin, He could take no portion. There were no slips in His outward life; there were no declensions in His inward heart. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors” is a very suitable prayer for Him to teach us, but He could not use it Himself. Nor had He any need to pray against inward corruptions, seeing He was born without them. We wrestle hard each day with original sin, but Jesus had no such adversaries. It is as much as we can do, with all the weapons of our holy war, to keep down the foes of our own household, but our Lord had no sinful nature to subdue. The inner life is a daily struggle with some of us, so that Paul’s exclamation, “O wretched man that I am!” is exceedingly familiar to our lips, but our Lord said truly of Himself, “The prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me.” Moreover, our Lord had not to seek some of the things which are exceedingly necessary to His disciples. One desire which I trust is ever present with us is for growth in divine grace and for advancement in the divine life; but our Lord was always perfect in holiness and love. I see not how there could have been any advancement in purity in Him; He was always the spotless lily of innocence, incomparable, faultless, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Our Lord had no need to make self-examination each night. When He retired for prayer, there would be no need to scan the actions of the day or to detect shortcomings and flaws; there would be no necessity to investigate secret motives to see whether He might not have been actuated by sinister principles. The deep wellsprings of His being were not of earth, but altogether divine; when He bowed His knee in the morning, He had no need to pray to be protected from sin during the day. He went forth to His daily labor without the infirmities which we bear within us, and was free from the tendencies to evil which we bear about us. Tempted He was in all points as we are, but the arrows which wound us glanced harmlessly from Him. Yet mark carefully, although our glorious Master did not require to pray in some of those respects in which it is most necessary to us, yet never was there a man who was more abundant in prayer and in supplication, nor One in whom prayer was exercised with so much vehemence and importunity. He was the greatest of preachers, but His prayers made even a deeper impression on His disciples than His sermons, for they did not say, “Lord, teach us to preach,” but they did exclaim, “Lord, teach us to pray.” They felt that He was Master of that heavenly art, and at His feet they desired to sit, that they might learn how to move heaven and earth with sacred wrestling. Brothers and sisters, since our sinless Lord was this mighty in prayer, does not His example say to us, with a voice irresistibly persuasive, “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation”? You are to be conformed to the image of Christ—be conformed in this respect, that you be men of prayer. You desire to know the secret of His power with men—seek to obtain His power with God. You wish to obtain the blessings which were so copiously bestowed upon Him—seek them where He sought them, find them where He found them. If you would adorn His doctrine and increase His kingdom, use the weapon of all-prayer which ensures victory to all who use it as the Captain did.

Although our Lord Jesus Christ was most constant in His perpetual devotions; yet devout men are used to set apart times for extraordinary supplication. A man, who does not pray regularly, is but a hypocrite when he pretends to pray specially. Who would care to live in a miser’s house that starved you

all the year round, except that now and then on a feast day he fed you daintily? We must not be miserly in prayer, neglecting it regularly, and only abounding in it on particular occasions when ostentation, rather than sincerity, may influence us. But even he who keeps a bounteous table sometimes spreads a more luxurious feast than at other times, and even so must we, if we habitually live near to God, select our extraordinary seasons in which the soul shall have her fill of fellowship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the text before us, has set us an example of extraordinary devotion, supplying us with all the details and minutiae of the exercise.

Notice *the place* which He selected for it. He sought the solitude of a mountain. He was so popular that He could not hope in any city or village to be free from innumerable followers; He was so great a benefactor that He could never be without sick folk entreating healing at His hands. He knew no leisure, no, not so much as to eat bread, and therefore, to obtain a little respite, He sought the hollow of some lofty hill where foot of man could not profane His loneliness. If you would draw near to God in an extraordinary manner, you must take care to be entirely undisturbed. I know not how it is, but if ever one desires to approach very near to God, there is sure to be a knock at the door, or some matter of urgent business, or some untoward circumstance to tempt us from our knees. Is it so, that Satan knows how soul-fattening retirement and devotion are, and therefore, if he can by any method stir up friend or foe to call us out of our closets, he will surely do so? Here our Lord was beyond call; the mountain was better than a closet with bolted doors. Far off was the din of the city, and the noise of those who clamored with their merchandise; neither the shout of triumph nor the wail of sorrow could reach Him there. Beloved friends, carefully seek, if you can, a perfect solitude, but if not, reach as near to it as you can, and as much as possible keep out the sound and thought of the outer world.

Did not our Lord resort to the mountain in order that He might be able to pray aloud? I cannot speak for others, but I often find it very helpful to myself to be able to speak aloud in private prayer. I do not doubt but that very spiritual minds can pray for a great length of time without the motion of the lips, but I think the most of us would often find it a spur and assistance if we could give utterance to our cries and sighs, no one being present to hear. We know that our Lord was accustomed to use strong cries and tears, and these it would not have been desirable for a human ear to listen to. In fact, His natural modesty would have put Him under a restraint; He therefore sought mountains far away, that He might, in His Father's presence, and in the presence of no one else; pour out His entire soul, groaning, struggling, wrestling, or rejoicing, as His spirit might be moved at the time.

Did He not also seek the mountain to avoid ostentation? If we pray to be seen of men, we shall have our reward, and a pitiful reward it will be—we shall have the admiration of shallow fools, and nothing more. If our objective in prayer is to obtain blessings from God, we must present our prayers unspoiled by human observation. Get alone with your God if you would move His arm. If you fast, appear not unto men to fast; if you plead personally with God, tell none of it; take care that this is a secret between God and your own soul—then shall your Father reward you openly. But if you gad about like a Pharisee, and sound your trumpet in the corner of the streets, you shall go where the Pharisee has gone—where hypocrites feel forever the wrath of God.

Jesus, therefore, to prevent interruption, to give Himself the opportunity of pouring out His whole soul, and to avoid ostentation, sought the mountain. What a grand oratory for the Son of God! What walls would have been so suitable? What room would have worthily housed so mighty an Intercessor? The Son of God most fittingly entered God's own glorious temple of nature when He would commune with heaven. Those giant hills, and the long shadows cast by the moonlight were alone worthy to be His companions. No pomp of gorgeous ceremony can possibly have equaled the glory of nature's midnight on the wild mountain's side where the stars, like the eyes of God, looked down upon the Worshipper, and the winds seemed as though they would bear the burden of His sighs and tears upon their willing wings. Samson, in the temple of the Philistines, moving the giant pillars, is a mere dwarf compared with Jesus of Nazareth moving heaven and earth, as He bows Himself alone in the great temple of Jehovah!

For purposes of extraordinary devotion, the time selected by our Master is also a lesson to us. He chose the silent hours of night. Now, it may so happen, that if we *literally* imitated Him, we might altogether miss our way, for, no doubt, He chose the night because it was most convenient, congenial, and in every way appropriate. To some of us the night might be most inappropriate and unsuitable; if so, we must by no means select it, but must follow our Lord in the spirit rather than in the letter. We should

give to heavenly things that part of the day in which we can be most quiet—those hours which we can most fairly allot to it without despoiling our other duties of their proper proportion of time. By day, our Savior was preaching; He could not cease from preaching even to spend the day in prayer. By day the multitude needed healing; our Lord would not suspend His benevolent work for His private communions. We are to take care never to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, but to balance and proportion our different forms of service, so that our life-work may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing. Usually, however, night will be the favored season for wrestling Jacobs. When every man had gone to his own home to rest, the Man of Nazareth had a right to seek His solace where best He could, and if sleep refreshed others, and prayer more fully refreshed Him, then by all means let Him pray. Against this not a dog shall move his tongue. Set apart for remarkably protracted intercession seasons which answer to this description, when the time is your own, not your employer, your own, not your families, not pilfered from family devotion, not abstracted from the public assembly or Sunday school, the time of quiet when all around you is in repose, the time congenial to solemnity, and the awe of a spirit hushed into reverent subjection, yet uplifted to rapt devotion. Such time, with many, may be the night, with others it may be the day; let sanctified common sense be your direction.

Again, our Lord sets us a good example in the matter of extraordinary seasons of devotion in *the protracted character of His prayer*. He continued all night in prayer. I do not think that we are bound to pray long as a general rule. I am afraid; however, there is no great need to make the remark, for most of Christians are short enough, if not far too short in private worship. By the aid of the Holy Spirit, it is possible to throw by holy energy and sacred zeal as much prayer into a few minutes as into many hours, for prevalent prayer is not measured by God by the yard or by the hour. Force is its standard rather than length. When the whole soul groans itself out in half-a-dozen sentences there may be more real devotion in them than in hours of mere wire drawing and word spinning. True prayer is the soul's mounting up to God, and if it can ride upon a cherub or the wings of the wind, so much the better, yet in extraordinary seasons, when the soul is thoroughly worked up to an eminent intensity of devotion, it is well to continue it for a protracted season. We know not that our Lord was vocally praying all the time, He may have paused to contemplate; He may have surveyed the whole compass of the field over which His prayer should extend, meditating upon the character of His God, recapitulating the precious promises, remembering the needs of His people, and thus arming Himself with arguments with which to return to wrestle and prevail.

How very few of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer, and yet what gifts we might have had for such asking! We little know what a night of prayer would do for us, its effect we can scarcely calculate. One night alone in prayer might make us new men, changed from poverty of soul to spiritual wealth, from trembling to triumph. We have an example of it in the life of Jacob. Previously the crafty shuffler, always bargaining and calculating, unlovely in almost every respect, yet one night in prayer turned the supplanter into a prevailing prince, and robed him with celestial grandeur. From that night he lives on the sacred page as one of the nobility of heaven. Could not we, at least now and then, in these weary earthbound years, hedge about a single night for such enriching traffic with the skies? What? Have we no sacred ambition? Are we deaf to the yearnings of divine love? Yet, my brothers and sisters, for wealth and for science, men will cheerfully quit their warm couches, and cannot we do it now and then for the love of God and the good of souls? Where is our zeal, our gratitude, our sincerity? I am ashamed while I thus upbraid both myself and you. May we often tarry at Jabbok, and cry with Jacob, as he grasped the angel—

*“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”*

Surely, brothers and sisters, if we have given whole days to folly, we can afford a space for heavenly wisdom. Time was when we gave whole nights to chambering and wantonness, to dancing and the world's revelry; we did not tire then; we were chiding the sun that he rose so soon, and wishing the hours would lag awhile that we might delight in wilder merriment, and perhaps deeper sin. Oh, why should we weary in heavenly employments? Why do we grow weary when asked to watch with our Lord? Up, sluggish heart, Jesus calls you! Rise and go forth to meet the heavenly friend in the place where He manifests Himself.

Jesus has further instructed us in the art of special devotion by *the manner of His prayer*. Notice He continued all night in prayer *to God—to God*. How much of our prayer is not prayer *to God* at all! It is nominally so, but it is really a muttering to the wind, a talking to the air, for the presence of God is not realized by the mind. “He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.” Do you know what it is, mentally, to lay hold upon the great unseen one, and to talk with Him as really as you talk to a friend whose hand you grip? How heavenly to speak right down into God’s ear, to pour your heart directly into God’s heart, feeling that you live in Him as the fish live in the sea, and that your every thought and word are discerned by Him. It is true pleading when the Lord is present to you, and you realize His presence, and speak under the power and influence of His divine overshadowing. That is to pray indeed, but to continue all night in such a frame of mind is wonderful to me, for I must confess, and I suppose it is your confession too, that if for a while I get near to God in prayer, yet distracting thoughts will intrude, the ravenous birds will come down upon the sacrifice, the noise of archers will disturb the songs at the place of drawing of water. How soon do we forget that we are speaking to God, and go on mechanically pumping up our desires, perhaps honestly uttering them, but forgetting to whom they are addressed! Oh, were He not a gracious God, the imperfection of our prayers would prevent so much as *one* of them ever reaching His ear; but He knows our frailty, and takes our prayers, not as what they are, but as what we mean them to be, and beholding them in Jesus Christ, He accepts both us and them in the Beloved. Let us learn from our Master to make our prayers distinctly and directly appeals to God. That gunner will do no service to the army who takes no aim, but is content as long as he does but fire; that vessel makes an unprofitable voyage which is not steered for a port, but is satisfied to sail here and there. We must direct our prayers to God, and maintain soul-fellowship with Him, or our devotion will become a nullity, a name for a thing which is not.

The Ethiopic translation reads, “In prayer *with God*.” Truly this is the highest order of prayer, and though the translation may be indefensible, the meaning is correct enough, for Jesus was eminently with God all night. To pray with God—do you know what that is? To be the echo of Jehovah’s voice! To desire the Lord’s desires, and long with His longings! This is a gracious condition to be in, when the heart is a tablet for the Lord to write upon, a coal blazing with celestial fire, a leaf driven with the heavenly wind! Oh, to be absorbed in the divine Will, having one’s whole mind swallowed up in the mind of God! This for a whole night would be blessed—this forever bliss itself.

Note too, that some have translated the passage, “in the prayer *of God*.” This is probably an incorrect translation, though Dr. Gill appears to endorse it, and it brings out a precious meaning. The most eminent things were in the Hebrew language ascribed to God, so that by it would be meant the noblest prayer, the most intense prayer, and the most vehement prayer, a prayer in which the whole man gathers up his full strength, and spends it in an agony before the eternal throne. Oh, to pray like that! The great, deep, vehement prayer of God! Brothers and sisters, I am afraid that as a rule in our prayer meetings, we are much too decorous, and even in our private prayers feel too much the power of formality. Oh, how I delight to listen to a brother who talks to God simply and from his heart; and I must confess I have no small liking to those rare old-fashioned Methodist prayers, which are now quite out of date. Our Methodist friends, for the most part, are getting too fine and respectable nowadays, too genteel to allow of prayers such as once made the walls to ring again. O for a revival of those glorious violent prayers which flew like hot shot against the battlements of heaven! O for more moving of the posts of the doors in vehemence—more thundering at the gates of mercy! I would sooner attend a prayer meeting where there were groans and cries all over the place, and cries and shouts of “Hallelujah!” than be in your polite assemblies where everything is dull as death, and decorous as the whitewashed sepulcher. O for more of the prayer of God, the whole body, soul and spirit working together, the whole man being stirred up to the highest pitch of intensity to wrestle with the Most High! Such, I have no doubt, was the prayer of Jesus on the cold mountain’s side.

Once more, we may learn from Jesus our Lord *the occasion* for special devotion. At the time when our Master continued all night in prayer He had been upbraided by the Pharisees. He fulfilled the resolve of the man after God’s own heart. “Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts.” So David did, and so did David’s Lord. The best answer to the slanderers of the ungodly is to be more constant in communion with God. Now, has it been so with any of you? Have you been persecuted or despised? Have you passed through any unusual form of

trial? Then celebrate an unusual season of prayer. This is the alarm bell which God rings. Hasten to Him for refuge. See to it that in this, your time of trouble, you betake yourself to the mercy seat with greater diligence.

Another reason is also noticed in the context. Christ had said to His disciples, "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." What He told them to do He would be sure to do Himself. He was just about to choose 12 apostles, and before that solemn act of ordination was performed, He sought power for them from the Most High. Who can tell what blessings were vouchsafed to the 12, in answer to that midnight intercession? If Satan fell like lightning from heaven, Jesus' prayer did it rather than the apostles' preaching. So, Christian, if you enter upon a new enterprise, or engage in something that is weightier and more extensive than what you have done before, select a night or a day, and set it apart for special communion with the Most High. If you are to pray, you must work, but if you are to work, you must also pray. If your prayer without your work will be hypocrisy, your work without your prayer will be presumption; so see to it that you are especially in supplication when especially in service. Balance your praying and working, and when you have reached the full tale of the one, do not diminish any of the other. To any man here who asks me, "When should I give myself especially to a protracted season of prayer?" I would answer, those occasions will frequently occur. You should certainly do this when about to join the church. The day of your public profession of faith should be altogether a consecrated day. I remember rising before the sun to seek my Master's presence on the day when I was buried with Him in baptism. It seemed to me a solemn ordinance not to be lightly undertaken, or flippantly carried out; a duty which, if done at all, should be performed in the most solemn and earnest manner. What is baptism without fellowship with Christ? To be buried in baptism, but not *with Him*, what is it? I would say to you young people who are joining the church now, mind you do not do it thoughtlessly, but in coming forward to enlist in the army of Christ, set apart a special season for self-examination and prayer. When you arrive at any great change of life do the same. Do not enter upon marriage, or upon emigration, or upon starting in business, without having sought a benediction from your Father who is in heaven. Any of these things may involve years of pain, or years of happiness to you; seek, therefore, to have the smile of God upon what you are about to do. Should you not also make your times of peculiar trial to be also times of special prayer? Wait upon God now that the child is dying. Wrestle with Him as David did about the child of Bathsheba. Draw near to God with fasting and prayer for a life that is especially dear to you if perhaps it may be preserved. And when the axe of death falls, and the tree beneath which you found shelter is cut down, then again, before the grave is closed, and the visitation is forgotten, draw near to God with sevenfold earnestness; and if you have been studying the Word of God, and cannot master a passage of Scripture, if some truth of revelation staggers you, now again is a time to set yourself like Daniel by prayer and supplication to find out what is the meaning of the Lord in the book of His prophecy. Indeed, such occasions will often occur to you who are spiritual, and I charge you by the living God, if you would be rich in divine grace, if you would make great advances in the divine life, if you would be eminent in the service of your Master, attend to these occasions, get an hour alone, an hour, yes, two hours a day if you can, and go not away from the Master's presence till your face is made to shine as once the face of Moses did, when he had been long upon the mount alone with God.

And now having thus brought out the example of Christ as well as I can, I want to make an application of the subject to this church which at this juncture has set apart a long season for special devotion. My words shall be few, but I earnestly desire that God may make them weighty to each member of this church.

A church, in order to have a blessing upon its special times of prayer, must abound in constant prayer at other times. I do not believe in spasmodic efforts for revival. There should be special occasions, but these should be the outgrowths of ordinary, active, healthy vigor. To neglect prayer all the year round, and then to celebrate a special week—is it much better than hypocrisy? To forsake the regular prayer meetings, but to come in crowds to a special one—what is this? Does it not betray superficiality or the effervescence of mere excitement? The church ought always to pray. prayer is to her what salt and bread are to our tables; No matter what the meal, we must have salt and bread there, and no matter what the church's engagements, she must have her regular constancy of prayer. I think that in London our churches err in not having morning and evening prayer daily in every case where the church

is large enough to maintain it. I am glad that our zealous brothers and sisters have here for some years maintained that constant prayer. I am thankful that in this church I cannot find much fault with you for non-attendance at the prayer meetings; there are some of you who never come, and I suppose you are such poor things that you are not of much good whether you come or stay away; but on the whole the most of the people who fear God in this place are abundant in their attendance at the means of divine grace, not to be blamed in any measure whatever for forsaking the assembling of themselves together, for they do draw near to God most regularly; and such prayer meetings have we every Monday, as I fear are not to be found anywhere else. But we must see to it that we keep this up, and moreover, those who are lax and lagging behind, must ask forgiveness of their heavenly Father, and endeavor henceforth to be more instant in supplication.

If, brothers and sisters, *men* ought always to pray and not to faint, much more should *Christians!* Jesus has sent His church into the world on the same errand upon which He Himself came, and that includes intercession. What if I say that the church is the world's priest? Creation is dumb, but the church is to find a mouth for it. Ungodly men are dumb of heart and will, but we who have the will and the power to intercede, dare not be silent. It is the church's privilege to pray. The door of divine grace is always open for her petitions, and they never return empty-handed. The veil was torn for her, the blood was sprinkled upon the altar for her, and God constantly invites her. Will she refuse the privilege which angels might envy her? Is not the church the bride of Christ? May she not go in unto her King at any time, at every time? Shall she allow the precious privilege to be unused? The church ever has need for prayer. There are always some in her midst who are declining, and frequently those who are falling into open sin. There are the lambs to be prayed for that they may be carried in Christ's bosom; there are the strong to be prayed for lest they grow presumptuous, and the weak lest they become despairing. In such a church as this is, if we kept up prayer meetings 24 hours in the day, 365 days in the year, we might never be without a special subject for supplication. Are we ever without the sick and the poor? Are we ever without the afflicted and the wavering? Are we ever without those who are seeking the conversion of their relatives, the reclaiming of backsliders, or the salvation of the depraved? No, with such congregations constantly gathering, with such a densely peopled neighborhood, with three million sinners around us, the most part of them lying dead in trespasses and sins, with such a country beginning to be benighted in superstition, over whom the darkness of Romanism is certainly gathering, in a world full of idols, full of cruelties, full of devilries—if the church does not pray, how shall she excuse her base neglect of the command of her loving Lord and covenant head? Let this church then be constant in supplication.

There should be frequent prayer meetings; these prayer meetings should be constantly attended by all. Every man and woman should make it a point of duty to come as often as possible to the place where prayer is known to be made. I wish that all throughout this country the prayers of God's churches were more earnest and constant. It might make a man weep tears of blood to think that in our Dissenting churches in so many cases the prayer meetings are so shamefully attended. I could indicate places that I know of, situated not many miles from where we now stand, where there are sometimes so few in attendance that there are scarcely praying men enough to keep up variety in the prayer meeting. I know towns where the prayer meeting is put off during the summer months, as if the devil would take off during the summer! I know of agricultural districts where they always put off prayer during the harvest, and I make some kind of excuse for them because the fruits of the earth must be gathered in, but I cannot understand large congregations where the prayer meeting and lecture are amalgamated because there will not be enough persons coming out to make two decent services in the week. And then they say that God does not bless the word. How can He bless the word? They say "Our conversions are not as numerous as they were," and they wonder how it is that we at the Tabernacle have so large an increase month by month. Do you wonder, brothers and sisters, that they have not a blessing when they do not seek it? Do you wonder that *we* have it when we do seek it? That is but a natural law of God's own government, that if men will not pray, they shall not have; and if men will pray, and pray vehemently, God will deny them nothing. He opens wide His hands and says, "Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you." I wish our denomination of Baptists, and other denominations of Christians were greater believers in prayer, for this mischief of Ritualism and Rationalism which is coming upon us, this curse which is withering our nation, this blight and mildew which are devouring the vineyard of the Lord, has

all come upon us because public prayer has almost ceased in the land as to its constancy, vehemence, and importunity! The Lord recover us from this sin!

But let the church be as diligent in prayer as she may on regular occasions, she ought still to have her special seasons. A thing which is regular and constant is sure to tire, so a little novelty is lawful; a little speciality may often tend to revive those who, otherwise, would be given to slumber. The church should have her special praying times because she has her special needs. There are times when spiritual epidemics fall upon churches and congregations. Sometimes it is the disease of pride, luxury, worldliness; at other times there are many falling into overt sin. Sometimes a vile form of vice will break out in the very midst of the church of God; at other times it is a heresy, or a doctrine carried to excess, or ill will, or a lack of brotherly love, or a general lethargy. At such special times of trial a church should have her extraordinary prayer meetings; as also when she is engaging in new enterprises, and is about to break up new ground, she needs fresh strength, and she should seek it. Let her call her members together, and with heart and soul let them commend the work to God. There should be special seasons of prayer because the Holy Spirit prompts us to it. "I believe in the Holy Spirit," is a sentence of the Creed, but how few really believe it? We seem to fancy that we have no motions of the Holy Spirit now among godly men as before, but I protest before the living God that such is not the case! The Holy Spirit at this day moves in those who are conversant with Him, and who are content to regard His gracious monitions; and He prompts us to special fellowship. We speak what we know, we declare what we have tasted and handled. The Holy Spirit, at certain times, prompts us to come together with peculiar earnestness and special desires. And then, if this suffices not, God has been pleased to set His seal to special seasons of prayer, therefore they ought to be held. There have been more ingatherings, I was about to say, under special efforts of a month than under ordinary efforts of 11 months. I am sure that, last year, we saw very clearly God's blessing upon us during the month of February. All the year round—my dear brothers, the deacons and elders can bear me out in it—there were always cases coming forward who said, "We were decided for Christ during the February meetings." God has always blessed the ministry here. I say it not to boast, but to the glory to God! I do not know of any sermon preached here without conversions, but yet those times of special meeting, those solemn assemblies, have always been a hundred-fold blessed of God, so that we have good reason to say we will continue them with renewed zeal, because the Lord is with them.

Now, brothers and sisters, I must have just a word with you upon another matter, namely, that *it should be our endeavor to bring power into these special meetings.* They are lawful; they are necessary; let us make them profitable. The way to do so is to draw near to God as Christ did. When He prayed, it was a son talking to his father, the Son of God talking with the Father God, and spilling out His heart in close communion. Come up tomorrow, my brothers and sisters, as sons and daughters of God to your Father; speak to Him as to one who is very near akin to you. There will be no lack of power if such is the case. Jesus drew near to God in His prayer as a priest, the High Priest making intercession for the people. You are all priests and kings unto God if you believe in Christ. Come with your breastplates on tomorrow. Come that you may intercede before the throne of God pleading the merit of the precious blood of Christ. There will be no flagging if everyone puts on his priestly miter. Jesus came before God with a burning zeal for His Father's glory. He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." My brothers and sisters, burn and blaze with love to God! Wait upon Him this afternoon, let that be a special private season of prayer, and ask Him to teach you how to love Him, show you how to reverence Him, and fire you with an intense ambition to spread abroad the savor of His name. Jesus Christ drew near to God in prayer with a wondrous love to the souls of men. Those tears of His were not for Him, but for others; those sighs and cries were not for His own pangs, but for the sorrows and the sins of men. Try to feel as Christ did; get a tender heart, an awakened conscience, quickened sympathies, and then if you come up to the house of God, the prayer meetings cannot be dull.

Seek to be bathed in the blood of Christ. Go, my brothers and sisters, to the wounds of Christ, and get lifeblood for your prayers. Sit down at Golgotha, and gaze upon your dying Lord, and hear Him say, "I have loved you, and given Myself for you." Then rise up with this resolve in your soul—

*"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss,"*

and go forward determined in His strength that nothing shall be lacking on your part to win for Him a kingdom, to gain for Him the hearts of the sons of men. If such shall be your state of mind, I am quite sure there will be power with God in prayer.

In closing, I shall say to you, we, above all the churches of this country, have a special need and a special encouragement to make our prayers things of power. For, in the first place, my brothers and sisters, what a multitude we now are! I often wish, though I beg to be pardoned of the Lord for it, that I had never occupied the position that I now fill because of its solemn responsibilities. I tell you, when I feel them, they crush me to the ground, and I can only manage to sustain my spirits by endeavoring to cast them upon the Lord. Why, 3,700 of you in church fellowship, or thereabouts, what can I do? Somebody complains that this sick one is not visited, or that that sinning one is not rebuked. How can I do it? How can one man, how can 20 men, how can a hundred men do the work? God knows I would, if I could, cut myself in pieces, that every piece might be active in His service. But how can we rule and minister fully in such a church as this? God has supplied my lack of service very wonderfully; still, there are things that make my heart ache day and night, as well as other matters that make my soul leap for joy. O pray for this great church! Where our power utterly fails us, let us implore the divine power to come in, that all may be kept right. We need to pray, for some have fallen. We have to confess it with a blush that crimson our cheek; some have fallen shamefully. O pray that others may not fall, and that the good men and women among us may be upheld by the power of God through faith unto salvation!

Think, my brothers and sisters, of the agencies which we are employing. If we do not pray for these, they will be so much wasted effort. Every week the sermons preached here are scattered by tens of thousands all over the globe—not in this language only, but in all the languages of Christendom are they read. Pray that God's blessing may rest upon the word which He has blessed before. Our sons, our young ministers whom this church has trained at her feet, are now to be counted by hundreds, scattered all over this country and elsewhere. Intercede for them! Forget not your own sons, turn not your hearts away from your own children whom God has sent forth to be heralds of the cross. In your Sunday schools, in your tract distributions, in your city missions, in your street preaching, in your offering of spiritual literature, in your orphanage—everywhere seek to glorify Christ. Do not, I beseech you forget the one thing necessary in all this. Do not be foolish builders, who will buy marble and precious stones at great cost, and then forget to lay the cornerstone securely. If it is worth while to serve God, it is worth while to pray that the service may be blessed. Why all this labor and cost? It is but offering to the Lord that which He cannot accept, unless by prayer you sanctify the whole. I think I see you as a church standing by the side of your altar with the victims slain, and the wood placed in order, but there is as yet still lacking the fire from on high. O intercede you Elijahs, men of like passions with us, but yet earnest men, upon whose hearts God has written prayer, intercede mightily! Intercede till at last the fire shall come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice and to make all go up like a pillar of smoke unto the Most High!

I cannot speak unto you as I would. The earnestness of my heart prevents my lips uttering what I feel, but if there are any bonds of love between us; above all, if there are any bonds of love between us and Christ, by His precious blood, by His death-sweat, by His holy life, and by His agonizing death, I do beseech you to strive together with us in your prayers that the Spirit of God may rest upon us, and to God shall be the glory. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 6:1-19.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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