Quiet Talks on Prayer

Samuel Dickey

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# Quiet Talks on Prayer

### by

### S. D. Gordon

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## I. The Meaning And Mission Of Prayer

### 1. Prayer the Greatest Outlet of Power.

### 2. Prayer the Deciding Factor in a Spirit Conflict.

### 3. The Earth, the Battle-Field in Prayer.

### 4. Does Prayer Influence God?

# Prayer the Greatest Outlet of Power

## Five Outlets of Power.

A great sorrow has come into the heart of God. Let it be told only in hushed voice–one of His worlds is *a prodigal*! Hush your voice yet more–*ours* is that prodigal world. Let your voice soften down still more–*we* have *consented* to the prodigal part of the story. But, in softest tones yet, He has won some of us back with His strong tender love. And now let the voice ring out with great gladness–we won ones may be the pathway back to God for the others. That is His earnest desire. That should be our dominant ambition. For that purpose He has endowed us with peculiar power.

There is one inlet of power in the life–anybody’s life–any kind of power: just one inlet–the Holy Spirit. He is power. He is in every one who opens his door to God. He eagerly enters every open door. He comes in by our invitation and consent. His presence within is the vital thing.

But with many of us while He is in, He is not in control: in as guest; not as host. That is to say He is hindered in His natural movements; tied up, so that He cannot do what He would. And so we are not conscious or only partially conscious of His presence. And others are still less so. But to yield to His mastery, to cultivate His friendship, to give Him full swing–that will result in what is called power. One inlet of power–the Holy Spirit in control.

There are five outlets of power: five avenues through which this One within shows Himself, and reveals His power.

First: through the life, what we are. Just simply what we are. If we be right the power of God will be constantly flowing out, though we be not conscious of it. It throws the keenest kind of emphasis on a man being right in his life. There will be an eager desire to serve. Yet we may constantly do more in what we are than in what we do. We may serve better in the lives we live than in the best service we ever give. The memory of that should bring rest to your spirit when a bit tired, and may be disheartened because tired.

Second: through the lips, what we say. It may be said stammeringly and falteringly. But if said your best with the desire to please the Master it will be God-blest. I have heard a man talk. And he stuttered and blushed and got his grammar badly tangled, but my heart burned as I listened. And I have heard a man talk with smooth speech, and it rolled off me as easily as it rolled out of him. Do your best, and leave the rest. If we are in touch with God His fire burns whether the tongue stammer or has good control of its powers.

Third: through our service, what we do. It may be done bunglingly and blunderingly. Your best may not be the best, but if it be your best it will bring a harvest.

Fourth: through our money, what we do not keep, but loosen out for God. Money comes the nearest to omnipotence of anything we handle.

And, fifth: through our prayer, what we claim in Jesus’ name.

And by all odds the greatest of these is the outlet through prayer. The power of a life touches just one spot, but the touch is tremendous. What is there we think to be compared with a pure, unselfish, gently strong life. Yet its power is limited to one spot where it is being lived. Power through the lips depends wholly upon the life back of the lips. Words that come brokenly are often made burning and eloquent by the life behind them. And words that are smooth and easy, often have all their meaning sapped by the life back of them. Power through service may be great, and may be touching many spots, yet it is always less than that of a life. Power through money depends wholly upon the motive back of the money. Begrudged money, stained money, soils the treasury. That which comes nearest to omnipotence also comes nearest to impotence. But the power loosened out through prayer is as tremendous, at the least, to say no more just now, is as tremendous as the power of a true fragrant life and, mark you, *and*, may touch not one spot but wherever in the whole round world you may choose to turn it.

The greatest thing any one can do for God and for man is to pray. It is not the only thing. But it is the chief thing. A correct balancing of the possible powers one may exert puts it first. For if a man is to pray right, he must first *be* right in his motives and life. And if a man *be* right, and put the practice of praying in its right place, then his serving and giving and speaking will be fairly fragrant with the presence of God.

The great people of the earth to-day are the people who pray. I do not mean those who talk about prayer; nor those who say they believe in prayer; nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean these people who *take* time and *pray*. They have not time. It must be taken from something else. This something else is important. Very important, and pressing than prayer. There are people that put prayer first, and group the other items in life’s schedule around and after prayer.

These are the people to-day who are doing the most for God; in winning souls; in solving problems; in awakening churches; in supplying both men and money for mission posts; in keeping fresh and strong these lives far off in sacrificial service on the foreign field where the thickest fighting is going on; in keeping the old earth sweet awhile longer.

It is wholly a secret service. We do not know who these people are, though sometimes shrewd guesses may be made. I often think that sometimes we pass some plain-looking woman quietly slipping out of church; gown been turned two or three times; bonnet fixed over more than once; hands that have not known much of the softening of gloves; and we hardly giver her a passing thought, and do not know, nor guess, that perhaps *she* is the one who is doing far more for her church, and for the world, and for God than a hundred who would claim more attention and thought, *because she prays*; truly prays as the Spirit of God inspires and guides.

Let me put it this way: God will do as a result of the praying of the humblest one here what otherwise He *would* not do. Yes, I can make it stronger than that, and I must make it stronger, for the Book does. Listen: God will do in answer to the prayer of the weakest one here what otherwise he *could* not do. “Oh!” someone thinks, “you are getting that too strong now.” Well, you listen to Jesus’ own words in that last long quiet talk He had with the eleven men between the upper room and the olive-green. John preserves much of that talk for us. Listen: “Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that”–listen, a part of the purpose why we have been chosen–“that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He *may* give it you.”[1] Mark that word “may”; not “shall” this time but *may*. “Shall” throws the matter over on God–His purpose. “May” throws it over upon us–our cooperation. That is to say our praying makes it possible for God to do what otherwise He could not do.

And if you think into it a bit, this fits in with the true conception of prayer. In its simplest analysis prayer–all prayer–has, must have, two parts. First, a God to give. “Yes,” you say, “certainly, a God wealthy, willing, all of that.” And, just as certainly, there must be a second factor, *a man to receive*. Man’s willingness is God’s channel to the earth. God never crowds nor coerces. Everything God does for man and through man He does with man’s consent, always. With due reverence, but very plainly, let it be said that God can do nothing for the man with shut hand and shut life. There must be an open hand and heart and life *through* which God can give what He longs to. An open life, an open hand, open upward, is the pipe line of communication between the heart of God and this poor befooled old world. Our prayer is God’s opportunity to get into the world that would shut Him out.

## In touch with a planet.

Prayer opens a whole planet to a man’s activities. I can as really be touching hearts for God in far away India or China through prayer, as though I were there. Not in as many ways as though there, but as truly. Understand me, I think the highest possible *privilege* of service is in those far off lands. There the need is greatest, the darkness densest, and the pleading call most eloquently pathetic. And if one *may* go there–happy man!–if one be *privileged* to go to the honoured place of service he may then use all five outlets direct in the spot where he is.

Yet this is only one spot. But his relationship is as wide as his Master’s and his sympathies should be. A man may be in Africa, but if his heart be in touch with Jesus it will be burning for *a world*. Prayer puts us into direct dynamic touch with a world.

A man may go aside to-day, and shut his door, and as really spend a half-hour in India–I am thinking of my words as I say them, it seems so much to say, and yet it is true–as really spend a half hour of his life in India for God as though he were there in person. *Is* that true? If it be true, surely you and I must get more half-hours for this secret service. Without any doubt he may turn his key and be for a bit of time as potentially in China by the power of prayer, as though there in actual bodily form. I say *potentially* present. Of course not consciously present. But in the *power exerted upon men* he may be truly present at the objective point of his prayer. He may give a new meaning to the printed page being read by some native down in Africa. He may give a new tongue of flame to the preacher or teacher. He may make it easier for men to accept the story of Jesus, and then to yield themselves to Jesus–yonder men swept and swayed by evil spirits, and by prejudices for generations–make it easier for them to accept the story, and, if need be, to cut with loved ones, and step out and up into a new life.

Some earnest heart enters an objection here, perhaps. You are thinking that if you were there you could influence men by your personal contact, by the living voice. So you could. And there must be the personal touch. Would that there were many times more going for that blessed personal touch. But this is the thing to mark keenly both for those who may go, and for those who must stay: no matter where you are you do more through your praying than through your personality. If you were in India you could *add your personality to your prayer*. That would be a great thing to do. But whether there or here, you must first win the victory, every step, every life, every foot of the way, in secret, in the spirit-realm, and then add the mighty touch of your personality in service. You can do *more*  than pray, *after* you have prayed. But you can *not* do more than pray *until* you have prayed. And just there is where we have all seemed to make a slip at times, and many of us are yet making it–a bad slip. We think we can do more where we are through our service: then prayer to give power to service. *No*–with the blackest underscoring of emphasis, let it be said–NO. We can do no thing of real power until we have done the prayer thing.

Here is a man by my side. I can talk to him. I can bring my personality to bear upon him, that I may win him. But before I can influence his will a jot for God, I must first have won the victory in the secret place. Intercession is winning the victory over the chief, and service is taking the field after the chief is driven off. Such service is limited by the limitation of personality to one place. This spirit-telegraphy called prayer puts a man into direct dynamic touch with a planet.

There are some of our friends who think themselves of the practical sort who say, “the great thing is work: prayer is good, and right, but the great need is to be doing something practical.” The truth is that when one understands about prayer, and puts prayer in its right place in his life, he finds a new motive power burning in his bones to be *doing*; and further he finds that it is the doing that grows out of praying that is mightiest in touching human hearts. And he finds further yet with a great joy that he may be *doing* something for an entire world. His service becomes as broad as his Master’s thought.

## Intercession is Service.

It helps greatly to remember that intercession is service: the chief service of a life on God’s plan. It is unlike all other forms of service, and superior to them in this: that it has fewer limitations. In all other service we are constantly limited by space, bodily strength, equipment, material obstacles, difficulties involved in the peculiar differences of personality. Prayer knows no such limitations. It ignores space. It may be free of expenditure of bodily strength, where rightly practiced, and one’s powers are under proper control. It goes directly, by the telegraphy of spirit, into men’s hearts, quietly passes through walls, and past locks unhindered, and comes into most direct touch with the inner heart and will to be affected.

In service, as ordinarily understood, one is limited to the space where his body is, the distance his voice can reach, the length of time he can keep going before he must quit to eat, or rest, or sleep. He is limited by walls, and locks, by the prejudices of men’s minds, and by those peculiar differences of temperament which must be studied in laying siege to men’s hearts.

The whole circle of endeavour in winning men includes such an infinite variety. There is speaking the truth to a number of persons, and to one at a time; the doing of needed kindly acts of helpfulness, supplying food, and the like; there is teaching; the almost omnipotent ministry of money; the constant contact with a pure unselfish life; letter writing; printer’s ink in endless variety. All these are in God’s plan for winning men. But the intensely fascinating fact to mark is this:–that the real victory in all of this service is won in secret, beforehand, by prayer, and these other indispensable things are the moving upon the works of the enemy, and claiming the victory already won. And when these things are put in their proper order, prayer first, and the other things second; *second*, I say, not omitted, not slurred over; done with all the earnestness and power of brain and hand and heart possible; but done *after* the victory has been won in secret, against the real foe, and done *while* the winner is still claiming the victory already assured,–then will come far greater achievements in this outer open service.

Then we go into this service with that fine spirit of expectancy that sweeps the field at the start, and steadily sticks on the stubbornly contested spots until the whipped foe turns tail, and goes. Prayer is striking the winning blow at the concealed enemy. Service is gathering up the results of that blow among the men we see and touch. Great patience and tact and persistence are needed in the service because each man must be influenced in his own will. But the shrewd strategy that wins puts the keen stiff secret fighting first.

## The Spirit Switchboard.

Electricity is a strange element. It is catalogued in the study of physics. It is supposed to be properly classed among the forces of nature. Yet it seems to have many properties of the spirit world. Those who know most of it say they know least of what it is. Some of the laws of its being have been learned, and so its marvellous power harnessed for man’s use, but in much ignorance of what it is. It seems almost to belong somewhere in between the physical and spirit realms. It furnishes many similes of graphic helpfulness in understanding more nearly much truth of the Spirit life.

In the power-house where the electricity is being wooed into man’s harnessing, or generated, as the experts say, is found a switchboard, or switch-room with a number of boards. Here in a large city plant a man may go and turn a switch, that is, move a little handle, a very short distance. It is a very simple act, easily performed, involving almost no strength. But that act has loosened the power in the house back of the switchboard out along the wires, and perhaps lighted a whole section of the city. He goes in again at another hour, and turns *this* set of switches, and *this*, and sets in motion maybe scores of cars, carrying swiftly, hundreds of passengers. Again he goes in, and moves the little handles and sets in motion the wheels in some factory employing hundreds of operatives.

It is a secret service, usually as far as any observers are concerned. It is a very quiet, matter of fact service. But the power influenced is unmeasured and immeasurable. And no one, seemingly, thus far, can explain the mysterious but tremendous agent involved. Does the fluid–it a fluid? or, what?–pass *through* the wire? or, *around* the wire? The experts say they do not know. But the laws which it obeys are known. And as men comply with them its almost omnipotence is manifested.

Just such a switch-room in the spirit realm is one’s prayer-room. Every one who will may have such a spirit switching-board in his life. There he may go and in compliance with the laws of the power used loosen out the gracious persuasive irresistible power of God *where he wills to*; now in Japan; now in China; among the hungry human hearts of India’s plains and mountains; again in Africa which is full as near to where Jesus sits as is England or America; and now into the house across the alley from your home; and down in the slum district; and now into your preacher’s heart for next Sunday’s work; and now again unto the hearts of those you will be meeting in the settlement house, or the mission school.

Children are not allowed at the electrical switchboard, nor any unskilled hand. For misuse means possibility of great damage to property and life. And the spirit switchboard does not yield to the unskilled touch. Though sometimes there seems to be much tampering by those with crude fingers, and with selfish desire to turn this current to personal advantage merely.

It takes skill here. Yet such is our winsome God’s wondrous plan that skill may come to any one who is willing; simply that–who is willing; and it comes *very simply* too.

Strange too, as with the electrical counterpart, the thing is beyond full or satisfying explanation.

How does it come to pass that a man turns a few handles, and miles away great wheels begin to revolve, and enormous power is manifested? Will some one kindly explain? Yet we know it is so, and men govern their actions by that knowledge.

How does it come to pass that a woman in Iowa prays for the conversion of her skeptical husband, and he, down in the thick of the most absorbing congress Washington has known since the civil war, and in full ignorance of her purpose becomes conscious and repeatedly conscious of the presence and power of the God in whose existence he does not believe; and months afterwards with his keen, legally trained mind, finds the calendar to fit together the beginning of her praying with the beginning of his unwelcome consciousness? Will some one kindly explain? Ah! who can, adequately! Yet the facts, easy ascertainable, are there, and evidenced in the complete change in the life and calling of the man.

How comes it to pass that a woman in Missouri praying for a friend of keen intellectual skeptically in Glasgow, who can skillfully measure and parry argument, yet finds afterwards that the time of her praying is the time of his, at first decidedly unwelcome, but finally radical change of convictions! Yet groups of thoughtful men and women know these two instances to be even so though unable to explain how.

And as the mysterious electrical power is being used by obedience to its laws, even so is the power of prayer being used by many who understand simply enough of its laws to obey, and to bring the stupendous results.

## The Broad Inner Horizon.

This suggests at once that the rightly rounded Christian life has two sides; the *out*-side, and the *inner* side. To most of us the outer side seems the greater. The living, the serving, the giving, the doing, the absorption in life’s work, the contact with men, with the great majority the sheer struggle for existence–these take the greater thought and time of us all. They seem to be the great business of life even to those of us who thoroughly believe in the inner life.

But when the real eyes open, the inner eyes that see the unseen, the change of perspective is first ludicrous, then terrific, then pathetic. Ludicrous, because of the change of proportions; terrific, because of the issues at stake; pathetic, because of strong men that see not, and push on spending splendid strength whittling sticks. The outer side is narrow in its limits. It has to do with food and clothing, bricks and lumber, time and the passing hour, the culture of the mind, the joys of social contact, the smoothing of the way for the suffering. And it needs not to be said, that these are right; they belong in the picture; they are its physical background.

The inner side *includes all of these*, and stretches infinitely beyond. Its limits are broad; broad as the home of man; with its enswathing atmosphere added. It touches the inner spirit. It moves in upon the motives, the loves, the heart. It moves out upon the myriad spirit-beings and forces that swarm ceaselessly about the earth staining and sliming men’s souls and lives. It moves up to the arm of God in cooperation with His great love-plan for a world.

Shall we follow for a day one who has gotten the true perspective? Here is the outer side: a humble home, a narrow circle, tending the baby, patching, sewing, cooking, calling; *or*, measuring dry goods, chopping a typewriter, checking up a ledger, feeding the swift machinery, endless stitching, gripping a locomotive lever, pushing the plow, tending the stock, doing the chores, tiresome examination papers; and all the rest of the endless, endless, doing, day by day, of the commonplace treadmill things, that must be done, that fill out the day of the great majority of human lives. This one whom we are following unseen is doing quietly, cheerily his daily round, with a bit of sunshine in his face, a light in his eye, and lightness in his step, and the commonplace place becomes uncommon by reason of the presence of this man with the uncommon spirit. He is working for God. No, better, he is working with God. He has an unseen Friend at his side. That changes all. The common drudgery ceases to be common, and ceases to be drudgery because it is done for such an uncommon Master. That is the outer, the narrow side of this life: not narrow in itself but in its proportion to the whole.

Now, hold your breath, and look, for here is the inner side where the larger work of life is being done. Here is the quiet bit of time alone with God, with the Book. The door is shut, as the Master said. Now it is the morning hour with a bit of made light, for the sun is busy yet farther east. Now it is the evening hour, with the sun speeding towards western service, and the bed invitingly near. There is a looking up into God’s face; then keen but reverent reading, and then a simple intelligent pleading with its many variations of this–“Thy will be done, in the Victor’s name.” God Himself is here, in this inner room. The angels are here. This room opens out into and is in direct touch with a spirit space as wide as the earth. The horizon of this room is as broad as the globe. God’s presence with this man makes it so.

To-day a half hour is spent in China, for its missionaries, its native Christians, its millions, the printed page, the personal contact, the telling of the story, the school, the dispensary, the hospital. And in through the petitions runs this golden thread–“Victory in Jesus’ name: victory in Jesus’ name; to-day: to-day: Thy will be being done: the other will undone: victory in Jesus’ name.” Tomorrow’s bit of time is largely spent in India perhaps. And so this man with the narrow outer horizon and the broad inner horizon pushes his spirit-way through Japan, India, Ceylon, Persia, Arabia, Turkey, Africa, Europe’s papal lands, the South American States, the home land, its cities, frontiers, slums, the home town, the home church, the man across the alley; in and out; out and in; the tide of prayer sweeps quietly, resistlessly day by day.

This is the true Christian life. This man is winning souls and refreshing lives in these far-off lands and in near-by places as truly as though he were in each place. This is the Master’s plan. The true follower of Jesus has as broad a horizon as his Master. Jesus thought in continents and seas. His follower prays in continents and seas. This man does not know what is being accomplished. Yes! He *does* know, too. He knows by the inference of faith.

This room where we are meeting and talking together might be shut up so completely that no light comes in. A single crack breaking somewhere lets in a thin line of light. But that line of light shining in the darkness tells of a whole sun of light flooding the outer world.

There comes to this man occasional, yes frequent, evidences of changes being wrought, yet he knows that these are but the thin line of glory light which speaks of the fuller shining. And with a spirit touched with glad awe that he can and may help God, and a heart full alike of peace and of yearning, and a life fragrant with an unseen Presence he goes steadily on his way, towards the dawning of the day.

Prayer the Deciding Factor in a Spirit Conflict

## A Prehistoric Conflict.

In its simplest meaning prayer has to do with a conflict. Rightly understood it is the deciding factor in a spirit conflict. The scene of the conflict is the earth. The purpose of the conflict is to decide the control of the earth, and its inhabitants. The conflict runs back into the misty ages of the creation time.

The rightful prince of the earth is Jesus, the King’s Son. There is a pretender prince who was once rightful prince. He was guilty of a breach of trust. But like King Saul, after his rejection and David’s anointing in his place, he has been and is trying his best by dint of force to hold the realm and oust the rightful ruler.

The rightful Prince is seeking by utterly different means, namely by persuasion, to win the world back to its first allegiance. He had a fierce set-to with the pretender, and after a series of victories won the great victory of the resurrection morning.

There is one peculiarity of this conflict making it different from all others; namely, a decided victory, and the utter vanquishing of the leading general has not stopped the war. And the reason is remarkable. The Victor has a deep love-ambition to win, not merely against the enemy, but *into men’s hearts, by their free consent*. And so, with marvellous love-born wisdom and courage, the conflict is left open, for men’s sake.

It is a spirit conflict. The earth is swung in a spirit atmosphere. There are unnumbered thousands of spirit beings good and evil, tramping the earth’s surface, and filling its atmosphere. They are splendidly organized into two compact organizations.

Man is a spirit being; an embodied spirit being. He has a body and a mind. He is a spirit. His real conflicts are of the spirit sort; in the spirit realm, with other spirit beings.

Satan is a spirit being; an unembodied spirit being. That is, unembodied, save as in much cunning, with deep, dark purpose he secures embodiment in human beings.

The only sort of power that influences in the spirit realm is *moral* power. By which is not meant *goodness*, but that sort of power either bad or good which is not of a physical sort: that higher, infinitely higher and greater power than the mere physical. Moral power is the opposite of violent or physical power.

God does not use force, violent physical force. There are some exceptions to this statement. There have been righteous wars, righteous on one side. Turning to the Bible record, in emergencies, in extreme instances God has ordered war measures. The nations that Israel was told to remove by the death of war would have inevitably worn themselves out through their physical excesses, and disobedience of the laws of life. But a wide view of the race revealed an emergency which demanded a speedier movement. And as an exception, for the sake of His plan for the ultimate saving of a race, and a world, God gave an extermination order. The emergency makes the exception. There is one circumstance under which the taking of human life is right, namely, when it can be clearly established that God the giver and sovereign of life has so directed. But the rule clearly is that God does not use force.

But note sharply in contrast with this that physical force is one of Satan’s chief weapons. But mark there two intensely interesting facts: first, he can use it only as he secures man as his ally, and uses it through him. And, second, in using it he has with great subtlety sought to shift the sphere of action. He knows that in the sphere of spirit force pure and simple he is at a disadvantage: indeed, worse yet, he is defeated. For there is a moral force on the other side greater than any at his command. The forces of purity and righteousness he simply *can*not withstand. Jesus is the personification of purity and righteousness. It was on this moral ground, in this spirit sphere that He won the great victory. He ran a terrific gauntlet of tests, subtle and fierce, through those human years, and came out victor with His purity and righteousness unstained.

## Prayer is Projecting One’s Spirit Personality.

Now prayer is a spirit force, it has to do wholly with spirit beings and forces. It is an insistent claiming, by a man, an embodied spirit being, down on the contested earth, that the power of Jesus’ victory over the great evil-spirit chieftain shall extend to particular lives now under his control. The prayer takes on the characteristic of the man praying. He is a spirit being. It becomes a spirit force. It is a projecting into the spirit realm of his spirit personality. Being a spirit force it has certain qualities or characteristics of unembodied spirit beings. An unembodied spirit being is not limited by space as we embodied folk are. It can go as swiftly as we can think. If I want to go to London it will take at least a week’s time to get my body through the intervening space. But I can think myself into London more quickly than I can say the words, and be walking down the Strand. Now a spirit being can go as quickly as I can think.

Further, spirit beings are not limited by material obstructions such as the walls of this building. When I came in here to-day I came in by this door. You all came in by these doors. We were obliged to come in either by doors or windows. But the spirit beings who are here listening to us, and deeply concerned with our discussion did not bother with the doors. They came in through the walls, or the roof, if they were above us, or through the floor here, if they happened to be below this level.

Prayer has these qualities of spirit beings of not being limited by space, or by material obstacles. Prayer is really projecting my spirit, that is, my real personality to the spot concerned, and doing business there with other spirit beings. For example there is a man in a city on the Atlantic seaboard for whom I pray daily. It makes my praying for him very tangible and definite to recall that every time I pray my prayer is a spirit force instantly traversing the space in between him and me, and going without hindrance through the walls of the house where he is, and influencing the spirit beings surrounding him, and so influencing his own will.

When it became clear to me some few years ago that my Master would not have me go yet to those parts of the earth where the need is greatest, a deep tinge of disappointment came over me. Then as I realized the wisdom of His sovereignty in service, it came to me anew that I could exert a positive influence in those lands for Him by prayer. As many others have done, I marked out a daily schedule of prayer. There are certain ones for whom I pray by name, at certain intervals. And it gives great simplicity to my faith, and great gladness to my heart to remember that every time such prayer is breathed out, my spirit personality is being projected yonder, and in effect I am standing in Shanghai, and Calcutta and Tokyo in turn and pleading the power of Jesus’ victory over the evil one there, and on behalf of those faithful ones standing there for God.

It is a fiercely contested conflict. Satan is a trained strategist, and an obstinate fighter. He refuses to acknowledge defeat until he must. It is the fight of his life. Strange as it must seem, and perhaps absurd, he apparently hopes to succeed. If we knew all, it might seem less strange and absurd, because of the factors on his side. There is surely much down in the world of the sort which we can fully appreciate to give colour to his expectations. Prayer is insisting upon Jesus’ victory, and the retreat of the enemy on each particular spot, and heart and problem concerned.

The enemy yields only what he must. He yields only what is taken. Therefore the ground must be taken step by step. Prayer must be definite. He yields only when he must. Therefore the prayer must be persistent. He continually renews his attacks, therefore the ground taken must be *held* against him in the Victor’s name. This helps to understand why prayer must be persisted in after we have full assurance of the result, and even after some immediate results have come, or, after the general results have commenced coming.

## Giving God a Fresh Footing.

The Victor’s best ally in this conflict is the man, who while he remains down on the battle-field, puts his life in full touch with his Saviour-Victor, and then incessantly, insistently, believingly claims *victory in Jesus’ name*. He is the one foe among men whom Satan cannot withstand. He is projecting an irresistible spirit force into the spirit realm. Satan is obliged to yield. We are so accustomed through history’s long record to seeing victories won through force, physical force, alone, that it is difficult for us to realize that moral force defeats as the other never can. Witness the demons in the gospels, and in modern days in China,[2] clearly against their own set purpose, notwithstanding intensest struggle on their part obliged to admit defeat, and even to ask favours of their Conqueror. The records of personal Christian service give fascinating instances of fierce opposition utterly subdued and individuals transformed through such influence.

Had we eyes to see spirit beings and spirit conflicts we would constantly see the enemy’s defeat in numberless instances through the persistent praying of some one allied to Jesus in the spirit of his life. Every time such a man prays it is a waving of the red-dyed flag of Jesus Christ above Satan’s head in the spirit world. Every such man who freely gives himself over to God, and gives himself up to prayer is giving God a new spot in the contested territory on which to erect His banner of victory.

The Japanese struggled for weeks to get a footing on the Port Arthur peninsula, even after the naval victories had practically rendered Russia helpless on the seas. It was an unusual spectacle to witness such difficulty in getting a landing after such victories. But with the bulldog tenacity that has marked her fighting Japan fought for a footing. Nothing could be done till a footing was gotten.

Prayer is man giving God a footing on the contested territory of this earth. The man in full touch of purpose with God praying, insistently praying–that man is God’s footing on the enemy’s soil. The man wholly given over to God gives Him a new sub-headquarters on the battle-field from which to work out. And the Holy Spirit within that man, on the new spot, will insist on the enemy’s retreat in Jesus the Victor’s name. That is prayer. Shall we not, every one of us, increase God’s footing down upon His prodigal earth!