

A Dynamic of Prevailing Prayer

By Arthur Wallis



There are conditions of prayer to which God has pledged Himself to respond. The New Testament contains several of these principles, and any one of them, if obeyed, will ensure that the prayer prevails. The first requires that we pray in the position of abiding.

What Is Abiding? “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7, KJV). The Lord Jesus had told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come to them. “At that day,” He said, “ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20).

The Father was His whole source and sphere of life. [Jesus] had not come of Himself, but had been sent by the Father (John 7:28). He had no teaching or words of His own, but spoke the words given Him by the Father (John 7:16). He could do nothing of Himself, only what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19). His very life depended on the Father (John 6:57). He ever sought, not His own will or glory, but the Father’s (John 5:30).

To abide in Christ is to maintain in principle the same relationship toward Him that He maintained toward the Father. This means firstly, a life of submission in which we gladly consent to the limitations of “that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We accept a bondage which we find to be perfect freedom. We pray, “Make me a captive,

Lord, and then I shall be free.”

Then it must be also a life of renunciation of ourselves, our abilities, our resources. We have to come to the place of weakness and emptiness that His strength may be made perfect in us. He is the vine, we are the branches. The vine has everything, the branch has nothing. “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself . . . no more can ye” (John 15:4).

Finally, abiding involves a life of faith which looks to Christ for all, and finds its all-sufficiency in Him. Alongside the statement of Christ, “for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), we must put Paul’s triumphant declaration, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13).

The Saviour revealed that His was a life of faith in dependence on the Father, when He said, “I live by the Father” (John 6:57). But He also declared, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19), and this requires the same attitude of faith that possessed Him.

His Words Must Abide in Us

As well as abiding in Him, the condition requires that His words abide in us. These He had earlier described as “spirit and life” (John 6:63), that is full of divine energy and life-giving power. It is impossible to embrace those life-giving words without experiencing their spiritual and moral force.

Christ had to say of some, “my word hath not free course in you” (John 8:37, asv). They rejected both Him and His message, to their own eternal disaster. Others accepted the message joyfully, but did not allow it to root fully in their hearts, so that the new growth withered in the hour of persecution; or they allowed it to be choked by worldly cares, and so to become unfruitful. These received the Word, but did not allow it to abide in them.

There were those, however, who allowed His Word to make its home in their hearts, to take deep root, and to spring up in spiritual fruitfulness. His words had already begun to abide in them, doing their quickening and fertilizing work.

To Live Is Christ

There may be different grades or degrees of abiding according to our spiritual understanding and development. The principle, however, does not change. When we can say from the heart, "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21), we are surely abiding in Him, and this gives us a position of authority with God in prayer.

So long as we fulfill the condition, as it is revealed to us, the Lord is pledged to answer whatever prayer we offer. So long as we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, He can safely trust us with a blank cheque drawn on the bank of heaven.

In His holy humanity the Saviour's prayers were never refused by God, because He was ever abiding in the Father. "Father," He prayed, "I thank Thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always" (John 11:41-42). Seeking neither His own will nor His own glory, but ever the Father's, He had only to ask in order to receive.

We shall be trusted in the same way when we fulfill the same condition. When the Father knows that it will be in His interests and for His glory that a certain petition is fulfilled, He cannot but respond to it. Such petitions ever flow from the life that abides in Christ.

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