

# Perseverance in Prayer

By Paris Reidhead\*

Will you turn, please, again to Ephesians, Chapter 6. Living as we do in a day when we want push button efficiency in every area of life, there is really very little place I am sure for someone to talk about Perseverance in Prayer. We could otherwise title this, The Problem of Unanswered Prayer, or the process of having prayer answered, and all such titles would be appropriate. The greatest privilege in all the universe for man, estranged from God by sin, to be brought back into fellowship with God through faith in the finished work of Christ, and then to have the privilege of going into the very throne room of the universe and there to converse as son to father, as brother to brother, as worshipper to the Sovereign God who is worthy of all worship, the privilege of prayer.

We have been dealing with prayer in many of its aspects in the weeks past, but it is imperative that we should understand that man through the years has had a great deal of difficulty with unanswered prayer. Invariably we try to find some easy way out of the problem, and we will hear it said from time to time, Well God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says, No. There is only one thing the matter with that: It isn't what you expected. And, therefore, being an oversimplification, it becomes an avoidance of the issue. God may say, No, but He ought to say, No, so directly that you understand that it is No before you ask Him to do it, not after you have asked Him to do it.

Thus it is important that we should take time in every consideration to face the issue. You have prayed for things which have not come to pass. You have asked God for things which you have wanted to see done, and have not been done. And there are problems in this, and it is important if we are to live honestly and fairly, and genuinely, sincerely, that we recognize that there are problems.

I have known some tragic things resulting from presumption in prayer. I think of one young man ministering down in the state of Florida who said to one of my friends, now a missionary with the Alliance abroad, when he was talking about the Spirit filled life and about the ability of the Lord to heal, Oh, he said, don't pay any attention to that. I got excited about that once, and I asked the Lord to do something, and if there ever was a sincere man in all the world it was me, and nothing happened. It is alright to read about it, but there is just nothing to it. And here this man was ministering before his people from the Word, committed to the truth of the Word, and he was undoubtedly praying for the sick. Every pastor, every Christian worker, every Christian neighbor prays for the sick; but it depends of course how you pray whether or not it is what God wants or what neighbors need. And here his whole life had been blighted, practically ruined because of an experience that he had that poisoned his mind in the future. This is important, because if we are going to use answers to prayer as reason for commending Christ to people, then we are going to have to face the effect of unanswered prayer upon people.

Now let us get two things clear in our minds. Everything in the Bible that God has promised is conditional except perhaps they that live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And even there is a condition. You have to live godly before you have that. But other than that every promise in the Word of God is a conditional promise. We frequently fail to understand that what God had said elsewhere is in His mind in what He is saying here, and that no Scripture is of private interpretation or is to be viewed apart from all the rest of Scripture. This is to be borne in mind by you, that instruction in the Word, to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, meditate in these things, and give thy self wholly to them that thy profiting may appear. This instruction was intended to remind the young man Timothy that it was the whole Word of God that was essential in any particular need, in any particular privilege, or responsibility. It takes from the mind the idea that we can seize upon one verse, extract it from its setting, extract it from the rest of the Word, hold this verse before the Lord, wave it before Him, and then proceed to insist that He do something.

If you are to have fruitful and effective prayer life, then it is going to be imperative that you give yourself to the Word of God. It is essential that you recognize that faith comes by hearing the Word, not just a Word. I used to think that faith comes by hearing a Word, a verse, a truth, a statement; but that isn't what it says. Faith comes from hearing the Word. Now you see if the person comes to Christ because all He wants from Christ is salvation from hell, then when he gets what he wants he can

sort of close the Book, put the key in the lock, hang it up on the nail in the corner, and go on without much reference to the Word. He knows that his title to a mansion in Heaven is clear and that if he dies he has every assurance from the Word and in his heart that he is going to go to Heaven. And since he has gotten from the Lord what he came for, he has what he wants; then the Word isn't too essential. If on the other hand this person says, No, it isn't just that I get from Christ what I want, but that He get from me what He wants, and that His intent and purpose for me is to be a vehicle through which He can manifest how wonderful He is. It is imperative then that I should so give myself to the Word of God that I can in due course of study in the unfolding ministry of the Word of God discover all that He wants me to be, and all that He wants me to have, and all that He wants me to do. And that everything in the Word of God that is important to anything in the Word of God and anything in my life, and thus you become a student in the Word of God.

Too frequently our tendency is to become listeners to the Word of God, hearers of the Word. Listen to a sermon for its entertainment quality, for its emotional content, for its liniments of outline, or of structure that pleased the mind, and then to go saying, Wasn't that a good or not so good sermon, as the case might be, feeling that one has done their duty toward the Word of God because they have endured perhaps three quarters of an hour a treatise concerning it, and thus one is satisfied to proceed into the week, sort of having had a vitamin injection for a little while that is going to carry them with some degree of vigor on through the problems that are ahead. And this is disastrous, absolutely disastrous. It is imperative that the person who listens to the Word get insight into the Word, so that they can go back and meditate upon the Word, and study the Word, and the Word begins to work in their heart, and work in their mind. It isn't just something that was said to them by someone who did that, but it is now something that God is saying to them, to you, in your heart. And as that Word that you hear is joined to all the other that you have heard, and the Word has been quickened and joined through the truth, there is a foundation structure built into your life, upon which you are prepared to rest when the issue comes, and the issue is constantly coming; because should it be that you escape from a day in which you have no pertinent prayer needs, that is the very day that you are going to have neighbors, and friends, and family pressed upon you, and will be forced to pray for them.

But it is necessary for you to accept the fact that you are called to Christ, and called to be a Christian, you are called to the Word of God, to study the Word of God, to learn the Word of God, to meditate upon the Word of God, to become instructed in the Word of God; "because faith comes from hearing, hearing the Word" (Rom. 10:17). And unless there is a structure of truth that you have built deliberately and thoughtfully with the illuminating work of the Spirit of God, you may have implicit sensitivity to His ability to meet the need but you do not understand the protocol or process that He has fixed by which that need is to be met. And this is why it is so important for you to be constantly a student of the Word, not just at the time of catastrophe.

Now undoubtedly God knows us so well that if we didn't have periods of seeming or impending catastrophe we might be willing to just casually have the Word for days, and weeks, and months, and years. And so it is when His love designs to move us from our position of lethargy into the Word of God in vitality, He just lets a little wind blow against, across our ship, and we begin to veer from the course of contentment, and we begin to feel the waves rise, and feel a little trouble surrounding us, a little mist coming over the bow of the ship, and then we go back to the Word again. We go to study it, but as soon as that problem is past, too frequently we close the Book, tuck it away, Well now I know what to do if that ever happens again; so instead of a head wind, God sends a tailwind, and there is another thing, something else comes, or something else blows from another quarter. And what you learned yesterday does not work today.

I talked just this past week up in Massachusetts with a young man who told me how that God had made real to him the truth of identification with Christ. And for several months he had gone on in joyous victory, victory that he had never known before, victory that had been utterly transforming. And then he said, You know something happened and it didn't work anymore. And I said, What did you do? I didn't preach any more either. I just sort of figured that it must have been enthusiasm on my part. I said, Isn't that pathetic. If you went to school and learned in arithmetic, two and two makes four, and you met a problem where you had to have two and three, you wouldn't know what to do, so you would burn your arithmetic book in school. Wouldn't you? That is exactly what you would do according to that logic and that reasoning. If the truth you have learned up until now, applicable to the kind of problem you have had up until now doesn't meet the need of the new problem, the thing to do is to quit school. That is the wisdom that you have exercised. He said, I see that. What I really should have done was to

have said, Thank you, Lord, you have now put a problem into my path that demands a lesson I haven't yet learned, and used that to drive the Word of God, to learn more completely and perfectly the truth that is there.

So perseverance in prayer must invariably of necessity be a perseverance, a persistence, a continuance in the Word of God, meditating upon the Word, feeding upon the Word, personally giving yourself to the Word. I believe that one of the products of our quasi Catholic Christianity is the fact that most people think the only one that can get anything out of the Word of God is the one who is paid by a church to do this. And this is not the case at all. The same teacher that will teach me will teach you. You may not have invested as much in books as I have, but in that case you haven't had as many prejudices to overcome as I have; because almost every book that I read has something which if you accepted it would have the same effect as swallowing fish with a bone in it. You might get a little nourishment out of it, but you may choke to death in the process. And so having a big library isn't all the ease that one thinks, and when you have good men that have disagreed on a given point and both of them equally sincere then you spend a good bit of time trying to decide which was right before you go on. Or as in my case you say, Well both of them must have been kind of right, and proceed to find the thing which meets your need. But the point that I wish to make is this, that the teacher is not the one that has put his best thoughts down on paper and preserved them for you. We are grateful for that contribution. You accept that contribution, but as Paul came to Berea and he expounded the truth to these that were present, we find that the nobility was demonstrated by the fact that they went home and searched the Scriptures daily to see that these things be so, and they had one as teacher that Paul had as teacher, namely, God Himself, God the Holy Ghost. And you have the privilege of His same teaching ministry.

Oh, what I wish today is to press to your heart that if you were expecting your life of prayer to become more fruitful and effective, there is no easy short course, there is no little gimmick that I can present to you, there is no little trick that I can give you, there is no little formula that I can give you. It is going to take a commitment of yourself to the source of all faith, which is the clear Word of God, and is going to necessitate that you give your attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, and that you meditate in these things, give yourself wholly to them. Oh that doesn't mean that 24 hours a day you stare at the page in the Book, but what you have learned, and what you have read is before you to be assimilated by you, and understood by you, matter of prayer that you can realize how this truth relates to that; and the structure then of truth that God has brought into your life becomes the foundation upon which He causes you to stand in prayer, in the opportunity and the challenge that He presents to you.

So perseverance in prayer has to be invariably a perseverance in the Word of God first. And you can make it quite sure that George Müller<sup>1</sup> whose prayer life was unparalleled had discovered and given himself to the Word of God. One of the most interesting things you read in his own personal devotion habits was the fact that he said that every morning he would read the Word of God, he would take it, and read it, though he had lived with the Book, and read it over and over again. He read it, seeking every time to hear it as though it were being spoken to him for the first time then, and he read until the Spirit of God quickened that Word to his heart, and he had living Word now that had been built into the very structure of his whole past in order that in this particular present moment there might be that which God had made real to him. And therefore if you are expecting your life to be a life of fruitfulness and joyousness, and blessing and prayer, there is no easy road, but a pushbutton generation looks for an easy road. We want it. We would like to have it. We would like to have it in respect to every area of life, like to get a college degree, and the next day push a button, and we are ready to retire on our social security. We have just gone through the process of... life is to be lived in these spasms of activity, and this we try to translate into the Christian life and almost everyone is looking for an experience that is going to eliminate the necessity of perseverance. And there isn't any such thing, any more than marriage is the key to happiness. Marriage isn't. A young person says, If I could just be married I'd be happy. Well come with me a little while, I'll prove to you that that is not the key to happiness at all. There are as many people married that are unhappy as there are unmarried that aren't happy. And this is to be discovered thus that marriage is not the key to happiness, and our generation has been indoctrinated by every subtle means possible to come to the place where you can build a happy married life by a crisis experience in front of a congregation. And immediately if you have enough

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<sup>1</sup> George Müller (1805-1898) Christian Evangelist and Director of the Ashley Down Orphanage

orange blossoms and beautiful music, you have a guarantee your married life is going to be happy. This isn't true. It requires patience and understanding and prayer, and conversation, and give and take, and all the adjustments that are there. There has to be perseverance in the purpose that a home become a joyous, fruitful, victorious home with the fruit of the Presence of Christ manifest there. It doesn't happen easily. It doesn't happen easily.

And so it happens that in the Christian life, a person wants victory, and they say, Well if you could just put an altar there, and I could come to an altar, and I could kneel, and a few others could kneel with me as they did in the good old days, then something would happen in me, and I would not need to worry any more. I would have victory after that. O yes, I wish it were so. I just wish it were so. But it doesn't come that way. Maybe you need the crisis of surrender, and the crisis of commitment to truth, and there is the place of a crisis experience of understanding our union with Christ, but where the test is the next day, whether you are going to apply that truth to the next situation, and if you do not apply that truth to the next situation however delightful may have been the experience you had at the altar its effectiveness is diminished just in proportion to your return to your old attitudes toward the old kind of experience. It means, therefore, that if you are to understand union with Christ in Death that there has to be perseverance. You say, Oh, how nice it would be if God could just give us an experience so we wouldn't be tempted any more, and wouldn't be able to fall any more, wouldn't be able to sin any more. This isn't what He gives. What He does give is a relationship with Jesus Christ, an insight into the work of Jesus Christ; so that we realize that He has made provision in Christ to meet our need. But just as this house has been wired by great expense, and you can sit in the dark if you choose, or when the darkness falls you can put the lights on if you are willing to get from where you are to where the control is, but you are going to have to put the lights on every time the darkness settles. And so it is going to be that you are going to have to apply the truth of union with Christ in death every time you are tempted. And all the experience of the past... Someone said, You know it sounds to me so to be a life of softness, and flabbiness, and ease. Everything is done by Jesus. What about you? Oh, my where the demand is great upon you is whether you are going to get up from where you are and go over to that switch and put it on. You cannot light the room, but you can control the flow of power. And there has to be perseverance. The truth works once, it will work again, it will work every time you apply it to your heart, release the Lord to use it.

So with the Spirit filled life. Oh, how easy it is for one to think that if they have had a crisis experience in which they have sensed the presence of the Spirit of God, anointing them and infilling them, and coming upon them, that this is now the sum of all their need for God, that they can go on from this point and live their life in the reflection of what happened to them at that point of crisis experience. Now obviously just as marriage has to begin with a crisis but can only be enjoyed and experienced in its fullness as a process of mutual understanding and service, and adjustment to all of the problems that come; so it is that the Spirit filled life, a time when God meets you and clothes you can only be continued in its joyous fullness as you are prepared to adjust to the things that He asks of you, and the conditions that He imposes, the changes that are going to come. This is set forth in the Word where the very essence of perseverance is given in the Greek in Ephesians 5:18, "Be ye being filled with the Spirit, Be ye being filled;" just as in Acts 2, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, but in Acts 4, the same people, that were filled in Acts 2, were filled. "Be ye being filled." Perseverance again.

Dr. Simpson<sup>2</sup> put it so beautifully. He said that one knew the crisis of the Spirit filled life, the crisis of the indwelling power of the Lord, released to be Himself in all He wished to be in that heart. He said, So often people were trying to warm themselves from the ashes of yesterday's fire, and feed on the crumbs from yesterday's loaf. And remembering how wonderful was their experience in some day in the past. And Dr. Simpson said, No, it isn't this. This isn't what it is. You have been given the privilege now by initiation into this relationship of going into the presence of God, and he used terms which express it. He said, You breathe out in worship and breathe out in adoration, and breathe out in affirmation; then you breathe in of the presence of the Lord. So it is breathing out, and breathing in. Then you go out into the presence of the world, and breathe out in witness; but you breathe in in worship.

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<sup>2</sup> Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

Now there is perseverance there. F. B. Meyer<sup>3</sup> came to George Müller in England and said, Father, why is it that sometimes I speak with power, and sometimes it is so flat. The old man looked at him. Even then the toll of years was coming. And he said, My son, it is because you breathe out twice when you only breathe in once. It is so hard to do. It is just so hard to do. You've nothing left to breathe out. There is perseverance, perseverance in this relationship. Into His presence in worship, breathing out your love, breathing in of Himself, and then out in witness breathing out.

So if there is to be perseverance in respect to every aspect of the Christian life, certainly there is to be perseverance in regard to prayer. How will we apply it particularly? Now we do not know about how to pray about all the problems that are presented to us, just do not. Sometimes people can say, Will you pray for me, and you say, Well I will do it, but tell me definitely how I should pray. And as they begin to explain to you their problem the only impulse you have from the Lord is this. My dear, this is so complicated, and so involved that I just have got to pray first about how to pray before I can really pray for you. That is the only honest way to do. Oh, the way if you want to escape and get away is say, Yes, I'll pray, and then go and forget all about it, or just say, Lord, bless Mary, as the case may be. But this is not being honest, it isn't being fair, and it is not affording God what He asks from you. When you are to become a participant in the life of another, you are to begin your prayer life by yearningly and longingly saying to the Lord, Lord, how should I pray, how should I pray. And then you will have to read the Word, and wait on the Lord, until He begins to show you. Now look at it from this way, and as you begin to think about it, and meditate upon it, and relate what you see to the Word of God, there is a release in your heart to ask this one thing, just this one thing. But you see, if He has taught you what to pray for, and He has instructed you as to what to pray for, then you will have the answer.

Now you notice, perhaps what you thought I was going to say when we came to perseverance was, Ask and don't ever give up. Perhaps the best thing you could do about some the prayers you have been asking is to give up right now, just give up. You have been asking for several days or months, or years, and nothing has happened so just give up. Let's just leave it, shall we. And let us go to the Lord and say, Now Lord, teach me how to pray, teach me how to pray. And approach it from the standpoint that perhaps we began, and you see where this becomes so subtle is, If we once ask God then we think it is unbelief to ever go back to the Lord and reopen the issue but perhaps we have commenced the issue without going to the Lord to find how to do it.

If you go down the road, and you think you are going toward Chicago and you are actually going through Miami, don't think that it is an evidence of perseverance to not stop and ask for direction. You may get satisfaction out of how fast you are going, but you are not going to arrive at the destination, and perseverance is not just what is needed. You may need some instruction. And men I know are particularly averse to asking for directions. They would rather wander around for an hour and have the dinner get cold, and have the family upset, than to stop in and say, Where am I and how can I get from here to where I ought to be. They are certain that if they go over that hill they will be there. Well they are there, but they aren't at the there they ought to be. And this is so true with us when we are praying. We will say, Now Lord, please. We are looking to Thee, we are taking it by faith, and then nothing happens. Well they say, It is a lack of faith to go back and open the matter again. I think it is wisdom. On the wrong road, going the wrong way, let's ask for guidance. And there are many things that have been in your heart you have been asking for, and the course of greatest wisdom for you would be to say, Well now I am going to leave this as it is, and I'm going to go to the Lord, and I am going to say, Lord, how should I pray about this.

Perseverance is not just stubbornness. Do not think for a moment it is just stubbornness. Perseverance is this confidence that because God is in it, and because God is God, I can approach Him honestly, and openly, and fairly, and expect Him to minister to me in kindness, not whipping me because of my lack of wisdom or ignorance as long as I admit it to Him, and come to Him for help. Paul prayed. You know he prayed, "O God, there is a thorn in my flesh, now I want..." (II Cor. 12:7). I don't know what the thorn is. You tell me, and I'll be happy, but I do not know whether it was ophthalmic or the eyes or whether it was just people that made life miserable for him. I do not know what it was. You can settle what the thorn was. All Paul wanted was to have it taken away. So he went to the Lord and said, Lord, take it away. Thorn. Pull this out. It is hard to walk on. And nothing happened. And he went to the Lord the second time and he said, Lord, last time I was here I asked you to take this thorn out,

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<sup>3</sup> Frederick Brotherton Meyer (1847-1929) A Baptist Pastor

but that thorn is still there. Nothing happened. And finally he went to the Lord, and he said, Lord, take the thorn out, please. And he said, I asked you twice, and now this is the third time, and it isn't out. And he was persevering. But you know what he did? He listened to what the Lord had to say, The Lord said, Paul I love you. You know that. But I have got to deal with you about something. (Now this is my own personal feeling. Don't make it dependent upon the message.) I told you never to relate what happened to you that day they left you under the stones outside the wall of Philippi, how that you went into the third heaven, and you saw things that I didn't want uttered. I did not give you that experience, Paul, so that you could win an argument with the people that were claiming you were not an Apostle. I wanted you to commit your apostleship to me. And when the pressure was on, dear friend, you know what you did? You used that experience to prove that you were apostle equal with the others, and I do not think you should have done it, son. And because you have disobeyed Me, I am not going to take that thorn away.

Now you see, Paul could have gone on from three to four, to five, to six, to seven, to ten, to twenty, to forty times, and said, My but I am persevering. He wasn't persevering at all if he had gone. He persevered when he listened, when he found out what God had to say about the matter, and discovered God's will in the matter. And then he heard the Lord say, "My grace is sufficient for you, My strength will be made perfect in your weakness" (II Cor. 12:9). You go ahead, Paul, but every step you take just like Jacob down there by the brook at Penill every time he took a step he remembered the time God had touched him. He remembered the time of failure, the time of breaking. Every step Paul took he remembered the fact. I believe that God had not wanted him to take the matter of the defense of his apostleship into his own hands, but to have left it in the hands of the Lord.

You know if anybody ever says Paul ever did anything wrong, we almost think that Paul was infallible. I think he wore shoes like we did, and got tired the same way we did, and if he had pencils he would have to have an eraser on them just as I do. I think this man was just one of us, and a sinner saved by grace, the chief of sinners.

Now the application to you is this, It is not just a matter of praying for something and then gritting your teeth, and setting your jaw, and holding on. It is to go to the Lord to whom you are praying, and to talk it over with Him, and to read His Word, and let Him speak to you, and then let Him apply it to you, and listen to the Lord as He begins to make it clear. And if you will do that you know what you are going to discover? There are some prayers that you have been asking for a long time, you never even should have asked in the first place. There are sometimes when I am tempted to pray for something, and I can't even pray. I can't get started any more since I have learned this. Sometimes there are things which have been presented to me for prayer, and I have to hold them before the Lord day, after day, after day, and week after week, and sometimes month after month, and I am praying about them, but I am not praying for them. I'm not asking. I don't know how to ask. I do not know what is involved. And then there will come a time when the matter will come clear, crystal clear, and you see if you ask anything according to the will of God He hears you. Now the way most people treat that is to pray what they would like, and then put a little suffix on the end of it, If it be Thy will. And they think they are asking according to the will of God. No. The will of God is not unreasonable, and it is not hidden, and God will show you His will, and if you wait and ask for His will most of the time when we pray for things we have done Him the dishonor of implying that He is not willing to show us what His will in the matter is.

And oh, so frequently you will find that if you will accept the fact that when you persevere in prayer you do not bite into the problem and refuse to let go, but you approach it with every necessary step. You approach it from every angle. You persist in the matter until you know how. Someone will say to you, Do you have faith to pray for this. If I am honest when anyone asks that question, do you know what the answer has to be; No. No. I do not have any faith. I have learned that long ago. I used to think that if I could just mentally exercise my mind enough by the friction of one verse against another, get a little intellectual perspiration, I could sort of strip it off the brow of my heart and run with glistening beads to the Lord and say, Here, Lord, before it evaporated please do this, because if it doesn't come now I don't know what I will do. I do not do that anymore, because faith is not the product of my energy in respect of God, but it is the product of God's energy in me. I do not have any faith. You say, Well doesn't the Word say it? Yes, but it said it a long time before I read it, and a lot of people have been reading that Word along the way. How is it going to come to me? It is going to come to me when by giving myself to the whole of the Word and to the Lord, not just for this particular emergency, but as a principle of life, persevering in worship,

persevering in the Word, then you come to the place that God can join these things together. So it is not just the taking a hold and clamping down like a bulldog does on the ankle of a thief and just holding on. That's not perseverance.

Perseverance is approaching it that God is reasonable, and God is gracious, and God is wise, and God is loving, and God is able. Oh, it is so clear, isn't it. Him that cometh to God must believe that God is. Oh, how many times we have thought that God exists. It isn't God exists. God is who He says He is, and God will do what He has said He will do what He says He will do. And so it means this, What does it mean to persevere in prayer? It means to become personally acquainted with God, and to live and walk in that acquaintanceship, and then just to go on friend with friend in constant relationship. I have known some people in the past that have had ample means, and I have had people say to me, You're a friend of so and so aren't you? And I have said, Yes. Well wouldn't you just tell him that we need for our work so much. Perhaps because you are such good friends, he would give it to you. And I can't do that. I can't do that. I can't use that privilege of friendship in that way. You have got to know the person with whom you are talking and dealing. And consequently it is essential that if you are to have faith in prayer you must become acquainted with God, and walk with Him, live with Him, and let your constant desire be not so much to get from Him, but to give to Him the adoration, and the worship, and the love of your heart. And in the midst of this you will hear him whisper, You know I would like to do that, I am concerned about this. And then you know His will, and you pray, and it is according to His will.

Perseverance in prayer means to persist in this wonderful invitation that has been given to you to know the Lord, just to know the Lord, and to walk with the Lord. Now you are going to say, That wasn't very helpful to me. I was hoping that he would give me a formula that I could do 1 and 2 and 3, and I would have every prayer I ever prayed answered. Well that might be helpful. I do not think so. I think after a little while you would be willing to take the hammer to Aladdin's lamp if you had it. I think life would be a horrible experience if it were an Aladdin lamp arrangement. But God wasn't intending to become a means to satisfy my desires. God is the ultimate end of the entire universe, and prayer has got to be based upon who God is, not just what I need. And it is to render to Him what He deserves, the worship, and adoration, and the love of our hearts, and let there be through us then the fulfillment of His intent and purpose.

Perseverance in prayer? Means just to know Him and keep on getting better acquainted with Him, until He can share with you the intent of His heart and the purpose of His life, and oh then it is not how much faith you have in God, but it is how much God you have, how big He is, how wonderful He is, and what He does. "Praying with all... watching there unto with all perseverance" (Eph. 6:18).

Let us pray.

OUR Father, we believe that in Thy great infinite heart of measureless mercy and boundless grace Thou hast made room for us. And we hear again the words of the Lord Jesus to the woman by the well, "God is Spirit." It is not the formula that they produced in Samaria, not the ritual and formula they have produced in Jerusalem that pleased Thee, but Thou hast said Thou art Spirit, and they that worship Thee must worship Thee in Spirit and in truth. And then these words, our Father, that our hearts cannot comprehend, God seeketh such to worship Him. We believe, our Father, that that prayer of perseverance is the prayer of continuance in all the aspects of prayer becoming ever better acquainted with Thee, knowing more fully Thy mind and will, knowing Thee better because we have lived with Thee and walked with Thee, and we have not used Thee as a means to our ends, ours or others, but we have found our hearts in wonderful fellowship with Thee, and Thou hast found us trustworthy in fellowship with Thee, and so Thou dost share with us the privilege of the outworking of Thy will. Make us to persevere in prayer, show it what it means, make us a praying people, in the Name and for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

\* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Morning, May 5, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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