



**PRAYING**  
in the  
**HOLY SPIRIT**

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## Introduction

In this booklet, we will meditate a little on prayer, and try to learn a few things about it from the Word of God. The Word of God is the foundation on which we build. Prayer keeps the soul in touch with the power by which alone we build aright. Mere Bible knowledge may make one heady and doctrinal. Prayer alone, if unguided by Scripture, tends toward fanaticism; but the Word and prayer together give a good, firm base on which to develop a sturdy Christian character.

Prayer is almost universal in mankind. "O You who hear prayer, to You all flesh will come" (Ps. 65:2). Unsaved men pray. All nations pray. It is the sense of need, of weakness, that leads men to cry out for help to a Higher Power; and it is wrong to say, as some have said, that the prayers of unconverted people are never heard. The man whom our Lord healed of his blindness said, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners" (Jn. 9:31). This is true, in the sense that he meant it. But the cases of Hagar in the wilderness, the heathen mariners mentioned in Jonah, and other similar instances must not be overlooked. Both Scripture and history testify to prayers answered in wondrous grace, even when those who prayed were ignorant of the One to whom their entreaties were directed.



## What Is Prayer In The Holy Spirit?

In Jude's brief letter—a fitting preface as it were to the book of Revelation—we find the expression, “Praying in the Holy Spirit” (v. 20). The Christian must be *prayerful* in the Holy Spirit. He must take time to speak to the One who speaks to him in the written Word. In this, unsaved people can have no part whatever, for no one can pray in the Spirit who is not indwelt by the Spirit. In Old Testament times people prayed according to the Spirit as they were controlled by Him, though He did not then indwell believers as He does now. “He has been *with* you. He shall be *in* you.” This latter is the characteristic truth of the present dispensation. It is His abiding presence in the children of God that distinguishes this period from all that preceded it.

But though the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers now, all do not recognize this marvelous fact. To many it is only a theory, a mere doctrinal statement. “Believe in the Holy Spirit,” say many real Christians without the least understanding of the wonderful meaning of these words. “Having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). This divine person dwells in you if you are a believer. Your body is His temple. He has come to make his permanent residence in you. Have you recognized and welcomed Him at home there? Observe this: He is the *Holy* Spirit. He detests sin in all its forms—pride, lust, selfishness, worldliness—in every shape and of every degree. He is easily grieved. Yet how many of us have never seriously sought to “clean house” that we might be suited temples for His indwelling!

I once spent a week in the house of a family in circumstances so filthy and unsanitary that I wonder how I ever stood them. I remained for fear that if I left I might stumble two poor ignorant souls groping after God. Coarseness, vulgarity and dirt grieved me constantly. I could not enjoy my visit, but I tried, by example and hard work, to clean up the place and to show the people living there a little of what cleanliness meant.

The Holy Spirit is more sensitive to moral filth and spiritual defilement than the most delicate and refined person could be to vulgar and degrading living conditions. Ephesians 4:30 says: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of

redemption.” The next verse suggests the kind of house-cleaning that is required if He would be made at home in our lives. “All bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil-speaking ... with all malice,” must be banished if He would be ungrieved. Only as He abides in us ungrieved can we really pray in the Holy Spirit.

This is the reason for so many unanswered prayers. This also explains why, so often, we try to pray and there is neither joy nor liberty. The grieved Spirit of God is silent. He does not form our petitions. Communion is broken. Our prayers are in vain. There is no refreshing of soul. For by our careless ways and lack of self-judgment we have so wounded our Holy Guest that He is in grieved retirement. He has not left us; He never leaves. He abides forever; but He cannot be at home in a heart where so much is tolerated that is disgusting to Him.

If any resent the term “disgusting,” and shrink from applying so strong a word to any habits or ways tolerated by them, let me remind you that to God pride is of all things most vile. By this sin Lucifer was transformed into the devil. And this is a sin most of us are slowest to detect in ourselves, while keen enough to observe in others. From this mother-sin spring all kinds of other evils. “By pride comes nothing but strife” (Pr. 13:10). “A proud look and a lying tongue” (Pr. 6:17) are each abominable in the sight of God.

How great the need then for a spiritual house-cleaning, if we would pray aright; for only as the Divine Person living in the believer is ungrieved can we pray in the Holy Spirit. Prayer in the Spirit must be in accordance with the word of God. Below are but a few quotations that distinctly affirm the Spirit’s authorship of the Holy Scriptures: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). “These things we also speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13).

Though the Holy Spirit dwells in all believers now, all have not recognized this marvelous fact.

The better I know my Bible, the more intelligently I can pray. I certainly need to learn all I can of the Book by careful, diligent study. But I must not stop there. I must know my Bible *practically*. I am to “*know* the truth,” but I must also “*walk* in the truth.” In fact, I do not

really know any truth unless I walk in it. If ignorant of the Word of God, I am likely to pray for many things that are not in harmony with the Lord's mind—things that are not suited to the dispensation (time period) in which we live, or that would not be helpful to my spiritual progress, or honoring to God. The better I know my Bible, and the more careful I am to obey its precepts, the better I shall be able to pray.

I want to stress that he who prays much but does not read his Bible is liable to fanaticism. This is an important consideration. Only recently a lady who had been deceived into the most unscrupulous practices, said tearfully, "I do not understand it. I prayed for weeks that God would show me if this movement was right, and if so, that He would give me the experience I sought; and now I see it has all been a delusion. Why did God allow me to fall into such a snare? Why did He not preserve me from it by answering my prayer?" It was pointed out to her that though she prayed so earnestly she neglected the very means God had appointed by which to get the answer she sought. Her Bible lay unread while she prayed for light; she sought help by attending meetings where emotional experiences took the place of sober instruction from the Book. God has never promised to guide any one into the truth who neglects the Word of truth. Therefore, he who would *pray* in the Spirit must *walk* in the truth, for the Spirit and the Word agree.



## Why Should We Pray?

Some who pretend to have great spiritual insight say that since the believer is already “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” there is no need for prayer in this present dispensation of grace, except in the character of communing with God. We are told that faith simply appropriates the blessings that are already ours, and does not ask for what God may be pleased to withhold. And as to material things, we need not pray for them because it is written in Romans 8:32: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” Therefore, prayer is unnecessary and impertinent.

To both these objections we answer that we are distinctly commanded not only to pray, but to “pray without ceasing” and to “pray in the Spirit.” Moreover, we are definitely told, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6,7).

There can be no question, one would say, but that prayer is both a privilege and a duty, as well as a healthful spiritual exercise; although it certainly has no merit in itself, nor should we for a moment think of it as a means of satisfying God and covering offences, as some have held all down the ages. But if God knows all our needs, and has already promised to supply them according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus, why are we expected to pray, as we become conscious of those needs ourselves? And, moreover, if He gives according to His unchanging purpose, what place can prayer have in the divine economy?

When George Muller, the great 19th century apostle of prayer, founded the Ashley Down Orphan Houses, he decided not to solicit from man, but to bring every need in prayer to God. He declared that his particular reason for doing this was to demonstrate to a materialistic age that God lives and hears prayer. And surely no greater proof of this has ever been given than that revealed in Muller’s journals.

If a certain matter is put on my heart by the Spirit of God, a matter that no other person on earth can possibly know about, and I entering

into my closet, shut the door, and tell it only to my Father who is in heaven, and the answer comes from a source perhaps least expected, how can I doubt that a living God heard and answered?

What parent has not had his heart thrill with gladness when his child comes pleading to him for the very thing parental love and forethought had already decided on? Surely it is not difficult to understand how our gracious God, whose Fatherly love transcends any mere human emotion as the sun outshines the candle, delights thus to anticipate our needs, according to the word, "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." (Is. 65:24).

I do not really know any truth unless I walk in it.

On a specific occasion a few years back, three very definite needs were pressing on my heart, all in connection with service for the Lord. These were obligations which I felt must be met; and yet I could not see just how to meet them, nor did I feel free to mention them to any other person, except God Himself.

For days I had prayed and attempted to quietly trust the Lord, but the burden increased in weight. Then one night, awakened from sleep, I began to ask why the answer was so long delayed. To my aroused heart and exercised conscience, God my Father, by His Spirit, brought to light certain things wherein I realized I had not only been slothful and slack, but had unquestionably grieved the divine indwelling Guest. After a season of confession and self-judgment I was able to pray with liberty for what had been burdening me before.

The next morning every need was met, and, singularly enough, the human instrument used lived on the other side of the continent and could know nothing of the circumstances. Yet his gift of love was exactly sufficient to meet the three particular needs that I had spread before the Lord; and, more than that, he himself designated with careful precision the three avenues of disbursement and the amounts to go to each cause. Could I doubt that the living God had heard my cry?

But, someone objects, if the money was already four days upon its way, and the letter was to be delivered in the morning whether you prayed or not, how does that prove prayer was answered? It proves far more than that. It proves that God had foreseen the need, had provided for it ahead of time, but did not let the provision come to me until in self-judgment, I had been brought to cry to Him about it.

And this is what I would press on my reader. To have received the required amount apart from prayer would have filled the heart with a glad recognition of a Father's love, but to receive it in such a way, after prayer, literally thrilled one's being with the knowledge that, through prayer, one was in direct touch with the living God.

Unbelief seeks to account for such occurrences on a purely human plane, and a misnamed psychology would teach that the only real value there is in prayer is in its reflex action upon the mind of him who prays. But the Word of God refutes all such atheistical reasoning, and proves through answered prayer that there is One on the other side who takes a personal interest in each one of His children, who numbers the very hairs of our head, and has ordained prayer as a means of definitely revealing Himself to them. No one who has ever known what it is to come to God in earnest wrestling about some definite matter, and received the answer, can do other than recognize the blessedness of having to do with the *living* God.



## Hindrances To Prayer

It is sad that although all Christians pray (for prayer is indeed the believer's vital breath), yet there are many who seldom record in actual experience a definite answer to the cry of their hearts. Because of this, there is a tendency to think of prayer as of value only because of its reflex action upon the souls of those who thus wait on God, rather than because of any possible answer.

It is important to bear in mind that there often are certain hindrances on our part that cause God to withhold the gift we ask. To Israel He said, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Is. 59:1-2). And the Psalmist plainly declares, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). Are not solemn words like these often forgotten? Do we not come carelessly into the Lord's presence pleading with Him to undertake for us, only to get no answer from heaven because of our careless ways or unjudged sin?

There are hindrances that must be recognized and dealt with, if we would come to God in the Spirit's liberty, and in the assurance of faith. We have already seen that iniquity in the heart or life prohibits the possibility of the prayer of faith. But I desire to bring to the reader's attention some very definite New Testament Scriptures indicating the exact nature of some of these hindrances.

### • *A Condemning Heart*

First, let's consider a condemning heart. In 1 John 3:20-22 we are told, "If our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, then have we confidence toward God; and whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." The entire passage, from verse 14 to the end of the chapter, is most illuminating, and shows us that he who would pray in confidence when his own need arises must ever walk in love and consideration for others, and minister to their needs as he has opportunity. Otherwise how can he go to God with an uncondemning

heart when in distress himself? It is written, “Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry and not be heard” (Pr. 21:13). If, therefore, I desire mercies of the Lord for myself, let me see to it that I show mercy to others; otherwise my own heart will condemn me, and I cannot pray in the Holy Spirit. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). Harshness of spirit, indifference to the need of others—whether spiritual or temporal—will effectually hinder my prayer getting through to the ear of God.

This principle has wide application. Whatever condemns me in my own conscience hinders prayer. Until it is judged, pleading and wrestling are in vain. Let me first search and try my ways and see if I am allowing anything in my life that is grieving the Spirit. If so, I cannot pray as I should, for God has not promised to hear the cry of one whose own heart condemns him. But if all is judged, the line is clear, and I can pray with assurance. Then I shall know beyond a doubt that I have to do with the living God who hears prayer.

### • *An Unforgiving Spirit*

Our Lord’s instruction on this important second hindrance must not be relegated to a past dispensation. In Mark 11:23-26 He sets forth the folly of expecting God to hear and answer prayer if wrath and bitterness are cherished in the heart.

The disciples had expressed their wonder at the drying up of the barren fig-tree. He uses the occasion to enforce a lesson of faith. He who does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says shall come to pass, can remove mountains of difficulties; and He adds, “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (v. 24). What a promise is this! What possibilities it suggests as to the life of faith and prayer!

But our Lord does not leave so great a pledge unqualified. Not everyone can so pray. There may be that which will hinder faith, and make prayer powerless. So He immediately tells them, “And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” In Luke 11:4 He taught them to pray; “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.” Here, He emphasizes this aspect of forgiveness— one that is often forgotten.

It is sometimes said that this is law, while in Ephesians 4:32 we have grace: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." But the two passages are in fullest agreement; they simply present two sides of the truth. If born of God, I have been forgiven: therefore, I should forgive. But, as a failing child, I daily need forgiveness myself, therefore it is incumbent on me to forgive my brother. If I cherish resentment and withhold forgiveness, I cannot pray with assurance. God has never promised to answer the prayer of one who has an unforgiving spirit.

"For years," said a brother recently, "I prayed for the conversion of an erring son, but all the time he seemed to go from bad to worse. During those years I had a bitter feeling in my heart toward a brother who, I felt, had grievously wronged me. I insisted on reparation which he refused to make. Feeling my cause was just, I held this against him, and would not overlook it. At last, I realized that this thing was hindering prayer. I judged it before God, and freely forgave. Oh the liberty as I then turned to God about my son! Soon, with joy, I heard of his conversion. Though far from home, he was brought under the power of the gospel and led to Christ." This brother felt that God had been waiting on him, before answering the pleading of his heart. How many times have saints made similar confessions. An unforgiving spirit explains why thousands of petitions apparently go unheeded.

### • *Selfishness*

A third hindrance is suggested in James 4:3: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." Selfishness is in the way. God loves us too well to grant every request of our selfish hearts. Yet how often do we forget this. Perhaps we read in verse 2, "You do not have, because you do not ask," and immediately conclude that we may ask what we will, and that God is bound to give; but we have already seen that promises such as these are subject to conditions. If we delight ourselves in the Lord, He declares He will "give us the desires of our hearts" (Ps. 37:4). But it is plain that he who thus finds his delight in the Lord will not ask selfishly for the gratification of carnal desires. If God does answer such prayers it is in judgment, as we shall see later on. Here the important thing to realize is that no promise is attached to the prayer of selfishness.

Suppose, for instance, I desired great wealth. Why not come to God and ask for a million dollars? If I did, would I receive it? Certainly not. God loves me too much to entrust me with a million dollars unless the circumstances be most exceptional. But if I ask for His glory, a million is nothing to Him. In the mid-nineteenth century, George Muller asked and received over five millions in fifty years to feed and shelter thousands of orphan children. God honored his faith, and gave the means as required.

Many of His servants can tell, to His praise and glory, how they have come to Him about financial and other needs *in order to carry on the work committed to them*, and He has answered most graciously, and demonstrated in marvelous ways that He is indeed the living God. But what He thus gives is a sacred trust to be administered for Him, not to be consumed on our own lusts.

Therefore, when we pray for temporal things it is well that we search ourselves, examining our motives in the light of His word, that we be not found asking selfishly, but for His glory. And, be it remembered, it is in accordance with His will that we trust Him for food and raiment, and pray to Him to supply the necessities of life. This is not the prayer of selfishness, but of childlike confidence. It was Christ Himself who said “When you pray, say ... Give us day by day our daily bread” (Luke 11:2). And we have the same privilege still, for, “In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving” we are encouraged to “let our requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6).

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### • ***Wrong Family Relationships***

Fourthly, wrong family relationships hinder prayer. Read 1 Peter 3:1-7. Note the concluding verse of this section in which wives and husbands are being instructed as to their duties toward each other. “Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life *that your prayers may not be hindered.*” When wife and husband are one in heart, one in purpose, each occupying the place divinely assigned in the home, loving and honoring one another, with what boldness and holy confidence can they kneel together before God in prayer, counting on His unflinching grace for their households and every interest of their hearts!

But where it is otherwise, how difficult it is to pray. And if strife and discord rule, prayer together is an impossibility. Formal prayers may yet be uttered while kneeling at the family altar, but definite answers will not be there.

Surrounded by a growing family, it is well that parents carefully consider whether their own behavior towards one another, publicly and privately, helps or hinders prayer. It is so very important that those who are responsible for their little ones should ever live in an atmosphere of trustful prayer, counting on God for the salvation of their households, and so live before them that the impressionable hearts of the children will recognize the practical power of godliness.

### • *Wavering*

Our fifth hindrance is mentioned in James 1:6,7: "Let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord." Wavering is really unbelief, and it is the very opposite to faith, and, therefore, a prime hindrance to prayer.

But wavering is generally a symptom of something deeper. He who wavers may well examine himself and see whether he has not a condemning heart, an unforgiving spirit, a selfish motive, or whether there is not some definite thing in his life whereby his prayer is hindered. It is absolutely impossible to offer the prayer of faith if any of these things are present. Faith and holiness are too intimately linked to be separated.

God has never promised to answer the prayer of one who has an unforgiving spirit.

God reveals His will to one who walks before Him, and thus he is enabled to "ask in faith, with no doubting." Where there is no such assurance it is well to take the word of the prophet: "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord" (Lam. 3:40). "Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord" (Hos. 6:3). And so we shall enter into His mind and understand His will, in order that we may pray in accordance with His Word, and so without hindrance.



## Prayer And The Unseen Enemy

He who seeks to enter into the privileges and responsibilities of prayer will soon be conscious of unseen hindrances which may greatly perplex him if uninstructed by Scripture. Satan and his hosts of evil spirits—unholy principalities and powers in heavenly places—constantly endeavor to hinder the prayer-life; and if the believer wills to be “instant in prayer,” the unseen enemy will use all his diabolic ingenuity to delay the answer.

This may astonish some who have never considered the teaching of the Word of God on this subject. Let us meditate a little on Ephesians 6:10-20. Here we have the veil, as it were, pushed aside, and we discern the nature of the conflict in the heavenlies. Ephesians is the New Testament Book of Joshua. It gives us the Christian’s inheritance (secured for us by the death of Christ), as faith sees the waters of judgment turned back and a dry way opened up into the good land—the heavenly places where all our blessings lie.

This is not heaven itself, which will be our eternal home; but our *present* place of privilege, as blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. “All things are yours,” says the apostle elsewhere; but what is now needed is appropriating faith. All the land of Canaan was given to Israel by God Himself. But energy was needed to enter into and enjoy it—to appropriate it—to “possess their possessions.”

There will be no enemies to fight when we reach the Father’s house. But the seven nations of Canaan, greater and mightier than Israel, typify the unseen spiritual foes with which we have now to cope. Therefore, the call in Ephesians 6:10 is to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” We are as dependent on God in this conflict as Israel was in the wars of the land. But “the Captain of the Lord’s host” was sent to lead them on to victory, and the same blessed One is our present onnipotent Captain of salvation. In His strength and power we shall be overcomers if we are obedient to His Word.

We must be arrayed in the whole armor of God, if we would stand against the wiles of the devil. Off his guard, Joshua was easily deceived by the wiles of the Gibeonites. Their good words and fair speeches spread a net for his feet, and Satan today works by cunning craftiness (Eph. 4:14), or, as it might be rendered, “wily error,” to

deceive those who do not know their Bibles and are not subject to the Word.

It is therefore of the utmost importance not to underestimate the power, nor misunderstand the nature, of the foes we have to meet. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (it is not with men, however wicked in life or however false their systems of teaching) “but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual host of wickedness in heavenly places” (v. 12). These are evil principalities and powers—craven, defeated foes—yet still relentlessly pursuing the people of God, and seeking to thwart them as they endeavor to appropriate their blood-bought blessings.

The devil is a defeated prince, but a prince still; and myriads of fallen spirits give allegiance to him. These are the “rulers” of the verse we are considering. The passage might be rendered: “The world-rulers of this darkness.” These unseen “world-rulers” hold sway over the minds of men who refuse to be subject to our Lord Jesus Christ. To them, Satan is the prince of this world, and its god too. They are “led by the devil captive at his will.”

But as we have seen, he is not the only enemy. He is distinctly called in Ephesians 2:2 “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” “The air” is included in the heavenly regions—“the high places,” or “heavenlies”—of our present verse.

In view of organized opposition such as this, how helpless we would be relying on our own strength and wisdom. Hence the exhortation to “take unto you the whole armor of God.” That heavenly suit of armor is outlined for us in the verses that follow. Note its parts:

- **“Having girded your waist with truth.”** It is as we know and practice the faith that we are kept from error. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. Christ is the Truth personally. Satan works by deception.
- **“The breastplate of righteousness.”** This is practical righteousness—not that which is imputed to us through faith in Christ. The believer is made the righteousness of God in Christ, but if he does not practice righteousness he cannot stand in the great conflict in which we are engaged. God said to Israel, “When the army goes out against your enemies, then keep yourself from every wicked thing” (Deut. 23:9). He who tampers with evil is trafficking with the enemy, and is already defeated.

- **“Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”** What shoes are these! We read of them again in Philippians 1:27, “Only let your conduct (or walk) be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” It is the walk in accord with the gospel.
- **“The shield of faith”** is implicit confidence in the living God, “whose I am and whom I serve.” It says, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”
- **“The helmet of salvation”** is the knowledge of God’s delivering grace protecting our minds from the doubts Satan would inject.
- **“The sword of the Spirit”** is not just the Word of God as a whole, but the particular *saying* of God—that special word or passage—to meet each particular case. This is well illustrated, for instance, by our Lord Himself in His conflict with Satan in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).
- **“All prayer”** lastly is John Bunyan’s peculiar, undescribed weapon without which we certainly shall be defeated: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance.” If the devil can rob you of this you will not be able to maintain your ground. “Watch and pray” go together—“praying always ... with all perseverance.” This demands spiritual energy. I must not allow myself to be careless or neglectful. It is well to accustom oneself to fixed times of prayer, and to refuse to allow even pressing business to turn one aside.

Have you heard of the white handkerchief in front of General Charles “Chinese” Gordon’s tent? The guard outside allowed no courier to enter, no matter how urgent, till that kerchief was removed. It indicated that Gordon, a British military officer, was having an audience with God, and all other matters must wait. Is it not often otherwise with many of us? Oh how often God is put last! If there is time, after all else is attended to, a few moments are given to prayer.

Meditate with me on a remarkable passage in the book of Daniel, chapter 10. Here we see God’s prophet on his face before the Lord for “three full weeks.” He is so exercised about a certain matter that he cannot partake of his ordinary food and drink. Day after day and night after night he prays. The burden is not lifted, for no answer has come. But observe the consummation. An angel comes to him and says: “Do not fear, Daniel: for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were

heard, and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people” (vv. 12-14).

What a mystery! A holy angel was sent from the throne of the Divine Majesty in immediate answer to the prophet’s prayer, but for twenty-one days he could not reach Daniel! Who would believe this if it were not so plainly written in the word of God? For three weeks this angelic messenger had been in conflict with that particular “world-ruler of this darkness” who was evidently appointed by Satan to control, if possible, the king of Persia and prevent the carrying out of God’s plan.

The mystery deepens as we learn that Michael the archangel had to come to assist the first messenger, before the evil angel was defeated. May we not learn from this why answers to many of our prayers seem to be long delayed? May it not be that God answered at once, but there may be something unseen to us that needed to be settled before the answer could reach us?

Let us not then be discouraged, nor accuse God of turning a deaf ear to our agonized cry. The answer may already be on the way, but Satan and his evil hosts are battling against it. But God is faithful, and in His due time He will see that the prayer we have made in accordance with His will is wonderfully answered to His praise and glory and to our eternal blessing.

It is in this way that patience has her perfect work. Praying in spite of the enemy’s effort to hinder, watching against anything that might delay the blessing, trusting even though “hope deferred makes the heart sick,” assured that God is faithful and will not suffer you to be tempted, or tested, above what you are able to bear. Faith looks to Him and cries, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

And even though called from this scene before the answer comes, in a better world, with clearer vision, you may see how your heart-cry has been heard and answered in a way least expected. “I do not need to live,” said a dying saint, “to keep watch upon the faithfulness of God.” The enemy may seem to triumph for a moment, but his final defeat is certain and eternal. Therefore let us heed the admonition to “pray without ceasing,” and “pray in faith, nothing wavering.”

## Prayer According To The Will Of God

Let's now consider the prayer that God delights to answer. First of all we have the clear, unequivocal declaration of 1 John 5:14,15: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: and if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we asked of Him." What words are these: "If we ask anything," and "Whatever we ask!" But let us not fail to observe the all-important condition, "According to His will."

Now God has been pleased, in wonderful grace, to make known His will in a book. We rightly call the Scriptures by the sublime title our Lord Himself used, "The Word of God" (Jn. 10:35). If I would know His will, I must study His book. Ignorance of the revealed Word accounts for many unanswered prayers. In regard to prayer, as in other matters, we err through not knowing the Scriptures. He who would pray aright must be taught of the Spirit through the written Word. Learning thus the mind of God, prayer becomes, not the whimsical expression of our own poor minds, but it takes on a high and holy character. It is asking of God what He delights to give, what He has declared is His desire and purpose.

He who finds  
his delight in  
the Lord  
will not ask  
selfishly  
for the  
gratification  
of carnal  
desires.

Here again we have to meet the natural objection of our unbelieving hearts: if it is God's will to do a certain thing, why need I pray about it? But Daniel may well teach us a lesson here. When he "understood by books" what God was about to do, he immediately set himself to pray in accordance with the prophetic message. And as he thus asked "according to His will," God answered in a way marvelously confirming the faith of His servant (Dan. 9:2).

It is therefore all-important that we search the Scriptures in a self-judged and teachable spirit, in order that we enter into the current of the divine counsels. Then as we learn anything that is in accordance with the will of God, we can bear it up before Him in confidence.

“I prayed for years,” said an almost hysterical woman, “that God would sanctify me wholly by rooting out all inbred sin and making me absolutely pure within, but He has not heard my cry.” I could only reply, “But you had no title to pray for anything of the kind. God has expressed His mind too clearly for any subject soul to be mistaken. His will is, not that inbred sin should be rooted out of you, but that through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, sin shall not reign *in* your mortal body.”

As with thousands of similar cases, this new view-point changed the character of her prayers completely. Israel desired a short-cut through the land of Edom—and Edom is a type or picture of the flesh. But

It is only as His servants pray that they see the glory of the Lord and behold His power working.

God’s will was that they should compass the land of Edom, even though the way was long and trying. In the desert they proved how well He was able to care for them. Go through your Bible and learn, particularly from the Epistles of the New Testament, what the will of

God really is; and as His counsels are opened up to your soul, pray accordingly, and He will do for you exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think.

When one is concerned about unsaved friends, relatives, or casual acquaintances, it is most blessed to know that prayer for their conviction and conversion is indeed in accordance with His will. “He is not willing that any should perish” (1 Peter 3:9), but “desires all men to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4). To those who refused His grace, our Savior said sorrowfully, “I would, but *you* would not.”

With what assurance can one pray for those in need, when he knows it is the will of God to save! Someone has well said, “Prayer does not change the will of God. It allows God to work upon man’s will, and change it.” The last sentence is perhaps capable of serious misunderstanding. But surely the meaning is that God is waiting on our prayers, in order to work in such a way that we may know He is revealing Himself in wondrous grace. Whenever He is about to work, He first stirs hearts to pray.

Abraham prayed, and God delivered Lot. Jacob prayed, and God caused Esau to meet him in peace. Moses prayed, and Amalek was defeated, and Israel was victorious. Hannah prayed definitely for a son,

and God heard, and she called her little one Samuel, which means “asked of God.” Daniel prayed, and the whole prophetic panorama was opened up to him. Nehemiah prayed, and the king’s heart was turned toward the remnant of Israel and the holy city.

These all prayed according to *the will of God*, and He heard and answered. The history of the Church abounds in similar instances, furnishing indisputable evidence of the supernatural character of Christianity, and should ever be an encouragement to each believer to seek to learn the will of God, and to ask largely in accordance with it, knowing that “He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13).

If we would pray more, we might worry less, for we would understand better what it means to rest in His love. He has said, “Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Ps. 37:4). Well may we cry with earnest hearts, “Teach me Your will;” and then “Lord teach us to pray.” And notice, the last petition is not merely “teach us *how* to pray,” but “teach us *to* pray,” for it is not enough to know the proper way in which to approach God, but we need to learn to pray without ceasing.



## In My Name

John's Gospel was written to unfold the glories of Christ as Son of God. And the very "holy of holies" of this tabernacle of truth are chapters thirteen to seventeen. In this section we see our blessed Lord, shut in with "His own," instructing them as to their path, revealing secrets until now unknown, and praying for them in the most sacred intimacy. And it is here that we get much valuable instruction about prayer, which is to be the resource of His tried and needy people during His absence.

He first speaks of prayer in connection with service. In John 14:12-14 He says: "Most assuredly, I say to you, He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to my Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." Few of His sayings have been more perverted or misunderstood than these. Let us weigh them carefully as He evidently desired that we should. His solemn "most assuredly," ("verily, verily" in the KJV) is always a challenge to our hearts, and invites us to pause and thoughtfully consider what follows.

His works have testified to the Father's delight in Him, and attested to His Messiahship. Now He is going away, and He empowers His disciples to continue the hallowed service which He had begun. Undoubtedly this involved, for a time at least, the power to work miracles, though it would be a great mistake to confine it to that. What were "the works" He did? Luke 7:22 gives the answer: "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them." These were His works, and of these the last is by no means least. As for the other works, we have only to read the Acts to see how truly they did follow His believing apostles, thus corroborating the message they carried to a godless world. They did not heal everybody, nor were there many occasions when the dead were raised, but they did "go everywhere preaching the Word." This was their great ministry, and miracles were but signs to attest to their divine commission.

But what are the “greater works” which He promised they should do? Surely not miracles, as commonly understood. If we think of these, who has ever performed greater works of power than He? Have any of His disciples called from the tomb a man four days dead, whose body was already decaying? Have any stilled the waves, and quieted the winds by a word? Have any multiplied food so as to feed greater multitudes than He? The centuries answer, “No.” The “greater works” cannot therefore refer to such wonders as these.

The “greater works” then, begun in the opening chapters of Acts, were the conversion of thousands, the eventual overturning of the paganism of the Roman Empire by the advancing light of Christianity, the miraculous changes wrought, not only in a few individuals, but in whole communities, and even nations, by the power of the gospel, the widespread dissemination of the Holy Scriptures carrying light and salvation to myriads—these are the greater things which have been accomplished through the power of the promised Holy Spirit. Linked with this promise is His assurance regarding prayer. It is only as His servants pray that they see the glory of the Lord and behold His power working. And so He says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask *in My name*, that will I do ... If ye ask anything *in My name*, I will do it.”

Again in John 15:16, He links the Father with Himself in answering, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give you.” Here is complete furnishing for the servant’s path. All that is needed, all that faith can ask in His name, the Father and the Son engage to supply.

But let there be no mistake here. To present a petition and then merely add routinely, “In the name of the Lord Jesus,” is not necessarily praying in His name. For millions of such prayers have gone unheeded, as every thoughtful person knows. Have you not often so prayed only to be denied?

But does this invalidate the promise? Surely not. It should lead one to inquire, “What is it to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus?” And the answer is clearly this: To pray in His name is to ask by His authority; and to ask by His authority is to ask in accordance with His will as revealed in His Word, thus bringing us back to what we were considering in our last chapter.

Let me illustrate what I mean by citing three prayers that recently came to my attention. At a political convention years ago, a chaplain

offered the invocation. He prayed "that it may please You to give wisdom to select a man for this high office who will lead the party to victory," and he closed with the words, "This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ Your Son." At a rival convention a very similar prayer was offered and closed in almost the same language.

Now were either or both of these petitions "in the name" of Him whom the world rejects today as it rejected Him of old? Certainly, God could not answer both of them. Nor if He seemed to answer one, by permitting the choice of one party to become president would that in itself be proof that the prayer of the chaplain had been in the name of Jesus.

About the time that my attention was called to these rival "prayers," I attended a little gathering where a few simple Christians had met together to wait on God. There I heard more than one pray fervently for the country, for those aspiring to high office, that all might be so ordered that blessing might come to man and that God might be glorified, and that His people might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness. This was prayer in accordance with the Word (1 Tim. 2:1-4), and in the name, that is, by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

The conclusion is this: To pray in the name of Jesus I must be intelligent as to the mind of Christ, and be in fellowship with Him as to God's present and future plans. If we go through the Acts and Epistles and notice how the expressions, "In the name of the Lord," "For His name's sake," and similar phrases are employed, we shall see this very clearly.

As the soul enters into this, what a solemn thing prayer becomes! It is no light matter to come before God bringing the petitions that the Holy Spirit lays upon the heart, in accordance with the revealed will of the Lord. To pray aright we must walk in the Spirit, study to show ourselves approved unto God, rightly divide the Word of Truth, and be in communion with Him who has said, "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it." Lord, teach us to pray! As we become intelligent as to what it is to pray in His name we shall be saved from many a disappointment.

Take, for instance, the question of *bodily healing*, which occupies so large a place in the thoughts of many today, when an ever-increasing emphasis seems to be laid upon what is purely physical. If the Lord had promised continued health of body to all obedient believers in this dispensation, or if His atonement was for sickness as well as for sin,

then we would be authorized, not only to pray for, but claim healing on all occasions, providing there be self-judgment and confession of all known sin on our part. But facts are stubborn things, and facts prove conclusively that many of the godliest saints are familiar with affliction, pain and sickness.

Moreover, those who advocate prayer as the divine and only remedy for illness, invariably succumb at last to some disease from which they pray to be healed. What then is the conclusion? Either that they are not praying in faith, or that it *is not the will of God* always to heal the bodies of His people in the present age. The latter is clearly the testimony of Scripture. We are “blessed with every *spiritual* blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3), but we are not promised all temporal or physical blessings. We still await the redemption of the body. Therefore, the prayer for health should be supplemented by subjection to the Father’s will. We dare not demand healing “in the name” of the Lord because He has not authorized us thus to pray.

To present a petition and then merely add, “In the name of the Lord Jesus,” is not necessarily to pray in His name.

As one becomes better acquainted with the Word of God, and walks in the power of the Spirit, he will better understand what it means really to ask in the name that cannot be denied.



## Prayer And Communion

Now let's consider prayer as the expression of the soul's communion with God. If we stop to consider what is involved in this statement, it will perhaps begin to dawn upon us that true prayer is a great deal more than some of us have thought. It is certainly far more than going lightly into the presence of God with some request that is possibly dictated by selfishness rather than the desire for the glory of God Himself. It is to those who abide in Him that He promises to grant their every request. If, therefore, I pray and there seems to be no answer, it would be well for me to remember the Word of the Lord, "When you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door pray to your Father who is in the secret place" (Matthew 6:6). Thus removed from all human interruption or worldly distraction, let there be a period of honest self-examination in the quiet presence of God. Ask yourself the following questions and answer each one faithfully and honestly:

1. Am I truly desirous that God's will should be done in me at whatever cost?
2. In presenting this particular request, am I seeking His glory or my own pleasure?
3. Is there anything in my life with which God has a controversy?
4. Have I been guilty of any known sin which lies unconfessed and unjudged upon my conscience?
5. Am I consciously yielded to God and endeavoring to walk in obedience to His Word?
6. Have I availed myself of the instruction in the Word of God, by meditating upon it carefully day by day to learn His will?
7. If my own heart condemns me along any of these lines, do I now honestly judge in myself everything that He, by the Spirit through the Word, shows me to be contrary to His mind?

I put before the reader these questions which I myself have employed for many years, though not always using the same terms. I earnestly desire to press the importance of taking stock, so to speak, of one's own actual state of soul. It may be that conscience does not condemn on any point, but even then it is well to remember that God,

who “is greater than our heart and knows all things” may detect something in us which we ourselves fail to recognize. The Apostle Paul said on one occasion, “I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, the importance of a lowly mind even when not conscious of failure.

After self-examination, weigh carefully the petition which you feel God has not answered. Look at it squarely, and see if you can honestly present it again in the light of all that has transpired between your soul and God. Perhaps you will realize that you cannot consistently press your claim lest, in doing so, you take yourself out of the hand of God. Perhaps it may be the very opposite. You will have your faith strengthened, and you will realize more clearly than before that your request was one that you were entitled to present with confidence. You will see that the temporary delay in answering was not a denial, but rather a test of faith. You will then leave the matter with the Lord as to the time and the manner in which He is to answer your cry and give you your heart’s desire.

Undoubtedly, many times the Lord purposely waits, when His loving heart would gladly give us at once that for which we yearn; but He would make us more dependent upon Himself, and more appreciative of His mercies when we receive them. The waiting season may become a time of rich spiritual blessing and of real growth in grace, as we learn to say, “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him” (Ps. 62:5). Others have pointed out that the Hebrew word here translated “expectation” is exactly the same as the word translated “cord” in Joshua 2:15. Think of the spies suspended by a cord from the window of Rahab’s house, and think of your own soul linked by expectation to the very throne of God! What a cord is this to draw your heart out to Himself as you wait upon Him to fulfill His Word in His own way and time!

As the soul enters more deeply into communion, the form of the petition may itself become changed, and that almost unconsciously, so that instead of definiteness there may be seeming indefiniteness. But this does not necessarily indicate lack of faith, but rather fuller confidence in the unchanging love and wisdom of Him who delights to have us address Him as “Our Father.” We read in Philippians 4:6-7: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God; and the

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” How blessed is this!

The soul in communion with God knows no anxiety. It is enabled to bring everything that distresses the heart to God Himself by prayer and supplication, not forgetting thanksgiving for past mercies and present blessings. And the heart rests in quietness, garrisoned by the very peace of God, a peace which passes all understanding because the human mind knows nothing of it. It is something of a purely spiritual character, not to be in any way confounded with stoical human determination to make the best of circumstances. It is the very calm that dwells in the heart of the Eternal God as He sits in peace upon His throne far above all the storms of earth, keeping the hearts and minds of those who believe in His son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, as a guest in a Christian home, I sat one afternoon at an open window. A beautiful child of perhaps eight years old was playing on the lawn, a lovely picture in a garden of flowers. Shortly my attention was attracted by the voice of another child who had come to the gate and called to my little friend in the garden. “Annie, she said, “we are going to have a picnic on Saturday, and a lot of us will be there, and we want you to come along. Will you?” “I will ask my mother,” replied the other, and immediately ran around the house to make inquiry. In a little while she returned and reported: “Mother says she will think about it.” “Oh,” exclaimed the other in an annoyed voice, “don’t leave it like that. Go and beg her until she says yes.” “It isn’t necessary to beg my mother,” said little Annie. “If she thinks it is best for me I know she will let me go; and if she doesn’t let me go, she probably has something better in mind for me anyway.” What a trustful child, I thought. What a lesson she may teach to many of her elders in regard to trusting implicitly the loving heart of our Father above!

Prevailing prayer is not to be confounded with the fretful begging of a restless heart, unhappy and dissatisfied, crying out rebelliously for changed circumstances that its own comfort may be increased. It is rather the trusting petition of a soul at perfect peace, resting in the very center of the will of God, asking in happy confidence for what the blessed Holy Spirit knows will bring added glory to God. It is thus as we learn to delight in the Lord for what He is in Himself, not merely because of what He gives to us, that we have the assurance that when we pray in faith, we shall receive the desires of our heart.

## Prayer Answered In Judgment

There are in Scripture striking illustrations of what sometimes happens when there is persistence in demanding of God what He is loath to give, because in His infinite wisdom He has something far better for us than we in our folly realize. We have already seen that it is only while abiding in Christ and with His words abiding in us that we can pray in His name, knowing that whatever we ask the Father, we shall receive of Him because we do His will and are pleasing in His sight. A restless will may lead us to pray to our own hurt. If there is not a timely recognition of this, accompanied by self-judgment and submission to the Word of God, we may find our prayers answered only to our deepest distress and sorrow afterwards.

The fretful demands of the people of Israel in the wilderness, when they insistently cried for meat, is a case in point. When the Psalmist summarizes their desert experiences, he tells us how “they soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul” (Ps. 106:13-15). Faith would have reckoned on the unfailing care of God, and a subject people would have left it to Him to provide the kind of food which He saw would be best for them. But their lustful hearts were set upon one particular thing, and without it they were sure they could not be happy.

At the moment, nothing seemed so important as the gratification of their desires. Not content with the manna from heaven which He gave them so abundantly, they cried, “Who will give us flesh to eat?” and “Our soul loathes this worthless bread” (Num. 11:18, 21:5). We are told in another psalm that “He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens; and by His power He brought in the south wind. He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas: and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled: for He gave them their own desire” (Ps. 78:26-29).

Doubtless many would have looked upon this as a most remarkable answer to prayer, and would have taken for granted that the answer in itself proved that the prayer was right and proper. Such a conclusion, however, would have been far from correct; for in the verses that

follow we read: “They were not deprived of their craving; but while their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel” (vv. 30-31). The fact that we receive what we pray for does not, therefore, in every instance, indicate either a right state of soul on our part or, on the other hand, God’s pleasure in our petition. It may be just as true now as then, that God will in His indignation grant our request and send leanness into our souls.

The mistake has often been made of assuming that if God seems to prosper a certain undertaking in which the heart is engaged, it must, therefore, have His approval. Later circumstances may show clearly that He was simply allowing us to have our own way in order that we might learn a lesson through eating of the fruit of our own devices, a proof of our own folly in persisting in a course for which we did not have a “Thus says the Lord.”

Another striking example of what we are considering is that of Israel when they desired a king. Earnestly they pleaded that they might become like the nations around them with a king ruling over them and leading them to battle. God took them at their word; a king was provided, and when they saw him, they were filled with delight. A heroic noble figure, he towered head and shoulders above the people. Just the ideal ruler and warrior, as men might think. But He who looks not on outward appearances, but on the heart, knew well the character of the man who was so readily acclaimed as king when presented to them by Samuel the prophet.

Years afterwards He says through Hosea: “Oh, Israel, you are destroyed, but your help is from Me. I will be your King; where is any other, that he may save you in all your cities? And your judges to whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes?’ I gave you a king in My anger, and took him away in My wrath” (Hos. 13:9-11). In their demand for a king, they were really rejecting God who had ruled them until now. Yet He allowed their plea, provided a king Himself, and used that king to chasten and afflict them. It was another case of prayer answered in judgment.

An Epaphras laboring fervently in prayer is as important in the work of evangelization as a Paul carrying the glad tidings to the regions beyond.

It is never safe to trust what some people call Providence while neglecting obedience to the Word. Let me cite an example. A Christian young woman became deeply infatuated with a brilliant but Christless young man. They got engaged, but Christian friends were earnestly praying that God would deliver her from an unequal yoke, which they felt would only bring sorrow into her life. It was a delicate matter to discuss with her. In fact, she resented any interference with her private affairs. However, in a short time they were estranged, and the young man himself broke the engagement.

Instead of recognizing that this was God's method of deliverance for her, the young woman was greatly distressed, and prayed day and night that the offended one might return to her and the engagement again be entered into. All that Christian friends could do to occupy her mind and heart with other interests, or to show her that God had acted in mercy toward her did not help. Constantly she grieved, and persistently she prayed that the desire of her heart might be granted. Strikingly enough, most unexpectedly he returned to her, took all the blame of the past upon himself, and asked for a renewal of the engagement. Gladly she entered into this, and shortly afterwards they were married.

Years of sorrow and misery resulted from her disobedience to the Word of God; yet she insisted at the time that it was God who had answered her prayer, and brought back her loved one to her. His deep hatred of Christ and the things of God, camouflaged for a time by a gentlemanly exterior, soon manifested itself, and before long a separation ensued, and she was left in wretchedness and misery with two little children dependent upon her. She realized deeply as the years have gone on that what she thought was a token of God's approval was but His chastening hand upon her because of her willfulness.

Instances such as the above might be multiplied almost without number in the lives of God's children. I was in a home some years ago where a poor mother was laboring under the grief of caring for a severely retarded son who did not so much as recognize her in the slightest way. She told me that years before, when he was a little baby in his cradle, he was taken ill with scarlet fever. The physicians gave him up, declaring there was no hope, but her heart was rebellious. She felt she could not let him go. She fell upon her knees, and told God she could never love Him again if He took her child from her. Within an hour, there was decided evidence of improvement. The little one recovered, but he never recognized his mother again. Her own heart

had become tender and subdued through the years. The rebellion was all gone, but she said to me: "How much better it would have been, if I could have said, 'Your will be done.'"

When a seeming crisis is reached in the life, and the soul is filled with perplexity as to what would be best, it is always wise to remember that the Holy Spirit Himself indwells the believer. And when we know not what to pray for, He can be trusted to make intercession for us according to the will of God with groanings that cannot be uttered. The subject heart, instead of insisting that God do according to its natural desires, will pray with Jeremiah: "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing" (Jer. 10:23-24). None need be afraid to trust everything in His hands who is deeply concerned about the welfare of each of His own, and who has declared in His Word that "All things work together for good to those who love God; who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

We often have to learn, indeed, that His ways are not our ways, but infinitely above them, and we shall praise Him at last for every seeming disappointment when we see "the end of the Lord." He is the Husbandman. We are the trees of His planting. He can be depended upon to do what is best for His own. We have cost Him too much for Him to be indifferent to our welfare now.

It is part of the chastening of the Lord to put the soul through experiences where it learns the utter unprofitableness of the flesh and is cast entirely upon God. No such experience is without real value, and recognizing this, we shall tread softly and pray submissively, remembering with whom we have to do. Nor should we think of chastisement as synonymous with punishment. It is the educative process of the soul, and is all in love, and never in anger. Its object is ever our blessing, and it invariably yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:11).



## Prayer And The Work Of Evangelization

The ministry of intercession has a very large place in connection with carrying the gospel to a lost world. Far more is accomplished in secret than Christians generally realize. The preachers who have been most widely used have been men of prayer. Not only have they prayed themselves, but also others prayed for them and their work; and many of these prayer-evangelists have never been brought to public notice. Theirs are not the gifts that attract the attention of the throngs, but there are mighty men and women of prayer prevailing against the unseen enemy in the heavenlies, and, by their intercession, bringing down power from heaven and blessing upon the public ministry of others. An Epaphras laboring fervently in prayer is as important in the work of evangelization as a Paul carrying the glad tidings to the regions beyond.

Paul himself was a mighty man of prayer. It is impossible to read his epistles without being struck by the prominent place that prayer had in his life. He prayed for himself and his work. He prayed for his fellow-servants, in whose victories he rejoiced as much as his own; and in this he was in marked contrast to many today. He prayed for the people of God, for his converts, and those who had been converted through the labors of others, that they might “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12). He prayed with passionate longing for Israel, his brethren after the flesh, that they might be saved and know the joys that he experienced as a believer in Christ. He prayed for the Gentiles, for kings and rulers, and for the people generally, knowing that it was God’s desire “to have all men saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Though he was a man of great faith and spiritual energy, he felt the need for the prayers of his brethren. He asked the saints at Rome to strive together with him in their prayers to God on his behalf that he might be delivered from the unbelieving Jews; that his service for the poor saints at Jerusalem might be accepted in the spirit in which it was given; and that he might eventually come to them at Rome with joy by the will of God, and with them be refreshed (Rom. 15:30-33). He expressed his deep gratitude to the Corinthians because in a time of deep distress, they helped together by prayer for him, his fellow-laborers, and the work in which they were engaged (2 Cor. 1:11).

He told the Ephesians how he bowed his knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf, but he requested them on their part to pray for him “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” that he may open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:1-19). From his prison cell he wrote to the Philippians of the confidence he had that all his trials would turn out for his deliverance through their prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). He exhorted the Colossians to “continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving,” praying for him and his companions in service that God would open a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was in bonds, that he might make it manifest as he ought to speak (Col. 4:2-4). The Thessalonian believers had been saved but a few months at most, yet he realized the efficacy in their childlike pleadings with God, and he wrote, “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thes. 5:25).

He had Philemon prepare him a lodging, for he trusted that through his prayers he would be delivered from prison and given unto them again (Phm. 22). To the Hebrew believers, assuming Paul is the author, he wrote, “Pray for us; for I trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,” and he added, “But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner” (Heb. 13:19). Who can read these many touching requests on the part of this the greatest of all preachers without realizing how dependent servants of God are on the intercession of the saints?

Our Lord Himself implied this when He taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come.” As we recognize that blessing can only come to earth as men submit to God, our heart takes up this petition with deepest fervor, and cries out for blessing on every instrument being used to usher in the coming kingdom. If we would be soul-winners, we must know how to pray. If we would prevail with men in public, we must prevail with God in secret.

Were this truth more realized, there would not be so many dry and dying prayer meetings. If the prayer meeting is the pulse of an assembly, then it may as well be frankly confessed that most of our assemblies are in a sad condition indeed. Numbers will come to hear a gifted preacher, but few indeed will gather for prayer. And when so gathered, how often is the time frittered away praying about generalities with no real spirit of intercession, no manifestation whatever of the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we had more Holy Spirit prayer meetings, we would have more Holy Spirit preaching. If saints would start to win victories by prayer, both in secret and in fellowship with others in the corporate gatherings, there would be a great awakening in regard to gospel testimony.

We must be methodical in this ministry of intercession. Many have found great help and profit in keeping regular prayer lists, to which are

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added from time to time the names of servants of God at home and in foreign lands in whom they become interested. By bringing such constantly before the Lord, a

real service is performed and added power given to the laborers for whom they pray. Again and again, this has been demonstrated in a marvelous way.

On one occasion, a few of us felt deeply burdened about a missionary in China. Those who knew him came together to pray specially for him. As we prayed the burden seemed to be lifted, and we felt assured that God was working for and through him. A few weeks later, a letter arrived from this particular brother. It was written a day or two after that little prayer gathering in America. He wrote: "Recently, I have had some heavy trials to bear and felt greatly discouraged. But in the last few days, there has come to me such a spiritual uplift and such a sense of the Lord's help as I have not known for a long time. I feel certain some one is praying for me." Instances like this could be multiplied without number.

We wrong our brothers and sisters who have devoted their lives to the spread of the gospel when we neglect to pray for them. Samuel said to Israel: "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Sam. 12:23). We definitely sin against the Lord when we neglect to pray for those whom He has put in the forefront of the battle. How often, instead of helping them by our prayers, we hinder them by our cynicism and our cold carnal criticism. Let us awake to the privilege and responsibility of this great ministry in fellowship with Him who ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25)!



## Conclusion

If, in the past, you have not availed yourself of this gracious opportunity to further the work of the Lord by prayer in the quiet of your own room, confess to God the great sin of having neglected a duty which might have resulted in such blessing to others. And in the coming days, with purpose of heart enter into this service as an important part of the work of the Lord; and when at last the record books are opened at the judgment seat of Christ, you will learn with delight and glad surprise how many souls you have had a part in winning for Christ through “laboring fervently ... in prayers” (Col. 4:12).

There is blessing as we pray for ourselves. There is rest of heart as we pour out our needs and longings to the sympathetic ear of our gracious God and Father. But he whose prayers center on himself and his blessings has never done more than cross the threshold of the temple of prayer. It is as our hearts reach out for others, as we plead for the interests of our Lord in this poor world, as we bear up His servants engaged in making known the exceeding riches of His grace to men and women dying in their lost condition, that we really enter into communion with Him who taught us to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10).

*The End*

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