

THE LIFE THAT CAN PRAY

IP #12

Someone said, "The greatest thing a person can do, is to teach another person to pray." And if one person this week has learned to pray, and learned to pray in power, and learned to pray in the fullness of the spirit, then only God knows the effect and the fruitfulness that one person can bring to the kingdom of God. So I appreciate this opportunity. Now would you open your Bibles tonight to the Gospel of John, chapter 15:1-7 and then the 16th verse. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (verse 16) Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Now let me read again the seventh verse because this is the verse around which the message tonight is built. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Now there are two things that determine the answer to any prayer. Number one, the prayer itself must be according to the will of God. It doesn't make any difference how much faith you have in that petition or how persistent you are in that praying, if the prayer itself is the request and not according to the will of God, God will not hear. That is the first primary condition to answered prayer. I John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, and we know that we have the petitions that we have desired of him."

The prayer must be according to ;the will of God. The second thing that determines the answer to prayer is the person making the prayer must be according to the will of God. Not only must his pethition be accordeing to the will of God, but his life must also ;be according to the will of God. For you see, it is the life that prays, it is the life that prays. You cannot separate your praying from your living. And we offer our prayers from the platform of our daily living of our relationship to God. Now there is a spiritual principle that I hope you willl learn, it ~~is~~ is one that is never violated as far as the word of God is con cerned. That spiritual principle is simply this; The acceptability of the person determines the acciptibility of the prayer. When I come to God in prayer and being before Him my petitions and offer my requests, the first thing that God look~~s~~ at is not that request, but He looks first of all at me. And the quality of the person praying, determines the quality of the prayer. Now you'll find this thought throughout the word of God. For instance, in Mathew 5:, Jesus says, "If you come to ;the alter to bring your gifts to the Lord and there remember that thy brother has ought against thee, leave then thy gift at the alter, first, go be reconciled to thy brother then come and offer thy gift." Jesus is saying the giver is more important than the gift. The worshipper is mor important than the act of worship. And what determines God accepting my worship, or my servic e, or my giving is the quality of my own life. And so it ~~is~~ is the acceptability of the person praying who really determines the acceptability of the prayer he offers to lGod. That simply means that if I am going to be able to pray and have God answer my prayer,than my life must be according to the will of God. It was Robert Murray McShan e that said, "What a man is when he prays, is what he is." No man's prayer life is greater than his personal life. And your power and effectiveness and prayer is only going to be as far as you power and effectiveness and personal holiness is concerned. It is the life that prays. And I hope that you learn that tonight even if you jfail to ~~lean~~ learn anything else from this conferece this week. Many times Christians leve their lives in neglect, live carelessly,

they do not take care to make certain that they are spiritually aligned and in harmony with the will of God. And then something comes up that they want to pray about, and they start to pray. They offer that petition to God, and God does not hear it. It seems that God just stuffs cotton in ~~his~~ His ears and the heavens seem to be made of brass and God doesn't hear. Then they go away saying that prayer doesn't work. And they have never realized that God never divorces the person ~~from Him~~, praying from the prayer he offers. You cannot separate your praying from your living. And if your living is not what it ought to be, then God will not hear your prayer. This is what David meant in Psalms 66:18, when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." And the word regard simply means that if I have sympathy towards any sin in my life, if I look with sympathy upon any sin in my life, the Lord will not hear me. Now you know this week as we have talked about the tremendous power available in prayer, Satan has stood right beside you and accused you of something in your life that keeps you from being able to pray with a clear conscience. I John 3 says, that if our hearts do not condemn us, neither does God condemn us. This is the confidence that we have toward Him. And what the Apostle is saying, is that if our heart is condemning us, then we really can't have any boldness in prayer. And some of you, each time you begin to pray, your ~~own~~ heart ~~condemns~~ condemns you. Satan is right there saying, "Now you; know that you can't really pray because what about this one thing in your life?" And quite frankly, there are some of you who are going to forfeit the privilege of praying because of one or more particular things in your life. You know there is something, that every one in a while, comes to haunt me, it is that on the day of judgement that when I stand in the presence of my Lord and He takes the record of my living and the record of my service, that He might say, "You know, I had so many blessings that I wanted to pour out upon you, I had so many problems that I wanted to solve for you, there were so many people that I wanted to save through your praying and through your witnessing, but you had one little habit that you wouldn't let go of. One

little area of unforgiveness that you wouldn't make right. There was just that one preacher way back yonder when you were in his church, that you still harbor bitterness against, you would never forgive him, you would never make reconciliation, and so often I wanted to save people in your family and work miracles through your life. But you wouldn't let go of that one little thing." You know, maybe from your viewpoint that one thing that keeps you from praying without your heart condemning you, maybe that one thing looms large. But when Christ puts it in the scales and lost souls are in one side of the ~~see see~~ scales and that one little sin is in the other ~~side~~ side of the scale it will not ~~ell~~ look nearly as large or nearly as important then. And I do not know about you, but I can't think of anything tonight that is worth forfeiting my power in prayer. More than anything else, I want to be able to come to God with a clear conscience, with my heart condemning me. And I wish you would tell me tonight ~~th~~ what it is you think that is more than being able to pray with a clear conscience. Because there will come a day when you'll need to pray, when you have come to the end of your rope, when you have come to the end of all of your own abilities and ways out and the only way to look is up and you'll not be able to pray with a clear conscience, you'll not be able to get hold of God because your life has not been according to the will of God. And it's well and good for us to talk night after night to talk about the theories and practices of praying but if you and I don't come tonight to the place where we're willing to pay any cost, in order to be able to pray, it has all been wasted and in vain. Are you willing tonight to pay the price to pray? Whatever the cost is that I can go to God and know that God will hear and God will answer. Whatever that cost is, are you willing to pay that tonight? James 5:16 says, "... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Well, it is the life that ~~pery~~ prays, so what kind of life do I have to live in order to be able to pray effectively? You have it right here in the seventh verse of John 15. Jesus says, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will and it shall be

done unto you." Now Jesus mentions in this verse the two conditions of answered prayer. The two things that must be true in my life and if these two things are true in my life, listen to the tremendous promise that Jesus makes. "If this is true, ye shall ask what ye will (unlimited) , and it shall be done unto you." What are these two things? First of all, Jesus said, "If ye abide in me," this is condition number one. Now what does it mean to abide in Jesus? In this fifteenth ~~verse~~ chapter, Jesus is using a very familiar figure of speech. The vine and the branches. They are on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane and perhaps some have said that they have passed by the temple and on the front of the temple they had the symbol of a vine. That was the symbol of the Jewish nation. And Jesus seeing that sign, speaks to His disciples these words, "I am the true vine and ye are the branches. If ye abide in me as a branch abideth in the vine, then you will bring forth much fruit." In those first verses, Jesus is telling us what it is to abide in Him. And what it means to abide in Jesus, is simply to do what a branch does to a vine. Abiding in Jesus is living a branch kind of life. This involves two things, and if you're willing to first of all come to these two things then you are on your way to being able to pray effectively. If you're willing to become nothing more nor less than a branch and to live a branch life, then Jesus says you can have what you will and it shall be done unto you. And in living a branch life first of all means that I acknowledge that the only purpose in living is just to bear fruit. The only way I can justify my existence is by bearing fruit. Notice what Jesus says in the second verse. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." Look at the sixth verse, "If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned." Jesus is saying that apart from fruitfulness, no branch has any right to exist. And if the husbandman comes out and sees a branch on the vine that is not bearing fruit, then it has no business living and he cuts it off. For me to abide in Jesus, to live that branch life is first of all to recognize and acknowledge Father that the only justification

for living is that Jesus might bear His fruit through me. Just to see yourself nothing more nor less than a branch. That means living a selfless life. That means burning my plans, my ambitions, desires, on the alter of His will. That means seeing myself as nothing but simply a branch, an instrument that God uses to express Himself through me. It's interesting to see how Jesus uses this figure of speech, because the only thing that a branch was good for was just to bear fruit. The wood of the vine was useless for anything else. It's too soft to build a chair or house with or to carve with, and even the Jewish law said that you could not use the wood of a vine in a fire for a sacrifice. That's just how useless the wood of the vine is. The only thing a vine is good for or the wood is good for, is to bear fruit. And if it's not going to bear fruit, it is good for nothing. Jesus is saying, "Christian, if you're not going to bear fruit, you're good for nothing. And apart from your fruitfulness, you cannot justify your existence." Remember the parable that Jesus tells in the Gospel of Luke, when He came to the fig tree and it didn't bear any fruit, He said to cut it down, and he said, "No Lord, give it just one more year and I'll fertilize it and I'll cultivate it!" And the Lord said, "Alright, but I'm going to come back and if it still isn't bearing fruit, I'm going to cut it down because it's just taking up space." And you know, there are a great many people who are taking up space. And our attendance in Sunday school may grow, but all it is is just many times useless wood. Jesus says, "Apart from ~~uselessness~~ Fruitfulness, you don't have any right to exist." And so the branch is that thing that recognizes the only good that I am is just to let Jesus bear fruit through me. What is fruit anyway? Most of the time we have the idea that fruit is just winning people to Jesus, and that's part of it. But do you know what fruit really is? Fruit is the outward expression of the inward nature. Now I can't walk through the woods and tell one tree from another. And there are a lot of people who can. My dad can. He can look at a tree and tell you if it is an Oak tree, or an Elm tree or a Mulberry tree, or a Spaghetti tree or a whatever it is. But I can't. I can

go to an orchard and I can't tell if that's a peach, orange, or apple tree or what it is. There is only one way that I can tell what kind of tree that is. And that is when it bears fruit. You can't fool me if I see an apple hanging on a tree, I know it's an apple tree. And if I see a peach hanging on a tree, I know it's a peach tree. What is a peach? A peach is simply an outward expression of the inward nature. What is the inward nature of a Christian? Jesus. What is the fruit? It is the outward expression of Jesus. It is Jesus expressing Himself through my personality. And I'm simply a branch, and I say, "Lord Jesus, I realize that the only value that I am to you is just as a branch." A branch is simply a drape rack. It's just something that God made to hang grapes upon. The branch doesn't produce fruit, He said it bears fruit. It is the vine that produces the fruit. The branch simply bears it. Jesus produces the fruit, and He just wants to hang it on my life. And so I'm simply a branch and I recognize that Jesus wants to use me to express His nature through me. Are you willing to become just a branch? That's all, just a branch. But it not only means just ~~that~~ that, it also means that I must make myself available to God for that purpose. Have you ever noticed a branch, or watched one? How it always stays in the same place, it never gets up and moves around, staying in the same place making itself available to the vine. And any time that vine wants to flow its life through that branch, the branch is there. And for me to abide in Jesus, simply means I come to the place where I make myself available to Jesus. He can do anything He wants to with me and through me. And so really to sum up this whole point, if I'm to abide in Jesus, I must come to the place where unconditionally, I make myself available to Him. That's all God wants from me is my availability. There was a time several years ago, when I used to worry whether I did enough for the Lord. I remember on different occasions I would lie awake at night and I would wonder if I ~~was~~ visited enough today, did I pray enough today, did I witness enough today? And there were some days when the schedule was just so crowded I didn't have time to visit, ~~id~~ I didn't have time to witness, and I would ~~la~~ lie awake at night condemning myself, accusing myself, because I didn't ~~have~~ do

enough for the Lord that day. And then God showed me something, One day I was walking in the kitchen and I looked at my water faucet and I noticed that it was looking a little sad and down in the dumps, downcast. And I stopped and I said, "Water faucet, what's the matter with you?" And the faucet said, "Well, I just ~~don't~~ feel real bad today because I failed you." I said, "What do you mean you failed me?" And the faucet said, "Well, I haven't turned on once today." And I haven't quenched your thirst a single time. And I haven't washed your hands a single time today, and I'm sorry master that I failed you. A couple of times I knew I was failing you and I tried to turn on, and I squeezed out a few drops, but I just couldn't turn myself on and that's why I'm feeling sad. I just knew I failed you today." And I said, "You stupid water faucet. I have passed by you a thousand times today and if I had wanted to turn you on, I would have turned you on. If I had wanted to get a drink of water from you, I would have gotten it. If I had wanted to wash my hands from you, I would have done it. And every time that I passed by today, I've known that you were there and would have responded to my touch. Water faucet, I don't want you turning yourself on. All you will do is waste water and make a mess. You just be there available to me and that's all I expect from you. You have been available to me, and I've known that at any time I could come and turn you on, you would have responded to my touch. You just be available. That's all I want from you." And you know, I saw it. I saw that when Jesus is my Lord and I'm just his servant, that all He wants from me is my availability. And I can come to the end of the day now and say, "Lord, you know you could have used me more if you had wanted to." ~~And the Lord~~ And if the Lord hasn't turned me on today, ~~isn't~~ it's simply because He didn't want to turn me on. And God has known that He can do anything He wanted to do with me, and if He hasn't that isn't my problem. I do not measure my faithfulness by how ~~many~~ much I have done, but by my ~~available~~ availability. That's what it means to be a branch. Just to be available. That is condition number one. If you abide in me. Notice the second condition that Jesus gives in verse seven.



"And my word abide in you." This means two things. First of all, it means His words control us. The word abide is a Greek word that means to dwell permanently. To take up permanent residence in us. Hosea, the prophet, brought God's message of accusation to the people and here is what God had against these people. He said, "You have treated my words as a stranger." Now a stranger in Israel had no voice in the affairs of the nation. If there was a problem, the stranger had no right to give his opinion. If there was a difficulty, the stranger had no voice in that decision. And God said, "You treat my word like a stranger." The stranger lives in the land, but he has no voice in the land. And He said, "You let my words live in you. You know them, but they have no voice in your lives." And so He said, "Let my words dwell permanently within you!" And my heart is to be a home for the word of God. To many many of us our heart is a hotel for the word of God and checkout is 12 noon on Sundays. And we come to church to hear the word of God and when we leave this church, the word of God leaves us. And for the word of God to abide in me, means that Jesus' words control me. That means ~~ob~~ obedience. I John 3:22 says, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and for those things that are pleasing in his sight." Let me just ask you this question. Can you think of any command in this book tonight that you're not obeying now? Can you think of a command in this Bible that you are willfully, knowingly, deliberately disobeying? The command that says speak no evil of one another brethren, and you've been critical of one another today, and you've gossiped today, and you've spoken evil of other people today. You willfully and knowingly and deliberately violated that command of God. No wonder you can't pray. When Jesus said, "If thy brother has ought against thee, go to him and make it right." ~~It~~ It doesn't say if you have ought against him, it says if your brother has ought against you. You may not have anything against him, may not be your fault, he's got something against you. Jesus says it doesn't make any difference. You're to go to him and be reconciled. That is a command of God. Are you disobeying that command? The Bible is filled with commands

and Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And you know that when we talk so much about the spirit filled life, and the Christ indwelt life, we sometimes neglect the word obedience. We somehow have the idea that obedience is legalistic. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandment." And for His words to abide in me, simply means that His words control me. Is there any command that you are willfully, knowingly, deliberately disobeying tonight? Then don't be surprised if you pray and nothing happens. But not only does it mean that His words control us, but it also means that His words cleanse us. He says in that second and third verses, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, my father, the husbandman, prunes it that it may bring forth more fruit." And in verse three, "Now are you cleaned through the words that I have spoken unto you." This simply means that if I am going to make myself available to prayer, then God says, "You want to pray, there's some things that I want to clip from your life. There are some things in your life that I don't care for. There ~~are~~ is a lot of dead wood that is taking up room and drawing off energy of the vine and I want to prune that so you can bring forth more fruit." And I find that when I make myself available to God and want to come to Him in power and prayer, that the father, the first thing that He wants to do is to some cleaning up of my life. To prune some things out of my life. This is a revelation. Any vine dresser, any vineyard keeper knows, that if you want to bear more fruit, you don't add more branches, you make the branches that you already have healthier. And what God wants to do this branch, is to make him healthier. He wants to cut off that useless wood that is taking up room and drawing off energy so that more of the life of Jesus can get to that area of my life that is fruitful. ~~and~~ And you know the reason that God cannot bear fruit in some of our lives is because we have so many branches that aren't bearing fruit. I'm not talking particularly about sins, I'm talking about good things. I'll be honest with you. You're going to have to make some sacrifices if you're really going to pray. And some of you don't pray because you spend all of your time watching television.

And there is nothing wrong with watching television. But the Father wants to come and clip off some of that so He can use you in fruitfulness and prayers. I never will forget when I was in Colorado leading a pastors retreat and I was bringing basically the same message on abiding in Jesus as the secret of fruitfulness. And I came to the part of pruning and cutting away some of the branches. And there was a pastor there that had been listening ~~and~~ and he was ~~hungry~~ hungry. I had talked with him the night before and he was really hungry to know more about it all. And all of a sudden as I was expounding this passage, tears just leaped in his ~~eyes~~ eyes and coursed down his cheeks, and I thought to myself, "well brother, the Lord has touched him." And as we were driving away, he was driving me back to the airport, ;he said, "you know, when you came to that place in that passage about in order for God to bear fruit, some things have to be pruned, cut away, all of a sudden I began to think of some memories of my church. And I thought if the Lord would prune away ~~all~~ old deacon so and so, we could really get moving for the Lord. And I thought about sister so and so, If God would just cut her away from our church, if we could just get rid of her and prune her from our membership, we could really go for the Lord. And all of a sudden, I realized that God wasn't talking about that at all. He was talking about pruning away things in my own life." ~~This~~ And that's when God broke him and convicted him. And notice who does the pruning. It's the Father. He is the husbandman. You don't have to take care of that yourself. Some Christians just worry themselves to death, trying to prune their lives making them acceptable to God. If you make yourself available, He will make ~~yourself available~~. you acceptable. And if you will come tonight to that place where you will make yourself available to ;God, the Father will see to it that you're fit to pray. And He will come to you with those pruning shears of the word of God and the Holy Spirit, and He'll start clipping away some things in your ~~de~~ life so that you'll have more time and energy and spiritual power to pray. Are you willing tonight to submit yourself to the husbandman and say, "Father, I don't know whether there is anything

in my life tonight that would hinder my effectiveness in praying. But I'm willing to submit to the husbandman and I'm willing to let you move into my life and prune anything and everything from my life that hinders my effective praying." Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to let His word abide in you tonight? And to submit yourself to the husbandman and let Him cut some things out that are holding back the spirit's fullness in your life. I want us to bow now for a moment.