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Substance of Prayer Meeting Address

given by our Pastor on October 15, 1974

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Lesson. 2 Thessalonians 3.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. 2 Thessalonians 3.1.

You are all conversant with this sacred Scripture. Very often when a deacon prays in the vestry on a Sunday morning before the service, he refers to this very Scripture. I felt confirmed when our deacon mentioned it almost at the close of his prayer. It is a most essential, blessed prayer, and it is under the heading of finality. "Finally, brethren, pray for us." I will just say personally, when you think of such a giant as the apostle Paul, and obviously he was what he was by the grace of God, and consider that he deeply felt his need of the prayers of the brethren because he knew it was the divine method of God; there would never be success in anything in the whole of the Church of God without the Spirit of grace and of supplications. You may take an able minister, a gracious individual, if he restrains or lacks prayer and gets into a prayerless frame, there is no unction, blessing, favour, benefit, fruit. So this is the divine, sacred method of God; prayer.

I will continue the first observation. If St Paul felt his tremendous need of the prayers of the brethren, it is certain we, who are cast in a much, much lesser mould, feel our need of the prayers of the brethren.

Now the word finally. We may take the exposition of it expressed by Mr Newton. It is a sad conclusion. He said;

"Long we either slight or doubt Him,

But, when all the means we try

Prove we cannot do without Him,

Then at last,- finally,- to Him we cry." (396) It is a rather sad commentary on our state if prayer is last of all. It should be first. Because of the perversion of human nature there is no soul travail until all else has failed and we know there is only One can do anything for us.

The apostle is here coming to the close of his life and ministry and

tribulation, and he is presenting to us a summary, as though he would say, "My friends, there is only one course, path, blessed door, holy ordinance, prayer. Finally." There is only ^{ONE} answer to everything. If I could look into your hearts, at the various sorrows, problems, difficulties, and the trials peculiar to your age, position, and so on, there is only ^{ONE} answer, that is, prayer. This is the very way the people of God enter heaven. Mr Stevens says in his hymn; "And when the soul prepares," - think of it: when death begins to touch you,

"And when the soul to march prepares,
Good hope sends out her fervent prayers,
And dies in peace with God." (242)

"Finally, brethren, pray." You will enter heaven by prayer. Wonderful this is.

So, "Finally, brethren." I shall address you as a family who are bound together in the Lord; who are one in Him; who love one another in Christ; who are in holy and everlasting union together in Christ; those who are in one another's hearts. How wonderful to have those who love you and you them, and this is everlasting. Brethren. "Finally, brethren, pray for us. It is obvious that those who fear God not only pray for themselves, but for those they really love, and for cases that are laid on their hearts. They pray for those who dispense the gospel to them because they hope to receive a blessing for their souls. It is wonderful to pray for one another.

"Finally, brethren, pray for us." Let me remind you that our blessed Lord Himself sought the seclusion of the mountain top. He would retire all night in prayer to His divine Father for strength to accomplish all He came to do. He was in prayer to His divine Father for us. "I pray for them." Think of it! and He intercedes for you now according to the pattern of His prayer in the days of His humility.

I want especially to name a few things on the last part of the verse. "that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." I thought just now of something that ^{was} often a reminiscence of the late George Stevens. When he was a [^]deacon of this Church he would survey the list of supply ministers who came here, and he said when Mr Ashdown from London came he thought he was such a giant that

he did not need prayer. He thought some needed a lot of prayer, but it was as if Mr Ashdown did not need it. I crave an interest in your prayers. So, "Finally, brethren, pray for us,"

What is the subject matter of the last part? I am concerned with the term 'have free course', so I will try to break it up for you and to expound the gospel which is likened to golden oil and flows through the golden pipe into the bowl. What is the objective of the Word of the Lord proclaimed in the ministry of the everlasting gospel? It is a heart, or hearts of hearers. 'That it may have free course' from the divine source through the medium of the ministry, and flow freely into the heart. You may ask, "Why is it that prayer is so important?" Because there are things intermediate that inhibit, clog, block, occlude, and prevent the free passage of the Word to the hearts. "That it may have free course, and be glorified." So for a moment or two let us take the metaphor and expound. A pipe, if it is furred will soon be blocked, like your blood vessels. Many people when they grow old, suffer from a type of disease where the arteries become blocked with fat, so the blood cannot flow through and they have a stroke. Whatever vessel it is there is always a possibility that there will be something to obstruct, and so the water or oil cannot flow through. Do you see the force of the word? "That the word of the Lord may have free course."- so there is nothing to inhibit, and it flows freely into your heart.

Let us think of it in three areas. Take the ministry itself. It is obvious from the words of Christ to His disciples there are things that even prevent the blessing of God on the ministry before it begins to flow from the lips of His servant. What does it mean? Take the case of the man who brought his son to the disciples to cast out the foul spirit, and they failed. They came to the Lord, and said; Lord, why did we fail? What prevented the healing blessing flowing from us to the poor lad?" The Lord gave them two answers. First, it was the sin of unbelief, and next, "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." So He shows that ordained ministers need the prevalency of living faith in the Person of Christ as they preach, and ~~mg~~ the tremendous necessity of prayer and fasting in the private lives of the Lord's servants. Mr J.K.Popham took delight in inviting various ministers into his study, and they would say to him:

"What is the secret of your ministry?" and he would say; "I invite you gentlemen into my study to show you on my knees by that chair is the secret of my ministry." A man can fail before he starts if he lacks that. If any should say; "Why pray, groan, plead before the Lord in secret?" It fails before it starts if there is no prayer. I remember Mr Popham saying to me; "That is the secret of my ministry: on my knees in my study." It is the same with you. If you complain of barrenness, go back to your house to see if you have got a secret. Is there a secret in your private life? Could you say; "That is the secret; that is why the Lord is pleased to favour me and to answer me. It is by that bed, or that chair." You will remember this.

So it needs in the minister himself the prevalency of faith, and prayer, and fasting. The third point is; Christ said to His disciples; "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace," they were ashamed. They had been arguing as to who should be the greatest. Jesus said to them; "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." They had been arguing as to who should be the greatest: this would prevent the blessing before they started.

Take the intermediate areas, - a Church, or a congregation gathered; it may be two hundred, three hundred, or fifty; all gathered. This is the intermediate area. The Word of the Lord is flowing forth; passing into the atmosphere of the Church. Those people themselves create the atmosphere. If you are in union and communion with Christ you will bring the atmosphere of Christ into the Sanctuary. If you have been playing with the world you will bring the atmosphere of the world into the Sanctuary. One person present in a service can spoil the atmosphere completely because they have brought an idol, a sin, the atmosphere of the world into the House of God. You will remember this. It is no good thinking you can jump out of the world into the House of God. What your life is before God in secret is the atmosphere you bring.....

"that the word of the Lord may have free course, - flow in." There are many things that obstruct: one is enmity. A poor sinner with no life, and with life, if they are left to a rebellious spirit, enmity fills their minds. That blocks; it is a barrier. Do you see what I mean?

I quote Mr Popham. He said; "The Lord can quickly make an enemy a friend by slaying enmity." If there is enmity the word cannot flow: it comes up against a wall. Unbelief is an occlusion, and hatred: lack of love; idolatry, carnality; pride; uncleanness; everything that grieves the Spirit. All that is grieving to the Holy Spirit of God is an occlusion. The word comes so far and it is blocked. Now do you see the importance of the subject?

"That the word of the Lord may have free course." It flows straight into your heart: all the furring of the pipe is cleared; all that obstructs, and there is free passage to your heart. What produces the free course of the word to the heart? Repentance: a needy sinner hungering and thirsting after righteousness; the prayer of the publican, and so on. This may help you: Dr Doddridge was discussing with a friend how the Lord's people die, and how he wished to die. He said;

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Thy kind arms I fall,
Be Thou my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All." (764)

Does this suit you? Where there is this; "God be merciful to me a sinner" the word flows straight into the heart: where there is living faith the word has free course into the heart. Where there is love to Christ, to the gospel, the heart is dilated, open, and the word flows freely to the heart. And where there is humility,- the Holy Ghost preparing the chamber of your breast for the Advent of Christ, the word has free course into your heart. You will look at the pipes in the house: one is blocked; and you say; "Lord, never let the pipe be blocked into my heart. Is it clogged? furred? Lord, purge it so there is free course into my heart." If the blood vessels are clogged the blood cannot get through.

"Lord, let the word have free course, and be glorified, that it may bear precious fruit, and we will give to God all the glory due to His holy Name. Amen.