

THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER
THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER
POWER THROUGH PRAYER
BY
E.M. BOUNDS

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The Necessity of Prayer

Edward M. Bounds

The Necessity of Prayer and other books by E.M. Bounds are unfailing wells for a lifetime of spiritual water-drawing. His wise counsel on prayer are words that originated on the anvil of experience.

His thoughts are inspiring, dynamic, and forthright. Probably no one has ever written more convincingly on the subject of prayer than E.M. Bounds. The Necessity of Prayer will help today's earnest Christians to discover the mystery and the majesty of prayer.

FOREWORD

EDWARD McKENDREE BOUNDS did not merely pray well that he might write well about prayer. He prayed because the needs of the world were upon him. He prayed, for long years, upon subjects which the easy-going Christian rarely gives a thought, and for objects which men of less thought and faith are always ready to call impossible. From his solitary prayer-vigils, year by year, there arose teaching equaled by few men in modern Christian history. He wrote transcendently about prayer, because he was himself, transcendent in its practice.

As breathing is a physical reality to us so prayer was a reality for Bounds. He took the command, "Pray without ceasing" almost as literally as animate nature takes the law of the reflex nervous system, which controls our breathing. Prayer-books -- real text-books, not forms of prayer -- were the fruit of this daily spiritual exercise. Not brief articles for the religious press came from his pen -- though he had been experienced in that field for years -- not pamphlets, but books were the product and result. He was hindered by poverty, obscurity, loss of prestige, yet his victory was not wholly reserved until his death.

In 1907, he gave to the world two small editions. One of these was widely circulated in Great Britain. The years following up to his death in 1913 were filled with constant labour and he went home to God leaving a collection of manuscripts. His letters carry the request that the present editor should publish these products of his gifted pen.

The preservation of the Bounds manuscripts to the present time has clearly been providential. The work of preparing them for the press has been a labour of love, consuming years of effort. These books are unfailing wells for a lifetime of spiritual water-drawing. They are hidden treasures, wrought in the darkness of the dawn and the heat of the noon, on the anvil of experience, and beaten into wondrous form by the mighty stroke of the Divine. They are living voices whereby he, being dead, yet speaketh.

-- C.C.

The above Foreword was written by Claude Chilton, Jr., an ardent admirer of Dr. Bounds, and to whom we owe many obligations for suggestions in editing the Bounds Spiritual Life Books. We buried Claude L. Chilton February 18, 1929. What a meeting of these two great saints of God, of shining panoply and knightly grace!

Homer W. Hodge.

Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

I. PRAYER AND FAITH

"A dear friend of mine who was quite a lover of the chase, told me the following story: 'Rising early one morning,' he said, 'I heard the baying of a score of deerhounds in pursuit of their quarry. Looking away to a broad, open field in front of me, I saw a young fawn making its way across, and giving signs, moreover, that its race was well-nigh run. Reaching the rails of the enclosure, it leaped over and crouched within ten feet from where I stood. A moment later two of the hounds came over, when the fawn ran in my direction and pushed its head between my legs. I

lifted the little thing to my breast, and, swinging round and round, fought off the dogs. I felt, just then, that all the dogs in the West could not, and should not capture that fawn after its weakness had appealed to my strength.' So is it, when human helplessness appeals to Almighty God. Well do I remember when the hounds of sin were after my soul, until, at last, I ran into the arms of Almighty God." -- A. C. Dixon.

IN any study of the principles, and procedure of prayer, of its activities and enterprises, first place, must, of necessity, be given to faith. It is the initial quality in the heart of any man who essays to talk to the Unseen. He must, out of sheer helplessness, stretch forth hands of faith. He must believe, where he cannot prove. In the ultimate issue, prayer is simply faith, claiming its natural yet marvellous prerogatives -- faith taking possession of its illimitable inheritance. True godliness is just as true, steady, and persevering in the realm of faith as it is in the province of prayer. Moreover: when faith ceases to pray, it ceases to live.

Faith does the impossible because it brings God to undertake for us, and nothing is impossible with God. How great -- without qualification or limitation -- is the power of faith! If doubt be banished from the heart, and unbelief made stranger there, what we ask of God shall surely come to pass, and a believer hath vouchsafed to him "whatsoever he saith."

Prayer projects faith on God, and God on the world. Only God can move mountains, but faith and prayer move God. In His cursing of the fig-tree our Lord demonstrated His power. Following that, He proceeded to declare, that large powers were committed to faith and prayer, not in order to kill but to make alive, not to blast but to bless.

At this point in our study, we turn to a saying of our Lord, which there is need to emphasize, since it is the very keystone of the arch of faith and prayer.

"Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." We should ponder well that statement -- "Believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Here is described a faith which realizes, which appropriates, which takes. Such faith is a consciousness of the Divine, an experienced communion, a realized certainty.

Is faith growing or declining as the years go by? Does faith stand strong and four square, these days, as iniquity abounds and the love of many grows cold? Does faith maintain its hold, as religion tends to become a mere formality and worldliness increasingly prevails? The enquiry of our Lord, may, with great appropriateness, be ours. "When the Son of Man cometh," He asks, "shall He find faith on the earth?" We believe that He will, and it is ours, in this our day, to see to it that the lamp of faith is trimmed and burning, lest He come who shall come, and that right early.

Faith is the foundation of Christian character and the security of the soul. When Jesus was looking forward to Peter's denial, and cautioning him against it, He said unto His disciple: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, to sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fall not."

Our Lord was declaring a central truth; it was Peter's faith He was seeking to guard; for well He knew that when faith is broken down, the foundations of spiritual life give way, and the entire structure of religious experience falls. It was Peter's faith which needed guarding. Hence Christ's solicitude for the welfare of His disciple's soul and His determination to fortify Peter's faith by His own all-prevailing prayer.

In his Second Epistle, Peter has this idea in mind when speaking of growth in grace as a measure of safety in the Christian life, and as implying fruitfulness. "And besides this," he declares, "giving diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness."

Of this additioning process, faith was the starting-point -- the basis of the other graces of the Spirit. Faith was the foundation on which other things were to be built. Peter does not enjoin his readers to add to works or gifts or virtues but to faith. Much depends on starting right in this business of growing in grace. There is a Divine order, of which Peter was aware; and so he goes on to declare that we are to give diligence to making our calling and election sure, which election

is rendered certain adding to faith which, in turn, is done by constant, earnest praying. Thus faith is kept alive by prayer, and every step taken, in this adding of grace to grace, is accompanied by prayer.

The faith which creates powerful praying is the faith which centres itself on a powerful Person. Faith in Christ's ability to do and to do greatly, is the faith which prays greatly. Thus the leper lay hold upon the power of Christ. "Lord, if Thou wilt," he cried, "Thou canst make me clean." In this instance, we are shown how faith centered in Christ's ability to do, and how it secured the healing power.

It was concerning this very point, that Jesus questioned the blind men who came to Him for healing: "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" He asks. "They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you."

It was to inspire faith in His ability to do that Jesus left behind Him, that last, great statement, which, in the final analysis, is a ringing challenge to faith. "All power," He declared, "is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

Again: faith is obedient; it goes when commanded, as did the nobleman, who came to Jesus, in the day of His flesh, and whose son was grievously sick.

Moreover: such faith acts. Like the man who was born blind, it goes to wash in the pool of Siloam when told to wash. Like Peter on Gennesaret it casts the net where Jesus commands, instantly, without question or doubt. Such faith takes away the stone from the grave of Lazarus promptly. A praying faith keeps the commandments of God and does those things which are well pleasing in His sight. It asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and answers quickly, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." Obedience helps faith, and faith, in turn, helps obedience. To do God's will is essential to true faith, and faith is necessary to implicit obedience.

Yet faith is called upon, and that right often to wait in patience before God, and is prepared for God's seeming delays in answering prayer. Faith does not grow disheartened because prayer is not immediately honoured; it takes God at His Word, and lets Him take what time He chooses in fulfilling His purposes, and in carrying on His work. There is bound to be much delay and long days of waiting for true faith, but faith accepts the conditions -- knows there will be delays in answering prayer, and regards such delays as times of testing, in the which, it is privileged to show its mettle, and the stern stuff of which it is made.

The case of Lazarus was an instance of where there was delay, where the faith of two good women was sorely tried: Lazarus was critically ill, and his sisters sent for Jesus. But, without any known reason, our Lord delayed His going to the relief of His sick friend. The plea was urgent and touching -- "Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick," -- but the Master is not moved by it, and the women's earnest request seemed to fall on deaf ears. What a trial to faith! Furthermore: our Lord's tardiness appeared to bring about hopeless disaster. While Jesus tarried, Lazarus died. But the delay of Jesus was exercised in the interests of a greater good. Finally, He makes His way to the home in Bethany. "Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

Fear not, O tempted and tried believer, Jesus will come, if patience be exercised, and faith hold fast. His delay will serve to make His coming the more richly blessed. Pray on. Wait on. Thou canst not fail. If Christ delay, wait for Him. In His own good time, He will come, and will not tarry.

Delay is often the test and the strength of faith. How much patience is required when these times of testing come! Yet faith gathers strength by waiting and praying. Patience has its perfect work in the school of delay. In some instances, delay is of the very essence of the prayer. God has to do many things, antecedent to giving the final answer -- things which are essential to the lasting good of him who is requesting favour at His hands. Jacob prayed, with point and ardour, to be delivered from Esau. But before that prayer could be answered, there was much to be done with, and for Jacob. He must be changed, as well as Esau. Jacob had to be made into a

new man, before Esau could be. Jacob had to be converted to God, before Esau could be converted to Jacob.

Among the large and luminous utterances of Jesus concerning prayer, none is more arresting than this: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it." How wonderful are these statements of what God will do in answer to prayer! Of how great importance these ringing words, prefaced, as they are, with the most solemn verity! Faith in Christ is the basis of all working, and of all praying. All wonderful works depend on wonderful praying, and all praying is done in the Name of Jesus Christ. Amazing lesson, of wondrous simplicity, is this praying in the name of the Lord Jesus! All other conditions are depreciated, everything else is renounced, save Jesus only. The name of Christ -- the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ -- must be supremely sovereign, in the hour and article of prayer.

If Jesus dwell at the fountain of my life; if the currents of His life have displaced and superseded all self-currents; if implicit obedience to Him be the inspiration and force of every movement of my life, then He can safely commit the praying to my will, and pledge Himself, by an obligation as profound as His own nature, that whatsoever is asked shall be granted. Nothing can be clearer, more distinct, more unlimited both in application and extent, than the exhortation and urgency of Christ, "Have faith in God."

Faith covers temporal as well as spiritual needs. Faith dispels all undue anxiety and needless care about what shall be eaten, what shall he drunk, what shall be worn. Faith lives in the present, and regards the day as being sufficient unto the evil thereof. It lives day by day, and dispels all fears for the morrow. Faith brings great ease of mind and perfect peace of heart.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusted in Thee."

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we are, in a measure, shutting tomorrow out of our prayer. We do not live in tomorrow but in today. We do not seek tomorrow's grace or tomorrow's bread. They thrive best, and get most out of life, who live in the living present. They pray best who pray for today's needs, not for tomorrow's, which may render our prayers unnecessary and redundant by not existing at all!

True prayers are born of present trials and present needs. Bread, for today, is bread enough. Bread given for today is the strongest sort of pledge that there will be bread tomorrow. Victory today, is the assurance of victory tomorrow. Our prayers need to be focused upon the present, We must trust God today, and leave the morrow entirely with Him. The present is ours; the future belongs to God. Prayer is the task and duty of each recurring day -- daily prayer for daily needs.

As every day demands its bread, so every day demands its prayer. No amount of praying, done today, will suffice for tomorrow's praying. On the other hand, no praying for tomorrow is of any great value to us today. To-day's manna is what we need; tomorrow God will see that our needs are supplied. This is the faith which God seeks to inspire. So leave tomorrow, with its cares, its needs, its troubles, in God's hands. There is no storing tomorrow's grace or tomorrow's praying; neither is there any laying-up of today's grace, to meet tomorrow's necessities. We cannot have tomorrow's grace, we cannot eat tomorrow's bread, we cannot do tomorrow's praying. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof;" and, most assuredly, if we possess faith, sufficient also, will be the good.

II. PRAYER AND FAITH (Continued)

"The guests at a certain hotel were being rendered uncomfortable by repeated strumming on a piano, done by a little girl who possessed no knowledge of music. They complained to the

proprietor with a view to having the annoyance stopped. 'I am sorry you are annoyed,' he said. 'But the girl is the child of one of my very best guests. I can scarcely ask her not to touch the piano. But her father, who is away for a day or so, will return tomorrow. You can then approach him, and have the matter set right.' When the father returned, he found his daughter in the reception-room and, as usual, thumping on the piano. He walked up behind the child and, putting his arms over her shoulders, took her hands in his, and produced some most beautiful music. Thus it may be with us, and thus it will be, some coming day. Just now, we can produce little but clamour and disharmony; but, one day, the Lord Jesus will take hold of our hands of faith and prayer, and use them to bring forth the music of the skies." -- Anon

GENUINE, authentic faith must be definite and free of doubt. Not simply general in character; not a mere belief in the being, goodness and power of God, but a faith which believes that the things which "he saith, shall come to pass." As the faith is specific, so the answer likewise will be definite: "He shall have whatsoever he saith." Faith and prayer select the things, and God commits Himself to do the very things which faith and persevering prayer nominate, and petition Him to accomplish.

The American Revised Version renders the twenty-fourth verse of the eleventh chapter of Mark, thus: "Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Perfect faith has always in its keeping what perfect prayer asks for. How large and unqualified is the area of operation -- the "All things whatsoever!" How definite and specific the promise -- "Ye shall have them!"

Our chief concern is with our faith, -- the problems of its growth, and the activities of its vigorous maturity. A faith which grasps and holds in its keeping the very things it asks for, without wavering, doubt or fear -- that is the faith we need -- faith, such as is a pearl of great price, in the process and practice of prayer.

The statement of our Lord about faith and prayer quoted above is of supreme importance. Faith must be definite, specific; an unqualified, unmistakable request for the things asked for. It is not to be a vague, indefinite, shadowy thing; it must be something more than an abstract belief in God's willingness and ability to do for us. It is to be a definite, specific, asking for, and expecting the things for which we ask. Note the reading of Mark 11:23: "And shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he saith."

Just so far as the faith and the asking is definite, so also will the answer be. The giving is not to be something other than the things prayed for, but the actual things sought and named. "He shall have whatsoever he saith." It is all imperative, "He shall have." The granting is to be unlimited, both in quality and in quantity.

Faith and prayer select the subjects for petition, thereby determining what God is to do. "He shall have whatsoever he saith." Christ holds Himself ready to supply exactly, and fully, all the demands of faith and prayer. If the order on God be made clear, specific and definite, God will fill it, exactly in accordance with the presented terms.

Faith is not an abstract belief in the Word of God, nor a mere mental credence, nor a simple assent of the understanding and will; nor is it a passive acceptance of facts, however sacred or thorough. Faith is an operation of God, a Divine illumination, a holy energy implanted by the Word of God and the Spirit in the human soul -- a spiritual, Divine principle which takes of the Supernatural and makes it a thing apprehendable by the faculties of time and sense.

Faith deals with God, and is conscious of God. It deals with the Lord Jesus Christ and sees in Him a Saviour; it deals with God's Word, and lays hold of the truth; it deals with the Spirit of God, and is energized and inspired by its holy fire. God is the great objective of faith; for faith rests its whole weight on His Word. Faith is not an aimless act of the soul, but a looking to God and a resting upon His promises. Just as love and hope have always an objective so, also, has faith. Faith is not believing just anything; it is believing God, resting in Him, trusting His Word.

Faith gives birth to prayer, and grows stronger, strikes deeper, rises higher, in the struggles and wrestlings of mighty petitioning. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the assurance and realization of the inheritance of the saints. Faith, too, is humble and persevering. It can wait and pray; it can stay on its knees, or lie in the dust. It is the one great condition of prayer; the lack of it lies at the root of all poor praying, feeble praying, little praying, unanswered praying.

The nature and meaning of faith is more demonstrable in what it does, than it is by reason of any definition given it. Thus, if we turn to the record of faith given us in that great honour roll, which constitutes the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we see something of the wonderful results of faith. What a glorious list it is -- that of these men and women of faith! What marvelous achievements are there recorded, and set to the credit of faith! The inspired writer, exhausting his resources in cataloguing the Old Testament saints, who were such notable examples of wonderful faith, finally exclaims: "And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets."

And then the writer of Hebrews goes on again, in a wonderful strain, telling of the unrecorded exploits wrought through the faith of the men of old, "of whom the world was not worthy." "All these," he says, "obtained a good report through faith."

What an era of glorious achievements would dawn for the Church and the world, if only there could be reproduced a race of saints of like mighty faith, of like wonderful praying! It is not the intellectually great that the Church needs; nor is it men of wealth that the times demand. It is not people of great social influence that this day requires. Above everybody and everything else, it is men of faith, men of mighty prayer, men and women after the fashion of the saints and heroes enumerated in Hebrews, who "obtained a good report through faith," that the Church and the whole wide world of humanity needs.

Many men, of this day, obtain a good report because of their money-giving, their great mental gifts and talents, but few there be who obtain a "good report" because of their great faith in God, or because of the wonderful things which are being wrought through their great praying. Today, as much as at any time, we need men of great faith and men who are great in prayer. These are the two cardinal virtues which make men great in the eyes of God, the two things which create conditions of real spiritual success in the life and work of the Church. It is our chief concern to see that we maintain a faith of such quality and texture, as counts before God; which grasps, and holds in its keeping, the things for which it asks, without doubt and without fear.

Doubt and fear are the twin foes of faith. Sometimes, they actually usurp the place of faith, and although we pray, it is a restless, disquieted prayer that we offer, uneasy and often complaining. Peter failed to walk on Gennesaret because he permitted the waves to break over him and swamp the power of his faith. Taking his eyes from the Lord and regarding the water all about him, he began to sink and had to cry for succour -- "Lord, save, or I perish!"

Doubts should never be cherished, nor fears harboured. Let none cherish the delusion that he is a martyr to fear and doubt. It is no credit to any man's mental capacity to cherish doubt of God, and no comfort can possibly derive from such a thought. Our eyes should be taken off self, removed from our own weakness and allowed to rest implicitly upon God's strength. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward."

A simple, confiding faith, living day by day, and casting its burden on the Lord, each hour of the day, will dissipate fear, drive away misgiving and deliver from doubt: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by supplication and prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

That is the Divine cure for all fear, anxiety, and undue concern of soul, all of which are closely akin to doubt and unbelief. This is the Divine prescription for securing the peace which passeth all understanding, and keeps the heart and mind in quietness and peace.

All of us need to mark well and heed the caution given in Hebrews: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

We need, also, to guard against unbelief as we would against an enemy. Faith needs to be cultivated. We need to keep on praying, "Lord, increase our faith," for faith is susceptible of increase. Paul's tribute to the Thessalonians was, that their faith grew exceedingly. Faith is increased by exercise, by being put into use. It is nourished by sore trials.

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glow at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Faith grows by reading and meditating upon the Word of God. Most, and best of all, faith thrives in an atmosphere of prayer. It would be well, if all of us were to stop, and inquire personally of ourselves: "Have I faith in God? Have I real faith, -- faith which keeps me in perfect peace, about the things of earth and the things of heaven?" This is the most important question a man can propound and expect to be answered. And there is another question, closely akin to it in significance and importance -- "Do I really pray to God so that He hears me and answers my prayers? And do I truly pray unto God so that I get direct from God the things I ask of Him?"

It was claimed for Augustus Caesar that he found Rome a city of wood, and left it a city of marble. The pastor who succeeds in changing his people from a prayerless to a prayerful people, has done a greater work than did Augustus in changing a city from wood to marble. And after all, this is the prime work of the preacher.

Primarily, he is dealing with prayerless people -- with people of whom it is said, "God is not in all their thoughts." Such people he meets everywhere, and all the time. His main business is to turn them from being forgetful of God, from being devoid of faith, from being prayerless, so that they become people who habitually pray, who believe in God, remember Him and do His will. The preacher is not sent to merely induce men to join the Church, nor merely to get them to do better. It is to get them to pray, to trust God, and to keep God ever before their eyes, that they may not sin against Him.

The work of the ministry is to change unbelieving sinners into praying and believing saints. The call goes forth by Divine authority, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We catch a glimpse of the tremendous importance of faith and of the great value God has set upon it, when we remember that He has made it the one indispensable condition of being saved. "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Thus, when we contemplate the great importance of prayer, we find faith standing immediately by its side. By faith are we saved, and by faith we stay saved. Prayer introduces us to a life of faith. Paul declared that the life he lived, he lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him -- that he walked by faith and not by sight.

Prayer is absolutely dependent upon faith. Virtually, it has no existence apart from it, and accomplishes nothing unless it be its inseparable companion. Faith makes prayer effectual, and in a certain important sense, must precede it. "For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Before prayer ever starts toward God; before its petition is preferred, before its requests are made known -- faith must have gone on ahead; must have asserted its belief in the existence of God; must have given its assent to the gracious truth that "God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek His face." This is the primary step in praying. In this regard, while faith does not bring the blessing, yet it puts prayer in a position to ask for it, and leads to another step toward realization, by aiding the petitioner to believe that God is able and willing to bless.

Faith starts prayer to work -- clears the way to the mercy-seat. It gives assurance, first of all, that there is a mercy-seat, and that there the High Priest awaits the pray-ers and the prayers. Faith opens the way for prayer to approach God. But it does more. It accompanies prayer at every step she takes. It is her inseparable companion and when requests are made unto God, it is faith which turns the asking into obtaining. And faith follows prayer, since the spiritual life into which a believer is led by prayer, is a life of faith. The one prominent characteristic of the experience into which believers are brought through prayer, is not a life of works, but of faith.

Faith makes prayer strong, and gives it patience to wait on God. Faith believes that God is a rewarder. No truth is more clearly revealed in the Scriptures than this, while none is more encouraging. Even the closet has its promised reward, "He that seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly," while the most insignificant service rendered to a disciple in the name of the Lord, surely receives its reward. And to this precious truth faith gives its hearty assent.

Yet faith is narrowed down to one particular thing -- it does not believe that God will reward everybody, nor that He is a rewarder of all who pray, but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Faith rests its care on diligence in prayer, and gives assurance and encouragement to diligent seekers after God, for it is they, alone, who are richly rewarded when they pray.

We need constantly to be reminded that faith is the one inseparable condition of successful praying. There are other considerations entering into the exercise, but faith is the final, the one indispensable condition of true praying. As it is written in a familiar, primary declaration: "Without faith, it is impossible to please Him."

James puts this truth very plainly. "If any of you lack wisdom," he says, "let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth (or doubteth) is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord."

Doubting is always put under the ban, because it stands as a foe to faith and hinders effectual praying. In the First Epistle to Timothy Paul gives us an invaluable truth relative to the conditions of successful praying, which he thus lays down: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

All questioning must be watched against and eschewed. Fear and peradventure have no place in true praying. Faith must assert itself and bid these foes to prayer depart. Too much authority cannot be attributed to faith; but prayer is the sceptre by which it signalizes its power. How much of spiritual wisdom there is in the following advice written by an eminent old divine. "Would you be freed from the bondage to corruption?" he asks. "Would you grow in grace in general and grow in grace in particular? If you would, your way is plain. Ask of God more faith. Beg of Him morning, and noon and night, while you walk by the way, while you sit in the house, when you lie down and when you rise up; beg of Him simply to impress Divine things more deeply on your heart, to give you more and more of the substance of things hoped for and of the evidence of things not seen."

Great incentives to pray are furnished in Holy Scriptures, and our Lord closes His teaching about prayer, with the assurance and promise of heaven. The presence of Jesus Christ in heaven, the preparation for His saints which He is making there, and the assurance that He will come again to receive them -- how all this helps the weariness of praying, strengthens its conflicts, sweetens its arduous toil! These things are the star of hope to prayer, the wiping away of its tears, the putting of the odour of heaven into the bitterness of its cry. The spirit of a pilgrim greatly facilitates praying. An earth-bound, earth-satisfied spirit cannot pray. In such a heart, the flame of spiritual desire is either gone out or smouldering in faintest glow. The wings of its faith are clipped, its eyes are filmed, its tongue silenced. But they, who in unswerving faith and unceasing prayer, wait continually upon the Lord, do renew their strength, do mount up with wings as eagles, do run, and are not weary, do walk, and not faint.

III. PRAYER AND TRUST

"One evening I left my office in New York, with a bitterly cold wind in my face. I had with me, (as I thought) my thick, warm muffler, but when I proceeded to button-up against the storm, I found that it was gone. I turned back, looked along the streets, searched my office, but in vain. I realized, then, that I must have dropped it, and prayed God that I might find it; for such was the

state of the weather, that it would be running a great risk to proceed without it. I looked, again, up and down the surrounding streets, but without success. Suddenly, I saw a man on the opposite side of the road holding out something in his hand. I crossed over and asked him if that were my muffler? He handed it to me saying, 'It was blown to me by the wind.' He who rides upon the storm, had used the wind as a means of answering prayer." --
William Horst.

PRAYER does not stand alone. It is not an isolated duty and independent principle. It lives in association with other Christian duties, is wedded to other principles, is a partner with other graces. But to faith, prayer is indissolubly joined. Faith gives it colour and tone, shapes its character, and secures its results.

Trust is faith become absolute, ratified, consummated. There is, when all is said and done, a sort of venture in faith and its exercise. But trust is firm belief, it is faith in full flower.

Trust is a conscious act, a fact of which we are sensible. According to the Scriptural concept it is the eye of the new-born soul, and the ear of the renewed soul. It is the feeling of the soul, the spiritual eye, the ear, the taste, the feeling – these one and all have to do with trust. How luminous, how distinct, how conscious, how powerful, and more than all, how Scriptural is such a trust! How different from many forms of modern belief, so feeble, dry, and cold! These new phases of belief bring no consciousness of their presence, no "Joy unspeakable and full of glory" results from their exercise. They are, for the most part, adventures in the peradventures of the soul. There is no safe, sure trust in anything. The whole transaction takes place in the realm of Maybe and Perhaps.

Trust like life, is feeling, though much more than feeling. An unfelt life is a contradiction; an unfelt trust is a misnomer, a delusion, a contradiction. Trust is the most felt of all attributes. It is all feeling, and it works only by love. An unfelt love is as impossible as an unfelt trust. The trust of which we are now speaking is a conviction. An unfelt conviction? How absurd!

Trust sees God doing things here and now. Yea, more. It rises to a lofty eminence, and looking into the invisible and the eternal, realizes that God has done things, and regards them as being already done. Trust brings eternity into the annals and happenings of time, transmutes the substance of hope into the reality of fruition, and changes promise into present possession. We know when we trust just as we know when we see, just as we are conscious of our sense of touch. Trust sees, receives, holds.

Trust is its own witness.

Yet, quite often, faith is too weak to obtain God's greatest good, immediately; so it has to wait in loving, strong, prayerful, pressing obedience, until it grows in strength, and is able to bring down the eternal, into the realms of experience and time. To this point, trust masses all its forces. Here it holds.

And in the struggle, trust's grasp becomes mightier, and grasps, for itself, all that God has done for it in His eternal wisdom and plenitude of grace.

In the matter of waiting in prayer, mightiest prayer, faith rises to its highest plane and becomes indeed the gift of God. It becomes the blessed disposition and expression of the soul which is secured by a constant intercourse with, and unwearied application to God.

Jesus Christ clearly taught that faith was the condition on which prayer was answered. When our Lord had cursed the fig-tree, the disciples were much surprised that its withering had actually taken place, and their remarks indicated their incredulity. It was then that Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God." "For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore, I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

Trust grows nowhere so readily and richly as in the prayer- chamber. Its unfolding and development are rapid and wholesome when they are regularly and well kept. When these engagements are hearty and full and free, trust flourishes exceedingly. The eye and presence of God give vigorous life to trust, just as the eye and the presence of the sun make fruit and flower to grow, and all things glad and bright with fuller life.

"Have faith in God," "Trust in the Lord" form the keynote and foundation of prayer. Primarily, it is not trust in the Word of God, but rather trust in the Person of God. For trust in the Person of God must precede trust in the Word of God. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me," is the demand our Lord makes on the personal trust of His disciples. The person of Jesus Christ must be central, to the eye of trust. This great truth Jesus sought to impress upon Martha, when her brother lay dead, in the home at Bethany. Martha asserted her belief in the fact of the resurrection of her brother:

"Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus lifts her trust clear above the mere fact of the resurrection, to His own Person, by saying: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me, shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Trust, in an historical fact or in a mere record may be a very passive thing, but trust in a person vitalizes the quality, fructifies it, informs it with love. The trust which informs prayer centres in a Person. Trust goes even further than this. The trust which inspires our prayer must be not only trust in the Person of God, and of Christ, but in their ability and willingness to grant the thing prayed for. It is not only, "Trust, ye, in the Lord," but, also, "for in the Lord Jehovah, is everlasting strength."

The trust which our Lord taught as a condition of effectual prayer, is not of the head but of the heart. It is trust which "doubteth not in his heart." Such trust has the Divine assurance that it shall be honoured with large and satisfying answers. The strong promise of our Lord brings faith down to the present, and counts on a present answer.

Do we believe, without a doubt? When we pray, do we believe, not that we shall receive the things for which we ask on a future day, but that we receive them, then and there? Such is the teaching of this inspiring Scripture. How we need to pray, "Lord, increase our faith," until doubt be gone, and implicit trust claims the promised blessings, as its very own.

This is no easy condition. It is reached only after many a failure, after much praying, after many waitings, after much trial of faith. May our faith so increase until we realize and receive all the fulness there is in that Name which guarantees to do so much.

Our Lord puts trust as the very foundation of praying. The background of prayer is trust. The whole issuance of Christ's ministry and work was dependent on implicit trust in His Father. The centre of trust is God. Mountains of difficulties, and all other hindrances to prayer are moved out of the way by trust and his virile henchman, faith. When trust is perfect and without doubt, prayer is simply the outstretched hand, ready to receive.

Trust perfected, is prayer perfected. Trust looks to receive the thing asked for -- and gets it. Trust is not a belief that God can bless, that He will bless, but that He does bless, here and now. Trust always operates in the present tense. Hope looks toward the future. Trust looks to the present. Hope expects. Trust possesses. Trust receives what prayer acquires. So that what prayer needs, at all times, is abiding and abundant trust.

Their lamentable lack of trust and resultant failure of the disciples to do what they were sent out to do, is seen in the case of the lunatic son, who was brought by his father to nine of them while their Master was on the Mount of Transfiguration. A boy, sadly afflicted, was brought to these men to be cured of his malady. They had been commissioned to do this very kind of work. This was a part of their mission. They attempted to cast out the devil from the boy, but had signally failed. The devil was too much for them. They were humiliated at their failure, and filled

with shame, while their enemies were in triumph. Amid the confusion incident to failure Jesus draws near. He is informed of the circumstances, and told of the conditions connected therewith.

Here is the succeeding account: "Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him and the child was cured from that very hour. And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

Wherein lay the difficulty with these men? They had been lax in cultivating their faith by prayer and, as a consequence, their trust utterly failed. They trusted not God, nor Christ, nor the authenticity of His mission, or their own. So has it been many a time since, in many a crisis in the Church of God. Failure has resulted from a lack of trust, or from a weakness of faith, and this, in turn, from a lack of prayerfulness. Many a failure in revival efforts has been traceable to the same cause. Faith had not been nurtured and made powerful by prayer. Neglect of the inner chamber is the solution of most spiritual failure. And this is as true of our personal struggles with the devil as was the case when we went forth to attempt to cast out devils. To be much on our knees in private communion with God is the only surety that we shall have Him with us either in our personal struggles, or in our efforts to convert sinners.

Everywhere, in the approaches of the people to Him, our Lord put trust in Him, and the divinity of His mission, in the forefront. He gave no definition of trust, and He furnishes no theological discussion of, or analysis of it; for He knew that men would see what faith was by what faith did; and from its free exercise trust grew up, spontaneously, in His presence. It was the product of His work, His power and His Person. These furnished and created an atmosphere most favourable for its exercise and development. Trust is altogether too splendidly simple for verbal definition; too hearty and spontaneous for theological terminology. The very simplicity of trust is that which staggers many people. They look away for some great thing to come to pass, while all the time "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

When the saddening news of his daughter's death was brought to Jairus our Lord interposed: "Be not afraid," He said calmly, "only believe." To the woman with the issue of blood, who stood tremblingly before Him, He said: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

As the two blind men followed Him, pressing their way into the house, He said: "According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened."

When the paralytic was let down through the roof of the house, where Jesus was teaching, and placed before Him by four of his friends, it is recorded after this fashion: "And Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

When Jesus dismissed the centurion whose servant was seriously ill, and who had come to Jesus with the prayer that He speak the healing word, without even going to his house, He did it in the manner following: "And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour."

When the poor leper fell at the feet of Jesus and cried out for relief, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," Jesus immediately granted his request, and the man glorified Him with a loud voice. Then Jesus said unto him, "Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

The Syrophenician woman came to Jesus with the case of her afflicted daughter, making the case her own, with the prayer, "Lord, help me," making a fearful and heroic struggle. Jesus honours her faith and prayer, saying: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

After the disciples had utterly failed to cast the devil out of the epileptic boy, the father of the stricken lad came to Jesus with the plaintive and almost despairing cry, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." But Jesus replied, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Blind Bartimaeus sitting by the wayside, hears our Lord as He passes by, and cries out pitifully and almost despairingly, "Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me." The keen ears of our Lord immediately catch the sound of prayer, and He says to the beggar: "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

To the weeping, penitent woman, washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with the hair of her head, Jesus speaks cheering, soul-comforting words: "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

One day Jesus healed ten lepers at one time, in answer to their united prayer, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," and He told them to go and show themselves to the priests. "And it came to pass as they went, they were cleansed."

IV. PRAYER AND DESIRE

"There are those who will mock me, and tell me to stick to my trade as a cobbler, and not trouble my mind with philosophy and theology. But the truth of God did so burn in my bones, that I took my pen in hand and began to set down what I had seen." --
Jacob Behmen.

DESIRE is not merely a simple wish; it is a deep seated craving; an intense longing, for attainment. In the realm of spiritual affairs, it is an important adjunct to prayer. So important is it, that one might say, almost, that desire is an absolute essential of prayer. Desire precedes prayer, accompanies it, is followed by it. Desire goes before prayer, and by it, created and intensified.

Prayer is the oral expression of desire. If prayer is asking God for something, then prayer must be expressed. Prayer comes out into the open. Desire is silent. Prayer is heard; desire, unheard.

The deeper the desire, the stronger the prayer. Without desire, prayer is a meaningless mumble of words. Such perfunctory, formal praying, with no heart, no feeling, no real desire accompanying it, is to be shunned like a pestilence. Its exercise is a waste of precious time, and from it, no real blessing accrues.

And yet even if it be discovered that desire is honestly absent, we should pray, anyway. We ought to pray. The "ought" comes in, in order that both desire and expression be cultivated. God's Word commands it. Our judgment tells us we ought to pray -- to pray whether we feel like it or not -- and not to allow our feelings to determine our habits of prayer. In such circumstance, we ought to pray for the desire to pray; for such a desire is God-given and heaven-born. We should pray for desire; then, when desire has been given, we should pray according to its dictates. Lack of spiritual desire should grieve us, and lead us to lament its absence, to seek earnestly for its bestowal, so that our praying, henceforth, should be an expression of "the soul's sincere desire."

A sense of need creates or should create, earnest desire. The stronger the sense of need, before God, the greater should be the desire, the more earnest the praying. The "poor in spirit" are eminently competent to pray.

Hunger is an active sense of physical need. It prompts the request for bread. In like manner, the inward consciousness of spiritual need creates desire, and desire breaks forth in prayer. Desire is an inward longing for something of which we are not possessed, of which we stand in need -- something which God has promised, and which may be secured by an earnest supplication of His throne of grace.

Spiritual desire, carried to a higher degree, is the evidence of the new birth. It is born in the renewed soul: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

The absence of this holy desire in the heart is presumptive proof, either of a decline in spiritual ecstasy, or, that the new birth has never taken place. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

These heaven-given appetites are the proof of a renewed heart, the evidence of a stirring spiritual life. Physical appetites are the attributes of a living body, not of a corpse, and spiritual desires belong to a soul made alive to God. And as the renewed soul hungers and thirsts after righteousness, these holy inward desires break out into earnest, supplicating prayer.

In prayer, we are shut up to the Name, merit and intercessory virtue of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. Probing down, below the accompanying conditions and forces in prayer, we come to its vital basis, which is seated in the human heart. It is not simply our need; it is the heart's yearning for what we need, and for which we feel impelled to pray. Desire is the will in action; a strong, conscious longing, excited in the inner nature, for some great good. Desire exalts the object of its longing, and fixes the mind on it. It has choice, and fixedness, and flame in it, and prayer, based thereon, is explicit and specific. It knows its need, feels and sees the thing that will meet it, and hastens to acquire it.

Holy desire is much helped by devout contemplation. Meditation on our spiritual need, and on God's readiness and ability to correct it, aids desire to grow. Serious thought engaged in before praying, increases desire, makes it more insistent, and tends to save us from the menace of private prayer -- wandering thought. We fail much more in desire, than in its outward expression. We retain the form, while the inner life fades and almost dies.

One might well ask, whether the feebleness of our desires for God, the Holy Spirit, and for all the fulness of Christ, is not the cause of our so little praying, and of our languishing in the exercise of prayer? Do we really feel these inward pantings of desire after heavenly treasures? Do the inbred groanings of desire stir our souls to mighty wrestlings? Alas for us! The fire burns altogether too low. The flaming heat of soul has been tempered down to a tepid lukewarmness. This, it should be remembered, was the central cause of the sad and desperate condition of the Laodicean Christians, of whom the awful condemnation is written that they were "rich, and increased in goods and had need of nothing," and knew not that they "were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind."

Again: we might well inquire -- have we that desire which presses us to close communion with God, which is filled with unutterable burnings, and holds us there through the agony of an intense and soul-stirred supplication? Our hearts need much to be worked over, not only to get the evil out of them, but to get the good into them. And the foundation and inspiration to the incoming good, is strong, propelling desire. This holy and fervid flame in the soul awakens the interest of heaven, attracts the attention of God, and places at the disposal of those who exercise it, the exhaustless riches of Divine grace.

The dampening of the flame of holy desire, is destructive of the vital and aggressive forces in church life. God requires to be represented by a fiery Church, or He is not in any proper sense, represented at all. God, Himself, is all on fire, and His Church, if it is to be like Him, must also be at white heat. The great and eternal interests of heaven-born, God-given religion are the only things about which His Church can afford to be on fire. Yet holy zeal need not to be fussy in order to be consuming. Our Lord was the incarnate antithesis of nervous excitability, the absolute opposite of intolerant or clamorous declamation, yet the zeal of God's house consumed Him; and the world is still feeling the glow of His fierce, consuming flame and responding to it, with an ever-increasing readiness and an ever-enlarging response. A lack of ardour in prayer, is the sure sign of a lack of depth and of intensity of desire; and the absence of intense desire is a sure sign of God's absence from the heart! To abate fervour is to retire from God. He can, and does, tolerate many things in the way of infirmity and error in His children. He can, and will pardon sin when the penitent prays, but two things are intolerable to Him -- insincerity and lukewarmness. Lack of heart and lack of heat are two things He loathes, and to the Laodiceans He said, in terms of

unmistakable severity and condemnation: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

This was God's expressed judgment on the lack of fire in one of the Seven Churches, and it is His indictment against individual Christians for the fatal want of sacred zeal. In prayer, fire is the motive power. Religious principles which do not emerge in flame, have neither force nor effect. Flame is the wing on which faith ascends; fervency is the soul of prayer. It was the "fervent, effectual prayer" which availed much. Love is kindled in a flame, and ardency is its life. Flame is the air which true Christian experience breathes. It feeds on fire; it can withstand anything, rather than a feeble flame; and it dies, chilled and starved to its vitals, when the surrounding atmosphere is frigid or lukewarm.

True prayer, must be aflame. Christian life and character need to be all on fire. Lack of spiritual heat creates more infidelity than lack of faith. Not to be consumingly interested about the things of heaven, is not to be interested in them at all. The fiery souls are those who conquer in the day of battle, from whom the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and who take it by force. The citadel of God is taken only by those, who storm it in dreadful earnestness, who besiege it, with fiery, unabated zeal.

Nothing short of being red hot for God, can keep the glow of heaven in our hearts, these chilly days. The early Methodists had no heating apparatus in their churches. They declared that the flame in the pew and the fire in the pulpit must suffice to keep them warm. And we, of this hour, have need to have the live coal from God's altar and the consuming flame from heaven glowing in our hearts. This flame is not mental vehemence nor fleshy energy. It is Divine fire in the soul, intense, dross-consuming – the very essence of the Spirit of God.

No erudition, no purity of diction, no width of mental outlook, no flowers of eloquence, no grace of person, can atone for lack of fire. Prayer ascends by fire. Flame gives prayer access as well as wings, acceptance as well as energy. There is no incense without fire; no prayer without flame.

Ardent desire is the basis of unceasing prayer. It is not a shallow, fickle inclination, but a strong yearning, an unquenchable ardour, which impregnates, glows, burns and fixes the heart. It is the flame of a present and active principle mounting up to God. It is ardour propelled by desire, that burns its way to the Throne of mercy, and gains its plea. It is the pertinacity of desire that gives triumph to the conflict, in a great struggle of prayer. It is the burden of a weighty desire that sobers, makes restless, and reduces to quietness the soul just emerged from its mighty wrestlings. It is the embracing character of desire which arms prayer with a thousand pleas, and robes it with an invincible courage and an all-conquering power.

The Syrophenician woman is an object lesson of desire, settled to its consistency, but invulnerable in its intensity and pertinacious boldness. The importunate widow represents desire gaining its end, through obstacles insuperable to feebler impulses.

Prayer is not the rehearsal of a mere performance; nor is it an indefinite, widespread clamour. Desire, while it kindles the soul, holds it to the object sought. Prayer is an indispensable phase of spiritual habit, but it ceases to be prayer when carried on by habit alone. It is depth and intensity of spiritual desire which give intensity and depth to prayer. The soul cannot be listless when some great desire fires and inflames it. The urgency of our desire holds us to the thing desired with a tenacity which refuses to be lessened or loosened; it stays and pleads and persists, and refuses to let go until the blessing has been vouchsafed.

"Lord, I cannot let Thee go,
Till a blessing Thou bestow;
Do not turn away Thy face;
Mine's an urgent, pressing case."

The secret of faint heartedness, lack of importunity, want of courage and strength in prayer, lies in the weakness of spiritual desire, while the non-observance of prayer is the fearful token of that desire having ceased to live. That soul has turned from God whose desire after Him no longer presses it to the inner chamber.

There can be no successful praying without consuming desire. Of course there can be much seeming to pray, without desire of any kind.

Many things may be catalogued and much ground covered. But does desire compile the catalogue? Does desire map out the region to be covered? On the answer, hangs the issue of whether our petitioning be prating or prayer. Desire is intense, but narrow; it cannot spread itself over a wide area. It wants a few things, and wants them badly, so badly, that nothing but God's willingness to answer, can bring it easement or content.

Desire single-shots at its objective. There may be many things desired, but they are specifically and individually felt and expressed. David did not yearn for everything; nor did he allow his desires to spread out everywhere and hit nothing. Here is the way his desires ran and found expression: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple."

It is this singleness of desire, this definiteness of yearning, which counts in praying, and which drives prayer directly to core and centre of supply.

In the Beatitudes Jesus voiced the words which directly bear upon the innate desires of a renewed soul, and the promise that they will be granted: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

This, then, is the basis of prayer which compels an answer -- that strong inward desire has entered into the spiritual appetite, and clamours to be satisfied. Alas for us! It is altogether too true and frequent, that our prayers operate in the arid region of a mere wish, or in the leafless area of a memorized prayer. Sometimes, indeed, our prayers are merely stereotyped expressions of set phrases, and conventional proportions, the freshness and life of which have departed long years ago.

Without desire, there is no burden of soul, no sense of need, no ardency, no vision, no strength, no glow of faith. There is no mighty pressure, no holding on to God, with a deathless, despairing grasp -- "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." There is no utter self-abandonment, as there was with Moses, when, lost in the throes of a desperate, pertinacious, and all-consuming plea he cried: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book." Or, as there was with John Knox when he pleaded: "Give me Scotland, or I die!"

God draws mightily near to the praying soul. To see God, to know God, and to live for God -- these form the objective of all true praying. Thus praying is, after all, inspired to seek after God. Prayer-desire is inflamed to see God, to have clearer, fuller, sweeter and richer revelation of God. So to those who thus pray, the Bible becomes a new Bible, and Christ a new Saviour, by the light and revelation of the inner chamber.

We iterate and reiterate that burning desire -- enlarged and ever enlarging -- for the best, and most powerful gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, is the legitimate heritage of true and effectual praying. Self and service cannot be divorced -- cannot, possibly, be separated. More than that: desire must be made intensely personal, must be centered on God with an insatiable hungering and thirsting after Him and His righteousness. "My soul thirsteth for God, the living God." The indispensable requisite for all true praying is a deeply seated desire which seeks after God Himself, and remains unappeased, until the choicest gifts in heaven's bestowal, have been richly and abundantly vouchsafed.

V. PRAYER AND FERVENCY

"St. Teresa rose off her deathbed to finish her work. She inspected, with all her quickness of eye and love of order the whole of the house in which she had been carried to die. She saw everything put into its proper place, and every one answering to their proper order, after which she attended the divine offices of the day. She then went back to her bed, summoned her daughters around her . . . and, with the most penitential of David's penitential prayers upon her tongue, Teresa of Jesus went forth to meet her Bridegroom." -- Alexander Whyte.

PRAYER, without fervour, stakes nothing on the issue, because it has nothing to stake. It comes with empty hands. Hands, too, which are listless, as well as empty, which have never learned the lesson of clinging to the Cross.

Fervourless prayer has no heart in it; it is an empty thing, an unfit vessel. Heart, soul, and life, must find place in all real praying. Heaven must be made to feel the force of this crying unto God.

Paul was a notable example of the man who possessed a fervent spirit of prayer. His petitioning was all-consuming, centered immovably upon the object of his desire, and the God who was able to meet it.

Prayers must be red hot. It is the fervent prayer that is effectual and that availeth. Coldness of spirit hinders praying; prayer cannot live in a wintry atmosphere. Chilly surroundings freeze out petitioning; and dry up the springs of supplication. It takes fire to make prayers go. Warmth of soul creates an atmosphere favourable to prayer, because it is favourable to fervency. By flame, prayer ascends to heaven. Yet fire is not fuss, nor heat, noise. Heat is intensity -- something that glows and burns. Heaven is a mighty poor market for ice.

God wants warm-hearted servants. The Holy Spirit comes as a fire, to dwell in us; we are to be baptized, with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Fervency is warmth of soul. A phlegmatic temperament is abhorrent to vital experience. If our religion does not set us on fire, it is because we have frozen hearts. God dwells in a flame; the Holy Ghost descends in fire. To be absorbed in God's will, to be so greatly in earnest about doing it that our whole being takes fire, is the qualifying condition of the man who would engage in effectual prayer.

Our Lord warns us against feeble praying. "Men ought always to pray," He declares, "and not to faint." That means, that we are to possess sufficient fervency to carry us through the severe and long periods of pleading prayer. Fire makes one alert and vigilant, and brings him off, more than conqueror. The atmosphere about us is too heavily charged with resisting forces for limp or languid prayers to make headway. It takes heat, and fervency and meteoric fire, to push through, to the upper heavens, where God dwells with His saints, in light.

Many of the great Bible characters were notable examples of fervency of spirit when seeking God. The Psalmist declares with great earnestness: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times."

What strong desires of heart are here! What earnest soul longings for the Word of the living God!

An even greater fervency is expressed by him in another place: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

That is the word of a man who lived in a state of grace, which had been deeply and supernaturally wrought in his soul. Fervency before God counts in the hour of prayer, and finds a speedy and rich reward at His hands. The Psalmist gives us this statement of what God had done for the king, as his heart turned toward his Lord: "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips."

At another time, he thus expresses himself directly to God in preferring his request: "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee."

What a cheering thought! Our inward groanings, our secret desires, our heart-longings, are not hidden from the eyes of Him with whom we have to deal in prayer.

The incentive to fervency of spirit before God, is precisely the same as it is for continued and earnest prayer. While fervency is not prayer, yet it derives from an earnest soul, and is precious in the sight of God. Fervency in prayer is the precursor of what God will do by way of answer. God stands pledged to give us the desire of our hearts in proportion to the fervency of spirit we exhibit, when seeking His face in prayer.

Fervency has its seat in the heart, not in the brain, nor in the intellectual faculties of the mind. Fervency therefore, is not an expression of the intellect. Fervency of spirit is something far transcending poetical fancy or sentimental imagery. It is something else besides mere preference, the contrasting of like with dislike. Fervency is the throb and gesture of the emotional nature.

It is not in our power, perhaps, to create fervency of spirit at will, but we can pray God to implant it. It is ours, then, to nourish and cherish it, to guard it against extinction, to prevent its abatement or decline. The process of personal salvation is not only to pray, to express our desires to God, but to acquire a fervent spirit and seek, by all proper means, to cultivate it. It is never out of place to pray God to beget within us, and to keep alive the spirit of fervent prayer.

Fervency has to do with God, just as prayer has to do with Him. Desire has always an objective. If we desire at all, we desire something. The degree of fervency with which we fashion our spiritual desires, will always serve to determine the earnestness of our praying. In this relation, Adoniram Judson says: "A travailing spirit, the throes of a great burdened desire, belongs to prayer. A fervency strong enough to drive away sleep, which devotes and inflames the spirit, and which retires all earthly ties, all this belongs to wrestling, prevailing prayer. The Spirit, the power, the air, and food of prayer is in such a spirit."

Prayer must be clothed with fervency, strength and power. It is the force which, centered on God, determines the outlay of Himself for earthly good. Men who are fervent in spirit are bent on attaining to righteousness, truth, grace, and all other sublime and powerful graces which adorn the character of the authentic, unquestioned child of God.

God once declared, by the mouth of a brave prophet, to a king who, at one time, had been true to God, but, by the incoming of success and material prosperity, had lost his faith, the following message: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein hast thou done foolishly; therefore, from henceforth thou shalt have wars."

God had heard Asa's prayer in early life, but disaster came and trouble was sent, because he had given up the life of prayer and simple faith.

In Romans 15:30, we have the word, "strive," occurring, in the request which Paul made for prayerful cooperation.

In Colossians 4:12, we have the same word, but translated differently: "Epaphras always labouring fervently for you in prayer." Paul charged the Romans to "strive together with him in prayer," that is, to help him in his struggle of prayer. The word means to enter into a contest, to fight against adversaries. It means, moreover, to engage with fervent zeal to endeavour to obtain.

These recorded instances of the exercise and reward of faith, give us easily to see that, in almost every instance, faith was blended with trust until it is not too much to say that the former was swallowed up in the latter. It is hard to properly distinguish the specific activities of these two qualities, faith and trust. But there is a point, beyond all peradventure, at which faith is relieved of its burden, so to speak; where trust comes along and says: "You have done your part, the rest is mine!"

In the incident of the barren fig tree, our Lord transfers the marvellous power of faith to His disciples. To their exclamation, "How soon is the fig tree withered away!" He said: "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye

shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

When a Christian believer attains to faith of such magnificent proportions as these, he steps into the realm of implicit trust. He stands without a tremor on the apex of his spiritual outreaching. He has attained faith's veritable top stone which is unswerving, unalterable, unalienable trust in the power of the living God.

VI. PRAYER AND IMPORTUNITY

"How glibly we talk of praying without ceasing! Yet we are quite apt to quit, if our prayer remained unanswered but one week or month! We assume that by a stroke of His arm or an action of His will, God will give us what we ask. It never seems to dawn on us, that He is the Master of nature, as of grace, and that, sometimes He chooses one way, and sometimes another in which to do His work. It takes years, sometimes, to answer a prayer and when it is answered, and we look backward we can see that it did. But God knows all the time, and it is His will that we pray, and pray, and still pray, and so come to know, indeed and of a truth, what it is to pray without ceasing." -- Anon.

OUR Lord Jesus declared that "men ought always to pray and not to faint," and the parable in which His words occur, was taught with the intention of saving men from faint-heartedness and weakness in prayer. Our Lord was seeking to teach that laxity must be guarded against, and persistence fostered and encouraged. There can be no two opinions regarding the importance of the exercise of this indispensable quality in our praying.

Importunate prayer is a mighty movement of the soul toward God. It is a stirring of the deepest forces of the soul, toward the throne of heavenly grace. It is the ability to hold on, press on, and wait. Restless desire, restful patience, and strength of grasp are all embraced in it. It is not an incident, or a performance, but a passion of soul. It is not a want, half-needed, but a sheer necessity.

The wrestling quality in importunate prayers does not spring from physical vehemence or fleshly energy. It is not an impulse of energy, not a mere earnestness of soul; it is an inwrought force, a faculty implanted and aroused by the Holy Spirit. Virtually, it is the intercession of the Spirit of God, in us; it is, moreover, "the effectual, fervent prayer, which availeth much." The Divine Spirit informing every element within us, with the energy of His own striving, is the essence of the importunity which urges our praying at the mercy-seat, to continue until the fire falls and the blessing descends. This wrestling in prayer may not be boisterous nor vehement, but quiet, tenacious and urgent. Silent, it may be, when there are no visible outlets for its mighty forces.

Nothing distinguishes the children of God so clearly and strongly as prayer. It is the one infallible mark and test of being a Christian. Christian people are prayerful, the worldly-minded, prayerless. Christians call on God; worldlings ignore God, and call not on His Name. But even the Christian had need to cultivate continual prayer. Prayer must be habitual, but much more than a habit. It is duty, yet one which rises far above, and goes beyond the ordinary implications of the term. It is the expression of a relation to God, a yearning for Divine communion. It is the outward and upward flow of the inward life toward its original fountain. It is an assertion of the soul's paternity, a claiming of the sonship, which links man to the Eternal.

Prayer has everything to do with moulding the soul into the image of God, and has everything to do with enhancing and enlarging the measure of Divine grace. It has everything to do with bringing the soul into complete communion with God. It has everything to do with enriching, broadening and maturing the soul's experience of God. That man cannot possibly be called a Christian, who does not pray. By no possible pretext can he claim any right to the term,

nor its implied significance. If he do not pray, he is a sinner, pure and simple, for prayer is the only way in which the soul of man can enter into fellowship and communion with the Source of all Christlike spirit and energy. Hence, if he pray not, he is not of the household of faith.

In this study however, we turn our thought to one phase of prayer -- that of importunity; the pressing of our desires upon God with urgency and perseverance; the praying with that tenacity and tension which neither relaxes nor ceases until its plea is heard, and its cause is won.

He who has clear views of God, and Scriptural conceptions of the Divine character; who appreciates his privilege of approach unto God; who understands his inward need of all that God has for him -- that man will be solicitous, outspoken and importunate. In Holy Writ, the duty of prayer, itself, is advocated in terms which are only barely stronger than those in which the necessity for its importunity is set forth. The praying which influences God is declared to be that of the fervent, effectual outpouring of a righteous man. That is to say, it is prayer on fire, having no feeble, flickering flame, no momentary flash, but shining with a vigorous and steady glow.

The repeated intercessions of Abraham for the salvation of Sodom and Gomorrah present an early example of the necessity for, and benefit deriving from importunate praying. Jacob, wrestling all night with the angel, gives significant emphasis to the power of a dogged perseverance in praying, and shows how, in things spiritual, importunity succeeds, just as effectively as it does in matters relating to time and sense.

As we have noted, elsewhere, Moses prayed forty days and forty nights, seeking to stay the wrath of God against Israel, and his example and success are a stimulus to present-day faith in its darkest hour. Elijah repeated and urged his prayer seven times ere the raincloud appeared above the horizon, heralding the success of his prayer and the victory of his faith. On one occasion Daniel though faint and weak, pressed his case three weeks, ere the answer and the blessing came.

Many nights during His earthly life did the blessed Saviour spend in prayer. In Gethsemane He presented the same petition, three times, with unabated, urgent, yet submissive importunity, which involved every element of His soul, and issued in tears and bloody sweat. His life crises were distinctly marked, his life victories all won, in hours of importunate prayer. And the servant is not greater than his Lord.

The Parable of the Importunate Widow is a classic of insistent prayer. We shall do well to refresh our remembrance of it, at this point in our study: "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you He will avenge them speedily."

This parable stresses the central truth of importunate prayer. The widow presses her case till the unjust judge yields. If this parable does not teach the necessity for importunity, it has neither point nor instruction in it. Take this one thought away, and you have nothing left worth recording. Beyond all cavil, Christ intended it to stand as an evidence of the need that exists, for insistent prayer.

We have the same teaching emphasized in the incident of the Syrophenician woman, who came to Jesus on behalf of her daughter. Here, importunity is demonstrated, not as a stark impertinence, but as with the persuasive habiliments of humility, sincerity, and fervency. We are given a glimpse of a woman's clinging faith, a woman's bitter grief, and a woman's spiritual insight. The Master went over into that Sidonian country in order that this truth might be mirrored for all time -- there is no plea so efficacious as importunate prayer, and none to which God surrenders Himself so fully and so freely.

The importunity of this distressed mother, won her the victory, and materialized her request. Yet instead of being an offence to the Saviour, it drew from Him a word of wonder, and glad surprise. "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

He prays not at all, who does not press his plea. Cold prayers have no claim on heaven, and no hearing in the courts above. Fire is the life of prayer, and heaven is reached by flaming importunity rising in an ascending scale.

Reverting to the case of the importunate widow, we see that her widowhood, her friendlessness, and her weakness counted for nothing with the unjust judge. Importunity was everything. "Because this widow troubleth me," he said, "I will avenge her speedily, lest she weary me." Solely because the widow imposed upon the time and attention of the unjust judge, her case was won. God waits patiently as, day and night, His elect cry unto Him. He is moved by their requests a thousand times more than was this unjust judge. A limit is set to His tarrying, by the importunate praying of His people, and the answer richly given. God finds faith in His praying child -- the faith which stays and cries -- and He honours it by permitting its further exercise, to the end that it is strengthened and enriched. Then He rewards it by granting the burden of its plea, in plenitude and finality.

The case of the Syrophenician woman previously referred to is a notable instance of successful importunity, one which is eminently encouraging to all who would pray successfully. It was a remarkable instance of insistence and perseverance to ultimate victory, in the face of almost insuperable obstacles and hindrances. But the woman surmounted them all by heroic faith and persistent spirit that were as remarkable as they were successful. Jesus had gone over into her country, "and would have no man know it." But she breaks through His purpose, violates His privacy, attracts His attention, and pours out to Him a poignant appeal of need and faith. Her heart was in her prayer.

At first, Jesus appears to pay no attention to her agony, and ignores her cry for relief. He gives her neither eye, nor ear, nor word. Silence, deep and chilling, greets her impassioned cry. But she is not turned aside, nor disheartened. She holds on. The disciples, offended at her unseemly clamour, intercede for her, but are silenced by the Lord's declaring that the woman is entirely outside the scope of His mission and His ministry. But neither the failure of the disciples to gain her a hearing nor the knowledge -- despairing in its very nature -- that she is barred from the benefits of His mission, daunt her, and serve only to lend intensity and increased boldness to her approach to Christ. She came closer, cutting her prayer in twain, and falling at His feet, worshipping Him, and making her daughter's case her own cries, with pointed brevity -- "Lord, help me!" This last cry won her case; her daughter was healed in the self-same hour. Hopeful, urgent, and unwearied, she stays near the Master, insisting and praying until the answer is given. What a study in importunity, in earnestness, in persistence, promoted and propelled under conditions which would have disheartened any but an heroic, a constant soul.

In these parables of importunate praying, our Lord sets forth, for our information and encouragement, the serious difficulties which stand in the way of prayer. At the same time He teaches that importunity conquers all untoward circumstances and gets to itself a victory over a whole host of hindrances. He teaches, moreover, that an answer to prayer is conditional upon the amount of faith that goes to the petition. To test this, He delays the answer. The superficial prayer subsides into silence, when the answer is delayed. But the man of prayer hangs on, and on. The Lord recognizes and honours his faith, and gives him a rich and abundant answer to his faith-evidencing, importunate prayer.

VII. PRAYER AND IMPORTUNITY (Continued)

"Two-thirds of the praying we do, is for that which would give us the greatest possible pleasure to receive. It is a sort of spiritual self-indulgence in which we engage, and as a consequence is the exact opposite of self-discipline. God knows all this, and keeps His children asking. In process of

time -- His time -- our petitions take on another aspect, and we, another spiritual approach. God keeps us praying until, in His wisdom, He deigns to answer. And no matter how long it may be before He speaks, it is, even then, far earlier than we have a right to expect or hope to deserve." -- Anon.

THE tenor of Christ's teachings, is to declare that men are to pray earnestly -- to pray with an earnestness that cannot be denied. Heaven has harkening ears only for the whole-hearted, and the deeply-earnest. Energy, courage, and persistent perseverance must back the prayers which heaven respects, and God hears. All these qualities of soul, so essential to effectual praying, are brought out in the parable of the man who went to his friend for bread, at midnight. This man entered on his errand with confidence. Friendship promised him success. His plea was pressing: of a truth, he could not go back empty-handed. The flat refusal chagrined and surprised him. Here even friendship failed!

But there was something to be tried yet -- stern resolution, set, fixed determination. He would stay and press his demand until the door was opened, and the request granted. This he proceeded to do, and by dint of importunity secured what ordinary solicitation had failed to obtain.

The success of this man, achieved in the face of a flat denial, was used by the Saviour to illustrate the necessity for insistence in supplicating the throne of heavenly grace. When the answer is not immediately given, the praying Christian must gather courage at each delay, and advance in urgency till the answer comes which is assured, if he have but the faith to press his petition with vigorous faith.

Laxity, faint-heartedness, impatience, timidity will be fatal to our prayers. Awaiting the onset of our importunity and insistence, is the Father's heart, the Father's hand, the Father's infinite power, the Father's infinite willingness to hear and give to His children.

Importunate praying is the earnest, inward movement of the heart toward God. It is the throwing of the entire force of the spiritual man into the exercise of prayer. Isaiah lamented that no one stirred himself, to take hold of God. Much praying was done in Isaiah's time, but it was too easy, indifferent and complacent. There were no mighty movements of souls toward God. There was no array of sanctified energies bent on reaching and grappling with God, to draw from Him the treasures of His grace. Forceless prayers have no power to overcome difficulties, no power to win marked results, or to gain complete victories. We must win God, ere we can win our plea.

Isaiah looked forward with hopeful eyes to the day when religion would flourish, when there would be times of real praying. When those times came, the watchmen would not abate their vigilance, but cry day and night, and those, who were the Lord's remembrancers, would give Him no rest. Their urgent, persistent efforts would keep all spiritual interests engaged, and make increasing drafts on God's exhaustless treasures.

Importunate praying never faints nor grows weary; it is never discouraged; it never yields to cowardice, but is buoyed up and sustained by a hope that knows no despair, and a faith which will not let go. Importunate praying has patience to wait and strength to continue. It never prepares itself to quit praying, and declines to rise from its knees until an answer is received. The familiar, yet heartening words of that great missionary, Adoniram Judson, is the testimony of a man who was importunate at prayer. He says: "I was never deeply interested in any object, never prayed sincerely and earnestly for it, but that it came at some time, no matter how distant the day. Somehow, in some shape, probably the last I would have devised, it came."

"Ask, and ye shall receive. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." These are the ringing challenges of our Lord in regard to prayer, and His intimation that true praying must stay, and advance in effort and urgency, till the prayer is answered, and the blessing sought, received.

In the three words ask, seek, knock, in the order in which He places them, Jesus urges the necessity of importunity in prayer. Asking, seeking, knocking, are ascending rounds in the ladder

of successful prayer. No principle is more definitely enforced by Christ than that prevailing prayer must have in it the quality which waits and perseveres, the courage that never surrenders, the patience which never grows tired, the resolution that never wavers.

In the parable preceding that of the Friend at Midnight, a most significant and instructive lesson in this respect is outlined. Indomitable courage, ceaseless pertinacity, fixity of purpose, chief among the qualities included in Christ's estimate of the highest and most successful form of praying.

Importunity is made up of intensity, perseverance, patience and persistence. The seeming delay in answering prayer is the ground and the demand of importunity. In the first recorded instance of a miracle being wrought upon one who was blind, as given by Matthew, we have an illustration of the way in which our Lord appeared not to hearken at once to those who sought Him. But the two blind men continue their crying, and follow Him with their continual petition, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." But He answered them not, and passed into the house. Yet the needy ones followed Him, and, finally, gained their eyesight and their plea.

The case of blind Bartimaeus is a notable one in many ways. Especially is it remarkable for the show of persistence which this blind man exhibited in appealing to our Lord. If it be -- as it seems -- that his first crying was done as Jesus entered into Jericho, and that he continued it until Jesus came out of the place, it is all the stronger an illustration of the necessity of importunate prayer and the success which comes to those who stake their all on Christ, and give Him no peace until He grants them their hearts' desire.

Mark puts the whole incident graphically before us. At first, Jesus seems not to hear. The crowd rebukes the noisy clamour of Bartimaeus. Despite the seeming unconcern of our Lord, however, and despite the rebuke of an impatient and quick-tempered crowd, the blind beggar still cries, and increases the loudness of his cry, until Jesus is impressed and moved. Finally, the crowd, as well as Jesus, hearken to the beggar's plea and declare in favour of his cause. He gains his case. His importunity avails even in the face of apparent neglect on the part of Jesus, and despite opposition and rebuke from the surrounding populace. His persistence won where half-hearted indifference would surely have failed.

Faith has its province, in connection with prayer, and, of course, has its inseparable association with importunity. But the latter quality drives the prayer to the believing point. A persistent spirit brings a man to the place where faith takes hold, claims and appropriates the blessing.

The imperative necessity of importunate prayer is plainly set forth in the Word of God, and needs to be stated and re-stated today. We are apt to overlook this vital truth. Love of ease, spiritual indolence, religious slothfulness, all operate against this type of petitioning. Our praying, however, needs to be pressed and pursued with an energy that never tires, a persistency which will not be denied, and a courage which never fails.

We have need, too, to give thought to that mysterious fact of prayer -- the certainty that there will be delays, denials, and seeming failures, in connection with its exercise. We are to prepare for these, to brook them, and cease not in our urgent praying. Like a brave soldier, who, as the conflict grows sterner, exhibits a superior courage than in the earlier stages of the battle; so does the praying Christian, when delay and denial face him, increase his earnest asking, and ceases not until prayer prevail. Moses furnishes an illustrious example of importunity in prayer. Instead of allowing his nearness to God and his intimacy with Him to dispense with the necessity for importunity, he regards them as the better fitting him for its exercise. When Israel set up the golden calf, the wrath of God waxed fierce against them, and Jehovah, bent on executing justice, said to Moses when divulging what He purposed doing, "Let Me alone!" But Moses would not let Him alone. He threw himself down before the Lord in an agony of intercession in behalf of the sinning Israelites, and for forty days and nights, fasted and prayed. What a season of importunate prayer was that!

Jehovah was wroth with Aaron, also, who had acted as leader in this idolatrous business of the golden calf. But Moses prayed for Aaron as well as for the Israelites; had he not, both Israel and Aaron had perished, under the consuming fire of God's wrath.

That long season of pleading before God, left its mighty impress on Moses. He had been in close relation with God aforetime, but never did his character attain the greatness that marked it in the days and years following this long season of importunate intercession.

There can be no question but that importunate prayer moves God, and heightens human character! If we were more with God in this great ordinance of intercession, more brightly would our face shine, more richly endowed would life and service be, with the qualities which earn the goodwill of humanity, and bring glory to the Name of God.

VIII. PRAYER AND CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

"General Charles James Gordon, the hero of Khartum, was a truly Christian soldier. Shut up in the Sudanese town he gallantly held out for one year, but, finally, was overcome and slain. On his memorial in Westminster Abbey are these words, 'He gave his money to the poor; his sympathy to the sorrowing; his life to his country and his soul to God.'" -- Homer W. Hodge.

PRAYER governs conduct and conduct makes character. Conduct, is what we do; character, is what we are. Conduct is the outward life. Character is the life unseen, hidden within, yet evidenced by that which is seen. Conduct is external, seen from without; character is internal - - operating within. In the economy of grace conduct is the offspring of character. Character is the state of the heart, conduct its outward expression. Character is the root of the tree, conduct, the fruit it bears.

Prayer is related to all the gifts of grace. To character and conduct its relation is that of a helper. Prayer helps to establish character and fashion conduct, and both for their successful continuance depend on prayer. There may be a certain degree of moral character and conduct independent of prayer, but there cannot be anything like distinctive religious character and Christian conduct without it. Prayer helps, where all other aids fail. The more we pray, the better we are, the purer and better our lives.

The very end and purpose of the atoning work of Christ is to create religious character and to make Christian conduct. "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

In Christ's teaching, it is not simply works of charity and deeds of mercy upon which He insists, but inward spiritual character. This much is demanded, and nothing short of it, will suffice.

In the study of Paul's Epistles, there is one thing which stands out, clearly and unmistakably -- the insistence on holiness of heart, and righteousness of life. Paul does not seek, so much, to promote what is termed "personal work," nor is the leading theme of his letters deeds of charity. It is the condition of the human heart and the blamelessness of the personal life, which form the burden of the writings of St. Paul.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures, too, it is character and conduct which are made preeminent. The Christian religion deals with men who are devoid of spiritual character, and unholy in life, and aims so to change them, that they become holy in heart and righteous in life. It aims to change bad men into good men; it deals with inward badness, and works to change it into inward goodness. And it is just here where prayer enters and demonstrates its wonderful efficacy and fruit. Prayer drives toward this specific end. In fact, without prayer, no such supernatural change in moral character, can ever be effected. For the change from badness to goodness is not wrought "by works of righteousness which we have done," but according to God's mercy, which saves us "by the washing of regeneration." And this marvellous change is brought to pass through earnest,

persistent, faithful prayer. Any alleged form of Christianity, which does not effect this change in the hearts of men, is a delusion and a snare.

The office of prayer is to change the character and conduct of men, and in countless instances, has been wrought by prayer. At this point, prayer, by its credentials, has proved its divinity. And just as it is the office of prayer to effect this, so it is the prime work of the Church to take hold of evil men and make them good. Its mission is to change human nature, to change character, influence behaviour, to revolutionize conduct. The Church is presumed to be righteous, and should be engaged in turning men to righteousness. The Church is God's manufactory on earth, and its primary duty is to create and foster righteousness of character. This is its very first business. Primarily, its work is not to acquire members, nor amass numbers, nor aim at money-getting, nor engage in deeds of charity and works of mercy, but to produce righteousness of character, and purity of the outward life.

A product reflects and partakes of the character of the manufactory which makes it. A righteous Church with a righteous purpose makes righteous men. Prayer produces cleanliness of heart and purity of life. It can produce nothing else. Unrighteous conduct is born of prayerlessness; the two go hand-in-hand. Prayer and sinning cannot keep company with each other. One, or the other, must, of necessity, stop. Get men to pray, and they will quit sinning, because prayer creates a distaste for sinning, and so works upon the heart, that evil-doing becomes repugnant, and the entire nature lifted to a reverent contemplation of high and holy things.

Prayer is based on character. What we are with God gauges our influence with Him. It was the inner character, not the outward seeming, of such men as Abraham, Job, David, Moses and all others, who had such great influence with God in the days of old. And, today, it is not so much our words, as what we really are, which weighs with God. Conduct affects character, of course, and counts for much in our praying. At the same time, character affects conduct to a far greater extent, and has a superior influence over prayer. Our inner life not only gives colour to our praying, but body, as well. Bad living means bad praying and, in the end, no praying at all. We pray feebly because we live feebly. The stream of prayer cannot rise higher than the fountain of living. The force of the inner chamber is made up of the energy which flows from the confluent streams of living. And the weakness of living grows out of the shallowness and shoddiness of character.

Feebleness of living reflects its debility and langour in the praying hours. We simply cannot talk to God, strongly, intimately, and confidently unless we are living for Him, faithfully and truly. The prayer-closet cannot become sanctified unto God, when the life is alien to His precepts and purpose. We must learn this lesson well -- that righteous character and Christlike conduct give us a peculiar and preferential standing in prayer before God. His holy Word gives special emphasis to the part conduct has in imparting value to our praying when it declares: "Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am; if thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth the finger, and speaking vanity."

The wickedness of Israel and their heinous practices were definitely cited by Isaiah, as the reason why God would turn His ears away from their prayers: "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."

The same sad truth was declared by the Lord through the mouth of Jeremiah: "Therefore, pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto Me for their trouble."

Here, it is plainly stated, that unholy conduct is a bar to successful praying, just as it is clearly intimated that, in order to have full access to God in prayer, there must be a total abandonment of conscious and premeditated sin.

We are enjoined to pray, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," and must pass the time of our sojourning here, in a rigorous abstaining from evil if we are to retain our privilege of calling upon the Father. We cannot, by any process, divorce praying from conduct.

"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

And James declares roundly that men ask and receive not, because they ask amiss, and seek only the gratification of selfish desires.

Our Lord's injunction, "Watch ye, and pray always," is to cover and guard all our conduct, so that we may come to our inner chamber with all its force secured by a vigilant guard kept over our lives.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."

Quite often, Christian experience founders on the rock of conduct. Beautiful theories are marred by ugly lives. The most difficult thing about piety, as it is the most impressive, is to be able to live it. It is the life which counts, and our praying suffers, as do other phases of our religious experience, from bad living.

In primitive times preachers were charged to preach by their lives, or not to preach at all. So, today, Christians, everywhere, ought to be charged to pray by their lives, or not to pray at all.

The most effective preaching, is not that which is heard from the pulpit, but that which is proclaimed quietly, humbly and consistently; which exhibits its excellencies in the home, and in the community. Example preaches a far more effective sermon than precept. The best preaching, even in the pulpit, is that which is fortified by godly living, in the preacher, himself. The most effective work done by the pew is preceded by, and accompanied with, holiness of life, separation from the world, severance from sin. Some of the strongest appeals are made with mute lips – by godly fathers and saintly mothers who, around the fireside, feared God, loved His cause, and daily exhibited to their children and others about them, the beauties and excellencies of Christian life and conduct.

The best-prepared, most eloquent sermon can be marred and rendered ineffective, by questionable practices in the preacher. The most active church worker can have the labour of his hands vitiated by worldliness of spirit and inconsistency of life. Men preach by their lives, not by their words, and sermons are delivered, not so much in, and from a pulpit, as in tempers, actions, and the thousand and one incidents which crowd the pathway of daily life.

Of course, the prayer of repentance is acceptable to God. He delights in hearing the cries of penitent sinners. But repentance involves not only sorrow for sin, but the turning away from wrong-doing, and the learning to do well. A repentance which does not produce a change in character and conduct, is a mere sham, which should deceive nobody. Old things must pass away, all things must become new.

Praying, which does not result in right thinking and right living, is a farce. We have missed the whole office of prayer if it fail to purge character and rectify conduct. We have failed entirely to apprehend the virtue of prayer, if it bring not about the revolutionizing of the life. In the very nature of things, we must quit praying, or our bad conduct. Cold, formal praying may exist side by side, with bad conduct, but such praying, in the estimation of God, is no praying at all. Our praying advances in power, just in so far as it rectifies the life. Growing in purity and devotion to God will be a more prayerful life.

The character of the inner life is a condition of effectual praying. As is the life, so will the praying be. An inconsistent life obstructs praying and neutralizes what little praying we may do. Always, it is "the prayer of the righteous man which availeth much." Indeed, one may go further and assert, that it is only the prayer of the righteous which avails anything at all -- at any time. To have an eye to God's glory; to be possessed by an earnest desire to please Him in all our ways; to possess hands busy in His service; to have feet swift to run in the way of His commandments -- these give weight and influence and power to prayer, and secure an audience with God. The

incubus of our lives often breaks the force of our praying, and, not unfrequently, are as doors of brass, in the face of prayer.

Praying must come out of a cleansed heart and be presented and urged with the "lifting up of holy hands." It must be fortified by a life aiming, unceasingly, to obey God, to attain conformity to the Divine law, and to come into submission to the Divine will.

Let it not be forgotten, that, while life is a condition of prayer, prayer is also the condition of righteous living. Prayer promotes righteous living, and is the one great aid to uprightness of heart and life. The fruit of real praying is right living.

Praying sets him who prays to the great business of "working out his salvation with fear and trembling;" puts him to watching his temper, conversation and conduct; causes him to "walk circumspectly, redeeming the time;" enables him to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called, with all lowliness and meekness;" gives him a high incentive to pursue his pilgrimage consistently by "shunning every evil way, and walking in the good."

IX. PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE

"An obedience discovered itself in Fletcher of Madeley, which I wish I could describe or imitate. It produced in him a ready mind to embrace every cross with alacrity and pleasure. He had a singular love for the lambs of the flock, and applied himself with the greatest diligence to their instruction, for which he had a peculiar gift. . . . All his intercourse with me was so mingled with prayer and praise, that every employment, and every meal was, as it were, perfumed therewith." - John Wesley.

UNDER the Mosaic law, obedience was looked upon as being "better than sacrifice, and to harken, than the fat of lambs." In Deuteronomy 5:29, Moses represents Almighty God declaring Himself as to this very quality in a manner which left no doubt as to the importance He laid upon its exercise. Referring to the waywardness of His people He cries: "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children after them."

Unquestionably obedience is a high virtue, a soldier quality. To obey belongs, preeminently, to the soldier. It is his first and last lesson, and he must learn how to practice it all the time, without question, uncomplainingly. Obedience, moreover, is faith in action, and is the outflow as it is the very test of love. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Furthermore: obedience is the conservator and the life of love. "If ye keep My commandments," says Jesus, "ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

What a marvellous statement of the relationship created and maintained by obedience! The Son of God is held in the bosom of the Father's love, by virtue of His obedience! And the factor which enables the Son of God to ever abide in His Father's love is revealed in His own statement, "For I do, always, those things that please Him."

The gift of the Holy Spirit in full measure and in richer experience, depends upon loving obedience: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," is the Master's word.

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."

Obedience to God is a condition of spiritual thrift, inward satisfaction, stability of heart. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the fruit of the land." Obedience opens the gates of the Holy City, and gives access to the tree of life.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates, into the city."

What is obedience? It is doing God's will: it is keeping His commandments. How many of the commandments constitute obedience? To keep half of them, and to break the other half -- is that real obedience? To keep all the commandments but one -- is that obedience? On this point, James the Apostle is most explicit: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," he declares, "and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

The spirit which prompts a man to break one commandment is the spirit which may move him to break them all. God's commandments are a unit, and to break one strikes at the principle which underlies and runs through the whole. He who hesitates not to break a single commandment, would -- it is more than probable -- under the same stress, and surrounded by the same circumstances, break them all.

Universal obedience of the race is demanded. Nothing short of implicit obedience will satisfy God, and the keeping of all His commandments is the demonstration of it that God requires. But can we keep all of God's commandments? Can a man receive moral ability such as enables him to obey every one of them? Certainly he can. By every token, man can, through prayer, obtain ability to do this very thing.

Does God give commandments which men cannot obey? Is He so arbitrary, so severe, so unloving, as to issue commandments which cannot be obeyed? The answer is that in all the annals of Holy Scripture, not a single instance is recorded of God having commanded any man to do a thing, which was beyond his power. Is God so unjust and so inconsiderate as to require of man that which he is unable to render? Surely not. To infer it, is to slander the character of God.

Let us ponder this thought, a moment: Do earthly parents require of their children duties which they cannot perform? Where is the father who would think, even, of being so unjust, and so tyrannical? Is God less kind and just than faulty, earthly parents? Are they better and more just than a perfect God? How utterly foolish and untenable a thought!

In principle, obedience to God is the same quality as obedience to earthly parents. It implies, in general effect, the giving up of one's own way, and following that of another; the surrendering of the will to the will of another; the submission of oneself to the authority and requirements of a parent. Commands, either from our heavenly Father or from our earthly father, are love-directing, and all such commands are in the best interests of those who are commanded. God's commands are issued neither in severity nor tyranny. They are always issued in love and in our interests, and so it behooves us to heed and obey them. In other words, and appraised at its lowest value -- God having issued His commands to us, in order to promote our good, it pays, therefore, to be obedient. Obedience brings its own reward. God has ordained it so, and since He has, even human reason can realize that He would never demand that which is out of our power to render. Obedience is love, fulfilling every command, love expressing itself. Obedience, therefore, is not a hard demand made upon us, any more than is the service a husband renders his wife, or a wife renders her husband. Love delights to obey, and please whom it loves. There are no hardships in love. There may be exactions, but no irk. There are no impossible tasks for love.

With what simplicity and in what a matter-of-fact way does the Apostle John say: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

This is obedience, running ahead of all and every command. It is love, obeying by anticipation. They greatly err, and even sin, who declare that men are bound to commit iniquity, either because of environment, or heredity, or tendency. God's commands are not grievous. Their ways are ways of pleasantness, and their paths peace. The task which falls to obedience is not a hard one. "For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

Far be it from our heavenly Father, to demand impossibilities of His children. It is possible to please Him in all things, for He is not hard to please. He is neither a hard master, nor an austere lord, "taking up that which he lays not down, and reaping that which he did not sow." Thank God, it is possible for every child of God, to please his heavenly Father! It is really much easier to please Him than to please men. Moreover, we may know when we please Him. This is

the witness of the Spirit – the inward Divine assurance, given to all the children of God that they are doing their Father's will, and that their ways are well- pleasing in His sight.

God's commandments are righteous and founded in justice and wisdom. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." "Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." God's commandments, then, can be obeyed by all who seek supplies of grace which enable them to obey. These commandments must be obeyed. God's government is at stake. God's children are under obligation to obey Him; disobedience cannot be permitted. The spirit of rebellion is the very essence of sin. It is repudiation of God's authority, which God cannot tolerate. He never has done so, and a declaration of His attitude was part of the reason the Son of the Highest was made manifest among men: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

If any should complain that humanity, under the fall, is too weak and helpless to obey these high commands of God, the reply is in order that, through the atonement of Christ, man is enabled to obey. The Atonement is God's Enabling Act. That which God works in us, in regeneration and through the agency of the Holy Spirit, bestows enabling grace sufficient for all that is required of us, under the Atonement. This grace is furnished without measure, in answer to prayer. So that, while God commands, He, at the same time, stands pledged to give us all necessary strength of will and grace of soul to meet His demands. This being true, man is without excuse for his disobedience and eminently censurable for refusing, or failing, to secure requisite grace, whereby he may serve the Lord with reverence, and with godly fear.

There is one important consideration those who declare it to be impossible to keep God's commandments strangely overlook, and that is the vital truth, which declares that through prayer and faith, man's nature is changed, and made partaker of the Divine nature; that there is taken out of him all reluctance to obey God, and that his natural inability to keep God's commandments, growing out of his fallen and helpless state, is gloriously removed. By this radical change which is wrought in his moral nature, a man receives power to obey God in every way, and to yield full and glad allegiance. Then he can say, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Not only is the rebellion incident to the natural man removed, but a heart which gladly obeys God's Word, blessedly received.

If it be claimed, that the unrenewed man, with all the disabilities of the Fall upon him, cannot obey God, there will be no denial. But to declare that, after one is renewed by the Holy Spirit, has received a new nature, and become a child of the King, he cannot obey God, is to assume a ridiculous attitude, and to display, moreover, a lamentable ignorance of the work and implications of the Atonement.

Implicit and perfect obedience is the state to which the man of prayer is called. "Lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting," is the condition of obedient praying. Here inward fidelity and love, together with outward cleanness are put down as concomitants of acceptable praying.

John gives the reason for answered prayer in the passage previously quoted: "And whatsoever we ask we receive of Him because we keep His commandments and do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

Seeing that the keeping of God's commandments is here set forth as the reason why He answers prayer, it is to be reasonably assumed that we can keep God's commandments, can do those things which are pleasing to Him. Would God make the keeping of His commandments a condition of effectual prayer, think you, if He knew we could not keep His statutes? Surely, surely not!

Obedience can ask with boldness at the Throne of grace, and those who exercise it are the only ones who can ask, after that fashion. The disobedient folk are timid in their approach and hesitant in their supplication. They are halted by reason of their wrong-doing. The requesting yet

obedient child comes into the presence of his father with confidence and boldness. His very consciousness of obedience gives him courage and frees him from the dread born of disobedience. To do God's will without demur, is the joy as it is the privilege of the successful praying-man. It is he who has clean hands and a pure heart, that can pray with confidence. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven."

To this great deliverance may be added another: "If ye keep My commandments ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love." "The Christian's trade," says Luther, "is prayer." But the Christian has another trade to learn, before he proceeds to learn the secrets of the trade of prayer. He must learn well the trade of perfect obedience to the Father's will. Obedience follows love, and prayer follows obedience. The business of real observance of God's commandments inseparably accompanies the business of real praying.

One who has been disobedient may pray. He may pray for pardoning mercy and the peace of his soul. He may come to God's footstool with tears, with confession, with penitent heart, and God will hear him and answer his prayer. But this kind of praying does not belong to the child of God, but to the penitent sinner, who has no other way by which to approach God. It is the possession of the unjustified soul, not of him who has been saved and reconciled to God.

An obedient life helps prayer. It speeds prayer to the throne. God cannot help hearing the prayer of an obedient child. He always has heard His obedient children when they have prayed. Unquestioning obedience counts much in the sight of God, at the throne of heavenly grace. It acts like the confluent tides of many rivers, and gives volume and fulness of flow as well as power to the prayer chamber. An obedient life is not simply a reformed life. It is not the old life primed and painted anew nor a church-going life, nor a good veneering of activities. Neither is it an external conformation to the dictates of public morality. Far more than all this is combined in a truly obedient Christian, God-fearing life.

A life of full obedience; a life settled on the most intimate terms with God; where the will is in full conformity to God's will; where the outward life shows the fruit of righteousness -- such a life offers no bar to the inner chamber but rather, like Aaron and Hur, it lifts up and sustains the hands of prayer.

If you have an earnest desire to pray well, you must learn how to obey well. If you have a desire to learn to pray, then you must have an earnest desire to learn how to do God's will. If you desire to pray to God, you must first have a consuming desire to obey Him. If you would have free access to God in prayer, then every obstacle in the nature of sin or disobedience, must be removed. God delights in the prayers of obedient children.

Requests coming from the lips of those who delight to do His will, reach His ears with great celerity, and incline Him to answer them with promptitude and abundance. In themselves, tears are not meritorious. Yet they have their uses in prayer. Tears should baptize our place of supplication. He who has never wept concerning his sins, has never really prayed over his sins. Tears, sometimes, is a penitent's only plea. But tears are for the past, for the sin and the wrongdoing. There is another step and stage, waiting to be taken. It is that of unquestioning obedience, and until it is taken, prayer for blessing and continued sustenance, will be of no avail.

Everywhere in Holy Scripture God is represented as disapproving of disobedience and condemning sin, and this is as true in the lives of His elect as it is in the lives of sinners. Nowhere does He countenance sin, or excuse disobedience. Always, God puts the emphasis upon obedience to His commands. Obedience to them brings blessing, disobedience meets with disaster. This is true, in the Word of God, from its beginning to its close. It is because of this, that the men of prayer, in Holy Writ, had such influence with God. Obedient men, always, have been the closest to God. These are they who have prayed well and have received great things from God, who have brought great things to pass.

Obedience to God counts tremendously in the realm of prayer. This fact cannot be emphasized too much or too often. To plead for a religious faith which tolerates sinning, is to cut the ground from under the feet of effectual praying. To excuse sinning by the plea that obedience to God is not possible to unregenerate men, is to discount the character of the new birth, and to place men where effective praying is not possible. At one time Jesus broke out with a very pertinent and personal question, striking right to the core of disobedience, when He said: "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say?"

He who would pray, must obey. He who would get anything out of his prayers, must be in perfect harmony with God. Prayer puts into those who sincerely pray a spirit of obedience, for the spirit of disobedience is not of God and belongs not to God's praying hosts.

An obedient life is a great help to prayer. In fact, an obedient life is a necessity to prayer, to the sort which accomplishes things. The absence of an obedient life makes prayer an empty performance, a mere misnomer. A penitent sinner seeks pardon and salvation and has an answer to his prayers even with a life stained and debauched with sin. But God's royal intercessors come before Him with royal lives. Holy living promotes holy praying. God's intercessors "lift up holy hands," the symbols of righteous, obedient lives.

X. PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE (Continued)

"Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within my four score years. But one equal to John Fletcher -- one so inwardly and outwardly obedient and devoted to God -- I have not known." -- John Wesley.

IT is worthy of note that the praying to which such transcendent position is given and from which great results are attributable, is not simply the saying of prayers, but holy praying. It is the "prayers of the saints," the prayers of the holy men of God. Behind such praying, giving to it energy and flame are the men and women who are wholly devoted to God, who are entirely separated from sin, and fully separated unto God. These are they who always give energy, force and strength to praying.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was preeminent in praying, because He was preeminent in saintliness. An entire dedication to God, a full surrender, which carries with it the whole being, in a flame of holy consecration -- all this gives wings to faith and energy to prayer. It opens the door to the throne of grace, and brings strong influence to bear on Almighty God.

The "lifting up of holy hands" is essential to Christly praying. It is not, however, a holiness which only dedicates a closet to God, which sets apart merely an hour to Him, but a consecration which takes hold of the entire man, which dedicates the whole life to God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," had full liberty of approach and ready access to God in prayer. And He had this free and full access because of His unquestioning obedience to His Father. Right through His earthly life His supreme care and desire was to do the will of His Father. And this fact, coupled with another -- the consciousness of having so ordered His life -- gave Him confidence and assurance, which enabled Him to draw near to the throne of grace with unbounded confidence, born of obedience, and promising acceptance, audience, and answer.

Loving obedience puts us where we can "ask anything in His name," with the assurance, that "He will do it." Loving obedience brings us into the prayer realm, and makes us beneficiaries of the wealth of Christ, and of the riches of His grace, through the coming of the Holy Spirit who will abide with us, and be in us. Cheerful obedience to God, qualifies us to pray effectually.

This obedience which not only qualifies but fore-runs prayer, must be loving, constant, always doing the Father's will, and cheerfully following the path of God's commands.

In the instance of King Hezekiah, it was a potent plea which changed God's decree that he should die and not live. The stricken ruler called upon God to remember how that he had walked before Him in truth, and with a perfect heart. With God, this counted. He hearkened to the petition, and, as a result, death found his approach to Hezekiah barred for fifteen years.

Jesus learned obedience in the school of suffering, and, at the same time, He learned prayer in the school of obedience. Just as it is the prayer of a righteous man which availeth much, so it is righteousness which is obedience to God. A righteous man is an obedient man, and he it is, who can pray effectually, who can accomplish great things when he betakes himself to his knees.

True praying, be it remembered, is not mere sentiment, nor poetry, nor eloquent utterance. Nor does it consist of saying in honeyed cadences, "Lord, Lord." Prayer is not a mere form of words; it is not just calling upon a Name. Prayer is obedience. It is founded on the adamant rock of obedience to God. Only those who obey have the right to pray. Behind the praying must be the doing; and it is the constant doing of God's will in daily life which gives prayer its potency, as our Lord plainly taught: "Not every one which saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name, and in Thy Name have cast out devils? And in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that worketh iniquity."

No name, however precious and powerful, can protect and give efficiency to prayer which is unaccompanied by the doing of God's will. Neither can the doing, without the praying, protect from Divine disapproval. If the will of God does not master the life, the praying will be nothing but sickly sentiment. If prayer do not inspire, sanctify and direct our work, then self-will enters, to ruin both work and worker.

How great and manifold are the misconceptions of the true elements and functionings of prayer! There are many who earnestly desire to obtain an answer to their prayers but who go unrewarded and unblest. They fix their minds on some promise of God and then endeavour by dint of dogged perseverance, to summon faith sufficient to lay hold upon, and claim it. This fixing of the mind on some great promise may avail in strengthening faith, but, to this holding on to the promise must be added the persistent and importunate prayer that expects, and waits till faith grows exceedingly. And who is there that is able and competent to do such praying save the man who readily, cheerfully and continually, obeys God?

Faith, in its highest form, is the attitude as well as the act of a soul surrendered to God, in whom His Word and His Spirit dwells. It is true that faith must exist in some form, or another, in order to prompt praying; but in its strongest form, and in its largest results, faith is the fruit of prayer. That faith increases the ability and the efficiency of prayer is true; but it is likewise true that prayer increases the ability and efficiency of faith. Prayer and faith, work, act and react, one upon the other.

Obedience to God helps faith as no other attribute possibly can. When obedience -- implicit recognition of the validity, the paramountcy of the Divine commands -- faith ceases to be an almost superhuman task. It requires no straining to exercise it.

Obedience to God makes it easy to believe and trust God. Where the spirit of obedience fully impregnates the soul; where the will is perfectly surrendered to God; where there is a fixed, unalterable purpose to obey God, faith almost believes itself. Faith then becomes almost involuntary. After obedience it is, naturally, the next step, and it is easily and readily taken. The difficulty in prayer is not with faith, but with obedience, which is faith's foundation.

We must look well to our obedience, to the secret springs of action, to the loyalty of our heart to God, if we would pray well, and desire to get the most out of our praying. Obedience is the groundwork of effectual praying; this it is, which brings us nigh to God.

The lack of obedience in our lives breaks down our praying. Quite often, the life is in revolt and this places us where praying is almost impossible, except it be for pardoning mercy. Disobedient living produces mighty poor praying. Disobedience shuts the door of the inner

chamber, and bars the way to the Holy of holies. No man can pray -- really pray -- who does not obey. The will must be surrendered to God as a primary condition of all successful praying. Everything about us gets its colouring from our inmost character. The secret will makes character and controls conduct. The will, therefore, plays an important part in all successful praying. There can be no praying in its richest implication and truest sense, where the will is not wholly and fully surrendered to God. This unswerving loyalty to God is an utterly indispensable condition of the best, the truest, the most effectual praying. We have "simply got to trust and obey; there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus -- but to trust, and obey! "

XI. PRAYER AND VIGILANCE

"David Brainerd was pursued by unearthly adversaries, who were resolved to rob him of his guerdon. He knew he must never quit his armour, but lie down to rest, with his corselet laced. The stains that marred the perfection of his lustrous dress, the spots of rust on his gleaming shield, are imperceptible to us; but they were, to him, the source of much sorrow and ardency of yearning." -
- Life Of David Brainerd.

THE description of the Christian soldier given by Paul in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, is compact and comprehensive. He is depicted as being ever in the conflict, which has many fluctuating seasons -- seasons of prosperity and adversity, light and darkness, victory and defeat. He is to pray at all seasons, and with all prayer, this to be added to the armour in which he is to fare forth to battle. At all times, he is to have the full panoply of prayer. The Christian soldier, if he fight to win, must pray much. By this means, only, is he enabled to defeat his inveterate enemy, the devil, together with the Evil One's manifold emissaries. "Praying always, with all prayer," is the Divine direction given him. This covers all seasons, and embraces all manner of praying.

Christian soldiers, fighting the good fight of faith, have access to a place of retreat, to which they continually repair for prayer. "Praying always, with all prayer," is a clear statement of the imperative need of much praying, and of many kinds of praying, by him who, fighting the good fight of faith, would win out, in the end, over all his foes.

The Revised Version puts it this way: "With all prayer and supplication, praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplications, for all saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me, in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am in bonds."

It cannot be stated too frequently that the life of a Christian is a warfare, an intense conflict, a lifelong contest. It is a battle, moreover, waged against invisible foes, who are ever alert, and ever seeking to entrap, deceive, and ruin the souls of men. The life to which Holy Scripture calls men is no picnic, or holiday junketing. It is no pastime, no pleasure jaunt.

It entails effort, wrestling, struggling; it demands the putting forth of the full energy of the spirit in order to frustrate the foe and to come off, at the last, more than conqueror. It is no primrose path, no rose-scented dalliance. From start to finish, it is war. From the hour in which he first draws sword, to that in which he doffs his harness, the Christian warrior is compelled to "endure hardness like a good soldier."

What a misconception many people have of the Christian life! How little the average church member appears to know of the character of the conflict, and of its demands upon him! How ignorant he seems to be of the enemies he must encounter, if he engage to serve God faithfully and so succeed in getting to heaven and receive the crown of life! He seems scarcely to realize that the world, the flesh and the devil will oppose his onward march, and will defeat him utterly, unless he give himself to constant vigilance and unceasing prayer.

The Christian soldier wrestles not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places. Or, as the Scriptural margin reads, "wicked spirits in high places." What a fearful array of forces are set against him who would make his way through the wilderness of this world to the portals of the Celestial City! It is no surprise, therefore, to find Paul, who understood the character of the Christian life so well, and who was so thoroughly informed as to the malignity and number of the foes, which the disciple of the Lord must encounter, carefully and plainly urging him to "put on the whole armour of God," and "to pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Wise, with a great wisdom, would the present generation be if all professors of our faith could be induced to realize this all-important and vital truth, which is so absolutely indispensable to a successful Christian life.

It is just at this point in much present-day Christian profession, that one may find its greatest defect. There is little, or nothing, of the soldier element in it. The discipline, self-denial, spirit of hardship, determination, so prominent in and belonging to the military life, are, one and all, largely wanting. Yet the Christian life is warfare, all the way.

How comprehensive, pointed and striking are all Paul's directions to the Christian soldier, who is bent on thwarting the devil and saving his soul alive! First of all, he must possess a clear idea of the character of the life on which he has entered.

Then, he must know something of his foes -- the adversaries of his immortal soul -- their strength, their skill, their malignity.

Knowing, therefore, something of the character of the enemy, and realizing the need of preparation to overcome them, he is prepared to hear the Apostle's decisive conclusion: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

All these directions end in a climax; and that climax is prayer. How can the brave warrior for Christ be made braver still? How can the strong soldier be made stronger still? How can the victorious battler be made still more victorious? Here are Paul's explicit directions to that end: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Prayer, and more prayer, adds to the fighting qualities and the more certain victories of God's good fighting-men. The power of prayer is most forceful on the battle-field amid the din and strife of the conflict. Paul was preeminently a soldier of the Cross. For him, life was no flowery bed of ease. He was no dress-parade, holiday soldier, whose only business was to don a uniform on set occasions. His was a life of intense conflict, the facing of many adversaries, the exercise of unsleeping vigilance and constant effort. And, at its close -- in sight of the end -- we hear him chanting his final song of victory, a "I have fought a good fight," and reading between the lines, we see that he is more than conqueror!

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul indicates the nature of his soldier-life, giving us some views of the kind of praying needed for such a career. He writes: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea."

Paul had foes in Judaea -- foes who beset and opposed him in the form of "unbelieving men" and this, added to other weighty reasons, led him to urge the Roman Christians to "strive with him in prayer." That word "strive" indicated wrestling, the putting forth of great effort. This is the kind of effort, and this the sort of spirit, which must possess the Christian soldier.

Here is a great soldier, a captain-general, in the great struggle, faced by malignant forces who seek his ruin. His force is well-nigh spent. What reinforcements can he count on? What can give help and bring success to a warrior in such a pressing emergency? It is a critical moment in the conflict. What force can be added to the energy of his own prayers? The answer is -- in the prayers of others, even the prayers of his brethren who were at Rome. These, he believes, will

bring him additional aid, so that he can win his fight, overcome his adversaries, and, ultimately, prevail.

The Christian soldier is to pray at all seasons, and under all circumstances. His praying must be arranged so as to cover his times of peace as well as his hours of active conflict. It must be available in his marching and his fighting. Prayer must diffuse all effort, impregnate all ventures, decide all issues. The Christian soldier must be as intense in his praying as in his fighting, for his victories will depend very much more on his praying than on his fighting. Fervent supplication must be added to steady resolve, prayer and supplication must supplement the armour of God. The Holy Spirit must aid the supplication with His own strenuous plea. And the soldier must pray in the Spirit. In this, as in other forms of warfare, eternal vigilance is the price of victory; and thus, watchfulness and persistent perseverance, must mark the every activity of the Christian warrior.

The soldier-prayer must reflect its profound concern for the success and well-being of the whole army. The battle is not altogether a personal matter; victory cannot be achieved for self, alone. There is a sense, in which the entire army of Christ is involved. The cause of God, His saints, their woes and trials, their duties and crosses, all should find a voice and a pleader in the Christian soldier, when he prays. He dare not limit his praying to himself. Nothing dries up spiritual secretions so certainly and completely; nothing poisons the fountain of spiritual life so effectively; nothing acts in such deadly fashion, as selfish praying.

Note carefully that the Christian's armour will avail him nothing, unless prayer be added. This is the pivot, the connecting link of the armour of God. This holds it together, and renders it effective. God's true soldier plans his campaigns, arranges his battle-forces, and conducts his conflicts, with prayer. It is all important and absolutely essential to victory, that prayer should so impregnate the life that every breath will be a petition, every sigh a supplication. The Christian soldier must needs be always fighting. He should, of sheer necessity, be always praying.

The Christian soldier is compelled to constant picket-duty. He must always be on his guard. He is faced by a foe who never sleeps, who is always alert, and ever prepared to take advantage of the fortunes of war. Watchfulness is a cardinal principle with Christ's warrior, "watch and pray," forever sounding in his ears. He cannot dare to be asleep at his post. Such a lapse brings him not only under the displeasure of the Captain of his salvation, but exposes him to added danger. Watchfulness, therefore, imperatively constitutes the duty of the soldier of the Lord.

In the New Testament, there are three different words, which are translated "watch." The first means "absence of sleep," and implies a wakeful frame of mind, as opposed to listlessness; it is an enjoiner to keep awake, circumspect, attentive, constant, vigilant. The second word means "fully awake," -- a state induced by some rousing effort, which faculty excited to attention and interest, active, cautious, lest through carelessness or indolence, some destructive calamity should suddenly evolve. The third word means "to be calm and collected in spirit," dispassionate, untouched by slumberous or beclouding influences, a wariness against all pitfalls and beguilements.

All three definitions are used by St. Paul. Two of them are employed in connection with prayer. Watchfulness intensified, is a requisite for prayer. Watchfulness must guard and cover the whole spiritual man, and fit him for prayer. Everything resembling unpreparedness or non-vigilance, is death to prayer.

In Ephesians, Paul gives prominence to the duty of constant watchfulness, "Watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication." Watch, he says, watch, WATCH! "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."

Sleepless wakefulness is the price one must pay for victory over his spiritual foes. Rest assured that the devil never falls asleep. He is ever "walking about, seeking whom he may devour." Just as a shepherd must never be careless and unwatchful lest the wolf devour his sheep, so the Christian soldier must ever have his eyes wide open, implying his possession of a spirit which neither slumbers nor grows careless. The inseparable companions and safeguards of prayer

are vigilance, watchfulness, and a mounted guard. In writing to the Colossians Paul brackets these inseparable qualities together: "Continue in prayer," he enjoins, "and watch in the same, with thanksgiving."

When will Christians more thoroughly learn the twofold lesson, that they are called to a great warfare, and that in order to get the victory they must give themselves to unsleeping watchfulness and unceasing prayer?

"Be sober, be vigilant," says Peter, "because your adversary, the devil, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." God's Church is a militant host. Its warfare is with unseen forces of evil. God's people compose an army fighting to establish His kingdom in the earth. Their aim is to destroy the sovereignty of Satan, and over its ruins, erect the Kingdom of God, which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." This militant army is composed of individual soldiers of the Cross, and the armour of God is needed for its defence. Prayer must be added as that which crowns the whole.

"Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God."

Prayer is too simple, too evident a duty, to need definition. Necessity gives being and shape to prayer. Its importance is so absolute, that the Christian soldier's life, in all the breadth and intensity of it, should be one of prayer. The entire life of a Christian soldier -- its being, intention, implication and action -- are all dependent on its being a life of prayer. Without prayer - - no matter what else he have -- the Christian soldier's life will be feeble, and ineffective, and constitute him an easy prey for his spiritual enemies.

Christian experience will be sapless, and Christian influence will be dry and arid, unless prayer has a high place in the life. Without prayer the Christian graces will wither and die. Without prayer, we may add, preaching is edgeless and a vain thing, and the Gospel loses its wings and its loins. Christ is the lawgiver of prayer, and Paul is His Apostle of prayer. Both declare its primacy and importance, and demonstrate the fact of its indispensability. Their prayer-directions cover all places, include all times, and comprehend all things. How, then, can the Christian soldier hope or dream of victory, unless he be fortified by its power? How can he fail, if in addition to putting on the armour of God he be, at all times and seasons, "watching unto prayer"?

XII. PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD

"How constantly, in the Scriptures, do we encounter such words as 'field,' 'seed,' 'sower,' 'reaper,' 'seed-time,' 'harvest'! Employing such metaphors interprets a fact of nature by a parable of grace. The field is the world and the good seed is the Word of God. Whether the Word be spoken or written, it is the power of God unto salvation. In our work of evangelism, the whole world is our field, every creature the object of effort and every book and tract, a seed of God." -- David Fant, Jr.

GOD'S Word is a record of prayer -- of praying men and their achievements, of the Divine warrant of prayer and of the encouragement given to those who pray. No one can read the instances, commands, examples, multiform statements which concern themselves with prayer, without realizing that the cause of God, and the success of His work in this world is committed to prayer; that praying men have been God's vicegerents on earth; that prayerless men have never been used of Him.

A reverence for God's holy Name is closely related to a high regard for His Word. This hallowing of God's Name; the ability to do His will on earth, as it is done in heaven; the

establishment and glory of God's kingdom, are as much involved in prayer, as when Jesus taught men the Universal Prayer. That "men ought always to pray and not to faint," is as fundamental to God's cause, today, as when Jesus Christ enshrined that great truth in the immortal settings of the Parable of the Importunate Widow.

As God's house is called "the house of prayer," because prayer is the most important of its holy offices; so by the same token, the Bible may be called the Book of Prayer. Prayer is the great theme and content of its message to mankind.

God's Word is the basis, as it is the directory of the prayer of faith. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," says St. Paul, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

As this word of Christ dwelling in us richly is transmuted and assimilated, it issues in praying. Faith is constructed of the Word and the Spirit, and faith is the body and substance of prayer.

In many of its aspects, prayer is dependent upon the Word of God. Jesus says: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The Word of God is the fulcrum upon which the lever of prayer is placed, and by which things are mightily moved. God has committed Himself, His purpose and His promise to prayer. His Word becomes the basis, the inspiration of our praying, and there are circumstances under which, by importunate prayer, we may obtain an addition, or an enlargement of His promises. It is said of the old saints that they, "through faith obtained promises." There would seem to be in prayer the capacity for going even beyond the Word, of getting even beyond His promise, into the very presence of God, Himself.

Jacob wrestled, not so much with a promise, as with the Promiser. We must take hold of the Promiser, lest the promise prove nugatory. Prayer may well be defined as that force which vitalizes and energizes the Word of God, by taking hold of God, Himself. By taking hold of the Promiser, prayer reissues, and makes personal the promise. "There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of Me," is God's sad lament. "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me," is God's recipe for prayer.

By Scriptural warrant, prayer may be divided into the petition of faith and that of submission. The prayer of faith is based on the written Word, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It receives its answer, inevitably -- the very thing for which it prays.

The prayer of submission is without a definite word of promise, so to speak, but takes hold of God with a lowly and contrite spirit, and asks and pleads with Him, for that which the soul desires. Abraham had no definite promise that God would spare Sodom. Moses had no definite promise that God would spare Israel; on the contrary, there was the declaration of His wrath, and of His purpose to destroy. But the devoted leader gained his plea with God, when he interceded for the Israelites with incessant prayers and many tears. Daniel had no definite promise that God would reveal to him the meaning of the king's dream, but he prayed specifically, and God answered definitely.

The Word of God is made effectual and operative, by the process and practice of prayer. The Word of the Lord came to Elijah, "Go show thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth." Elijah showed himself to Ahab; but the answer to his prayer did not come, until he had pressed his fiery prayer upon the Lord seven times.

Paul had the definite promise from Christ, that he "would be delivered from the people and the Gentiles," but we find him exhorting the Romans in the urgent and solemn manner concerning this very matter:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints."

The Word of God is a great help in prayer. If it be lodged and written in our hearts, it will form an outflowing current of prayer, full and irresistible. Promises, stored in the heart, are to be the fuel from which prayer receives life and warmth, just as the coal, stored in the earth, ministers to our comfort on stormy days and wintry nights. The Word of God is the food, by which prayer is nourished and made strong. Prayer, like man, cannot live by bread alone, "but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord."

Unless the vital forces of prayer are supplied by God's Word, prayer, though earnest, even vociferous, in its urgency, is, in reality, flabby, and vapid, and void. The absence of vital force in praying, can be traced to the absence of a constant supply of God's Word, to repair the waste, and renew the life. He who would learn to pray well, must first study God's Word, and store it in his memory and thought.

When we consult God's Word, we find that no duty is more binding, more exacting, than that of prayer. On the other hand, we discover that no privilege is more exalted, no habit more richly owned of God. No promises are more radiant, more abounding, more explicit, more often reiterated, than those which are attached to prayer. "All things, whatsoever" are received by prayer, because "all things whatsoever" are promised. There is no limit to the provisions, included in the promises to prayer, and no exclusion from its promises. "Every one that asketh, receiveth." The word of our Lord is to this all-embracing effect: "If ye shall ask anything in My Name, I will do it."

Here are some of the comprehensive, and exhaustive statements of the Word of God about prayer, the things to be taken in by prayer, the strong promise made in answer to prayer: "Pray without ceasing;" "continue in prayer;" "continuing instant in prayer;" "in everything by prayer, let your request be made known unto God;" "pray always, pray and not faint;" "men should pray everywhere;" "praying always, with all prayer and supplication."

What clear and strong statements are those which are put in the Divine record, to furnish us with a sure basis of faith, and to urge, constrain and encourage us to pray! How wide the range of prayer, as given us, in the Divine Revelation! How these Scriptures incite us to seek the God of prayer, with all our wants, with all our burdens!

In addition to these statements left on record for our encouragement, the sacred pages teem with facts, examples, incidents, and observations, stressing the importance and the absolute necessity of prayer, and putting emphasis on its all-prevailing power.

The utmost reach and full benefit of the rich promises of the Word of God, should humbly be received by us, and put to the test.

The world will never receive the full benefits of the Gospel until this be done. Neither Christian experience nor Christian living will be what they ought to be till these Divine promises have been fully tested by those who pray. By prayer, we bring these promises of God's holy will into the realm of the actual and the real. Prayer is the philosopher's stone which transmutes them into gold. If it be asked, what is to be done in order to render God's promises real, the answer is, that we must pray, until the words of the promise are clothed upon with the rich raiment of fulfilment.

God's promises are altogether too large to be mastered by desultory praying. When we examine ourselves, all too often, we discover that our praying does not rise to the demands of the situation; is so limited that it is little more than a mere oasis amid the waste and desert of the world's sin. Who of us, in our praying, measures up to this promise of our Lord: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to My Father."

How comprehensive, how far reaching, how all-embracing! How much is here, for the glory of God, how much for the good of man! How much for the manifestation of Christ's enthroned power, how much for the reward of abundant faith! And how great and gracious are the results which can be made to accrue from the exercise of commensurate, believing prayer!

Look, for a moment, at another of God's great promises, and discover how we may be undergirded by the Word as we pray, and on what firm ground we may stand on which to make our petitions to our God: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

In these comprehensive words, God turns Himself over to the will of His people. When Christ becomes our all-in-all, prayer lays God's treasures at our feet. Primitive Christianity had an easy and practical solution of the situation, and got all which God had to give. That simple and terse solution is recorded in John's First Epistle: Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in His sight."

Prayer, coupled with loving obedience, is the way to put God to the test, and to make prayer answer all ends and all things. Prayer, joined to the Word of God, hallows and makes sacred all God's gifts. Prayer is not simply to get things from God, but to make those things holy, which already have been received from Him. It is not merely to get a blessing, but also to be able to give a blessing. Prayer makes common things holy and secular things, sacred. It receives things from God with thanksgiving and hallows them with thankful hearts, and devoted service.

In the First Epistle to Timothy, Paul gives us these words: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." That is a statement which gives a negative to mere asceticism. God's good gifts are to be holy, not only by God's creative power, but, also, because they are made holy to us by prayer. We receive them, appropriate them and sanctify them by prayer.

Doing God's will, and having His Word abiding in us, is an imperative of effectual praying. But, it may be asked, how are we to know what God's will is? The answer is, by studying His Word, by hiding it in our hearts, and by letting the Word dwell in us richly. "The entrance of Thy word, giveth light."

To know God's will in prayer, we must be filled with God's Spirit, who maketh intercession for the saints, and in the saints, according to the will of God. To be filled with God's Spirit, to be filled with God's Word, is to know God's will. It is to be put in such a frame of mind, to be found in such a state of heart, as will enable us to read and interpret aright the purposes of the Infinite. Such filling of the heart, with the Word and the Spirit, gives us an insight into the will of the Father, and enables us to rightly discern His will, and puts within us, a disposition of mind and heart to make it the guide and compass of our lives. Epaphras prayed that the Colossians might stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God." This is proof positive that, not only may we know the will of God, but that we may know all the will of God. And not only may we know all the will of God, but we may do all the will of God. We may, moreover, do all the will of God, not occasionally, or by a mere impulse, but with a settled habit of conduct. Still further, it shows us that we may not only do the will of God externally, but from the heart, doing it cheerfully, without reluctance, or secret disinclination, or any drawing or holding back from the intimate presence of the Lord.

XIII. PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD (Continued)

"Some years ago a man was travelling in the wilds of Kentucky. He had with him a large sum of money and was well armed. He put up at a log-house one night, but was much concerned with the rough appearance of the men who came and went from this abode. He retired early but not to sleep. At midnight he heard the dogs barking furiously and the sound of someone entering the cabin. Peering through a chink in the boards of his room, he saw a stranger with a gun in his hand. Another man sat before the fire. The traveller concluded they were planning to rob him, and prepared to defend himself and his property. Presently the newcomer took down a copy of the Bible, read a chapter aloud, and then knelt down and prayed. The traveller dismissed his fears, put

his revolver away and lay down, to sleep peacefully until morning light. And all because a Bible was in the cabin, and its owner a man of prayer." -- Rev. F. F. Shoup.

PRAYER has all to do with the success of the preaching of the Word. This, Paul clearly teaches in that familiar and pressing request he made to the Thessalonians: "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified."

Prayer opens the way for the Word of God to run without let or hindrance, and creates the atmosphere which is favourable to the word accomplishing its purpose. Prayer puts wheels under God's Word, and gives wings to the angel of the Lord "having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Prayer greatly helps the Word of the Lord.

The Parable of the Sower is a notable study of preaching, showing its differing effects and describing the diversity of hearers. The wayside hearers are legion. The soil lies all unprepared either by previous thought or prayer; as a consequence, the devil easily takes away the seed (which is the Word of God) and dissipating all good impressions, renders the work of the sower futile. No one for a moment believes, that so much of present-day sowing would go fruitless if only the hearers would prepare the ground of their hearts beforehand by prayer and meditation.

Similarly with the stony-ground hearers, and the thorny-ground hearers. Although the word lodges in their hearts and begins to sprout, yet all is lost, chiefly because there is no prayer or watchfulness or cultivation following. The good-ground hearers are profited by the sowing, simply because their minds have been prepared for the reception of the seed, and that, after hearing, they have cultivated the seed sown in their hearts, by the exercise of prayer. All this gives peculiar emphasis to the conclusion of this striking parable: "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." And in order that we may take heed how we hear, it is needful to give ourselves continually to prayer.

We have got to believe that underlying God's Word is prayer, and upon prayer, its final success will depend. In the Book of Isaiah we read: "So shall My word be that goeth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

In Psalm 19, David magnifies the Word of God in six statements concerning it. It converts the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures eternally, and is true and righteous altogether. The Word of God is perfect, sure, right, pure. It is heart-searching, and at the same time purifying, in its effect. It is no surprise therefore that after considering the deep spirituality of the Word of God, its power to search the inner nature of man, and its deep purity, the Psalmist should close his dissertation with this passage: "Who can understand his errors?" And then praying after this fashion: "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins. Let them not have dominion over me. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer."

James recognizes the deep spirituality of the Word, and its inherent saving power, in the following exhortation: "Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

And Peter talks along the same line, when describing the saving power of the Word of God: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Not only does Peter speak of being born again, by the incorruptible Word of God, but he informs us that to grow in grace we must be like new-born babes, desiring or feeding upon the "sincere milk of the Word."

That is not to say, however, that the mere form of words as they occur in the Bible have in them any saving efficacy. But the Word of God, be it remembered, is impregnated with the

Holy Spirit. And just as there is a Divine element in the words of Scripture, so also is the same Divine element to be found in all true preaching of the Word, which is able to save and convert the soul.

Prayer invariably begets a love for the Word of God, and sets people to the reading of it. Prayer leads people to obey the Word of God, and puts into the heart which obeys a joy unspeakable.

Praying people and Bible-reading people are the same sort of folk.

The God of the Bible and the God of prayer are one. God speaks to man in the Bible; man speaks to God in prayer. One reads the Bible to discover God's will; he prays in order that he may receive power to do that will. Bible-reading and praying are the distinguishing traits of those who strive to know and please God.

And just as prayer begets a love for the Scriptures, and sets people to reading the Bible, so, also, does prayer cause men and women to visit the house of God, to hear the Scriptures expounded.

Church-going is closely connected with the Bible, not so much because the Bible cautions us against "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is," but because in God's house, God's chosen minister declares His Word to dying men, explains the Scriptures, and enforces their teachings upon his hearers. And prayer germinates a resolve, in those who practice it, not to forsake the house of God.

Prayer begets a church-going conscience, a church-loving heart, a church-supporting spirit. It is the praying people, who make it a matter of conscience, to attend the preaching of the Word; who delight in its reading; exposition; who support it with their influence and their means. Prayer exalts the Word of God and gives it preeminence in the estimation of those who faithfully and wholeheartedly call upon the Name of the Lord.

Prayer draws its very life from the Bible, and has no standing ground outside of the warrant of the Scriptures. Its very existence and character is dependent on revelation made by God to man in His holy Word. Prayer, in turn, exalts this same revelation, and turns men toward that Word. The nature, necessity and all-comprehending character of prayer, is based on the Word of God.

Psalm 119 is a directory of God's Word. With three or four exceptions, each verse contains a word which identifies, or locates, the Word of God. Quite often, the writer breaks out into supplication, several times praying, "Teach me Thy statutes." So deeply impressed is he with the wonders of God's Word, and of the need for Divine illumination wherewith to see and understand the wonderful things recorded therein, that he fervently prays: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

From the opening of this wonderful Psalm to its close, prayer and God's Word are intertwined. Almost every phase of God's Word is touched upon by this inspired writer. So thoroughly convinced was the Psalmist of the deep spiritual power of the Word of God that he makes this declaration: "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee."

Here the Psalmist found his protection against sinning. By having God's Word hidden in his heart; in having his whole being thoroughly impregnated with that Word; in being brought completely under its benign and gracious influence, he was enabled to walk to and fro in the earth, safe from the attack of the Evil One, and fortified against a proneness to wander out of the way. We find, furthermore, the power of prayer to create a real love for the Scriptures, and to put within men a nature which will take pleasure in the Word. In holy ecstasy he cries, "O, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day." And again: "How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my taste."

Would we have a relish for God's Word? Then let us give ourselves continually to prayer. He who would have a heart for the reading of the Bible must not--dare not-- forget to pray. The man of whom it can be said, "His delight is in the law of the Lord," is the man who can truly say,

"I delight to visit the place of prayer." No man loves the Bible, who does not love to pray. No man loves to pray, who does not delight in the law of the Lord.

Our Lord was a man of prayer, and He magnified the Word of God, quoting often from the Scriptures. Right through His earthly life Jesus observed Sabbath-keeping, church-going and the reading of the Word of God, and had prayer intermingled with them all: "And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up, and as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read."

Here, let it be said, that no two things are more essential to a spirit-filled life than Bible-reading and secret prayer; no two things more helpful to growth in grace; to getting the largest joy out of a Christian life; toward establishing one in the ways of eternal peace. The neglect of these all-important duties, presages leanness of soul, loss of joy, absence of peace, dryness of spirit, decay in all that pertains to spiritual life.

Neglecting these things paves the way for apostasy, and gives the Evil One an advantage such as he is not likely to ignore. Reading God's Word regularly, and praying habitually in the secret place of the Most High puts one where he is absolutely safe from the attacks of the enemy of souls, and guarantees him salvation and final victory, through the overcoming power of the Lamb.

XIV. PRAYER AND THE HOUSE OF GOD

"And dear to me the loud 'Amen,'
Which echoes through the blest abode --
Which swells, and sinks, then swells again,
Dies on the walls -- but lives with God! "

PRAYER stands related to places, times, occasions and circumstances. It has to do with God and with everything which is related to God, and it has an intimate and special relationship to His house. A church is a sacred place, set apart from all unhallowed and secular uses, for the worship of God. As worship is prayer, the house of God is a place set apart for worship. It is no common place; it is where God dwells, where He meets with His people, and He delights in the worship of His saints.

Prayer is always in place in the house of God. When prayer is a stranger there, then it ceases to be God's house at all. Our Lord put peculiar emphasis upon what the Church was when He cast out the buyers and sellers in the Temple, repeating the words from Isaiah, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer." He makes prayer preeminent, that which stands out above all else in the house of God. They, who sidetrack prayer or seek to minify it, and give it a secondary place, pervert the Church of God, and make it something less and other than it is ordained to be.

Prayer is perfectly at home in the house of God. It is no stranger, no mere guest; it belongs there. It has a peculiar affinity for the place, and has, moreover, a Divine right there, being set, therein, by Divine appointment and approval.

The inner chamber is a sacred place for personal worship. The house of God is a holy place for united worship. The prayer-closet is for individual prayer. The house of God is for mutual prayer, concerted prayer, united prayer. Yet even in the house of God, there is the element of private worship, since God's people are to worship Him and pray to Him, personally, even in public worship. The Church is for the united prayer of kindred, yet individual believers.

The life, power and glory of the Church is prayer. The life of its members is dependent on prayer and the presence of God is secured and retained by prayer. The very place is made sacred by its ministry. Without it, the Church is lifeless and powerless.

Without it, even the building, itself, is nothing, more or other, than any other structure. Prayer converts even the bricks, and mortar, and lumber, into a sanctuary, a holy of holies, where the Shekinah dwells. It separates it, in spirit and in purpose from all other edifices. Prayer gives a peculiar sacredness to the building, sanctifies it, sets it apart for God, conserves it from all common and mundane affairs.

With prayer, though the house of God might be supposed to lack everything else, it becomes a Divine sanctuary. So the Tabernacle, moving about from place to place, became the holy of holies, because prayer was there. Without prayer the building may be costly, perfect in all its appointments, beautiful for situation and attractive to the eye, but it comes down to the human, with nothing Divine in it, and is on a level with all other buildings.

Without prayer, a church is like a body without spirit; it is a dead, inanimate thing. A church with prayer in it, has God in it. When prayer is set aside, God is outlawed. When prayer becomes an unfamiliar exercise, then God Himself is a stranger there.

As God's house is a house of prayer, the Divine intention is that people should leave their homes and go to meet Him in His own house. The building is set apart for prayer especially, and as God has made special promise to meet His people there, it is their duty to go there, and for that specific end. Prayer should be the chief attraction for all spiritually minded church-goers. While it is conceded that the preaching of the Word has an important place in the house of God, yet prayer is its predominating, distinguishing feature. Not that all other places are sinful, or evil, in themselves or in their uses. But they are secular and human, having no special conception of God in them. The Church is, essentially, religious and Divine. The work belonging to other places is done without special reference to God. He is not specifically recognized, nor called upon. In the Church, however, God is acknowledged, and nothing is done without Him. Prayer is the one distinguishing mark of the house of God. As prayer distinguishes Christian from unchristian people, so prayer distinguishes God's house from all other houses. It is a place where faithful believers meet with their Lord.

As God's house is, preeminently, a house of prayer, prayer should enter into and underlie everything that is undertaken there. Prayer belongs to every sort of work appertaining to the Church of God. As God's house is a house where the business of praying is carried on, so is it a place where the business of making praying people out of prayerless people is done. The house of God is a Divine workshop, and there the work of prayer goes on. Or the house of God is a Divine schoolhouse, in which the lesson of prayer is taught; where men and women learn to pray, and where they are graduated, in the school of prayer.

Any church calling itself the house of God, and failing to magnify prayer; which does not put prayer in the forefront of its activities; which does not teach the great lesson of prayer, should change its teaching to conform to the Divine pattern or change the name of its building to something other than a house of prayer.

On an earlier page, we made reference to the finding of the Book of the Law of the Lord given to Moses. How long that book had been there, we do not know. But when tidings of its discovery were carried to Josiah, he rent his clothes and was greatly disturbed. He lamented the neglect of God's Word and saw, as a natural result, the iniquity which abounded throughout the land.

And then, Josiah thought of God, and commanded Hilkiah, the priest, to go and make inquiry of the Lord. Such neglect of the Word of the Law was too serious a matter to be treated lightly, and God must be enquired of, and repentance shown, by himself, and the nation: "Go enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book."

But that was not all. Josiah was bent on promoting a revival of religion in his kingdom, so we find him gathering all the elders of Jerusalem and Judah together, for that purpose. When

they had come together, the king went into the house of the Lord, and himself read in all the words of the Book of the Covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.

With this righteous king, God's Word was of great importance. He esteemed it at its proper worth, and counted a knowledge of it to be of such grave importance, as to demand his consulting God in prayer about it, and to warrant the gathering together of the notables of his kingdom, so that they, together with himself, should be instructed out of God's Book concerning God's Law. When Ezra, returned from Babylon, was seeking the reconstruction of his nation, the people, themselves, were alive to the situation, and, on one occasion, the priests, Levites and people assembled themselves together as one man before the water gate.

"And they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law."

This was Bible-reading Day in Judah -- a real revival of Scripture-study. The leaders read the law before the people, whose ears were keen to hear what God had to say to them out of the Book of the Law. But it was not only a Bible-reading day. It was a time when real preaching was done, as the following passage indicates: "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." Here then is the Scriptural definition of preaching. No better definition can be given. To read the Word of God distinctly -- to read it so that the people could hear and understand the words read; not to mumble out the words, nor read it in an undertone or with indistinctness, but boldly and clearly -- that was the method followed in Jerusalem, on this auspicious day.

Moreover: the sense of the words was made clear in the meeting held before the water gate; the people were treated to a high type of expository preaching. That was true preaching -- preaching of a sort which is sorely needed, today, in order that God's Word may have due effect on the hearts of the people. This meeting in Jerusalem surely contains a lesson which all present-day preachers should learn and heed.

No one having any knowledge of the existing facts, will deny the comparative lack of expository preaching in the pulpit effort of today. And none, we should, at least, imagine, will do other than lament the lack. Topical preaching, polemical preaching, historical preaching, and other forms of sermonic output have, one supposes, their rightful and opportune uses. But expository preaching -- the prayerful expounding of the Word of God is preaching that is preaching -- pulpit effort par excellence.

For its successful accomplishment, however, a preacher needs must be a man of prayer. For every hour spent in his study-chair, he will have to spend two upon his knees. For every hour he devotes to wrestling with an obscure passage of Holy Writ, he must have two in the which to be found wrestling with God. Prayer and preaching: preaching and prayer! They cannot be separated. The ancient cry was: "To your tents, O Israel!" The modern cry should be: "To your knees, O preachers, to your knees!"

THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRAYER E. M. Bounds

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The Possibilities of Prayer
E. M. Bounds

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"The story of prayer is the story of great achievements. Prayer is a wonderful power placed by Almighty God in the hands of His saints, which may be used to accomplish great purposes and to achieve unusual results. Prayer reaches to everything, takes in all things great and small which are promised by God to the children of men. The only limits to prayer are the promises of God and His ability to fulfill those promises."

Discover for yourself the infinite possibilities of prayer. Chapters like "Answered Prayer," "Prayer Miracles," and "Wonders of God Through Prayer" will help you understand what can be accomplished if we will only pray. A practical, challenging look at prayer and its power.

Edward McKendree Bounds (1835-1913) practiced law for three years until he was called to preach the gospel. While serving as chaplain during the Civil War, he was captured and held prisoner in Nashville, Tennessee. After his release, he held several pastorates. His books on prayer have been continual best-sellers for over fifty years.

I. The Ministry of Prayer

"Prayer should be the breath of our breathing, the thought of our thinking, the soul of our feeling, and the life of our living, the sound of our hearing, the growth of our growing." Prayer in its magnitude is length without end, width without bounds, height without top, and depth without bottom. Ilimitable in its breadth, exhaustless in height, fathomless in depths and infinite in extension. -- HOMER W. HODGE

THE ministry of prayer has been the peculiar distinction of all of God's saints. This has been the secret of their power. The energy and the soul of their work has been the closet. The need of help outside of man being so great, man's natural inability to always judge kindly, justly, and truly, and to act the Golden Rule, so prayer is enjoined by Christ to enable man to act in all these things according to the Divine will. By prayer, the ability is secured to feel the law of love, to speak according to the law of love, and to do everything in harmony with the law of love.

God can help us. God is a Father. We need God's good things to help us to "do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God." We need Divine aid to act brotherly, wisely, and nobly, and to judge truly, and charitably. God's help to do all these things in God's way is secured by prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

In the marvellous output of Christian graces and duties, the result of giving ourselves wholly to God, recorded in the twelfth chapter of Romans, we have the words, "Continuing instant in prayer," preceded by "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation," followed by, "Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality." Paul thus writes as if these rich and rare graces and unselfish duties, so sweet, bright, generous, and unselfish, had for their center and source the ability to pray.

This is the same word which is used of the prayer of the disciples which ushered in Pentecost with all of its rich and glorious blessings of the Holy Spirit. In Colossians, Paul presses the word into the service of prayer again, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." The word in its background and root means strong, the ability to stay, and persevere steadfast, to hold fast and firm, to give constant attention to.

In Acts, chapter six, it is translated, "Give ourselves continually to prayer." There is in it constancy, courage, unfainting perseverance. It means giving such marked attention to, and such deep concern to a thing, as will make it conspicuous and controlling.

This is an advance in demand on "continue." Prayer is to be incessant, without intermission, assiduously, no check in desire, in spirit or in act, the spirit and the life always in the attitude of prayer. The knees may not always be bended, the lips may not always be vocal with words of prayer, but the spirit is always in the act and intercourse of prayer.

There ought to be no adjustment of life or spirit for closet hours. The closet spirit should sweetly rule and adjust all times and occasions. Our activities and work should be performed in the same spirit which makes our devotion and which makes our closet time sacred. "Without intermission, incessantly, assiduously," describes an opulence, and energy, and unabated and ceaseless strength and fulness of effort; like the full and exhaustless and spontaneous flow of an artesian stream. Touch the man of God who thus understands prayer, at any point, at any time, and a full current of prayer is seen flowing from him.

But all these untold benefits, of which the Holy Spirit is made to us the conveyor, go back in their disposition and results to prayer. Not on a little process and a mere performance of prayer is the coming of the Holy Spirit and of His great grace conditioned, but on prayer set on fire, by an unquenchable desire, with such a sense of need as cannot be denied, with a fixed determination which will not let go, and which will never faint till it wins the greatest good and gets the best and last blessing God has in store for us.

The First Christ, Jesus, our Great High Priest, forever blessed and adored be His Name, was a gracious Comforter, a faithful Guide, a gifted Teacher, a fearless Advocate, a devoted Friend, and an all powerful Intercessor. The other, "another Comforter," the Holy Spirit, comes into all these blessed relations of fellowship, authority and aid, with all the tenderness, sweetness, fulness and efficiency of the First Christ.

Was the First Christ the Christ of prayer? Did He offer prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto God? Did He seek the silence, the solitude and the darkness that He might pray unheard and unwitnessed save by heaven, in His wrestling agony, for man with God? Does He ever live, enthroned above at the Father's right hand, there to pray for us?

Then how truly does the other Christ, the other Comforter, the Holy Spirit, represent Jesus Christ as the Christ of prayer! This other Christ, the Comforter, plants Himself not in the waste of the mountain nor far into the night, but in the chill and the night of the human heart, to rouse it to the struggle, and to teach it the need and form of prayer. How the Divine Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, puts into the human heart the burden of earth's almighty need, and makes the human lips give voice to its mute and unutterable groanings!

What a mighty Christ of prayer is the Holy Spirit! How He quenches every flame in the heart but the flame of heavenly desire! How He quiets, like a weaned child, all the self-will, until in will, in brain, and in heart, and by mouth, we pray only as He prays. "Making intercession for the saints, according to the will of God."

II. Prayer and the Promises

You need not utterly despair even of those who for the present "turn again and rend you." For if all your arguments and persuasives fail, there is yet another remedy left, and one that is frequently found effectual, when no other method avails. This is prayer. Therefore, whatsoever you desire or want, either for others or for your own soul, "Ask, and it shall be given you." --
JOHN WESLEY

WITHOUT the promise prayer is eccentric and baseless. Without prayer, the promise is dim, voiceless, shadowy, and impersonal. The promise makes prayer dauntless and irresistible. The Apostle Peter declares that God has given to us "exceeding great and precious promises." "Precious" and "exceeding great" promises they are, and for this very cause we are to "add to our faith," and supply virtue. It is the addition which makes the promises current and beneficial to us. It is prayer which makes the promises weighty, precious and practical. The Apostle Paul did not hesitate to declare that God's grace so richly promised was made operative and efficient by prayer. "Ye also helping together by prayer for us."

The promises of God are "exceeding great and precious," words which clearly indicate their great value and their broad reach, as grounds upon which to base our expectations in praying. Howsoever exceeding great and precious they are, their realization, the possibility and condition of that realization, are based on prayer. How glorious are these promises to the believing saints and to the whole Church! How the brightness and bloom, the fruitage and cloudless midday glory of the future beam on us through the promises of God! Yet these promises never brought hope to bloom or fruit to a prayerless heart. Neither could these promises, were they a thousandfold increased in number and preciousness, bring millennium glory to a prayerless Church. Prayer makes the promise rich, fruitful and a conscious reality.

Prayer as a spiritual energy, and illustrated in its enlarged and mighty working, makes way for and brings into practical realization the promises of God.

God's promises cover all things which pertain to life and godliness, which relate to body and soul, which have to do with time and eternity. These promises bless the present and stretch out in their benefactions to the illimitable and eternal future. Prayer holds these promises in keeping and in fruition. Promises are God's golden fruit to be plucked by the hand of prayer. Promises are God's incorruptible seed, to be sown and tilled by prayer.

Prayer and the promises are interdependent. The promise inspires and energizes prayer, but prayer locates the promise, and gives it realization and location. The promise is like the blessed rain falling in full showers, but prayer, like the pipes, which transmit, preserve and direct the rain, localizes and precipitates these promises, until they become local and personal, and bless, refresh and fertilize. Prayer takes hold of the promise and conducts it to its marvellous ends, removes the obstacles, and makes a highway for the promise to its glorious fulfillment.

While God's promises are "exceeding great and precious," they are specific, clear and personal. How pointed and plain God's promise to Abraham:

"And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son;

"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

But Rebekah through whom the promise is to flow is childless. Her barren womb forms an invincible obstacle to the fulfillment of God's promise. But in the course of time children are born to her.

Isaac becomes a man of prayer through whom the promise is to be realized, and so we read:

"And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord was entreated for him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."

Isaac's praying opened the way for the fulfilment of God's promise, and carried it on to its marvellous fulfillment, and made the promise effectual in bringing forth marvellous results.

God spoke to Jacob and made definite promises to him:

"Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee."

Jacob promptly moves out on the promise, but Esau confronts him with his awakened vengeance and his murderous intention, more dreadful because of the long years, unappeased and waiting. Jacob throws himself directly on God's promise by a night of prayer, first in quietude and calmness, and then when the stillness, the loneliness and the darkness of the night are upon him, he makes the all-night wrestling prayer.

"With thee I mean all night to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."

God's being is involved, His promise is at stake, and much is involved in the issue. Esau's temper, his conduct and his character are involved. It is a notable occasion. Much depends upon it. Jacob pursues his case and presses his plea with great struggles and hard wrestling. It is the highest form of importunity. But the victory is gained at last. His name and nature are changed and he becomes a new and different man. Jacob himself is saved first of all. He is blessed in his life and soul. But more still is accomplished. Esau undergoes a radical change of mind. He who came forth with hate and revenge in his heart against his own brother, seeking Jacob's destruction, is strangely and wonderfully affected, and he is changed and his whole attitude toward his brother becomes radically different. And when the two brothers meet, love takes the place of fear and hate, and they vie with each other in showing true brotherly affection.

The promise of God is fulfilled. But it took that all night of importunate praying to do the deed. It took that fearful night of wrestling on Jacob's part to make the promise sure and cause it to bear fruit. Prayer wrought the marvellous deed. So prayer of the same kind will produce like results in this day. It was God's promise and Jacob's praying which crowned and crowded the results so wondrously.

"Go show thyself to Ahab and I will send rain on the earth," was God's command and promise to His servant Elijah after the sore famine had cursed the land. Many glorious results marked that day of heroic faith and dauntless courage on Elijah's part. The sublime issue with Israel had been successful, the fire had fallen, Israel had been reclaimed, the prophets of Baal had been killed, but there was no rain. The one thing, the only thing, which God had promised, had not been given. The day was declining, and the awestruck crowds were faint, and yet held by an invisible hand.

Elijah turns from Israel to God and from Baal to the one source of help for a final issue and a final victory. But seven times is the restless eagerness of the prophet stayed. Not till the seventh repeated time is his vigilance rewarded and the promise pressed to its final fulfillment. Elijah's fiery, relentless praying bore to its triumphant results the promise of God, and rain descended in full showers.

"Thy promise, Lord, is ever sure,
And they that in Thy house would dwell
That happy station to secure,
Must still in holiness excel."

Our prayers are too little and feeble to execute the purposes or to claim the promises of God with appropriating power. Marvellous purposes need marvellous praying to execute them. Miracle-making promises need miracle-making praying to realize them. Only Divine praying can operate Divine promises or carry out Divine purposes. How great, how sublime, and how exalted are the promises God makes to His people! How eternal are the purposes of God! Why are we so impoverished in experience and so low in life when God's promises are so "exceeding great and precious"? Why do the eternal purposes of God move so tardily? Why are they so poorly executed? Our failure to appropriate the Divine promises and rest our faith on them, and to pray believingly is the solution. "We have not because we ask not." "We ask and receive not because we ask amiss."

Prayer is based on the purpose and promise of God. Prayer is submission to God. Prayer has no sigh of disloyalty against God's will. It may cry out against the bitterness and the dread weight of an hour of unutterable anguish: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But it is surcharged with the sweetest and promptest submission. "Yet not my will, but thine be done."

But prayer in its usual uniform and deep current is conscious conformity to God's will, based upon the direct promise of God's Word, and under the illumination and application of the Holy Spirit. Nothing is surer than that the Word of God is the sure foundation of prayer. We pray just as we believe God's Word. Prayer is based directly and specifically upon God's revealed promises in Christ Jesus. It has no other ground upon which to base its plea. All else is shadowy, sandy, fickle. Not our feelings, not our merits, not our works, but God's promise is the basis of faith and the solid ground of prayer.

"Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain;
The wounds of Jesus -- for my sin,
Before the world's foundation slain."

The converse of this proposition is also true. God's promises are dependent and conditioned upon prayer to appropriate them and make them a conscious realization. The promises are inwrought in us, appropriated by us, and held in the arms of faith by prayer. Let it be noted that prayer gives the promises their efficiency, localizes and appropriates them, and utilizes them. Prayer puts the promises to practical and present uses. Prayer puts the promises as the seed in the fructifying soil. Promises, like the rain, are general. Prayer embodies, precipitates, and locates them for personal use. Prayer goes by faith into the great fruit orchard of God's exceeding great and precious promises, and with hand and heart picks the ripest and richest fruit. The promises, like electricity, may sparkle and dazzle and yet be impotent for good till these dynamic, life-giving currents are chained by prayer, and are made the mighty forces which move and bless.

III. Prayer and the Promises (Continued)

Every promise of Scripture is a writing of God, which may be pleaded before Him with this reasonable request: "Do as Thou hast said." The Creator will not cheat His creature who depends upon His truth; and, far more, the Heavenly Father will not break His word to His own child. "Remember the word unto Thy servant, on which Thou hast caused me to hope," is most prevalent pleading. It is a double argument: It is Thy Word, wilt Thou not keep it? Why hast Thou spoken of it if Thou wilt not make it good? Thou hast caused me to hope in it; wilt Thou disappoint the hope which Thou hast Thyself begotten in me? -- C. H. SPURGEON

THE great promises find their fulfillment along the lines of prayer. They inspire prayer, and through prayer the promises flow out to their full realization and bear their ripest fruit.

The magnificent and sanctifying promise in Ezekiel, thirty-sixth chapter, a promise finding its full, ripe, and richest fruit in the New Testament, is an illustration of how the promise waits on prayer:

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

"And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.

"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

And concerning this promise, and this work, God definitely says:

"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

The more truly men have prayed for these rich things, the more fully have they entered into this exceeding great and precious promise, for in its initial, and final results as well as in all of its processes, realized, it is entirely dependent on prayer.

"Give me a new, a perfect heart,

From doubt, and fear, and sorrow free;

The mind which was in Christ impart,

And let my spirit cleave to thee.

"O take this heart of stone away!

Thy sway it doth not, cannot own;

In me no longer let it stay;

O take away this heart of stone!"

No new heart ever throbbed with its pulsations of Divine life in one whose lips have never sought in prayer with contrite spirit, that precious boon of a perfect heart of love and cleanness. God never has put His Spirit into the realm of a human heart which had never invoked by ardent praying the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A prayerless spirit has no affinity for a clean heart. Prayer and a pure heart go hand in hand. Purity of heart follows praying, while prayer is the natural, spontaneous outflowing of a heart made clean by the blood of Jesus Christ.

In this connection let it be noted that God's promises are always personal and specific. They are not general, indefinite, vague. They do not have to do with multitudes and classes of people in a mass, but are directed to individuals. They deal with persons. Each believer can claim the promise as his own. God deals with each one personally. So that every saint can put the promises to the test. "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord." No need of generalizing, nor of being lost in vagueness. The praying saint has the right to put his hand upon the promise and claim it as his own, one made especially to him, and one intended to embrace all his needs, present and future.

"Though troubles assail,

And dangers affright,

Though friends should all fail,

And foes all unite,

Yet one thing secures us,

Whatever betide,

The promise assures us,

The Lord will provide."

Jeremiah once said, speaking of the captivity of Israel and of its ending, speaking for Almighty God: "After seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and will perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

But this strong and definite promise of God was accompanied by these words, coupling the promise with prayer: "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will

hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." This seems to indicate very clearly that the promise was dependent for its fulfillment on prayer.

In Daniel we have this record, "I, Daniel, understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fastings and sackcloth and ashes."

So Daniel, as the time of the captivity was expiring, set himself in mighty prayer in order that the promise should be fulfilled and the captivity be brought to an end. It was God's promise by Jeremiah and Daniel's praying which broke the chains of Babylonish captivity, set Israel free and brought God's ancient people back to their native land. The promise and prayer went together to carry out God's purpose and to execute His plans.

God had promised through His prophets that the coming Messiah should have a forerunner. How many homes and wombs in Israel had longed for the coming to them of this great honour! Perchance Zacharias and Elizabeth were the only ones who were trying to realize by prayer this great dignity and blessing. At least we do know that the angel said to Zacharias, as he announced to him the coming of this great personage, "Thy prayer is heard." It was then that the word of the Lord as spoken by the prophets and the prayer of the old priest and his wife brought John the Baptist into the withered womb, and into the childless home of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

The promise given to Paul, engraven on his apostolic commission, as related by him after his arrest in Jerusalem, when he was making his defense before King Agrippa, was on this wise: "Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I now send thee." How did Paul make this promise efficient? How did he make the promise real? Here is the answer. In trouble by men, Jew and Gentile, pressed by them sorely, he writes to his brethren at Rome, with a pressing request for prayer:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

"That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea."

Their prayers, united with his prayer, were to secure his deliverance and secure his safety, and were also to make the apostolic promise vital and cause it to be fully realized.

All is to be sanctified and realized by the Word of God and prayer. God's deep and wide river of promise will turn into the deadly miasma or be lost in the morass, if we do not utilize these promises by prayer, and receive their full and life-giving waters into our hearts.

The promise of the Holy Spirit to the disciples was in a very marked way the "Promise of the Father," but it was only realized after many days of continued and importunate praying. The promise was clear and definite that the disciples should be endued with power from on high, but as a condition of receiving that power of the Holy Spirit, they were instructed to "tarry in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high." The fulfillment of the promise depended upon the "tarrying." The promise of this "endowment of power" was made sure by prayer. Prayer sealed it to glorious results. So we find it written, "These continued with one accord, in prayer and supplication, with the women." And it is significant that it was while they were praying, resting their expectations on the surety of the promise, that the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they were all "filled with the Holy Ghost." The promise and the prayer went hand in hand.

After Jesus Christ made this large and definite promise to His disciples, He ascended on high, and was seated at His Father's right hand of exaltation and power. Yet the promise given by Him of sending the Holy Spirit was not fulfilled by His enthronement merely, nor by the promise only, nor by the fact that the Prophet Joel had foretold with transported raptures of the bright day of the Spirit's coming. Neither was it that the Spirit's coming was the only hope of God's cause in this

world. All these all-powerful and all-engaging reasons were not the immediate operative cause of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The solution is found in the attitude of the disciples. The answer is found in the fact that the disciples, with the women, spent several days in that upper room, in earnest, specific, continued prayer. It was prayer that brought to pass the famous day of Pentecost. And as it was then, so it can be now. Prayer can bring a Pentecost in this day if there be the same kind of praying, for the promise has not exhausted its power and vitality. The "promise of the Father" still holds good for the present-day disciples.

Prayer, mighty prayer, united, continued, earnest prayer, for nearly two weeks, brought the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the world in Pentecostal glory and power. And mighty continued and united prayer will do the same now.

"Lord God, the Holy Ghost,
In this accepted hour;
As on the day of Pentecost,
Descend in all Thy power.
"We meet with one accord,
In our appointed place,
And wait the promise of our Lord,
The Spirit of all grace."

Nor must it be passed by that the promises of God to sinners of every kind and degree are equally sure and steadfast, and are made real and true by the earnest cries of all true penitents. It is just as true with the Divine promises made to the unsaved when they repent and seek God, that they are realized in answer to the prayers of broken-hearted sinners, as it is true that the promises to believers are realized in answer to their prayers. The promise of pardon and peace was the basis of the prayers of Saul of Tarsus during those days of darkness and distress in the house of Judas, when the Lord told Ananias in order to allay his fears, "Behold he prayeth."

The promise of mercy and an abundant pardon is tied up with seeking God and caring upon Him by Isaiah:

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near."
"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

The praying sinner receives mercy because his prayer is grounded on the promise of pardon made by Him whose right it is to pardon guilty sinners. The penitent seeker after God obtains mercy because there is a definite promise of mercy to all who seek the Lord in repentance and faith. Prayer always brings forgiveness to the seeking soul. The abundant pardon is dependent upon the promise made real by the promise of God to the sinner.

While salvation is promised to him who believes, the believing sinner is always a praying sinner. God has no promise of pardon for a prayerless sinner just as He has no promise for the prayerless professor of religion. "Behold he prayeth" is not only the unfailing sign of sincerity and the evidence that the sinner is proceeding in the right way to find God, but it is the unfailing prophecy of an abundant pardon. Get the sinner to praying according to the Divine promise, and he then is near the kingdom of God. The very best sign of the returning prodigal is that he confesses his sins and begins to ask for the lowliest place in his father's house.

It is the Divine promise of mercy, of forgiveness and of adoption which gives the poor sinner hope. This encourages him to pray. This moves him in distress to cry out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me."

"Thy promise is my only plea,
With this I venture nigh;
Thou call'st the burdened soul to Thee,
And such, O Lord, am I."

How large are the promises made to the saint! How great the promises given to poor, hungry-hearted, lost sinners, ruined by the fall! And prayer has arms sufficient to encompass them all, and prove them. How great the encouragement to all souls, these promises of God! How firm the ground on which to rest our faith! How stimulating to prayer! What firm ground on which to base our pleas in praying!

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures."

IV. Prayer -- Its Possibilities

The Holy Ghost comes down into our hearts sometimes in prayer with a beam from heaven, whereby we see more at once of God and His glory, more astounding thoughts and enlarged apprehensions God, many beams meeting in one and falling to the center of our hearts. By these coming downs or divine influxes, God slides into our hearts by beams of Himself; we come not to have communion with God by way of many broken thoughts put together, but there is a contraction of many beams from heaven, which is shed into our souls, so that we know more of God and have more communion with Him in a quarter-hour than we could know in a year by the way of wisdom only. -- THOS. GOODWIN

HOW vast are the possibilities of prayer! How wide is its reach! What great things are accomplished by this divinely appointed means of grace! It lays its hand on Almighty God and moves Him to do what He would not otherwise do if prayer was not offered. It brings things to pass which would never otherwise occur. The story of prayer is the story of great achievements. Prayer is a wonderful power placed by Almighty God in the hands of His saints, which may be used to accomplish great purposes and to achieve unusual results. Prayer reaches to everything, takes in all things great and small which are promised by God to the children of men. The only limits to prayer are the promises of God and His ability to fulfill those promises. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it."

The records of prayer's achievements are encouraging to faith, cheering to the expectations of saints, and an inspiration to all who would pray and test its value. Prayer is no mere untried theory. It is not some strange unique scheme, concocted in the brains of men, and set on foot by them, an invention which has never been tried nor put to the test. Prayer is a Divine arrangement in the moral government of God, designed for the benefit of men and intended as a means for furthering the interests of His cause on earth, and carrying out His gracious purposes in redemption and providence. Prayer proves itself. It is susceptible of proving its virtue by those who pray. Prayer needs no proof other than its accomplishments. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." If any man will know the virtue of prayer, if he will know what it will do, let him pray. Let him put prayer to the test.

What a breadth is given to prayer! What heights it reaches! It is the breathing of a soul inflamed for God, and inflamed for man. It goes as far as the Gospel goes, and is as wide, compassionate and prayerful as is that Gospel.

How much of prayer do all these unpossessed, alienated provinces of earth demand in order to enlighten them, to impress them and to move them toward God and His Son, Jesus Christ? Had the professed disciples of Christ only have prayed in the past as they ought to have done, the centuries would not have found these provinces still bound in death, in sin, and in ignorance.

Alas! how the unbelief of men has limited the power of God to work through prayer! What limitations have disciples of Jesus Christ put upon prayer by their prayerlessness! How the Church, with her neglect of prayer, has hedged about the Gospel and shut up doors of access!

Prayer possibilities open doors for the entrance of the Gospel: "Withal praying also for us that God would open to us a door of utterance." Prayer opened for the Apostles doors of utterance, created opportunities and made openings to preach the Gospel. The appeal by prayer was to God, because God was moved by prayer. God was thereby moved to do His own work in an enlarged way and by new ways. Prayer possibility gives not only great power, and opens doors to the Gospel, but gives facility as well to the Gospel. Prayer makes the Gospel to go fast and to move with glorious fastness. A Gospel projected by the mighty energies of prayer is neither slow, lazy nor dull. It moves with God's power, with God's effulgence and with angelic swiftness.

"Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified," is the request of the Apostle Paul, whose faith reached to the possibilities of prayer for the preached Word. The Gospel moves altogether too slowly, often timidly, and with feeble steps. What will make this Gospel go rapidly like a race runner? What will give this Gospel Divine effulgence and glory, and cause it to move worthy of God and of Christ? The answer is at hand. Prayer, more prayer, better prayer will do the deed. This means of grace will give fast going, splendour and divinity to the Gospel.

The possibilities of prayer reach to all things. Whatever concerns man's highest welfare, and whatever has to do with God's plans and purposes concerning men on earth, is a subject for prayer. In "whatsoever ye shall ask," is embraced all that concerns us or the children of men and God. And whatever is left out of "whatsoever" is left out of prayer. Where will we draw the lines which leave out or which will limit the word "whatsoever"? Define it, and search out and publish the things which the word does not include. If "whatsoever" does not include all things, then add to it the word "anything." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."

What riches of grace, what blessings, spiritual and temporal, what good for time and eternity, would have been ours had we learned the possibilities of prayer and our faith had taken in the wide range of the Divine promises to us to answer prayer! What blessings on our times and what furtherance to God's cause had we but learned how to pray with large expectations! Who will rise up in this generation and teach the Church this lesson? It is a child's lesson in simplicity, but who has learned it well enough to put prayer to the test? It is a great lesson in its matchless and universal good. The possibilities of prayer are unspeakable, but the lesson of prayer which realizes and measures up to these possibilities, who has learned?

In His discourse in John, fifteenth chapter, our Lord seems to connect friendship for Him with that of prayer, and His choosing of His disciples seemed to have been with a design that through prayer they should bear much fruit.

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.

"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 the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

Jesus puts fruit-bearing and fruit-remaining, ripe, unwithered, and rich fruit, that prayer might come to its full possibilities in order that the Father might give. Here we have again the undefined and unlimited word, "whatsoever," as covering the rights and the things for which we are to pray in the possibilities of prayer.

We have still another declaration from Jesus:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Here is a very definite exhortation from our Lord to largeness in praying. Here we are definitely urged by Him to ask for large things, and announced with the dignity and solemnity

indicated by the double amen, "Verily, Verily." Why these marvellous urgencies in this last recorded and vital conversation of our Lord with His disciples? The answer is that our Lord might prepare them for the New Dispensation, in which prayer was to have such marvellous results, and in which prayer was to be the chief agency to conserve and make aggressive His Gospel.

In our Lord's language to His disciples about choosing them that should bear fruit, in this affluent statement of our Lord, He clearly teaches us that this matter of praying and fruit-bearing is not a petty business of our choice, or a secondary matter in relation to other matters, but that He has chosen us for this very business of praying. He had specially in mind our praying, and He has chosen us of His own Divine selection, and He expects us to do this one thing of praying and to do it intelligently and well. For He before says that He had made us His friends, and had brought us into bosom confidence with Him, and also into free and full conference with Him. The main object of choosing us as His disciples and of friendship for Him was that we might be the better fitted to bear the fruit of prayer.

Let us not forget that we are noting the possibilities of the true praying ones. "Anything" is the word of area and circumference. How far it reaches we may not know. How wide it spreads, our minds fail to discover. What is there which is not within its reach? Why does Jesus repeat and exhaust these words, all-inclusive and boundless words, if He does not desire to emphasize the unbounded magnificence and illimitable munificence of prayer? Why does He press men to pray, so that our very poverty might be enriched and our limitless inheritance by prayer be secured?

We affirm with absolute certainty that Almighty God answers prayer. The vast possibilities and the urgent necessity of prayer lie in this stupendous fact that God hears and answers prayer. And God hears and answers all prayer. He hears and answers every prayer, where the true conditions of praying are met. Either this is so or it is not. If not, then is there nothing in prayer. Then prayer is but the recitation of words, a mere verbal performance, an empty ceremony. Then prayer is an altogether useless exercise. But if what we have said is true, then are there vast possibilities in prayer. Then is it far reaching in its scope, and wide is its range. Then is it true that prayer can lay its hand upon Almighty God and move Him to do great and wonderful things.

The benefits, the possibilities and the necessity of prayer are not merely subjective but are peculiarly objective in their character. Prayer aims at a definite object. Prayer has a direct design in view. Prayer always has something specific before the mind's eye. There may be some subjective benefits which accrue from praying, but this is altogether secondary and incidental. Prayer always drives directly at an object and seeks to secure a desired end. Prayer is asking, seeking and knocking at a door for something we have not, which we desire, and which God has promised to us.

Prayer is a direct address to God. "In everything let your requests be made known unto God." Prayer secures blessings, and makes men better because it reaches the ear of God. Prayer is only for the betterment of men when it has affected God and moved Him to do something for men. Prayer affects men by affecting God. Prayer moves men because it moves God to move men. Prayer influences men by influencing God to influence them. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world.

"That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus to the throne;
And moves the hand which moves the world,
To bring salvation down."

The utmost possibilities of prayer have rarely been realized. The promises of God are so great to those who truly pray, when He puts Himself so fully into the hands of the praying ones, that it almost staggers our faith and causes us to hesitate with astonishment. His promise to answer, and to do and to give "all things," "anything," "whatsoever," and "all things whatsoever," are so large, so great, so exceeding broad, that we stand back in amazement and give ourselves to questioning and doubt. We "stagger at the promises through unbelief." Really the promises of God to prayer have been pared down by us to our little faith, and have been brought down to the low level of

our narrow notions about God's ability, liberality and resources. Let us ever keep in mind and never for one moment allow ourselves to doubt the statement that God means what He says in all of His promises. God's promises are His own word. His veracity is at stake in them. To question them is to doubt His veracity. He cannot afford to prove faithless to His word. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." His promises are for plain people, and He means to do for all who pray just what He says He will do. "For He is faithful that hath promised."

Unfortunately we have failed to lay ourselves out in praying. We have limited the Holy One of Israel. The ability to pray can be secured by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, but it demands so strenuous and high a character that it is a rare thing for a man or woman to be on "praying ground and on pleading terms with God." It is as true to-day as it was in the days of Elijah, that "the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." How much such a prayer avails, who can tell?

The possibilities of prayer are the possibilities of faith. Prayer and faith are Siamese twins. One heart animates them both. Faith is always praying. Prayer is always believing. Faith must have a tongue by which it can speak. Prayer is the tongue of faith. Faith must receive. Prayer is the hand of faith stretched out to receive. Prayer must rise and soar. Faith must give prayer the wings to fly and soar. Prayer must have an audience with God. Faith opens the door, and access and audience are given. Prayer asks. Faith lays its hand on the thing asked for.

God's omnipotent power is the basis of omnipotent faith and omnipotent praying. "All things are possible to him that believeth," and "all things whatsoever" are given to him who prays. God's decree and death yield readily to Hezekiah's faith and prayer. When God's promise and man's praying are united by faith, then "nothing shall be impossible." Importunate prayer is so all-powerful and irresistible that it obtains promises, or wins where the prospect and the promise seem to be against it. In fact, the New Testament promise includes all things in heaven and in earth. God, by promise, puts all things He possesses into man's hands. Prayer and faith put man in possession of this boundless inheritance.

Prayer is not an indifferent or a small thing. It is not a sweet little privilege. It is a great prerogative, far-reaching in its effects. Failure to pray entails losses far beyond the person who neglects it. Prayer is not a mere episode of the Christian life. Rather the whole life is a preparation for and the result of prayer. In its condition, prayer is the sum of religion. Faith is but a channel of prayer. Faith gives it wings and swiftness. Prayer is the lungs through which holiness breathes. Prayer is not only the language of spiritual life, but makes its very essence and forms its real character.

"O for a faith that will not shrink
Though pressed by every foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.
"Lord, give us such a faith as this,
And then, whate'er may come,
We'll taste e'en here, the hallowed bliss
Of our eternal home."

V. Prayer -- Its Possibilities (Continued)

He who has the spirit of prayer has the highest interest in the court of heaven. And the only way to retain it is to keep it in constant employment. Apostasy begins in the closet. No man ever backslid from the life and power of Christianity who continued constant and fervent in private prayer. He who prays without ceasing is likely to rejoice evermore. -- ADAM CLARKE

AFTER a comprehensive and cursory view of the possibilities of prayer, as mapped out in what has been said, it is important to descend to particulars, to Bible facts and principles in regard to this great subject. What are the possibilities of prayer as disclosed by Divine revelation? The necessity of prayer and its being are coexistent with man. Nature, even before a clear and full revelation, cries out in prayer. Man is, therefore prayer is. God is, therefore prayer is. Prayer is born of the instincts, the needs and the cravings and the very being of man.

The prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple is the product of inspired wisdom and piety, and gives a lucid and powerful view of prayer in the wideness of its range, the minuteness of its details, and its abounding possibilities and its urgent necessity. How minute and exactly comprehending is this prayer! National and individual blessings are in it, and temporal and spiritual good is embraced by it. Individual sins, national calamities, sins, sickness, exile, famine, war, pestilence, mildew, drought, insects, damage to crops, whatever affects husbandry, enemies--whatsoever sickness, one's own sore, one's own guilt, one's own sin -- one and all are in this prayer, and all are for prayer.

For all these evils prayer is the one universal remedy. Pure praying remedies all ills, cures all diseases, relieves all situations, however dire, most calamitous, most fearful and despairing. Prayer to God, pure praying, relieves dire situations because God can relieve when no one else can. Nothing is too hard for God. No cause is hopeless which God undertakes. No case is mortal when Almighty God is the physician. No conditions are despairing which can deter or defy God.

Almighty God heard this prayer of Solomon, and committed Himself to undertake, to relieve and to remedy if real praying be done, despite all adverse and inexorable conditions. He will always relieve, answer and bless if men will pray from the heart, and if they will give themselves to real, true praying.

After Solomon had finished his magnificent, illimitable and all-comprehending prayer, this is the record of what God said to him:

"And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts that they devour the land, or if I send pestilence among the people;

"If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land;

"Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place.

"For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever."

God put no limitation to His ability to save through true praying. No hopeless conditions, no accumulation of difficulties, and no desperation in distance or circumstance can hinder the success of real prayer. The possibilities of prayer are linked to the infinite rectitude and to the omnipotent power of God. There is nothing too hard for God to do. God is pledged that if we ask, we shall receive. God can withhold nothing from faith and prayer.

"The thing surpasses all my thought,

But faithful is my Lord;

Through unbelief I stagger not,

For God hath spoke the word.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,

And looks to that alone;

Laughs at impossibilities,

And cries, 'It shall be done!'"

The many statements of God's Word fully set forth the possibilities and far-reaching nature of prayer. How full of pathos! "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Again, read the cheering words: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him."

How diversified the range of trouble! How almost infinite its extent! How universal and dire its conditions! How despairing its waves! Yet the range of prayer is as great as trouble, is as universal as sorrow, as infinite as grief. And prayer can relieve all these evils which come to the children of men. There is no tear which prayer cannot wipe away or dry up. There is no depression of spirits which it cannot relieve and elevate. Where is no despair which it cannot dispel.

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great things and difficult, which thou knowest not." How broad these words of the Lord, how great the promise, how cheering to faith! They really challenge the faith of the saint. Prayer always brings God to our relief to bless and to aid, and brings marvellous revelations of His power. What impossibilities are there with God? Name them. "Nothing," He says, "is impossible to the Lord." And all the possibilities in God are in prayer.

Samuel, under the Judges of Israel, will fully illustrate the possibility and the necessity of prayer. He himself was the beneficiary of the greatness of faith and prayer in a mother who knew what praying meant. Hannah, his mother, was a woman of mark, in character and in piety, who was childless. That privation was a source of worry and weakness and grief. She sought unto God for relief, and prayed and poured out her soul before the Lord. She continued her praying, in fact she multiplied her praying, to such an extent that to Old Eli she seemed to be intoxicated, almost beside herself in the intensity of her supplications. She was specific in her prayers. She wanted a child. For a man child she prayed.

And God was specific in His answer. A man child God gave her, a man indeed he became. He was the creation of prayer, and grew himself to a man of prayer. He was a mighty intercessor, especially in emergencies in the history of God's people. The epitome of his life and character is found in the statement, "Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." The victory was complete, and the Ebenezer was the memorial of the possibilities and necessity of prayer.

Again, at another time, Samuel called unto the Lord, and thunder and rain came out of season in wheat harvest. Here are some statements concerning this mighty intercessor, who knew how to pray, and whom God always regarded when he prayed: "Samuel cried unto the Lord all night."

Says he at another time in speaking to the Lord's people, "Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you."

These great occasions show how this notable ruler of Israel made prayer a habit, and that this was a notable and conspicuous characteristic of his dispensation. Prayer was no strange exercise to Samuel. He was accustomed to it. He was in the habit of praying, knew the way to God, and received answers from God. Through him and his praying God's cause was brought out of its low, depressed condition, and a great national revival began, of which David was one of its fruits.

Samuel was one of the notable men of the Old Dispensation who stood out prominently as one who had great influence with God in prayer. God could not deny him anything he asked of Him. Samuel's praying always affected God, and moved God to do what would not have otherwise been done had he not prayed. Samuel stands out as a striking illustration of the possibilities of prayer. He shows conclusively the achievements of prayer.

Jacob is an illustration for all time of the commanding and conquering forces of prayer. God came to him as an antagonist. He grappled Jacob, and shook him as if he were in the embrace of a deadly foe. Jacob, the deceitful supplanter, the wily, unscrupulous trader, had no eyes to see God. His perverted principles, and his deliberate overreaching and wrong-doing had blinded his vision.

To reach God, to know God, and to conquer God, that was the demand of this critical hour. Jacob was alone, and all night witnessed to the intensity of the struggle, its changing issues, and its veering fortunes, as well as the receding and advancing lines in the conflict. Here was the strength of weakness, the power of self-despair, the energy of perseverance, the elevation of humility, and the victory of surrender. Jacob's salvation issued from the forces which he massed in that all-night conflict.

He prayed and wept and importuned until the fiery hate of Esau's heart died and it was softened into love. A greater miracle was wrought on Jacob than on Esau. His name, his character and his destiny were all changed by that all-night praying. Here is the record of the results of that night's praying struggle: "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." "By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed."

What forces lie in importunate prayer! What mighty results are gained by it in one night's struggle in praying! God is affected and changed in attitude, and two men are transformed in character and destiny.

VI. Prayer -- Its Possibilities (Continued)

Satan dreads nothing but prayer. . . . The Church that lost its Christ was full of good works. Activities are multiplied that meditation may be ousted, and organizations are increased that prayer may have no chance. Souls may be lost in good works, as surely as in evil ways. The one concern of the devil is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray. -- SAMUEL CHADWICK

THE possibilities of prayer are seen in its results in temporal matters. Prayer reaches to everything which concerns man, whether it be his body, his mind or his soul. Prayer embraces the very smallest things of life. Prayer takes in the wants of the body, food, raiment, business, finances, in fact everything which belongs to this life, as well as those things which have to do with the eternal interests of the soul. Its achievements are seen not only in the large things of earth, but more especially in what might be called the little things of life. It brings to pass not only large things, speaking after the manner of men, but also the small things.

Temporal matters are of a lower order than the spiritual, but they concern us greatly. Our temporal interests make up a great part of our lives. They are the main source of our cares and worries. They have much to do with our religion. We have bodies, with their wants, their pains, their disabilities and their limitations. That which concerns our bodies necessarily engages our minds. These are subjects of prayer, and prayer takes in all of them, and large are the accomplishments of prayer in this realm of our king.

Our temporal matters have much to do with our health and happiness. They form our relations. They are tests of honesty and belong to the sphere of justice and righteousness. Not to pray about temporal matters is to leave God out of the largest sphere of our being. He who cannot pray in everything, as we are charged to do by Paul in Philippians, fourth chapter, has never learned in any true sense the nature and worth of prayer. To leave business and time out of prayer is to leave religion and eternity out of it. He who does not pray about temporal matters cannot pray with confidence about spiritual matters. He who does not put God by prayer in his struggling toil for daily bread will never put Him in his struggle for heaven. He who does not cover and supply the wants of the body by prayer will never cover and supply the wants of his soul. Both body and soul are dependent on God, and prayer is but the crying expression of that dependence.

The Syrophenician woman prayed for the health things. In fact the Old Testament is but the record of God in dealing with His people through the Divine appointment of prayer. Abraham prayed that Sodom might be saved from destruction. Abraham's servant prayed and received God's direction in choosing a wife for Isaac. Hannah prayed, and Samuel was given unto her. Elijah prayed, and no rain came for three years. And he prayed again, and the clouds gave rain. Hezekiah was saved from a mortal sickness by his praying. Jacob's praying saved him from Esau's revenge. The Old Bible is the history of prayer for temporal blessings as well as for spiritual blessings.

In the New Testament we have the same principles illustrated and enforced. Prayer in this section of God's Word covers the whole realm of good, both temporal and spiritual. Our Lord, in His universal prayer, the prayer for humanity, in every clime, in every age and for every condition, puts in it the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." This embraces all necessary earthly good.

In the Sermon on the Mount, a whole paragraph is taken up by our Lord about food and raiment, where He is cautioned against undue care or anxiety for these things, and at the same time encouraging to a faith which takes in and claims all these necessary bodily comforts and necessities. And this teaching stands in close connection with His teachings about prayer. Food and raiment are taught as subjects of prayer. Not for one moment is it even hinted that they are things beneath the notice of a great God, nor too material and earthly for such a spiritual exercise as prayer.

The Syrophenician woman prayed for the health of her daughter. Peter prayed for Dorcas to be brought back to life. Paul prayed for the father of Publius on his way to Rome, when cast on the island by a shipwreck, and God healed the man who was sick with a fever. He urged the Christians at Rome to strive with him together in prayer that he might be delivered from bad men.

When Peter was put in prison by Herod, the Church was instant in prayer that Peter might be delivered from the prison, and God honoured the praying of these early Christians. John prayed that Gaius might "prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered."

The Divine directory in James, fifth chapter, says: "Is any among you afflicted, let him pray. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him."

Paul, in writing to the Philippians, fourth chapter, says: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." This provides for all kinds of cares business cares, home cares, body cares, and soul cares. All are to be brought to God by prayer, and at the mercy seat our minds and souls are to be disburdened of all that affects us or causes anxiety or uneasiness. These words of Paul stand in close connection with what he says about temporal matters specially: "But now I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again: wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect to want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

And Paul closes his Epistle to these Christians with the words, which embrace all temporal needs as well as spiritual wants:

"But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

Unbelief in the doctrine that prayer covers all things which have to do with the body and business affairs, breeds undue anxiety about earth's affairs, causes unnecessary worry, and creates very unhappy states of mind. How much needless care would we save ourselves if we but believed in prayer as the means of relieving those cares, and would learn the happy art of casting all our cares in prayer upon God, "who careth for us!" Unbelief in God as one who is concerned about even the smallest affairs which affect our happiness and comfort limits the Holy One of Israel, and makes our lives altogether devoid of real happiness and sweet contentment.

We have in the instance of the failure of the disciples to cast the devil out of the lunatic son, brought to them by his father, while Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, a suggestive lesson of the union of faith, prayer and fasting, and the failure to reach the possibilities and obligations of an occasion. The disciples ought to have cast the devil out of the boy. They had been sent out to do this very work, and had been empowered by their Lord and Master to do it. And yet they signally failed. Christ reproved them with sharp upbraidings for not doing it. They had been sent out on this very specific mission. This one thing was specified by our Lord when He sent them out. Their failure brought shame and confession on them, and discounted their Lord and Master and His cause. They brought Him into disrepute, and reflected very seriously upon the cause which they represented. Their faith to cast out the devil had signally failed, simply because

it had not been nurtured by prayer and fasting. Failure to pray broke the ability of faith, and failure came because they had not the energy of a strong authoritative faith.

The promise reads, and we cannot too often refer to it, for it is the very basis of our faith and the ground on which we stand when we pray: "All things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." What enumeration table can tabulate, itemize, and aggregate "all things whatsoever"? The possibilities of prayer and faith go to the length of the endless chain, and cover the unmeasurable area.

In Hebrews, eleventh chapter, the sacred penman, wearied with trying to specify the examples of faith, and to recite the wonderful exploits of faith, pauses a moment, and then cries out, giving us almost unheard-of achievements of prayer and faith as exemplified by the saints of the olden times. Here is what he says:

"And what shall I say more? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephtha, of David also; and Samuel, and the prophets;

"Who through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions;

"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens;

"Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection."

What an illustrious record is this! What marvellous accomplishments, wrought not by armies, or by man's superhuman strength, nor by magic, but all accomplished simply by men and women noted alone for their faith and prayer! Hand in hand with these records of faith's illimitable range are the illustrious records of prayer, for they are all one. Faith has never won a victory nor gained a crown where prayer was not the weapon of the victory, and where prayer did not jewel the crown. If "all things are possible to him that believeth," then all things are possible to him that prayeth.

"Depend on him; thou canst not fail;

Make all thy wants and wishes known:

Fear not; his merits must prevail;

Ask but in faith, it shall be done."

VII. Prayer -- Its Wide Range

Nothing so pleases God in connection with our prayer as our praise, . . . and nothing so blesses the man who prays as the praise which he offers. I got a great blessing once in China in this connection. I had received bad and sad news from home, and deep shadows had covered my soul. I prayed, but the darkness did not vanish. I summoned myself to endure, but the darkness only deepened. Just then I went to an inland station and saw on the wall of the mission home these words: "Try Thanksgiving." I did, and in a moment every shadow was gone, not to return. Yes, the Psalmist was right, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." -- HENRY W. FROST

THE possibilities of prayer are gauged by faith in God's ability to do. Faith is the one prime condition by which God works. Faith is the one prime condition by which man prays. Faith draws on God to its full extent. Faith gives character to prayer. A feeble faith has always brought forth feeble praying. Vigorous faith creates vigorous praying. At the close of a parable, "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men always ought to pray, and not to faint," in which He stressed the necessity of vigorous praying, Christ asks this pointed question, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

In the case of the lunatic child which the father brought first to the disciples, who could not cure him, and then to the Lord Jesus Christ, the father cried out with all the pathos of a declining

faith and of a great sorrow, "If thou canst do anything for us, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said unto him, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The healing turned on the faith in the ability of Christ to heal the boy. The ability to do was in Christ essentially and eternally, but the doing of the thing turned on the ability of the faith. Great faith enables Christ to do great things.

We need a quickening faith in God's power. We have hedged God in till we have little faith in His power. We have conditioned the exercise of His power till we have a little God, and a little faith in a little God.

The only condition which restrains God's power, and which disables Him to act, is unfaith. He is not limited in action nor restrained by the conditions which limit men.

The conditions of time, place, nearness, ability and all others which could possibly be named, upon which the actions of men hinge, have no bearing on God. If men will look to God and cry to Him with true prayer, He will hear and can deliver, no matter how dire soever may be the state, how remediless their conditions may be.

Strange how God has to school His people in His ability to do! He made a promise to Abraham and Sarah that Isaac would be born. Abraham was then nearly one hundred years old, and Sarah was barren by natural defect, and had passed into a barren, wombless age. She laughed at the thought of having a child as preposterous. God asked, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" And God fulfilled His promise to these old people to the letter.

Moses hesitated to undertake God's purpose to liberate Israel from Egyptian bondage, because of his inability to talk well. God checks him at once by an inquiry:

"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

"And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?

"Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."

When God said He would feed the children of Israel a whole month with meat, Moses questioned His ability to do it. The Lord said unto Moses, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

Nothing is too hard for the Lord to do. As Paul declared, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." Prayer has to do with God, with His ability to do. The possibility of prayer is the measure of God's ability to do.

The "all things," the "all things whatsoever," and the "anything," are all covered by the ability of God. The urgent entreaty reads, "Ask whatsoever ye will," because God is able to do anything and all things that my desires may crave, and that He has promised. In God's ability to do, He goes far beyond man's ability to ask. Human thoughts, human words, human imaginations, human desires and human needs, cannot in any way measure God's ability to do.

Prayer in its legitimate possibilities goes out on God Himself. Prayer goes out with faith not only in the promise of God, but faith in God Himself, and in God's ability to do. Prayer goes out not on the promise merely, but "obtains promises," and creates promises.

Elijah had the promise that God would send the rain, but no promise that He would send the fire. But by faith and prayer he obtained the fire, as well as the rain, but the fire came first.

Daniel had no specific promise that God would make known to him the dream of the king, but he and his associates joined in united prayer, and God revealed to Daniel the king's dream and the interpretation, and their lives were spared thereby.

Hezekiah had no promise that God would cure him of his desperate sickness which threatened his life. On the contrary the word of the Lord came to him by the mouth of the prophet, that he should die. However, he prayed against this decree of Almighty God, with faith, and he succeeded in obtaining a reversal of God's word and lived.

God makes it marvellous when He says by the mouth of His prophet: "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker: Ask me of things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me." And in this strong promise in which He commits Himself into the hands of His praying people, He appeals in it to His great creative power: "I have created the earth and made man upon it. I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded."

The majesty and power of God in making man and man's world, and constantly upholding all things, are ever kept before us as the basis of our faith in God, and as an assurance and urgency to prayer. Then God calls us away from what He Himself has done, and turns our minds to Himself personally. The infinite glory and power of His Person are set before our contemplation: "Remember ye not the former things neither consider the things of old?" He declares that He will do a "new thing," that He does not have to repeat Himself, that all He has done neither limits His doing nor the manner of His doing, and that if we have prayer and faith, He will so answer our prayers and so work for us, that His former work shall not be remembered nor come into mind. If men would pray as they ought to pray, the marvels of the past would be more than reproduced. The Gospel would advance with a facility and power it has never known. Doors would be thrown open to the Gospel, and the Word of God would have a conquering force rarely if ever known before.

If Christians prayed as Christians ought, with strong commanding faith, with earnestness and sincerity, men, God-called men, God-empowered men everywhere, would be all burning to go and spread the Gospel world-wide. The Word of the Lord would run and be glorified as never known heretofore. The God-influenced men, the God-inspired men, the God-commissioned men, would go and kindle the flame of sacred fire for Christ, salvation and heaven, everywhere in all nations, and soon all men would hear the glad tidings of salvation and have an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. Let us read another one of those large illimitable statements in God's Word, which are a direct challenge to prayer and faith:

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?"

What a basis have we here for prayer and faith, illimitable, measureless in breadth, in depth and in height! The promise to give us all things is backed up by the calling to our remembrance of the fact that God freely gave His only Begotten Son for our redemption. His giving His Son is the assurance and guarantee that He will freely give all things to him who believes and prays.

What confidence have we in this Divine statement for inspired asking! What holy boldness we have here for the largest asking! No commonplace tameness should restrain our largest asking. Large, larger, and largest asking magnifies grace and adds to God's glory. Feeble asking impoverishes the asker, and restrains God's purposes for the greatest good and obscures His glory.

How enthroned, magnificent and royal the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ at His Father's right hand in heaven! The benefits of His intercession flow to us through our intercessions. Our intercession ought to catch by contagion, and by necessity the inspiration and largeness of Christ's great work at His Father's right hand. His business and His life are to pray. Our business and our lives ought to be to pray, and to pray without ceasing.

Failure in our intercession affects the fruits His intercession. Lazy, heartless, feeble, and indifferent praying by us mars and hinders the effects of Christ's praying.

VIII. Prayer -- Facts and History

The particular value of private prayer consists in being able to approach God with more freedom, and unbosom ourselves more fully than in any other way. Between us and God there are private and personal interests, sins to confess and wants to be supplied, which it would be improper to disclose to the world. This duty is enforced by the example of good men in all ages. -- AMOS BINNEY

THE possibilities of prayer are established by the facts and the history of prayer. Facts are stubborn things. Facts are the true things. Theories may be but speculations. Opinions may be wholly at fault. But facts must be deferred to. They cannot be ignored. What are the possibilities of prayer judged by the facts? What is the history of prayer? What does it reveal to us? Prayer has a history, written in God's Word and recorded in the experiences and lives of God's saints. History is truth teaching by example. We may miss the truth by perverting the history, but the truth is in the facts of history.

"He spake with Abraham at the oak,
He called Elisha from the plough;
David he from the sheepfolds took,
Thy day, thine hour of grace, is now."

God reveals the truth by the facts. God reveals Himself by the facts of religious history. God teaches us His will by the facts and examples of Bible history. God's facts, God's Word and God's history are all in perfect harmony, and have much of God in them all. God has ruled the world by prayer; and God still rules the world by the same divinely ordained means.

The possibilities of prayer cover not only individuals but reach to cities and nations. They take in classes and peoples. The praying of Moses was the one thing which stood between the wrath of God against the Israelites and His declared purpose to destroy them and the execution of that Divine purpose, and the Hebrew nation still survived. Notwithstanding Sodom was not spared, because ten righteous men could not be found inside its limits, yet the little city of Zoar was spared because Lot prayed for it as he fled from the storm of fire and brimstone which burned up Sodom. Nineveh was saved because the king and its people repented of their evil ways and gave themselves to prayer and fasting.

Paul in his remarkable prayer in Ephesians, chapter three, honours the illimitable possibilities of prayer and glorifies the ability of God to answer prayer. Closing that memorable prayer, so far-reaching in its petitions, and setting forth the very deepest religious experience, he declares that "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." He makes prayer all-inclusive, comprehending all things, great and small. Where is no time nor place which prayer does not cover and sanctify. All things in earth and in heaven, everything for time and for eternity, all are embraced in prayer. Nothing is too great and nothing is too small to be subject of prayer. Prayer reaches down to the least things of life and includes the greatest things which concern us.

"If pain afflict or wrongs oppress,
If cares distract, or fears dismay;
If guilt deject, or sin distress,
In every case still watch and pray."

One of the most important, far-reaching, peace-giving, necessary and practical prayer possibilities we have in Paul's words in Philippians, chapter four, dealing with prayer as a cure for undue care:

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"Cares" are the epidemic evil of mankind. They are universal in their reach. They belong to man in his fallen condition. The predisposition to undue anxiety is the natural result of sin. Care comes in all shapes, at all times, and from all sources. It comes to all of every age and station. There are the cares of the home circle, from which there is no escape save in prayer. There are the cares of business, the cares of poverty, and the cares of riches. Ours is an anxious world, and ours is an anxious race. The caution of Paul is well addressed, "In nothing be anxious." This is the Divine injunction, and that we might be able to live above anxiety and freed from undue care, "In

everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." This is the divinely prescribed remedy for all anxious cares, for all worry, for all inward fretting.

The word, "careful," means to be drawn in different directions, distraction, anxious, disturbed, annoyed in spirit. Jesus had warned against this very thing in the Sermon on the Mount, where He had earnestly urged His disciples, "Take no thought for the morrow," in things concerning the needs of the body. He was endeavouring to show them the true secret of a quiet mind, freed from anxiety and unnecessary care about food and raiment. To-morrow's evils were not to be considered. He was simply teaching the same lesson found in Psalm 37: 3, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." In cautioning against the fears of to-morrow's prospective evils, and the material wants of the body, our Lord was teaching the great lesson of an implicit and childlike confidence in God. "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."

"Day by day," the promise reads,
Daily strength for daily needs
Cast foreboding fears away;
Take the manna of to-day."

Paul's direction is very specific, "Be careful for nothing." Be careful for not one thing. Be careful for not anything, for any condition, chance or happening. Be troubled about not anything which creates one disturbing anxiety. Have a mind freed from all anxieties, all cares, all fretting, and all worries. Cares divide, distract, bewilder, and destroy unity, forces and quietness of mind. Cares are fatal to weak piety and are enfeebling to strong piety. What great need to guard against them and learn the one secret of their cure, even prayer!

What boundless possibilities there are in prayer to remedy the situation of mind of which Paul is speaking! Prayer over everything can quiet every distraction, hush every anxiety, and lift every care from care-enslaved lives and from care-bewildered hearts. The prayer specific is the perfect cure for all ills of this character which belong to anxieties, cares and worries. Only prayer in everything can drive dull care away, relieve of unnecessary heart burdens, and save from the besetting sin of worrying over things which we cannot help. Only prayer can bring into the heart and mind the "peace which passeth all understanding," and keep mind and heart at ease, free from carking care.

Oh, the needless heart burdens borne by fretting Christians! How few know the real secret of a happy Christian life, filled with perfect peace, hid from the storms and billows of a fretting careworn life! Prayer has a possibility of saving us from "carefulness," the bane of human lives. Paul in writing to the Corinthians says, "I would have you without carefulness," and this is the will of God. Prayer has the ability to do this very thing. "Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you," is the way Peter puts it, while the Psalmist says, "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil." Oh, the blessedness of a heart at ease from all inward care, exempt from undue anxiety, in the enjoyment of the peace of God which passeth all understanding!

Paul's injunction which includes both God's promise and His purpose, and which immediately precedes his entreaty to be "careful for nothing," reads on this wise:

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.

"Let your moderation be made known to all men. The Lord is at hand."

In a world filled with cares of every kind, where temptation is the rule, where there are so many things to try us, how is it possible to rejoice always? We look at the naked, dry command, and we accept it and reverence it as the Word of God, but no joy comes. How are we to let our moderation, our mildness, and our gentleness be universally and always known? We resolve to be benign and gentle. We remember the nearness of the Lord, but still we are hasty, quick, hard and salty. We listen to the Divine charge, "Be careful for nothing," yet still we are anxious, care-worn, care-eaten, and care-tossed. How can we fulfill the Divine word, so sweet and so large in promise, so beautiful in the eye, and yet so far from being realized? How can we enter upon the rich

patrimony of being true, honest, just, pure, and possess lovely things? The recipe is infallible, the remedy is universal, and the cure is unfailing. It is found in the words which we have so often herein referred to of Paul: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

This joyous, care-free, peaceful experience bringing the believer into a joyousness, living simply by faith day by day, is the will of God. Writing to the Thessalonians, Paul tells them: "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." So that not only is it God's will that we should find full deliverance from all care and undue anxiety, but He has ordained prayer as the means by which we can reach that happy state of heart.

The Revised Version makes some changes in the passage of Paul, about which we have been speaking. The reading there is "In nothing be anxious," and "the peace of God shall guard your hearts and your minds." And Paul puts the antecedent in the air of prayer, which is "Rejoice in the Lord always." That is, be always glad in the Lord, and be happy with Him. And that you may thus be happy, "Be careful for nothing." This rejoicing is the doorway for prayer, and its pathway too. The sunshine and buoyancy of joy in the Lord are the strength and boldness of prayer, the peans of its victory. "Moderation" makes the rainbow of prayer. The word means mildness, fairness, gentleness, sweet reasonableness. The Revised Version changes it to "forbearance," with the margin reading "gentleness." What rare ingredients and beautiful colourings! These are colourings and ingredients which make a strong and beautiful character and a wide and positive reputation. A rejoicing, gentle spirit, positive in reputation, is well fitted for prayer, rid of the distractions and unrest of care.

IX. Prayer -- Facts and History (Continued)

The neglect of prayer is a grand hindrance to holiness. "We have not because we ask not." Oh, how meek and gentle, how lowly in heart, how full of love both to God and to man, might you have been at this day, if you had only asked! If you had continued instant in prayer! Ask, that you may thoroughly experience and perfectly practice the whole of that religion which our Lord has so beautifully described in the Sermon on the Mount. -- JOHN WESLEY

IT is to the closet Paul directs us to go. The unfailing remedy for all carking, distressing care is prayer. The place where the Lord is at hand is the closet of prayer. There He is always found, and there He is at hand to bless, to deliver and to help. The one place where the Lord's presence and power will be more fully realized than any other place is the closet of prayer.

Paul gives the various terms of prayer, supplication and giving of thanks as the complement of true praying. The soul must be in all of these spiritual exercises. There must be no half-hearted praying, no abridging its nature, and no abating its force, if we would be freed from this undue anxiety which causes friction and internal distress, and if we would receive the rich fruit of that peace which passeth all understanding. He who prays must be an earnest soul, all round in spiritual attributes.

"In everything, let your requests be made known unto God," says Paul. Nothing is too great to be handled in prayer, or to be sought in prayer. Nothing is too small to be weighed in the secret councils of the closet, and nothing is too little for its final arbitrament. As care comes from every source, so prayer goes to every source. As there are no small things in prayer, so there are no small things with God. He who counts the hairs of our head, and who is not too lofty and high to notice the little sparrow which falls to the ground, is not too great and high to note everything which concerns the happiness, the needs and the safety of His children. Prayer brings God into

what men are pleased to term the little affairs of life. The lives of people are made up of these small matters, and yet how often do great consequences come from small beginnings?

"There is no sorrow, Lord, too light

To bring in prayer to Thee;

There is no anxious care too slight

To wake Thy sympathy.

"There is no secret sigh we breathe,

But meets Thine ear Divine,

And every cross grows light beneath

The shadow, Lord, of Thine."

As everything by prayer is to be brought to the notice of Almighty God, so we are assured that whatever affects us concerns Him. How comprehensive is this direction about prayer! "In everything by prayer." There is no distinction here between temporal and spiritual things. Such a distinction is against faith, wisdom and reverence. God rules everything in nature and in grace. Man is affected for time and eternity by things secular as well as by things spiritual. Man's salvation hangs on his business as well as on his prayers. A man's business hangs on his prayers just as it hangs on his diligence.

The chief hindrances to piety, the wildest and the deadliest temptations of the devil, are in business, and lie alongside the things of time. The heaviest, the most confusing and the most stupefying cares lie beside secular and worldly matters. So in everything which comes to us and which concerns us, in everything which we want to come to us, and in everything which we do not want to come to us, prayer is to be made for all. Prayer blesses all things, brings all things, relieves all things and prevents all things. Everything as well as every place and every hour is to be ordered by prayer. Prayer has in it the possibility to affect everything which affects us. Here are the vast possibilities of prayer.

How much is the bitter of life sweetened by prayer! How are the feeble made strong by prayer! Sickness flees before the health of prayer. Doubts, misgivings, and trembling fears retire before prayer. Wisdom, knowledge, holiness and heaven are at the command of prayer. Nothing is outside of prayer. It has the power to gain all things in the provision of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul covers all departments and sweeps the entire field of human concernment, conditions, and happenings by saying, "In everything by prayer."

Supplications and thanksgiving are to be joined with prayer. It is not the dignity of worship, the gorgeousness of ceremonials, the magnificence of its ritual, nor the plainness of its sacraments, which avail. It is not simply the soul's hallowed and lowly abasement before God, neither the speechless awe, which benefits in this prayer service, but the intensity of supplication, the looking and the lifting of the soul in ardent plea to God for the things desired and for which request is made.

The radiance and gratitude and utterance of thanksgiving must be there. This is not simply the poetry of praise, but the deep-toned words and the prose of thanks. There must be hearty thanks, which remembers the past, sees God in it, and voices that recognition in sincere thanksgiving. The hidden depths within must have utterance. The lips must speak the music of the soul. A heart enthused of God, a heart illumined by His presence, a life guided by His right hand, must have something to say for God in gratitude. Such is to recognize God in the events of past life, to exalt God for His goodness, and to honour God who has honoured it.

"Make known your requests unto God." The "requests" must be made known unto God. Silence is not prayer. Prayer is asking God for something which we have not, which we desire, and which He has promised to give in answer to prayer. Prayer is really verbal asking. Words are in prayer. Strong words and true words are found in prayer. Desires in prayer are put in words. The praying one is a pleader. He urges his prayer by arguments, promises, and needs.

Sometimes loud words are in prayer. The Psalmist said, "Evening, morning and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud." The praying one wants something which he has not got. He wants

something which God has in His possession, and which he can get by praying. He is beggared, bewildered, oppressed and confused. He is before God in supplication, in prayer, and in thanksgiving. These are the attitudes, the incense, the paraphernalia, and the fashion of this hour, the court attendance of his soul before God.

"Requests" mean to ask for one's self. The man is in a strait. He needs something, and he needs it badly. Other help has failed. It means a plea for something to be given which has not been done. The request is for the Giver, -- not alone His gifts but Himself. The requests of the praying one are to be made known unto God. The requests are to be brought to the knowledge of God. It is then that cares fly away, anxieties disappear, worries depart, and the soul gets at ease. Then it is there steals into the heart "the peace of God that passeth all understanding."

"Peace! doubting heart, my God's I am,
Who formed me man, forbids my fear;
The Lord hath called me by my name;
The Lord protects, forever near;
His blood for me did once atone,
And still He loves and guards His own."

In James, chapter five, we have another marvellous description of prayer and its possibilities. It has to do with sickness and health, sin and forgiveness, and rain and drouth. Here we have James' directory for praying:

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.

"Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

"Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

"And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

Here is prayer for one's own needs and intercessory prayer for others; prayer for physical needs and prayer for spiritual needs; prayer for drouth and prayer for rain; prayer for temporal matters and prayer for spiritual things. How vast the reach of prayer! How wonderful under these words its possibilities!

Here is the remedy for affliction and depression of every sort, and here we find the remedy for sickness and for rain in the time of drouth. Here is the way to obtain forgiveness of sins. A stroke of prayer paralyzes the energies of nature, stays its clouds, rain and dew, and blasts field and farm like the simoon. Prayer brings clouds, and rain and fertility to the famished and wasted earth.

The general statement, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," is a statement of prayer as an energetic force. Two words are used. One signifies power in exercise, operative power, while the other is power as an endowment. Prayer is power and strength, a power and strength which influences God, and is most salutary, widespread and marvellous in its gracious benefits to man. Prayer influences God. The ability of God to do for man is the measure of the possibility of prayer.

"Thou art coming to a king,
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much."

X. Answered Prayer

In his "Soldier's Pocket Book," Lord Wolseley says if a young officer wishes to get on, he must volunteer for the most hazardous duties and take every possible chance of risking his life. It was a spirit and courage like that which was shown in the service of God by a good soldier of Jesus Christ named John McKenzie who died a few years ago. One evening when he was a lad and eager for work in the Foreign Mission field he knelt down at the foot of a tree in the Ladies' Walk on the banks of the Lossie at Elgin and offered up this prayer: "O Lord send me to the darkest spot on earth." And God heard him and sent him to South Africa where he laboured many years first under the London Missionary Society and then under the British Government as the first Resident Commissioner among the natives of Bechuanaland. -- J.O. STRUTHERS

IT is answered prayer which brings praying out of the realm of dry, dead things, and makes praying a thing of life and power. It is the answer to prayer which brings things to pass, changes the natural trend of things, and orders all things according to the will of God. It is the answer to prayer which takes praying out of the regions of fanaticism, and saves it from being Eutopian, or from being merely fanciful. It is the answer to prayer which makes praying a power for God and for man, and makes praying real and divine. Unanswered prayers are training schools for unbelief, an imposition and a nuisance, an impertinence to God and to man.

Answers to prayer are the only surety that we have prayed aright. What marvellous power there is in prayer! What untold miracles it works in this world! What untold benefits to men does it secure to those who pray! Why is it that the average prayer by the million goes a begging for an answer?

The millions of unanswered prayers are not to be solved by the mystery of God's will. We are not the sport of His sovereign power. He is not playing at "make-believe" in His marvellous promises to answer prayer. The whole explanation is found in our wrong praying. "We ask and receive not because we ask amiss." If all unanswered prayers were dumped into the ocean, they would come very near filling it. Child of God, can you pray? Are your prayers answered? If not, why not? Answered prayer is the proof of your real praying.

The efficacy of prayer from a Bible standpoint lies solely in the answer to prayer. The benefit of prayer has been well and popularly maximized by the saying, "It moves the arm which moves the universe." To get unquestioned answers to prayer is not only important as to the satisfying of our desires, but is the evidence of our abiding in Christ. It becomes more important still. The mere act of praying is no test of our relation to God. The act of praying may be a real dead performance. It may be the routine of habit. But to pray and receive clear answers, not once or twice, but daily, this is the sure test, and is the gracious point of our vital connection with Jesus Christ.

Read our Lord's words in this connection:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

To God and to man, the answer to prayer is the all-important part of our praying. The answer to prayer, direct and unmistakable, is the evidence of God's being. It proves that God lives, that there is a God, an intelligent being, who is interested in His creatures, and who listens to them when they approach Him in prayer. There is no proof so clear and demonstrative that God exists than prayer and its answer. This was Elijah's plea: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God."

The answer to prayer is the part of prayer which glorifies God. Unanswered prayers are dumb oracles which leave the praying ones in darkness, doubt and bewilderment, and which carry no

conviction to the unbeliever. It is not the act or the attitude of praying which gives efficacy to prayer. It is not abject prostration of the body before God, the vehement or quiet utterance to God, the exquisite beauty and poetry of the diction of our prayers, which do the deed. It is not the marvellous array of argument and eloquence in praying which makes prayer effectual. Not one or all of these are the things which glorify God. It is the answer which brings glory to His Name.

Elijah might have prayed on Carmel's heights till this good day with all the fire and energy of his soul, and if no answer had been given, no glory would have come to God. Peter might have shut himself up with Dorcas' dead body till he himself died on his knees, and if no answer had come, no glory to God nor good to man would have followed, but only doubt, blight and dismay.

Answer to prayer is the convincing proof of our right relations to God. Jesus said at the grave of Lazarus:

"Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

"And I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people that stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

The answer of His prayer was the proof of His mission from God, as the answer to Elijah's prayer was made to the woman whose son he raised to life. She said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God." He is highest in the favour of God who has the readiest access and the greatest number of answers to prayer from Almighty God.

Prayer ascends to God by an invariable law, even by more than law, by the will, the promise and the presence of a personal God. The answer comes back to earth by all the promise, the truth, the power and the love of God.

Not to be concerned about the answer to prayer is not to pray. What a world of waste there is in praying. What myriads of prayers have been offered for which no answer is returned, no answer longed for, and no answer is expected! We have been nurturing a false faith and hiding the shame of our loss and inability to pray, by the false, comforting plea that God does not answer directly or objectively, but indirectly and subjectively. We have persuaded ourselves that by some kind of hocus pocus of which we are wholly unconscious in its process and its results, we have been made better. Conscious that God has not answered us directly, we have solaced ourselves with the delusive unction that God has in some impalpable way, and with unknown results, given us something better. Or we have comforted and nurtured our spiritual sloth by saying that it is not God's will to give it to us. Faith teaches God's praying ones that it is God's will to answer prayer. God answers all prayers and every prayer of His true children who truly pray.

"Prayer makes the darkened cloud withdraw,
Prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw;
Gives exercise to faith and love,
Brings every blessing from above."

The emphasis in the Scriptures is always given to the answer to prayer. All things from God are given in answer to prayer. God Himself, His presence, His gifts and His grace, one and all, are secured by prayer. The medium by which God communicates with men is prayer. The most real thing in prayer, its very essential end, is the answer it secures. The mere repetition of words in prayer, the counting of beads, the multiplying mere words of prayer, as works of supererogation, as if there was virtue in the number of prayers to avail, is a vain delusion, an empty thing, a useless service. Prayer looks directly to securing an answer. This is its design. It has no other end in view.

Communion with God of course is in prayer. There is sweet fellowship there with our God through His Holy Spirit. Enjoyment of God there is in praying, sweet, rich and strong. The graces of the Spirit in the inner soul are nurtured by prayer, kept alive and promoted in their growth by this spiritual exercise. But not one nor all of these benefits of prayer have in them the essential end of prayer. The divinely appointed channel through which all good and all grace flows to our souls and bodies is prayer.

"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give."

Prayer is divinely ordained as the means by which all temporal and spiritual good are gained to us. Prayer is not an end in itself. It is not something done to be rested in, something we have done, about which we are to congratulate ourselves. It is a means to an end. It is something we do which brings us something in return, without which the praying is valueless. Prayer always aims at securing an answer.

We are rich and strong, good and holy, beneficent and benignant, by answered prayer. It is not the mere performance, the attitude, nor the words of prayer, which bring benefit to us, but it is the answer sent direct from heaven. Conscious, real answers to prayer bring real good to us. This is not praying merely for self, or simply for selfish ends. The selfish character cannot exist when the prayer conditions are fulfilled.

It is by these answered prayers that human nature is enriched. The answered prayer brings us into constant and conscious communion with God, awakens and enlarges gratitude, and excites the melody and lofty inspiration of praise. Answered prayer is the mark of God in our praying. It is the exchange with heaven, and it establishes and realizes a relationship with the unseen. We give our prayers in exchange for the Divine blessing. God accepts our prayers through the atoning blood and gives Himself, His presence and His grace in return.

All holy affections are affected by answered prayers. By the answers to prayer all holy principles are matured, and faith, love and hope have their enrichment by answered prayer. The answer is found in all true praying. The answer is in prayer strongly as an aim, a desire expressed, and its expectation and realization give importunity and realization to prayer. It is the fact of the answer which makes the prayer, and which enters into its very being. To seek no answer to prayer takes the desire, the aim, and the heart out of prayer. It makes praying a dead, stockish thing, fit only for dumb idols. It is the answer which brings praying into Bible regions, and makes it a desire realized, a pursuit, an interest, that clothes it with flesh and blood, and makes it a prayer, throbbing with all the true life of prayer, affluent with all the paternal relations of giving and receiving, of asking and answering.

God holds all good in His own hands. That good comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ because of His all atoning merits, by asking it in His name. The only and the sole command in which all the others of its class belong, is "Ask, seek, knock." And the one and sole promise is its counterpart, its necessary equivalent and results: "It shall be given -- ye shall find -- it shall be opened unto you."

God is so much involved in prayer and its hearing and answering, that all of His attributes and His whole being are centered in that great fact. It distinguishes Him as peculiarly beneficent, wonderfully good, and powerfully attractive in His nature. "O thou that hearest prayer! To thee shall all flesh come."

"Faithful, O Lord, Thy mercies are
A rock that cannot move;
A thousand promises declare
Thy constancy of love."

Not only does the Word of God stand surety for the answer to prayer, but all the attributes of God conspire to the same end. God's veracity is at stake in the engagements to answer prayer. His wisdom, His truthfulness and His goodness are involved. God's infinite and inflexible rectitude is pledged to the great end of answering the prayers of those who call upon Him in time of need. Justice and mercy blend into oneness to secure the answer to prayer. It is significant that the very justice of God comes into play and stands hard by God's faithfulness in the strong promise God makes of the pardon of sins and of cleansing from sin's pollutions:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God's kingly relation to man, with all of its authority, unites with the fatherly relation and with all of its tenderness to secure the answer to prayer.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is most fully committed to the answer of prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." How well assured the answer to prayer is, when that answer is to glorify God the Father! And how eager Jesus Christ is to glorify His Father in heaven! So eager is He to answer prayer which always and everywhere brings glory to the Father, that no prayer offered in His name is denied or overlooked by Him. Says our Lord Jesus Christ again, giving fresh assurance to our faith, "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." So says He once more, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

"Come, my soul, thy suit prepare,
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He Himself has bid thee pray,
Therefore will not say thee nay."

XI. Answered Prayer (Continued)

Constrained at the darkest hour to confess humbly that without God's help I was helpless, I vowed a vow in the forest solitude that I would confess His aid before men. A silence as a death was around me; it was midnight, I was weakened by illness, prostrated with fatigue and worn with anxiety for my white and black companions, whose fate was a mystery. In this physical and mental distress I besought God to give me back my people. Nine hours later we were exulting with rapturous joy. In full view of all was the crimson flag with the crescent and beneath its waving folds was the long-lost rear column. -- HENRY M. STANLEY

GOD has committed Himself to us by His Word in our praying. The Word of God is the basis and the inspiration and the heart of prayer. Jesus Christ stands as the illustration of God's Word, its illimitable good in promise as well as in realization. God takes nothing by halves. He gives nothing by halves. We can have the whole of Him when He has the whole of us. His words of promise are so far-reaching, and so all-comprehending, that they seem to have deadened our comprehension and have paralyzed our praying. This appears when we consider those large words, when He almost exhausts human language in promises, as in "whatever," "anything," and in the all-inclusive "whatsoever," and "all things." These oft-repeated promises, so very great, seem to daze us, and instead of allowing them to move us to asking, testing, and receiving, we turn away full of wonder, but empty handed and with empty hearts.

We quote another passage from our Lord's teaching about prayer. By the most solemn verification, He declares as follows:

"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing; Verily, Verily, I say unto you: Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Twice in this passage He declares the answer, and pledging His Father, "He will give it to you," and declaring with impressive and most suggestive iteration, "Ask, and ye shall receive." So strong and so often did Jesus declare and repeat the answer as an inducement to pray, and as an inevitable result of prayer, the Apostles held it as so fully and invincibly established, that prayer would be answered, they held it to be their main duty to urge and command men to pray. So firmly were they established as to the truth of the law of prayer as laid down by our Lord, that they were led to affirm that the answer to prayer was involved in and necessarily bound up with all right praying. God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son, are both strongly committed by all the truth of their word and by the fidelity of their character, to answer prayer.

Not only do these and all the promises pledge Almighty God to answer prayer, but they assure us that the answer will be specific, and that the very thing for which we pray will be given.

Our Lord's invariable teaching was that we receive that for which we ask, and obtain that for which we seek, and have that door opened at which we knock. This is according to our Heavenly Father's direction to us, and His giving to us for our asking. He will not disappoint us by not answering, neither will He deny us by giving us some other thing for which we have not asked, or by letting us find some other thing for which we have not sought, or by opening to us the wrong door, at which we were not knocking. If we ask bread, He will give us bread. If we ask an egg, He will give us an egg. If we ask a fish, He will give us a fish. Not something like bread, but bread itself will be given unto us. Not something like a fish, but a fish will be given. Not evil will be given us in answer to prayer, but good.

Earthly parents, though evil in nature, give for the asking, and answer to the crying of their children. The encouragement to prayer is transferred from our earthly father to our Heavenly Father, from the evil to the good, to the supremely good; from the weak to the omnipotent, our Heavenly Father, centering in Himself all the highest conceptions of Fatherhood, abler, readier, and much more than the best, and much more than the ablest earthly father. "How much more," who can tell? Much more than our earthly father, will He supply all our needs, give us all good things, and enable us to meet every difficult duty and fulfill every law, though hard to flesh and blood, but made easy under the full supply of our Father's beneficent and exhaustless help.

Here we have in symbol and as initial, more than an intimation of the necessity, not only of perseverance in prayer, but of the progressive stages of intentness and effort in the outlay of increasing spiritual force. Asking, seeking, and knocking. Here is an ascending scale from the mere words of asking, to a settled attitude of seeking, resulting in a determined, clamorous and vigorous direct effort of praying.

Just as God has commanded us to pray always, to pray everywhere, and to pray in everything, so He will answer always, everywhere and in everything.

God has plainly and with directness committed Himself to answer prayer. If we fulfill the conditions of prayer, the answer is bound to come. The laws of nature are not so invariable and so inexorable as the promised answer to pray. The ordinances of nature might fail, but the ordinances of grace can never fail. There are no limitations, no adverse conditions, no weakness, no inability, which can or will hinder the answer to prayer. God's doing for us when we pray has no limitations, is not hedged about, by provisos in Himself, or in the peculiar circumstances of any particular case. If we really pray, God masters and defies all things and is above all conditions.

God explicitly says, "Call unto me, and I will answer." There are no limitations, no hedges, no hindrances in the way of God fulfilling the promise. His word is at stake. His word is involved. God solemnly engages to answer prayer. Man is to look for the answer, be inspired by the expectation of the answer, and may with humble boldness demand the answer. God, who cannot lie, is bound to answer. He has voluntarily placed Himself under obligation to answer the prayer of him who truly prays.

"To God your every want
In instant prayer display;
Pray always; pray, and never faint;
Pray, without ceasing, pray.
"In fellowship, alone,
To God with faith draw near;
Approach His courts, beseech His throne,
With all the power of prayer."

The prophets and the men of God of Old Testament times were unshaken in their faith in the absolute certainty of God fulfilling His promises to them. They rested in security on the word of God, and had no doubt whatever either as to the fidelity of God in answering prayer or of His

willingness or ability. So that their history is marked by repeated asking and receiving at the hands of God,

The same is true of the early Church. They received without question the doctrine their Lord and Master had so often affirmed that the answer to prayer was sure. The certainty of the answer to prayer was as fixed as God's Word was true. The Holy Ghost dispensation was ushered in by the disciples carrying this faith into practice. When Jesus told them to "Tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high," they received it as a sure promise that if they obeyed the command, they would certainly receive the Divine power. So in prayer for ten days they tarried in the upper room, and the promise was fulfilled. The answer came just as Jesus said.

So when Peter and John were arrested for healing the man who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple, after being threatened by the rulers in Jerusalem, they were released. "And being let go, they went to their own company," they went to those with whom they were in affinity, those of like minds, and not to men of the world. Still believing in prayer and its efficacy, they gave themselves to prayer, the prayer itself being recorded in Acts, chapter four. They recited some things to the Lord, and "when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

Here they were refilled for this special occasion with the Holy Ghost. The answer to prayer responded to their faith and prayer. The fullness of the Spirit always brings boldness. The cure for fear in the face of threatenings of the enemies of the Lord is being filled with the Spirit. This gives power to speak the word of the Lord with boldness. This gives courage and drives away fear.

XII. Answered Prayer (Continued)

A young man had been called to the foreign field. He had not been in the habit of preaching, but he knew one thing, how to prevail with God; and going one day to a friend he said: "I don't see how God can use me on the field. I have no special talent." His friend said: "My brother, God wants men on the field who can pray. There are too many preachers now and too few pray-ers." He went. In his own room in the early dawn a voice was heard weeping and pleading for souls. All through the day, the shut door and the hush that prevailed made you feel like walking softly, for a soul was wrestling with God. Yet to this home, hungry souls would flock, drawn by some irresistible power. Ah, the mystery was unlocked. In the secret chamber lost souls were pleaded for and claimed. The Holy Ghost knew just where they were and sent them along. -- J. HUDSON TAYLOR

WE put it to the front. We unfold it on a banner never to be lowered or folded, that God does hear and answer prayer. God has always heard and answered prayer. God will forever hear and answer prayer. He is the same yesterday, to-day and forever, ever blessed, ever to be adored. Amen. He changes not. As He has always answered prayer, so will He ever continue to do so.

To answer prayer is God's universal rule. It is His unchangeable and irrevocable law to answer prayer. It is His invariable, specific and inviolate promise to answer prayer. The few denials to prayer in the Scriptures are the exceptions to the general rule, suggestive and startling by their fewness, exception and emphasis.

The possibilities of prayer, then, lie in the great truth, illimitable in its broadness, fathomless in its depths, exhaustless in its fullness, that God answers every prayer from every true soul who truly prays.

God's Word does not say, "Call unto me, and you will thereby be trained into the happy art of knowing how to be denied. Ask, and you will learn sweet patience by getting nothing." Far from it. But it is definite, clear and positive: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you."

We have this case among many in the Old Testament:

"Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thy hand might be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me."

And God readily granted him the things which he had requested.

Hannah, distressed in soul because she was childless, and desiring a man child, repaired to the house of prayer, and prayed, and this is the record she makes of the direct answer she received: "For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me the petition which I asked of him."

God's promises and purposes go direct to the fact of giving for the asking. The answer to our prayers is the motive constantly presented in the Scriptures to encourage us to pray and to quicken us in this spiritual exercise. Take such strong, clear passages as these:

"Call unto me, and I will answer thee."

"He shall call unto me, and I will answer."

"Ask; and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

This is Jesus Christ's law of prayer. He does not say, "Ask, and something shall be given you." Nor does He say, "Ask, and you will be trained into piety." But it is that when you ask, the very thing asked for will be given. Jesus does not say, "Knock, and some door will be opened." But the very door at which you are knocking will be opened. To make this doubly sure, Jesus Christ duplicates and reiterates the promise of the answer: "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

Answered prayer is the spring of love, and is the direct encouragement to pray. "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

The certainty of the Father's giving is assured by the Father's relation, and by the ability and goodness of the Father. Earthly parents, frail, infirm, and limited in goodness and ability, give when the child asks and seeks. The parental heart responds most readily to the cry for bread. The hunger of the child touches and wins the father's heart. So God, our Heavenly Father, is as easily and strongly moved by our prayers as the earthly parent. "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father in heaven give good gifts unto them that ask him?" "Much more," just as much more does God's goodness, tenderness and ability exceed that of man's.

Just as the asking is specific, so also is the answer specific. The child does not ask for one thing and get another. He does not cry for bread, and get a stone. He does not ask for an egg, and receive a scorpion. He does not ask for a fish, and get a serpent. Christ demands specific asking. He responds to specific praying by specific giving.

To give the very thing prayed for, and not something else, is fundamental to Christ's law of praying. No prayer for the cure of blind eyes did He ever answer by curing deaf ears. The very thing prayed for is the very thing which He gives. The exceptions to this are confirmatory of this great law of prayer. He who asks for bread gets bread, and not a stone. If he asks for a fish, he receives a fish, and not a serpent. No cry is so pleading and so powerful as the child's cry for bread. The cravings of hunger, the appetite felt, and the need realized, all create and propel the crying of the child. Our prayers must be as earnest, as needy, and as hungry as the hungry child's cry for bread. Simple, artless and direct and specific must be our praying, according to Christ's law of prayer and His teaching of God's Fatherhood.

The illustration and enforcement of the law of prayer are found in the specific answers given to prayer. Gethsemane is the only seeming exception. The prayer of Jesus Christ in that awful hour of darkness and hell was conditioned on these words, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But beyond these utterances of our Lord was the soul and life prayer of the willing,

suffering Divine victim, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." The prayer was answered, the angel came, strength was imparted, and the meek sufferer in silence drank the bitter cup.

Two cases of unanswered prayer are recorded in the Scriptures in addition to the Gethsemane prayer of our Lord. The first was that of David for the life of his baby child, but for good reasons to Almighty God the request was not granted. The second was that of Paul for the removal of the thorn in the flesh, which was denied. But we are constrained to believe these must have been notable as exceptions to God's rule, as illustrated in the history of prophet, priest, apostle and saint, as recorded in the Divine Word. There must have been unrevealed reasons which moved God to veer from His settled and fixed rule to answer prayer by giving the specific thing prayed for.

Our Lord did not hold the Syrophenician woman in the school of unanswered prayer in order to test and mature her faith, neither did He answer her prayer by healing or saving her husband. She asks for the healing of her daughter, and Christ healed the daughter. She received the very thing for which she asked the Lord Jesus Christ. It was in the school of answered prayer our Lord disciplined and perfected her faith, and it was by giving her a specific answer to her prayer. Her prayer centered on her daughter. She prayed for the one thing, the healing of her child. And the answer of our Lord centered likewise on the daughter.

We tread altogether too gingerly upon the great and precious promises of God, and too often we ignore them wholly. The promise is the ground on which faith stands in asking of God. This is the one basis of prayer. We limit God's ability. We measure God's ability and willingness to answer by prayer by the standard of men. We limit the Holy One of Israel. How full of benefaction and remedy to suffering mankind are the promises as given us by James in his Epistle, fifth chapter! How personal and mediate do they make God in prayer! They are a direct challenge to our faith. They are encouraging to large expectations in all the requests we make of God. Prayer affects God in a direct manner, and has its aim and end in affecting Him. Prayer takes hold of God, and induces Him to do large things for us, whether personal or relative, temporal or spiritual, earthly or heavenly.

The great gap between Bible promises to prayer and the income from praying is almost unspeakably great, so much so that it is a prolific source of infidelity. It breeds unbelief in prayer as a great moral force, and begets doubt really as to the efficacy of prayer. Christianity needs to-day, above all things else, men and women who can in prayer put God to the test and who can prove His promises. When this happy day for the world begins, it will be earth's brightest day, and will be heaven's dawning day on earth. These are the sort of men and women needed in this modern day in the Church. It is not educated men who are needed for the times. It is not more money that is required. It is not more machinery, more organization, more ecclesiastical laws, but it is men and women who know how to pray, who can in prayer lay hold upon God and bring Him down to earth, and move Him to take hold of earth's affairs mightily and put life and power into the Church and into all of its machinery.

The Church and the world greatly need saints who can bridge this wide gap between the praying done and the small number of answers received. Saints are needed whose faith is bold enough and sufficiently far-reaching to put God to the test. The cry comes even now out of heaven to the people of the present-day Church, as it sounded forth in the days of Malachi: "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts." God is waiting to be put to the test by His people in prayer. He delights in being put to the test on His promises. It is His highest pleasure to answer prayer, to prove the reliability of His promises. Nothing worthy of God nor of great value to men will be accomplished till this is done.

Our Gospel belongs to the miraculous. It was projected on the miraculous plane. It cannot be maintained but by the supernatural. Take the supernatural out of our holy religion, and its life and power are gone, and it degenerates into a mere mode of morals. The miraculous is Divine power. Prayer has in it this same power. Prayer brings this Divine power into the ranks of men and puts it to work. Prayer brings into the affairs of earth a supernatural element. Our Gospel when truly

presented is the power of God. Never was the Church more in need of those who can and will test Almighty God. Never did the Church need more than now those who can raise up everywhere memorials of God's supernatural power, memorials of answers to prayer, memorials of promises fulfilled. These would do more to silence the enemy of souls, the foe of God and the adversary of the Church than any modern scheme or present-day plan for the success of the Gospel. Such memorials reared by praying people would dumbfound God's foes, strengthen weak saints, and would fill strong saints with triumphant rapture.

The most prolific source of infidelity, and that which traduces and hinders praying, and that which obscures the being and glory of God most effectually, is unanswered prayer. Better not to pray at all than to go through a dead form, which secures no answer, brings no glory to God, and supplies no good to man. Nothing so indurates the heart and nothing so blinds us to the unseen and the eternal, as this kind of prayerless praying.

XIII. Prayer Miracles

George Benfield, a driver on the Midland Railway, living at Derby, was standing on the footplate oiling his engine, the train being stationary, when his foot slipped; he fell on the space between the lines. He heard the express coming on, and had only time enough to lie full length on the "six-foot" when it rushed by, and he escaped unhurt. He returned to his home in the middle of the night and as he was going up-stairs he heard one of his children, a girl about eight years old, crying and sobbing. "Oh, father," she said, "I thought somebody came and told me that you were going to be killed, and I got out of bed and prayed that God would not let you die." Was it only a dream, a coincidence? George Benfield and others believed that he owed his life to that prayer. --
DEAN HOLE

THE earthly career of our Lord Jesus Christ was no mere episode, a sort of interlude, in His eternal life. What He was and what He did on earth was neither abnormal nor divergent, but characteristic. What He was and what He did on earth is but the figure and the illustration of what He is and what He is doing in heaven. He is "the same yesterday and to-day, and forever." This statement is the Divine summary of the eternal unity and changelessness of His character. His earthly life was made up largely of hearing and answering prayer. His heavenly life is devoted to the same Divine business. Really the Old Testament is the record of God hearing and answering prayer. The whole Bible deals largely with this all important subject.

Christ's miracles are object lessons. They are living pictures. They talk to us. They have hands which take hold of us. Many valuable lessons do these miracles teach us. In their diversity, they refresh us. They show us the matchless power of Jesus Christ, and at the same time discover to us His marvellous compassion for suffering humanity. These miracles disclose to us His ability to endlessly diversify His operations. God's method in working with man is not the same in all cases. He does not administer His grace in rigid ruts. There is endless variety in His movements. There is marvellous diversity in His operations. He does not fashion His creations in the same mould. Just so our Lord is not circumscribed in His working nor trammelled by models. He works independently. He is His own architect. He furnishes His own patterns which have unlimited variety.

When we consider our Lord's miracles, we discover that quite a number were performed unconditionally. At least there were no conditions accompanying them so far as the Divine record

shows. At His own instance, without being solicited to do so, in order to glorify God and to manifest His own glory and power, this class of miracles was wrought. Many of His mighty works were performed at the moving of His compassion and at the call of suffering and need, as well as at the call of His power. But a number of them were performed by Him in answer to prayer. Some were wrought in answer to the personal prayers of those who were afflicted. Others were performed in answer to the prayers of the friends of those who were afflicted. Those miracles wrought in answer to prayer are very instructive in the uses of prayer.

In these conditional miracles, faith holds the primacy and prayer is faith's vicegerent. We have an illustration of the importance of faith as the condition on which the exercise of Christ's power was based, or the channel through which it flowed, in the incident of a visit He made to Nazareth with its results, or rather its lack of results. Here is the record of the case:

"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

"And he marvelled because of their unbelief."

Those people at Nazareth may have prayed our Lord to raise their dead, or open the eyes of the blind, or heal the lepers, but it was all in vain. The absence of faith, however much of performance may be seen, restrains the exercise of God's power, paralyzes the arm of Christ, and turns to death all signs of life. Unbelief is the one thing which seriously hinders Almighty God in doing mighty works. Matthew's record of this visit to Nazareth says, "And he did not any mighty works there because of their unbelief." Lack of faith ties the hands of Almighty God in His working among the children of men. Prayer to Christ must always be based, backed and impregnated with faith.

The miracle of miracles in the earthly career of our Lord, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, was remarkable for its prayer accompaniment. It was really a prayer issue, something after the issue between the prophets of Baal and Elijah. It was not a prayer for help. It was one of thanksgiving and assured confidence. Let us read it:

"And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

"And I know that thou hearest me always. But because of the people that stand by, I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

It was a prayer mainly for the benefit of those who were present, that they might know that God was with Him because He had answered His prayers, and that faith in God might be radiated in their hearts.

Answered prayers are sometimes the most convincing and faith-creating forces. Unanswered prayers chill the atmosphere and freeze the soil of faith. If Christians knew how to pray so as to have answers to their prayers, evident, immediate, and demonstrative answers from God, faith would be more widely diffused, would become more general, would be more profound, and would be a much more mighty force in the world.

What a valuable lesson of faith and intercessory prayer does the miracle of the healing of the centurion's servant bring to us! The simplicity and strength of the faith of this Roman officer are remarkable, for He believed that it was not needful for our Lord to go directly to his house in order to have his request granted, "But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." And our Lord puts His mark upon this man's faith by saying, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." This man's prayer was the expression of his strong faith, and such faith brought the answer promptly.

The same invaluable lesson we get from the prayer miracle of the case of the Syrophenician woman who went to our Lord in behalf of her stricken daughter, making her daughter's case her own, by pleading, "Lord, help me." Here was importunity, holding on, pressing her case, refusing to let go or to be denied. A strong case it was of intercessory prayer and its benefits. Our Lord seemingly held her off for a while but at last yielded, and put His seal upon her strong faith: "O woman, great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." What a lesson on praying for others and its large benefits!

Individual cases could be named, where the afflicted persons interceded for themselves, illustrations of wonderful things wrought by our Lord in answer to the cries of those who were afflicted. As we read the Evangelists' record, the pages fairly glisten with records of our Lord's miracles wrought in answer to prayer, showing the wonderful things accomplished by the use of this divinely appointed means of grace.

If we turn back to Old Testament times, we have no lack of instances of prayer miracles. The saints of those days were well acquainted with the power of prayer to move God to do great things. Natural laws did not stand in the way of Almighty God when He was appealed to by His praying ones. What a marvellous record is that of Moses as those successive plagues were visited upon Egypt in the effort to make Pharaoh let the children of Israel go that they might serve God! As one after another of these plagues came, Pharaoh would beseech Moses, "Entreat the Lord your God that he may take away this death." And as the plagues themselves were miracles, prayer removed them as quickly as they were sent by Almighty God. The same hand which sent these destructive agencies upon Egypt was moved by the prayers of His servant Moses to remove these same plagues. And the removal of the plagues in answer to prayer was as remarkable a display of Divine power as was the sending of the plagues in the first instance. The removal in answer to prayer would do as much to show God's being and His power as would the plagues themselves. They were miracles of prayer.

All down the line in Old Testament days we see these prayer miracles. God's praying servants had not the least doubt that prayer would work marvellous results and bring the supernatural into the affairs of earth. Miracles and prayer went hand in hand. They were companions. The one was the cause, the other was the effect. The one brought the other into existence. The miracle was the proof that God heard and answered prayer. The miracle was the Divine demonstration that God, who was in heaven, interfered in earth's affairs, intervened to help men, and worked supernaturally if need be to accomplish His purposes in answer to prayer.

Passing to the days of the early Church, we find the same Divine record of prayer miracles. The sad news came to Peter that Dorcas was dead and he was wanted at Joppa. Promptly he made his way to that place. Peter put everybody out of the room, and then he kneeled down and prayed, and with faith said, "Tabitha, arise," and she opened her eyes and sat up. Knee work on the part of Peter did the work. Prayer brought things to pass and saved Dorcas for further work on earth.

Paul was on that noted journey to Rome under guard, and had been shipwrecked on an island. The chief man of the island was Publius, and his old father was critically ill of a bloody flux. Paul laid his hands on the old man, and prayed for him, and God came to the rescue and healed the sick man. Prayer brought the thing desired to pass. God interfered with the laws of nature, either suspending or setting them aside for a season, and answered the prayer of this praying servant of His. And the answer to prayer among those heathen people convinced them that a supernatural power was at work among them. In fact so true was this that they seemed to think a supernatural being had come among them.

Peter was put in prison by Herod after he had killed James with the sword. The young Church was greatly concerned, but they neither lost heart nor gave themselves over to needless fretting and worrying. They had learned before this from whence their help came. They had been schooled in the lesson of prayer. God had intervened before in the behalf of His servants and interfered when His cause was at stake. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." An angel on swift wings comes to the rescue, and in a marvellous and supernatural way releases Peter and leaves the prison doors locked. Locks and prison doors and an unfriendly king cannot stand in the way of Almighty God when His people cry in prayer unto Him. Miracles if need be will be wrought in their behalf to fulfill His promises and to carry forward His plans. After this order does the Word of God illustrate and enlarge and confirm the possibilities of prayer by what may be termed "Prayer miracles."

How quickly to our straits follow our enlargements! God wrought a wonderful work through Samson in enabling him with a crude instrument, the jaw bone of an ass, to slay a thousand men,

giving him a great deliverance. Shortly afterward he was abnormally thirsty, and he was unable to obtain any water. It seemed as if he would perish with thirst. God had saved him from the hands of the Philistines. Could he not as well save him from thirst? So Samson cried unto the Lord, and "God clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout, and when he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived." God could bring water out of the jaw bone just as well as He could give victory by it to Samson. God could change that which had been death-dealing to His enemies and make it life-giving to His servant. God can and will work a miracle in answer to prayer in order to deliver His friends, sooner than He will work one to destroy His enemies. He does both, however, in answer to prayer.

All natural forces are under God's control. He did not create the world and put it under law, and then retire from it, to work out its own destiny, irrespective of the welfare of His intelligent creatures. Natural laws are simply God's laws, by which He governs and regulates all things in nature. Nature is nothing but God's servant. God is above nature, God is not the slave of nature. This being true, God can and will suspend the working of nature's laws, can hold them in abeyance by His almighty hand, can for the time being set them aside, to fulfill His higher purposes in redemption. It is no violation of nature's laws when, in answer to prayer, He who is above nature makes nature His servant, and causes nature to carry out His plans and purposes.

This is the explanation of that wonderful prayer miracle of Old Testament times, when Joshua, in the strength and power of the Lord God, commanded the sun and moon to stand still in order to give time to complete the victory over the enemies of Israel. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that the God of nature and of grace should interfere with His own natural laws for a short season in answer to prayer, and for the good of His cause? Is God tied hand and foot? Has He so circumscribed Himself that He cannot operate the law of prayer? Is the law of nature superior to the law of prayer? Not by any means. He is the God of prayer as well as the God of nature. Both prayer and nature have God as their Maker, their Ruler and their Executor. And prayer is God's servant, just as nature is His servant.

The prayer force in God's government is as strong as any other force, and all natural and other forces must give way before the force of prayer. Sun, moon and stars are under God's control in answer to prayer. Rain, sunshine and drouth obey His will. "Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy wind fulfilling his word." Disease and health are governed by Him. All, all things in heaven and earth, are absolutely under the control of Him who made heaven and earth, and who governs all things according to His own will.

Prayer still works miracles among men and brings to pass great things. It is as true now as when James wrote his Epistle, "The fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And when the records of eternity are read out to an assembled world, then will it appear how much prayer has wrought in this world. Little is now seen of the fruits of prayer compared to all that it has accomplished and is accomplishing. At the judgment day, then will God disclose the things which were brought to pass in this world through the prayers of the saints. Many occurrences which are now taken as a matter of course will then be seen to have happened because of the Lord's praying ones.

The work of George Muller in Bristol, England, was a miracle of the nineteenth century. It will take the opening of the books at the great judgment day to disclose all he wrought through prayer. His orphanage, in which hundreds of fatherless and motherless children were cared for, to sustain which this godly man never asked any one for money with which to pay its running expenses, is a marvel of modern times. His practice was always to ask God for just what was needed, and the answers which came to him read like a record of apostolic times. He prayed for everything and trusted implicitly to God to supply all his needs. And it is a matter of record that never did he and the orphans ever lack for any good thing.

Of a holy man who has done so much for Christ and suffering humanity, it was said at the grave about him:

"He prayed up the walls of an hospital, and the hearts of the nurses. He prayed mission stations into being, and missionaries into faith. He prayed open the hearts of the rich, and gold from the most distant lands."

Luther is quoted as once saying: "The Christian's trade is praying." Certainly, for a great reason, the preacher's trade should be praying. We fear greatly that many preachers know nothing of this trade of praying, and hence they never succeed at this trade. A severe apprenticeship in the trade of praying must be served in order to become a journeyman in it. Not only is it true that there are few journeymen at work at this praying trade, but numbers have never even been apprentices at praying. No wonder so little is accomplished by them. God and the supernatural are left out of their programmes.

Many do not understand this trade of praying because they have never learned it, and hence do not work at it. Many miracles ought to be worked by our praying. Why not? Is the arm of the Lord shortened that He cannot save? Is His ear heavy that He cannot hear? Has prayer lost its power because iniquity abounds and the love of many has grown cold? Has God changed from what He once was? To all these queries we enter an emphatic negative. God can as easily to-day work miracles by praying as He did in the days of old. "I am the Lord; I change not." "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

He who works miracles by praying will first of all work the chief miracle on himself. Oh, that we might fully understand well the Christian's trade of praying, and follow the trade day by day and thus make to ourselves great spiritual wealth!

XIV. Wonders of God Through Prayer

Wisdom and Revelation distinguished by Experience and Scripture. By Experience. Take a weak understanding (but one exceeding holy), having little knowledge of God by way of discursive wisdom and laying this thing to that, and so knowing God: such poor soul is oftentimes hardly able to speak wisely and he will know more of God in one prayer than a great scholar (though also very holy) hath known of Him in all his life; God often deals thus with the weak who are very holy; for if such were shut up to knowing God by way of a sanctified reason, large understandings would have infinite advantage of them and they would grow little in grace and holiness; therefore God makes a supply by breaking in upon their spirits by such irradiations as these. -- THOS. GOODWIN

IN the fearful contest in this world between God and the devil, between good and evil, and between heaven and hell, prayer is the mighty force for overcoming Satan, giving dominion over sin, and defeating hell. Only praying leaders are to be counted on in this dreadful conflict. Praying men alone are to be put to the front. These are the only sort who are able to successfully contend with all the evil forces.

The "prayers of all saints" are a perpetual force against all the powers of darkness. These prayers are a mighty energy in overcoming the world, the flesh and the devil and in shaping the destiny of God's movements, to overcome evil and get the victory over the devil and all his works. The character and energy of God's movements lie in prayer. Victory is to come at the end of praying.

The wonders of God's power are to be kept alive, made real and present, and repeated only by prayer. God is not now so evident in the world, so almighty in manifestation as of old, not because miracles have passed away, nor because God has ceased to work, but because prayer has been shorn of its simplicity, its majesty, and its power. God still lives, and miracles still live while God lives and acts, for miracles are God's ways of acting. Prayer is dwarfed, withered and petrified when faith in God is staggered by doubts of His ability, or through the shrinking caused by fear. When faith has a telescopic, far-off vision of God, prayer works no miracles, and brings

no marvels of deliverance. But when God is seen by faith's closest, fullest eye, prayer makes a history of wonders.

Think about God. Make much of Him, till He broadens and fills the horizon of faith. Then prayer will come into its marvellous inheritance of wonders. The marvels of prayer are seen when we remember that God's purposes are changed by prayer, God's vengeance is stayed by prayer, and God's penalty is remitted by prayer. The whole range of God's dealing with man is affected by prayer. Here is a force which must be increasingly used, that of prayer, a force to which all the events of life ought to be subjected.

To "pray without ceasing," to pray in everything, and to pray everywhere -- these commands of continuity are expressive of the sleepless energy of prayer, of the exhaustless possibilities of prayer, and of its exacting necessity. Prayer can do all things. Prayer must do all things.

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech

That infant lips can try;

Prayer the sublimest strains that reach

The majesty on high."

Prayer is asking God for something, and for something which He has promised. Prayer is using the divinely appointed means for obtaining what we need and for accomplishing what God proposes to do on earth.

"Prayer is appointed to convey

The blessings God designs to give;

Long as they live should Christians pray,

They learn to pray when first they live."

And prayer brings to us blessings which we need, and which only God can give, and which prayer can alone convey to us.

In their broadest fullness, the possibilities of prayer are to be found in the very nature of prayer. This service of prayer is not a mere rite, a ceremony through which we go, a sort of performance. Prayer is going to God for something needed and desired. Prayer is simply asking God to do for us what He has promised us He will do if we ask Him. The answer is a part of prayer, and is God's part of it. God's doing the thing asked for is as much a part of the prayer as the asking of the thing is prayer. Asking is man's part. Giving is God's part. The praying belongs to us. The answer belongs to God.

Man makes the plea and God makes the answer. The plea and the answer compose the prayer. God is more ready, more willing and more anxious to give the answer than man is to give the asking. The possibilities of prayer lie in the ability of man to ask large things and in the ability of God to give large things.

God's only condition and limitation of prayer is found in the character of the one who prays. The measure of our faith and praying is the measure of His giving. Like as our Lord said to the blind man, "According to your faith be it unto you," so it is the same in praying, "According to the measure of your asking, be it unto you." God measures the answer according to the prayer. He is limited by the law of prayer in the measure of the answers He gives to prayer. As is the measure of prayer, so will be the answer.

If the person praying has the characteristics which warrant praying, then the possibilities are illimitable. They are declared to be "all things whatsoever." Here is no limitation in character or kind, in circumference or condition. The man who prays can pray for anything and for everything, and God will give everything and anything. If we limit God in the asking, He will be limited in the giving.

Looking ahead, God declares in His Word that the wonder of wonders will be so great in the last days that everything animate and inanimate will be excited by His power:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come to mind.

"But be ye glad and rejoice, forever, in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

But these days of God's mighty working, the days of His magnificent and wonder-creating power, will be days of magnificent praying.

"And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

It has ever been so. God's marvellous, miracle-working times have been times of marvellous, miracle-working praying. The greatest thing in God's worship by His own estimate is praying. Its chief service and its distinguishing feature is prayer:

"Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offering and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar, for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

This was true under all the gorgeous rites and parade of ceremonies under the Jewish worship. Sacrifice, offering and the atoning blood were all to be impregnated with prayer. The smoke of burnt offering and perfumed incense which filled God's house was to be but the flame of prayer, and all of God's people were to be anointed priests to minister at His altar of prayer. So all things were to be done with mighty prayer, because mighty prayer was the fruitage and inspiration of mighty faith. But much more is it now true every way under the more simple service of the Gospel.

The course of nature, the movements of the planets, and the clouds, have yielded to the influence of prayer, and God has changed and checked the order of the sun and the seasons under the mighty energies of prayer. It is only necessary to note the remarkable incident when Joshua, through this divine means of prayer, caused the sun and the moon to stand still in order that a more complete victory could be given to the armies of Israel in the contest with the armies of the Amorites.

If we believe God's word, we are bound to believe that prayer affects God, and affects Him mightily; that prayer avails, and that prayer avails mightily. There are wonders in prayer because there are wonders in God. Prayer has no talismanic influence. It is no mere fetish. It has no so-called powers of magic. It is simply making known our requests to God for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ. It is just yielding our requests to a Father, who knows all things, who has control of all things, and who is able to do all things. Prayer is infinite ignorance trusting to the wisdom of God. Prayer is the voice of need crying out to Him who is inexhaustible in resources. Prayer is helplessness reposing with childlike confidence on the word of its Father in heaven. Prayer is but the verbal expression of the heart of perfect confidence in the infinite wisdom, the power and the riches of Almighty God, who has placed at our command in prayer everything we need.

How all the gracious results of such gracious times are to come to the world through prayer, we are taught in God's Word. God's heart seems to overflow with delight at the prospect of thus blessing His people. By the mouth of the Prophet Joel, God thus speaks:

"Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things.

"Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength.

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

"And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker worm and the caterpillar, and the palmer worm, my great army which I sent among you.

"And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed.

"And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed."

What wonderful material things are these which God proposes to bestow upon His people! They are marvellous temporal blessings He promises to bestow on them. They almost astonish the mind when they are studied. But God does not restrict His large blessings to temporal things. Looking down the ages, He foresees Pentecost, and makes these exceeding great and precious promises concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, these very words being quoted by Peter on that glad day of Pentecost:

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions;

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaidens in those days will I pour out my Spirit.

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke;

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord shall come.

"And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."

But these marvellous blessings will not be bestowed upon the people by sovereign power, nor be given unconditionally. God's people must do something precedent to such glorious results. Fasting and prayer must play an important part as conditions of receiving such large blessings. By the mouth of the same prophet, God thus speaks:

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning;

"And rend your heart, and not your garments; and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

"Who knoweth if he will turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat offering, and a drink offering, unto the Lord your God?"

"Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.

"Gather the people; sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children; and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

"Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them; Wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?"

"Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

"Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith; and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen."

Prayer reaches even as far as does the presence of God go. It reaches everywhere because God is everywhere. Let us read from Psalm 139:1:

"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there.

"If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea;

"Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

This may be said as truly of prayer as it is said of the God of prayer. The mysteries of death have been fathomed by prayer, and its victims have been brought back to life by the power of prayer, because God holds dominion over death, and prayer reaches where God reigns. Elisha and Elijah both invaded the realms of death by their prayers, and asserted and established the power of God as the power of prayer. Peter by prayer brings back to life the saintly Dorcas to the early

Church. Paul doubtless exercised the power of prayer as he fell upon and embraced Eutychus who fell out of the window when Paul preached at night.

Our Lord several times explicitly declared the far-reaching possibilities and the illimitable nature of prayer as covering "all things whatsoever." The conditions of prayer are exalted into a personal union with Himself. That successful praying glorified God was the condition upon which labourers of first quality and sufficient in numbers were to be secured in order to press forward God's work in the world. The giving of all good things is conditioned upon asking for them. The giving of the Holy Spirit to God's children is based upon the asking of the children of God. God's will on earth can only be secured by prayer. Daily bread is obtained and sanctified by prayer. Reverence, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from the evil one, and salvation from temptation, are in the hands of prayer.

The first jewelled foundation Christ lays as the basic principle of His religion in the Sermon on the Mount reads on this wise: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." As prayer follows from the inner sense of need, and prayer is the utterance of a deep poverty-stricken spirit, so it is evident he who is "poor in spirit" is where he can pray and where he does pray.

Prayer is a tremendous force in the world. Take this picture of prayer and its wonderful possibilities. God's cause is quiet and motionless on the earth. An angel, strong and impatient to be of service, waits round about the throne of God in heaven, and in order to move things on earth and give impetus to the movements of God's cause in this world, he gathers all the prayers of all God's saints in all ages, and puts them before God just like Aaron used to do, cloud, flavour and sweeten himself with the delicious incense when he entered the holy sanctuary, made awful by the immediate presence of God. The angel impregnates all the air with that holy offering of prayers, and then takes its fiery body and casts it on the earth.

Note the remarkable result. "There were voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake." What tremendous force is this which has thus convulsed the earth? The answer is that it is the "prayers of the saints," turned loose by the angel round about the throne, who has charge of those prayers. This mighty force is prayer, like the power of earth's mightiest dynamite.

Take another fact showing the wonders of prayer wrought by Almighty God in answer to the praying of His true prophet. The nation of God's people was fearfully apostate in head and heart and life. A man of God went to the apostate king with the fearful message which meant so much to the land, "There shall not be rain nor dew these years but according to my word." Whence this mighty force which can stay the clouds, seal up the rain, and hold back the dew? Who is this who speaks with such authority? Is there any force which can do this on earth? Only one, and that force is prayer, wielded in the hands of a praying prophet of God. It is he who has influence with God and over God in prayer, who thus dares to assume such authority over the forces of nature. This man Elijah is skilled in the use of that tremendous force. "And Elijah prayed earnestly, and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months."

But this is not all the story. He who could by prayer lock up the clouds and seal up the rain, could also unlock the clouds and unseal the rain by the same mighty power of prayer. "And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth gave forth her fruit."

Mighty is the power of prayer. Wonderful are its fruits. Remarkable things are brought to pass by men of prayer. Many are the wonders of prayer wrought by an Almighty hand. The evidences of prayer's accomplishments almost stagger us. They challenge our faith. They encourage our expectations when we pray.

From a cursory compend like this, we get a bird's-eye view of the large possibilities of prayer and the urgent necessity of prayer. We see how God commits Himself into the hands of those who truly pray. Great are the wonders of prayer because great is the God who hears and answers prayer. Great are these wonders because great are the rich promises made by a great God to those who pray.

We have seen prayer's far-reaching possibilities and its absolute, unquestioned necessity, and we have also seen that the foregoing particulars and elaboration were requisite in order to bring the subject more clearly, truly and strongly before our minds. The Church more than ever needs profound convictions of the vast importance of prayer in prosecuting the work committed to it. More praying must be done and better praying if the Church shall be able to perform the difficult, delicate and responsible task given to it by her Lord and Master. Defeat awaits a non-praying Church. Success is sure to follow a Church given to much prayer. The supernatural element in the Church, without which it must fail, comes only through praying. More time, in this busy bustling age, must be given to prayer by a God-called Church. More thought must be given to prayer in this thoughtless, silly age of superficial religion. More heart and soul must be in the praying that is done if the Church would go forth in the strength of her Lord and perform the wonders which is her heritage by Divine promise.

"O Spirit of the Living God,
In all thy plenitude of grace,
Where'er the foot of man hath trod,
Descend on our apostate race.
"Give tongues of fire and hearts of love,
To preach the reconciling word,
Give power and unction from above,
Where'er the joyful sound is heard."

It might be in order to give an instance or two in the life of Rev. John Wesley, showing some remarkable displays of spiritual power. Many times it is stated this noted man gathered his company together, and prayed all night, or till the mighty power of God came upon them. It was at a Watch Night service, at Fetter Lane, December 31, 1738, when Charles and John Wesley, with Whitfield, sat up till after midnight singing and praying. This is the account:

"About three o'clock in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, so that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we had recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice, 'We praise thee, O God! We acknowledge thee to be the Lord!'"

On another occasion, Mr. Wesley gives us this account:

"After midnight, about a hundred of us walked home together, singing, rejoicing and praising God."

Often does this godly man make the record to this effect, "We continued in ministering the Word and in prayer and praise till morning."

One of his all-night wrestlings in prayer alone with God is said to have greatly affected a Catholic priest, who was really awakened by the occurrence to a realization of his spiritual condition.

As often as God manifested His power in Scriptural times in working wonders through prayer, He has not left Himself without witness in modern times. Prayer brings the Holy Spirit upon men to-day in answer to importunate, continued prayer just as it did before Pentecost. The wonders of prayer have not ceased.

XV. Prayer and Divine Providence

Again a poor soul is tempted to doubt the being of a God; arguments by way of reason and wisdom may convince him he may get a little light from them; but sometimes God will come into his soul with an immediate beam and scatter all his doubts, more than a thousand arguments can do; the way of wisdom thus of knowing there is a God, that unties the knot; but the other cuts it in pieces presently; so it is in all temptations else a man goes the way of wisdom and sanctified

reason, and looks into his own heart and there sees the work of grace and argues from all God's dealings with him; yet all these satisfy not a man: but God comes with a light in his spirit and all his bolts and shackles are knocked off in a moment; here we see the way of Wisdom and the way of Revelation. -- THOS. GOODWIN

PRAYER and the Divine providence are closely related. They stand in close companionship. They cannot possibly be separated. So closely connected are they that to deny one is to abolish the other. Prayer supposes a providence, while providence is the result of and belongs to prayer. All answers to prayer are but the intervention of the providence of God in the affairs of men. Providence has to do specially with praying people. Prayer, providence and the Holy Spirit are a trinity, which cooperate with each other and are in perfect harmony with one another. Prayer is but the request of man for God through the Holy Spirit to interfere in behalf of him who prays.

What is termed providence is the Divine superintendence over earth and its affairs. It implies gracious provisions which Almighty God makes for all His creatures, animate and inanimate, intelligent or otherwise. Once admit that God is the Creator and Preserver of all men, and concede that He is wise and intelligent, and logically we are driven to the conclusion that Almighty God has a direct superintendence of those whom He has created and whom He preserves in being. In fact creation and preservation suppose a superintending providence. What is called Divine providence is simply Almighty God governing the world for its best interests, and overseeing everything for the good of mankind.

Men talk about a "general providence" as separate from a "special providence." There is no general providence but what is made up of special providences. A general supervision on the part of God supposes a special and individual supervision of each person, yea, even every creature, animal and all alike.

God is everywhere, watching, superintending, overseeing, governing everything in the highest interest of man, and carrying forward His plans and executing His purposes in creation and redemption. He is not an absentee God. He did not make the world with all that is in it, and turn it over to so-called natural laws, and then retire into the secret places of the universe having no regard for it or for the working of His laws. His hand is on the throttle. The work is not beyond His control. Earth's inhabitants and its affairs are not running independent of Almighty God.

Any and all providences are special providences, and prayer and this sort of providences work hand in hand. God's hand is in everything. None are beyond Him nor beneath His notice. Not that God orders everything which comes to pass. Man is still a free agent, but the wisdom of Almighty God comes out when we remember that while man is free, and the devil is abroad in the land, God can superintend and overrule earth's affairs for the good of man and for His glory, and cause even the wrath of man to praise Him.

Nothing occurs by accident under the superintendence of an all-wise and perfectly just God. Nothing happens by chance in God's moral or natural government. God is a God of order, a God of law, but none the less a superintendent in the interest of His intelligent and redeemed creatures. Nothing can take place without the knowledge of God.

"His all surrounding sight surveys

Our rising and our rest;

Our public walks, our private ways,

The secrets of our breasts."

Jesus Christ sets this matter at rest when He says, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

God cannot be ruled out of the world. The doctrine of prayer brings Him directly into the world, and moves Him to a direct interference with all of this world's affairs.

To rule Almighty God out of the providences of life is to strike a direct blow at prayer and its

efficacy. Nothing takes place in the world without God's consent, yet not in a sense that He either approves everything or is responsible for all things which happen. God is not the author of sin.

The question is sometimes asked, "Is God in everything?" as if there are some things which are outside of the government of God, beyond His attention, with which He is not concerned. If God is not in everything, what is the Christian doing praying according to Paul's directions to the Philippians?

"Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

Are we to pray for some things and about things with which God has nothing to do? According to the doctrine that God is not in everything, then we are outside the realm of God when "in everything we make our requests unto God."

Then what will we do with that large promise so comforting to all of God's saints in all ages and in all climes, a promise which belongs to prayer and which is embraced in a special providence: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"?

If God is not in everything, then what are the things we are to expect from the "all things" which "work together for good to them that love God"? And if God is not in everything in His providence what are the things which are to be left out of our praying? We can lay it down as a proposition, borne out by Scripture, which has a sure foundation, that nothing ever comes into the life of God's saints without His consent. God is always there when it occurs. He is not far away. He whose eye is on the sparrow is also upon His saints. His presence which fills immensity is always where His saints are. "Certainly I will be with thee," is the word of God to every child of His.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them." And nothing can touch those who fear God only with the permission of the angel of the Lord. Nothing can break through the encampment without the permission of the captain of the Lord's hosts. Sorrows, afflictions, want, trouble, or even death, cannot enter this Divine encampment without the consent of Almighty God, and even then it is to be used by God in His plans for the good of His saints and for carrying out His plans and purposes:

"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

"Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These evil things, unpleasant and afflictive, may come with Divine permission, but God is on the spot, His hand is in all of them, and He sees to it that they are woven into His plans. He causes them to be overruled for the good of His people, and eternal good is brought out of them. These things, with hundreds of others, belong to the disciplinary processes of Almighty God in administering His government for the children of men.

The providence of God reaches as far as the realm of prayer. It has to do with everything for which we pray. Nothing is too small for the eye of God, nothing too insignificant for His notice and His care. God's providence has to do with even the stumbling of the feet of His saints:

"For he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

"They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

Read again our Lord's words about the sparrow, for He says, "Five sparrows are sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God." Paul asks the pointed question, "Doth God care for oxen?" His care reaches to the smallest things and has to do with the most insignificant matters which concern men. He who believes in the God of providence is prepared to see His hand in all things which come to him, and can pray over everything.

Not that the saint who trusts the God of providence, and who takes all things to God in prayer, can explain the mysteries of Divine providence, but the praying ones recognize God in everything,

see Him in all that comes to them, and are ready to say as John said to Peter at the Sea of Galilee, "It is the Lord."

Praying saints do not presume to interpret God's dealings with them nor undertake to explain God's providences, but they have learned to trust God in the dark as well as in the light, to have faith in God even when "cares like a wild deluge come, and storms of sorrow fall."

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him." Praying saints rest themselves upon the words of Jesus to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." None but the praying ones can see God's hands in the providences of life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," shall see God here in His providences, in His Word, in His Church. These are they who do not rule God out of earth's affairs, and who believe God interferes with matters of earth for them.

While God's providence is over all men, yet His supervision and administration of His government are peculiarly in the interest of His people.

Prayer brings God's providence into action. Prayer puts God to work in overseeing and directing earth's affairs for the good of men. Prayer opens the way when it is shut up or straitened.

Providence deals more especially with temporalities. It is in this realm that the providence of God shines brightest and is most apparent. It has to do with food and raiment, with business difficulties, with strangely interposing and saving from danger, and with helping in emergencies at very opportune and critical times.

The feeding of the Israelites during the wilderness journey is a striking illustration of the providence of God in taking care of the temporal wants of His people. His dealings with those people show how He provided for them in that long pilgrimage.

"Day by day the manna fell,
O to learn this lesson well!
Still by constant mercy fed,
Give me, Lord, my daily bread.

"Day by day the promise reads,
Daily strength for daily needs;
Cast foreboding fears away,
Take the manna of to-day."

Our Lord teaches this same lesson of a providence which clothes and feeds His people, in the Sermon on the Mount, when He says, "Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Then He directs attention to the fact that it is God's providence which feeds the fowls of the air, clothes the lilies of the field, and asks if God does all this for birds and flowers, will He not care for them?

All of this teaching leads up to the need of a childlike, implicit trust in an overruling providence, which looks after the temporal wants of the children of men. And let it be noted specially that all this teaching stands closely connected in the utterances of our Lord with what He says about prayer, thus closely connecting a Divine oversight with prayer and its promises.

We have an impressive lesson on Divine providence in the case of Elijah when he was sent to the brook Cherith, where God actually employed the ravens to feed His prophet. Here was an interposition so plain that God cannot be ruled out of life's temporalities. Before God will allow His servant to want bread, He moves the birds of the air to do His bidding and take care of His prophet.

Nor was this all. When the brook ran dry, God sent him to a poor widow, who had just enough meal and oil for the urgent needs of the good woman and her son. Yet she divided with him her last morsel of bread. What was the result? The providence of God interposed, and as long as the drouth lasted, the cruse of oil never failed nor did the meal in the barrel give out.

The Old Testament sparkles with illustrations of the provisions of Almighty God for His people, and show clearly God's overruling providence. In fact the Old Testament is largely the account of a providence which dealt with a peculiar people, anticipating their every temporal want, which ministered to them when in emergencies, and which sanctified to them their troubles.

It is worth while to read that old hymn of Newton's, which has in it so much of the providence of God:

"Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite,
Yet one thing secures me, whatever betide,
The promise assures us, the Lord will provide.

"The birds without barns, or storehouse are fed,
From them let us learn, to trust for our bread;
His saints what is fitting, shall ne'er be denied,
So long as it's written, the Lord will provide."

In fact many of our old hymns are filled with sentiments in song about a Divine providence, which are worth while to be read and sung even in this day.

God is in the most afflictive and sorrowing events of life. All such events are subjects of prayer, and this is so for the reason that everything which comes into the life of the praying one is in the providence of God, and takes place under His superintending hand. Some would rule God out of the sad and hard things of life. They tell us that God has nothing to do with certain events which bring such grief to us. They say that God is not in the death of children, that they die from natural causes, and that it is but the working of natural laws.

Let us ask what are nature's laws but the laws of God, the laws by which God rules the world? And what is nature anyway? And who made nature? How great the need to know that God is above nature, is in control of nature, and is in nature? We need to know that nature or natural laws are but the servants of Almighty God who made these laws, and that He is directly in them, and they are but the Divine servants to carry out God's gracious designs, and are made to execute His gracious purposes. The God of providence, the God to whom the Christians pray, and the God who interposes in behalf of the children of men for their good, is above nature, in perfect and absolute control of all that belongs to nature. And no law of nature can crush the life out of even a child without God giving His consent, and without such a sad event occurring directly under His all-seeing eye, and without His being immediately present.

David believed this doctrine when he fasted and prayed for the life of his child, for why pray and fast for a baby to be spared, if God has nothing to do with its death should it die?

Moreover, "does care for oxen," and have a direct oversight of the sparrows which fall to the ground, and yet have nothing to do with the going out of this world of an immortal child? Still further, the death of a child, no matter if it should come alone as some people claim by the operation of the laws of nature, let it be kept in mind that it is a great affliction to the parents of the child. Where do these innocent parents come in under any such doctrine? It becomes a great sorrow to mother and father. Are they not to recognize the hand of God in the death of the child? And is there no providence or Divine oversight in the taking away of their child to them? David recognized the facts clearly that God had to do with keeping his child in life; that prayer might avail in saving his child from death, and that when the child died it was because God had ordered it. Prayer and providence in all this affair worked in harmonious cooperation, and David thoroughly understood it. No child ever dies without the direct permission of Almighty God, and such an event takes place in His providence for wise and beneficent ends. God works it into His plans concerning the child himself and the parents and all concerned. Moreover, it is a subject of prayer whether the child lives or dies.

"In each event of life how clear,

Thy ruling hand I see;
Each blessing to my soul most dear,
Because conferred by Thee."

XVI. Prayer and Divine Providence (Continued)

A proper idea of prayer is the pouring out of the soul before God, with the hand of faith placed on the head of the Sacrificial Offering, imploring mercy, and presenting itself a free-will offering of itself unto God, giving up body, soul and spirit, to be guided and governed as may seem good to His heavenly wisdom, desiring only perfectly to love Him, and to serve Him with all its powers, at all times, while He has a being. -- ADAM CLARKE

TWO kinds of providences are seen in God's dealings with men, direct providences and permissive providences. God orders some things, others He permits. But when He permits an afflictive dispensation to come into the life of His saint, even though it originate in a wicked mind, and it be the act of a sinner, yet before it strikes His saint and touches him, it becomes God's providence to the saint. In other words, God consents to some things in this world, without in the least being responsible for them, or in the least excusing him who originates them, many of them very painful and afflictive, but such events or things always become to the saint of God the providence of God to him. So that the saint can say in each and all of these sad and distressing experiences, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." Or with the Psalmist, he may say, "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

This was the explanation of all of Job's severe afflictions. They came to him in the providence of God, even though they had their origin in the mind of Satan, who devised them and put them into execution. God gave Satan permission to afflict Job, to take away his property, and to rob him of his children. But Job did not attribute these things to blind chance, nor to accident, neither did he charge them to Satanic agency, but said, "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He took these things as coming from his God, whom he feared and served and trusted.

And to the same effect are Job's words to his wife when she left God out of the question, and wickedly told her husband, "Curse God and die." Job replied, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

It is no surprise under such a view of God's dealings with Job that it should be recorded of this man of faith, "In all this did not Job sin with his lips," and in another place was it said, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." In nothing concerning God and the events of life do men talk more foolishly and even wickedly than in ignorantly making up their judgments on the providences of God in this world. O that we had men after the type of Job, who though afflictions and privations are severe in the extreme, yet they see the hand of God in providence and openly recognize God in it.

The sequel to all these painful experiences are but illustrations of that familiar text of Paul, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." Job received back more in the end than was ever taken away from him. He emerged from under these tremendous troubles with victory, and became till this day the exponent and example of great patience and strong faith in God's providences. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job," rings down the line of Divine revelation. God took hold of the evil acts of Satan, and worked them into His plans and brought great good out of them. He made evil work out for good without in the least endorsing the evil or conniving at it.

We have the same gracious truth of Divine providence evidenced in the story of Joseph and his brethren, who sold him wickedly into Egypt and forsook him and deceived their old father.

All this had its origin in their evil minds. And yet when it reached God's plans and purposes, it became God's providence both to Joseph and to the future of Jacob's descendants. Hear Joseph as he spoke to his brethren after he had discovered himself to them down in Egypt, -- in which he traces all the painful events back to the mind of God and made them have to do with fulfilling God's purposes concerning Jacob and his posterity:

"Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity on the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

"So that it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

Cowper's well-known hymn might well be read in this connection, one verse of which is sufficient just now:

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."

The very same line of argument appears in the betrayal of our Lord by Judas. Of course it was the wicked act of an evil man, but it never touched our Lord till the Father gave His consent, and God took the evil design of Judas and worked it into His own plans for the redemption of the world. It did not excuse Judas in the least that good came out of his wicked act, but it does magnify the wisdom and greatness of God in so overruling it as that man's redemption was secured. It is so always in God's dealings with man. Things which come to us from second causes are no surprise to God, nor are they beyond His control. His hand can take hold of them in answer to prayer and lie can make afflictions, from whatever quarter they may come, "work for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The providence of God goes before His saints, opens the way, removes difficulties, solves problems and brings deliverances when escape seems hopeless. God brought Israel out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, His chosen leader of that people. They came to the Red Sea. But there were the waters in front, with no crossing nor bridges. On one side were high mountains, and behind came the hosts of Pharaoh. Every avenue of escape was closed. There seemed no hope. Despair almost reigned. But there was one way open which men overlooked, and that was the upward way. A man of prayer, Moses, the man of faith in God, was on the ground. This man of prayer, who recognized God in providence, with commanding force, spoke to the people on this wise:

"Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord."

With this he lifted up his rod, and according to Divine command, he stretched his hand over the sea. The waters divided, and the command issued forth, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." And Israel went over the sea dry shod. God had opened a way, and what seemed an impossible emergency was remarkably turned into a wonderful deliverance. Nor is this the only time that God has interposed in behalf of His people when their way was shut up.

The whole history of the Jews is the story of God's providence. The Old Testament cannot be accepted as true without receiving the doctrine of a Divine, overruling providence. The Bible is preeminently a Divine revelation. It reveals things. It discovers, uncovers, brings to light things concerning God, His character and His manner of governing this world, and its inhabitants, not discoverable by human reason, by science or by philosophy. The Bible is a book in which God reveals Himself to men. And this is particularly true when we consider God's care of His creatures and His oversight of the world, His superintendence of its affairs. And to dispute the doctrine of providence is to discredit the entire revelation of God's Word. Everywhere this Word discovers God's hand in man's affairs.

The Old Testament especially, but also the New Testament, is the story of prayer and providence. It is the tale of God's dealings with men of prayer, men of faith in His direct

interference in earth's affairs, and with God's manner of superintending the world in the interest of His people and in carrying forward His work in His plans and purposes in creation and redemption.

Praying men and God's providence go together. This was thoroughly understood by the praying ones of the Scripture. They prayed over everything because God had to do with everything. They took all things to God in prayer because they believed in a Divine providence which had to do with all things. They believed in an ever present God, who had not retired into the secret recesses of space, leaving His saints and His creatures to the mercy of a tyrant, called nature, and its laws, blind, unyielding, with no regard for any one who stood in its way. If that be the correct conception of God, why pray to Him? He is too far away to hear them when they pray, and too unconcerned to trouble Himself about those on earth.

These men of prayer had an implicit faith in a God of special providence, who would gladly, promptly and readily respond to their cries for help in times of need and in seasons of distress.

The so-called "laws of nature" did not trouble them in the least. God was above nature, in control of nature, while nature was but the servant of Almighty God. Nature's laws were but His own laws, since nature was but the offspring of the Divine hand. Laws of nature might be suspended and no evil would result. Every intelligent person is conversant every day when he sees man overruling and overcoming the law of gravitation, and no one is surprised or raises his hand or voice in horror at the thought of nature's laws being violated. God is a God of law and order, and all His laws in nature, in providence and in grace work together in perfect accord, with no clash nor disharmony.

God suspends or overcomes the laws of disease and rain often without or independent of prayer. But quite often He does this in answer to prayer. Prayer for rain or for dry weather is not outside the moral government of God, nor is it asking God to violate any law which He has made, but only asking Him to give rain in His own way, according to His own laws. So also the prayer for the rebuking of disease is not a request at war with law either natural or otherwise, but is a prayer in accordance with law, even the law of prayer, a law set in operation by Almighty God as the so-called natural law which governs rain or which controls disease.

The believer in the law of prayer has strong ground on which to base his plea. And the believer in a Divine providence, the companion of prayer, stands equally on strong granite foundations, from which he need not be shaken. These twin doctrines stand fast and will abide forever.

"In every condition, in sickness, in health,
In poverty's vale or abounding in wealth;
At home or abroad, on the land or the sea,
As thy days may demand shall thy strength ever be."

POWER THROUGH PRAYER

EDWARD M. BOUNDS

PREFACE

Power through Prayer has been called “one of the truly great masterpieces on the theme of prayer.” The term *classic* can appropriately be applied to this outstanding book.

In twenty provocative and inspiring chapters, each prefaced with quotations from spiritual giants, Edward M. Bounds stresses the imperative of vital prayer in the life of a pastor. He says, “. . . every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry is weak as a factor in God’s work and is powerless to project God’s cause in this world.”

Recreation to a minister must be as whetting is with the mower—that is, to be used only so far as is necessary for his work. May a physician in plague-time take any more relaxation or recreation than is necessary for his life, when so many are expecting his help in a case of life and death? Will you stand by and see sinners gasping under the pangs of death, and say: “God doth not require me to make myself a drudge to save them?” Is this the voice of ministerial or Christian compassion or rather of sensual laziness and diabolical cruelty.—Richard Baxter

Misemployment of time is injurious to the mind. In illness I have looked back with self-reproach on days spent in my study; I was wading through history and poetry and monthly journals, but I was in my study! Another man’s trifling is notorious to all observers, but what am I doing? Nothing, perhaps, that has reference to the spiritual good of my congregation. Be much in retirement and prayer. Study the honor and glory of your Master.—Richard Cecil

1 Men of Prayer Needed

Study universal holiness of life. Your whole usefulness depends on this, for your sermons last but an hour or two; your life preaches all the week. If Satan can only make a covetous minister a lover of praise, of pleasure, of good eating, he has ruined your ministry. Give yourself to prayer, and get your texts, your thoughts, your words from God. Luther spent his best three hours in prayer.—Robert Murray McCheyne

WE are constantly on a stretch, if not on a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organizations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man or sink the man in the plan or organization. God’s plan is to make much of the man, far more of him than of anything else. Men are God’s method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. “There was a man sent from God whose name was John.” The dispensation that heralded and prepared the way for Christ was bound up in that man John. “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” The world’s salvation comes out of that cradled Son. When Paul appeals to the personal character of the men who rooted the gospel in the world, he solves the mystery of their success. The glory and efficiency of the gospel is staked on the men who proclaim it. When God declares that “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him,” he declares the necessity of men and his dependence on them as a channel through which to exert his power upon the world. This vital, urgent truth is one that this age of machinery is apt to forget. The forgetting of it is as baneful on the work of God as would be the striking of the sun from his sphere. Darkness, confusion, and death would ensue.

What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in

prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men—men of prayer.

An eminent historian has said that the accidents of personal character have more to do with the revolutions of nations than either philosophic historians or democratic politicians will allow. This truth has its application in full to the gospel of Christ, the character and conduct of the followers of Christ—Christianize the world, transfigure nations and individuals. Of the preachers of the gospel it is eminently true.

The character as well as the fortunes of the gospel is committed to the preacher. He makes or mars the message from God to man. The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must not only be golden, but open and flawless, that the oil may have a full, unhindered, unwasted flow.

The man makes the preacher. God must make the man. The messenger is, if possible, more than the message. The preacher is more than the sermon. The preacher makes the sermon. As the life-giving milk from the mother's bosom is but the mother's life, so all the preacher says is tintured, impregnated by what the preacher is. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and the taste of the vessel impregnates and may discolor. The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes twenty years to make a sermon, because it takes twenty years to make the man. The true sermon is a thing of life. The sermon grows because the man grows. The sermon is forceful because the man is forceful. The sermon is holy because the man is holy. The sermon is full of the divine unction because the man is full of the divine unction.

Paul termed it "My gospel;" not that he had degraded it by his personal eccentricities or diverted it by selfish appropriation, but the gospel was put into the heart and lifeblood of the man Paul, as a personal trust to be executed by his Pauline traits, to be set aflame and empowered by the fiery energy of his fiery soul. Paul's sermons—what were they? Where are they? Skeletons, scattered fragments, afloat on the sea of inspiration! But the man Paul, greater than his sermons, lives forever, in full form, feature and stature, with his molding hand on the Church. The preaching is but a voice. The voice in silence dies, the text is forgotten, the sermon fades from memory; the preacher lives.

The sermon cannot rise in its life-giving forces above the man. Dead men give out dead sermons, and dead sermons kill. Everything depends on the spiritual character of the preacher. Under the Jewish dispensation the high priest had inscribed in jeweled letters on a golden frontlet: "Holiness to the Lord." So every preacher in Christ's ministry must be molded into and mastered by this same holy motto. It is a crying shame for the Christian ministry to fall lower in holiness of character and holiness of aim than the Jewish priesthood. Jonathan Edwards said: "I went on with my eager pursuit after more holiness and conformity to Christ. The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness." The gospel of Christ does not move by popular waves. It has no self-propagating power. It moves as the men who have charge of it move. The preacher must impersonate the gospel. Its divine, most distinctive features must be embodied in him. The constraining power of love must be in the preacher as a projecting, eccentric, an all-commanding, self-oblivious force. The energy of self-denial must be his being, his heart and blood and bones. He must go forth as a man among men, clothed with humility, abiding in meekness, wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove; the bonds of a servant with the spirit of a king, a king in high, royal, in dependent bearing, with the simplicity and sweetness of a child. The preacher must throw himself, with all the abandon of a perfect, self-emptying faith and a self-consuming zeal, into his work for the salvation of men. Hearty, heroic, compassionate, fearless martyrs must the men be who take hold of and shape a generation for God. If they be timid time servers, place seekers, if they be men pleasers or men fearers, if their faith has a weak hold on God or his Word, if their denial be broken by any phase of self or the world, they cannot take hold of the Church nor the world for God.

The preacher's sharpest and strongest preaching should be to himself. His most difficult, delicate, laborious, and thorough work must be with himself. The training of the twelve was the great, difficult, and enduring work of Christ. Preachers are not sermon makers, but men makers and saint makers, and he only is well-trained for this business who has made himself a man and a saint. It is not great talents nor great learning nor great preachers that God needs, but men great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God—men always preaching by holy sermons in the pulpit, by holy lives out of it. These can mold a generation for God.

After this order, the early Christians were formed. Men they were of solid mold, preachers after the heavenly type—heroic, stalwart, soldierly, saintly. Preaching with them meant self-denying, self-crucifying, serious, toilsome, martyr business. They applied themselves to it in a way that told on their generation, and formed in its womb a generation yet unborn for God. The preaching man is to be the praying man. Prayer is the preacher's mightiest weapon. An almighty force in itself, it gives life and force to all.

The real sermon is made in the closet. The man—God's man—is made in the closet. His life and his profoundest convictions were born in his secret communion with God. The burdened and tearful agony of his spirit, his weightiest and sweetest messages were got when alone with God. Prayer makes the man; prayer makes the preacher; prayer makes the pastor.

The pulpit of this day is weak in praying. The pride of learning is against the dependent humility of prayer. Prayer is with the pulpit too often only official—a performance for the routine of service. Prayer is not to the modern pulpit the mighty force it was in Paul's life or Paul's ministry. Every preacher who does not make prayer a mighty factor in his own life and ministry is weak as a factor in God's work and is powerless to project God's cause in this world.

2 Our Sufficiency Is of God

But above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behavior, and the fewness and fullness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverend frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his prayer. And truly it was a testimony. He knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men, for they that know him most will see most reason to approach him with reverence and fear.—William Penn of George Fox

THE sweetest graces by a slight perversion may bear the bitterest fruit. The sun gives life, but sunstrokes are death. Preaching is to give life; it may kill. The preacher holds the keys; he may lock as well as unlock. Preaching is God's great institution for the planting and maturing of spiritual life. When properly executed, its benefits are untold; when wrongly executed, no evil can exceed its damaging results. It is an easy matter to destroy the flock if the shepherd be unwary or the pasture be destroyed, easy to capture the citadel if the watchmen be asleep or the food and water be poisoned. Invested with such gracious prerogatives, exposed to so great evils, involving so many grave responsibilities, it would be a parody on the shrewdness of the devil and a libel on his character and reputation if he did not bring his master influences to adulterate the preacher and the preaching. In face of all this, the exclamatory interrogatory of Paul, "Who is sufficient for these things?" is never out of order.

Paul says: "Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The true ministry is God-touched, God-enabled, and God-made. The Spirit of God is on the preacher in anointing power, the fruit of the Spirit is in his heart, the Spirit of God has vitalized the man and the word; his preaching gives life, gives life as the spring gives life; gives life as the resurrection gives life; gives ardent life as the summer gives ardent life; gives fruitful life as the

autumn gives fruitful life. The life-giving preacher is a man of God, whose heart is ever athirst for God, whose soul is ever following hard after God, whose eye is single to God, and in whom by the power of God's Spirit the flesh and the world have been crucified and his ministry is like the generous flood of a life-giving river.

The preaching that kills is non-spiritual preaching. The ability of the preaching is not from God. Lower sources than God have given to it energy and stimulant. The Spirit is not evident in the preacher nor his preaching. Many kinds of forces may be projected and stimulated by preaching that kills, but they are not spiritual forces. They may resemble spiritual forces, but are only the shadow, the counterfeit; life they may seem to have, but the life is magnetized. The preaching that kills is the letter; shapely and orderly it may be, but it is the letter still, the dry, husky letter, the empty, bald shell. The letter may have the germ of life in it, but it has no breath of spring to evoke it; winter seeds they are, as hard as the winter's soil, as icy as the winter's air, no thawing nor germinating by them. This letter-preaching has the truth. But even divine truth has no life-giving energy alone; it must be energized by the Spirit, with all God's forces at its back. Truth unquickened by God's Spirit deadens as much as, or more than, error. It may be the truth without admixture; but without the Spirit its shade and touch are deadly, its truth error, its light darkness. The letter-preaching is ununctionless, neither mellowed nor oiled by the Spirit. There may be tears, but tears cannot run God's machinery; tears may be but summer's breath on a snow-covered iceberg, nothing but surface slush. Feelings and earnestness there may be, but it is the emotion of the actor and the earnestness of the attorney. The preacher may feel from the kindling of his own sparks, be eloquent over his own exegesis, earnest in delivering the product of his own brain; the professor may usurp the place and imitate the fire of the apostle; brains and nerves may serve the place and feign the work of God's Spirit, and by these forces the letter may glow and sparkle like an illumined text, but the glow and sparkle will be as barren of life as the field sown with pearls. The death-dealing element lies back of the words, back of the sermon, back of the occasion, back of the manner, back of the action. The great hindrance is in the preacher himself. He has not in himself the mighty life-creating forces. There may be no discount on his orthodoxy, honesty, cleanness, or earnestness; but somehow the man, the inner man, in its secret places has never broken down and surrendered to God, his inner life is not a great highway for the transmission of God's message, God's power. Somehow self and not God rules in the holy of holiest. Somewhere, all unconscious to himself, some spiritual nonconductor has touched his inner being, and the divine current has been arrested. His inner being has never felt its thorough spiritual bankruptcy, its utter powerlessness; he has never learned to cry out with an ineffable cry of self-despair and self-helplessness till God's power and God's fire comes in and fills, purifies, empowers. Self-esteem, self-ability in some pernicious shape has defamed and violated the temple which should be held sacred for God. Life-giving preaching costs the preacher much—death to self, crucifixion to the world, the travail of his own soul. Crucified preaching only can give life. Crucified preaching can come only from a crucified man.

3 The Letter Killeth

During this affliction I was brought to examine my life in relation to eternity closer than I had done when in the enjoyment of health. In this examination relative to the discharge of my duties toward my fellow creatures as a man, a Christian minister, and an officer of the Church, I stood approved by my own conscience; but in relation to my Redeemer and Saviour the result was different. My returns of gratitude and loving obedience bear no proportion to my obligations for redeeming, preserving, and supporting me through the vicissitudes of life from infancy to old age. The coldness of my love to Him who first loved me and has done so much for me overwhelmed and confused me; and to complete my unworthy character, I had not only neglected to improve the grace given to the extent of my duty and privilege, but for want of improvement had, while

abounding in perplexing care and labor, declined from first zeal and love. I was confounded, humbled myself, implored mercy, and renewed my covenant to strive and devote myself unreservedly to the Lord.—Bishop McKendree

THE preaching that kills may be, and often is, orthodox—dogmatically, inviolably orthodox. We love orthodoxy. It is good. It is the best. It is the clean, clear-cut teaching of God's Word, the trophies won by truth in its conflict with error, the levees which faith has raised against the desolating floods of honest or reckless misbelief or unbelief; but orthodoxy, clear and hard as crystal, suspicious and militant, may be but the letter well-shaped, well-named, and well-learned, the letter which kills. Nothing is so dead as a dead orthodoxy, too dead to speculate, too dead to think, to study, or to pray.

The preaching that kills may have insight and grasp of principles, may be scholarly and critical in taste, may have every minutia of the derivation and grammar of the letter, may be able to trim the letter into its perfect pattern, and illumine it as Plato and Cicero may be illumined, may study it as a lawyer studies his text-books to form his brief or to defend his case, and yet be like a frost, a killing frost. Letter-preaching may be eloquent, enameled with poetry and rhetoric, sprinkled with prayer spiced with sensation, illumined by genius and yet these be but the massive or chaste, costly mountings, the rare and beautiful flowers which coffin the corpse. The preaching which kills may be without scholarship, unmarked by any freshness of thought or feeling, clothed in tasteless generalities or vapid specialties, with style irregular, slovenly, savoring neither of closet nor of study, graced neither by thought, expression, or prayer. Under such preaching how wide and utter the desolation! how profound the spiritual death!

This letter-preaching deals with the surface and shadow of things, and not the things themselves. It does not penetrate the inner part. It has no deep insight into, no strong grasp of, the hidden life of God's Word. It is true to the outside, but the outside is the hull which must be broken and penetrated for the kernel. The letter may be dressed so as to attract and be fashionable, but the attraction is not toward God nor is the fashion for heaven. The failure is in the preacher. God has not made him. He has never been in the hands of God like clay in the hands of the potter. He has been busy about the sermon, its thought and finish, its drawing and impressive forces; but the deep things of God have never been sought, studied, fathomed, experienced by him. He has never stood before "the throne high and lifted up," never heard the seraphim song, never seen the vision nor felt the rush of that awful holiness, and cried out in utter abandon and despair under the sense of weakness and guilt, and had his life renewed, his heart touched, purged, inflamed by the live coal from God's altar. His ministry may draw people to him, to the Church, to the form and ceremony; but no true drawings to God, no sweet, holy, divine communion induced. The Church has been frescoed but not edified, pleased but not sanctified. Life is suppressed; a chill is on the summer air; the soil is baked. The city of our God becomes the city of the dead; the Church a graveyard, not an embattled army. Praise and prayer are stifled; worship is dead. The preacher and the preaching have helped sin, not holiness; peopled hell, not heaven.

Preaching which kills is prayerless preaching. Without prayer the preacher creates death, and not life. The preacher who is feeble in prayer is feeble in life-giving forces. The preacher who has retired prayer as a conspicuous and largely prevailing element in his own character has shorn his preaching of its distinctive life-giving power. Professional praying there is and will be, but professional praying helps the preaching to its deadly work. Professional praying chills and kills both preaching and praying. Much of the lax devotion and lazy, irreverent attitudes in congregational praying are attributable to professional praying in the pulpit. Long, discursive, dry, and inane are the prayers in many pulpits. Without unction or heart, they fall like a killing frost on all the graces of worship. Death-dealing prayers they are. Every vestige of devotion has perished under their breath. The deader they are the longer they grow. A plea for short praying, live praying, real heart praying, praying by the Holy Spirit—direct, specific, ardent, simple, unctuous

in the pulpit—is in order. A school to teach preachers how to pray, as God counts praying, would be more beneficial to true piety, true worship, and true preaching than all theological schools.

Stop! Pause! Consider! Where are we? What are we doing? Preaching to kill? Praying to kill? Praying to God! the great God, the Maker of all worlds, the Judge of all men! What reverence! what simplicity! what sincerity! what truth in the inward parts is demanded! How real we must be! How hearty! Prayer to God the noblest exercise, the loftiest effort of man, the most real thing! Shall we not discard forever accursed preaching that kills and prayer that kills, and do the real thing, the mightiest thing—prayerful praying, life-creating preaching, bring the mightiest force to bear on heaven and earth and draw on God's exhaustless and open treasure for the need and beggary of man?

4 Tendencies to Be Avoided

Let us often look at Brainerd in the woods of America pouring out his very soul before God for the perishing heathen without whose salvation nothing could make him happy. Prayer—secret fervent believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness. A competent knowledge of the language where a missionary lives, a mild and winning temper, a heart given up to God in closet religion—these, these are the attainments which, more than all knowledge, or all other gifts, will fit us to become the instruments of God in the great work of human redemption.—Carrey's Brotherhood, Serampore

THERE are two extreme tendencies in the ministry. The one is to shut itself out from intercourse with the people. The monk, the hermit were illustrations of this; they shut themselves out from men to be more with God. They failed, of course. Our being with God is of use only as we expend its priceless benefits on men. This age, neither with preacher nor with people, is much intent on God. Our hankering is not that way. We shut ourselves to our study, we become students, bookworms, Bible worms, sermon makers, noted for literature, thought, and sermons; but the people and God, where are they? Out of heart, out of mind. Preachers who are great thinkers, great students must be the greatest of prayers, or else they will be the greatest of backsliders, heartless professionals, rationalistic, less than the least of preachers in God's estimate.

The other tendency is to thoroughly popularize the ministry. He is no longer God's man, but a man of affairs, of the people. He prays not, because his mission is to the people. If he can move the people, create an interest, a sensation in favor of religion, an interest in Church work—he is satisfied. His personal relation to God is no factor in his work. Prayer has little or no place in his plans. The disaster and ruin of such a ministry cannot be computed by earthly arithmetic. What the preacher is in prayer to God, for himself, for his people, so is his power for real good to men, so is his true fruitfulness, his true fidelity to God, to man, for time, for eternity.

It is impossible for the preacher to keep his spirit in harmony with the divine nature of his high calling without much prayer. That the preacher by dint of duty and laborious fidelity to the work and routine of the ministry can keep himself in trim and fitness is a serious mistake. Even sermon-making, incessant and taxing as an art, as a duty, as a work, or as a pleasure, will engross and harden, will estrange the heart, by neglect of prayer, from God. The scientist loses God in nature. The preacher may lose God in his sermon.

Prayer freshens the heart of the preacher, keeps it in tune with God and in sympathy with the people, lifts his ministry out of the chilly air of a profession, fructifies routine and moves every wheel with the facility and power of a divine unction.

Mr. Spurgeon says: "Of course the preacher is above all others distinguished as a man of prayer. He prays as an ordinary Christian, else he were a hypocrite. He prays more than ordinary Christians, else he were disqualified for the office he has undertaken. If you as ministers are not very prayerful, you are to be pitied. If you become lax in sacred devotion, not only will you need

to be pitied but your people also, and the day cometh in which you shall be ashamed and confounded. All our libraries and studies are mere emptiness compared with our closets. Our seasons of fasting and prayer at the Tabernacle have been high days indeed; never has heaven's gate stood wider; never have our hearts been nearer the central Glory."

The praying which makes a prayerful ministry is not a little praying put in as we put flavor to give it a pleasant smack, but the praying must be in the body, and form the blood and bones. Prayer is no petty duty, put into a corner; no piecemeal performance made out of the fragments of time which have been snatched from business and other engagements of life; but it means that the best of our time, the heart of our time and strength must be given. It does not mean the closet absorbed in the study or swallowed up in the activities of ministerial duties; but it means the closet first, the study and activities second, both study and activities freshened and made efficient by the closet. Prayer that affects one's ministry must give tone to one's life. The praying which gives color and bent to character is no pleasant, hurried pastime. It must enter as strongly into the heart and life as Christ's "strong crying and tears" did; must draw out the soul into an agony of desire as Paul's did; must be an inwrought fire and force like the "effectual, fervent prayer" of James; must be of that quality which, when put into the golden censer and incensed before God, works mighty spiritual throes and revolutions.

Prayer is not a little habit pinned on to us while we were tied to our mother's apron strings; neither is it a little decent quarter of a minute's grace said over an hour's dinner, but it is a most serious work of our most serious years. It engages more of time and appetite than our longest dinings or richest feasts. The prayer that makes much of our preaching must be made much of. The character of our praying will determine the character of our preaching. Light praying will make light preaching. Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick. In every ministry weighty for good, prayer has always been a serious business.

The preacher must be preeminently a man of prayer. His heart must graduate in the school of prayer. In the school of prayer only can the heart learn to preach. No learning can make up for the failure to pray. No earnestness, no diligence, no study, no gifts will supply its lack.

Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still. He will never talk well and with real success to men for God who has not learned well how to talk to God for men. More than this, prayerless words in the pulpit and out of it are deadening words.

5 Prayer, the Great Essential

You know the value of prayer: it is precious beyond all price. Never, never neglect it—Sir Thomas Buxton

Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to a minister. Pray, then, my dear brother: pray, pray, pray—Edward Payson

PRAYER, in the preacher's life, in the preacher's study, in the preacher's pulpit, must be a conspicuous and an all-impregnating force and an all-coloring ingredient. It must play no secondary part, be no mere coating. To him it is given to be with his Lord "all night in prayer." The preacher, to train himself in self-denying prayer, is charged to look to his Master, who, "rising up a great while before day, went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." The preacher's study ought to be a closet, a Bethel, an altar, a vision, and a ladder, that every thought might ascend heavenward ere it went manward; that every part of the sermon might be scented by the air of heaven and made serious, because God was in the study.

As the engine never moves until the fire is kindled, so preaching, with all its machinery, perfection, and polish, is at a dead standstill, as far as spiritual results are concerned, till prayer has kindled and created the steam. The texture, fineness, and strength of the sermon is as so much

rubbish unless the mighty impulse of prayer is in it, through it, and behind it. The preacher must, by prayer, put God in the sermon. The preacher must, by prayer, move God toward the people before he can move the people to God by his words. The preacher must have had audience and ready access to God before he can have access to the people. An open way to God for the preacher is the surest pledge of an open way to the people.

It is necessary to iterate and reiterate that prayer, as a mere habit, as a performance gone through by routine or in a professional way, is a dead and rotten thing. Such praying has no connection with the praying for which we plead. We are stressing true praying, which engages and sets on fire every high element of the preacher's being—prayer which is born of vital oneness with Christ and the fullness of the Holy Ghost, which springs from the deep, overflowing fountains of tender compassion, deathless solicitude for man's eternal good; a consuming zeal for the glory of God; a thorough conviction of the preacher's difficult and delicate work and of the imperative need of God's mightiest help. Praying grounded on these solemn and profound convictions is the only true praying. Preaching backed by such praying is the only preaching which sows the seeds of eternal life in human hearts and builds men up for heaven.

It is true that there may be popular preaching, pleasant preaching, taking preaching, preaching of much intellectual, literary, and brainy force, with its measure and form of good, with little or no praying; but the preaching which secures God's end in preaching must be born of prayer from text to exordium, delivered with the energy and spirit of prayer, followed and made to germinate, and kept in vital force in the hearts of the hearers by the preacher's prayers, long after the occasion has past.

We may excuse the spiritual poverty of our preaching in many ways, but the true secret will be found in the lack of urgent prayer for God's presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. There are preachers innumerable who can deliver masterful sermons after their order; but the effects are short-lived and do not enter as a factor at all into the regions of the spirit where the fearful war between God and Satan, heaven and hell, is being waged because they are not made powerfully militant and spiritually victorious by prayer.

The preachers who gain mighty results for God are the men who have prevailed in their pleadings with God ere venturing to plead with men. The preachers who are the mightiest in their closets with God are the mightiest in their pulpits with men.

Preachers are human folks, and are exposed to and often caught by the strong driftings of human currents. Praying is spiritual work; and human nature does not like taxing, spiritual work. Human nature wants to sail to heaven under a favoring breeze, a full, smooth sea. Prayer is humbling work. It abases intellect and pride, crucifies vainglory, and signs our spiritual bankruptcy, and all these are hard for flesh and blood to bear. It is easier not to pray than to bear them. So we come to one of the crying evils of these times, maybe of all times—little or no praying. Of these two evils, perhaps little praying is worse than no praying. Little praying is a kind of make-believe, a salvo for the conscience, a farce and a delusion.

The little estimate we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it. The time given to prayer by the average preacher scarcely counts in the sum of the daily aggregate. Not infrequently the preacher's only praying is by his bedside in his nightdress, ready for bed and soon in it, with, perchance the addition of a few hasty snatches of prayer ere he is dressed in the morning. How feeble, vain, and little is such praying compared with the time and energy devoted to praying by holy men in and out of the Bible! How poor and mean our petty, childish praying is beside the habits of the true men of God in all ages! To men who think praying their main business and devote time to it according to this high estimate of its importance does God commit the keys of his kingdom, and by them does he work his spiritual wonders in this world. Great praying is the sign and seal of God's great leaders and the earnest of the conquering forces with which God will crown their labors.

The preacher is commissioned to pray as well as to preach. His mission is incomplete if he does not do both well. The preacher may speak with all the eloquence of men and of angels;

but unless he can pray with a faith which draws all heaven to his aid, his preaching will be “as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal” for permanent God-honoring, soul-saving uses.

6 A Praying Ministry Successful

The principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write or read or converse or hear with a ready heart; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is the more my carnal heart is apt to start from it. Prayer and patience and faith are never disappointed. I have long since learned that if ever I was to be a minister faith and prayer must make me one. When I can find my heart in frame and liberty for prayer, everything else is comparatively easy.—Richard Newton

IT may be put down as a spiritual axiom that in every truly successful ministry prayer is an evident and controlling force—evident and controlling in the life of the preacher, evident and controlling in the deep spirituality of his work. A ministry may be a very thoughtful ministry without prayer; the preacher may secure fame and popularity without prayer; the whole machinery of the preacher’s life and work may be run without the oil of prayer or with scarcely enough to grease one cog; but no ministry can be a spiritual one, securing holiness in the preacher and in his people, without prayer being made an evident and controlling force.

The preacher that prays indeed puts God into the work. God does not come into the preacher’s work as a matter of course or on general principles, but he comes by prayer and special urgency. That God will be found of us in the day that we seek him with the whole heart is as true of the preacher as of the penitent. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry that brings the preacher into sympathy with the people. Prayer as essentially unites to the human as it does to the divine. A prayerful ministry is the only ministry qualified for the high offices and responsibilities of the preacher. Colleges, learning, books, theology, preaching cannot make a preacher, but praying does. The apostles’ commission to preach was a blank till filled up by the Pentecost which praying brought. A prayerful minister has passed beyond the regions of the popular, beyond the man of mere affairs, of secularities, of pulpit attractiveness; passed beyond the ecclesiastical organizer or general into a sublimer and mightier region, the region of the spiritual. Holiness is the product of his work; transfigured hearts and lives emblazon the reality of his work, its trueness and substantial nature. God is with him. His ministry is not projected on worldly or surface principles. He is deeply stored with and deeply schooled in the things of God. His long, deep communings with God about his people and the agony of his wrestling spirit have crowned him as a prince in the things of God. The iciness of the mere professional has long since melted under the intensity of his praying.

The superficial results of many a ministry, the deadness of others, are to be found in the lack of praying. No ministry can succeed without much praying, and this praying must be fundamental, ever-abiding, ever-increasing. The text, the sermon, should be the result of prayer. The study should be bathed in prayer, all its duties so impregnated with prayer, its whole spirit the spirit of prayer. “I am sorry that I have prayed so little,” was the deathbed regret of one of God’s chosen ones, a sad and remorseful regret for a preacher. “I want a life of greater, deeper, truer prayer,” said the late Archbishop Tait. So may we all say, and this may we all secure.

God’s true preachers have been distinguished by one great feature: they were men of prayer. Differing often in many things, they have always had a common center. They may have started from different points, and traveled by different roads, but they converged to one point: they were one in prayer. God to them was the center of attraction, and prayer was the path that led to God. These men prayed not occasionally, not a little at regular or at odd times; but they so prayed that their prayers entered into and shaped their characters; they so prayed as to affect their own lives and the lives of others; they so prayed as to make the history of the Church and

influence the current of the times. They spent much time in prayer, not because they marked the shadow on the dial or the hands on the clock, but because it was to them so momentous and engaging a business that they could scarcely give over.

Prayer was to them what it was to Paul, a striving with earnest effort of soul; what it was to Jacob, a wrestling and prevailing; what it was to Christ, “strong crying and tears.” They “prayed always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.” “The effectual, fervent prayer” has been the mightiest weapon of God’s mightiest soldiers. The statement in regard to Elijah—that he “was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”—comprehends all prophets and preachers who have moved their generation for God, and shows the instrument by which they worked their wonders.

7 Much Time Should Be Given to Prayer

The great masters and teachers in Christian doctrine have always found in prayer their highest source of illumination. Not to go beyond the limits of the English Church, it is recorded of Bishop Andrews that he spent five hours daily on his knees. The greatest practical resolves that have enriched and beautified human life in Christian times have been arrived at in prayer.—Canon Liddon

WHILE many private prayers, in the nature of things, must be short; while public prayers, as a rule, ought to be short and condensed; while there is ample room for and value put on ejaculatory prayer—yet in our private communions with God time is a feature essential to its value. Much time spent with God is the secret of all successful praying. Prayer which is felt as a mighty force is the mediate or immediate product of much time spent with God. Our short prayers owe their point and efficiency to the long ones that have preceded them. The short prevailing prayer cannot be prayed by one who has not prevailed with God in a mightier struggle of long continuance. Jacob’s victory of faith could not have been gained without that all-night wrestling. God’s acquaintance is not made by pop calls. God does not bestow his gifts on the casual or hasty comers and goers. Much with God alone is the secret of knowing him and of influence with him. He yields to the persistency of a faith that knows him. He bestows his richest gifts upon those who declare their desire for and appreciation of those gifts by the constancy as well as earnestness of their importunity. Christ, who in this as well as other things is our Example, spent many whole nights in prayer. His custom was to pray much. He had his habitual place to pray. Many long seasons of praying make up his history and character. Paul prayed day and night. It took time from very important interests for Daniel to pray three times a day. David’s morning, noon, and night praying were doubtless on many occasions very protracted. While we have no specific account of the time these Bible saints spent in prayer, yet the indications are that they consumed much time in prayer, and on some occasions long seasons of praying was their custom.

We would not have any think that the value of their prayers is to be measured by the clock, but our purpose is to impress on our minds the necessity of being much alone with God; and that if this feature has not been produced by our faith, then our faith is of a feeble and surface type.

The men who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for him, have been men who spent so much time with God as to make it a notable feature of their lives. Charles Simeon devoted the hours from four till eight in the morning to God. Mr. Wesley spent two hours daily in prayer. He began at four in the morning. Of him, one who knew him well wrote: “He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of face next to shining.” John

Fletcher stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night; always, frequently, and with great earnestness. His whole life was a life of prayer. "I would not rise from my seat," he said, "without lifting my heart to God." His greeting to a friend was always: "Do I meet you praying?" Luther said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." He had a motto: "He that has prayed well has studied well."

Archbishop Leighton was so much alone with God that he seemed to be in a perpetual meditation. "Prayer and praise were his business and his pleasure," says his biographer. Bishop Ken was so much with God that his soul was said to be God-enamored. He was with God before the clock struck three every morning. Bishop Asbury said: "I propose to rise at four o'clock as often as I can and spend two hours in prayer and meditation." Samuel Rutherford, the fragrance of whose piety is still rich, rose at three in the morning to meet God in prayer. Joseph Alleine arose at four o'clock for his business of praying till eight. If he heard other tradesmen plying their business before he was up, he would exclaim: "O how this shames me! Doth not my Master deserve more than theirs?" He who has learned this trade well draws at will, on sight, and with acceptance of heaven's unfailing bank.

One of the holiest and among the most gifted of Scotch preachers says: "I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession." This was the praying plan of Robert McCheyne. The memorable Methodist band in their praying shame us. "From four to five in the morning, private prayer; from five to six in the evening, private prayer."

John Welch, the holy and wonderful Scotch preacher, thought the day ill spent if he did not spend eight or ten hours in prayer. He kept a plaid that he might wrap himself when he arose to pray at night. His wife would complain when she found him lying on the ground weeping. He would reply: "O woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!"

8 Examples of Praying Men

The act of praying is the very highest energy of which the human mind is capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties. The great mass of worldly men and of learned men are absolutely incapable of prayer.—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

BISHOP WILSON says: "In H. Martyn's journal the spirit of prayer, the time he devoted to the duty, and his fervor in it are the first things which strike me."

Payson wore the hard-wood boards into grooves where his knees pressed so often and so long. His biographer says: "His continuing instant in prayer, be his circumstances what they might, is the most noticeable fact in his history, and points out the duty of all who would rival his eminency. To his ardent and persevering prayers must no doubt be ascribed in a great measure his distinguished and almost uninterrupted success."

The Marquis DeRenty, to whom Christ was most precious, ordered his servant to call him from his devotions at the end of half an hour. The servant at the time saw his face through an aperture. It was marked with such holiness that he hated to arouse him. His lips were moving, but he was perfectly silent. He waited until three half hours had passed; then he called to him, when he arose from his knees, saying that the half hour was so short when he was communing with Christ.

Brainerd said: "I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer."

William Bramwell is famous in Methodist annals for personal holiness and for his wonderful success in preaching and for the marvelous answers to his prayers. For hours at a time he would pray. He almost lived on his knees. He went over his circuits like a flame of fire. The fire was kindled by the time he spent in prayer. He often spent as much as four hours in a single season of prayer in retirement.

Bishop Andrewes spent the greatest part of five hours every day in prayer and devotion.

Sir Henry Havelock always spent the first two hours of each day alone with God. If the encampment was struck at 6 A.M., he would rise at four.

Earl Cairns rose daily at six o'clock to secure an hour and a half for the study of the Bible and for prayer, before conducting family worship at a quarter to eight.

Dr. Judson's success in prayer is attributable to the fact that he gave much time to prayer. He says on this point: "Arrange thy affairs, if possible, so that thou canst leisurely devote two or three hours every day not merely to devotional exercises but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God. Endeavor seven times a day to withdraw from business and company and lift up thy soul to God in private retirement. Begin the day by rising after midnight and devoting some time amid the silence and darkness of the night to this sacred work. Let the hour of opening dawn find thee at the same work. Let the hours of nine, twelve, three, six, and nine at night witness the same. Be resolute in his cause. Make all practicable sacrifices to maintain it. Consider that thy time is short, and that business and company must not be allowed to rob thee of thy God." Impossible, say we, fanatical directions! Dr. Judson impressed an empire for Christ and laid the foundations of God's kingdom with imperishable granite in the heart of Burmah. He was successful, one of the few men who mightily impressed the world for Christ. Many men of greater gifts and genius and learning than he have made no such impression; their religious work is like footsteps in the sands, but he has engraven his work on the adamant. The secret of its profundity and endurance is found in the fact that he gave time to prayer. He kept the iron red-hot with prayer, and God's skill fashioned it with enduring power. No man can do a great and enduring work for God who is not a man of prayer, and no man can be a man of prayer who does not give much time to praying.

Is it true that prayer is simply the compliance with habit, dull and mechanical? A petty performance into which we are trained till tameness, shortness, superficiality are its chief elements? "Is it true that prayer is, as is assumed, little else than the half-passive play of sentiment which flows languidly on through the minutes or hours of easy reverie?" Canon Liddon continues: "Let those who have really prayed give the answer. They sometimes describe prayer with the patriarch Jacob as a wrestling together with an Unseen Power which may last, not unfrequently in an earnest life, late into the night hours, or even to the break of day. Sometimes they refer to common intercession with St. Paul as a concerted struggle. They have, when praying, their eyes fixed on the Great Intercessor in Gethsemane, upon the drops of blood which fall to the ground in that agony of resignation and sacrifice. Importunity is of the essence of successful prayer. Importunity means not dreaminess but sustained work. It is through prayer especially that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. It was a saying of the late Bishop Hamilton that "No man is likely to do much good in prayer who does not begin by looking upon it in the light of a work to be prepared for and persevered in with all the earnestness which we bring to bear upon subjects which are in our opinion at once most interesting and most necessary."

9 Begin the Day with Prayer

I ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: "Early will I seek thee"; "Thou shalt early hear my voice." Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then when in secret prayer the soul is often out of tune, I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another.—Robert Murray McChesney

THE men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be in the last place the remainder of the day.

Behind this early rising and early praying is the ardent desire which presses us into this pursuit after God. Morning listlessness is the index to a listless heart. The heart which is behindhand in seeking God in the morning has lost its relish for God. David's heart was ardent after God. He hungered and thirsted after God, and so he sought God early, before daylight. The bed and sleep could not chain his soul in its eagerness after God. Christ longed for communion with God; and so, rising a great while before day, he would go out into the mountain to pray. The disciples, when fully awake and ashamed of their indulgence, would know where to find him. We might go through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.

A desire for God which cannot break the chains of sleep is a weak thing and will do but little good for God after it has indulged itself fully. The desire for God that keeps so far behind the devil and the world at the beginning of the day will never catch up.

It is not simply the getting up that puts men to the front and makes them captain generals in God's hosts, but it is the ardent desire which stirs and breaks all self-indulgent chains. But the getting up gives vent, increase, and strength to the desire. If they had lain in bed and indulged themselves, the desire would have been quenched. The desire aroused them and put them on the stretch for God, and this heeding and acting on the call gave their faith its grasp on God and gave to their hearts the sweetest and fullest revelation of God, and this strength of faith and fullness of revelation made them saints by eminence, and the halo of their sainthood has come down to us, and we have entered on the enjoyment of their conquests. But we take our fill in enjoyment, and not in productions. We build their tombs and write their epitaphs, but are careful not to follow their examples.

We need a generation of preachers who seek God and seek him early, who give the freshness and dew of effort to God, and secure in return the freshness and fullness of his power that he may be as the dew to them, full of gladness and strength, through all the heat and labor of the day. Our laziness after God is our crying sin. The children of this world are far wiser than we. They are at it early and late. We do not seek God with ardor and diligence. No man gets God who does not follow hard after him, and no soul follows hard after God who is not after him in early morn.

10 Prayer and Devotion United

There is a manifest want of spiritual influence on the ministry of the present day. I feel it in my own case and I see it in that of others. I am afraid there is too much of a low, managing, contriving, maneuvering temper of mind among us. We are laying ourselves out more than is expedient to meet one man's taste and another man's prejudices. The ministry is a grand and holy affair, and it should find in us a simple habit of spirit and a holy but humble indifference to

all consequences. The leading defect in Christian ministers is want of a devotional habit.—Richard Cecil

NEVER was there greater need for saintly men and women; more imperative still is the call for saintly, God-devoted preachers. The world moves with gigantic strides. Satan has his hold and rule on the world, and labors to make all its movements subserve his ends. Religion must do its best work, present its most attractive and perfect models. By every means, modern sainthood must be inspired by the loftiest ideals and by the largest possibilities through the Spirit. Paul lived on his knees, that the Ephesian Church might measure the heights, breadths, and depths of an unmeasurable saintliness, and “be filled with all the fullness of God.” Epaphras laid himself out with the exhaustive toil and strenuous conflict of fervent prayer, that the Colossian Church might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Everywhere, everything in apostolic times was on the stretch that the people of God might each and “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” No premium was given to dwarfs; no encouragement to an old babyhood. The babies were to grow; the old, instead of feebleness and infirmities, were to bear fruit in old age, and be fat and flourishing. The divinest thing in religion is holy men and holy women.

No amount of money, genius, or culture can move things for God. Holiness energizing the soul, the whole man aflame with love, with desire for more faith, more prayer, more zeal, more consecration—this is the secret of power. These we need and must have, and men must be the incarnation of this God-inflamed devotedness. God’s advance has been stayed, his cause crippled: his name dishonored for their lack. Genius (though the loftiest and most gifted), education (though the most learned and refined), position, dignity, place, honored names, high ecclesiastics cannot move this chariot of our God. It is a fiery one, and fiery forces only can move it. The genius of a Milton fails. The imperial strength of a Leo fails. Brainerd’s spirit can move it. Brainerd’s spirit was on fire for God, on fire for souls. Nothing earthly, worldly, selfish came in to abate in the least the intensity of this all-impelling and all-consuming force and flame.

Prayer is the creator as well as the channel of devotion. The spirit of devotion is the spirit of prayer. Prayer and devotion are united as soul and body are united, as life and the heart are united. There is no real prayer without devotion, no devotion without prayer. The preacher must be surrendered to God in the holiest devotion. He is not a professional man, his ministry is not a profession; it is a divine institution, a divine devotion. He is devoted to God. His aim, aspirations, ambition are for God and to God, and to such prayer is as essential as food is to life.

The preacher, above everything else, must be devoted to God. The preacher’s relations to God are the insignia and credentials of his ministry. These must be clear, conclusive, unmistakable. No common, surface type of piety must be his. If he does not excel in grace, he does not excel at all. If he does not preach by life, character, conduct, he does not preach at all. If his piety be light, his preaching may be as soft and as sweet as music, as gifted as Apollo, yet its weight will be a feather’s weight, visionary, fleeting as the morning cloud or the early dew. Devotion to God—there is no substitute for this in the preacher’s character and conduct. Devotion to a Church, to opinions, to an organization, to orthodoxy—these are paltry, misleading, and vain when they become the source of inspiration, the animus of a call. God must be the mainspring of the preacher’s effort, the fountain and crown of all his toil. The name and honor of Jesus Christ, the advance of his cause, must be all in all. The preacher must have no inspiration but the name of Jesus Christ, no ambition but to have him glorified, no toil but for him. Then prayer will be a source of his illuminations, the means of perpetual advance, the gauge of his success. The perpetual aim, the only ambition, the preacher can cherish is to have God with him.

Never did the cause of God need perfect illustrations of the possibilities of prayer more than in this age. No age, no person, will be ensamples of the gospel power except the ages or persons of deep and earnest prayer. A prayerless age will have but scant models of divine power. Prayerless hearts will never rise to these Alpine heights. The age may be a better age than the past, but there is an infinite distance between the betterment of an age by the force of an advancing

civilization and its betterment by the increase of holiness and Christlikeness by the energy of prayer. The Jews were much better when Christ came than in the ages before. It was the golden age of their Pharisaic religion. Their golden religious age crucified Christ. Never more praying, never less praying; never more sacrifices, never less sacrifice; never less idolatry, never more idolatry; never more of temple worship, never less of God worship; never more of lip service, never less of heart service (God worshiped by lips whose hearts and hands crucified God's Son!); never more of churchgoers, never less of saints.

It is prayer-force which makes saints. Holy characters are formed by the power of real praying. The more of true saints, the more of praying; the more of praying, the more of true saints.

11 An Example of Devotion

I urge upon you communion with Christ a growing communion. There are curtains to be drawn aside in Christ that we never saw, and new foldings of love in him. I despair that I shall ever win to the far end of that love, there are so many plies in it. Therefore dig deep, and sweat and labor and take pains for him, and set by as much time in the day for him as you can. We will be won in the labor.—Samuel Rutherford

God has now, and has had, many of these devoted, prayerful preachers—men in whose lives prayer has been a mighty, controlling, conspicuous force. The world has felt their power, God has felt and honored their power, God's cause has moved mightily and swiftly by their prayers, holiness has shone out in their characters with a divine effulgence.

God found one of the men he was looking for in David Brainerd, whose work and name have gone into history. He was no ordinary man, but was capable of shining in any company, the peer of the wise and gifted ones, eminently suited to fill the most attractive pulpits and to labor among the most refined and the cultured, who were so anxious to secure him for their pastor. President Edwards bears testimony that he was "a young man of distinguished talents, had extraordinary knowledge of men and things, had rare conversational powers, excelled in his knowledge of theology, and was truly, for one so young, an extraordinary divine, and especially in all matters relating to experimental religion. I never knew his equal of his age and standing for clear and accurate notions of the nature and essence of true religion. His manner in prayer was almost inimitable, such as I have very rarely known equaled. His learning was very considerable, and he had extraordinary gifts for the pulpit."

No sublimer story has been recorded in earthly annals than that of David Brainerd; no miracle attests with diviner force the truth of Christianity than the life and work of such a man. Alone in the savage wilds of America, struggling day and night with a mortal disease, unschooled in the care of souls, having access to the Indians for a large portion of time only through the bungling medium of a pagan interpreter, with the Word of God in his heart and in his hand, his soul fired with the divine flame, a place and time to pour out his soul to God in prayer, he fully established the worship of God and secured all its gracious results. The Indians were changed with a great change from the lowest besotments of an ignorant and debased heathenism to pure, devout, intelligent Christians; all vice reformed, the external duties of Christianity at once embraced and acted on; family prayer set up; the Sabbath instituted and religiously observed; the internal graces of religion exhibited with growing sweetness and strength. The solution of these results is found in David Brainerd himself, not in the conditions or accidents but in the man Brainerd. He was God's man, for God first and last and all the time. God could flow unhindered through him. The omnipotence of grace was neither arrested nor straightened by the conditions of his heart; the whole channel was broadened and cleaned out for God's fullest and most powerful passage, so that God with all his mighty forces could come down on the hopeless, savage

wilderness, and transform it into his blooming and fruitful garden; for nothing is too hard for God to do if he can get the right kind of a man to do it with.

Brainerd lived the life of holiness and prayer. His diary is full and monotonous with the record of his seasons of fasting, meditation, and retirement. The time he spent in private prayer amounted to many hours daily. "When I return home," he said, "and give myself to meditation, prayer, and fasting, my soul longs for mortification, self-denial, humility, and divorcement from all things of the world." "I have nothing to do," he said, "with earth but only to labor in it honestly for God. I do not desire to live one minute for anything which earth can afford." After this high order did he pray: "Feeling somewhat of the sweetness of communion with God and the constraining force of his love, and how admirably it captivates the soul and makes all the desires and affections to center in God, I set apart this day for secret fasting and prayer, to entreat God to direct and bless me with regard to the great work which I have in view of preaching the gospel, and that the Lord would return to me and show me the light of his countenance. I had little life and power in the forenoon. Near the middle of the afternoon God enabled me to wrestle ardently in intercession for my absent friends, but just at night the Lord visited me marvelously in prayer. I think my soul was never in such agony before. I felt no restraint, for the treasures of divine grace were opened to me. I wrestled for absent friends, for the ingathering of souls, for multitudes of poor souls, and for many that I thought were the children of God, personally, in many distant places. I was in such agony from sun half an hour high till near dark that I was all over wet with sweat, but yet it seemed to me I had done nothing. O, my dear Saviour did sweat blood for poor souls! I longed for more compassion toward them. I felt still in a sweet frame, under a sense of divine love and grace, and went to bed in such a frame, with my heart set on God." It was prayer which gave to his life and ministry their marvelous power.

The men of mighty prayer are men of spiritual might. Prayers never die. Brainerd's whole life was a life of prayer. By day and by night he prayed. Before preaching and after preaching he prayed. Riding through the interminable solitudes of the forests he prayed. On his bed of straw he prayed. Retiring to the dense and lonely forests, he prayed. Hour by hour, day after day, early morn and late at night, he was praying and fasting, pouring out his soul, interceding, communing with God. He was with God mightily in prayer, and God was with him mightily, and by it he being dead yet speaketh and worketh, and will speak and work till the end comes, and among the glorious ones of that glorious day he will be with the first.

Jonathan Edwards says of him: "His life shows the right way to success in the works of the ministry. He sought it as the soldier seeks victory in a siege or battle; or as a man that runs a race for a great prize. Animated with love to Christ and souls, how did he labor? Always fervently. Not only in word and doctrine, in public and in private, but in prayers by day and night, wrestling with God in secret and travailing in birth with unutterable groans and agonies, until Christ was formed in the hearts of the people to whom he was sent. Like a true son of Jacob, he persevered in wrestling through all the darkness of the night, until the breaking of the day!"

12 Heart Preparation Necessary

For nothing reaches the heart but what is from the heart or pierces the conscience but what comes from a living conscience.—William Penn

In the morning was more engaged in preparing the head than the heart. This has been frequently my error, and I have always felt the evil of it especially in prayer. Reform it then, O Lord! Enlarge my heart and I shall preach.—Robert Murray McCheyne
A sermon that has more head infused into it than heart will not borne home with efficacy to the hearers.—Richard Cecil

PRAYER, with its manifold and many-sided forces, helps the mouth to utter the truth in its fullness and freedom. The preacher is to be prayed for, the preacher is made by prayer. The preacher's mouth is to be prayed for; his mouth is to be opened and filled by prayer. A holy mouth is made by praying, by much praying; a brave mouth is made by praying, by much praying. The Church and the world, God and heaven, owe much to Paul's mouth; Paul's mouth owed its power to prayer.

How manifold, illimitable, valuable, and helpful prayer is to the preacher in so many ways, at so many points, in every way! One great value is, it helps his heart.

Praying makes the preacher a heart preacher. Prayer puts the preacher's heart into the preacher's sermon; prayer puts the preacher's sermon into the preacher's heart.

The heart makes the preacher. Men of great hearts are great preachers. Men of bad hearts may do a measure of good, but this is rare. The hireling and the stranger may help the sheep at some points, but it is the good shepherd with the good shepherd's heart who will bless the sheep and answer the full measure of the shepherd's place.

We have emphasized sermon-preparation until we have lost sight of the important thing to be prepared—the heart. A prepared heart is much better than a prepared sermon. A prepared heart will make a prepared sermon.

Volumes have been written laying down the mechanics and taste of sermon-making, until we have become possessed with the idea that this scaffolding is the building. The young preacher has been taught to lay out all his strength on the form, taste, and beauty of his sermon as a mechanical and intellectual product. We have thereby cultivated a vicious taste among the people and raised the clamor for talent instead of grace, eloquence instead of piety, rhetoric instead of revelation, reputation and brilliancy instead of holiness. By it we have lost the true idea of preaching, lost preaching power, lost pungent conviction for sin, lost the rich experience and elevated Christian character, lost the authority over consciences and lives which always results from genuine preaching.

It would not do to say that preachers study too much. Some of them do not study at all; others do not study enough. Numbers do not study the right way to show themselves workmen approved of God. But our great lack is not in head culture, but in heart culture; not lack of knowledge but lack of holiness is our sad and telling defect—not that we know too much, but that we do not meditate on God and his word and watch and fast and pray enough. The heart is the great hindrance to our preaching. Words pregnant with divine truth find in our hearts nonconductors; arrested, they fall shorn and powerless.

Can ambition, that lusts after praise and place, preach the gospel of Him who made himself of no reputation and took on Him the form of a servant? Can the proud, the vain, the egotistical preach the gospel of him who was meek and lowly? Can the bad-tempered, passionate, selfish, hard, worldly man preach the system which teems with long-suffering, self-denial, tenderness, which imperatively demands separation from enmity and crucifixion to the world? Can the hireling official, heartless, perfunctory, preach the gospel which demands the shepherd to give his life for the sheep? Can the covetous man, who counts salary and money, preach the gospel till he has gleaned his heart and can say in the spirit of Christ and Paul in the words of Wesley: "I count it dung and dross; I trample it under my feet; I (yet not I, but the grace of God in me) esteem it just as the mire of the streets, I desire it not, I seek it not?" God's revelation does not need the light of human genius, the polish and strength of human culture, the brilliancy of human thought, the force of human brains to adorn or enforce it; but it does demand the simplicity, the docility, humility, and faith of a child's heart.

It was this surrender and subordination of intellect and genius to the divine and spiritual forces which made Paul peerless among the apostles. It was this which gave Wesley his power and radicated his labors in the history of humanity. This gave to Loyola the strength to arrest the retreating forces of Catholicism.

Our great need is heart-preparation. Luther held it as an axiom: "He who has prayed well has studied well." We do not say that men are not to think and use their intellects; but he will use his intellect best who cultivates his heart most. We do not say that preachers should not be students; but we do say that their great study should be the Bible, and he studies the Bible best who has kept his heart with diligence. We do not say that the preacher should not know men, but he will be the greater adept in human nature who has fathomed the depths and intricacies of his own heart. We do say that while the channel of preaching is the mind, its fountain is the heart; you may broaden and deepen the channel, but if you do not look well to the purity and depth of the fountain, you will have a dry or polluted channel. We do say that almost any man of common intelligence has sense enough to preach the gospel, but very few have grace enough to do so. We do say that he who has struggled with his own heart and conquered it; who has taught it humility, faith, love, truth, mercy, sympathy, courage; who can pour the rich treasures of the heart thus trained, through a manly intellect, all surcharged with the power of the gospel on the consciences of his hearers—such a one will be the truest, most successful preacher in the esteem of his Lord.

13 Grace from the Heart Rather than the Head

Study not to be a fine preacher. Jerichos are blown down with rams' horns. Look simply unto Jesus for preaching food; and what is wanted will be given, and what is given will be blessed, whether it be a barley grain or a wheaten loaf, a crust or a crumb. Your mouth will be a flowing stream or a fountain sealed, according as your heart is. Avoid all controversy in preaching, talking, or writing; preach nothing down but the devil, and nothing up but Jesus Christ.—Berridge

THE heart is the Saviour of the world. Heads do not save. Genius, brains, brilliancy, strength, natural gifts do not save. The gospel flows through hearts. All the mightiest forces are heart forces. All the sweetest and loveliest graces are heart graces. Great hearts make great characters; great hearts make divine characters. God is love. There is nothing greater than love, nothing greater than God. Hearts make heaven; heaven is love. There is nothing higher, nothing sweeter, than heaven. It is the heart and not the head which makes God's great preachers. The heart counts much every way in religion. The heart must speak from the pulpit. The heart must hear in the pew. In fact, we serve God with our hearts. Head homage does not pass current in heaven.

We believe that one of the serious and most popular errors of the modern pulpit is the putting of more thought than prayer, of more head than of heart in its sermons. Big hearts make big preachers; good hearts make good preachers. A theological school to enlarge and cultivate the heart is the golden desideratum of the gospel. The pastor binds his people to him and rules his people by his heart. They may admire his gifts, they may be proud of his ability, they may be affected for the time by his sermons; but the stronghold of his power is his heart. His scepter is love. The throne of his power is his heart.

The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. Heads never make martyrs. It is the heart which surrenders the life to love and fidelity. It takes great courage to be a faithful pastor, but the heart alone can supply this courage. Gifts and genius may be brave, but it is the gifts and genius of the heart and not of the head.

It is easier to fill the head than it is to prepare the heart. It is easier to make a brain sermon than a heart sermon. It was heart that drew the Son of God from heaven. It is heart that will draw men to heaven. Men of heart is what the world needs to sympathize with its woe, to kiss away its sorrows, to compassionate its misery, and to alleviate its pain. Christ was eminently the man of sorrows, because he was preeminently the man of heart.

“Give me thy heart,” is God’s requisition of men. “Give me thy heart! This is man’s demand of man.

A professional ministry is a heartless ministry. When salary plays a great part in the ministry, the heart plays little part. We may make preaching our business, and not put our hearts in the business. He who puts self to the front in his preaching puts heart to the rear. He who does not sow with his heart in his study will never reap a harvest for God. The closet is the heart’s study. We will learn more about how to preach and what to preach there than we can learn in our libraries. “Jesus wept” is the shortest and biggest verse in the Bible. It is he who goes forth *weeping* (not preaching great sermons), bearing precious seed, who shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Praying gives sense, brings wisdom, broadens and strengthens the mind. The closet is a perfect school-teacher and schoolhouse for the preacher. Thought is not only brightened and clarified in prayer, but thought is born in prayer. We can learn more in an hour praying, when praying indeed, than from many hours in the study. Books are in the closet which can be found and read nowhere else. Revelations are made in the closet which are made nowhere else.

14 Unction a Necessity

One bright benison which private prayer brings down upon the ministry is an indescribable and inimitable something—an unction from the Holy One If the anointing which we bear come not from the Lord of hosts, we are deceivers, since only in prayer can we obtain it. Let us continue instant constant fervent in supplication. Let your fleece lie on the thrashing floor of supplication till it is wet with the dew of heaven.—Charles Haddon Spurgeon

ALEXANDER KNOX, a Christian philosopher of the days of Wesley, not an adherent but a strong personal friend of Wesley, and with much spiritual sympathy with the Wesleyan movement, writes: “It is strange and lamentable, but I verily believe the fact to be that except among Methodists and Methodistical clergyman, there is not much interesting preaching in England. The clergy, too generally have absolutely lost the art. There is, I conceive, in the great laws of the moral world a kind of secret understanding like the affinities in chemistry, between rightly promulgated religious truth and the deepest feelings of the human mind. Where the one is duly exhibited, the other will respond. Did not our hearts burn within us?—but to this devout feeling is indispensable in the speaker. Now, I am obliged to state from my own observation that this *unction*, as the French not unfitly term it, is beyond all comparison more likely to be found in England in a Methodist conventicle than in a parish Church. This, and this alone, seems really to be that which fills the Methodist houses and thins the Churches. I am, I verily think, no enthusiast; I am a most sincere and cordial churchman, a humble disciple of the School of Hale and Boyle, of Burnet and Leighton. Now I must aver that when I was in this country, two years ago, I did not hear a single preacher who taught me like my own great masters but such as are deemed Methodistical. And I now despair of getting an atom of heart instruction from any other quarter. The Methodist preachers (however I may not always approve of all their expressions) do most assuredly diffuse this true religion and undefiled. I felt real pleasure last Sunday. I can bear witness that the preacher did at once speak the words of truth and soberness. There was no eloquence—the honest man never dreamed of such a thing—but there was far better: a cordial communication of vitalized truth. I say vitalized because what he declared to others it was impossible not to feel he lived on himself.”

This unction is the art of preaching. The preacher who never had this unction never had the art of preaching. The preacher who has lost this unction has lost the art of preaching. Whatever other arts he may have and retain—the art of sermon-making, the art of eloquence, the art of great, clear thinking, the art of pleasing an audience—he has lost the divine art of preaching.

This unction makes God's truth powerful and interesting, draws and attracts, edifies, convicts, saves.

This unction vitalizes God's revealed truth, makes it living and life-giving. Even God's truth spoken without this unction is light, dead, and deadening. Though abounding in truth, though weighty with thought, though sparkling with rhetoric, though pointed by logic, though powerful by earnestness, without this divine unction it issues in death and not in life. Mr. Spurgeon says: "I wonder how long we might beat our brains before we could plainly put into word what is meant by preaching with unction. Yet he who preaches knows its presence, and he who hears soon detects its absence. Samaria, in famine, typifies a discourse without it. Jerusalem, with her feast of fat things, full of marrow, may represent a sermon enriched with it. Every one knows what the freshness of the morning is when orient pearls abound on every blade of grass, but who can describe it, much less produce it of itself? Such is the mystery of spiritual anointing. We know, but we cannot tell to others what it is. It is as easy as it is foolish, to counterfeit it. Unction is a thing which you cannot manufacture, and its counterfeits are worse than worthless. Yet it is, in itself, priceless, and beyond measure needful if you would edify believers and bring sinners to Christ."

15 Unction, the Mark of True Gospel Preaching

Speak for eternity. Above all things, cultivate your own spirit. A word spoken by you when your conscience is clear and your heart full of God's Spirit is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin. Remember that God, and not man, must have the glory. If the veil of the world's machinery were lifted off, how much we would find is done in answer to the prayers of God's children.—Robert Murray McCheyne

UNCTION is that indefinable, indescribable something which an old, renowned Scotch preacher describes thus: "There is sometimes somewhat in preaching that cannot be ascribed either to matter or expression, and cannot be described what it is, or from whence it cometh, but with a sweet violence it pierceth into the heart and affections and comes immediately from the Word; but if there be any way to obtain such a thing, it is by the heavenly disposition of the speaker."

We call it unction. It is this unction which makes the word of God "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It is this unction which gives the words of the preacher such point, sharpness, and power, and which creates such friction and stir in many a dead congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, smooth as human oil could make them; but no signs of life, not a pulse throb; all as peaceful as the grave and as dead. The same preacher in the meanwhile receives a baptism of this unction, the divine inflatus is on him, the letter of the Word has been embellished and fired by this mysterious power, and the throbbings of life begin—life which receives or life which resists. The unction pervades and convicts the conscience and breaks the heart.

This divine unction is the feature which separates and distinguishes true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting the truth, and which creates a wide spiritual chasm between the preacher who has it and the one who has it not. It backs and impregns revealed truth with all the energy of God. Unction is simply putting God in his own word and on his own preachers. By mighty and great prayerfulness and by continual prayerfulness, it is all potential and personal to the preacher; it inspires and clarifies his intellect, gives insight and grasp and projecting power; it gives to the preacher heart power, which is greater than head power; and tenderness, purity, force flow from the heart by it. Enlargement, freedom, fullness of thought, directness and simplicity of utterance are the fruits of this unction.

Often earnestness is mistaken for this unction. He who has the divine unction will be earnest in the very spiritual nature of things, but there may be a vast deal of earnestness without the least mixture of unction.

Earnestness and unction look alike from some points of view. Earnestness may be readily and without detection substituted or mistaken for unction. It requires a spiritual eye and a spiritual taste to discriminate.

Earnestness may be sincere, serious, ardent, and persevering. It goes at a thing with good will, pursues it with perseverance, and urges it with ardor; puts force in it. But all these forces do not rise higher than the mere human. The *man* is in it—the whole man, with all that he has of will and heart, of brain and genius, of planning and working and talking. He has set himself to some purpose which has mastered him, and he pursues to master it. There may be none of God in it. There may be little of God in it, because there is so much of the man in it. He may present pleas in advocacy of his earnest purpose which please or touch and move or overwhelm with conviction of their importance; and in all this earnestness may move along earthly ways, being propelled by human forces only, its altar made by earthly hands and its fire kindled by earthly flames. It is said of a rather famous preacher of gifts, whose construction of Scripture was to his fancy or purpose, that he “grew very eloquent over his own exegesis.” So men grow exceeding earnest over their own plans or movements. Earnestness may be selfishness simulated.

What of unction? It is the indefinable in preaching which makes it preaching. It is that which distinguishes and separates preaching from all mere human addresses. It is the divine in preaching. It makes the preaching sharp to those who need sharpness. It distills as the dew to those who need to be refreshed. It is well described as:

*“a two-edged sword
Of heavenly temper keen,
And double were the wounds it made
Wherever it glanced between.
'Twas death to silt; 'twas life
To all who mourned for sin.
It kindled and it silenced strife,
Made war and peace within.”*

This unction comes to the preacher not in the study but in the closet. It is heaven's distillation in answer to prayer. It is the sweetest exhalation of the Holy Spirit. It impregnates, suffuses, softens, percolates, cuts, and soothes. It carries the Word like dynamite, like salt, like sugar; makes the Word a soother, an arranger, a revealer, a searcher; makes the hearer a culprit or a saint, makes him weep like a child and live like a giant; opens his heart and his purse as gently, yet as strongly as the spring opens the leaves. This unction is not the gift of genius. It is not found in the halls of learning. No eloquence can woo it. No industry can win it. No prelatical hands can confer it. It is the gift of God—the signet set to his own messengers. It is heaven's knighthood given to the chosen true and brave ones who have sought this anointed honor through many an hour of tearful, wrestling prayer.

Earnestness is good and impressive: genius is gifted and great. Thought kindles and inspires, but it takes a diviner endowment, a more powerful energy than earnestness or genius or thought to break the chains of sin, to win estranged and depraved hearts to God, to repair the breaches and restore the Church to her old ways of purity and power. Nothing but this holy unction can do this.

16 Much Prayer the Price of Uction

*All the minister's efforts will be vanity or worse than vanity if he have not unction.
Uction must come down from heaven and spread a savor and feeling and relish over his*

ministry; and among the other means of qualifying himself for his office, the Bible must hold the first place, and the last also must be given to the Word of God and prayer.—Richard Cecil

IN the Christian system unction is the anointing of the Holy Ghost, separating unto God's work and qualifying for it. This unction is the one divine enablement by which the preacher accomplishes the peculiar and saving ends of preaching. Without this unction there are no true spiritual results accomplished; the results and forces in preaching do not rise above the results of unsanctified speech. Without unction the former is as potent as the pulpit.

This divine unction on the preacher generates through the Word of God the spiritual results that flow from the gospel; and without this unction, these results are not secured. Many pleasant impressions may be made, but these all fall far below the ends of gospel preaching. This unction may be simulated. There are many things that look like it, there are many results that resemble its effects; but they are foreign to its results and to its nature. The fervor or softness excited by a pathetic or emotional sermon may look like the movements of the divine unction, but they have no pungent, penetrating heart-breaking force. No heart-healing balm is there in these surface, sympathetic, emotional movements; they are not radical, neither sin-searching nor sin-curing.

This divine unction is the one distinguishing feature that separates true gospel preaching from all other methods of presenting truth. It backs and interpenetrates the revealed truth with all the force of God. It illumines the Word and broadens and enriches the intellect and empowers it to grasp and apprehend the Word. It qualifies the preacher's heart, and brings it to that condition of tenderness, of purity, of force and light that are necessary to secure the highest results. This unction gives to the preacher liberty and enlargement of thought and soul—a freedom, fullness, and directness of utterance that can be secured by no other process.

Without this unction on the preacher the gospel has no more power to propagate itself than any other system of truth. This is the seal of its divinity. Uction in the preacher puts God in the gospel. Without the unction, God is absent, and the gospel is left to the low and unsatisfactory forces that the ingenuity, interest, or talents of men can devise to enforce and project its doctrines.

It is in this element that the pulpit oftener fails than in any other element. Just at this all-important point it lapses. Learning it may have, brilliancy and eloquence may delight and charm, sensation or less offensive methods may bring the populace in crowds, mental power may impress and enforce truth with all its resources; but without this unction, each and all these will be but as the fretful assault of the waters on a Gibraltar. Spray and foam may cover and spangle; but the rocks are there still, unimpressed and unimpressible. The human heart can no more be swept of its hardness and sin by these human forces than these rocks can be swept away by the ocean's ceaseless flow.

This unction is the consecration force, and its presence the continuous test of that consecration. It is this divine anointing on the preacher that secures his consecration to God and his work. Other forces and motives may call him to the work, but this only is consecration. A separation to God's work by the power of the Holy Spirit is the only consecration recognized by God as legitimate.

The unction, the divine unction, this heavenly anointing, is what the pulpit needs and must have. This divine and heavenly oil put on it by the imposition of God's hand must soften and lubricate the whole man—heart, head, spirit—until it separates him with a mighty separation from all earthly, secular, worldly, selfish motives and aims, separating him to everything that is pure and Godlike.

It is the presence of this unction on the preacher that creates the stir and friction in many a congregation. The same truths have been told in the strictness of the letter, but no ruffle has been seen, no pain or pulsation felt. All is quiet as a graveyard. Another preacher comes, and this mysterious influence is on him; the letter of the Word has been fired by the Spirit, the throes of a

mighty movement are felt, it is the unction that pervades and stirs the conscience and breaks the heart. Unctionless preaching makes everything hard, dry, acrid, dead.

This unction is not a memory or an era of the past only; it is a present, realized, conscious fact. It belongs to the experience of the man as well as to his preaching. It is that which transforms him into the image of his divine Master, as well as that by which he declares the truths of Christ with power. It is so much the power in the ministry as to make all else seem feeble and vain without it, and by its presence to atone for the absence of all other and feebler forces.

This unction is not an inalienable gift. It is a conditional gift, and its presence is perpetuated and increased by the same process by which it was at first secured; by unceasing prayer to God, by impassioned desires after God, by estimating it, by seeking it with tireless ardor, by deeming all else loss and failure without it.

How and whence comes this unction? Direct from God in answer to prayer. Praying hearts only are the hearts filled with this holy oil; praying lips only are anointed with this divine unction.

Prayer, much prayer, is the price of preaching unction; prayer, much prayer, is the one, sole condition of keeping this unction. Without unceasing prayer the unction never comes to the preacher. Without perseverance in prayer, the unction, like the manna overkept, breeds worms.

17 Prayer Marks Spiritual Leadership

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer.—John Wesley

THE apostles knew the necessity and worth of prayer to their ministry. They knew that their high commission as apostles, instead of relieving them from the necessity of prayer, committed them to it by a more urgent need; so that they were exceedingly jealous else some other important work should exhaust their time and prevent their praying as they ought; so they appointed laymen to look after the delicate and engrossing duties of ministering to the poor, that they (the apostles) might, unhindered, “give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Prayer is put first, and their relation to prayer is put most strongly—“give themselves to it,” making a business of it, surrendering themselves to praying, putting fervor, urgency, perseverance, and time in it.

How holy, apostolic men devoted themselves to this divine work of prayer! “Night and day praying exceedingly,” says Paul. “We will give ourselves continually to prayer” is the consensus of apostolic devotion. How these New Testament preachers laid themselves out in prayer for God’s people! How they put God in full force into their Churches by their praying! These holy apostles did not vainly fancy that they had met their high and solemn duties by delivering faithfully God’s word, but their preaching was made to stick and tell by the ardor and insistence of their praying. Apostolic praying was as taxing, toilsome, and imperative as apostolic preaching. They prayed mightily day and night to bring their people to the highest regions of faith and holiness. They prayed mightier still to hold them to this high spiritual altitude. The preacher who has never learned in the school of Christ the high and divine art of intercession for his people will never learn the art of preaching, though homiletics be poured into him by the ton, and though he be the most gifted genius in sermon-making and sermon-delivery.

The prayers of apostolic, saintly leaders do much in making saints of those who are not apostles. If the Church leaders in after years had been as particular and fervent in praying for their people as the apostles were, the sad, dark times of worldliness and apostasy had not marred the

history and eclipsed the glory and arrested the advance of the Church. Apostolic praying makes apostolic saints and keeps apostolic times of purity and power in the Church.

What loftiness of soul, what purity and elevation of motive, what unselfishness, what self-sacrifice, what exhaustive toil, what ardor of spirit, what divine tact are requisite to be an intercessor for men!

The preacher is to lay himself out in prayer for his people; not that they might be saved, simply, but that they be mightily saved. The apostles laid themselves out in prayer that their saints might be perfect; not that they should have a little relish for the things of God, but that they "might be filled with all the fullness of God." Paul did not rely on his apostolic preaching to secure this end, but "for this cause he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's praying carried Paul's converts farther along the highway of sainthood than Paul's preaching did. Epaphras did as much or more by prayer for the Colossian saints than by his preaching. He labored fervently always in prayer for them that "they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Preachers are preeminently God's leaders. They are primarily responsible for the condition of the Church. They shape its character, give tone and direction to its life.

Much every way depends on these leaders. They shape the times and the institutions. The Church is divine, the treasure it incases is heavenly, but it bears the imprint of the human. The treasure is in earthen vessels, and it smacks of the vessel. The Church of God makes, or is made by, its leaders. Whether it makes them or is made by them, it will be what its leaders are; spiritual if they are so, secular if they are, conglomerate if its leaders are. Israel's kings gave character to Israel's piety. A Church rarely revolts against or rises above the religion of its leaders. Strongly spiritual leaders; men of holy might, at the lead, are tokens of God's favor; disaster and weakness follow the wake of feeble or worldly leaders. Israel had fallen low when God gave children to be their princes and babes to rule over them. No happy state is predicted by the prophets when children oppress God's Israel and women rule over them. Times of spiritual leadership are times of great spiritual prosperity to the Church.

Prayer is one of the eminent characteristics of strong spiritual leadership. Men of mighty prayer are men of might and mold things. Their power with God has the conquering tread.

How can a man preach who does not get his message fresh from God in the closet? How can he preach without having his faith quickened, his vision cleared, and his heart warmed by his closeting with God? Alas, for the pulpit lips which are untouched by this closet flame. Dry and unctionless they will ever be, and truths divine will never come with power from such lips. As far as the real interests of religion are concerned, a pulpit without a closet will always be a barren thing.

A preacher may preach in an official, entertaining, or learned way without prayer, but between this kind of preaching and sowing God's precious seed with holy hands and prayerful, weeping hearts there is an immeasurable distance.

A prayerless ministry is the undertaker for all God's truth and for God's Church. He may have the most costly casket and the most beautiful flowers, but it is a funeral, notwithstanding the charming array. A prayerless Christian will never learn God's truth; a prayerless ministry will never be able to teach God's truth. Ages of millennial glory have been lost by a prayerless Church. The coming of our Lord has been postponed indefinitely by a prayerless Church. Hell has enlarged herself and filled her dire caves in the presence of the dead service of a prayerless Church.

The best, the greatest offering is an offering of prayer. If the preachers of the twentieth century will learn well the lesson of prayer, and use fully the power of prayer, the millennium will come to its noon ere the century closes. "Pray without ceasing" is the trumpet call to the preachers of the twentieth century. If the twentieth century will get their texts, their thoughts, their words, their sermons in their closets, the next century will find a new heaven and a new

earth. The old sin-stained and sin-eclipsed heaven and earth will pass away under the power of a praying ministry.

18 Preachers Need the Prayers of the People

If some Christians that have been complaining of their ministers had said and acted less before men and had applied themselves with all their might to cry to God for their ministers—had, as it were, risen and stormed heaven with their humble, fervent and incessant prayers for them—they would have been much more in the way of success.—Jonathan Edwards

SOMEHOW the practice of praying in particular for the preacher has fallen into disuse or become discounted. Occasionally have we heard the practice arraigned as a disparagement of the ministry, being a public declaration by those who do it of the inefficiency of the ministry. It offends the pride of learning and self-sufficiency, perhaps, and these ought to be offended and rebuked in a ministry that is so derelict as to allow them to exist.

Prayer, to the preacher, is not simply the duty of his profession, a privilege, but it is a necessity. Air is not more necessary to the lungs than prayer is to the preacher. It is absolutely necessary for the preacher to pray. It is an absolute necessity that the preacher be prayed for. These two propositions are wedded into a union which ought never to know any divorce: *the preacher must pray; the preacher must be prayed for*. It will take all the praying he can do, and all the praying he can get done, to meet the fearful responsibilities and gain the largest, truest success in his great work. The true preacher, next to the cultivation of the spirit and fact of prayer in himself, in their intensest form, covets with a great covetousness the prayers of God's people.

The holier a man is, the more does he estimate prayer; the clearer does he see that God gives himself to the praying ones, and that the measure of God's revelation to the soul is the measure of the soul's longing, importunate prayer for God. Salvation never finds its way to a prayerless heart. The Holy Spirit never abides in a prayerless spirit. Preaching never edifies a prayerless soul. Christ knows nothing of prayerless Christians. The gospel cannot be projected by a prayerless preacher. Gifts, talents, education, eloquence, God's call, cannot abate the demand of prayer, but only intensify the necessity for the preacher to pray and to be prayed for. The more the preacher's eyes are opened to the nature, responsibility, and difficulties in his work, the more will he see, and if he be a true preacher the more will he feel, the necessity of prayer; not only the increasing demand to pray himself, but to call on others to help him by their prayers.

Paul is an illustration of this. If any man could project the gospel by dint of personal force, by brain power, by culture, by personal grace, by God's apostolic commission, God's extraordinary call, that man was Paul. That the preacher must be a man given to prayer, Paul is an eminent example. That the true apostolic preacher must have the prayers of other good people to give to his ministry its full quota of success, Paul is a preeminent example. He asks, he covets, he pleads in an impassioned way for the help of all God's saints. He knew that in the spiritual realm, as elsewhere, in union there is strength; that the concentration and aggregation of faith, desire, and prayer increased the volume of spiritual force until it became overwhelming and irresistible in its power. Units of prayer combined, like drops of water, make an ocean which defies resistance. So Paul, with his clear and full apprehension of spiritual dynamics, determined to make his ministry as impressive, as eternal, as irresistible as the ocean, by gathering all the scattered units of prayer and precipitating them on his ministry. May not the solution of Paul's preeminence in labors and results, and impress on the Church and the world, be found in this fact that he was able to center on himself and his ministry more of prayer than others? To his brethren at Rome he wrote: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in prayers to God for me." To the Ephesians he says: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with

all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.” To the Colossians he emphasizes: “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.” To the Thessalonians he says sharply, strongly: “Brethren, pray for us.” Paul calls on the Corinthian Church to help him: “Ye also helping together by prayer for us.” This was to be part of their work. They were to lay to the helping hand of prayer. He in an additional and closing charge to the Thessalonian Church about the importance and necessity of their prayers says: “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.” He impresses the Philippians that all his trials and opposition can be made subservient to the spread of the gospel by the efficiency of their prayers for him. Philemon was to prepare a lodging for him, for through Philemon’s prayer Paul was to be his guest.

Paul’s attitude on this question illustrates his humility and his deep insight into the spiritual forces which project the gospel. More than this, it teaches a lesson for all times, that if Paul was so dependent on the prayers of God’s saints to give his ministry success, how much greater the necessity that the prayers of God’s saints be centered on the ministry of to-day!

Paul did not feel that this urgent plea for prayer was to lower his dignity, lessen his influence, or depreciate his piety. What if it did? Let dignity go, let influence be destroyed, let his reputation be marred—he must have their prayers. Called, commissioned, chief of the Apostles as he was, all his equipment was imperfect without the prayers of his people. He wrote letters everywhere, urging them to pray for him. Do you pray for your preacher? Do you pray for him in secret? Public prayers are of little worth unless they are founded on or followed up by private praying. The praying ones are to the preacher as Aaron and Hur were to Moses. They hold up his hands and decide the issue that is so fiercely raging around them.

The plea and purpose of the apostles were to put the Church to praying. They did not ignore the grace of cheerful giving. They were not ignorant of the place which religious activity and work occupied in the spiritual life; but not one nor all of these, in apostolic estimate or urgency, could at all compare in necessity and importance with prayer. The most sacred and urgent pleas were used, the most fervid exhortations, the most comprehensive and arousing words were uttered to enforce the all-important obligation and necessity of prayer.

“Put the saints everywhere to praying” is the burden of the apostolic effort and the keynote of apostolic success. Jesus Christ had striven to do this in the days of his personal ministry. As he was moved by infinite compassion at the ripened fields of earth perishing for lack of laborers and pausing in his own praying—he tries to awaken the stupid sensibilities of his disciples to the duty of prayer as he charges them, “Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.” “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.”

19 Deliberation Necessary to Largest Results from Prayer

This perpetual hurry of business and company ruins me in soul if not in body. More solitude and earlier hours! I suspect I have been allotting habitually too little time to religious exercises, as private devotion and religious meditation, Scripture-reading, etc. Hence I am lean and cold and hard. I had better allot two hours or an hour and a half daily. I have been keeping too late hours, and hence have had but a hurried half hour in a morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean. But all may be done through prayer—almighty prayer, I am ready to say—and why not? For that it is almighty is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. O then, pray, pray, pray!—William Wilberforce

OUR devotions are not measured by the clock, but time is of their essence. The ability to wait and stay and press belongs essentially to our intercourse with God. Hurry, everywhere unseemingly and damaging, is so to an alarming extent in the great business of communion with God. Short devotions are the bane of deep piety. Calmness, grasp, strength, are never the companions of hurry. Short devotions deplete spiritual vigor, arrest spiritual progress, sap spiritual foundations, blight the root and bloom of spiritual life. They are the prolific source of backsliding, the sure indication of a superficial piety; they deceive, blight, rot the seed, and impoverish the soil.

It is true that Bible prayers in word and print are short, but the praying men of the Bible were with God through many a sweet and holy wrestling hour. They won by few words but long waiting. The prayers Moses records may be short, but Moses prayed to God with fastings and mighty cryings forty days and nights.

The statement of Elijah's praying may be condensed to a few brief paragraphs, but doubtless Elijah, who when "praying he prayed," spent many hours of fiery struggle and lofty intercourse with God before he could, with assured boldness, say to Ahab, "There shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." The verbal brief of Paul's prayers is short, but Paul "prayed night and day exceedingly." The "Lord's Prayer" is a divine epitome for infant lips, but the man Christ Jesus prayed many an all-night ere his work was done; and his all-night and long-sustained devotions gave to his work its finish and perfection, and to his character the fullness and glory of its divinity.

Spiritual work is taxing work, and men are loath to do it. Praying, true praying, costs an outlay of serious attention and of time, which flesh and blood do not relish. Few persons are made of such strong fiber that they will make a costly outlay when surface work will pass as well in the market. We can habituate ourselves to our beggarly praying until it looks well to us, at least it keeps up a decent form and quiets conscience—the deadliest of opiates! We can slight our praying, and not realize the peril till the foundations are gone. Hurried devotions make weak faith, feeble convictions, questionable piety. To be little with God is to be little for God. To cut short the praying makes the whole religious character short, scrumpy, niggardly, and slovenly.

It takes good time for the full flow of God into the spirit. Short devotions cut the pipe of God's full flow. It takes time in the secret places to get the full revelation of God. Little time and hurry mar the picture.

Henry Martyn laments that "want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer through incessant sermon-making had produced much strangeness between God and his soul." He judged that he had dedicated too much time to public ministrations and too little to private communion with God. He was much impressed to set apart times for fasting and to devote times for solemn prayer. Resulting from this he records: "Was assisted this morning to pray for two hours." Said William Wilberforce, the peer of kings: "I must secure more time for private devotions. I have been living far too public for me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul; it grows lean and faint. I have been keeping too late hours." Of a failure in Parliament he says: "Let me record my grief and shame, and all, probably, from private devotions having been contracted, and so God let me stumble." More solitude and earlier hours was his remedy.

More time and early hours for prayer would act like magic to revive and invigorate many a decayed spiritual life. More time and early hours for prayer would be manifest in holy living. A holy life would not be so rare or so difficult a thing if our devotions were not so short and hurried. A Christly temper in its sweet and passionless fragrance would not be so alien and hopeless a heritage if our closet stay were lengthened and intensified. We live shabbily because we pray meanly. Plenty of time to feast in our closets will bring marrow and fatness to our lives. Our ability to stay with God in our closet measures our ability to stay with God out of the closet. Hasty closet visits are deceptive, defaulting. We are not only deluded by them, but we are losers by them in many ways and in many rich legacies. Tarrying in the closet instructs and wins. We

are taught by it, and the greatest victories are often the results of great waiting—waiting till words and plans are exhausted, and silent and patient waiting gains the crown. Jesus Christ asks with an affronted emphasis, “Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night unto him?”

To pray is the greatest thing we can do: and to do it well there must be calmness, time, and deliberation; otherwise it is degraded into the littlest and meanest of things. True praying has the largest results for good; and poor praying, the least. We cannot do too much of real praying; we cannot do too little of the sham. We must learn anew the worth of prayer, enter anew the school of prayer. There is nothing which it takes more time to learn. And if we would learn the wondrous art, we must not give a fragment here and there—“A little talk with Jesus,” as the tiny saintlets sing—but we must demand and hold with iron grasp the best hours of the day for God and prayer, or there will be no praying worth the name.

This, however, is not a day of prayer. Few men there are who pray. Prayer is defamed by preacher and priest. In these days of hurry and bustle, of electricity and steam, men will not take time to pray. Preachers there are who “say prayers” as a part of their programme, on regular or state occasions; but who “stirs himself up to take hold upon God?” Who prays as Jacob prayed—till he is crowned as a prevailing, princely intercessor? Who prays as Elijah prayed—till all the locked-up forces of nature were unsealed and a famine-stricken land bloomed as the garden of God? Who prayed as Jesus Christ prayed as out upon the mountain he “continued all night in prayer to God?” The apostles “gave themselves to prayer”—the most difficult thing to get men or even the preachers to do. Laymen there are who will give their money—some of them in rich abundance—but they will not “give themselves” to prayer, without which their money is but a curse. There are plenty of preachers who will preach and deliver great and eloquent addresses on the need of revival and the spread of the kingdom of God, but not many there are who will do that without which all preaching and organizing are worse than vain—pray. It is out of date, almost a lost art, and the greatest benefactor this age could have is the man who will bring the preachers and the Church back to prayer.

20 A Praying Pulpit Begets a Praying Pew

I judge that my prayer is more than the devil himself; if it were otherwise, Luther would have fared differently long before this. Yet men will not see and acknowledge the great wonders or miracles God works in my behalf. If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.—Martin Luther

ONLY glimpses of the great importance of prayer could the apostles get before Pentecost. But the Spirit coming and filling on Pentecost elevated prayer to its vital and all-commanding position in the gospel of Christ. The call now of prayer to every saint is the Spirit’s loudest and most exigent call. Sainthood’s piety is made, refined, perfected, by prayer. The gospel moves with slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long.

Where are the Christly leaders who can teach the modern saints how to pray and put them at it? Do we know we are raising up a prayerless set of saints? Where are the apostolic leaders who can put God’s people to praying? Let them come to the front and do the work, and it will be the greatest work which can be done. An increase of educational facilities and a great increase of money force will be the direst curse to religion if they are not sanctified by more and better praying than we are doing. More praying will not come as a matter of course. The campaign for the twentieth or thirtieth century fund will not help our praying but hinder if we are not careful. Nothing but a specific effort from a praying leadership will avail. The chief ones must lead in the apostolic effort to radicate the vital importance and *fact* of prayer in the heart and life of the Church. None but praying leaders can have praying followers. Praying apostles will beget praying saints. A praying pulpit will beget praying pews. We do greatly need some body who can set the

saints to this business of praying. We are not a generation of praying saints. Non-praying saints are a beggarly gang of saints who have neither the ardor nor the beauty nor the power of saints. Who will restore this breach? The greatest will be of reformers and apostles, who can set the Church to praying.

We put it as our most sober judgment that the great need of the Church in this and all ages is men of such commanding faith, of such unsullied holiness, of such marked spiritual vigor and consuming zeal, that their prayers, faith, lives, and ministry will be of such a radical and aggressive form as to work spiritual revolutions which will form eras in individual and Church life.

We do not mean men who get up sensational stirs by novel devices, nor those who attract by a pleasing entertainment; but men who can stir things, and work revolutions by the preaching of God's Word and by the power of the Holy Ghost, revolutions which change the whole current of things.

Natural ability and educational advantages do not figure as factors in this matter; but capacity for faith, the ability to pray, the power of thorough consecration, the ability of self-littleness, an absolute losing of one's self in God's glory, and an ever-present and insatiable yearning and seeking after all the fullness of God—men who can set the Church ablaze for God; not in a noisy, showy way, but with an intense and quiet heat that melts and moves everything for God.

God can work wonders if he can get a suitable man. Men can work wonders if they can get God to lead them. The full endowment of the spirit that turned the world upside down would be eminently useful in these latter days. Men who can stir things mightily for God, whose spiritual revolutions change the whole aspect of things, are the universal need of the Church.

The Church has never been without these men; they adorn its history; they are the standing miracles of the divinity of the Church; their example and history are an unfailing inspiration and blessing. An increase in their number and power should be our prayer.

That which has been done in spiritual matters can be done again, and be better done. This was Christ's view. He said "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." The past has not exhausted the possibilities nor the demands for doing great things for God. The Church that is dependent on its past history for its miracles of power and grace is a fallen Church.

God wants elect men—men out of whom self and the world have gone by a severe crucifixion, by a bankruptcy which has so totally ruined self and the world that there is neither hope nor desire of recovery; men who by this insolvency and crucifixion have turned toward God perfect hearts.

Let us pray ardently that God's promise to prayer may be more than realized.

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