The Power Of United Prayer

By Andrew Murray

Most churches think their members gather simply to take care of and build up each other. They know not that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints, that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered, that by prayer the church on earth has disposal of the powers of the heavenly world to fulfill the commission Christ gave her.

Union Is Strength

"And when they had prayed, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:31-32).

The power of union we see everywhere in nature. How feeble is a drop of rain as it falls to earth. But when the many drops are united in one stream, and thus become one body, how speedily the power is irresistible. Such is the power of true union in prayer. In Psalm 34:5 the English margin has instead of *"They looked unto Him," "They flowed unto Him."* The Dutch translation is, *"They rushed toward Him like a stream of water."*

Such was the prayer in the upper room. And such can our prayer be if we unite all our forces in pleading the promise of the Father. And when the world "comes in like a flood," it can be overcome in the power of united prayer.

When in spirit God's people reach out their hands to each other, there will be power to resist the terrible influence that the world can exert. And in that unity God's children, when they have overcome the power of the world and the flesh, will have power to prevail with God.

It was in the upper room that the disciples abode the ten days until they had truly become one heart and one soul. When the Spirit of God descended, He not only filled each individual, but took possession of the whole company as the Body of Christ.

Do believe, O Christians, that in this twentieth century the prayer of our Lord Jesus is still being offered: "Father, that they may be one as We are one." It is in the fellowship of loving and believing prayer that our hearts can be melted into one, and that we shall become strong in faith to believe and to accept what God has promised us.

The Power of Prayer

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

Prayer avails much. It avails much with God. It avails much in the history of His church and people. Prayer is the one great power which the church can exercise in securing the working of

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God's omnipotence in the world.

The prayer of *a righteous man* avails much. That is, a man who has the righteousness of Christ, not only as a garment covering him, but as a life-power inspiring him, as a new man *"created in righteousness and true holiness"* (Eph. 4:24). A man that lives as *"the servant to righteousness"* (Rom. 6:16, 19). These are the righteous whom the Lord loveth and whose prayer hath power (Psa. 66:18-19; 1 John 3:22).

When Christ gave His great prayer promises in the last night, it was to those who keep His commandments. *"If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter"* (John 14:15-16). *"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; and ye shall ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall done unto you"* (15:7, 10).

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It is only when the righteous man stirs up himself and rouses his whole being to take hold of God that the prayer availeth much. As Jacob said: "I will not let Thee go"; as the importunate widow gave the unjust Judge no rest, so it is that the effectual fervent prayer effects great things.

And then comes the effectual fervent prayer of many righteous. When two or three agree, there is the promise of an answer. How much more when hundreds and thousands unite with one accord to cry to God to display His mighty power on behalf of His people. Let us join those who have united themselves to call upon God for the mighty power of His Holy Spirit in His church. What a great and blessed work, and what a sure prospect, in God's time, of an abundant answer! Let us pray God individually and unitedly for the grace of the effectual fervent prayer which availeth much.

That They All May Be One

"Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are... Neither pray I for these alone; but for them also which believe on Me through their word; that they may all be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me" (John 17:11, 20-23).

Notice carefully how the Lord uses the expression, *"that they may be one,"* five times over. It is as if He felt the need of laying the emphasis strongly upon these words, if we are really to realize the chief thought of His High Priestly prayer. He longs that the words and the thought shall in very deed have the same place in our hearts that they have in His.

As He was on the way to go to the Father through the cross, He would have us understand that He took the thought and the desire with Him to heaven, to make it the object of His unceasing intercession there. And He entrusted the words to us that we should take them into the world with us, and make them the object of our unceasing intercession too. That alone would enable us to fulfill the last, the new command, which He gave, that we should love the brethren as He loved us, that our joy might be full.

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How little the church has understood this. How little its different branches are marked by a fervent affectionate love to all the saints of whatever name or denomination. Shall we not welcome heartily the invitation to make this prayer, *"that they may be one"* a chief part of our daily fellowship with God?

How simple it would be once we connected the two words, "our Father," with all the children of God throughout the world. Each time we used these sacred words we would only have to expand this little word "our" into all the largeness and riches of God's Father Love, and our hearts would soon learn as naturally as we say "Father" with the thought of His infinite love and our love to Him, to say "our" with the childlike affection to all the saints of God, whoever and wherever they be. The prayer that "*they may be one*" would then become a joy and a strength, a deeper bond of fellowship with Christ Jesus and all His saints, and an offering of a sweet savour to the Father of love.

Prayer for All Saints

Prayer for all saints: let this be our first thought. It will need time, and thought and love to realize what is included in that simple expression. Think of your own neighbourhood and the saints you know; think of your whole country, and praise God for all who are His saints; think of the Christian nations of the world, and the saints to be found in each of these; think of all the heathen nations and the saints of God to be found among them in ever-increasing numbers.

Think of all the different circumstances and conditions in which these are to be found, and all the very varying needs which call for God's grace and help. Think of many, oh, so many, who are God's saints, and yet through ignorance or sloth, through worldly-mindedness or an evil heart of unbelief, are walking in the dark, and bringing no honour to God. Think of so many who are in earnest, and yet conscious of a life of failure, with little or no power to please God or to bless man.

And then think again of those who are to be found everywhere, in solitary places or in companies, whose one aim is to serve the Lord who bought them, and to be the light of those around them. Think of them especially as joining, often, unconscious of their relation to the whole body of Christ, in pleading for the great promise of the Holy Spirit and the love and oneness of heart which He alone can give.

This is not the work of one day or one night. It needs a heart which will set itself from time to time to do serious thinking in regard to the state and the need of that body of Christ to which we belong. But when once we begin, we shall find what abundant reason there is for our persevering and yielding to God's Spirit, that He may fit us for the great and blessed work of day by day praying the twofold prayer, for the love of God and Christ to fill the hearts of His people, and for the power of the Holy Ghost to come down and accomplish God's work in this sinful world.

With One Accord

"They were all with one accord in one place…And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:1, 4).

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We may indeed thank God, for we know of the tens of thousands of His children who in daily prayer are pleading specially for some portion of the work of God's kingdom in which they are personally interested. But in many cases the prayers are limited to the work that they take an interest in, and there is a lack of that large-hearted and universal love that takes up all the saints of God and their service into its embrace. There is not the boldness and the strength that comes from the consciousness of being part of a large and conquering army under the leadership of our conquering King.

A wrestler in the games gathers up his whole strength and counts upon every member of his body doing its very utmost. In an army, with its millions of soldiers, each detachment not only throws its whole heart into the work that it has to do, but it is ready to rejoice and take new courage from every tiding of the bravery and enthusiasm of the far-distant members of the one great army.

And is not this what we need in the church of Christ, such an enthusiasm for the King and His Kingdom and such a faith in His purpose, that His name shall be made known to every human being, that our prayers shall rise up every day, with a large-hearted love that grasps the whole body of Christ and pleads daily for the power of the Holy Spirit on all its members, even to the very feeblest?

The strength unity gives is something inconceivable. The power of each individual member is increased to a large degree by the inspiration of fellowship with a large and conquering host. Nothing can so help us to an ever larger faith as the consciousness of being one body and one spirit in Christ Jesus. It was as the disciples were all with one accord in one place on the Day of Pentecost, that they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. United prayer brings the answer to prayer. Let us surrender our whole being to that intercession of the Spirit that will help to bring Pentecost again into the hearts of God's people.

– From *The Secret Of United Prayer*.

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