

Peter 1 of 10

Pray

#0375

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—August 1, 1969

In the Bible, we have a record of God's dealing with His people over a four thousand year period. During this long time, there were millions, billions, *trillions* of experiences that came to God's people. Very few of them are recorded in the Bible. I wonder why certain ones were put in there, and others weren't. Well, the Lord knew what would best help you and me down here today. And we should give Him credit for focusing the light most clearly on that which is most important.

It's interesting to me how curious minds long to know something that isn't revealed or is rather hazy. But my heavenly Father has made in this Book that most clear which I need most. Do you agree with me?

Of all the experiences that have come down through the history of the world, there is one 24-hour period that has much more space devoted to it than anything else in all these thousands of years. Which 24-hour period is that? Yes. That's Friday, the 14th of Abib, A. D. 31—the day that Jesus was crucified. At the beginning of that day, as the Bible begins the day—in the evening—He met with His disciples in the upper room.

Now, you will find that Matthew devotes over a hundred verses to those 24 hours. Mark devotes over a hundred verses to those 24 hours. Luke devotes over a hundred verses to those 24 hours. And the apostle John devotes the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th chapters of his Gospel to those 24 hours—over 200 verses.

Did the Holy Spirit inspire these men? Yes, all of them. There must have been something about those events that God desired that we should give special attention to. In fact, we're told that it would be well for us if every day we would spend some time reviewing the life of Jesus, especially what? The closing scenes of His earthly life.

And so this morning, and in some of the mornings to come, I would like to share with you some things that God has impressed my heart with.

We will begin this morning with Matthew 26:30–35. This is on the road from the upper room to Gethsemane. They've left the supper, they're on their way down through the streets of Jerusalem, cross the brook Kidron, and getting ready to go into the garden:

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though

all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” Matthew 26:31–35.

What did all the disciples say? They said what Peter said. Peter was a leader. We see him on the day of Pentecost leading out in that great experience. And we see him before the cross, as well as after, manifesting this gift of leadership.

Leadership is a wonderful thing when the leader is going in the right direction, isn't it? But as you remember just a few hours after what we're reading here, Peter led all the disciples in doing what? What did Peter lead all the disciples to do when the Master was bound and led away to the judgment hall? To forsake Him.

Now, notice this is the very thing that he said he wouldn't do. Was this hypocrisy? No, it was not hypocrisy. I read:

“When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it” *The Desire of Ages*, page 673.

Now, a hypocrite is not sincere, but Peter was sincere. Is that true? That's what this says:

“When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did not know himself. Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life. Unless he was made conscious of his danger, these would prove his eternal ruin” *Ibid*.

So Peter was not a hypocrite. He was sincere. But he didn't what? Didn't know himself. Well, fortunately, you and I know ourselves, so we're not in danger, are we? Or are we? If we don't think we are, then most certainly we are. Right? And if we think we are, then we'd do well to ponder. But if we don't—all the more we need to ponder. You remember the prophet says:

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9.

Only the Lord knows our hearts, only the Lord.

Now, the reason I want to study this with you, brothers and sisters, is that ahead of us is an experience very much like these disciples went through.

You remember that a little while after the words we have read, Jesus came to Gethsemane and asked the disciples to pray while He prayed. Do you remember? And although they prayed after a fashion for a season, they finally did what? Went

to sleep. Three times they missed the opportunity of fellowship with Christ in intercession. In *Volume 2*, we have this significant statement:

“By these sleeping disciples is represented a sleeping church, when the day of God’s visitation is nigh. It is a time of clouds and thick darkness, when to be found asleep is most perilous” *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2*, page 205.

So as we look at Peter and his fellow disciples there in the garden of Gethsemane sleeping while Jesus prays, we get a picture, inspiration says, of a sleeping church. Now, did Jesus go to sleep? No. And those who follow Him today need not go to sleep. Those who follow Him today will not go to sleep. We must not be asleep now.

What was the thing that Jesus did instead of sleeping? He prayed. What was it that Jesus tried to get Peter to do instead of sleeping? To pray. Now notice this in Matthew 26:

“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” Matthew 26:41.

When Jesus said the spirit is willing, He was making reference to Peter’s statement, “I’ll go with you to prison and to death.” In other words, He’s saying to Peter, “You mean all right, Peter, and you love Me after a fashion, and you think you will be true. That’s your desire, your choice. But you don’t know how weak you are. Therefore you’d better get busy and pray, and pray hard.”

But Peter was so sure that he had what Jesus thought He needed that he did not feel that urgent push to intercede. He already had it. It was all settled. He was going to be true to Jesus, no matter what happened. And even if John and Andrew and James and Matthew, and all the rest should leave Jesus, he was going to be right in there with Him fighting to the end. And that’s the point. He had in mind to fight, and that’s what he got into presently, and then ran away.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation”
Matthew 26:41.

Sometime previous Peter had been with the other disciples when they were hunting for Jesus, Who had drawn Himself away to seek God. And they came across Him in a secret place out in the woods, praying. You remember that as Luke tells the story in Luke 11, the disciples hearing Him pray were so charmed, so impressed, that at the close of His prayer they said:

“Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples”
Luke 11:1.

Now these men were ordained ministers at this time. They'd had mighty power to work miracles. But they *sensed* the fact as they heard the Master pray, that they knew very little about it. They still knew little about it at this time in Gethsemane.

And so, there is *every* reason for you and me to consider the fact that maybe there are some things we need to learn about prayer. And that if we learn them, we can avoid Peter's fall, Peter's mistake.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation"
Matthew 26:41.

I'd like to share with you a few thoughts, very simple, very practical. You may think them so simple that they hardly need notice. But in my experience in counseling with many people in many places, I find that some of these things are either unknown or, if known, unused.

Here's one of them:

"Learn to pray aloud where only God can hear you" *Our High Calling*, page 130.

Many times when I'm talking with somebody that's having a spiritual problem, I say to them, "Do you pray?"

"Yes."

"Do you have times to pray all alone with God?"

"Yes."

Then I will say to them, "When you're all alone with God, and you pray, do you pray out loud? Do you move your lips and actually say words to God? Or do you merely think your prayers?"

And many times, they will say, "Well, I think them."

Now, I will not say there's anything wrong with that. But I will say that if that's all we do, friends, there are some things about prayer we'll never learn. It's perfectly proper for us to think our prayers when we're in the midst of a business engagement, when we're sitting at the table surrounded by a group of people. And in the affairs of life as we go about, it's a good thing for us to be thinking prayers to Jesus from time to time all day long, isn't it?

But friends, when we get down on our knees for prayer with God in the early morning, and at night before we go to bed, and at other times as God may arrange, we need to learn to open our mouths, use our lips, our vocal cords, and *talk* to God.

My authority is the sentence I've just read. Let me read it, and see if you can make anything else out of it:

“Learn to pray aloud where only God can hear you” *Ibid.*

“Well,” somebody might say, “Why pray aloud when God is the only person Who can hear?”

Now, we all pray aloud in family worship and prayer meeting. If we’re asked to return thanks at the table, we don’t just think a prayer, do we? We understand, of course, other people are listening. But when I get all alone with God, why should I speak out loud? Can’t God read my mind? Certainly, He can. He can go further than that. He knows all I need even before I ever think about it, doesn’t He? What is the purpose of prayer, then? Is it to inform God? No. The purpose of prayer is to commune with God over certain matters in a way that makes us *conscious* of the fact that God and we are thinking about the same thing, and planning about the same thing, and that we’re getting God’s mind on this matter.

Therefore, *everything* that we can do that will make us more conscious of the fact that we are talking with God, *that* we need to do. This is the reason that we get down on our knees.

“Can’t God hear us if we’re standing up or sitting down?”

Certainly, He can. And as we walk along the way, we’re told that we can commune with God. There’s nothing wrong about praying to God as we walk, sit, stand. But on the other hand, friends, the special blessing of special prayer seasons, includes getting down on our knees.

But why, I ask again. Because in that posture, in that position, we are more conscious of the fact that we are having an audience with the King of kings. Do you see? Now, God knows whether we’re really reverent or not. Getting down on our knees, if we don’t really love Him and reverence Him, could be an act of hypocrisy. But when we kneel in prayer because we’re conscious of the fact that we’re talking to God, it increases the sense of the presence of God. And we need all the help we can get in that.

In the same way, just as kneeling helps us to sense that we’re having a special audience with God, talking to Him out loud does the same thing. We’re not merely thinking, meditating. We’re communing with God.

Another very practical point: Have you ever noticed that if you merely think your prayers, you hardly know when you begin or when you end? In fact, there is danger when we are just thinking our prayers that without knowing it, our mind has *wandered* off onto some business matter, some family matter, some personal matter. We begin to think about what we have to do and this and that. And we catch ourselves and come back.

Now, somebody may say, “Well, Brother Frazee, wouldn’t that happen if I prayed out loud?”

Yes, it will. I'll be honest with you, it will. But the difference is this: you will soon be aware of it because you will have quit speaking. And when you're speaking out loud, and your mind trails off in some other direction, pretty soon you'll catch yourself, and your mind is way off somewhere, but you can bring it back and start talking to God again. Do you see what I mean? This is very important.

So let me read this sentence again:

"Learn to pray aloud where only God can hear you. Do not offer make believe prayers, but earnest, feeling petitions, expressing the hunger of the soul for the Bread of life. If we prayed more in secret, we should be able to pray more intelligently in public" *Ibid.*

Honestly, friends, when I hear some prayers in public... do you want me to be frank? I think about a tape recorder. Certain expressions used over and over again. I could mention what some of them are. It might offend somebody. But this says that if we pray more in secret, our prayers in public will be more intelligent.

What would you think if some friend came to visit you to ask for a favor, but he went through a certain form of words? And every time he came, he went through that same form of words, sentence after sentence? Not on very close terms.

"Learn to pray aloud where only God can hear you" *Ibid.*

Now notice, it doesn't say learn to pray *loud* where only God can hear you. We don't have to shout. We don't have to pray so loud that the neighbors can hear us. This says:

"Learn to pray aloud where only God can hear you" *Ibid.*

And if you have somebody in the next room, you'll have to pray in a low tone so that only God hears you, right?

And let me deal with another very practical problem. Some of us have roommates at one time or another. When we're in school, we usually have a roommate. Married folks have a roommate. Under other circumstances, we may have a roommate.

I got a great lesson on this. Many years ago, I was attending a ministerial institute, and the man who led the devotional at the very first early morning meeting said:

"Now brethren, we're together from near and far. We're in our rooms, and most of us have someone rooming with us. I want to share with you a blessing that an older minister taught me years ago. He said, 'He and I were put together at a convention to room together. This man said to me, "Now brother, we are going to be sharing this room for several days. I would like to have an understanding between you and me that we can do in this room whatever we would do if we were alone. I'd like to have an understanding that I can kneel down and pray in my corner of the

room anytime without feeling embarrassed or without embarrassing you.’ I appreciated that very much. I recommend it to all of you. It would be too bad if we go through this convention without personal prayer. It would be too bad if being together, as we are thrown together in these rooms, should hinder that in any way, right at this time when we’re seeking the Lord in these meetings.”

Well, I’ve never forgotten that lesson. And my dear friends, I tell you this. Anything that is important as prayer, we must be so anxious that we’re going to find some way to get to do it.

I remember reading of J. Hudson Taylor, the man that God used to open up missions in China years ago. He was very jealous of this early morning appointment with God.

He said that on one occasion, he was on the Yangtze River, that great stream that drains thousands of square miles of China, and for days, day and night, he was simply on one of these Chinese boats surrounded by a bunch of sweating coolies. *Where* could he pray? *When* could he pray?

He watched his opportunity, and he found that his only opportunity was around three or four or five in the morning when most of them were asleep. And there, floating on that river, surrounded by those sleeping coolies, he knelt and talked to God. Oh friends, there’s a way.

Now another practical thing. You may, at times, be in a situation where the only way you can talk to God and still do what this says—where only God can hear you—is to whisper to God.

Let me illustrate it. Here’s something I want to say to Brother Martin, but I don’t want any of you to hear. I don’t even want these folks that are listening in on the public address to hear. Now, if I want him to know what I’m going to say, I’ll have to tell him. But it’s just for *him*. Let me see if I can do it.

He got the message. Did any of you get it? No, you didn’t get it. What did I do? I whispered. Oh, my friends, when other people around you are so close, when your roommate is right there, and yet it’s time for you to pray, you can whisper to God. But oh, whispering is so much different from just kneeling there, thinking.

All right, this is all I’m going to give you this morning. We’re trying to learn what Peter failed to learn before Gethsemane. Thank the Lord, he learned it afterward.

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