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THE WORD OF GOD AND PRAYER

Jan. 13. I have already received blessing through Whitfield's life. His great success in preaching the Gospel is evidently to be ascribed, instrumentally, to his great prayerfulness, and his reading the Bible on his knees. I have known the importance of this for years; I have practised it a little, but far too little. I have had more communion with God to-day than I have had, at least generally, for some time past.

Jan. 14. Lord's day. I have continued reading Whitfield's life. God has again blessed it to my soul. I have spent several hours in prayer to-day, and read on my knees, and prayed for two hours over Psalm 63. God has blessed my soul much to-day. I have been fighting together with the armies of Jesus, though this is the tenth Lord's day since I have been kept from preaching, and though I have not assembled with the brethren here, on account of my head. My soul is now brought into that state, that I delight myself in the will of God, as it regards my health. Yea, I can now say, from my heart, I would not have this disease removed till God, through it, has bestowed the blessing for which it was sent. He has drawn out my soul much yesterday and to-day. Lord, continue thy goodness, and fill me with love! I long, more fully to glorify God; not so much by outward activity, as by inward conformity to the image of Jesus. What hinders God, to make of one, so vile as I am, another Whitfield? Surely, God could bestow as much grace upon me, as he did upon him. O, my Lord, draw me closer and closer to thyself, that I may run after thee!—I desire, if God should restore me again for the ministry of the word (and this I believe he will do soon, judging from the state into which he has now brought my soul, though I have been worse in health the last eight days, than for several weeks previously), that my preaching may be more than ever the result of earnest prayer and much meditation, and that I may so walk with God, that "out of my belly may flow rivers of living water." But alas! if the grace of God prevent not, one day more, and the rich blessings, which he has bestowed upon my soul yesterday and to-day, will all vanish; but again, if he favours me (and oh! may he do it), I shall go from strength to strength, and I and the saints in Bristol shall have abundant reason to praise God for this my illness.

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

Pierson opens this chapter by highlighting the dual nature of habit in showing what a person is like and making that person into what they will be. How does “habit” show us a person?

How does habit make a person?

If we replaced the word “habit” with “practice of the spiritual disciplines” would the same still be true? If so, how?

In early 1838, Müller and his family went to Trowbridge so that he might recover from an affliction that had been troubling him. While there, he began to read yet another biography that would have a profound impact on his life and ministry. What are the three biographies which influence and shape George Müller the most significantly? How did each affect him?

In reading Whitefield’s biography, Müller is struck by two traits of Whitefield’s. What are they?

What are some of the benefits that Pierson attaches to the practice of reading Scripture upon our knees?

Is this posture required of us when reading Scripture?

Does posture matter? Why or why not?

What advantage does Pierson note concerning praying with an open Bible?

To which phrase of our definition of prayer does this relate?

What advantage does Pierson attach to writing down our prayer requests?

As Pierson continues, he notes that: *“It was habits of life such as these, and not impulsive feelings and transient frames, that made this man of God what he was and strengthened him to lift up his hands in God’s name, and follow hard after Him and in Him rejoice.”* What lessons can we learn about sanctification and discipleship from this statement?

About this time, Müller notes his own lack of earnestness in prayer and fervency of spirit. Pierson calls attention to this situation in order to highlight what he calls the “paradox of *spiritual life*.” What is the paradox to which Pierson refers?

What are the various ways that Christians attempt to solve this seeming paradox? How ought we to view it?

Having been away from the ministry in Bristol for a significant period of time, Müller was able to return in and resume public services in May of 1838. Shortly thereafter, a significant financial trial was to befall the orphanage. This trial drove Müller to his Father in prayer. However, Müller did not simply offer up requests, he used arguments. Pierson notes: “*This method of holy argument—ordering our cause before God, as an advocate would plead before a judge—is not only almost a lost art, but to many it actually seems almost puerile. And yet it is abundantly taught and exemplified in Scripture.*” What is this “*method of holy argument*”? Is it a lost art in our day? Is it taught in Scripture? If so, where?

What portions of Scripture did Müller mine for such arguments?

How might you develop the habit of argumentation in prayer?

Below is the list of eleven arguments which Müller used in prayer to seek the help of his Father:

1. *That I set about the work for the glory of God, i. e., that there might be a visible proof, by God supplying, in answer to prayer only, the necessities of the Orphans, that he is the living God, and most willing, even in our day, to answer prayer; and that, therefore, he would be pleased to send supplies.*
2. *That God is the “Father of the fatherless,” and that he, therefore, as their Father, would be pleased to provide. Psalm 68:5.*
3. *That I have received the children in the name of Jesus, and that, therefore, he, in these children, has been received, and is fed, and is clothed; and that, therefore, he would be pleased to consider this. Mark 9:36, 37.*
4. *That the faith of many of the children of God has been strengthened by this work hitherto, and that, if God were to withhold the means for the future, those who are weak in faith would be staggered; whilst, by a continuance of means, their faith might still further be strengthened.*
5. *That many enemies would laugh, were the Lord to withhold supplies, and say, did we not foretell that this enthusiasm would come to nothing?*
6. *That many of the children of God, who are uninstructed, or in a carnal state, would feel themselves justified to continue their alliance with the world in the work of God, and to go on as heretofore, in their unscriptural proceedings respecting similar institutions, so far as the obtaining of means is concerned, if he were not to help me.*
7. *That the Lord would remember that I am his child, and that he would graciously pity me, and remember that I cannot provide for these children, and that therefore he would not allow this burden to lie upon me long without sending help.*
8. *That he would remember likewise my fellow-labourers in the work, who trust in him, but who would be tried were he to withhold supplies.*
9. *That he would remember that I should have to dismiss the children from under our Scriptural instruction to their former companions.*
10. *That he would show, that those were mistaken who said, that, at the first, supplies might be expected, while the thing was new, but not afterwards.*
11. *That I should not know, were he to withhold means, what construction I should put upon all the many most remarkable answers to prayer, which he had given me heretofore in connexion with this work, and which most fully have shown to me that it is of God.*

Müller, George. *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller*. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.

NEXT LESSON:

TRIALS OF FAITH AND HELPERS TO FAITH

In some small measure I now understand, experimentally, the meaning of that word, "how long" which so frequently occurs in the prayers of the Psalms. But even now, by the grace of God, my eyes are up unto him only, and I believe that he will send help.

Sept. 10. Monday morning. Neither Saturday nor yesterday had any money come in. It appeared to me now needful to take some steps on account of our need, i. e., to go to the Orphan-Houses, call the brethren and sisters together, (who, except brother T——, had never been informed about the state of the funds), state the case to them, see how much money was needed for the present, tell them that amidst all this trial of faith I still believed that God would help, and to pray with them. Especially, also, I meant to go for the sake of telling them that no more articles must be purchased than we have the means to pay for, but to let there be nothing lacking in any way to the children, as it regards nourishing food and needful clothing; for I would rather at once send them away than that they should lack. I meant to go for the sake also of seeing whether there were still articles remaining which had been sent for the purpose of being sold, or whether there were any articles really needless, that we might turn them into money. I felt that the matter was now come to a solemn crisis.—About half-past nine six-pence came in, which had been put anonymously into the box at Gideon Chapel. This money seemed to me like an earnest, that God would have compassion and send more. About ten, after I had returned from brother Craik, to whom I had unbosomed my heart again, whilst once more in prayer for help, a sister called who gave two sovereigns to my wife for the Orphans, stating that she had felt herself stirred up to come, and that she had delayed coming already too long. A few minutes after, when I went into the room where she was, she gave me two sovereigns more, and all this without knowing the least about our need. Thus the Lord most mercifully has sent us a little help, to the great encouragement of my faith. A few minutes after I was called on for money from the Infant-Orphan-House, to which I sent 2l., and 1l. 0s. 6d. to the Boys'-Orphan-House, and 1l. to the Girls'-Orphan-House.

Müller, George. A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller. Vol. 1. London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1860. Print.