



DHM
Divine Healing
MINISTRIES

Perseverance In Prayer

By Brother David Jardine

Why Do We Need To Persevere In Prayer?

The answer to that question is very simple - because Jesus told us to. In Luke 18 He tells a parable to encourage people not to give up, but to keep on praying. Then in Luke 11 we have the disciples coming along and making that beautiful request, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. It is a request that we today would do well to follow. We seek in many places to find help with prayer - books, articles, talks, sermons, spiritual directors, and friends. We are quite right to seek this guidance, but surely the greatest help of all must come from the Master Himself. He knows more about prayer than anyone else and I have no doubt that if we were to say, 'Lord, teach me to pray', He would respond generously to that request. Certainly His guidance to the disciples was clear. He began by teaching them the prayer which is still used in every service of worship today. Then He taught them a parable about the need to persevere in prayer. It seems to me that the positioning of that parable, coming as it does immediately after such an important teaching, show clearly how important Jesus felt it was to carry on praying and not to give up too quickly. That is good enough for me. If Jesus said it, we have to do it. His word is the greatest authority we can have. Why do we need to persevere in prayer? Because Jesus told us to.

Faithfulness Brings Blessing

My good friend, Rev Cecil Kerr, director of the Christian Renewal Centre in Rostrevor, said to me on one occasion, 'Brother, you remain faithful and the Lord will bestow the blessing'. He was absolutely right. I believe that in every area of the Christian life faithfulness to God brings blessing, and that includes the area of prayer. We know that in Northern Ireland. For almost 8 years we have had prayers for our land every day in St Anne's Cathedral. At times attendances have been very good. On other occasions numbers have been low, so low at times that I have said, 'Lord, do You really want us to continue with these prayers?' On every occasion I felt that the answer was very clear, 'Yes'. So we continued, we remained faithful every day to what we felt the Lord was asking us to do. I have no doubt that He honoured that faithfulness.

In July, 1997, at a time of crisis in this land we called a week of prayer in the Cathedral. People were frightened, so three thousand came during the course of the week. I believe the Lord used those prayers in the Cathedral to encourage prayer initiatives all over the country. At the eleventh hour He intervened, diffused tension and saw us safely through the summer months. He did it again this year of 1998. As the Drumcree situation evolved tension was far worse than in 1997. By Saturday, July 11th, it was hard to see how catastrophe was going to be avoided. But on the day of July 12th the Lord intervened again and

diffused tension in a way that no one else could possibly have done.

I thank God for the faith of so many people in Northern Ireland, ordinary people, who have remained faithful in prayer over the years, even when there was very little light at the end of the tunnel. We all owe them a debt of gratitude. But we should be even more grateful to the Lord who responded to those prayers and who, in His mercy, showed us on so many occasions that faithfulness in prayer brings blessing.

Perseverance In Trust

Canon Jim Glennon from St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney is a man who has been used powerfully in the healing ministry for almost 40 years. In his books he focuses strongly not just on prayer, but on the prayer of faith. He says that when we are bringing requests before the Lord we eventually have to move from asking, asking, asking to believing, believing, believing. I think he is absolutely right. We have to reach the stage in our prayer where we accept that we have been heard and we trust the Lord to be responding to our requests. I have seen occasions when I have moved from asking to trusting the Lord in this way, and something has been released to allow Him to move much more powerfully in the situation.

There was a good example of that in Northern Ireland at the beginning of July. We held a twenty-four hour prayer

vigil in St Anne's Cathedral on the weekend of Drumcree. The attendance was great. More than 1000 people came over the course of the twenty-four hours. I joked on one occasion that if there was a stand-off at Drumcree we would have a sit-in in the Cathedral until we got a breakthrough. It was only a joke. But by the Monday, when the stand-off was going strong, I had to take it seriously - 'Lord, do You want us to have a sit-in in the Cathedral? Do You want us to organise another special initiative of prayer?' I felt that the answer came back very clearly, 'No. You said your prayers. Every one of those prayers has been heard. Every one has been taken account of. Just trust me to see you through'.

The advice made sense and even though, as the week progressed, it was hard to fathom how He was going to see us through, nevertheless I made that my prayer, 'Lord, I trust you to see us through'. I prayed it many times and, as I said earlier, at the very last possible moment, the Lord intervened and saved us. As a general principle it seems to me that it is normally the prayer of faith that the Lord responds powerfully to. One way to express that faith is through the prayer of trust. That is why I suggest that there always comes a stage where we have to move from persevering in asking to persevering in trusting.

Perseverance Sometimes Produces A Result That We Would Not Have Had If We Had Stopped Praying.

Over the years there have been a number of miracles of healing through Divine Healing Ministries, people who have been suffering from medically incurable illnesses and who have been suddenly healed. In almost every case, although the healing eventually came suddenly, a great deal of prayer had taken place beforehand.

The healing of Paul Burns was a good example. In the middle of 1993 he ended up in a wheel-chair for two and a half years and throughout that whole period he was prayed for right across this community by both Protestant and Catholic. Some members of Divine Healing Ministries went to his house on a regular basis to pray with him. But for two and a half years there was no sign whatsoever that prayer was going to be answered in a dramatic way, until one night in January, 1996. Paul and his wife Lorraine had had a real struggle to get him up to bed. Because of fluid his weight had gone up to eighteen stone. Lorraine was one of the people who had never lost faith that Paul could be healed.

That night, before they settled down, she prayed once again for Paul's healing. Shortly afterwards Paul felt that the Lord was speaking to him, telling him to move parts of his body that he had not been able to move for two and a

half years. Years before, as a Christian, Paul had learnt that when the Lord spoke always to be obedient. So when he felt the Lord telling him first of all to move his right arm and then to raise it above his head he did it. It was the same with the left arm. Then came the big one - 'get out of bed and walk'. Paul did not hesitate. He struggled out of bed and began to walk, unsteadily, into the bathroom. Then he went into the room where his little three-year-old son Philip was asleep. He had never seen Paul walk. When he awoke he became very excited, 'My daddy's walking, my daddy's walking'. And he really was. He has gone from strength to strength since then, and you would find it hard to believe, if you saw Paul praying for sick people in St Anne's Cathedral on a Monday night, that he had been in a wheelchair for two and a half years.

I have no doubt that all the prayers offered during that period were of vital importance. Every one of them were taken account of and used by the Lord to bring that dramatic healing in January, 1996. It's just as well that people did not become discouraged and give up praying for Paul too quickly.

Perseverance Develops Character

That is what James tells us in the first chapter of his letter.

'My brothers whenever you have to face trials of many kinds, count yourselves supremely happy, in the knowledge that such testing of your faith breeds fortitude,

and if you give fortitude full play you will go on to complete a balanced character that will fall short in nothing’.

(NEB James 1:2-4)

There is no doubt about it, that it is going through difficulties and hardships which helps to develop not just our character but our faith. If life had always been smooth for me I doubt if I would be in the relationship that I am in with God today. Facing difficulties forces us to trust God and lean on Him in a way that would not have been necessary if life had been too easy.

I was reminded of that this year when on my way to do a chaplaincy duty for the Sisters of St Clare in the village of Freeland near Oxford. I travelled on a beautiful summer’s day, admiring the lovely little villages that we passed through, and thinking how wonderful it would be to be a vicar in that part of the country. It only took me a few seconds to realise that for me it would not have been so wonderful at all.

I have lived through almost 30 years of community troubles in

Belfast, living on the edge of a very tough part of the city. All that time I had to struggle in prayer, asking the Lord, begging the Lord, to find a way to end the violence and the suffering of our people. Through that struggle I had grown

in my relationship with the Lord. I had learnt a great deal about Him and what He is capable of doing on behalf of a whole nation in response to prayer. It was at times a struggle, but what the Lord taught me through it I could never have learned in a beautiful little village like Freeland.

The organisation which helped me to develop the life of prayer and confidence in prayer was the Society of St Francis. I have been a member of this Anglican religious community for 25 years and a very distinctive part of our life-style is that we spend three hours each day in prayer and worship. That probably seems an awful lot to most people, and it is at times an effort to get up every morning at 6.30 am for prayer, especially if I have been out late the night before. But the fact that I stuck at it, spending all those hours in prayer every day, today gives me a confidence, faith and authority in prayer that could have been learned in no other way.

**Sometimes We Have To Persevere In Prayer
Because There Is Something In Our Lives Which
Is Blocking The Lord's Response**

If someone were to say to me, 'I would like to be involved in the ministry of healing. I would like to pray with people with the laying-on of hands. Give me just one tip', my response would be, 'work on your relationship with God. If you have read every book on the ministry of healing and

you're not close to God there will always be something lacking in your ministry. But if you are really close to God, even if your book knowledge of the ministry is not very extensive, God can still use you powerfully'. I believe that is true to every area of ministry not just for the ministry of healing. And it is true about prayer. We don't have to be perfect to be effective Christians, or none of us would qualify. But we do have to show the Lord that we are working seriously to put right in our lives things that are out of tune with Him.

I came to a realisation of this during the years that I spent in Brooklyn, New York. I worked in a church called St Augustine's. The majority of people there had come from the Caribbean. Just after I went there in March, 1985, I was asked to pray with a man suffering from Parkinson's Disease. His name was Iva and he had originally come from Jamaica. The condition had left him with a bad shake in his hand and physically very weak. We prayed together that day, and for the next three years we met every Friday afternoon for prayer in the side chapel of St Augustine's Church.

Over the course of that period Iva did make progress. His depression lifted. He came right back into the life of the church and his faith was renewed. Physically he became stronger. But this progress came slowly. It was only as we looked back over a long period that we were able to see any improvement. The last time I prayed with Iva was at

the end of December, 1987. I was going back to Belfast the next week, so after we had finished I went out to the door of the church to say 'cheerio'. As we were standing talking Iva saw his bus coming and he started to run for it. When he reached home he was so excited that he rang me straight back at the church.

'Did you see that?' he said

'Iva, did you run to catch that bus?'

'I felt so well', he said, 'that I could have run half a mile to catch that bus if I had to'.

I went back into the side-chapel where we had prayed, and reflected on what had happened. I had ministered to Iva every week for three years and there was only a small amount of progress over that whole period. Suddenly I pray once and he feels so well that he says he could have run half a mile. What was the reason? It's hard to prove these things but I felt that what had happened was that at long last I had managed to put right in my life something that the Lord had been pointing out for a long time. And, because of that, once that barrier was removed, the spirit was allowed to flow so freely that a man suffering from Parkinson's Disease was given a new injection of life and energy.

I have no doubt that if I had done three years before what the Lord was asking of me Iva would have benefited a

great deal more from my prayers. I had had to persevere in prayer because something was blocking the full flow of the spirit. It was clear advice to me that if the Lord points something out we have to take it seriously. Doing that can only help to bring us closer to Him, and he did say, 'If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it will be given unto you'.

Persevering In Praise And Thanksgiving

Usually when we talk about persevering in prayer we almost always refer to persevering in asking or trusting. Obviously, that is important. But most of the time we neglect to emphasise the importance of persevering in praise and thanksgiving. The Psalmist did not forget. He was faced by many difficulties, but always brings us back to the praise of God.

'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits'.

I have found that African Christians are much better at this than we are. They seem to have a far greater spirit of joy than we have. A friend of mine worked out there for ten years, in Kenya. He was asked on one occasion to go and preach at a harvest thanksgiving in a church which had no minister at that time. They were in the midst of a famine, so there wasn't much produce with which to decorate the church. But they made the best arrangements

they could in the circumstances and, when my friend arrived, he found that they had chosen the readings. One of them was from the book of Habakkuk.

‘Although the fig-tree does not burgeon, the vines bear no fruit, the olive-crop fails, the orchard yield no food, the fold is bereft of its flock, and there are no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord and rejoice in the God of my salvation’.

Maybe in our materially rich countries we could learn something from African Christians about persevering in thanking and praising God for so many blessings that we just take for granted. Those who persevere in prayer are often a great inspiration to others.

There has been prayer for our country in St Anne’s Cathedral every day for almost 8 years. We started on April 30th, 1991 when there was no sign that the violence would ever end. It was a significant day. The first round of political talks were starting at Stormont. So the media came in large numbers to report on the prayers for those involved in the talks. Paddy O’Flaherty, the well known local journalist, was one of them. Realising that they were giving us good publicity I said to him, ‘It’s good to see you fellows here’. ‘Ah no!’ he replied, ‘It’s good to see you fellows here’.

It made me realise that many who do not have the time or stamina or inclination to pray for our country are

nevertheless glad that others are taking this commitment seriously. And that is still true today, 8 years later. I came back from holidays this year at the beginning of August to find a cheque for £200 waiting for me. It was from a barrister, too busy himself to come and join us in prayer at lunch-time, but writing to express his support and encouragement for those who meet in the Cathedral on a daily basis.

Response To Prayer Coming Slowly Can Help To Build A Strong Foundation

Often when we have to really strive to achieve something we value it and cherish it a great deal. As a boy I had to save up thrupenny bits for months before I could afford to have restrung an old tennis racket of my father's. Years later, as an adult, buying new tennis and squash rackets was financially no problem for me. But I don't think I ever valued any of them as much as that first one which was restrung only after months of hard saving.

Lasting peace is coming slowly in Northern Ireland. For years we have had to strive hard and pray hard. If it had come instantaneously, I believe that we would very quickly have lost our appreciation of it. I trust that through having to labour so hard for a lasting peace, when it comes, we will not easily forget how precious is this gift. And the fact that we have had to persevere in prayer for 30 years, to lean on the Lord, will show us clearly that, even in

peaceful times, if the foundations for the future are going to be strong, the Church must continue to welcome Him to be at the centre of the life of the nation.

One Group Of People For Whom We Need To Persevere In Prayer

This is a very important group - people who have been bereaved. When I conduct a funeral I always appeal to the congregation to regularly remember the family in their prayers for months to come. If people take that appeal seriously it will unquestionably ease the grief and pain of the bereaved. I have had personal experience of this myself. On July 16th, 1997 my Aunt Mabel died after a short illness. She was 86 years of age and she had lived with my mother for 35 years. The two of them were inseparable. So my aunt's death was a big blow to my mother, and indeed it was to me as well because Aunt Mabel was like a second mother to me. It had been a long time since anyone so close to me had died, and I wondered how I would handle the experience. I must confess that, after the initial period of grieving, I handled it pretty well, and my mother did too. I think the reason was that we were both surrounded by much prayer.

When you are deeply involved in the ministry of healing, as I am, you can guarantee that if something goes wrong you will be surrounded in prayer. That makes a tremendous difference. One member of the team of Divine

Healing Ministries, whom I speak to often, always says to me, 'You and your mother are remembered ever day'. Another lady wrote to me, 'I will remember you and your mother in prayer every day for a year'. I do not think my mother could be as well today as she is - I don't even think I would be so well myself - if both of us had not been surrounded in prayer. One way that I recommend people to practise this is to turn thoughts into prayer. When someone comes into our mind, especially someone sick or bereaved or in difficulties, we simply need to lift their name before the Lord. It only takes five seconds. We can do it wherever we happen to be. But if enough people persevere in praying for the bereaved in this way I have no doubt that it will greatly ease their pain and grief.

When Can We Stop Persevering In Prayer?

There is no general answer to this question. In some cases the prayer topic is so big, such as praying for peace and renewal in Northern Ireland, that we have to carry on for years. Praying for individual people may well be different. We simply cannot keep on praying for everyone ad infinitum. A friend of mine says that if people ask him to pray for them, he prays there and then on the spot. I also try to respond quickly and sometimes say that I will pray in the car on my way to my next destination, knowing that I probably won't have time to remember them after that. If people in need come into my mind I often turn that

thought into a prayer and take a few seconds to simply lift them before the Lord.

Some prayer chains remember people for a week. Our own Divine Healing Ministries intercession service prays for people for a month. After that the request has to be renewed so that the person making the request cannot abrogate all responsibility. There are people who's condition is so serious and long-standing that they need prayer on an on-going basis month after month.

Sometimes on a personal basis, if we are being inundated with requests we simply have to surrender the person to the Lord and put their name down on the intercession service, which is able to handle hundreds of request at a time. At the end of the day the length of time we pray for will be guided by the Lord. He does not expect us to pray for everyone but will guide us to pray for particular people and situations in an ongoing way, maybe through a special love and concern that He has given us for them. We may have to trust in some cases that those whom we do not feel guided to pray for intensively will be covered by the prayers of others.

Examples Of Perseverance In Prayer

Surely one of the greatest examples of God's response to persevering prayer must be the coming down of the Iron Curtain in 1989. We could not believe that the Russians who had previously crushed all opposition - the

Hungarians in 1956, the Czechoslovaks in 1968, the Poles in 1980 - were sitting back and allowing it to happen. Surely this must have been an act of God - the whole communist system of Eastern Europe, which had seemed so impregnable, collapsing at our feet. Sabin Wurmbrand, the wife of Richard, is in absolutely no doubt how this came about. She spoke in Belfast in 1991 about their experience of life in Rumania under the Ceaucescu regime. After she had finished I asked her what part prayer had played in bringing down the Iron Curtain. This woman of 80 almost ran back to the microphone to answer, 'My dear brother, it was prayer that brought down the Berlin Wall just as surely as it was prayer that brought down the walls of Jericho'.

The same principle is true about prayer for individuals. Canon Jim Glennon from Australia, used powerfully in the healing ministry, says in one of his books that over the years he has been asked to be god-father to many children. He prayed for every one of them every day. Every one of them has grown up to become a committed Christian.

I am deeply grateful in both my life and ministry that people have persevered in prayer on behalf of me. You may be surprised to know that one of them is a man who did a sentence in Crumlin Road Prison. It happened about 20 years ago. While he was awaiting trial for a crime of dishonesty he became a committed Christian. He knew that when his trial came up he was almost certainly going

to end up in prison. I used to talk to him, from my experience as a chaplain, how he would find things there. When he eventually did come into prison he bore a very effective Christian witness, showing courage in standing up to men trying to force him to act contrary to his principles. I didn't think that I did all that much for him, but he did, and he has been grateful ever since. Every time I see him, he never leaves me without telling me that 20 years later he still says a prayer for me every day. And for that I am deeply grateful to him.

Persevering In The Prayer Of Forgiveness

Canon Glennon says that when he first became involved in the healing ministry more than forty years ago he realised that he would have to put right anything in his life that could be a possible barrier to the flow of the Spirit. One area that he identified was the area of relationships. He says that over the years there had been six relationships that he knew were not good. He spent eighteen months in his morning prayer time working through those relationships until he came to the point where he could genuinely say from his heart that he had forgiven those people. He says that today, forty years later, he still prays for each one of them every day, in case the demon of resentment could find a way in again. If the hurt has been deep it can take time to forgive, to let go of resentment. Once we have reached that point, I think it is a good idea

to protect the healing, as Canon Glennon recommends, by praying every day for the person who has hurt us.

The Practice Of The Presence Of God

This is the title of a book by Brother Lawrence, a monk in a monastery in France in the 17th century. He said that when he entered the monastery he made an act of surrender of his whole life to God. He had to go back on many occasions, sometimes many occasions each day, and make that act of surrender again. At the same time he vowed that, from he got up in the morning until he went to bed at night, he would keep up a conversation with God. Other people would not know what he was doing, but within himself he would be talking away to God. At times his mind wandered but when he became aware of it he didn't get annoyed: he simply brought his mind back to God again. He said that everything he did he would do for the love of God and to the glory of God. Even if he were only picking up a straw from the ground he would do it to glorify God. He did not try to do anything in his own strength. He always drew on the grace of God which is freely available to all of us. From time to time he would stop what he was doing and just worship God. Indeed on his deathbed someone asked him what he was thinking about and he said that he was doing what he had spent his whole life doing, worshipping God.

Lawrence found that through this act of surrender of his whole life and through the practice of the presence of God he broke through to the peace and strength and grace of God in a way that he had never known before. It takes time to develop this way of keeping in touch with God throughout the day. It will require an effort on our part. But I have also found through perseverance in this kind of prayer a new peace, strength, grace and awareness of God's nearness at all times.

Perseverance In Prayer On Behalf Of The Church

The renewal and development of the Church is a topic of discussion that has come up on a regular basis ever since I was ordained in 1967, and I am sure for a long time before that. Many different suggestions have been made. I believe that the most effective way to bring renewal to a church is to get many people to pray for this in the background. A Presbyterian Church in Kilkenny in the Republic of Ireland showed how powerful prayer can be. For many years the numbers in their congregation had gone down, until there were just about twelve or fifteen left. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland was thinking about closing the Church. But every member of the congregation who was left believed in the power of prayer and they started to pray for renewal of that church in Kilkenny. Gradually things began to pick up. Today there are between 200 and 300 in that congregation every Sunday.

To pray is something that everyone can do. I am convinced that the best contribution we can make to the health and welfare of any Church is to spend time praying for it. Senior citizens have a special contribution to make here. They have one particular commodity which is not in so plentiful supply for the rest of us, time. Maybe they feel that, because they are not so strong now, their best days of service are over. If they are prepared to spend time praying for their Church their most effective days of service could yet be to come. And for those who take this suggestion seriously there is a ready-made prayer leaflet, the parish magazine. Everything that happens in the congregation is mentioned in the magazine: the names of the clergy, the office-bearers, children who have been baptised, families bereaved, couples married, organisations and special events. The whole life of the congregation is mentioned in the magazine and if every member of the Church were to use it as a prayer leaflet on a daily basis I believe that it could have a revolutionary effect.

To persevere in prayer on behalf of the Church as a whole and on behalf of our own local church is the secret to renewal and development.

How Do We Get People To Persevere In Prayer?

I have been involved in organising prayer for Northern Ireland for many years. I have seen so much happen in

those years in response to prayer that the question of whether God answers prayer or not isn't a question at all for me. I just take that for granted.

The only question in my mind is 'how do we get people to persevere in prayer?'

And the answer is that we have to organise them. That is why we have been able to maintain daily prayers for our land in St Anne's Cathedral ever since April, 1991. I have no hesitation in saying that, if people had not persevered in prayer for this land over many years, we would not be faced with the opportunities that we have in Northern Ireland at this time.

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