

kneel before the Lord our Maker.”¹ Solomon kneeled on his knees,² Daniel “kneeled on his knees three times a day and prayed,”³ the leper kneeled to Christ,⁴ also the father of the lunatic,⁵ Simon Peter and the Syro-phoenician woman fell down before Him,⁶ Jesus Himself set us the example of kneeling,⁷ St. Peter kneeled to pray,⁸ so did St. Stephen,⁹ and also St. Paul,¹⁰ and such was the general Christian custom.¹¹

From Sabine Baring-Gould’s

The Golden Gate

Fr. Baring-Gould is most famous for his hymn, “Onward Christian Soldiers”.

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Prayer with Power

By Rev. Baring-Gould

Author of

“Onward Christian Soldiers”

¹ Psalm 95:6

² 1 Kings 19:4; 2 Chronicles 6:13

³ Daniel 6:10

⁴ Mark 1:40

⁵ Matthew 17:14

⁶ Luke 5:8; Matthew 15:25

⁷ Luke 22:41

⁸ Acts 9:40

⁹ Acts 7:60

¹⁰ Acts 20:36; Ephesians 3:14

¹¹ Acts 21:5

1. Prayer need not be long. God does not desire “much speaking,”¹² but earnest, well-chosen utterances. The publican was justified by seven words, the penitent thief gained Paradise by a prayer of nine.

The same words may be repeated again and again. Thus David repeats “For His mercy endureth for ever” twenty seven times in one Psalm (136), and in the last Psalm attributes praise to God eleven times in succession. Thus the importunate [persistent] widow continued to repeat, “Avenge me of mine adversary,”¹³ and Christ in the garden repeated three times the same words, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.”¹⁴

2. Prayer to be efficacious must be (a) recollected, (b) detached, (c) earnest, (d) definite, (e) persevering.

(a) By *Recollected* is meant that all the powers of the mind should be called in and concentrated on Him to whom prayer is made. St. Peter toiled all night in his vessel and caught nothing till Jesus entered it. So in the work of prayer Christ must be present. And this presence is secured by endeavor to realize it.

The *mind* in recollected prayer is fixed on God, the *memory* is engaged in calling up God’s mercies, and the acts of Christ’s passion. The *understanding* is

directed to the comprehending of our necessities, or of whatever we are praying about. The *will* is exerted in desire to obtain what we ask for.

(b) By *Detached* is meant the loosening of the affections from earth; recollection has to do with the intellectual faculties, detachment refers to the affections of the heart. When St. Peter had received Jesus into his boat, he thrust out a little from the land, and so must we, in prayer, disengage our desires from earth to fix them on heaven.

(c) By *Earnest* is meant vehement desire to obtain what is asked for. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm.”¹⁵ The example of the Syrophoenician woman is one illustrating this truth.¹⁶

(d) By *Definite* is meant that prayer should not be vague and uncertain as to its objects. Certain things should be resolved on and then those things be prayed for. A good plan is to take a beatitude, or a virtue, or a gift of the Spirit, and pray for that; or else to pray for grace to overcome a certain sin, or to keep a particular commandment. Thus prayer, becoming definite, necessarily becomes also earnest.

(e) By *Persevering* is meant that prayer is to be continued through all discouragements, through dryness of soul,

and through apparent want of success. “Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you” our Lord says;¹⁷ by this repetition expressing the necessity of perseverance. St. Peter toiled all night and took nothing, but, by persevering till dawn he drew a miraculous draught of fishes. See for examples of perseverance, Luke 6: 12; 18: 1-8; Matthew 15: 22-28; Ephesians 6: 18; Judith 4: 9-13.

3. Prayers are not always answered immediately for several reasons. (1) From sin continuing unrepented of.¹⁸ (2) From want of fervor in prayer.¹⁹ (3) From want of perseverance.²⁰ (4) From want of faith.²¹ (5) From the prayer being badly offered.²² (6) Because if the prayer were granted it would be for our ill.²³ (7) Because God desires the intercession of others.²⁴ (8) Because presumptuous.²⁵

4. Prayer should be offered with reverent posture of the body, for prayer is the offering of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit to God. “O Come let us worship and fall down, and

¹² Matthew 6:7

¹³ Luke 18:1-8

¹⁴ Mark 14:39

¹⁵ Matthew 11:12

¹⁶ Matthew 15:22-28

¹⁷ Matthew 7:7

¹⁸ Isaiah 1:15; 59:2

¹⁹ Jeremiah 29: 12, 13

²⁰ Luke 11:8

²¹ James 1:6, 7

²² James 4:3

²³ 2 Corinthians 12:8

²⁴ 2 Kings 19:2-4; 22:14; Romans 15:30

²⁵ Matthew 20:22