

Behold he prayeth

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[0 : 00] chapter 9 and verse 11. The words of the risen Christ to Ananias. Arise and go into the street which is called straight and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for behold he prayeth.

And especially these words for behold he prayeth. When heaven brings forward a mark of the great saving change wrought in this man who called himself the chief of sinners heaven latches onto what may seem a very simple and almost unnoticeable thing he prayeth.

Without any shadow of doubt the conversion of this man's Saul of Tarsus was a terrific and traumatic event not only in his own life but in the life of the whole New Testament church.

And it is an event that has left its mark not only on the church of his own day but on the church of Jesus Christ right down through the centuries since then.

Conversion to Christ is a turning point in any life. Every converted person here tonight knows that.

[1 : 57] And just as it is always the turning point in our life so it was the turning point in the life of this man Saul of Tarsus. But conversion the conversion of Saul was the turning point not only in his own life but in the life of the whole church of his day.

That fact points to a very simple but very important thing. how vital the conversion of one person in any age or in any place can be and should be for the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible makes it clear that heaven rejoices there is joy in the presence of the angel over one sinner who repents.

Christ around whom the angel serve and praise Christ the risen one rejoices. God himself rejoices the father rejoices when a sinner is converted but it is an important event not only in heaven but on earth also.

The conversion of a sinner is something that we must never underestimate. Again and again in history the conversion of one person has under the hand of God and by grace been a turning point in the welfare of the whole church on earth.

[3 : 50] I wonder if you're here tonight and your conversion to Christ by the amazing grace of God will leave its mark on this age.

Aren't you think the minister is taking a flight of fancy? No my friend. Your conversion to Christ if you're not converted yet could be one of the most remarkable thing to have in this age.

Saul struck down and Saul blinded and Saul made to feel his sinnership and Saul of Tarsus praying behold he prayed and it is the only assurance of a real radical heart change that the risen Christ gives to assure the heart of Ananias as he sends him to Saul.

Now I want us to take notice of this. Every one of us would agree I think that Paul more than any other of the converts of his age left his mark in the New Testament church.

We think of him and we rightly think of him as a great pattern great example of what a Christian convert is. We think of him as a great pattern of what Christian service should be.

[5 : 36] Just think of some of the things that marked this man out as a servant of God. When it comes to a mastery of divine truth what a mind this man has under the Holy Spirit.

How he knew the Bible and how he knew the mind of God and how he was able to convey that in these wonderful New Testament letters.

What a mastery of truth and what an ability out of that mastery of truth to teach others the way of God more perfectly. My friend, do you want to help other Christians master your Bible?

The best education any man can have is obtainable. Not in Glasgow University, nor in St. Andrews, nor in Cambridge or Oxford, not even in Aberdeen.

the best education that any man can obtain is obtainable to us all in the word of God which endures forever.

[6 : 49] Sad mark of the weakness of the church today is its ignorance of God's word. Or think of Paul in his devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This man could say I live yet not I, but Christ lives in me. You never see the zeal of Paul as a Christian flagging and waning and wavering, do you?

From the moment of his conversion until the moment years later, what a testimony he has. He presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God.

He's not like the converts that are bound today. One day they're bright and the next day you wouldn't know the difference between them and an ungodly world. Or when we think of the experience that Paul had of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and of the indwelling of Christ, he knew Christ in his life to the extent that he can say this is the hope of glory, Christ dwelling in your heart. Or when we think of the remarkable humility of the man and how he was willing to serve others. And rather than have Christian believers say often this man makes demands in my pocket, he would so tense.

[8 : 21] or his missionary enthusiasm. This man looked for conversions of others from the moment of his own conversion.

He was converted, he found peace with Christ, the scale fell from his eyes, and listen, straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue.

But he is the son of God. What a turn about in the mind of this Jew who had all his days preached and tried to serve one God.

He is now saying distinctively Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal son of God. I wish he was teaching in some of the theological colleges in our land today.

The message he took to the synagogues of Damascus. In all these things, yes, and in a thousand other ways, Paul is a patron for every believer.

[9 : 32] But you know, we don't often pause to think of this, but I think that it is very true that perhaps above all, Paul is a patron to Christians, patron of prayer.

Not just the patron of a prayer life. It is not Paul's method that shines out, but it is Paul the man caught up in the reality of communion and fellowship with God.

Paul, as a Christian believer, living a life that is totally dependent upon the power of the Holy Ghost, as prayer brings that power down into his heart and his life's experience, and his service with Christ. Where there are no other testimony in the Bible, but a monumental testimony to the reality power, and the power, and the power, yes, and let me say this, the pleasure of living a life of prayer, this man is.

I wish we had many Paul's in the church today. I believe the scene within the church will be different.

[10 : 53] Why do we not have many Paul's? Why are all our deacons not Paul's in the life of prayer? Why are all our elders not Paul's? Why are all our ministers not Paul's?

nothing was available to Paul, but is available to the most humble Christian today. The grace of God, if only the most humble Christian, would ask for grace to lay hold of it.

I want us to look at Paul this evening as a patron of prayer, because what Jesus said of him at the outset of his spiritual pilgrimage was to be the keynote of his Christian life.

Behold, he prays there in Damascus when he's blind. Behold, he prays as he goes to Jerusalem to meet the apostles.

Behold, he prays as he goes out to mission. Through Asia Minor, behold, he prays as he stoned for the witness of Christ.

[12 : 09] Right through the keynote of this man's life, can be summed up in the words of Christ about him. Behold, he prays. Let me ask you, my friend, my Christian friend, is that the keynote of your life?

I don't ask those who are not Christians tonight, because as yet they don't know what prayer is really. Let me ask everyone now, what use we make of prayer.

Boys and girls, do you pray? You're not too wee to bend your knee by your bedside, and lift up your mind and heart to the God of heaven, and bring many petitions to him.

No matter how wee you are, you're not too wee. And no matter how old you are, you're not too old to come to a throne of grace.

No matter how useless you may feel in the world, as far as the cause is concerned, here is something you can do. Perhaps you find it difficult to speak to other people, it should not be difficult

if you're in Christ, to speak to God for other people.

[13 : 38] Notice this. First of all, that prayer was the heartbeat of this man's Christian living.

I want to illustrate that from some of his own letters. The fact that prayer permeated his life at every level comes out very clearly.

And yet it comes out in an almost unconscious way. You know, you can't really write a letter to a friend without revealing to the friend what kind of passion you are, can't you?

I was saying to somebody just the other day, you can't really stand in a pulpit and preach without revealing what kind of passion you are either. It's one of the awful things about preaching.

And when Paul wrote his letters under the hand of the Holy Ghost, he almost unconsciously, yes, I believe totally unconsciously, unselfconsciously, certainly, me, he revealed what manner of man he was.

[14 : 50] He opened up the secret of his spiritual life and he showed all his readers in every age that he was a man given to prayer.

And given to much prayer. Let me illustrate that by just two or three quotations from his own pen. Here he is writing to the Romans. he's going to give them a great message about the gospel.

He's going to tell them how for months and even years he's been longing to come to them and preach the gospel to them and impart some spiritual gift to them.

And before he gets down to the real theme, yes, in verse 9, just after he's opened his letter, this is what he says, God, he says, is my witness.

that without ceasing, notice his words, God is my witness that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.

[16 : 01] He's wanting to reassure these people about the gospel. and he begins by telling them that without ceasing he remembers them and do you have anyone that you remember without ceasing?

Do you pray for churches that you've never seen, for Paul had never seen this one? Do you remember them without ceasing in your prayers to God? The church in Ethiopia or the church in South Africa or Peru or in India where we have our own missionaries serving in our name?

And you say tonight God is my witness that without ceasing I I ask, you'll talk about the church, just like me.

You'll talk about it and you'll say what a poor thing the church in the world is today. Not bending its knees but bending like rushes before the wind of every breath of modernism that blows on it.

Always we're complaining about the church. How often do we pray for the church? And then still in Romans, Romans 10 now, he's talking of his attitude to the unconverted Jews who would crucify him if they got their way and listen to him.

[17 : 28] Oh, he says, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.

God's he prays for his persecutors this month. He prays for the people that are a real thorn in his flesh. He prays for the people that are a terrible hindrance in his ministry.

He prays for the people that stone him and drag him out of current. My heart's desire, it wasn't just the words of his lips, but his heart breathed out and longed that Israel would be saved.

He loved his nation. He loved and esteemed the privileges that had been his because he was a Jew. Do you love the privileges that God gave you being born in a land where you can hear the gospel, being born perhaps into a home where a father or a mother prayed for you?

Listen to him when he writes to the Corinthians. And he's just started the letter, 1 Corinthians 1.4. I thank my God always on your behalf for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.

[18 : 51] He looked at these Corinthian believers and he thanked God for the grace of Christ shining in them. Do you often thank God for your fellow believers and for what you see of the grace of God at work in them?

For what you see of the Lord Jesus shining through them that reaffirms and reassures your own faith and that makes you love them far more dearly than you love anyone else in the world.

Warms your heart towards them and makes you bend by your bedside and say oh Lord bless them tonight. And bless them this morning too because you'll remember them not just when you're going to bed or when you're getting out of it.

I thank my God well or just on Monday or Tuesdays Paul. No no no no says Paul. I thank my God always on your behalf.

And then to the Ephesian believers he writes like this Ephesians 1:16 I cease not to give thanks for you making mention of you in my prayers.

[20:10] What are parts of the prayers. Now these prayers and there's many others I could have quoted but you'd be here till 10 o'clock tonight if I quoted them. These prayers taken together give us the picture of a man who prayed much.

That's what a Christian should be a passion who prays much. Are you a Christian? Do you pray much?

Pray without sitting was not a pious phrase rolling off the tongue of this man. Pray without sitting was a reality in his own everyday life.

Paul how can you get time to pray when you're doing so many things. Perhaps you think well he wasn't caught up in life the way I am not apostle. Well my friend he was.

He was far busier than you are and he was far busier in the kingdom of God than you are or than I am. But he realised that prayer was so vital.

[21:29] Very hard to make time for it. What a patron for prayer. For prayer is of the very heartbeat the centre of his Christian living.

And unless it is the heartbeat of our Christian living too our Christian living will be poor and wretched. God will be poor and I want for a moment just to dwell on the content.

How did Paul pray? What sort of prayers did he pray for these people? How should I pray? How should you pray? And prayer is not easy. If you've got any experience of God and of Christ and of grace you know that prayer is not an easy thing.

It goes against almost everything we are by nature. We get down on our knees there and we begin to think of things all around us that we haven't thought of for days. We go to approach the throne of grace and things that are wrong in our hearts rise up and deter us.

And God's word comes through if we regard sin in our heart the Lord will not hear us. And when we're five minutes praying we think we've been in our knees for another hour and we say it's damn I was getting up now.

[22:50] And above all we say how do I really pray? How should a believer approach a great and holy God? Well let's look for a moment at the content and we're just looking at some of them.

Here's one of the very notable things about Paul's prayers. They are nearly always for Christian believers. Paul Selden if ever says that he prays for unbelievers but he frequently prays for his fellow believers.

And he prays very special things for his fellow believers. Let me give you one of them. He prays for continual enlightenment in his fellow believers.

Ephesians 1 and verse 69 he says since I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love to all the saints cease not to give thanks for you making mention of you of you and my prayers but the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation. you. Do you pray like that for other believers? God give them more light. Give them the spirit of wisdom that they may walk wisely in the world and be godly.

[24:27] Give them the spirit of wisdom in all their contacts with other people that you may be glorified. Give them the spirit of revelation that more and more they'll enter into the treasures and the riches of the grace of Christ and know more and more of what he is and of what he has done for them.

And one of the notable things in Paul's prayer is that God would establish believers. Paul saw people converted.

I don't think he spent a lot of time talking to them about God but he spent a lot of time talking to God about them. He knew the dangers that he immediately confronted a young convert to Christ and they're still there.

And he prayed that God would establish them, ground them, root them, make them firm in the faith and make them stand strong like big trees.

that would stand up against a gale. I pray he says that God may strengthen and establish you.

[25:51] He says that in almost every letter. He prays for the establishment of God's people. Can I sum it up like this? The content of Paul's prayer really centers around this thing that God will work powerfully in every believer.

There is something to pray. That God will bring them on and make their light shine brighter and brighter in this world. something was drawing my attention this week to something I think I had seen

before in the writings of Arthur Pink, A.W.

Pink. He draws attention to this fact that Paul doesn't pray as the Arminians do for the conversion of the whole world.

He never prays for that. He doesn't pray that God will pour out his spirit upon the whole world. He concentrates his prayers upon God's elect people.

And the strength of his prayers are not for unconverted people, but for converted people. It's a very remarkable thing.

[27 : 16] And it's very different from much of the praying that we hear in the church today, or that we hear in our prayer meetings, or it's very different from the prayer that we use all too frequently on our knees.

This man is continually praying within the will, the revealed will, and mind of God. prayer. And then, finally, I want to look just at this with you, because it reveals Paul's belief about prayer.

We've been looking at the fact that the heartbeat of his Christian life was prayer. And we've been saying that the content of his prayers centered upon God's work in his people.

And finally, this we might pass it over without noticing. We see how strongly Paul believed in prayer by the fact of his requests, his almost incessant requests, for the prayers of other Christians.

For Paul, prayer wasn't something just for the apostles. It wasn't something that he practiced and that other Christians could leave. as they felt like it.

[28 : 40] Every letter he wrote asks for the prayers of every believer. That's a very instructive fact.

That a man like Paul, a man who had such a knowledge of truth, a man who had such an experience of the indwelling Christ, a man who knew so much of the anointing and power of the Holy Ghost, that such a man, a man who went out preaching the gospel and saw the world of his day turned upside down and inside out through his preaching, that such a man would ask the humblest Christian believer in Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi, pray for me.

That's a remarkable. This man felt his need of the prayers of God's people.

Let me ask you a question. Do you pray for the preacher you go to hear? Or if you belong to St. Vincent Street, do you pray for the minister who is preaching from the pulpit?

Did you, before you left home tonight, did you ask God to bless the preacher to your soul that he would come to hear? I sometimes hear people complaining that they go to hear preachers and come away unbled.

[30 : 18] Sometimes you, as I visit you in the home and talk with you, you tell me that you come out from under the thermos and you wish God have given you more and I sympathize with you.

I don't find preaching or preparing for preaching an easy thing. But I want to ask you this, how often do you really ask God to help the minister and to make the minister a channel of life and power for you?

And let me ask you this too, can you really expect to meet to meet with God and be blessed of God and be thrilled by the gospel if you're not asking for the preacher?

Paul had been preaching for more than 20 years when he said, pray for me that a door of utram may be opened up.

He had been preaching for more than 20 years when he asked another church to pray that he might speak as he ought to speak. I've been preaching for 23 years and after 23 years of preaching I feel I need your prayers more desperately than ever before.

[31 : 49] Sometimes over recent months, and I'm saying this quite frankly, sometimes over recent months I have wondered how I can go on in a preacher of the gospel unless God gives me more of himself and more power and more evidence that he is using my preaching.

Some months ago when I was ill I was writing to someone that I know very well and I was marking the difference between his work and mine. I had to say to him you can go out to your field and you can plough and sow and you'll see a harvest and you'll be able to measure the return that God has given you for your labor.

For a minister it's not like that. It's not like that. And because we have really no standard for measuring the returns it's often difficult to go on.

a minister means you in prayer.

So do the elders. How do you think it's easy for elders to be godly men men or for deacons? It's easy for the men who go from our midst to supply the other pulpits in Glasgow.

[33 : 30] people and I thank God that they are here to do that. It's one thing that encourages me. That from my own ministry other men are going out to preach the gospel and I think some of them are doing it far more effectively than I do myself when I rejoice in Christ.

But do you pray for them? Who else is going to pray for them if we don't pray for them? Paul never presumed on his salvation.

I don't know anybody in the whole scriptures who had such an assurance of salvation as Paul had. Paul put right and he meant it and he wrote it out of his own experience. I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

But Paul wrote something else too. Let me read to you what Paul wrote. in connection with requests for prayer. Paul wrote this to the Romans again.

I beseech you brethren for the Lord Jesus Christ sake and for the love of the Spirit that ye strive together by prayer for me.

[34 : 57] That you strive together with God with me in prayer to God for me. He is talking again to the Corinthians at 2nd Corinthians 1.10 of his own difficulties and he says of Christ in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us ye also notice this ye also helping together by prayer to him for us.

Oh he says I know I believe that I be delivered through Christ from all the things that are troubling me. That's not quite what he said.

I will be delivered by Christ and by your prayer together your prayers will cooperate. They'll reach heaven's throne and they'll bring down heaven's power.

Nothing else will bring down the power. Since I took ill in November I've been looking at books that talk about power and the presence of the spirit in the church because that's what we long to see. I've been reading biographies of ministers and preachers and histories of revival and one thing I have noticed that through this century from 1900 on there seemed to be a languished longing in the hearts of many Christians to have power from God on the easiest possible terms.

[36 : 53] Let me say that again. One thing that stands out of much of the writing in the 20th century about the secret of power with God is the desire to have it as cheaply as possible or as easily as possible.

But they wouldn't use the word cheaply. You get books that are devoted to the consecration of the heart or the submission of the life or you do this or you do that and then almost automatically the power of God comes down.

But when you go back to the writings of our great Scottish ministers who knew revival, when you go back to the writings of the Puritans who walked with God, you know what you find?

you find a stress on one thing, the need of prayer in relation to power.

No matter how close we walk, no matter how much of the Holy Ghost there is in us or upon us, God will work his works through the prayers of his people.

[38 : 04] I will yet be inquired of Israel for this. I looked and I wondered, this is God speaking, I looked and I wondered and found none and wondered that there was no intercessor.

Where are the intercessors of the throne of grace today? two or three of our men have been talking to me over recent weeks about how in some congregations they find it very easy to preach and they feel a liberty and a power and a freedom in preaching the gospel and how when they go to other places they find it very difficult.

Two or three of them have said to me, why do you think that is? and I have had to say this to them, I think it is a mark either of the prayerfulness or the prayerlessness of the congregations to which you're preaching.

May God save us, save me and save the men among us and save our ministers from the agony of trying to preach to our prayerless people.

It's like but in your head against us don't walk. You know if there was nothing else but the hardness or the liberty that a man can know in preaching the gospel if there was nothing else but that it would convince me of the reality of spiritual things.

[39 : 44] I have gone into a group that can remember it very vividly to this day when I was a student in Abedin I won't say where it was and from the moment I opened my mouth in that tulpe the presence of God filled the place and preaching was a very strange experience it was like standing beside someone else preaching the gospel it wasn't a big congregation then what did it I believe just one thing that in it were people who prayed to God for power and who commanded the power of heaven I have said and I have been glad to be able to say that for the first year since St.

Vincent St. I enjoyed preaching and I believe that was for one reason only because you were praying for me now I am not asking for your prayers primarily that I would enjoy preaching I want to enjoy preaching because if I don't enjoy my preaching I don't think you will enjoy it but I am asking for your prayers primarily because the whole cause of Christ amongst us need your prayers our children going up to our Sunday school they need your prayers or they'll go out and they'll become grossly worldly men and women and they'll be lost to Christ and his cause and worse they will be lost in hell for eternity our young people in our youth club and our youth fellowship need your prayers too or their lives will be useless and powerless and christless our deacons need them or they cannot be godly men our elders need them or they cannot rule wisely and in the fear of god and every individual member needs the prayers of every other member are you contributing to the cause of god amongst them with your prayers let me ask you this tonight will heaven look down upon you and will the risen christ say of you behold he prayeth behold she prayeth and will your prayers attract the presence and power of god upon us in a new way now i know that every christian believer here agrees with what i have been saying from the life of god we can agree with it we can put out amen to it but the sad fact is that although we do that we can go out from this sermon unchanged in reality this sermon will only be effective if the holy spirit takes it and through it gives us a new region in the place of pain we will have to make time to do it we will have to exert effort to do it but it will be worthwhile be good and■t and.