

The Prayer-Ministry of Evan Roberts.

"A servant of Christ Jesus . . . labouring fervently in prayer . . ."—Col. iv. 12, R.V

EVAN Roberts says he had the "call" to prayer in Newcastle Emlyn in the autumn of 1904, but when the unexpected happened, and he found himself on a tide carrying him, whether he would or not, into public ministry, the call to prayer for the time being sunk into abeyance.

It did not return as a definite call demanding attention until sometime in the spring of 1907. He was then in Leicester, in the weakness of a breakdown in health, which had kept him aside from public work since the beginning of 1906.

Even during this time of weakness there had been many indications of his power in prayer, and some very extraordinary answers to prayer had been given. In one case the sudden break up of a spurious Revival movement which was proceeding as a flame of fire, took place after one time of prayer, and other results as marked were seen, not only in Britain, but in lands beyond the sea. The potentialities of such prayer, and the responsibility of using what was evidently a gift of power in prayer, did now and then break on the vision of those around him, but they, with many others, had their minds fixed on the apparently greater gift of reaching the multitude, and were watching eagerly for the word of God to come to him which would once more send him forth for "Revival" service.

But the "gifts and calling of God are without repentance," God had other thoughts for His servant, and greater needs in His Church than could be met either by pulpit or platform in the days then coming on the spiritual Church.

The call to prayer came back suddenly one day in the spring of 1907. The Lord's servant had been for two hours or more, with another, dealing exhaustively in prayer with the needs of the moment. The "time of prayer" was over, and he was occupied with some other thing, when a "draw" to prayer came again, and he said to himself, "If I obey this, I shall be always 'praying.'" He dropped the matter in hand, and followed the draw to prayer, when he discovered a spring opened, as it were, in his spirit out of which came a prayer "stream" full of unction, just as other Spirit-taught believers find God opens the Word to them for the ministry of teaching or preaching.

It is only now in looking back over the seven years of prayer that followed this hour, that it is possible to see, (1) the purposes of God in this call; (2) the equipment of the chosen instrument for the fulfilment of those purposes; and (3) the issues to the Church of Christ that lay in obedience to the call.

First, as to the purposes of God. These seem best summed up in the words of Isaiah, "Yea, truth faileth . . . and He saw that there was no man, and He wondered that there was no intercessor ..." (Isa. lix. 15, 16); and the Word of the Lord through Ezekiel, "I sought for a man . . . *that should . . . stand in the gap before Me* for the land ..." (Ezek. xxii. 30).

The demon-hosts of hell had swept upon the Church awakened in the Revival, and truly there was "no man" who clearly realised the peril, to "stand in the gap" before the Lord, with hands uplifted like Moses against the unseen foes whilst Israel battled in the plain. "Truth" was failing through the lying spirits counterfeiting every truth of God, and there was "no intercessor," for there were none who saw deeply into the depths of the realm of *counterfeit*, and the basic causes of giving ground to the Deceiver in this new peril of the Church.

Second, as to the equipment of the instrument. It is clear that no believer *can pray beyond the measure of his knowledge*. Each man's range of experience is therefore an asset to the whole Church, and a stewardship given to the man *for* the whole Church. The experience gained by the Lord's servant in the Revival in Wales was *unique from the supernatural standpoint*, not to speak of other aspects visible to the world of men. There was unveiled to him a realm concerning the subtle workings of the devil which became of the highest value as material for prayer. Without this knowledge he could not have prayed so effectively, and herein we see the wisdom of God in choosing a man who having *suffered* above his fellows was thereby equipped to pray for those who in the hour of the Church's peril would be in abnormal suffering.

This is borne out directly by the Scriptures, in which we are told that our Lord's fitness to be our High Priest lies in the fact that "He was *tempted in all points* like as we are ..." The measure of the Lord's experience on earth, because He drank the cup of sorrows to the dregs, is the measure of His ability to pray for us in heaven. Ah, *what* must the Lord know experimentally of the *needs* of the Church; what must *He* see as He looks from His place of intercession; how He remembers what He suffered at Calvary from friend and foe—all this was His preparation for prayer when He entered upon His heavenly work of making intercession for us.

The intercession of Christ in heaven—according to the Scriptures—does not do away with the need of *intercessors on earth*; why, we cannot fully know until we join our Lord in heaven.

Thirdly, it is now, and only now, that we can see in clear perspective the issues to the Church of Christ that lay in the obedience of God's servant to the call. The dispensational aspect is referred to in other papers* in this number. We speak now of the individual members of the Church of Christ. These will not know until they reach eternity what they have been saved from by this ministry of prayer. It has been no small thing for the Church of Christ to have one member with deep experience give himself wholly to prayer, with no personal desire to leave his hidden work for the more attractive service of ministering to the multitude.

And this not only from the standpoint of prayer, but of stewardship on behalf of the Church. "As every man hath received the gift" he is called to "minister the same, one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."† Deep spiritual knowledge and deep experience is a "gift" to be used for the Church. How? Only by "preaching"? Nay. What is said in preaching is of necessity limited by the measure of the hearers. A man may "preach" and have three parts of his gift of knowledge unused. A man may "teach," and again have depths upon depths of experience unexpressed. But in PRAYER there is no limit. The inexpressible to man can be expressed to God, and hence *used* to its utmost extent for others. The deeper the experience, the deeper the capacity and knowledge to pray, and hence the greater the results to God's people.

Let us now see how the opened spring of prayer was developed, and used until it increased in volume, and became a deep strong stream, able to compass in prayer the needs of the whole Church, and in fellowship with God to understand from Him what to *ask*, and to hold in faith for the universal Church.

It was "developed" as every man develops some gift he discovers within him. First by obeying every "draw" in the spirit to prayer, and next by *praying how to pray*! e.g., every unnameable burden that came on the spirit was prayed over to discover what it meant *for prayer*. And prayer would be focussed upon the—at first—unnameable "burden" until light would break, gleam by gleam, and its cause was known. Then by the lifting of the burden and the relief of spirit would be given the clue to its purport, and all this prayed over again until at last all could be gathered up into one clear definite petition with assurance of its being in the mind of God.

Then *every thought* that came to the mind was at once turned into prayer. Others seize "light" from God upon truth, or experience,

* The change of the dispensations, p. 193. "War on the Saints and its dispensational significance," p. 190.

† 1 Pet. ii. 10.11. † Cf. Heb. v. 7.

with the purpose of transmitting in Bible class, or preaching, but this servant of God eagerly seized light as it came as fuel for prayer.

"If I do not turn it into prayer I may lose it," he would say, and so he guarded against what he called "leakage," in prayer, by allowing any thought in the mind, or burden, or pressure on the spirit, to escape his stewardship of prayer.

By this daily and momentary giving of himself to co-work with the Holy Spirit in every spirit movement to pray, and every thought, given to the mind as *knowledge* for prayer, gradually his whole being was, so to speak, shut, up to the prayer service. It took his whole time, as other absorbing work takes the time of other men. It became the one "engagement," and the one claim of his life. He was living in another world, occupied with service in the unseen realm, and therefore he could only have his spirit and mind free for outer things when God released him from this service of prayer, by his having *nothing left to pray for*, and he was, as he said, right up-to-date with his "work" of *prayer*.

And it was truly the "prayer of *faith*." God was GOD to this labourer in prayer (Col. iv. 12). The word of God was the "word of God," and hence to be trusted and acted upon implicitly. The basis of all this prayer was FAITH: e.g., faith, that as some spiritual knowledge was given to him, and he prayed that others in the spiritual Church should be given that light, those *needing* that light would be given it wherever they were; and even if they did not get it consciously, they would be prepared by prayer for that truth when it reached them in the Providence of God.

This explains why the book "War on the Saints" was so quickly understood by those who *needed its light*. First, because all the truths in the Book came from *light on experience* obtained by prayer, and secondly because all in need of that light were prepared by prayer to *receive* the light long before the book was published. The book itself may be said to be full of truth in the germ. The terse statements summed up conclusions arrived at by exhaustive prayer, and proved by testing their effective working.

Then, through the knowledge already gained, of the deep workings of the kingdom of darkness, all the ramifications of those workings were dealt with in prayer, asking exposure and destruction on the ground of the Calvary victory of the Son of God. Every known possible counterfeit by demons of what God does and can do, was prayed through in detail; every known need of the children of God, for light and deliverance; every phase of truth branching out from what is described as "germ truth" was dealt with in prayer—openings out of truth not possible to give in the

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compass of the volume, concerning the workings of the kingdom of darkness, and the way of victory over them by the children of God. The terse directions, too, given in the book to those who found themselves in the net of the deceiver, were all obtained and tried and proved in the crucible of prayer. They were not "Saul's armour," but of the make of David's sling-stones, wielded with sure faith in what grew to be a "prayer-war" against the forces of Satan.

This prayer-work lasted, without intermission, for seven years, for even at night, he says, he fell asleep praying, and awoke in the morning with his spirit and mind alert for dealing with God. In *deep spiritual isolation* the work was done, with a crucifixion in the personal life that few could endure, or understand. Alone and misjudged, or his work not understood, the faithful intercessor ploughed on. Tenacity of will would not have sufficed to enable this prayer-labourer to hold on year after year, with all outer things, both painful and pleasant, made subservient to his trust. He himself says that he *had no choice*, from the standpoint of the suffering in his spirit when the burden upon it was unrelieved by prayer. Others saw and bore witness to the marks of the Divine source of the prayers. No human mind could have conceived them, for they were Divinely inspired, as if the spirit was in perpetual communion with God, catching His mind concerning men and things, long before it reached the outer world—and reached even many children of God.

All this is reasonable when viewed from a spiritual standpoint. Apart from any special call to prayer, any believer who walks with God so closely as to keenly watch and discern every movement of His Spirit, and do this year after year as the one thing, must of necessity become "quick of scent" in the fear of the Lord, and quick in understanding the ways of God.

This fact explains, too, why this servant of God seemed to require so little outside information for prayer. God laid upon him the need oftentimes before the exterior knowledge reached him, and thus came about what had been thought his "extraordinary" prevision. Elijah, as a man of prayer, knew in his spirit the mind of God for Israel, and prayed what God purposed for the land.

In like manner the issues of that call to prayer which began so simply in 1907 show that this servant of God has been a man who "stood in the gap" against the onrush of counterfeiting demons upon the spiritual section of the Church. And now that that tide upon the Church has subsided,* and the outbreak of lying spirits is

*** e.g., a "tide" of the Holy Spirit breaks forth and subsides, with results remaining in individuals. So a "tide" from the pit rushes forth, and subsides, leaving some under its power.**

raging in the outer world of men, this prayer-labourer is still engaged in prayer, but prayer, it may be said, of a different form, *i.e.*, not directed against the hosts of darkness in their counterfeiting onslaught on the Church, but in their workings in the world of men, *e.g.*, in their raging among the nations as war-demons; in their work in the Papal church as the "Babylon" of the apocalypse; in Spiritism as leading men away from God—in brief, PRAYER as it concerns the CLOSE of the old Dispensation and the opening of the new, the adjusting of the nations, the return of the Jews to their land, and all God's programme as set forth in the Scriptures.

The outstanding characteristic which over-shadows all others in Evan Eoberts, is his manifest ANCHOR WITHIN THE VEIL—the inevitable result of a life of perpetual prayer. Thus "anchored," no tumult, or touch of the rushing twentieth century spirit seems to move him.

"Prayer," he says, "is a definite transaction with God"—a committal to Him of everything as it arises; and once committed, or "prayed over," that thing, whether it be work of demons or sin of men, untoward circumstances, or personal trouble, is transferred to God to deal with according to His will. And from that moment of "committal" the believer who really *commits*, has no further care; faith—true living faith—rests on God's faithfulness, and is not concerned or disturbed by exterior things. Faith, anchored in God, holds steady, and, as a rope to an anchor pulls a tossing ship to safety, compels the "things seen" to give place to the things eternal.

This is visibly true in this man of prayer. Once anything is "prayed over" he is as undisturbed as if it did not exist, for it means that he is no longer carrying the responsibility; it is placed upon God, and then if "hurry" or "tumult" comes "it has been prayed over" is enough for calm.

Let any believer live like this for years, and there will come upon him, too, the stamp of the eternal; impetuosity of speech and action will subside; the fever of haste in manner and gait will pass away. The "anchor" will hold even when the nations are shaken, and no spot of peace on earth can be found.

Finally, in lifting the veil in the last issue of the *Overcomer*, from the prayer ministry which initiated the paper; obtained in prayer truths set forth in its pages, and steered it through the opposing forces of darkness; we would say that we have sought to write the brief story in words of truth and soberness, that others may understand also how to give themselves to prayer in this hour of need—and know how their *knowledge can be turned into prayer* for the relief of their own spirits, and the hastening of the Lord's return.