The Cross And Prayer

By F. J. Huegel

Let us consider prayer in the light of our crucifixion with Christ. Prayer is nothing if it is not communion with God. The old life cannot have fellowship with God inasmuch as in Christ it was condemned and potentially put to death. True communion is only possible when the old life is terminated.

The only reason why many find prayer so unsatisfactory and the life of prayer so unattractive, is because they have attempted to enter into prayer's celestial realms in the strength of the "old man." The "old man" can no more wield these weapons which are "not carnal but mighty through God," than he can "love his enemies," or "rejoice always", or "have the mind which was in Christ Jesus," or fulfil any other Christian grace. The "old man" may imitate these graces, but he can never actually possess them.

They are "the fruits of the Spirit." They come from above. They are the outworkings of the Christ-nature imparted to the believer and incorporated in his being on the basis of the cross, that is, a removal of the old nature by a participation in Christ's death.

True prayer can only be inaugurated on the basis of our crucifixion with Christ. This is the prime condition. "If you abide in Me and I in you, you shall ask whatsoever you will and it shall be done unto you." We must be "in Christ." But we cannot be in Christ in the fullest sense, without committing to death the "old life" in the power of the Saviour's death, or being as God sees us, crucified with Christ.

It is when we realize our oneness with Christ in death and resurrection that prayer becomes the marvelous force that we find it was in the life of the Saviour and the invincible dynamic that it reveals itself to be in the book of Acts and the experience of the great saints of the ages.

It is then that our spirits, liberated by the power of the cross from the fleshly and the soulish entanglements, "mount up on wings as eagles." It is then that communion with the infinitely adorable One who inhabits Eternity, comes spontaneously and naturally to its fullest expression. It is then that the injunction, "Pray without ceasing," ceases to be an unintelligible command, for the spirit released from the thralldom of the "flesh life," and freed from all satanic oppression by an appropriation of the full benefits of the Calvary victory, rises to take its place with Christ in the Heavenlies where prayer is the continuous in-breathing of the life of God.

It is then that prayer, energized by the Spirit of the living God, which it cannot be until it is freed from all selfish ingredients, becomes at times a groaning which is unutterable, and which does not fail to move mountains, and achieve the impossible. It is then that prayer becomes a working out of the will of God, and therefore, must prevail, be the difficulties what they may, however staggering the problem, however great the need.

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It is then that the great disparity between what the Master said that prayer would accomplish, and the miserable caricature that it is in the actual practice of millions, is removed, and prayer blossoms out in all the glory of its true nature.

Seeing prayer in the light of the cross and our participation in the Saviour's death and resurrection, we are not the least surprised over the achievements of some of the great prayer warriors of the Church:

Hudson Taylor and a few fellow workers praying for a thousand workers to be thrust into China, with the result that the Lord gave them not a thousand, but eleven hundred and fifty-four;

George Müller of Bristol, receiving in answer to prayer, millions of dollars for the support of his many orphans;

David Brainerd wrestling with God in the forests of New England for a great revival, not only among his beloved Indians, but for great ingatherings of souls throughout the whole world and thus becoming, according to some of the historians of missions, the prime factor in ushering in the great era of Modern Missions.

Such achievements abound in the life and work of those who have known the Lord Jesus and the power of His resurrection. Like Paul, they have had fellowship with Him in His sufferings, "being made conformable unto His death" (Phil. 3:10).

May it not be that the great world crisis, with its economic and moral agonies which have enveloped the nations, is due after all to the spiritual feebleness of the Church? The Church is the Divine agency for the redemption of the nations. What they are going through is a sure index to the state of organized Christianity. They are dependent upon Christ and His Church for the development of the moral and spiritual life-forces, without which nations as well as individuals become reeking carcasses of corruption.

The pending suicide of civilization which is causing men's hearts to fail them for fear, can only be averted by that Divine impact which is the Spirit of Christ operating within the hearts of men. Again and again, as history clearly reveals, this has brought the nations out of chaos and charged them with new vigor and hope.

The crying need of the day, as it has been of all times, is the expulsion of the monster of selfishness from the hearts of men and the opening up of the floodgates in the life of the nations for the free circulation of the great love of Christ. There is no other healing for the nations, there is no other hope for the individual soul.

Shall we not then give place to a pure Christianity? Christ cannot possess us, and cause the rivers of Living Water which He has promised, to flow forth from our hearts with healing, renovating, transforming, abounding force, unless we are willing to be dispossessed of our own life. Christ will not rear His edifices upon the old foundations of selfishness. It is not a case of simply denying ourselves certain things, but of a complete renunciation of ourselves.

Christ took us with Himself to the cross. The so-called Adamic life, the "old man," was

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potentially terminated at Calvary. Let us be drawn by that love which so moved the Saviour that He was willing to be spat upon, willing to hang between two criminals while the mob jeered, willing to be trampled under foot as though He were a despicable thing, that we might have life. Let us respond with glad surrender to the unfathomable yearnings of the Crucified.

He would have us share His cross. He would have us divorced from the carnal mind, which is enmity with God, by a participation in His own death. Into His death we have been baptized (Romans 6:3). If we are followers of Christ, then His death to sin is our death to sin; His resurrection our resurrection; His victory our victory; His ascension our ascension.

God grant to us the grace to claim our full heritage that thus we may be more than conquerors. "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).

– From *Bone Of His Bone* by F. J. Huegel.

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