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Some Things You Can Always Count On

In our day of lowered
standards and shifting
values, there are...



“Some Things You Can Always Count on”

By Dr. Robert A. Cook



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Suppose you are a navigator - whether of some ancient sailing vessel or of a sophisticated modern leviathan, it does not matter. You plot your course according to known unalterable guides. And you know that by following that set course you are absolutely certain of arriving at precise destinations.

The compass always points to the north. The stars in the heavens are spread out in a pattern of predictable exactness. You can count on the trustworthiness of this information.

But you are not piloting a ship. You are "just living."

Can you be sure that by giving strict attention to the eternal bearing points in the Word of God, you will arrive where you want to be?

You can!

Proof of this fact is in an exciting story recorded in Acts 4.

Recall the scene:

Simon Peter and John were on their way to a 3 p.m. prayer meeting when they were accosted by a man lame from birth, asking for money. Peter gave the classic answer, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." The record says that Peter "took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, went with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God."

This happening created no small stir, as you may well imagine! It accomplished two things: It gave opportunity for a straightforward sermon delivered by Peter as a result of which people were converted. It also resulted in Peter's and John's being thrown into jail.

The next morning these two were brought out, questioned, threatened, and let go. (How could it be otherwise, with the healed man standing right there as living proof of God's miracle-working power?)

Now we come to the part of the story which shows clearly that there are predictable results that can be cited in the life of any believer who really wants to live for the Lord. Naturally, this brief portion does not enumerate all the results, but there are at least three here that we should look at.

And being let go (it says) they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they (that is, the rest of the church) heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is.

Then the inspired historian quotes these disciples of Jesus as saying:

“Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

Then what happened?

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness And with great power gave the apostles witness of .the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.” (Acts 4:23-33).

I. Count On This-You Pick Your Own Crowd

See what it says. *“Being let go, they (the two representatives of Jesus Christ) went to their own company” (v. 23).*

You choose your own crowd in life, and the people you like to associate with become an exact reflection of the person you are. (Oh, you say, what about those missionaries who can associate only with the lowest and least “spiritual” of men? The rule still holds, for those faithful ambassadors of Christ are seeing their peers not as they are, but as they could be and will be, by the grace of God.)

Oh, yes, my friend, it always works this way. If you are a playboy and live for conquests, you’ll gravitate to that type of crowd. If you are a mocker, you’ll join the scorners. If you’re a practical joker, you’ll search for the friendship of those like-minded.

On the other hand, if you want to find ones who love God, you’ll find them. If in your heart there’s a longing for prayer, and divine guidance and the peace of God, you’ll pick the people who have similar desires. If you really yearn for the salvation of the world, you’ll probably be found with other people who, like you, believe that every one should hear, at least once, that Jesus Christ can save.

All of us have had experiences of this kind. Perhaps we were moving down a cafeteria line. All at once we see this lady behind the counter. She is friendly. She is efficient. But there is also a certain light in her face. Maybe we have courage to say to her, "You're a Christian, aren't you?" or perhaps we just think it. But we both know that the answer is "Yes!"

Remember, you can't fake this relationship with the Lord. Your "own company" will tell on you every time. Peter found this out when he heard the biting reproof, "Thy speech betrayeth thee."

I beg of you, then, give some thought to the people in whom you invest time and friendship. Unmistakably, they will make something of you, and they will reveal a good deal about you, too.

II. Count On This-Ultimate Victory Belongs To People Who Pray

Notice: *"They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God ... "*

All our lives most of us have heard about praying. Not all of us do a lot of it, but we've heard enough so that when someone talks about prayer we inwardly respond, "Oh yeah, that. I know about that. Let's get on to the next point."

But although it is almost a cliché, the fact remains that the victory any time, anywhere belongs to people who pray. Prayer puts you in touch with Almighty God. And who is He? The verses tell us.

...God of creation-"thou hast made heaven and earth"

...God of inspiration-"who by the mouth of thy servant ... said"

...God of incarnation--"thy holy child Jesus"

...God of eternal purposes-"thy counsel determined... to be done"

...God of Calvary and the empty tomb-"witness the resurrection"

What more could you want? Yes, prayer puts you and God, in inverse order, in full command of any situation. And because God is God, there can be only victory ahead,

As you know, prayer is important at The King's College. What you learn here is not all that different from the curriculum that is offered at anyone of some 2,000 other undergraduate institutions. We do require that courses in Bible be taken here. We do teach the liberal arts and natural sciences from the point of view of classic Biblical Christianity. Yes, we do that.

But the difference between this school and hundreds of others is, my dear friend, found in a certain firm emphasis of ours. We hold that whether you choose to be a scientist or a writer, a lawyer or a physician, an engineer or a housewife, a teacher or a missionary or anyone of a number of other vocations, everything depends on the eternal dimension of God in your life. With Him, you can do anything-absolutely anything-to which He is calling you. Without Him in the inner throne room of your life, your most elaborate efforts will bring only scant if any success. Prayer helps you to “draw nigh.”

Most of us put prayer last, rather than first in our list of priorities. We are like the dear lady whom Vance Havner tells about. She was greatly disturbed over many real and imagined troubles.

Finally, in a spirit of love (and some desperation) her family told her, “Grandma, we’ve done all we can for you. You’ll just have to trust God now.”

“Oh dear,” she replied, despair on her face, “has it come to that?”

Vance Havner goes on to say, “It always comes to that, so we might as well begin with that.” God’s Word tells us to bring all our concerns to the Lord. When we do, that peace of God comes in - you can be sure of it.

My first introduction to “balance of power” praying came when I was just beginning to preach. Each Friday night, during the service at Chicago Gospel Mission in Chicago, we would be interrupted by the sound of some derelict being rolled literally down the stairs outside, by the owners of a bar upstairs.

The director of the Mission said, “We’re going to pray those people out!” He invited me to stay with other friends for an all night prayer meeting.

A week passed, and we held another all night session of prayer. To our delight, during the following week, the people upstairs moved out, bag and baggage! The Mission director lost no time in renting the space for a sort of “halfway house” for men who had trusted Christ and wanted to get a new start in life.

Yes, the balance of power rests with those who pray.

III. Count On It-God Will Work In Your Life If You Let Him

Note the holy boldness. Do we hear those early disciples praying, "Now, Lord, grant unto us the tact and good sense to keep our mouths shut so as not to antagonize our captors"?

Far from it!

They asked God to

...Look at the situation-"behold."

...Give them a change of attitude-"all boldness."

...Prove His power through what they would then proceed to do.

"Grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak. thy word, . ."

What brought about this change in their lives? It was the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within them.

Initially, the Holy Spirit came to the infant church on Pentecost Day.

"Constantly he assists any seeking soul who would know Christ." (John 3:5,6). No one can become a believer without the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

He also comes to believers again and again in answer to prayer, filling and anointing them for any given task or crisis. In answer to your prayer for help, the Holy Spirit will enable you to preach or to minister or to bear a burden or to face a threat-all completely in victory. Holy boldness and the presence of the Holy Spirit are two sides of the same coin.

When the Holy Spirit is in control I have no fear of people and things around me. When the Spirit is allowed to enter every room of my heart-house, I become a changed person. Whereas before I was cringing and apologetic, now I have assurance and power.

Note the *"great grace."*

"With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all" (v. 33). One evidence of that grace was that these early believers "were of one heart and one soul." Unity in the Body of Christ - harmony among believers - is beautifully possible when the Holy Spirit is in control.

Note the sacrifice.

Here is the crowning proof that God is doing something in the individual life.

Barnabas had some land. He sold it and brought the proceeds to the apostles, saying something like this, "Fellows, here's the money. I give it to the Lord, through you."

Does that mean that everyone who has a possession should sell it and give the money to the church? Not at all. It does mean that when God speaks, you listen to what He asks of you, even if it mean the forfeiting of some good, and legitimate things you hold dear.

Sacrifice doesn't always mean giving something you can, hold and handle. Sometimes it means giving yourself. Sometimes it means giving your time. Sometimes it means dropping a tear on the hand of one whose heart is breaking. Sometimes it involves your own personal heartbreak. - But always, if God is working in your life, the taste of sacrifice will be sweet. To change the figure, you will have the crowning proof that God is walking in your shoes.

To sum up: We have talked about three things. First, you pick your own crowd, and the crowd you pick tells what kind of person you are. Second, in any situation - any time, anywhere - ultimate victory belongs to people who pray. And third, the real proof of the value of the four years (or less or more) that you spent at The King's College lies in what God does in your life in answer to prayer. The fullness of the Spirit, the boldness to witness, the grace of humility, the taste of sacrifice - all this, in your life, is proof of whether you got anything from God in this place.

These are holy, wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten years. May you carry with you not only the memory of happy times with your peers and learning hours with your instructors and all the rest of the experiences that make up the fabric of memory, but may you also carry with you day by day, and step by step, the presence and power of the One to whom Christ's early followers spoke when they said, "Lord, thou art God."

