

Delightful Discoveries in Prayer

Prayer Lessons in Creation

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Name: _____

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Lesson 14: The Sabbath and Righteousness

"But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," the Lord said also to them, 'Ye shall be holy men unto Me.' Exodus 20:8; 22:31." The Desire of Ages, page 257.

1. God creates when He speaks. Psalm 33:6, first part: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made."
2. It is by the breath of His mouth. Verse 6, last part: "And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."
3. When Christ spoke to the leper, "I will; be thou clean," there was cleansing in that word. Matthew 8:3. "And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
4. Jesus says we are also cleansed, spiritually, through His word. John 15:3: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."
5. All this proves His word is powerful. Luke 4:32: "His word was with power."
6. That powerful word of God is also powerful to reprove, to convict. Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
7. The challenge. Hebrews 4:7: "To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."
8. The response. Habakkuk 2:1: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."

ISRAEL'S SAD STORY:

As we read the story of Israel in the wilderness, we can see that they should have marched right into the land of Canaan in a short period of time after leaving Egypt. (It was only a two weeks' journey.) But in the 14th chapter of the book of Numbers, we read of a terrible sin they committed. Instead of listening to the voice of God that promised them the land of Canaan, they rebelled. They refused to believe His promises, to obey His commands, or take to heart the entreaties of Moses, His servant.

Because they doubted God's promise, and were not pleased with the way God had led them, they were in process of appointing a captain to return to Egypt. They actually picked up stones to slay the two faithful spies, Caleb and Joshua. It was then that God intervened, and spared the lives of His faithful servants from death at the hands of that rebellious mob. They heard His voice, but they did not listen. They did not claim in childlike faith, what God had so generously promised them. It was then that God

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passed the sentence upon them that they must turn back and wander in the wilderness for forty long years, until those rebellious doubters had all died. You would do well to read the whole story. It holds many lessons for us.

The Bible tells us that God changes not. Malachi 3:6: "I am the Lord, I change not." Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." When men turn from a complaining attitude against the leadings of God in their lives, and realize that God has a purpose in permitting trials to come our way to teach us patience (James 1:2, 3; Romans 5:3, 4); God is glorified.

GERTRUDE'S AFFLICTION

For many years Gertrude had been afflicted with various maladies, including jangled nerves and pitiful finances. Both were steadily growing worse. Although we had known Gertrude and her husband, Will, for years, distance precluded our becoming too familiar with their spiritual condition, or their responses to the Lord's leadership in their lives.

Then, one day, we received an amazing letter from Gertrude. She exclaimed: "We have done this __, and this __, and this __ to please the Lord, but He has done nothing for us!" My wife and I knew better. We knew God had done wonderful things for her and her family. Her words sounded much like the murmurings of Israel. God had led them through the Red Sea by a miracle which caused surrounding nations to stand aghast. He rained down manna from heaven—the most perfect food they could have eaten while traveling in the wilderness. He had caused water to gush out of solid rock to quench their thirst. Yet they repeatedly murmured against His leadings. God finally swore that they could not enter His rest. They must go back into the wilderness and wear out their lives. The land of promise was not to be theirs, but their children's.

This was Gertrude's spirit, but in a far lesser degree. She was not downright rebellious. Hers was a bitterness, a self-pity, that she herself did not fully detect.

During a period of several months, we continued in earnest prayer for Gertrude that she might find the Lord in a very real way. At times she wrote the most delightful letters of her love for God. Then again, there appeared a little strain of bitterness. Once again she would come out of the caves of depression and disappointment over God's leadings, and find answers to prayer.

It was during these days of deep trial and many disappointments, that Gertrude was afflicted with a serious physical malady which we feared threatened her life. She was hemorrhaging so badly, that we took to our knees in earnest prayer for her healing. The next thing we learned, she had been healed completely of this menacing disorder. Then again, ere long, she had little questions in her mind as to God's guidance in her life.

For years Gertrude had had a certain nerve disorder. It was becoming more aggravated, it seemed, until at times she considered suicide. My wife and I were hundreds of miles from Gertrude's home, but we felt impressed to ask the Lord to heal her. We felt that she had put away her little feelings of bitterness against God. So in spite of letters we received from friends, suggesting that Gertrude should be committed to an institution, we continued to pray. Finally, we called on some of our dear Christian friends to unite in a day of special prayer for her healing.

Soon after, we learned that Gertrude was partially healed. Then she began questioning God as to why she was not completely healed. All of this caused us grave concern.

One day, God came very close to Gertrude. He told her that she was entertaining an attitude toward Him, toward the providences of life, and toward healing, that was not warranted. She could not expect Him to bless her, and heal her, so long as she held a little club of bitterness over His head. As mentioned

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earlier, she had not fully realized to what extent she had permitted herself to question the Lord. But now she listened to hear what God would say, just as Habakkuk did so long ago. She would not harden her heart as He spoke.

It was only a few days after this that we received a message from Gertrude, "God has healed—gloriously healed!"

In spite of Gertrude's questionings, she was deeply sincere. She and her husband, Will, had for years been faithful to God in their financial stewardship. But in the very depths of poverty, she had suggested to Will that she thought they should increase their gifts to the Lord, and to charity. So they had decided to do this, by perhaps ten per cent. That brought their giving up to fully twenty-five per cent of their income, including their tithe.

This I mention to help us to see that Gertrude was not willfully bitter against God. It was, instead, a lingering, nearly hidden, sometimes entirely unrecognized kind of disappointment in her life. She had been searching for healing. She was determined to fulfill every condition to receiving all that God has promised. In healing her completely, God was exultantly proclaiming His reward for her fulfilling the simple conditions laid down in His Word. One of the biggest of these is a right attitude. Does not the Scripture say, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" Philippians 2:5? And did not Jesus say, "I do always those things that please him" John 8:29? This shows what the Christ-like attitude should be toward God's permissive will in our lives.

Now a financial disaster seemed to loom ahead. Satan decided he would confront Gertrude and Will with complete loss of almost every material thing they had on earth! Unless they could raise approximately \$1,200 within a few days, they would lose their car. Since Will worked some twenty-five miles from home, this meant that he could not get to and from work. They were also to lose their furniture which had been stored for almost a year. It had been stored, in the first place, because they moved from the city where they had been living; and when they arrived in the new location, could not afford to rent a house. They lived with a Christian family who had opened the doors of their home to them. Now the storage bill was mounting. Their precious furniture would soon be sold for storage costs. They had no time to lose in trying to float a loan. But where to secure the needed loan, they had no idea.

But there was a gleam of hope. Since Gertrude and her husband had for many months been faithful to God in returning to Him His own in tithes and offerings, she had an assurance now that with her little bitterness surrendered and gone, she could claim God's promise to supply their need.

CLAIMING MALACHI 3:8-12

The night before the deadline, Gertrude made a suggestion to her husband. "Will, let's talk over the question of our financial stewardship. Let us decide together whether we should continue to give twenty-five per cent of our income in tithes and offerings, or whether we should reduce our giving, since we are almost destitute. Our friends are paying our electric bills, our telephone bills, and are sharing their home with us. Shouldn't we pay our bills before we give so much to God?"

As they studied and prayed over the matter, they were impressed that they should not diminish their giving. In fact, by the time they were through with their discussion, they had made a firmer commitment to the Lord than before. Their tithes and offerings, and all gifts to charity and religious purposes, would continue to be twenty-five per cent of their income.

"Now," said Gertrude, "let's fall on our knees with the promise of Malachi 3:8 to 12 before us. Let us ask God to do exactly what He has promised. Then let us tell Him we take Him at His word. Let us really

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believe. Let us not doubt. And then let us reach right up by simple faith, and tell God that we have received, just as we have been taught.”

Will agreed wholeheartedly. And so did their children, Grace and Sam. The four prayed together. They used the ABC’s of prayer. A-is ask, Matthew 7:7. B-is believe, Mark 11:24. And C-is to claim, or receive right on the spot, Matthew 21:22. Then watch and wait to see how the Lord is fulfilling His word.

As they rose from their knees, Gertrude turned to Will and exclaimed, “Brother Andrews is going to call our banker before we get there in the morning, and tell him to loan us the money.”

Will was not so sure. He was thinking of another promise which states that we do not know how God is going to answer. For us to tell God just how and when to answer us, could be presumption. So Will shied away from Gertrude’s remark. But, nothing daunted, Gertrude persisted.

“How do you know this is the way it is going to take place?” Will responded, somewhat irritated. Irritation was not usually a part of Will’s nature. He was naturally one of the most patient of men. But Gertrude detected that Will was afraid she was becoming presumptuous. And well he might have, too. I think I would have entertained the same misgivings had my wife said to me what Gertrude did to Will.

“I will tell you how I know Brother Andrews is going to call the bank,” Gertrude replied.

“Well, tell me, then,” Will retorted.

“Because,” Gertrude said, “I heard a voice. It was that of the Holy Spirit. He told me so. I had a glorious revelation. And I am absolutely sure about it. I have Christ’s word for it.”

On the way to the bank, Gertrude exclaimed, “Will, the Holy Spirit has just spoken to my heart again. Brother Andrews is going to call the bank and tell the banker to let us borrow this money.” But Will was in no frame of mind to be taken in by some sudden impulse, as he felt hers to be.

“I am afraid, Gertrude,” Will cautioned, “that you are going ahead of the Lord. Don’t be too sure of the way God is answering our prayer.”

Again, friends, I would have gone along with Will, wouldn’t you? Listen to this text of Scripture, and see if Will was not showing a reasonable attitude. “And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known.” Isaiah 42:16. While the last part of the same text is full of promises that God will not forsake, yet it is prefaced by that very strong assertion we have just read. It may be in a way that we do not know. So Will was on solid ground. But this did not change Gertrude in the least.

"A few minutes later, as they were nearing the bank, Gertrude made an even more startling statement. “Will,” she cried out in joy, “when we walk into the bank, Brother Andrews will be talking with the banker on the phone.”

This was altogether too much for Will to endure. Another text of Scripture may have been in the background of his thinking. It is, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Jeremiah 33:3. The last part of the promise assures us that we may not always know how God is going to answer our prayers. We must surrender, and commit our way to the Lord. We must trust the Lord to do it His way.

A few moments later, Gertrude and Will walked into the bank. As they took seats, they found themselves in a position where they could see the banker over in his little booth. He was on the phone. And Gertrude and Will listened attentively--Gertrude, because she knew what the answer would be:

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Will, because he was waiting to show Gertrude how wrong she had been in going ahead of the Lord, as he had thought.

"Will," Gertrude whispered, "did you hear that? Our banker said to Brother Andrews, who is on the other end of the line: "I will do anything I can to help them"

A few moments later, the banker beckoned Gertrude and Will to come in to where he was.

"Have chairs," he began. "A friend of yours, and a good patron of ours, a Mr. Andrews, just hung up. He was discussing with me his desire for you to get a loan, and he offered to co-sign with you."

Will was almost speechless. He had been on sound ground, according to the promises. But Gertrude had been on sound ground, too, because she had heard a voice speaking to her soul. It was the same voice to which she had listened as it had reproved her. Now that voice was directing her.

This experience in guidance is an exception to the rule. I certainly would never have taken any other attitude, as I mentioned earlier, than Will took. But on the other hand, Gertrude had fulfilled needful conditions to answered prayer. She had put away her bitter feelings. She had made an unconditional commitment to her Lord. She and Will had not wavered in their financial commitment to God. Had not Jesus promised, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" John 15:7? I believe in order to be sure it was God's voice speaking to her, Gertrude had to first have the experience of listening to His voice of conviction.

Brother Andrews confirmed the story. He reported, "I was over a thousand miles distant from Gertrude and Will at the time. On that particular morning, at just the right moment--following a definite impression--I left my typewriter, walked over to the phone and called the banker regarding the need of this couple. While I was talking with him, all of a sudden he interrupted me and said, "Gertrude and Will are here. Would you like to talk with them?" I replied, "No, that will be all right. You take care of the problem, and I will endorse the note."

There are doubtless those who have financial, or other problems, similar to Gertrude's and Will's. May I suggest that you ask God, in the words of the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23 and 24."

It may be that your Lord will suggest to some of you that you are harboring bitterness, long cherished, but never recognized. You will leave that at His feet. He may suggest to you that you have not been faithful in your stewardship, including financial giving. Or He may reveal something else that needs to be surrendered before He can solve the problem you are presenting to Him. Israel did not heed the voice, and their hearts became hard. It is possible for a person to sit and hear the voice of God, and be farther from repentance than before. Therefore: "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:30 to 32.

That same voice that spoke, and cleansed the leper; that spoke, and raised Lazarus from the dead; that spoke and offered the repentant thief Paradise; that spoke to Gertrude, and delivered her, healed her, and solved her financial problem; is speaking to you just now. Our Lord softly speaks: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20.

It may be that the same God who spoke to Habakkuk when the prophet decided to watch for that voice, will reveal duties as a condition to answered prayer. If so, why not do as Gertrude did—put away all

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bitterness, worldliness, selfishness, or what-have-you, and let our Lord into your heart? His voice speaks peace. He will give solutions to every problem of life just as He did for Gertrude; for "God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10:34.

"It is no Secret,
What God can do;
What He's done for others,
He'll do for you!
With arms wide open,
He'll pardon you!
It is no Secret
What God can do!"

Deliverance through the Word of God:

"Satan ... cannot hold in spiritual death one soul who in faith receives Christ's word of power. God is saying to all who are dead in sin, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Ephesians 5:14. That word is eternal life. As the word of God which bade the first man live, still gives us life; as Christ's word, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise," gave life to the youth of Nain, so that word, "Arise from the dead," is life to the soul that receives it. God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Colossians 1:13. It is all offered us in His word. If we receive the word we have the deliverance. "The Desire of Ages, page 297.

Review Questions

Note: Be free to check which of the following blanks represent the correct answer.

1. God's word is (a) with power ____, (b) with weakness ____, (c) with tradition ____, Luke 4:32.
2. The Word of God is (a) slow ____, (b) quick, and powerful ____. Heb. 4:12.
3. God promises that if we bring to Him our tithes and offerings, He will (a) let us come to want ____, (b) open the windows of heaven ____. Mal. 3:10-12.
4. There is a text of Scripture which gives the ABC's of claiming Bible promises. It is (a) Mark 11:22 ____, (b) Matt. 21:22 ____.

Answers found on answer sheet.