

Keep on Praying

#0700

Study given by W.D. Frazee—May 24, 1964

Two different artists were given the opportunity to paint a picture. The subject was peace.

One of them painted a beautiful meadow scene with cows grazing. There was a little stream winding through the meadow. Everything was lovely and peaceful. That was what the picture was supposed to be.

The other artist painted a picture of a mountain cataract; a gorge. The water was leaping from rock to rock. There was a tempest in the dark sky. On a branch of a tree which hung out over the stream a bird had built a nest, and the little bird was sitting there. That was peace.

Which kind of peace do you have? Is everything around you peaceful like the cows grazing in the meadow? There is nothing wrong with that, and I hope all of you have that experience at times where everything around is beautiful and lovely. If we will watch for those times, they usually come. But Jesus tells us something that is more like the second picture:

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” John 16:33.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” John 14:27.

I suppose that nearly all here have tasted of this peace, and I suppose that nearly all would like to have some more. Well, let's have some more. You and I individually, and as a part of the group we are connected with, as a part of God's church, have a glorious opportunity just ahead if we will learn this lesson.

As I watch the surging of the billows, as I come in contact from day to day with the trials and problems of human beings, on this campus and off this campus, I am persuaded that among the many lessons God is seeking to teach us perhaps the greatest one is to have peace in the midst of problems; to know our Lord when we know nothing else.

If we can learn that, do you know what the reward is? The reward is not to go to heaven where all is peace. The reward is to be in the providence of God where many others need to learn that lesson. In other words, to be confronted with problems and trials and difficulties. David sighed, “Oh that I had wings like a dove;

then would I fly away and be at rest.” He may have sung that song when he was down in the cave at Adullam. We are told that when he was fleeing from Saul and found that mountain hideout, everyone who was discontented and everyone that was in debt and everyone that was in distress came to him until he had four hundred people. Were you ever surrounded with four hundred discontented, debt-ridden, distressed people? David was. But thank God he had learned where his strength was, and he sang to them songs of courage and faith.

He sang to himself too. He had to. But when David came to the throne, out of those four hundred came the leaders of the kingdom.

Instead of dreaming of what we would do if we could only have the kind of facilities we wish we had, and the kind of helpers we wish we had, and the amount of help we wish we had, and the size of problems we wish we had, let us rejoice that our heavenly Father has a plan of giving us peace and rest and courage in the midst of need of all kinds.

I want to bring to you some simple things on how we may do this. The first thing is to keep praying.

“And He spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” Luke 18:1.

What should men do? Pray. When? Always. And what should they not do? Faint. Who said this? Jesus. If we faint we won't pray. But if we pray we won't faint. That is the beauty of it. Let's keep praying.

After that great day when the fire fell on Mount Carmel Elijah recognized that the time had come for rain after three and a half years of drought. He went up to the top of the mountain to talk with God about it. He prayed and prayed earnestly. What happened? Nothing. He prayed again and what happened? Nothing. He prayed again and what happened? Nothing. That kept on over and over again. Finally, after he had prayed seven times he saw a little cloud. Notice this comment:

“I asked the angel why there was no more faith and power in Israel. He said, ‘Ye let go of the arm of the Lord too soon. Press your petitions to the throne, and hold on by strong faith. The promises are sure. Believe ye receive the things ye ask for, and ye shall have them.’ I was then pointed to Elijah” *Early Writings*, page 73.

Elijah is one of the examples of persevering prayer. He not only prayed, but he kept on praying, and finally the Lord gave him the answer.

We must keep on believing.

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” Mark 11:24.

When are you to believe? When you pray. Well, if you pray more than once, you should believe more than once. Is that right? As long as you keep on praying you are to keep on believing. Believing what? Believe that you will receive the things you ask for. That takes faith.

“And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God”
Mark 11:22.

Notice how important it is to keep on believing:

“But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” James 1:6-7.

So even if we pray, we don't receive unless we believe and keep on believing. Here is the interesting thing about it. You can see that the man who doubts becomes confirmed in his doubts. He may pray, but he doesn't know whether he will get it or not.

As time goes on, instead of faith strengthening, doubt strengthens. He does not get what he prays for because he does not believe. That confirms him in his unbelief. He says, I prayed, but nothing happened. I just wondered if it would happen or not. Now I am sure it doesn't work for me.

Does it work for him? No. Why? Because he did not carry out the full directions. Believing is just as important as praying. God says, “For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.”

What does he get? A zero. I used to hear it called a goose egg. That is what the man gets who prays and does not believe, and does not keep on praying and keep on believing.

You say, How can you believe when you keep on praying and don't get it? How can you believe that God hears and will answer?

You can, but only by faith. Faith is believing what we can't see or feel or hear; believing it just because God says it.

It is interesting how we do that all the time with other things. I see people writing out orders to Sears and sending money. They do not lie awake all night until finally it comes in the mail. They do not say Oh, I didn't know if I would get it, but it has come at last. No. Usually, once the order is made and the money put into the envelope and mailed, people do not worry about it. They get that off their mind and go off to some other business. In a few days here it comes. They expect it.

Isn't it strange to expect what men promise to do and wonder whether God will keep His promise? God has made faith a condition of receiving. There is the difference. With Sears we can write out an order and put the money in an envelope and send it off. One order brings one answer. But God has not arranged it that way

in this matter of praying. Sometimes it takes many prayers. It took seven with Elijah. Sometimes it takes more than seven, sometimes less. Since we understand that we will keep on praying and keep on believing.

“I saw that if we do not feel immediate answers to our prayers, we should hold fast our faith, not allowing distrust to come in, for that will separate us from God. If our faith wavers, we shall receive nothing from Him”
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, page 121.

“Every saint who comes to God with a true heart, and sends his honest petitions to Him in faith, will have his prayers answered. Your faith must not let go of the promises of God, if you do not see or feel the immediate answer to your prayers. Be not afraid to trust God. Rely upon His sure promise: ‘Ask, and ye shall receive.’” *Ibid*, page 120.

I think that is wonderful. Number one is keep on praying. Number two is keep on believing. Number three is keep expressing faith.

Jesus had been up on the mount of transfiguration with three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John. They came down in the early morning and there were the other nine disciples trying to cast out a devil that was in a poor, sick boy. The father was pleading with them to do something, and they were not able to do it.

The father came to Jesus. Jesus asked him questions, and the father gave what we call a case history. He told the experience of this boy, and finally said:

“And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us” Mark 9:22.

Did he pray? Yes, he prayed, but he put an “if” in his prayer.

“Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” Mark 9:23-24.

He not only had faith at that moment, but he expressed it. And everything hung on it. He was wanting to make his faith dependent upon Christ's answer. In other words, If you can heal my boy, then I know you will do something.

Jesus told him it was the other way around. Instead of Jesus doing first and then him believing, he must first believe and then Jesus would do something.

He saw the lesson, and thank God he accepted it. He put his will on the side of faith and action, and expressed his belief. “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

There is something wonderful about this. He was a bit shaky. He wasn't one hundred percent convinced. But thank God, he was fifty-one percent convinced, and he put his will on the side of faith and expressed it.

Jesus will help you just the same as He helped that poor, trembling father. You do not have to wait until you have the faith of Elijah. You can have the faith of this poor man. One moment he was saying if and the next moment his faith laid hold of the promise of Jesus, and he got help. So not only have faith but express it. I want you to see how vital this is.

“That if thou shall confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shall be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” Romans 10:9-10.

The heart here is the mind. The mind is what you believe with. But what do you use to do the next thing? The mouth. How hard this is for some people. Plenty of people can talk about recipes or automobiles or farming or cooking or business or music or children or recreation, and on and on. But when it comes to this subject they are so reticent.

Isn't it wonderful that we can train the mouth in this matter? Yes, we can train the mouth. Back of the mouth is what? The heart, the mind. And with the heart, the mind, the man believeth. With the mouth confession is made. So not only believe, but express it. Take every opportunity to express faith. Every chance you get to confess Christ and express faith, do it. And when you get an opportunity to express faith, don't talk doubt. Talk faith. That is what brings salvation to you and others.

Doubt doesn't do anything. It doesn't help anyone but the Devil, and you don't want to help him.

The first point is keep praying. The second point is keep believing. The third point is express it to God, to yourself, and to others. The fourth point is never allow the opposite of that. Never allow your mind to think doubts, or your mouth to express it. Don't do it. Here is my prize reference on this:

“Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless discouraged way. If you do you will lose much” *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 147.

Do you have control of yourself? The inference here is you should. The great privilege of the Christian is to have self-control. Suppose it was someone you had charge of. Suppose it was your 6 year old child. He is starting to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. Can you stop him? You better. You are his father and mother, and he is at an age where you are responsible for it.

This says not to allow him to do it. What would you say about a parent who would say they can't do anything with him? That is the way a lot of people are doing

about themselves. Perhaps there are some people here that if I would give them a change would stand up and say, That is what is the matter with me. I am always saying what I should not. I am talking doubt when I should not.

Do not say that. It is more of the same. Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way. Never.

As one of my teachers at the medical college used to say, “Never is not very often.”

Right here is where someone is going to get some help. Never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way, even if you are down in the belly of a whale, and it is your own fault that you got there.

Do what Jonah did. He started praying to God. What happened? He got out. He could have stayed down there and perished in discouragement. Yes, he could have. But he prayed his way out. God heard from His heavenly temple. And you can get out of any discouragement your soul ever gets into if you will pray, believe, keep on praying, keep on believing, express faith, and never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way.

You might have to stop yourself in the middle of a sentence, human nature being what is. You have to do that way with children sometimes. You have to say, No. And if the child is well trained he stops right in the middle of the sentence.

Can you train your tongue? Here is the good news. If you stop it in the middle of the sentence, pretty soon the sentence will never start. That is the way the mind works.

If you catch your tongue talking discouragement, say, “Wait a minute. Did you get permission? I can't allow you to talk that way. The One who is in charge of me put me in charge of you, and He told me to never allow you to do this, and you must not do it. Stop right now.”

Here is a marvelous promise, and I want you to see three little words, each only one syllable. This was the last week of Jesus' life before the crucifixion. He cursed the fig tree that had no fruit. As they went by the next day the disciples marveled that the fig tree was already withered.

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”
Matthew 21:21.

Somebody says, I know someone who prayed for something and nothing happened.

Stop and think for a moment. Did you ever see one of these satellites they have been putting up that go around the earth? Suppose I come and you tell me about one of those satellites. I say I don't believe there is much to that. Think of all the tries they made and never produced anything. Think of all the times they tried to shoot something up there and it never even got off the earth. And think of the ones that got part way up and fell back. I don't think there is anything much to it.

What would you think of me if I talked that way? You would say I was foolish and unreasonable. The truth of the matter is that they are up there day after day and night after night circling around the earth. How many do they have up there now. I lost track. And they intend to put some more up. Every once in a while we hear about another one. Either the Russians have sent one up or the United States has sent one up. And can the seeming failures be explained scientifically? Sure. Something broke or this and that was not done, and they have learned and keep right on to success.

Are you going to let somebody's seeming failure in the prayer and faith experience discourage you from something which has been proved true by Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and Samuel and Peter and Paul and Martin Luther and Joseph Bates, and millions of others? Oh, let's talk what? Faith. And never allow yourself to talk in a hopeless, discouraged way.

Jesus says if you have faith, doubt not. Don't forget that. Let me tell you about a cousin to doubt. I will get closer than that. It is a brother or sister to doubt.

“Do all things without murmuring and disputing”
Philippians 2:14.

Murmuring is another name for doubt. Read the history of Israel in the wilderness. When they came to the Red Sea they murmured. When they got out in the desert and ran out of bread they murmured. When they ran out of water they murmured. God calls that doubt. In Hebrews 19 He sums it up and says they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Every time you and I murmur, whether it is against people or circumstances, we are doubting God. We are doubting God's providence. If I say, “Why do I have to be bothered with this person and that person”, I am murmuring. Who is that addressed to? It is addressed to the air. But if I analyze it, who am I addressing it to? God. Is God arranging my life? Yes.

It was because Jesus had fully accepted the way of faith that He was willing for anything to happen that His Father permitted. He never murmured. Even when those cruel soldiers spit in His face and hit Him, and made the crown of thorns and pressed it down upon His brow, scourged Him, and took Him out to Calvary and nailed Him to the tree, He never murmured because He never doubted. He knew that His Father was looking after Him, and that whatever His Father permitted wicked men and devils to do to Him was for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Oh friends, I want to learn that lesson. What do you say?

Let's make this very practical. Our problem is not people spitting in our faces. I doubt if there is anyone here who has had anyone spit in your face this last week. That is not our problem. Our problems are so much tinier than that. But even a little mosquito or a gnat can be a problem.

There are people who curse and swear, and that is all it takes to make them. And that is all it takes to make people murmur and complain. If we will settle in our minds that murmuring and complaining is an expression of doubt in our Father's providence, and if we will quit murmuring about people and what they do to us and accept with joy the providence our Father arranges, we can have this peace we are studying.

My last point is sing.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” Colossians 3:16.

Somebody says, I can't sing. Well, you can all sing the way Paul says. You can sing in your heart. If you can't carry a tune you can still sing. I think we ought to let what gets into the heart get out to the mouth as often as we can.

Sing to who? The Lord. Oh, I wish every time we sang, whether it is in an audience or in special music, we would always sing to the Lord. If we do, it will bring joy to His heart. He will listen.

We are to sing to the Lord, and we are supposed to sing to ourselves too.

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” Ephesians 5:19-20.

The man who wrote this practiced what he preached. That night in the jail where they had him in stocks and his back all beaten, he said to Silas, Come, let's have a prayer meeting.

They didn't open with a funeral hymn either. They sang praises to God. At midnight in a dark dungeon, their feet in stocks, their backs all covered with blood, they sang. God appreciated what they sang to Him and to themselves. He shook the prison down. And there were some converts made that night, praise the Lord.

Friends, if we find ourselves in the stocks, let's sing. If we find ourselves in a dungeon with bleeding backs, let's sing.

By the way, are some of us going to land in exactly that position before long? Do you think then we are going to learn these lessons? Oh, no. We are going to learn them now, and we are going to practice them then. We are going to learn them

with mosquitoes now, and practice them with dragons then. We are going to learn them with little things, and practice them with big things.

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in that which is much” Luke 16:10.

“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” John 16:33.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you” John 14:27.

Surrounded by the roaring cataract and thunder in the sky we look up by faith to the mercy seat where Jesus our High Priest stands and lifts His hands for us. If He strong? He has all power in heaven and earth. Is He wise? He knows the end from the beginning. Is He love? Oh, yes. He has given all for us. Wisdom knows what is best for me. Power can get it. Nothing that I need can be withheld while I cling to that arm of love.

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