

'Pray Without Ceasing'

A Sermon

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'Pray without ceasing.' [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#).

THE POSITION OF OUR TEXT is very suggestive. Observe what it follows. It comes immediately after the precept, 'Rejoice evermore;' as if that command had somewhat staggered the reader, and made him ask 'How can I always rejoice?' and, therefore, the apostle appended as answer, 'Always pray.' The more praying the more rejoicing. Prayer gives a channel to the pent-up sorrows of the soul, they flow away, and in their stead streams of sacred delight pour into the heart. At the same time the more rejoicing the more praying; when the heart is in a quiet condition, and full of joy in the Lord, then also will it be sure to draw nigh unto the Lord in worship. Holy joy and prayer act and react upon each other.

Observe, however, what immediately follows the text: 'In everything give thanks.' When joy and prayer are married their first born child is gratitude. When we joy in God for what we have, and believingly pray to him for more, then our souls thank him both in the enjoyment of what we have, and in the prospect of what is yet to come. Those three texts are three companion pictures, representing the life of a true Christian, the central sketch is the connecting link between those on either side. These three precepts are an ornament of grace to every believer's neck, wear them every one of you, for glory and for beauty; 'Rejoice evermore;' 'Pray without ceasing;' 'in everything give thanks.'

But we cannot spare any time for the consideration of the context, but must advance to the precept in hand. Our text though exceedingly short is marvellously full, and we will discuss it under the following heads. We shall ask and answer four questions. *What do these words imply?* Secondly, *What do they actually mean?* Thirdly, *How shall we obey them?* And, fourthly, *Why should WE especially obey them?*

I. WHAT DO THESE WORDS IMPLY? 'Pray without ceasing.' Do they not imply that *the use of the voice is not an essential element in prayer?* It would be most unseemly even if it were possible for us to continue unceasingly to pray aloud. There would of course be no opportunity for preaching and hearing, for the exchange of friendly intercourse, for business, or for any other of the duties of life; while the din of so many voices would remind our neighbors rather of the worship of Baal than that of Zion. It was never the design of the Lord Jesus that our throats, lungs, and tongues should be for ever at work. Since we are to pray without ceasing, and yet could not pray with the voice without ceasing, it is clear that audible language is not essential to prayer. We may speak a thousand words which seem to

be prayer, and yet never pray; on the other hand, we may cry into God's ear most effectually, and yet never say a word. In the book of Exodus God is represented as saying to Moses, 'Why criest thou unto me?' And yet it is not recorded that Moses had uttered so much as a single syllable at that time. It is true that the use of the voice often helps prayer. I find, personally, that I can pray best when alone if I can hear my own voice; at the same time it is not essential, it does not enter at all into the acceptability, reality, or prevalence of prayer. Silence is as fit a garment for devotion as any that language can fashion.

It is equally clear that *the posture of prayer is of no great importance*, for if it were necessary that we should pray on our knees we could not pray without ceasing, the posture would become painful and injurious. To what end has our Creator given us feet, if he desires us never to stand upon them? If he had meant us to be on our knees without ceasing, he would have fashioned the body differently, and would not have endowed us with such unnecessary length of limb. It is well to pray on one's knees; it is a most fitting posture; it is one which expresses humility, and when humility is truly felt, kneeling is a natural and beautiful token of it, but, at the same time, good men have prayed flat upon their faces, have prayed sitting, have prayed standing, have prayed in any posture, and the posture does not enter into the essence of prayer. Consent not to be placed in bondage by those to whom the bended knee is reckoned of more importance than the contrite heart.

It is clear, too, from the text, that *the place is not essential to prayer*, for if there were only certain holy places where prayer was acceptable, and we had to pray without ceasing, our churches ought to be extremely large, that we might always live in them, and they would have to comprise all the arrangements necessary for human habitations. If it be true that there is some sanctity this side of a brick-wall more than there is on the other side of it, if it be true that the fresh air blows away grace, and that for the highest acceptance we need groined arches, pillars, aisle, chancel, and transept, then farewell, ye green lanes, and fair gardens, and lovely woods, for henceforth we must, without ceasing, dwell where your fragrance and freshness can never reach us. But this is ridiculous; wherefore I gather that the frequenting of some one particular place has little or nothing to do with prayer; and such a conclusion is consistent with the saying of Paul upon Mars' Hill, 'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.'

'Pray without ceasing.' That precept at one stroke *overthrows the idea of particular times* wherein prayer is more acceptable or more proper than at others. If I am to pray without ceasing, then every second must be suitable for prayer, and there is not one unholy moment in the hour, nor one unaccepted hour in the day, nor one unhallowed day in the year. The Lord has not appointed a certain week for prayer, but all weeks should be weeks of prayer: neither has he said that one hour of the day is more acceptable than another. All time is equally legitimate for supplication, equally holy, equally accepted with God, or else we should

not have been told to pray without ceasing. It is good to have your times of prayer; it is good to set apart seasons for special supplication we have no doubt of that; but we must never allow this to gender the superstition that there is a certain holy hour for prayer in the morning, a specially acceptable hour for prayer in the evening, and a sacred time for prayer at certain seasons of the year. Wherever we seek the Lord with true hearts he is found of us; whenever we cry unto him he heareth us. Every place is hallowed ground to a hallowed heart, and every day is a holy day to a holy man. From January to December the calendar has not one date in which prayer is forbidden. All the days are red-letter days, whether Sabbaths or week days they are all accepted times for prayer. Clear, then, is it from the text, that the voice, the posture, the place, the time none of them enter into the essence of prayer, or else, in this case, we should be commanded to perform an impossibility, which we are quite certain is not after the manner of the Lord our God.

There is one other thing implied in the text, namely, that *a Christian has no right to go into any place where he could not continue to pray*. Pray without ceasing? Then I am never to be in a place where I could not pray without ceasing. Hence, many worldly amusements without being particularized may be judged and condemned at once. Certain people believe in ready-made prayers, cut and dried for all occasions, and, at the same time, they believe persons to be regenerated in baptism though their lives are any thing but Christian; ought they not to provide prayers for all circumstances in which these, the dear regenerated but graceless sons and daughters of their church, are found? As, for instance, a pious collect for a young prince or nobleman, who is about to go to a shooting-match, that he may be forgiven for his cruelty towards those poor pigeons who are only badly wounded and made to linger in misery, as also a prayer for a religious and regenerated gentleman who is going to a horserace, and a collect for young persons who have received the grace of confirmation, upon their going to the theater to attend a very questionable play. Could not such special collects be made to order? You revolt at the idea. Well, then, have nothing to do with that which you cannot ask God's blessing upon, have nothing to do with it, for if God cannot bless it, you may depend upon it the devil has cursed it. Anything that is right for you to do you may consecrate with prayer, and let this be a sure gauge and test to you, if you feel that it would be an insult to the majesty of heaven for you to ask the Lord's blessing upon what is proposed to you, then stand clear of the unholy thing. If God doth not approve, neither must you have fellowship therewith.

These matters are clearly implied in the precept, 'Pray without ceasing.'

II. But now, WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN? If it does not mean we are to be always on our knees, nor always saying prayers nor always in church or in meeting and does not mean that we are to consider any day as unfit for praying what then? The words mean, first, *a privilege*; secondly, *a precept* "Pray without ceasing." Our Lord Jesus Christ in these words assures you that you may pray without ceasing. There is no time when we may not

pray. You have here permission given to come to the mercy-seat when you will, for the veil of the Most Holy place is rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and our access to the mercy-seat is undisputed and indisputable. Kings hold their levees upon certain appointed days, and then their courtiers are admitted; but the King of Kings holds a constant levee. The monarch whose palace was in Shushan would have none approach him unless he sent for them, but the King of kings has called for all his people, and they may come at all times. They were slain who went in unto the king Ahasuerus, unless he stretched out his scepter to them; but our King never withdraws his scepter, it is always stretched out, and whosoever desires to come to him may come now, and come at any time. Among the Persians there were some few of the nobility who had the peculiar and special right of an audience with the king at any time they chose. Now, that which was the peculiar right of a very few and of the very great is the privilege of every child of God. He may come in unto the King at all times. The dead of night is not too late for God; the breaking of the morning, when the first grey light is seen, is not too early for the Most High; at midday he is not too busy; and when the evening gathers he is not weary with his children's prayers. 'Pray without ceasing,' is, if I read it aright, a most sweet and precious permit to the believer to pour out his heart at all times before the Lord. I hear its still small voice saying, 'Come to the mercy seat, O my child, whenever thou wilt; come to the treasury of grace whenever thou desirest'

'The happy gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day.'

The doors of the temple of divine love shall not be shut. Nothing, can set a barrier between a praying soul and its God. The road of angels and of prayers is ever open. Let us but send out the dove of prayer and we may be certain that she will return unto us with an olive branch of peace in her mouth. Evermore the Lord hath regard unto the pleadings of his servants, and waiteth to be gracious unto them.

Still, however, it is a *precept*, 'Pray without ceasing.' And what does it mean? It means a great truth which I cannot very well convey to you in a few words, and, therefore, must try and bring out under four or five points.

It means, first, *never abandon prayer*. Never for any cause or reason cease to pray. Imagine not that you must pray until you are saved, and may then leave off. For those whose sins are pardoned prayer is quite as needful as for those mourning under a sense of sin. 'Pray without ceasing,' for in order that you may persevere in grace you must persevere in prayer. Should you become experienced in grace and enriched with much spiritual knowledge, you must not dream of restraining prayer because of your gifts and graces. 'Pray without ceasing,' or else your flower will fade and your spiritual fruit will never ripen. Continue in prayer until the-last moment of your life.

'Long as they live must Christians pray,
For only while they pray they live.'

As we breathe without ceasing, so must we pray without ceasing. As there is no attainment in life, of health, or of strength, or of muscular vigor which can place a man beyond the necessity of breathing, so no condition of spiritual growth or advance in grace will allow a man to dispense with prayer.

'Let us pray! our life is praying;
Prayer with time alone may cease:
Then in heaven, God's will obeying,
Life is praise and perfect peace.'

Never give up praying, not even though Satan should suggest to you that it is in vain for you to cry unto God. Pray in his teeth; 'pray without ceasing.' If for awhile the heavens are as brass and your prayer only echoes in thunder above your head, pray on; if month after month your prayer appears to have miscarried, and no reply has been vouchsafed to you, yet still continue to draw nigh unto the Lord. Do not abandon the mercy-seat for any reason whatever. If it be a good thing that you have been asking for, and you are sure it is according to the divine will, if the vision tarry wait for it, pray, weep, entreat, wrestle, agonise till you get that which you are praying for. If your heart be cold in prayer, do not restrain prayer until your heart warms, but pray your soul unto heat by the help of the everblessed Spirit who helpeth our infirmities. If the iron be hot then hammer it, and if it be cold hammer it till you heat it. Never cease prayer for any sort of reason or argument. If the philosopher should tell you that every event is fixed, and, therefore, prayer cannot possibly change anything, and, consequently, must be folly; still, if you cannot answer him and are somewhat puzzled, go on with your supplications notwithstanding all. No difficult problem concerning digestion would prevent your eating, for the result justifies the practice, and so no quibble should make us cease prayer, for the assured success of it commends it to us. You know what your God has told you, and if you cannot reply to every difficulty which man can suggest, resolve to be obedient to the divine will, and still 'Pray without ceasing.' Never, never, never renounce the habit of prayer, or your confidence in its power.

A second meaning is this. *Never suspend the regular offering of prayer.* You will, if you are a watchful Christian, have your times of daily devotion, fixed not by superstition, but for your convenience and remembrance; just as David, three times a day, and as another saint, seven times a day, sought the Lord: now be sure to keep up this daily prayer without intermission. This advice will not comprehend the whole range of the text, I am not pretending that it does; I am only mentioning it now as supplementary to other thoughts. 'Pray without ceasing;' that is, never give up the morning prayer, nor the evening prayer, nor the prayer at midday if such has grown to be your habit. If you change hours and times, as you may, yet keep up the practice of regularly recurring retirement, meditation, and prayer. You may be said to continue in prayer if your habitual devotions be maintained. It would be quite correct for me to say that I know a man who has been always begging ever since I have

been in London. I do not think that I ever passed the spot where he stands without seeing him there. He is a blind person, and stands near a church. As long as my recollection serves me he has been begging without ceasing; of course he has not begged when he has been asleep, he has not begged when he has gone home to his meals, nor did you understand me to have asserted anything so absurd when I said he had begged without ceasing for years. And so, if at those times when it is proper for you to separate yourself from your ordinary labors, you continue perseveringly begging at mercy's throne, it may be with comparative correctness said of you that you pray without ceasing. Through all hours are alike to me, I find it profitable to meet with God at set periods, for these seem to me to be like the winding up of the clock. The clock is to go all day, but there is a time for winding it up; and the little special season that we set apart and hedge round about for communion with our God, seems to wind us up for the rest of the day. Therefore, if you would pray without ceasing, continue in the offering of the morning and the evening sacrifice, and let it be perpetually an ordinance with you, that your times of prayer are not broken in upon.

That, however, is only a help, for I must add, thirdly, *between these times of devotion, labor to be much in ejaculatory prayer*. While your hands are busy with the world, let your hearts still talk with God; not in twenty sentences at a time, for such an interval might be inconsistent with your calling, but in broken sentences and interjections. It is always wrong to present one duty to God stained with the blood of another, and that we should do if we spoiled study or labor by running away to pray at all hours; but we may, without this, let short sentences go up to heaven, ay, and we may shoot upwards cries, and single words, such as an 'Ah,' an 'Oh,' an 'O that;' or, without words we may pray in the upward glancing of the eye or the sigh of the heart. He who prays without ceasing uses many little darts and hand-grenades of godly desire, which he casts forth at every available interval. Sometimes he will blow the furnace of his desires to a great heat in regular prayer, and as a consequence at other times, the sparks will continue to rise up to heaven in the form of brief words, and looks, and desires.

Fourthly, if we would pray without ceasing, *we must be always in the spirit of prayer*. Our heart, renewed by the Holy Ghost, must be like the magnetized needle, which always has an inclination towards the pole. It does not always point to that pole, you can turn it aside if you will; in an iron ship it exhibits serious deflections, under all circumstances it is not exactly true; but if you put your finger to that needle and force it round to the east, you have only to take away the pressure, and immediately it returns to its beloved pole again. So let your heart be magnetized with prayer, so that if the finger of duty turns it away from the immediate act of prayer, there may still be the longing desire for prayer in your soul, and the moment you can do so, your heart reverts to its beloved work. As perfume lies in flowers even when they do not shed their fragrance upon the gale, so let prayer lie in your hearts.

But, perhaps, the last meaning that I shall give has the most of the truth of the text in it, namely this: *Let all your actions be consistent with your prayers, and be in fact a continuation of your prayers.* If I am to pray without ceasing, it cannot mean that I am always to be in the act of direct devotion; for the human mind, as at present constituted, needs variety of occupation, and it could not without producing madness or imbecility continue always in the exercise of one function. We must, therefore, change the *modus* or the manner of operation if we are ceaselessly to continue in prayer. We must pursue our prayers, but do it in another manner. Take an instance. This morning I prayed to God to arouse his people to prayerfulness; very well; as I came to this house my soul continued to ejaculate, 'O Lord, awaken thy children to prayerfulness.' Now, while I am preaching to you and driving at the same point, am I not praying? Is not my sermon the continuation of my prayer, for I am desiring and aiming at the same thing? Is it not a continuing to pray when we use the best means towards the obtaining of that which we pray for? Do you not see my point? He who prays for his fellow creatures, and then seeks their good, is praying still. In this sense there is truth in that old distich.

'He prayeth best that loveth best
Both man, and bird, and beast.'

Loving is praying. If I seek in prayer the good of my fellow creature, and then go and try to promote it, I am practically praying for his good in my actions. If I seek, as I should do, God's glory above everything, then if all my actions are meant to tend to God's glory, I am continuing to pray, though I may not be praying with my thoughts or with my lips. Oh, that our whole life might be a prayer. It can be. There can be a praying without ceasing before the Lord, though there be many pausings in what the most of men would call prayer. Pray then without ceasing, my brother. Let thy whole life be praying. If thou changest the method, yet change not the pursuit; but continue still to worship, still to adore. This I think to be the meaning of our text, 'never altogether abandon prayer; do not suspend the regular offering of prayer; be much in earnest ejaculations, be always in the spirit of prayer, and let the whole of your life be consistent with your prayer, and become a part of it.'

III. HOW CAN WE OBEY THESE WORDS? First, let us labor as much as we can to prevent all *sinful* interruptions. 'Pray without ceasing.' Then if it be impossible to be in the act of prayer always, at least let us be as much as possible in that act; and let us prevent those interruptions which I mentioned in the early part of my discourse, the interruptions occasioned by our own sin. Let us endeavor to keep clear, as far as we can, of anything and everything in ourselves, or round about us, that would prevent our abounding in supplication. And let us also keep clear of interruptions from the sins of others. Do others forbid us to pray? Let us not be afraid of their wrath. Remember Daniel, who while he was under the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, yet opened his window towards Jerusalem, and prayed seven times a day as he had done aforetime. Under no threats: and for no bribes, let

us ever cease to pray. In private let us always pray, and if duty calls us to do so where others observe us, let us so much fear the eye of God that we shall not dare to fear the eye of man.

Let us next avoid all *unnecessary* interruptions of every sort to our prayer. If we know that any matter, from which we can escape, has a tendency to disturb the spirit of prayer within us, let us avoid it earnestly. Let us try, as much as possible, not to be put off the scent in prayer. Satan's object will be to distract the mind, to throw it off the rails, to divert its aim, but let us resolve before God, we will not turn aside from following hard after him. Sir Thomas Abney had for many years practiced family prayer regularly; he was elected Lord Mayor of London, and on the night of his election he must be present at a banquet, but when the time came for him to call his family together in prayer, having no wish either to be a Pharisee or to give up his practice, he excused himself to the guests in this way, 'he said he had an important engagement with a very dear friend, and they must excuse him for a few minutes. It was most true, his dearest friend was the Lord Jesus, and family prayer was an important engagement; and so he withdrew for awhile to the family altar, and in that respect prayed without ceasing. We sometimes allow good things to interrupt our prayer, and thus make them evil. Mrs. Rowe observes in one of her letters, that if the twelve apostles were preaching in the town where she lived and she could never hear them again, if it were her time for private devotion, she would not be bribed out of her closet by the hope of hearing them. I am not sure but what she might have taken another time for her private devotions, and so have enjoyed both privileges, but at the same time, supposing she must; have lost the prayer and have only got the preaching in exchange, I agree with her, it would have been exchanging gold for silver. She would be more profited in praying than she would be in hearing, for praying is the end of preachings. Preaching is but the wheat-stalk, but praying is the golden grain itself, and he hath the best who gets it.

Sometimes we think we are too busy to pray. That also is a great mistake, for praying is a saving of time. You remember Luther's remark, 'I have so much to do to-day that I shall never get through it with less than three hours' prayer.' He had not been accustomed to take so much time for pray on ordinary days, but since that was a busy day, he must needs have more communion with his God. But, perhaps, our occupations begin early, and we therefore say, 'How can I get alone with God in prayer?' It is said of Sir Henry Havelock that every morning when the march began at six, he always rose at four, that he might not miss his time for the reading of the Scripture and communion with his God. If we have no time we must make time, for if God has given us time for secondary duties, he must have given us time for primary ones, and to draw near to him is a primary duty, and we must let nothing set it on one side. There is no real need to sacrifice any duty, we have time enough for all if we are not idle; and, indeed, the one will help the other instead of clashing with it. When Edward Payson was a student at College, he found he had so much to do to attend his classes and prepare for examinations, that he could not spend as much time as he should in private

prayer; but, at last, waking up to the feeling that he was going back in divine things through his habits, he took due time for devotion and he asserts in his diary that he did more in his studies in a single week after he had spent time with God in prayer, than he had accomplished in twelve months before. God can multiply our ability to make use of time. If we give the Lord his due, we shall have enough for all necessary purposes. In this matter seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Your other engagements will run smoothly if you do not forget your engagement with God.

We must, dear friends, in order to pray without ceasing, strive against *indolence* in prayer. I believe that no man loves prayer until the Holy Spirit has taught him the sweetness and value of it. If you have ever prayed without ceasing you will pray without ceasing. The men who do not love to pray must be strangers to its secret joy. When prayer is a mechanical act, and there is no soul in it, it is a slavery and a weariness; but when it is really living prayer, and when the man prays because he is a Christian and cannot help praying, when he prays along the street, prays in his business, prays in the house, prays in the field, when his whole soul is full of prayer, then he cannot have too much of it. He will not be backward in prayer who meets Jesus in it, but he who knows not the Well-beloved will count it a drudgery.

Let us avoid, above all things, *lethargy and indifference in prayer*. Oh, it is a dreadful thing that ever we should insult the majesty of heaven by words from which our heart has gone. I must, my spirit, I must school thee to this, that thou must have communion with God, and if in thy prayer thou dost not talk with God, thou shalt keep on praying till thou dost. Come not away from the mercy-seat till thou hast prayed.

Beloved brother, say unto thy soul, thus "here have I come to the throne of grace to worship God and seek his blessing, and I am not going away till I have done this; I will not rise from my knees, because I have spent my customary minutes, but here will I pray till I find the blessing." Satan will often leave off tempting when he finds you thus resolute in prayer. Brethren, we need waking up. Routine grows upon us. We get into the mill-horse way 'round, and round, and round the mill. From this may God save us. It is deadly. A man may pray twenty years with regularity, as far as the time goes, and the form goes, and never have prayed a single grain of prayer in the whole period. One real groan fetched from the heart is worth a million litanies, one living breath from a gracious soul is worth ten thousand collects. May we be kept awake by God's grace, praying without ceasing.

And we must take care, dear brethren, again, if we would perform this duty, that we fight against anything like *despair* of being heard. If we have not been heard after six times we must, as Elijah, go again seven times; if our Peter is in prison, and the church has prayed God to liberate him, and he still is in fetters bound in the inner prison, let us pray on, for one of these days Peter will knock at the gate. Be importunate, heaven's gate does not open

to every runaway knock. Knock, and knock, and knock again; and add to thy knocking and to thy asking seeking, and be not satisfied till thou gettest a real answer.

Never cease from prayer through *presumption*; guard against that. Feel, O Christian, that you always need to pray. Say not, 'I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.' Thou art by nature still naked, and poor, and miserable; therefore, persevere in prayer, and buy of the Lord fine gold, and clean raiment, that thou mayst be rich, and fitly clothed.

Thus I have tried to set before you, beloved, how by resisting presumption and despair, indolence and lethargy, and trying to put aside all sinful and other interruptions, we may pray without ceasing.

IV. Now, very briefly, in the last place, WHY SHOULD WE OBEY THIS PRECEPT? Of course we should obey it because it is of divine authority; but, moreover, we should attend to it because *the Lord always deserves to be worshipped*. Prayer is a method of worship; continue, therefore, always to render to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, your Father, the homage of your prayers. With such a King let us not be slack in homage. Let us pay him the revenue of praise continually. Evermore may we magnify and bless his name. His enemies curse him; let us bless him without ceasing. Moreover, brethren, the spirit of love within us surely prompts us to draw near to God without ceasing. Christ is our husband. Is the bride true to her marriage vows if she cares not for her beloved's company? God is our Father. What sort of a child is that which does not desire to climb its father's knee and receive a smile from its father's face? If you and I can live day after day and week after week without anything like communion with God, how dwelleth the love of God in us? 'Pray without ceasing,' because the Lord never ceases to love you, never ceases to bless you, and never ceases to regard you as his child.

'Pray without ceasing,' for you *want a blessing* on all the work you are doing. Is it common work? 'Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.' Is it business? It is vain to rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, for without God you cannot prosper. You are taught to say, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' an inspired prayer for secular things. Oh, consecrate your seculars by prayer. And, if you are engaged in God's service, what work is there in which you can hope for success without his blessing? To teach the young, to preach the gospel, to distribute tracts, to instruct the ignorant, do not all these want his blessing? What are they if that favor be denied? Pray, therefore, as long as you work.

You are always in *danger of being tempted*; there is no position in life in which you may not be assaulted by the enemy. 'Pray without ceasing,' therefore. A man who is going along a dark road where he knows that there are enemies, if he must be alone and has a sword with him, he carries it drawn in his hand, to let the robbers know that he is ready for them. So Christian, pray without ceasing; carry your sword in your hand, wave that mighty weapon

of all-prayer of which Bunyan speaks. Never sheathe it; it will cut through coats of mail. You need fear no foe if you can but pray. As you are tempted without ceasing, so pray without ceasing.

You need always to pray, for you *always want* something. In no condition are you so rich as not to need something from your God. It is not possible for you to say, 'I have all things,' or, if you can, you have them only in Christ, and from Christ you must continue to seek them. As you are always in need, so beg always at mercy's gate. Moreover, blessings are always waiting for you. Angels are ready with favors that you know not of, and you have but to ask and have. Oh, could you see what might be had for the asking you would not be so slack. The priceless benisons of heaven which lie on one side as yet, oh, did you but perceive that they are only waiting for you to pray, you would not hesitate a moment. The man who knows that his farming is profitable, and that his land brings forth abundantly, will be glad to sow a broader stretch of land another year; and he who knows that God answers prayer, and is ready still to answer it, will open his mouth yet wider that God may fill it.

Continue to pray, brethren, for even if you should not want prayer yourself there are *others who do* there are the dying, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, the backsliding, the blaspheming, the heathen at home, and the heathen abroad. 'Pray without ceasing,' for the enemy works incessantly, and as yet the kingdom has not come unto Zion. You shall never be able to say, 'I left off praying, for I had nothing to pray for.' This side heaven objects for prayer are as multitudinous as the stars of the sky.

And, now, I said I would say a word as to why WE ought to pray especially, and that shall close the sermon. Beloved friends, this church ought to pray without ceasing. We have been in years past notable for prayer. If ever a church has prayed it has been this church. I might find many faults with some who hinder prayer, but yet I must say in God's sight I know and feel that there has been living prayer in this church for many years, and hence it is we have had many years of peace and prosperity. We have lacked nothing because we have not lacked prayer. I do not doubt we might have had much more if we had prayed more; still prayer has been very mighty here. Now, brethren, suppose you had no pastor, suppose the preacher was gone from you, and that the black cloth upon this pulpit was not for a deceased elder of the church but for the preacher himself, you would pray, would you not? Will you not pray for me then while I live? If you would pray for another to come, will you not pray for me while I am here? I desire to discharge my office before you in God's sight with all earnestness, but I cannot without your prayers, and as being gone from you, you would lift up many sighs, and you would with prayers ask for a successor, pray for me while I am yet with you. Beloved, you have prayed very earnestly for the pastor when he has been sick, your prayers have been his consolation and his restoration; will you not pray for him now that he is able to preach the gospel, that his health may be sanctified to God's service,

and the ministry of the truth may be mighty in the winning of souls. I ask it of you, I think I might claim it of you. I do beseech you, brethren, pray for us.

Suppose again, dear brethren, there were no conversions in our midst, would not you pray? And since there are a great many conversions, should that be a reason for leaving off? Shall we worship God the less because he gives us more? Instead of one prayer which would go up were there no conversions, there should be ten now that he continues to work salvation among us.

Suppose we were divided, and had many schisms, and jealousies, and bickerings, would not the faithful ones pray in bitterness of spirit? Will you not pray since there are no divisions, and much Christian love? Surely, I say again, you will not treat God the worse because he treats you the better. That were foolish indeed.

Suppose we were surrounded to-day with hosts of persecutors, and that error everywhere crept into our midst and did us damage, would you not pray, you who love the Lord? And now that we live in days of peace, and error, though it prowls around, is kept out of our fold, will you not commune with the Lord all the more? I will say yet a third time, shall we pray the less because God gives the more? Oh no, but the better he is to us the more let us adore and magnify his name.

Just now we need to pray, for some are growing cold, and turning to their old sins. We need to pray, for we are doing much for Christ. Every agency is in full work. We want a *great* blessing upon *great* efforts. We have had such results from prayer as might make a man's ears to tingle who should hear of them for the first time: our history as a church has not been second even to apostolic history itself: we have seen God's arm made bare in the eyes of all the people, and to the ends of the earth the testimony of this pulpit has gone forth, and thousands have found the Savior, all in answer to many prayers. Pray, then, without ceasing. O church in the Tabernacle, hold fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Oh, continue to be a praying church that we together; when we shall stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, pastor and people, may not be accused of being prayerless, nor of being slack in the work of the Lord. I earnestly hope all this will tend to make to-morrow's day of prayer more earnest and intense; but yet more do I pray that at all times all of us may be fervent, frequent, instant, and constant in prayer; praying in the Holy Ghost, in the name of Jesus.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 5.