



• ANEKO PRESS CHRISTIAN CLASSICS •

ANDREW MURRAY

With CHRIST
in the SCHOOL
of PRAYER

A 31-Day Study

Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. – 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

UPDATED, MODERN EDITION

With Christ in the School of Prayer

Thoughts on Our Training for the Ministry of
Intercession

A 31-Day Study

Andrew Murray



OceanofPDF.com

Contents

[Preface](#)

- Lesson 1: [Teach Us to Pray](#)
- Lesson 2: [In Spirit and in Truth](#)
- Lesson 3: [Alone with God](#)
- Lesson 4: [The Model Prayer](#)
- Lesson 5: [The Certainty of Answered Prayer](#)
- Lesson 6: [The Infinite Fatherliness of God](#)
- Lesson 7: [The All-Comprehensive Gift](#)
- Lesson 8: [The Boldness of God's Friends](#)
- Lesson 9: [Pray the Lord of the Harvest](#)
- Lesson 10: [Specific Prayer](#)
- Lesson 11: [Faith that Receives](#)
- Lesson 12: [Have Faith in God](#)
- Lesson 13: [Prayer and Fasting](#)
- Lesson 14: [Love, Forgiveness, and Prayer](#)
- Lesson 15: [The Power of United Prayer](#)
- Lesson 16: [The Power of Persevering Prayer](#)
- Lesson 17: [Prayer in Harmony with God](#)
- Lesson 18: [Prayer in Harmony with Man's Destiny](#)
- Lesson 19: [Power for Prayer and Work](#)
- Lesson 20: [The Chief End of Prayer](#)
- Lesson 21: [If Ye Abide in Me](#)
- Lesson 22: [The Word and Prayer](#)
- Lesson 23: [Obedience: The Path to Power in Prayer](#)
- Lesson 24: [In My Name](#)
- Lesson 25: [The Holy Spirit and Prayer](#)
- Lesson 26: [Christ the Intercessor](#)
- Lesson 27: [Christ the High Priest](#)
- Lesson 28: [Christ the Sacrifice](#)
- Lesson 29: [Boldness in Prayer](#)
- Lesson 30: [The Ministry of Intercession](#)

Lesson 31: [A Life of Prayer](#)

[Notes](#)

[*Andrew Murray – A Brief Biography*](#)

Register This New Book

Benefits of Registering*

- FREE **replacements** of lost or damaged books
- FREE **audiobook** – Pilgrim's Progress, audiobook edition
- FREE information about new titles and other **freebies**

www.anekopress.com/new-book-registration

*See our website for requirements and limitations.

OceanofPDF.com

Preface

Of all the promises connected with the command to *abide in me*, there is none higher and none that more readily brings the confession *Not as though I had already attained it, either were already made perfect* (Philippians 3:12) than *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you* (John 15:7). Power with God is the highest attainment of the life of full abiding.

And of all the traits of a life like Christ, there is none higher and more glorious than conformity to Him in the work that now engages Him without ceasing in the Father's presence – His all-prevailing intercession. The more we abide in Him and grow unto His likeness, the more His priestly life will work in us mightily, and our life will become what His is, a life that always pleads and prevails for men.

Thou *has made us kings and priests unto God* (Revelation 1:6). With both the king and the priest, the chief things are power, influence, and blessing. With the king, the power flows downward, and with the priest, the power rises upward and prevails with God. In our blessed Priest-King, Jesus Christ, the kingly power is founded on the priestly statement: *He is able also to save to the uttermost . . . seeing he ever lives to make intercession* (Hebrews 7:25). In us, it is not otherwise. In intercession, the church can find and wield its highest power; each member of the church has power with God and with men – and prevails.

This book has been written with a deep impression that the place and power of prayer in the Christian life is too little understood. I feel sure that as long as we look on prayer chiefly as the means of maintaining our own Christian life, we shall not know fully what it is meant to be. But when we learn to regard it as the highest part of the work entrusted to us, the root and

strength of all other work, we shall see that we need nothing more than to study and practice the art of praying. If I have succeeded in pointing out the progressive teaching of our Lord in regard to prayer, and the distinct reference of His wonderful promises of His last night to the works we are to do in His name – to the greater works and the bearing of much fruit – we shall all admit that only when the church gives herself up to this holy work of intercession can she expect the power of Christ to manifest itself on her behalf. I pray that God will use this book to explain to some of His children the wonderful place of power and influence that He is waiting for them to occupy and that a weary world is waiting for too.

In connection with this, another truth has come to me with wonderful clarity as I studied the teaching of Jesus on prayer. The Father waits to hear every prayer of faith – to give us whatsoever we will and whatsoever we ask in Jesus' name. We have become so accustomed to limiting the wonderful love and the large promises of our God that we cannot read the simplest and clearest statements of our Lord without the qualifying clauses by which we guard and expound them. If there is one thing the church needs to learn, it is that God means prayer to have an answer; it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God will do for His child who gives himself to believe that his prayer will be heard (1 Corinthians 2:9). God hears prayer; this truth is universally admitted, but very few understand the meaning or experience the power. If what I have written stirs my reader to go to the Master's words and take His wondrous promises simply and literally as they stand, my objective has been attained.

And then just one thing more. In these last years, thousands have found an unspeakable blessing in learning how completely Christ is our life and how He undertakes to be and to do all in us that we need. I do not know if we have learned to apply this truth to our prayer life yet. Many complain that they don't have the power to pray in faith – to pray the effectual prayer that avails much. The message I would gladly bring them is that the blessed Jesus is waiting and longing to teach them this. Christ is our life: in heaven

He lives to pray; His life in us is an ever-praying life, if we will but trust Him for it. Christ teaches us to pray not only by example, by instruction, by command, and by promises, but also by showing us Himself, the eternal Intercessor, as our life. When we believe this and go and abide in Him for our prayer life too, our fears of not being able to pray right will vanish, and we will joyfully and triumphantly trust our Lord to teach us to pray that He would be the life and the power of our prayer.

May God open our eyes to see what the holy ministry of intercession is and how we have been set apart for that as His royal priesthood. May He give us a large and strong heart to believe what mighty influence our prayers can exert. And may all fear as to our being able to fulfill our vocation vanish as we see Jesus, living forever to pray, living in us to pray, and maintaining assurance for our prayer life.

Andrew Murray

OceanofPDF.com

First Lesson

Teach Us to Pray

And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray. –
Luke 11:1

The disciples had been with Christ and had seen Him pray. They had learned to understand some of the connection between His wondrous life in public and His secret life of prayer. They had learned to believe in Him as the Master in the art of prayer – none could pray like Him. And so, they came to Him with the request, *Lord, teach us to pray*. And in later years, they would have told us that there were few things more wonderful or blessed that He taught them than His lessons on prayer.

Yet, at this time as He was praying in a certain place, one of His disciples who saw Him thus engaged felt the need of repeating the same request, *Lord, teach us to pray*. As we grow in the Christian life, the thought and the faith of the beloved Master in His never-failing intercession becomes even more precious, and the hope of being like Christ in His intercession gains an attractiveness before unknown. And as we see Him pray and remember that there is none who can pray like Him and none who can teach like Him, we feel that the petition of the disciples, *Lord, teach us to pray*, is just what we need. And as we think how all He is and has, how He Himself is our very own, and how He Himself is our life, we feel assured that we only have to ask, and He will be delighted to take us up into closer fellowship with Himself and teach us to pray even as He prays.

Come, my brothers! Shall we not go to the blessed Master and ask Him to enroll our names again in that school which He always keeps open for those

who long to continue their studies in the divine art of prayer and intercession? Yes, let us say to the Master today, as they did of old, *Lord, teach us to pray*. As we meditate, we shall find each word of the petition we bring to be full of meaning.

Lord, teach us to pray. Yes, *to pray*. This is what we need to be taught. Though in its beginnings, prayer is so simple that the feeblest child can pray, yet at the same time it is the highest and holiest work that man can accomplish. Prayer is fellowship with the unseen and Most Holy One. The powers of the eternal world have been placed at its disposal. It is the very essence of true religion, the channel of all blessings, and the secret of power and life. It is not only for ourselves, but also for others, for the church, and for the world that God has given the right to pray and to take hold of Him and His strength. It is on prayer that the promises wait for their fulfillment, the kingdom for its coming, and the glory of God for its full revelation. But how slothful and unfit we are for this blessed work. Only the Spirit of God can enable us to do it right. How speedily we are deceived into resting in the form, while the power is lacking. Our early training, the teaching of the church, the influence of habit, and the stirring of the emotions – how easily these lead to prayer that has no spiritual power and avails little.

True prayer takes hold of God's strength and avails much – to which the gates of heaven are opened wide. Who would not cry, "Oh, for someone to teach me to pray like that!"

Jesus has opened a school in which He trains His redeemed ones who desire especially to have power in prayer. Shall we not enter it with the petition, "Lord, we need to be taught this. Oh, *teach us to pray*."

Lord, teach us to pray. Yes, *us*, Lord. We have read in Your Word with what power Your believing people of old used to pray and what mighty wonders were done in answer to their prayers. And if this took place under the Old Covenant in the time of preparation, how much more will You not now, in these days of fulfillment, give Your people this sure sign of Your presence in their midst. We have heard the promises given to Your apostles

of the power of prayer in Your name and have seen how gloriously they experienced their truth. We know for certain that they can become true to us too. We hear continually even in these days what glorious tokens of Your power You still give to those who trust You fully. Lord, these are all men of like passions with ourselves; teach *us* to pray too. The promises are for us; the powers and gifts of the heavenly world are for us. Oh, teach *us* to pray so that we may receive abundantly. To us too You have entrusted Your work; the coming of Your kingdom depends on our prayer too. You can glorify Your name; *Lord, teach us to pray*. Yes, us, Lord; we offer ourselves as learners; we want to be taught by You. *Lord, teach us to pray*.

Lord, teach us to pray. Yes, we feel the need to be *taught* to pray. At first, there is no work that appears so simple; later, no work is more difficult, and the confession is forced from us – we don't know how to pray as we ought. We have God's Word with its clear and sure promises, but sin has darkened our mind so that we don't know how to apply the Word. In spiritual things, we do not always seek the most necessary things, or we fail to pray according to the law of the sanctuary. In temporal things, we are still less able to avail ourselves of the wonderful liberty our Father has given us to ask what we need.

And even when we know what to ask, how much there is still needed to make prayer acceptable. It must be to the glory of God, in full surrender to His will, in full assurance of faith, in the name of Jesus, and with a perseverance that, if need be, refuses to be denied. All this must be learned. It can only be learned in the school of much prayer, for practice makes perfect. Amid the painful consciousness of ignorance and unworthiness, in the struggle between believing and doubting, the heavenly art of effectual prayer is learned. Because, even when we do not remember, there is One, the Beginner and Finisher of faith and prayer, who watches over our praying and sees to it that all who trust Him for their education in the school of prayer shall be carried on to perfection. Let the deep undertone of all our prayer be the teachableness that comes from a sense of ignorance and from

faith in Him as a perfect teacher; we can be certain we will be taught; we will learn to pray in power. Yes, we may depend upon it; He teaches us to pray.

Lord, teach us to pray. None can teach like Jesus, none but Jesus; therefore, we call on Him, *Lord, teach us to pray.* A pupil needs a teacher who knows his work, has the gift of teaching, and will approach the pupil's needs in patience and love. Blessed be God! Jesus is all this and much more. He knows what prayer is. It is Jesus, praying Himself, who teaches us to pray. He knows what prayer is. He learned it amid the trials and tears of His earthly life.

In heaven, it is still His beloved work: His life there is prayer. Nothing delights Him more than to find those whom He can take with Him into the Father's presence and clothe with power to pray God's blessing on those around them. He can train them to be His fellow workers in the intercession by which the kingdom is to be revealed on earth. He knows how to teach – now by the urgency of felt need, then by the confidence with which joy inspires; here by the teaching of the Word, there by the testimony of another believer who knows what it is to have prayer heard. By His Holy Spirit, He has access to our heart and teaches us to pray by showing us the sin that hinders the prayer or giving us the assurance that we please God. He teaches by giving not only thoughts of what to ask or how to ask but also by breathing within us the very spirit of prayer and living within us as the Great Intercessor.

We may indeed and most joyfully say, "Who teaches like Him?" Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach – only how to pray. He did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much was spoken of praying well. To know how to speak to God is more than knowing how to speak to man. The first thing is not power with men but power with God. Jesus loves to teach us how to pray.

What think you? my beloved fellow disciples. Wouldn't it be just what we need – to ask the Master for a month to give us a course of special lessons

on the art of prayer? As we meditate on the words He spoke on earth, let's yield ourselves to His teaching in the fullest confidence that we will make progress with such a teacher. Let's take time not only to meditate but also to pray, to tarry at the foot of the throne, and to be trained for the work of intercession. Let's do this with the assurance that amidst our stammerings and fears, He is carrying on His work most beautifully. He will breathe His own life, which is all prayer, into us. As He makes us partakers of His righteousness and His life, He will make us partakers of His intercession too. As the members of His body, we will take part in His work of pleading and prevailing with God for men. Yes, though ignorant and feeble as we are, let us most joyfully say, *Lord, teach us to pray.*

* * * *

Blessed Lord, You live to intercede; You can teach me to pray and to live to pray forever too. In this You share Your glory in heaven – that I should pray without ceasing and always stand as a priest in the presence of my God.

Lord Jesus, I ask You this day to enroll my name among those who confess that they don't know how to pray as they ought, and I especially ask You for a course of teaching in prayer. Lord, teach me to tarry with You in the school and give You time to train me. May a deep sense of my ignorance, of the wonderful privilege and power of prayer, and of the need for the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of prayer lead me to cast away my thoughts of what I think I know and make me kneel before You in true teachableness and poverty of spirit.

And fill me, Lord, with the confidence that with such a teacher as You, I will learn to pray. With the assurance that I have Jesus as my teacher who is forever praying to the Father and by His prayer rules the destinies of His church and the world, I will not be afraid. As much as I need to know of the mysteries of the prayer world, You will unfold for me. And when I might not know, You will teach me to be strong in faith and give glory to God.

Blessed Lord, You will not put to shame Your scholar who trusts You, nor

by Your grace will he bring shame to Thee either. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Second Lesson

In Spirit and in Truth

But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. – John 4:23-24

These words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria are His first recorded teaching on the subject of prayer. They give us some wonderful first glimpses into the world of prayer. The Father seeks worshippers: our worship satisfies His loving heart and is a joy to Him. He seeks true worshippers but doesn't find many as He would have them. True worship is that which is *in spirit and in truth*. The Son has come to open the way for this worship in spirit and in truth and teach it to us. So, one of our first lessons in the school of prayer must be to understand what it is to pray in spirit and in truth and to know how we can accomplish this.

Our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria about a threefold worship. First is the ignorant worship of the Samaritans: *Ye worship what ye know not* (John 4:22). The second is the intelligent worship of the Jew who has the true knowledge of God: *We worship what we know; for saving health is of the Jews* (John 4:22). And last is the new – the spiritual worship which He Himself has come to introduce: *The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth*. From the connection it is evident that the words *in spirit and in truth* do not mean earnestly, from the heart, and in sincerity, as is often thought. The Samaritans had the five books of Moses and some knowledge of God; there was doubtless more than one among them who honestly and earnestly

sought God in prayer. The Jews had the true full revelation of God in His Word as far as it had been given; there were godly men among them who called upon God with their whole heart. And yet they were not *in spirit and in truth* in the full meaning of the words. Jesus said, *The hour comes, and now is*; it is only in and through Him that the worship of God will be in spirit and in truth.

One still finds the three classes of worshippers among Christians. Some are ignorant and hardly know what they ask; they pray earnestly but receive little. Others have more correct knowledge and try to pray with all their mind and heart; they often pray most earnestly but do not achieve the full blessedness of worship in spirit and truth. It is into the third group that we must ask our Lord Jesus to take us; we must be taught by Him how to worship in spirit and truth. This alone is spiritual worship; this makes us worshippers such as the Father seeks. In prayer, everything will depend on our understanding and practicing the worship in spirit and truth.

God is a Spirit, and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The first thought suggested here by the Master is that there must be harmony between God and His worshippers; as God is, so must His worship be. This is according to a principle which prevails throughout the universe: we look for correspondence between an object and the organ to which it reveals or yields itself. The eye has an inner affinity for the light, the ear for sound. The man who desires to truly worship God will find, and know, and possess, and enjoy God; he must be in harmony with Him and have the capacity for receiving Him. Because *God is a Spirit*, we must worship *in spirit*. As God is, so His worshippers must be.

And what does this mean? The woman had asked our Lord whether Samaria or Jerusalem was the true place of worship. He answered that from that time on, worship would no longer be limited to a certain place: *Woman, believe me, the hour comes when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father* (John 4:21). As God is Spirit, not bound by space or time but in His infinite perfection always and

everywhere the same, so His worship would no longer be confined by place or form; it would be spiritual as God Himself is spiritual – a lesson of deep importance.

How much our Christianity suffers from being confined to certain times and places. A man who seeks to pray earnestly in the church or in the closet spends the greater part of the week or the day in a spirit entirely at variance with the spirit in which he prayed. His worship was the work of a fixed place or hour but not of his whole being. God is a Spirit: He is the Everlasting and Unchangeable One; what He is, He is always and in truth. Our worship must also be in spirit and truth: His worship must be the spirit of our life; our life must be worship in spirit as God is Spirit.

God is a Spirit and those that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The second thought that comes to us is that this worship in the spirit must come from God Himself. God is Spirit: He alone has Spirit to give. The Lord fit us for spiritual worship by giving us the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of His own work when twice He said, *The hour comes*, and then added, *and now is*. He came to baptize with the Spirit; the Spirit would not come until He was glorified (John 1:33; 7:37-39; 16:7). When He had made an end of sin, entered into the Holiest of all with His blood, and *received* the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), He could send Him down to us as the Spirit of the Father. After Christ had redeemed us, and in Him we had received the position of children, the Father sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to cry, *Abba, Father* (Romans 8:15). The worship in spirit is the worship of the Father in the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of sonship.

This is the reason Jesus uses the name of *Father* here. We never find one of the Old Testament saints personally appropriate the position of child or call God his Father. The worship of the Father is only possible with those to whom the Spirit of the Son has been given. The worship *in spirit* is only possible with those to whom the Son has revealed the Father and who have received the spirit of sonship. Only Christ opens the way and teaches the worship in spirit.

And *in truth* – that does not only mean *in sincerity*. Nor does it only represent the truth of God's Word. The expression is one of deep and divine meaning. Jesus is the only begotten of the Father, *full of grace and truth* (John 1:14). *The law was given through Moses, but the grace and the truth of God came through Jesus, the Christ* (John 1:17). Jesus said, *I AM the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6).

In the Old Testament, all was shadow and promise; Jesus brought fulfillment to the promise and made it reality – *the substance of things waited for* (Hebrews 11:1). In Him the blessings and powers of the eternal life are our actual possession and experience. Jesus is full of grace and truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; through Him the grace that is in Jesus is ours in deed and truth, a positive communication out of the divine life. So, worship in spirit is worship *in truth* – actual living fellowship with God, a real correspondence and harmony between the Father, who is a Spirit, and the child praying in the spirit.

What Jesus said to the woman of Samaria she could not at once understand. Pentecost was needed to reveal its full meaning. We are hardly prepared at our first entrance into the school of prayer to grasp such teaching. We shall understand it better later. Let's only begin and take the lesson as He gives it. We are carnal and cannot bring God the worship He seeks. But Jesus came to give the Spirit: He has given Him to us. Let the disposition in which we set ourselves to pray be what Christ's words have taught us. Let there be the deep confession of our inability to bring God the worship that is pleasing to Him, the childlike teachableness that waits for Him to instruct us, and the simple faith that yields itself to the breathing of the Spirit. Above all, let us hold fast the blessed truth. We will find that the Lord has more to say to us about it. The knowledge of the fatherhood of God, the revelation of His infinite fatherliness in our hearts, and the faith in the infinite love that gives us His Son and His Spirit to make us children is indeed the secret of prayer in spirit and truth. Christ opened this new and living way for us.

* * * *

Blessed Lord, I adore the love with which You taught a woman who had questioned giving You a cup of water, what the worship of God must be. I rejoice in the assurance that You will instruct Your disciple now who comes to You with a heart that longs to pray in spirit and in truth. Oh, my Holy Master, teach me this blessed secret.

Teach me that the worship in spirit and truth is not of man but only comes from You; teach me that it is not only a thing of times and seasons but is also the outflowing of a life in You. Teach me to draw near to God in prayer under the deep acceptance of my ignorance, as I have nothing in myself to offer Him, but at the same time, Your provision of my Savior makes for the Spirit's breathing in my childlike stammerings. I do bless You that in You I am a child and have a child's liberty of access; in You I have the spirit of sonship and of worship in truth. Teach me, above all, blessed Son of the Father, how it is the revelation of the Father that gives confidence in prayer; let the infinite fatherliness of God's heart be my joy and strength for a life of prayer and worship. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Third Lesson

Alone with God

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father who sees in secret shall reward thee openly. – Matthew 6:6

After Jesus had called His first disciples, He gave them their first public teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. He expounded to them the kingdom of God, its laws, and its life. In that kingdom, God is not only King but also Father; He not only gives all but is also Himself all. In the knowledge and fellowship of Him alone is its blessedness. So, it came as a matter of course that the revelation of prayer and the prayer life was a part of His teaching about the new kingdom He came to set up. Christ was the One who taught them to pray.

And the first thing the Lord taught His disciples was that they needed a secret place for prayer; everyone must have some solitary spot where he can be alone with his God. Every teacher must have a schoolroom. We have learned to know and accept Jesus as our only teacher in the school of prayer. He has already taught us at Samaria that worship is no longer confined to times and places, and that worship, true spiritual worship, is a thing of the spirit and the life. The whole man must worship in spirit and truth in his whole life. And yet He wants each one to choose for himself the fixed spot where He can meet him daily. That inner chamber, that solitary place, is Jesus' schoolroom. That spot may be anywhere; it may change from day to day if we have to change our abode, but there must be a secret place for the quiet time in which the pupil can place himself in the Master's

presence to be by Him and prepare to worship the Father. Alone in that place, Jesus most surely comes to us to teach us to pray.

A teacher is always concerned that his schoolroom is bright and attractive, filled with the light and air of heaven; he desires a place where pupils long to come and love to stay. In His first words on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus sought to describe the inner chamber to us in its most attractive light. If we listen carefully, we soon notice what the chief thing is that He told of our tarrying there. Three times He used the name of *Father*: *Pray to thy Father, thy Father who sees in secret shall reward thee, and your Father knows what things ye have need of* (Matthew 6:6, 8).

The first thing in closet prayer is that we must meet our Father. The light that shines in the closet must be the light of the Father's countenance. The fresh air from heaven with which Jesus would have it filled, the atmosphere in which we are to breathe and pray, is God's Father-love, God's infinite fatherliness. Therefore, each thought or petition we pray will be simple, hearty, childlike trust in the Father. This is how the Master teaches us to pray; He brings us into the Father's living presence.

What we pray for there must prevail. Let us listen carefully to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

First, *Pray to thy Father who is in secret* – God is a God who hides Himself to the carnal eye. As long as we are chiefly occupied with our own thoughts and exercises during our worship of God, we will not meet Him who is a Spirit, the unseen One. But to the man who withdraws himself from all that is of the world and man and prepares to wait upon God alone, the Father will reveal Himself. As this man forsakes all to shut out the world and the life of the world, he surrenders himself to be led by Christ into the secret of God's presence, then the light of the Father's love will rise upon him. The secrecy of the inner chamber and the closed door, the entire separation from all around us, is an image of and a help to that inner spiritual sanctuary, the secret of God's tabernacle within the veil, where our spirit can truly come into contact with the invisible One. So, we are taught

at the beginning of our search for the secret of effectual prayer to remember that it is in the inner chamber where we are alone with the Father that we will learn to pray right. *Thy Father who is in secret*: in these words Jesus teaches us where He is waiting for us, where He is always to be found.

Christians often complain that private prayer is not what it should be. They feel weak and sinful; the heart is cold and dark; it is as if they have so little to pray for, and in that little, they have no faith or joy. They are discouraged and kept from prayer by the thought that they cannot come to the Father as they should or as they wish. Child of God, listen to your Teacher. He tells you that when you go to private prayer, your first thought must be: *Thy Father who is in secret*; the Father waits for me there. If your heart is cold and prayerless, you even more urgently must go into the presence of the loving Father. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities you. Do not think of how little you have to bring to God but of how much He wants to give to you. Just place yourself before Him and look up into His face; think of His love – His wonderful, tender, pitying love. Just tell Him how sinful and cold and dark everything is. The Father's loving heart will give light and warmth to yours. Oh, do what Jesus says: Just shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. Isn't it wonderful to be able to go alone to God, the infinite God, and then to look up and say, "My Father!"

And thy Father who sees in secret shall reward thee. Here Jesus assures us that secret prayer cannot be fruitless; its blessing will show itself in our life. But in secret and alone with God, we have to entrust our life before men to Him; He will reward us openly; He will see to it that the answer to prayer is made manifest in His blessing upon us. In this way our Lord teaches us that with infinite fatherliness and faithfulness is how God meets us in secret, so our part should be the childlike simplicity of faith with the confidence that our prayer will bring a blessing. *He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him* (Hebrews 11:6). The blessing of the closet does not depend on the strong or the

fervent feeling with which I pray, but upon the love and the power of the Father to whom I entrust my needs. And therefore, the Master has but one desire: Remember your Father is and sees and hears in secret; go there and stay there and leave in the confidence that He will reward. Trust Him for it; depend upon Him; prayer to the Father cannot be futile; He will reward you openly.

To confirm this faith in the Father-love of God, Christ spoke a third word: *Your Father knows what things ye have need of before ye ask him.* At first consideration, it might appear as if this thought made prayer less necessary; God knows far better than us what we need. But as we get a deeper insight into what prayer really is, this truth will help much to strengthen our faith. It will teach us that we do not need, as the heathen, to compel an unwilling God to listen to us with a multitude and urgency of our words. It will lead to holy thoughtfulness and silence in prayer as it suggests the question, does my Father really know that I need this? When we have once been led by the Spirit and according to the Word to the certainty that our request is indeed something that we do need for God's glory, it will give us wonderful confidence to say, "My Father knows I need it and must have it." And if there is any delay in the answer, it will teach us in quiet perseverance to wait: "Father, You know I need it."

Oh, the blessed liberty and simplicity of a child that Christ our Teacher would gladly cultivate in us as we draw near to God. Let us look to the Father until His Spirit works it in us. When we are in danger of being so occupied with our fervent, urgent petitions that we forget that the Father knows and hears, let us hold still and just quietly say, "My Father sees, my Father hears, my Father knows." It will help our faith to take the answer and say, "We know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him."

And now, all who have entered the school of Christ again to be taught to pray, take these lessons, practice them, and trust Him to perfect you in them. Dwell often and long in the inner chamber with the door shut – shut in from men, shut up with God. This is where the Father waits for you; it is

where Jesus will teach you to pray. To be alone in secret with the Father is your highest joy. To be assured that the Father will openly reward the secret prayer, so it isn't unblessed, is your strength day by day. To know that the Father knows that you need what you ask is your liberty to bring every need with the assurance that your *God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 4:19).

* * * *

Blessed Savior! With my whole heart I bless You for the appointment of the inner chamber as the school where You meet each of Your pupils alone and reveal to them the Father. Oh, my Lord, strengthen my faith in the Father's tender love and kindness, so that when I feel sinful or troubled, the first instinctive thought may be to go where I know the Father waits for me and where prayer never can go unblessed. Let the thought that He knows my need before I ask bring me to trust that He will give what His child requires in great restfulness of faith. Oh, let the place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot on earth.

And Lord, hear me as I pray that You would bless the closets of Your believing people everywhere. Let Your wonderful revelation of a Father's tenderness free all young Christians from every thought of secret prayer as a duty or a burden and lead them to regard it as the highest privilege of their lives, a joy, and a blessing. Bring back all who are discouraged because they cannot find anything to bring to You in prayer. Oh, help them to understand that they only need to come with their emptiness to Him who has all to give and delights to do it. Let their one thought be not what they have to bring to the Father, but what the Father waits to give to them.

Bless especially the inner chamber of all Your servants who are working for You as the place where God's truth and God's grace are revealed to them, where they are daily anointed with fresh oil, where their strength is renewed, and where the blessings are received in faith with which they are

to bless their fellow men. Lord, draw us all in the closet nearer to Yourself and the Father. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Fourth Lesson

The Model Prayer

Ye, therefore, are to pray like this: Our Father who art in the heavens.

– Matthew 6:9

Every teacher knows the power of example. He not only tells the child what to do and how to do it but also shows him how it is done. In recognition of our weakness, our heavenly Teacher has given us the very words we are to take with us as we draw near to our Father. We have in them a form of prayer which breathes the freshness and fullness of the eternal life. It is so simple that the child can lisp it and so divinely rich that it comprehends all that God can give. This prayer becomes the model and inspiration for all other prayer and yet always draws us back to itself as the deepest utterance of our souls before our God.

Our Father who art in the heavens! To appreciate this word of adoration correctly, I must remember that none of the saints in Scripture had ever ventured to address God as their Father. The invocation places us at once in the center of the wonderful revelation the Son came to make of His Father as our Father too. It comprehends the mystery of redemption – Christ delivers us from the curse so that we might become the children of God. It includes the mystery of regeneration – the Spirit in the new birth gives us the new life. Then it introduces the mystery of faith – even before the redemption is accomplished or understood, the word is given to the disciples to prepare them for the blessed experience still to come. The words are the key to the whole prayer – to all prayer. It takes time; it takes life to study them and it will take eternity to understand them fully. The knowledge of God's Father-love is the first and simplest but also the last

and highest lesson in the school of prayer. The personal relationship to the living God and the personal, conscious fellowship of love with Him is where that prayer begins. It is in the knowledge of God's fatherliness, revealed by the Holy Spirit, that the power of prayer will be found to root and grow. The life of prayer has its joy in the infinite tenderness, pity, and patience of the infinite Father and in His loving readiness to hear and to help. Oh, let us take time until the Spirit has made these words spirit and truth to us, filling heart and life: *Our Father who art in the heavens*. Then we are indeed within the veil – in the secret place of power where prayer always prevails.

Hallowed be thy name (Matthew 6:9). There is something here that strikes us at once. While we ordinarily first bring our own needs to God in prayer and then think of what belongs to God and His interests, the Master reverses the order. First, *Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will*; then, *give us, forgive us, lead us, deliver us* (Matthew 6:10-13). The lesson is of more importance than we think. In true worship the Father must be first; He must be all. The sooner I learn to forget myself in the desire that He may be glorified, the richer the blessing will be that prayer will bring to me. No one ever loses by what he sacrifices for the Father.

This must influence all our prayer. There are two sorts of prayer: personal and intercessory. The latter ordinarily occupies the lesser part of our time and energy. This should not be. Christ has opened the school of prayer especially to train intercessors for the great work of bringing the blessings of His work and love to the world through their faith and prayer. There can be no deep growth in prayer unless this is our aim.

The little child may ask of the father only what he needs for himself, and yet he soon learns to say, "Give some to brother too." But the grown-up son who only lives for the father's interest and takes charge of the father's business asks more extensively and gets all that is asked.

Jesus would train us to the blessed life of consecration and service in which our interests are all subordinate to the name, and the kingdom, and

the will of the Father. Oh, let us live for this and let us follow each act of adoration – *our Father*, with *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, and *Thy* will – in the same breath; for this we look up and long.

Hallowed be thy name. What name? This new name of *Father*. The word *holy* is the central word of the Old Testament, and the name *Father* is of the New. In this name of love, all the holiness and glory of God are now to be revealed. And how is the name to be hallowed? By God Himself: *I will sanctify my great name, . . . which ye have profaned* (Ezekiel 36:23). Our prayer must be that God would reveal the holiness, the divine power, and the hidden glory of the name of Father in us, in all God's children, and in the presence of the world. The Spirit of the Father is the *Holy Spirit*; it is only when we yield ourselves to be led by Him that the name will be *hallowed* in our prayers and our lives. Let us learn the prayer: *Our Father . . . Hallowed be thy name.*

Thy kingdom come (Matthew 6:10). The Father is King and has a kingdom. The son and heir of a king has no higher ambition than the glory of his father's kingdom. In time of war or danger, this becomes his passion; he can think of nothing else. The children of the Father are here in the Enemy's territory where the kingdom, which is in heaven, is not yet fully manifested. What is more natural than when they learn to hallow the name of the Father, they should long and cry with deep enthusiasm, *Thy kingdom come*. The coming of the kingdom is the one great event on which the revelation of the Father's glory, the blessedness of His children, and the salvation of the world depends. The coming of the kingdom also waits on our prayers. Shall we not join in the deep, longing cry of the redeemed, *Thy kingdom come*? Let us learn it in the school of Jesus.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). This petition is too frequently applied alone to the suffering of the will of God. In heaven, God's will is done, and the Master teaches the child to ask that the will may be done on earth just as in heaven – in the spirit of adoring submission and ready obedience. Because the will of God is the glory of

heaven, the doing of it is the blessedness of heaven. As the will is done, the kingdom of heaven comes into the heart. And wherever faith has accepted the Father's love, obedience accepts the Father's will. The surrender to, and the prayer for a life of heaven-like obedience, is the spirit of childlike prayer.

Give us this day our daily bread (Matthew 6:11). When the child has first yielded himself to the Father in the care of His name, His kingdom, and His will, he has full liberty to ask for his daily bread. A master cares for the food of his servant, a general for his soldiers, and a father for his child. Won't the Father in heaven care for the child who has in prayer given himself up to His interests?

We may indeed in full confidence say, "Father, I live for Your honor and Your work; I know You care for me." Consecration to God and His will gives wonderful liberty in prayer for temporal things; the whole earthly life is given to the Father's loving care.

And set us free from our debts, as we set free our debtors (Matthew 6:12). As bread is the first need of the body, so forgiveness [freedom] is for the soul. And the provision for the one is as sure as for the other. We are children – but sinners too; we owe our right of access to the Father's presence to the precious blood and the forgiveness it has won for us. Let us beware of the prayer for forgiveness that becomes a formality: only what is sincerely confessed is forgiven. In faith, let us accept the forgiveness as promised – as a spiritual reality, an actual transaction between God and us; it is the entrance into all the Father's love and all the privileges of children. Such forgiveness, as a living experience, is impossible without a forgiving spirit to others: as *forgiven* expresses the heavenward relationship of God's child, so *forgiving* expresses the earthward. In each prayer to the Father, I must be able to say that I know of no one whom I do not heartily love.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (Matthew 6:13). Our daily bread, the pardon of our sins, and then our being kept from all sin and the power of the Evil One – in these three petitions all our personal

need is comprehended. The prayer for bread and pardon must be accompanied by the surrender to live in holy obedience to the Father's will in all things, and the believing prayer must be kept by the power of the indwelling Spirit from the power of the Evil One in everything.

Children of God, Jesus would have us pray like this to the Father in heaven. Oh, let His name, and kingdom, and will have the first place in our love; His providing, pardoning, and sustaining love will be our sure portion. So, the prayer will lead us to the true child life: the Father all to the child and all for the child. We shall understand how Father and child, the *Thine* and the *our*, are all one, and how the heart that begins its prayer with the God-devoted *Thine* will have the power in faith to speak out for the *our* also. Such prayer will indeed be the fellowship and interchange of love, always bringing us back in trust and worship to Him who is not only the Beginning but also the End. *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen* (Matthew 6:13). Son of the Father, teach us to pray, *Our Father*.

* * * *

Oh, You who are the only begotten Son, teach us, we ask You, to pray, *Our Father*. We thank You, Lord, for these living, blessed words that You have given us. We thank You for the millions who have learned to know and worship the Father through them and for what they have been to us. Lord, it is as if we needed days and weeks in Your school with each separate petition; so deep and full they are. But we look to You to lead us deeper into their meaning; do it, we pray, for Your name's sake; Your name is Son of the Father.

Lord, You once said, *No one has known the Son but the Father, neither has anyone known the Father except the Son and he unto whom the Son will reveal him* (Matthew 11:27). And again, *I have manifested unto them thy name and will manifest it still, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them* (John 17:26). Lord Jesus, reveal to us the Father. Let His

name, His infinite Father-love, the love with which He loved You according to Your prayer be in us. Then we will say correctly, *Our FATHER*. Then shall we comprehend Your teaching, and the first spontaneous breathing of our heart will be “Our Father, Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will.” And we shall bring our needs and our sins and our temptations to Him in the confidence that the love of such a Father cares for all.

Blessed Lord, we are Your scholars, and we trust You; do teach us to pray, *Our Father*. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Fifth Lesson

The Certainty of Answered Prayer

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. – Matthew 7:7-8

Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss. – James 4:3

Our Lord returns a second time in the Sermon on the Mount to speak of prayer. The first time He had spoken of the Father who can be found in secret but rewards openly; He had given us the pattern prayer (Matthew 6:5-15). Here He wants to teach us what is considered the chief thing in all Scripture concerning prayer: the assurance that prayer will be heard and answered. Observe how He uses words that mean almost the same thing, and each time He distinctly repeats the promise: You *shall* receive, you *shall* find, it *shall* be opened unto you. Then He gives the law of the kingdom as grounds for such assurance: *For every one that asks receives, and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* We cannot but realize how in this sixfold repetition He wants to impress deep on our minds this one truth – that we may and must most confidently expect an answer to our prayer. Next to the revelation of the Father's love, there is in the whole course of the school of prayer not a more important lesson than this: Everyone that asks receives.

In the three words the Lord uses – *ask*, *seek*, and *knock* – a difference in meaning has been sought. If such was indeed His purpose, then the first *ask* refers to the gifts we pray for. But I may ask and receive the gift without the Giver. *Seek* is the word Scripture uses of God Himself; Christ assures me

that I can find Him. But it is not enough to find God in time of need without coming to abiding fellowship. *Knock* speaks of admission to dwell with Him and in Him. Asking and receiving the gift would thus lead to seeking and finding the Giver; this again leads to the knocking and opening of the door of the Father's home and love. One thing is sure: The Lord wants us to be certain that asking, seeking, and knocking are not in vain; receiving an answer, finding God, and the opened heart and home of God are the certain fruit of prayer.

That the Lord thought it was necessary to repeat the truth in so many ways is a lesson of great importance. It proves that He knows our heart; He knows how doubt and distrust toward God are natural to us and how easily we are inclined to treat prayer as a religious work without an answer. Even when we believe that God is the Hearer of prayer, He knows that believing prayer that lays hold of the promise is something spiritual, too high and difficult for the halfhearted disciple. Therefore, at the very beginning of His instruction to those who desire to learn to pray, He seeks to lodge this truth deep into their hearts: Prayer does avail much. *Ask, and it shall be given you; . . . every one that asks receives.* This is the fixed eternal law of the kingdom: if you ask and don't receive, it must be because there is something amiss or lacking in the prayer. Keep going; let the Word and Spirit teach you to pray correctly, but do not let go of the confidence He seeks to awaken: *Every one that asks receives.*

Ask, and it shall be given you. Christ has no mightier stimulus to persevering prayer in His school than this. As a child has to prove a sum to be correct, so the proof that we have prayed correctly is *the answer*. If we ask and don't receive, it is because we have not learned to pray correctly. Let every learner in the school of Christ therefore take the Master's Word in all simplicity: *Every one that asks receives.* He had good reasons for speaking so unconditionally. Let us beware of weakening the Word with our human wisdom. When He tells us heavenly things, let us believe Him. His Word will explain itself to him who believes it fully. If questions and

difficulties arise, let's not seek to have them settled before we accept the Word. No, let's entrust them all to Him; it is His work to solve them; our work is first and fully to accept and hold fast His promise. Let the Word be inscribed in letters of light in our inner chamber and in the inner chamber of our heart too. *Every one that asks receives.*

According to this teaching of the Master, prayer consists of two parts; it has two sides – a human and a divine. The human is the asking, the divine is the giving. Or, to look at both from the human side, there is the asking and the receiving – the two halves that make up a whole. It is as if He would tell us that we are not to rest without an answer, because it is the will of God, the rule in the Father's family. Every childlike believing petition is granted. If no answer comes, we are not to sit down in idleness that calls itself resignation and suppose that it is not God's will to give an answer. No, there must be something in the prayer that is not as God would have it, childlike and believing; we must seek for grace to pray so that the answer may come. It is far easier for the flesh to submit without the answer than to yield itself to be searched and purified by the Spirit, until it has learned to pray the prayer of faith.

One of the terrible marks of the diseased state of Christian life in these days is that there are so many who rest content without the distinct experience of answer to prayer. They pray daily; they ask many things and trust that some of them will be heard, but they know little of direct definite answers to prayer as the rule of daily life. And this is what the Father wills: He seeks daily communication with His children by listening to and granting their petitions. He wills that we should come to Him day by day with distinct requests; He wills day by day to do for us what we ask. It was in His answer to prayer that the saints of old learned to know God as the living One and were stirred to praise and love (Psalm 34). *But verily God has heard me; he has attended to the voice of my prayer* (Psalm 66:19). *I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications*

(Psalm 116:1). Our Teacher waits to imprint this upon our minds: prayer and its answer, the child asking and the Father giving, belong to each other.

There may be cases in which the answer is a refusal because the request is not according to God's Word, as when Moses asked to enter Canaan. But still, there was an answer. God did not leave His servant in uncertainty as to His will. The gods of the heathen are dumb and cannot speak. Our Father lets His child know when He cannot give him what he asks, and he withdraws his petition, even as the Son did in Gethsemane. Both Moses the servant and Christ the Son knew that what they asked was not according to what the Lord had spoken; their prayer was the humble supplication even though it was not possible for the decision to be changed.

By His Word and Spirit, God will teach those who are teachable and who give Him time, whether their request is according to His will or not. Let us withdraw the request if it is not according to God's mind. Let us persevere until the answer comes, if it is according to His will. Prayer functions to obtain the answer. In prayer and its answer the interchange of love between the Father and His child takes place.

The estrangement of our heart from God must be so deep that we find it difficult to grasp such promises. Even while we accept the words and believe their truth, the faith of the heart that fully has them and rejoices in them comes so slowly. This is because our spiritual life is still so weak, and the capacity for understanding God's thoughts is so feeble. Let us look to Jesus to teach us as none but He can teach. If we take His words in simplicity and trust Him by His Spirit to make them life and power within us, they will enter into our inner being such that the spiritual, divine reality of the truth they contain will indeed take possession of us. We will not rest content until every petition we offer is borne heavenward on Jesus' own words: *Ask, and it shall be given you.*

Beloved fellow disciples in the school of Jesus, let us learn this lesson well. Let us take these words just as they were spoken. Let us not suffer human reason to weaken their force. Let us take them as Jesus gives them

and believe them. He will teach us in due time how to understand them fully. Let us begin by implicitly believing them. Let us take time, as often as we pray, to listen to His voice: *Every one that asks receives*. Let us not make the feeble experiences of our unbelief be the measure of what our faith may expect. Let us seek not only in our seasons of prayer but also at all times to hold fast the joyful assurance. Man's prayer on earth and God's answer in heaven are meant for each other. Let us trust Jesus to teach us to pray so the answer can come. He will do it, if we hold fast the word He gives today: *Ask, and it shall be given you*.

* * * *

Oh, Lord Jesus, teach me to understand and believe what You have now promised me. The reasonings my heart seeks to satisfy itself are not hiding from You, my Lord, when no answer comes. There is the thought that my prayer is not in harmony with the Father's secret counsel, that there is perhaps something better You would give me, or that prayer as fellowship with God is blessing enough without an answer. And yet, my blessed Lord, I find in Your teaching on prayer that You did not speak of these things. You said plainly that prayer may and must expect an answer. You assured us that this is the fellowship of a child with the Father: The child asks and the Father gives.

Blessed Lord, Your words are faithful and true. It must be that I pray incorrectly, so my experience of answered prayer is not clearer. It must be that I live too little in the Spirit, my prayer is too little in the Spirit, and the power for the prayer of faith is lacking.

Lord, teach me to pray. Lord Jesus, I trust You for it; teach me to pray in faith. Lord, teach me this lesson of today: *Every one that asks receives*. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Sixth Lesson

The Infinite Fatherliness of God

Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him? – Matthew 7:9-11

In these words, our Lord proceeds to confirm what He had said of the certainty of an answer to prayer. To remove all doubt and show us on what sure ground His promise rests, He appeals to what everyone has seen and experienced here on earth. We are all children and know what we expected of our fathers. We are fathers, or we continually see our fathers, and everywhere, we look upon fatherhood as the most natural thing there can be – for a father to hear his child. The Lord asks us to look up from earthly parents, of whom the best are but evil, and to calculate how much more the heavenly Father will give good gifts to them that ask Him. Jesus desires for us to see that as much greater as God is than sinful man, so our assurance ought to be much greater so that He will grant our childlike petitions more certainly than any earthly father. As much greater as God is than men, so much surer is it that prayer will be heard by the Father in heaven than by a father on earth.

As simple and intelligible as this parable is, so deep and spiritual is the teaching it contains. The Lord would remind us that the prayer of a child owes its influence entirely to his relationship with his parent. The prayer can exert that influence only when the child is really living in that relationship – in the home, in the love, and in the service of the Father. The

power of the promise, *Ask, and it shall be given you*, lies in the loving relationship between us as children and the Father in heaven. When we live and walk in that relationship, the prayer of faith and its answer will be the natural result. So the lesson we have today in the school of prayer is this: Live as a child of God; then you will be able to pray as a child, and as a child, you will most assuredly be heard.

And what is the true child's life? The answer can be found in any home. The child who forsakes the father's house and finds no pleasure in the presence and love and obedience of the father but still thinks to ask and obtain what he wants will surely be disappointed. On the contrary, he to whom the communication and will and honor and love of the father are the joy of his life will find that it is the father's joy to grant his requests. Scripture says, *For all that are led by the Spirit of God, the same are sons of God* (Romans 8:14). The childlike privilege of asking all is inseparable from the childlike life under the leading of the Spirit. He that gives himself to be led by the Spirit in his life will be led by Him in his prayers too. And he will find that father-like giving is the divine response to childlike living.

To see what this childlike living is, in which childlike asking and believing have their basis, we have only to notice what our Lord taught in the Sermon on the Mount about the Father and His children. In it, the prayer promises are imbedded in the life precepts; the two are inseparable. They form one whole, and he alone can count on the fulfillment of the promise who accepts all that the Lord has connected with it. It is as if in speaking the word, *Ask and it shall be given you*, He said, "I give these promises to those whom in the Beatitudes I have pictured in their childlike poverty and purity and of whom I have said, *They shall be called the sons of God* (Matthew 5:3-9)." To these children, He said, *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens* (Matthew 5:16). To those who walk in love, He said, *that ye may be sons of your Father who is in the heavens*, and who seek to be perfect, even as your Father who is in the heavens is perfect (Matthew 5:45,

48). To those whose fasting and praying and almsgiving are not before men but before your *Father who sees in secret*, to those who forgive even as your heavenly Father will also set you free, He will reward openly (Matthew 6:4, 14). Those who trust the heavenly Father in all earthly need and seek . . . *first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* (Matthew 6:26-33), and who not only say, *Lord, Lord*, but who also do *the will of my Father who is in the heavens* (Matthew 7:21), shall enter the kingdom of heaven, *for your heavenly Father knows that ye have need of all these things* (Matthew 6:32). Such are the children of the Father, and such is the life in the Father's love and service; in such a child's life, answered prayers are certain and abundant.

But won't such teaching discourage a weak person? If we are first to answer to this description of a child, won't many give up all hope of answers to prayer? The difficulty is removed if we think again of the blessed name of father and child. A child is weak; there is a great difference among children in age and gifts. The Lord does not demand of us a perfect fulfillment of the law. No, He desires only the childlike and wholehearted surrender to live as a child with Him in obedience and truth. Nothing more, but also, nothing less. The Father must have the whole heart. When this is given, and He sees the child with honest purpose and steady will seeking in everything to be and live as a child, then our prayer will count with Him as the prayer of a child. Let anyone simply and honestly begin to study the Sermon on the Mount and take it as his guide in life, and he will find, notwithstanding weakness and failure, an ever-growing liberty to claim the fulfillment of its promises in regard to prayer. In the names of father and child, he has the pledge that his petitions will be granted.

This is the one chief thought on which Jesus dwells here and which He would have all His scholars understand. He would have us see that the secret of effectual prayer is to have the heart filled with the Father-love of God. It is not enough for us to know that God is a Father; He would have us take time to come under the full experience of what that name implies. We

must take the best earthly father we know and think of the tenderness and love with which he regards the request of his child and the love and joy with which he grants every reasonable desire. We must then, as we think in adoring worship of the infinite love and fatherliness of God, consider with how much more tenderness and joy He sees as we come to Him, and He gives us what we ask correctly.

When we see how much this divine arithmetic is beyond our comprehension and feel how impossible it is for us to understand God's readiness to hear us, then He would have us come and open our heart for the Holy Spirit to shed God's Father-love there. Let's do this not only when we want to pray but let's also yield heart and life to dwell in that love. The child who only wants to know the love of the father when he has something to ask will be disappointed. But he who lets God be Father always and in everything, who gladly lives his whole life in the Father's presence and love, and who allows God in all the greatness of His love to be a Father to him, will experience most gloriously that a life in God's infinite fatherliness and continual answers to prayer are inseparable.

Beloved fellow disciple, we begin to see what the reason is that we know so little of daily answers to prayer and what the chief lesson is that the Lord has for us in His school. It is all in the name of Father. We thought of new and deeper insight into some of the mysteries of the prayer world as what we should get in Christ's school. He tells us the first is the highest lesson – we must learn to say, *Abba, Father, Our Father who art in the heavens*. Whoever can say this has the key to all prayer. We must study the heart of our Father in all the compassion with which a father listens to his weak or sickly child, in all the joy with which he hears his stammering child, and in all the gentle patience with which he bears with a thoughtless child – until every prayer is borne on the faith of this divine word: *How much more shall your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him?*

* * * *

Blessed Lord, You know that this, though it is one of the first and simplest and most glorious lessons in Your school, is to our hearts one of the hardest to learn. We know so little of the love of the Father. Lord, teach us to live with the Father so that His love may be nearer, clearer, and dearer to us than the love of any earthly father. And let the assurance of His hearing our prayer be much greater than the confidence in an earthly parent; as the heavens are higher than earth, so God is infinitely greater than man. Lord, show us that it is only our unchildlike distance from the Father that hinders the answer to prayer, and lead us on to the true life of God's children. Lord Jesus, it is father-like love that awakens childlike trust. Oh, reveal the Father and His tender, pitying love to us that we may become childlike and experience how the power of prayer lies in the child life.

Blessed Son of God, the Father loves You and has given You all things. You love the Father and have done all things He commanded You and therefore have the power to ask all things. Lord, give us Your Spirit, the Spirit of the Son. Make us childlike, as You were on earth. Let every prayer be breathed in the faith that as the heaven is higher than the earth, so God's Father-love and His readiness give us what we ask and surpass all we can think or conceive. Amen.

* * * *

Note¹

Your Father who is in the heavens. Alas, we speak of it only as the utterance of a reverential homage. We think of it as a figure borrowed from an earthly life and only in some faint and shallow meaning to be used of God. We are afraid to take God as our own tender and pitiful father. He is a schoolmaster – or almost further off than that and knowing less about us – an inspector who knows nothing of us except through our lessons. His eyes are not on the scholar but on the book, and all must come up to the standard.

Now open the ears of the heart, timid child of God; let it sink right down into the innermost depths of the soul. Here is the starting point of holiness –

in the love and patience and pity of our heavenly Father. We don't have to learn to be holy as a hard lesson at school in order to make God think well of us; we are to learn it at home with the Father to help us. God loves you not because you are clever and not because you are good but because He is your Father. The cross of Christ does not make God love us; it is the outcome and measure of His love for us. He loves all His children – the clumsiest, the dullest, and the worst of His children. His love is the basis of everything, and we must get on that as the solid foundation of our religious life and not grow up into that but grow up *out of it*. We must begin there, or our beginning will come to nothing. Do take hold of this mightily. We must go out of ourselves for any hope, or any strength, or any confidence. And what hope, what strength, what confidence may be ours now that we begin here – *Your Father who is in the heavens*.

We need to enter the tenderness and helpfulness which lie in these words and rest upon it – *Your Father*. Speak these words over to yourself until you feel something of the wonderful truth. It means that I am bound to God by the closest and most tender relationship, and I have a right to His love and His power and His blessing, such as nothing else could give me. Oh, the boldness with which we can draw near. Oh, the great things we have a right to ask for. *Your Father*. It means that all His infinite love and patience and wisdom bend over to help me. In this relationship lies not only the possibility of holiness but also infinitely more.

Here we are to begin, in the patient love of our Father. Think how He knows us apart and by ourselves in all our peculiarities and in all our weaknesses and difficulties. The master judges by the result, but our Father judges by the effort. Failure does not always mean fault. He knows how much things cost and weighs them where others only measure them. *Your Father*. Think how great a store His love sets by the poor beginnings of the little ones – clumsy and unmeaning as they may be to others. All this lies in this blessed relationship and infinitely more. Do not fear to take it all as your own.

¹ From *Thoughts on Holiness*, by Mark Guy Pearse. What is so beautifully said of the knowledge of God's fatherliness as the starting point of holiness is no less true of prayer.

OceanofPDF.com

Seventh Lesson

The All-Comprehensive Gift

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him? – Luke 11:13

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord had already given utterance to His wonderful *how much more?* Here in Luke He repeats the question, but there is a difference. Instead of speaking of giving good gifts, He says, *How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit?* He thus teaches us that the chief and the best of these gifts is the Holy Spirit or that in this gift all others are comprised. The Holy Spirit is the first of the Father's gifts and the one He delights most to bestow. The Holy Spirit is therefore the gift we ought first and foremost to seek.

We can easily understand the unspeakable worth of this gift. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as *the promise of my Father* – the one promise in which God's fatherhood revealed itself (Luke 24:49). The best gift a good and wise father can bestow on a child on earth is his own spirit. This is the great object of a father in education – to reproduce in his child his own disposition and character. If the child is to know and understand his father, if he is to enter into all his will and plans as he grows up, and if he is to have his highest joy in the father and the father in him, he must be of one mind and spirit with him. So, it is impossible to conceive of God bestowing any higher gift on His child than this – His own Spirit. God is what He is through His Spirit; the Spirit is the very life of God. Just think what it means – God giving His own Spirit to His child on earth.

Or wasn't this the glory of Jesus as a Son on earth – that the Spirit of the

Father was in Him? At His baptism in the Jordan, two things were united – the voice, proclaiming Him to be the beloved Son, and the Spirit, descending upon Him. As the apostle says of us: *Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.* A king seeks in the whole education of his son to call forth in him a kingly spirit. Our Father in heaven desires to educate us as His children for the holy, heavenly life in which He dwells, and for this He gives us His own Spirit from the depths of His heart. This was the whole purpose of Jesus after making atonement with His own blood: He entered into God's presence for us that He might obtain and send down the Holy Spirit to dwell in us.

As the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the whole life and love of the Father and the Son are in Him. Coming down into us, He lifts us up into their fellowship. As Spirit of the Father, He sheds abroad the Father's love with which He loved the Son in our hearts and teaches us to live in it. As Spirit of the Son, He breathes in us the childlike liberty, devotion, and obedience in which the Son lived upon earth. The Father can bestow no higher or more wonderful gift than this: His own Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sonship.

This truth naturally suggests the thought that this first and foremost gift of God must be the first and foremost object of all prayer. For every need of the spiritual life, this is the one thing necessary – the Holy Spirit. All the fullness is in Jesus – the fullness of grace and truth – out of which we receive grace for grace. The Holy Spirit is the appointed vehicle whose special work it is to make Jesus and all there is in Him our own blessed experience – ours in personal appropriation. He is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; as wonderful as the life is, so wonderful is the provision by which such an agent is provided to communicate it to us.

If we just yield ourselves entirely to the disposal of the Spirit and let Him have His way with us, He will manifest the life of Christ within us. He will do this with a divine power, maintaining the life of Christ in us in

uninterrupted continuity. Surely, if there is one prayer that should draw us to the Father's throne and keep us there, it is this: prayer for the Holy Spirit, whom we as children have received, to stream into us and out from us in greater fullness.

In the variety of the gifts that the Spirit has to dispense, He meets the believer's every need. Just think of the names He bears: the Spirit of grace to reveal and impart all of grace there is in Jesus; the Spirit of faith to teach us to begin and go on and increase in ever believing; the Spirit of adoption and assurance who witnesses that we are God's children and inspires the confiding and confident Abba, Father; the Spirit of truth to lead us into all truth and make each word of God ours in deed and in truth; the Spirit of prayer through whom we speak with the Father – prayer that must be heard; the Spirit of judgment and burning to search the heart and convince of sin; the Spirit of holiness to manifest and communicate the Father's holy presence within us; the Spirit of power through whom we are strong to testify boldly and work effectually in the Father's service; and the Spirit of glory, the pledge of our inheritance, the preparation and the foretaste of the glory to come. Surely, the child of God needs only one thing to be able to live as a child. It is to be filled with this Spirit.

And now, the lesson Jesus teaches us in His school is this: the Father is longing to give the Spirit to us if we will ask in childlike dependence on what He says. *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him?* In the words of God's promise, *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh* (Joel 2:28), and in His command, *Be filled with the Spirit* (Ephesians 5:18), we have the measure of what God is ready to give and what we may obtain. As God's children, we have already received the Spirit. But we still need to ask and pray for His special gifts and operations as we require them. And not only this, but we also need to ask for Him to take complete and entire possession of us and for His unceasing momentary guidance. Just as the branch, already filled with the sap of the vine, is still

crying for the continued and increasing flow of the sap so it may bring its fruit to perfection, so the believer, rejoicing in the possession of the Spirit, ever thirsts and cries for more. And what the Great Teacher would have us learn is that nothing less than God's promise and God's command may be the measure of our expectation and our prayer; we must be filled abundantly. He would have us ask this in the assurance that the wonderful *how much more* of God's Father-love is the pledge that when we ask, we do most certainly receive.

Let us now believe this. As we pray to be filled with the Spirit, let us not seek for the answer in our feelings.

All spiritual blessings must be received, that is, accepted or taken in faith.² Let me believe that the Father gives the Holy Spirit to His praying child. Even now, while I pray, I must say in faith, "I have what I ask, the fullness of the Spirit is mine." Let's continue steadfast in this faith. On the strength of God's Word, we know that we have what we ask. With thanksgiving that we have been heard and with thanksgiving for what we have received and taken and now hold as ours, let's continue steadfast in believing prayer that the blessing, which has already been given us and which we hold in faith, may break through and fill our whole being. It is in such believing, thanksgiving, and prayer that our soul opens up for the Spirit to take entire and undisturbed possession. Such prayer not only asks and hopes but also takes and holds; it inherits the full blessing. In all our prayer, let's remember the lesson the Savior would teach us that if there is one thing on earth we can be sure of, it is that the Father desires to have us filled with His Spirit, and He delights to give us His Spirit.

When we have once learned to believe for ourselves and to take out of the treasure we hold in heaven, what liberty and power to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit on the church of God, on all flesh, on individuals, or on special efforts is ours. He who has learned to know the Father in prayer for himself learns to pray most confidently for others too. The Father

gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him and not least but most, when they ask for others.

* * * *

Father in heaven, You sent Your Son to reveal Yourself, Your Father-love, and all that that love has for us. And He has taught us that the gift above all gifts that You bestow in answer to prayer is the Holy Spirit.

Oh, my Father, I come to You with this prayer; there is nothing I would desire as much as to be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The blessings He brings are unspeakable and just what I need. He sheds Your love in the heart and fills it with You. I long for this. He breathes the mind and life of Christ in me, so that I live as He did – in and for the Father’s love. I long for this. He endows with power from on high for all my walk and work. I long for this. Oh Father, I beseech You, give me this day the fullness of Your Spirit.

Father, I ask this as I rest on the words of my Lord: *How much more . . . the Holy Spirit*. I do believe that You hear my prayer. I receive now what I ask; Father, I claim and I take the fullness of Your Spirit as mine. I receive the gift this day again as a faith gift; in faith I reckon my Father works through the Spirit all He has promised. The Father delights to breathe His Spirit into His waiting child as He tarries in fellowship with Himself. Amen.

² The Greek word for *receiving* and *taking* is the same. When Jesus said, *Every one that asks receives*, He used the same verb as at the Last Supper, *Take, eat* (Matthew 26:26), and on the resurrection morning, *Receive ye the Holy Spirit* (John 20:22). Receiving not only implies God’s bestowment, but also our acceptance.

Eighth Lesson

The Boldness of God's Friends

And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend and shall go unto him at midnight and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needs. – Luke 11:5-8

The first teaching to His disciples was given by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. It was nearly a year later that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In answer, He gave them the Lord's Prayer a second time and taught them *what* to pray. He then spoke of *how* they ought to pray and repeated what he formerly said of God's fatherliness and the certainty of an answer. But between these two times, He added the beautiful parable of the friend at midnight to teach them the twofold lesson that God does not only want us to pray for ourselves but for the perishing around us also. He taught them that in such intercession great boldness of entreaty is often necessary and always lawful – yes, even pleasing to God.

The parable is a perfect storehouse of instruction about true intercession. First, it depicts the love that seeks to help the needy around us: *a friend of mine . . . is come to me*. Then came the need to cry, *I have nothing to set before him*. Then follows the confidence that help is to be obtained: *which of you shall have a friend . . . and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves*. Then comes the unexpected refusal: *I cannot rise and give thee*.

Then again, the perseverance that takes no refusal: *because of his importunity*. And lastly, the reward of such prayer: *he will rise and give him as many as he needs*. This is a wonderful setting forth of prayer and faith in which the blessing of God has often been sought and found.

Let's confine ourselves to the chief thought: Prayer is an appeal to the friendship of God. We shall find that two lessons are particularly suggested. The one is that if we are God's friends and come as such to Him, we must prove ourselves to be the friends of the needy; God's friendship to us and ours to others go hand in hand. The other is that when we come in this way, we may use the utmost liberty in claiming an answer.

There is a twofold use of prayer: the one is to obtain strength and blessing for our own life; the other is intercession – the higher, true glory of prayer for which Christ has taken us into His fellowship and teaching. This is where prayer is the royal power of a child of God who exercises in heaven on behalf of others and even of the kingdom. We see in Scripture how it was in intercession for others that Abraham and Moses, Samuel and Elijah, with all the holy men of old proved that they had power with God and prevailed. When we give ourselves to be a blessing, we can count on the blessing of God. When we draw near to God as the friend of the poor and the perishing, we can count on His friendliness; the righteous man who is the friend of the poor is especially the friend of God. This gives wonderful liberty in prayer.

Lord, I have a needy friend whom I must help. As a friend, I have undertaken to help him. In You, I have a Friend whose kindness and riches I know to be infinite. I am sure You will give me what I ask. If I, being evil, am ready to do for my friend what I can, how much more will You, oh, my heavenly Friend, now do for Your friend what he asks?

The question might suggest itself whether the fatherhood of God does not give such confidence in prayer that the thought of His friendship can hardly teach us anything more, but a father is more than a friend. And yet, if we consider it, this pleading the friendship of God opens new wonders to us.

That a child obtains what he asks from his father looks so perfectly natural, we almost count it the father's duty to give. But with a friend, it is as if the kindness is more free, dependent not on nature but on sympathy and character. Then the connection of a child is more that of perfect dependence; two friends are more nearly on a level. And so our Lord, in seeking to unfold to us the spiritual mystery of prayer, would gladly have us approach God in this relationship too – as those whom He has acknowledged as His friends whose mind and life are in sympathy with His.

But then we must be living as His friends. I am still a child even when a wanderer, but friendship depends upon the conduct. *Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you* (John 15:14). *Dost thou not see how the faith worked together with his works, and the faith was complete by the works? And that the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God* (James 2:22-23). It is the Spirit, the same Spirit, who leads us that also bears witness to our acceptance with God. Likewise, the same Spirit helps us in prayer (Romans 8:26). A life as the friend of God gives the wonderful liberty to say, "I have a friend to whom I can go even at midnight."

And how much more it does so when I go in the very spirit of that friendship, manifesting myself the very kindness I look for in God, seeking to help my friend as I want God to help me. When I come to God in prayer, He always looks to what the purpose of my petition is. If it is merely for my own comfort or joy that I seek His grace, I do not receive it. But if my desire is that He may be glorified in my dispensing His blessings to others, I shall not ask in vain. Or if I ask for others but want to wait until God has made me so rich that it is no sacrifice or act of faith to aid them, I shall not obtain. But if I can say that I have already undertaken for my needy friend and in my poverty I have already begun the work of love, because I know I had a friend who would help me, my prayer will be heard. Oh, we know not how much the plea profits – the friendship of earth looking in its need to the friendship of heaven. He will give him as much as he needs.

But man may not always receive his requests at once. The one thing by which he can honor and enjoy his God is his faith. Intercession is part of faith's training school. Our friendship with men and with God is tested there. It is seen whether my friendship with the needy is so real that I will take time and sacrifice my rest and will go even at midnight and not cease until I have obtained what I need. It is seen whether my friendship with God is so sure that I can depend on Him not to turn me away and therefore pray on until He gives.

Oh, what a deep, heavenly mystery this is of persevering prayer. The God who has promised, who longs, whose fixed purpose it is to give the blessing holds it back. To Him it is a matter of deep importance that His friends on earth should know and fully trust their rich Friend in heaven. Therefore, He trains them in the school of delayed answer to discover how their perseverance prevails and what the mighty power is that they can wield in heaven, if they only set themselves to it. There is a faith that sees the promise and embraces it but does not receive it (Hebrews 11:13, 39). When the answer to prayer does not come, and the promise we are most firmly trusting appears to be of no effect, the trial of faith, more precious than gold, takes place. In this trial the faith that has embraced the promise is purified and strengthened and prepared in personal, holy fellowship with the living God to see the glory of God. It takes and holds the promise until it has received the fulfillment of what it had claimed in a living truth in the unseen but living God.

Let each child of God who seeks to work the work of love in his Father's service take courage. The parent with his child, the teacher with his class, the visitor with his district, the Bible reader with his circle, the preacher with his hearers – each one who, in his little circle, has accepted and is bearing the burden of hungry, perishing souls – let them all take courage. Nothing is at first so strange to us that God should require persevering prayer – that there should be a real spiritual need for importunity. To teach it to us, the Master uses this almost strange parable. If the unfriendliness of a

selfish earthly friend can be conquered by persistence, how much more will it avail with the heavenly Friend, who loves to give but is held back by our spiritual unfitness, our incapacity to possess what He has to give. Oh, let's thank Him that in delaying His answer He is educating us to our true position and the exercise of all our power with Him. He is training us to live with Him in the fellowship of undoubting faith and trust – to be indeed the friends of God. And let us hold fast the threefold cord that cannot be broken: the hungry friend needing the help, the praying friend seeking the help, and the mighty Friend loving to give as much as he needs.

* * * *

Oh, my blessed Lord and Teacher, I come to You in prayer. Your teaching is so glorious and yet too high for me to grasp. I must confess that my heart is too little to take in these thoughts of the wonderful boldness I may use with Your Father as my Friend. Lord Jesus, I trust You to give me Your Spirit with Your Word and to make the Word quick and powerful in my heart. I desire to keep Your Word of this day: *Because of his importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*

Lord, teach me more to know the power of persevering prayer. I know that in it the Father suits Himself to our need of time for the inner life to attain its growth and ripeness, so that His grace may indeed be assimilated and made our very own. I know that He would gladly train us to exercise the strong faith that does not let Him go even in the face of seeming disappointment. I know He wants to lift us to that wonderful liberty in which we understand how He has made the dispensing of His gift dependent on our prayer. Lord, I know this. Oh, teach me to see it in spirit and truth.

And may it now be the joy of my life to become the distributor for my rich Friend in heaven, to care for all the hungry and perishing, even at midnight, because I know my Friend, who always gives to him who perseveres, *because of his importunity, . . . as many as he needs.* Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Ninth Lesson

Pray the Lord of the Harvest

Then he said unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. – Matthew 9:37-38

The Lord frequently taught His disciples that they must pray and *how* to pray but seldom *what* to pray. This He left to their sense of need and the leading of the Spirit. But here we have one thing He expressly directs them to remember: in view of the plenteous harvest and the need for reapers, they must cry to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers. Just as in the parable of the friend at midnight, He wanted them to understand that prayer is not to be selfish, so here it is the power through which blessing can come to others. The Father is Lord of the harvest. When we pray for the Holy Spirit, we must pray for Him to prepare and send forth laborers for the work.

Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray for this? And couldn't He pray Himself? And wouldn't one prayer of His profit more than a thousand of theirs? And didn't God, the Lord of the harvest, see the need? Wouldn't He, in His own good time, send forth laborers without their prayers? Such questions lead us to the deepest mysteries of prayer and its power in the kingdom of God. The answer to such questions will convince us that prayer is indeed a power on which the gathering of the harvest and the coming of the kingdom do depend.

Prayer is not a form or show. The Lord Jesus was Himself the truth; everything He spoke was the deepest truth. It was *when he saw the multitude, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted and*

were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd, that He called on the disciples to pray for laborers to be sent among them (Matthew 9:36). He did so because He believed that their prayer was needed, and it would help.

The veil that hides the invisible world from us was wonderfully transparent to the holy, human soul of Jesus. He had looked long and deep and far into the hidden connection between cause and effect in the spirit world. He had marked in God's Word how, when God called men like Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and Daniel and gave them authority over men in His name, He had at the same time given them authority and the right to call in the powers of heaven to their aid as they needed them. He knew that the work of God had been entrusted to these men of old and to Himself for a time upon earth, and it was now about to pass over into the hands of His disciples. He knew that when they were given charge over this work, it would not be a mere matter of form or show, but the success of the work would actually depend on them and their being faithful or unfaithful.

As a single individual within the limitations of a human body and a human life, Jesus felt how little His short visit could accomplish among these wandering sheep He saw around Him. He longed for help to have them properly cared for, so He told His disciples to begin to pray and, when they had taken over the work from Him on earth, to make this one of the chief petitions in their prayer: that the Lord of the harvest Himself would send forth laborers into His harvest. The God who entrusted them with the work and made it so dependent on them gave them authority to apply to Him for laborers to help and made the supply dependent on their prayer.

How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of laborers in the fields of the world that are so white with the harvest. And how little they believe that our labor supply depends on prayer or that prayer will really provide as many as He needs. Not that the dearth of labor is not known or discussed or that efforts are not sometimes put forth to supply the want, but how little the burden of the sheep wandering without a Shepherd is really borne with faith that the Lord of the harvest will, in answer to prayer, send

forth the laborers with the solemn conviction that without this prayer, fields ready for reaping will be left to perish. And yet it is so. So wonderful is the surrender of His work into the hands of His church, so dependent has the Lord made Himself on them as His body through whom alone His work can be done, and so real is the power that the Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that the number of the laborers and the measure of the harvest do actually depend upon their prayer.

Solemn thought! Oh, why is it that we do not obey the injunction of the Master more heartily and cry more earnestly for laborers? There are two reasons for this. One is that we miss the compassion of Jesus that gave rise to this request for prayer. When believers learn that to love their neighbors as themselves and to live entirely for God's glory in their fellow men is the Father's first commandment to His redeemed ones, they will accept that the perishing ones are their charge entrusted to them by their Lord. By accepting them not only as a field of labor but also as the objects of loving care and interest, it will not be long before compassion towards the hopelessly perishing will touch their hearts, and the cry will ascend with an earnestness: Lord, send laborers!

The other reason for the neglect of the command – the lack of faith – will then make itself felt, but will be overcome as our pity pleads for help. We believe too little in the power of prayer to bring about definite results. We do not live close enough to God and are not entirely given up to His service and kingdom to be capable of the confidence that He will give an answer to our prayer. Oh, let us pray for a life so united with Christ that His compassion may stream into us, and His Spirit may be able to assure us that our prayer will bring results.

Such prayer will ask and obtain a twofold blessing. There will first be the desire for the increase of men entirely given up to the service of God. It is a terrible blot upon the church of Christ that there are times when men cannot actually be found for the service of the Master as ministers, missionaries, or teachers of God's Word. As God's children make this a matter of

supplication for their own circle or church, it will be given. The Lord Jesus is now Lord of the harvest. He has been exalted to bestow gifts – the gifts of the Spirit. His chief gifts are men filled with the Spirit. But the supply and distribution of the gifts depend on the cooperation of Head and members. It is prayer that will lead to such cooperation; the believing suppliants will be stirred to find the men and the means for the work.

The other blessing to be asked will not be less. Every believer is a laborer; none of God's children have been redeemed for service without their work of waiting. It must be our prayer that the Lord would so fill all His people with the spirit of devotion that not one may be found standing idle in the vineyard. Wherever there is a complaint about the need for helpers or for fit helpers in God's work, prayer has the promise of a supply. There is no Sunday school or district visiting, no Bible reading or rescue work where God is not ready and able to provide. It may take time and perseverance, but the command of Christ to ask the Lord of the harvest is the pledge that the prayer will be heard: *I say unto you, . . . he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*

What a solemn, blessed thought! This power has been given us in prayer to provide for the needs of the world and to secure the servants for God's work. The Lord of the harvest will hear. Christ, who called us so specifically to pray thus, will support our prayers offered in His name and interest. Let's set apart time and give ourselves to this part of our intercessory work. It will lead us into the fellowship of that compassionate heart of His that led Him to call for our prayers. It will elevate us to the insight of our regal position as those whose will counts for something with the great God in the advancement of His kingdom. It will make us feel how truly we are God's fellow workers on earth, to whom a share in His work has been entrusted in earnest. It will make us partakers in the soul anguish but also in the soul satisfaction of Jesus, for we know how, in answer to our prayer, blessing has been given that otherwise would not have come.

* * * *

Blessed Lord, You have given us another of Your wondrous lessons to learn. We humbly ask You to help us see correctly the spiritual realities that You have been speaking of. There is the harvest, which is so large and perishing that it waits for sleepy disciples to give the signal for laborers to come. Lord, teach us to look out upon this harvest with a heart moved with compassion and pity. There are so few laborers. Lord, show us how terrible the sin of the lack of prayer and faith is, of which this is the token. And there is the Lord of the harvest, so able and ready to send them forth. Lord, show us how He waits for the prayer to which He has bound His answer. And there are the disciples to whom the commission to pray has been given: Lord, show us how You can pour down Your Spirit and breathe upon the disciples, so that Your compassion and the faith in Your promise will rouse them to unceasing, prevailing prayer.

Oh Lord, we cannot understand how You can entrust such work and give such power to men so slothful and unfaithful. We thank You for all whom You teach to cry day and night for laborers to be sent forth. Lord, breathe Your own Spirit on all Your children that they may learn to live for this one thing alone – the kingdom and glory of their Lord – and may they become fully awake to the faith of what their prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in this, as in every petition, be filled with the assurance that prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God, will bring certain and abundant answer. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Tenth Lesson

Specific Prayer

And Jesus, answering, said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? – Mark 10:51; Luke 18:41

The blind man had been crying out loudly a great deal, *Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me* (Mark 10:47). The cry had reached the ear of the Lord; He knew what the blind man wanted and was ready to grant it to him. But before He provided for the need, He asked him, *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* He wanted to hear from the blind man's own lips not only the general petition for mercy but also the distinct expression of his desire. Until he spoke it out loud, he was not healed.

The Lord still puts the same question to many who cannot get the aid they ask for until the question has been answered. Our prayers must not be a vague appeal to His mercy or an indefinite cry for blessing, but the distinct expression of definite need. It is not that His loving heart does not understand our cry or is not ready to hear, but He desires it for our own sake. Such definite prayer teaches us to know our own needs better. It demands time and thought and self-scrutiny to find out what really is our greatest need.

Such time searches us and puts us to the test as to whether our desires are honest and real, such that we are ready to persevere. It leads us to judge whether our desires are according to God's Word and whether we really believe that we shall receive the things we ask. It helps us to wait for the special answer and to mark it when it comes.

Yet, how much of our prayer is vague and pointless. Some cry for mercy but don't take the trouble to know what mercy must do for them. Perhaps

others ask to be delivered from sin but do not begin by naming any sin from which the deliverance may be claimed. Still others pray for God's blessing on those around them and for the outpouring of God's Spirit on their land or the world but have no special field where they wait and expect to see the answer. The Lord says to all, "And what is it that you really want and expect Me to do?"

Every Christian has limited powers, and as he must have his own special field of labor in which he works, so his prayers have a special field too. Each believer has his own circle – his family, his friends, and his neighbors. If he were to take one or more of these by name, he would find that this brings him into the training school of faith and leads to personal and pointed dealings with his God. When we have claimed and received answers in such distinct matters by faith, our more general prayers will be believing and effectual.

We all know how surprised the whole civilized world was when they heard of the way trained troops were repulsed by the Transvaal Boers at Majuba.³ And to what did they owe their success? In the armies of Europe, the soldier would fire upon the enemy standing in large masses but would never consider aiming with every bullet. In hunting game, the Boer had learned a different lesson: his practiced eye sent every bullet on a special message – to seek and find its man.

Such aiming will win the day in the spiritual world too. As long as we only pour out our hearts in prayer with a multitude of petitions, but without taking time to confirm that every petition is sent with the purpose and expectation of getting an answer, many will not reach the mark. But if, as in silence of soul we bow before the Lord, we asked such questions as these: What is really my desire? Do I desire it in faith, expecting to receive? Am I now ready to place it and leave it in the Father's bosom? Is it a settled thing between God and me that I am to have the answer? We should learn to pray so that God would see and we would know what we really expect.

This, among other reasons, is why the Lord warns us against the vain

repetitions of the Gentiles, who are heard for much praying. We often hear prayers of great earnestness and fervor, in which a multitude of petitions are poured forth but to which the Savior would undoubtedly answer, *What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?*

If I were in a strange land, taking care of the interests of my father's business, I would certainly write two different types of letters. Family letters would express to all the communication that affection prompts; business letters would contain orders for what I need. Some letters might contain both. The answers would correspond to the letters. I would not expect a special answer to each sentence of the letters containing the family news. But for each order I send, I would be confident of an answer as to whether the desired article had been sent. In our dealings with God, the business element must not be lacking. With our expression of need and sin, of love and faith and consecration, there must be the pointed statement of what we ask and expect to receive. In the answer, the Father loves to give us the token of His approval and acceptance.

But the word of the Master teaches us more. He does not say, "What dost thou *wish*?" but "What dost thou *will*?" One often wishes for a thing without willing it. I wish to have a certain article, but I find the price too high, so I resolve not to take it. I *wish* but do not *will* to have it. The sluggard wishes to be rich but does not will it. Many wish to be saved but perish because they do not will it. The will rules the whole heart and life; if I really will to have anything that is within my reach, I do not rest until I have it. Likewise, when Jesus says to us, *What wilt thou?* He asks if it is indeed our purpose to have what we ask at any price – however great the sacrifice. Do you indeed so will to have it that, though He delay it long, you do not hold your peace until He hears you? Alas, how many prayers are wishes, sent up for a short time and then forgotten or sent up year after year as a matter of duty, while we rest content with the prayer without the answer.

But it may be asked, is it not best to make our wishes known to God and

then leave it to Him to decide what is best without seeking to assert our will? By no means. This is the very essence of the prayer of faith that Jesus sought to teach His disciples – it does not just make its desire known and then leave the decision to God. That would be the prayer of submission for cases when we cannot know God's will. But the prayer of faith, finding God's will in some promise of the Word, pleads for that until it comes. In Matthew, Jesus said to the blind man, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* (Matthew 9:28). In Mark, He says, *What wilt thou that I should do?* In both cases, He said that faith had saved them. So, He also said to the Syrophenician woman, *Great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou desire* (Matthew 15:28). Faith is nothing but the purpose of the will resting on God's Word and saying, "I must have it." To believe truly is to will firmly.

But isn't such a will at variance with our dependence on God and our submission to Him? By no means. It is rather the true submission that honors God. Only when the child has yielded his own will in entire surrender to the Father can he receive from the Father liberty and power to will what he would have. But when the believer has once accepted the will of God as revealed through the Word and Spirit as his will also, then it is the will of God that His child should use this renewed will in His service. The will is the highest power in the soul; grace wants more than everything to sanctify and restore this will to full and free exercise – one of the chief traits of God's image. As a son, who only lives for his father's interests and seeks not his own but his father's will, is trusted by the father with his business, so God speaks to His child in all truth, *What wilt thou?*

It is often spiritual laziness that, under the appearance of humility, professes to have no will, because it fears the trouble of searching out the will of God, or when found, the struggle of claiming it in faith. True humility is always in company with strong faith, which only seeks to know what is according to the will of God and then boldly claims the fulfillment of the promise: *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

* * * *

Lord Jesus, teach me to pray with all my heart and strength that there may be no doubt with You or with me as to what I have asked. May I know what I desire, so that even as my petitions are recorded in heaven, I can record them on earth and note each answer as it comes. And may my faith in what Your Word has promised be so clear that the Spirit may indeed work in me the liberty to will that it shall come. Lord, renew, strengthen, and sanctify wholly my will for the work of effectual prayer.

Blessed Savior, I ask You to reveal to me the wonderful confidence You show us, thus asking us to say what we will that You should do and promising to do whatever we will. Son of God, I cannot understand it; I can only believe that You have indeed redeemed us wholly for Yourself and seek to make the will as our noblest part. Lord, I do most unreservedly yield my will to You, as the power through which Your Spirit is to rule my whole being. Let Him take possession of it, lead it into the truth of Your promises, and make it so strong in prayer that I may forever hear Your voice saying, *Great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou desire.* Amen.

³ Editor's note: The Battle of Majuba Hill on February 27, 1881, was the final battle of the First Boer War. The British occupied the hill but did not believe the Boers could scale it in an attack, so they brought no artillery and did not dig trenches. However, the Boers formed storming parties. The British front line collapsed, and the Boers won the battle. This resounding victory for the Boers was a humiliation for the British; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Majuba_Hill.

Eleventh Lesson

Faith that Receives

Therefore I say unto you that everything that ye ask for, praying, believe that ye receive it, and it shall come upon you. – Mark 11:24

What a promise! So large, so divine, that our little hearts cannot take it in, and in every possible way we seek to limit it to what we think safe or probable. Instead of allowing it, in its quickening power and energy, to enter in and enlarge our hearts to the measure of what His love and power are ready to do for us, we tend to limit it. Faith is far from being a mere conviction of the truth of God's Word or a conclusion drawn from certain premises. It is the ear that has heard God say what He will do and the eye that has seen Him doing it. Therefore, where there is true faith, it is impossible for the answer not to come.

If we only carry out the one thing that He asks of us as we pray – *Believe that ye receive it* – He will do the thing He has promised: *It shall come upon you*. The keynote of Solomon's prayer – *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has with his hand fulfilled that which he spoke with his mouth to my father David* – is the keynote of all true prayer (2 Chronicles 6:4). This is the joyful adoration of a God whose hand always secures the fulfillment of what His mouth has spoken. Let us in this spirit listen to the promise Jesus gives; each part of it has its divine message.

Everything [All things whatsoever]. At this first word, our human wisdom begins to doubt and ask, "This surely cannot be literally true?" But if it is not, why did the Master say it with the very strongest expression He could find? – *Everything*. It is not as if this were the only time He said this. Didn't He say, *If thou canst believe this, all things are possible to him that*

believes, and If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you (Mark 9:23; Matthew 17:20)? Faith is so wholly the work of God's Spirit through His Word in the prepared heart of the believing disciple that it is impossible that the fulfillment should not come. Faith is the pledge and forerunner of the coming answer. Yes, *everything that ye shall ask for, praying, believe that ye receive it*. The tendency of human reason is to interject here with certain qualifying clauses: "if expedient" or "if according to God's will" to break the force of a statement that appears dangerous.

Oh, let us beware of dealing with the Master's words in this way. His promise is most literally true. He wants His often-repeated *everything* to enter into our hearts and reveal to us how mighty the power of faith is, how truly the Head calls the members to share with Him in His power, and how wholly our Father places His power at the disposal of the child who trusts Him. In this *everything*, faith is to have its food and strength; as we weaken it, we weaken faith. *Everything* is unconditional; the only condition is what is implied in the believing.

Before we can believe, we must discover what God's will is; believing is the exercise of a soul surrendered and given up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit, but when we do believe, nothing shall be impossible. God forbid that we should try to bring down His *everything* to the level of what we think possible. Let's simply take Christ's *everything* [all things whatsoever] as the measure and the hope of our faith. It is a seed word that will unfold itself and strike root, fill our life with its fullness, and bring forth fruit abundantly if we take it as He gives it and keep it in our heart.

Everything [all things whatsoever] *that ye ask for, praying*. It is in prayer that these *all things* are to be brought to God, requested from Him, and received of Him. The faith that receives them is the fruit of the prayer. In one respect, there must be faith before there can be prayer; in another respect, the faith is the outcome and the growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the Savior, in communication with Him, that faith rises to grasp what at first appeared too high. It is in prayer that we hold up our

desire to the light of God's holy will that our motives are tested, and proof is given whether we ask indeed in the name of Jesus and only for the glory of God. It is in prayer that we wait for the leading of the Spirit to show us whether we are asking the right thing and in the right spirit. It is in prayer that we become conscious of our lack of faith, that we are led to say to the Father that we believe, and that we prove the reality of our faith by the confidence with which we persevere. It is in prayer that Jesus teaches and inspires faith. He that waits to pray, or loses heart in prayer because he does not yet feel the faith needed to get the answer, will never learn to believe. He who begins to pray and ask will find the Spirit of faith is given most surely at the foot of the throne.

Believe that ye receive it. It is clear that what we are to believe is that we receive the very things we ask. The Savior does not hint that the Father may give us something else because He knows what is best. The very mountain is cast into the sea as faith bids. Paul's prayer in which he says, *In every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,* is the prayer of trust (Philippians 4:6-7). It has reference to things of which we cannot find out if God is going to give them.

As children, we make known our desires in the countless things of daily life and leave it to the Father to give or not as He thinks best. But the prayer of faith that Jesus speaks of is something different, something higher. Whether in the greater interests of the Master's work or in the lesser concerns of our daily life, is when the soul is led to see how nothing so honors the Father as the faith that is assured He will do what He has said in giving us whatsoever we ask for. It takes its stand on the promise as brought home by the Spirit that it may know most certainly that it does receive exactly what it asks. Just see how clearly the Lord sets this before us in Mark 11:23: *Whosoever . . . shall not doubt in his heart but shall believe that what he says shall be done . . . unto him.* This is the blessing of the

prayer of faith that Jesus speaks of: *Believe that ye receive it*. This word of central importance is too often misunderstood. Believe that you receive it – now, while praying, the thing you ask for.

It may be later that you will have it in personal experience, that you will see what you believe; but now, without seeing, you are to believe that it has been given to you by the Father in heaven. The receiving or accepting of an answer to prayer is just like the receiving or accepting of Jesus or of pardon; it is a spiritual thing, an act of faith apart from all feeling. When I come as a seeker for pardon, I believe that Jesus in heaven is for me, so I receive or take Him. When I come as a seeker for any special gift that is according to God's Word, I believe that what I ask is given to me. I believe that I have it, and I hold it in faith; I thank God that it is mine. *If we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the petitions that we asked of him* (1 John 5:15).

And it shall come upon you. That is, the gift that we first held in faith as bestowed upon us in heaven will also become ours in personal experience. But will it be necessary to pray longer once we know we have been heard and have received what we asked? There are cases in which such prayer will not be necessary, in which the blessing is ready to break through at once, if we just hold fast our confidence and prove our faith by praising God for what we have received in the face of not yet having it in experience. In other cases, the faith that has received needs to be further tried and strengthened in persevering prayer. Only God knows when everything in and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the blessing that has been given to faith.

Elijah knew for certain that rain would come; God had promised it, but he had to pray seven times for it. That prayer was not a show or a play; it was an intense spiritual reality in the heart of him who lay pleading, and in heaven above where it had its effectual work to do. It is through faith *and patience* [we] *inherit the promises* (Hebrews 6:12). Faith says most confidently, "I have received it." Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift

bestowed in heaven is seen on earth. *Believe that ye receive it, and it shall come upon you.* Between the *receive* in heaven and the *shall come* of earth is *believe*: believing praise and prayer are the link.

Remember one more thing: Jesus is the One who said this. As we see heaven open to us and the Father on the throne offering to give us whatsoever we ask in faith, our hearts feel full of shame that we have availed ourselves of our privilege so seldom. And we are full of fear lest our feeble faith still fails to grasp what is clearly placed within our reach. One thing must make us strong and full of hope – Jesus who brought us this message from the Father. When He was on earth, He lived the life of faith and prayer. It was when the disciples expressed their surprise at what He had done to the fig tree that He told them that the very same life He led could be theirs, and they could not only command the fig tree but the very mountain also, and it must obey.

He is our Life. All He was on earth, He is in us now. All He teaches, He really gives. He is the Author and the Perfecter of our faith; He gives the spirit of faith. Let's not fear that such faith might not be meant for us. It is meant for every child of the Father; it is within reach of each one who will be childlike, yielding himself to the Father's will and love and trusting the Father's Word and power. Dear fellow Christian, let the thought that this word comes through Jesus, the Son, our Brother, give us courage, and let our answer be yes, blessed Lord, we do believe Your Word. We do believe that we receive.

* * * *

Blessed Lord, You came from the Father to show us His love and all the treasures of blessing that love is waiting to bestow. Lord, You have again flung the gates so wide open and given us such promises as to our liberty in prayer that we blush that our poor hearts have taken so little in. It has been too much for us to believe.

Lord, we now look to You to teach us to take and keep and use this

precious word of Yours: *Everything that ye ask for, praying, believe that ye receive it.* Blessed Jesus, our faith must be rooted in You if it is to grow strong. Your work has freed us wholly from the power of sin and has opened the way to the Father. Your love is forever longing to bring us into the full fellowship of Your glory and power. Your Spirit is forever drawing us upward into a life of perfect faith and confidence. We are assured that in Your teaching we shall learn to pray the prayer of faith. You will train us to pray so that we believe that we receive and believe that we really have what we ask. Lord, teach me to know and trust and love You, so I may live and abide in You that all my prayers rise and come before God, and my soul may have the assurance that I am heard. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Twelfth Lesson

Have Faith in God

Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you that whosoever shall . . . not doubt in his heart but shall believe that what he says shall be done . . . shall be done unto him. Therefore I say unto you that everything that ye ask for, praying, believe that ye receive it, and it shall come upon you. – Mark 11:22-24

The promise of answer to prayer in the previous lesson is one of the most wonderful in all Scripture. In many hearts, it has raised the question, how can I ever attain the faith that knows that it receives all it asks? This is the question our Lord answered in these verses.

Before He gave that wonderful promise to His disciples, Jesus spoke another word in which He pointed out where the faith in the answer to prayer emerges and forever finds its strength: *Have faith in God*. This word precedes the instruction to have faith in the promise of an answer to prayer. The power to believe a promise depends entirely on faith in the promiser. Trust in the person produces trust in his word. It is only when we live and associate with God in personal, loving communication and God Himself is everything to us that our whole being can be continually opened up and exposed to the mighty influences that are at work. Then His holy presence is revealed, and the capacity for believing that He gives whatsoever we ask will be developed.

This connection between faith in God and faith in His promise will become clear to us if we realize what faith really is. It is often compared to the hand or the mouth by which we take and appropriate what is offered to us. But it is important to understand that faith is also the ear by which I hear

what is promised and the eye by which I see what is offered me. The power to receive depends on this. I must hear the person who gives me the promise; the very tone of his voice gives me courage to believe. I must see him; in the light of his eye and countenance, all fear as to my right to receive passes away. The value of the promise depends on the promiser; faith in the promise depends on my knowledge of the promiser.

It is for this reason, before Jesus gave that wonderful prayer promise, He first said, *Have faith in God*. Let your eye be open to the living God and gaze on Him, seeing Him who is invisible. Through the eye I yield myself to the influence of what is before me; I just allow His influence to enter, to exert its influence, and to leave its impression upon my mind. So, believing God is just looking to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His presence, giving Him time, and yielding my whole self. I must take in the full impression of what He is as God with my soul opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of His love. Yes, faith is the eye to which God shows what He is and what He does; through faith, the light of His presence and the workings of His mighty power stream into the soul. As that which I see lives in me, so by faith God lives in me too.

And even so, faith is also the ear through which the voice of God is always heard and communication with Him is maintained. It is through the Holy Spirit that the Father speaks to us. The Son is the Word, the substance of what God says; the Spirit is the living voice. The child of God needs this voice to lead and guide him; the secret voice from heaven must teach him what to say and what to do. An ear opened towards God is a believing heart waiting on Him to hear what He says; it will hear Him speak.

The words of God will not only be the words of a book, but proceeding from the mouth of God they will also be spirit, truth, life, and power. They will bring living experience to what are otherwise only thoughts. Through this opened ear, the soul tarries under the influence of the life and power of God Himself. As the words I hear enter the mind, dwelling and working there, so through faith God enters the heart and dwells and works there.

When faith is in full exercise as eye and ear, the faculty of the soul by which we see and hear God, then it will be able to exercise its full power as hand and mouth by which we appropriate God and His blessings. The power of reception will depend entirely on the power of spiritual perception. For this reason, before He gave the promise that God would answer believing prayer, Jesus said, *Have faith in God*. Faith is simply surrender; I yield myself to the impression that the words I hear make on me. By faith, I yield myself to the living God. His glory and love fill my heart and have the mastery over my life.

Faith is fellowship; I give myself up to the influence of the friend who makes me a promise and become linked to him by it. And it is when we enter into this living fellowship with God Himself in a faith that always sees and hears Him, that it becomes easy and natural to believe His promise about prayer. Faith in the promise is the fruit of faith in the promiser; the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith. And in this way, the faith that prays effectually is indeed a gift of God – not as something that He bestows or infuses at once but in a far deeper and truer sense as the blessed disposition or habit of soul that grows in us in a life of communication with Him. Surely, for one who knows his Father well and lives in constant, close communication with Him, it is a simple thing to believe the promise that He will do the will of His child who lives in union with Him.

Because many of God's children do not understand this connection between the life of faith and the prayer of faith, their experience of the power of prayer is limited. When they desire earnestly to obtain an answer from God, they fix their whole heart upon the promise and try their utmost to grasp that promise in faith. When they do not succeed, they are ready to give up hope; the promise is true, but it is beyond their power to take hold of it in faith. Listen to the lesson Jesus taught: *Have faith in God*, the living God; let faith look to God more than the thing promised. His love, His power, and His living presence will waken and work the faith.

A physician would tell someone asking for some means to get more

strength in his arms and hands that he should exercise – his whole constitution must be built up and strengthened. So the cure for a feeble faith is to be found in the invigoration of our whole spiritual life by communication with God. Learn to believe in God, hold on to God, and let God take possession of your life; then it will be easy to take and receive the promise. He who knows and trusts God finds it easy to trust the promise too.

Note how distinctly this appears in the saints of old. Every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit of a special revelation of God. See it in Abraham: *The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And he brought him forth abroad and said, . . . And he believed the LORD* (Genesis 15:1, 5-6). And later again: *The LORD appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; . . . And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, Behold my covenant with thee* (Genesis 17:1, 3-4). The revelation of God Himself gave the promise its living power to enter the heart and work the faith.

Because they knew God, the men of faith could not do anything but trust His promise. God's promise will be to us what God Himself is. It is the man who walks before the Lord and falls upon his face to listen while the living God speaks to him who will receive the promise. Though we have God's promises in the Bible with full liberty to take them, the spiritual power is lacking, except as God Himself speaks to us. And He speaks to those who walk and live with Him. Therefore, *have faith in God*; let faith be all eye and ear, the surrender to let God make His full impression and reveal Himself in the soul. Count it one of the chief blessings of prayer to exercise faith in God, as the living, mighty God who waits to fulfill in us all the good pleasure of His will and the work of faith with power. See in Him the God of love, whose delight it is to bless and impart Himself. In such worship of faith in God, the power will speedily come to believe the promise too.

All things, whatever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive (Matthew 21:22). Yes, see that in faith you make God your own; the promise will be yours too.

What a precious lesson Jesus has for us this day. We seek God's gifts; God wants to give Himself to us first. We think of prayer as the power to draw good gifts from heaven and Jesus as the means to draw ourselves to God. We want to stand at the door and cry; Jesus wants us to enter first and realize that we are friends and children. Let's accept the teaching. Let every experience of the littleness of our faith in prayer urge us first to exercise more faith in the living God and yield ourselves to Him in that faith. A heart full of God has power for the prayer of faith. Faith in God produces faith in the promise – the promise of an answer to prayer.

Therefore, child of God, take time to bow before Him and wait for Him to reveal Himself. Take time to let your soul exercise and express its faith in the infinite One in holy awe and worship. As He imparts Himself and takes possession of you, the prayer of faith will crown your faith in God.

* * * *

Oh, my God, I believe in You. I believe You are the Father, infinite in Your love and power. As the Son, You are my Redeemer and my Life. As the Holy Spirit, You are my Comforter and Guide and Strength. As the Three-in-One God, I have faith in You. I know and am sure that all that You are, You are to me, and all You have promised, You will perform.

Lord Jesus, increase this faith. Teach me to take time to wait and worship in the holy presence until my faith takes in all there is in my God for me. Let my faith see Him as the fountain of all life, working with almighty strength to accomplish His will in the world and in me. Let me see Him in His love, longing to meet and fulfill my desires. Let faith possess my heart and life that God alone may dwell there. Lord Jesus, help me. I want to believe in God with my whole heart. Let faith in God fill me every moment.

Oh, my blessed Savior, how can Your church glorify You and how can it

fulfill that work of intercession through which Your kingdom must come unless our whole life is faith in God? Blessed Lord, speak Your Word, *Have faith in God*, into the depths of our souls. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Thirteenth Lesson

Prayer and Fasting

Then the disciples came to Jesus apart and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unfaithfulness; . . . If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this lineage of demons does not go out but by prayer and fasting. – Matthew 17:19-21

When the disciples saw Jesus cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic whom *they could not cure*, they asked the Master why they had failed. He had given them *power against unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of weakness* (Matthew 10:1). They had often exercised that power and joyfully told how the demons were subject to them. And yet now, while He was on the mount, they had utterly failed. There had been nothing in the will of God or in the nature of the case to render deliverance impossible; that was proved when the evil spirit left at Christ's bidding. From their expression, *Why could not we cast him out?* it is evident that they had wished and sought to do so; they had probably used the Master's name and called upon the evil spirit to go out. Their efforts had been in vain, and in the presence of the multitude, they had been put to shame. *Why could not we cast him out?*

Christ's answer was direct and plain: *Because of your unbelief* (KJV). The cause of His success and their failure was not due to His having a special power to which they had no access. No, the reason was not far from them. He had often taught them that there is one power, that of faith, to which everything must bow in the kingdom of darkness as in the kingdom of God. In the spiritual world, failure has one cause – the lack of faith. Faith is the

one condition on which all divine power can enter into man and work through him. It is the responsiveness to the unseen – man’s will yielded up to and molded by the will of God. They did not hold the power they had received to cast out demons in themselves as a permanent gift or possession. The power was in Christ – to be received, held, and used by faith alone as living faith in Him. Had they been full of faith in Him as Lord and Conqueror in the spirit world, and had they been full of faith in Him as having given them authority to cast out demons in His name, this faith would have given them the victory. *Because of your unbelief* was the Master’s explanation and reproof of impotence and failure in His church for all time.

But such lack of faith must have a cause. The disciples might have asked, “And why could we not believe? Our faith has cast out demons before. Why have we now failed in believing?” The Master proceeded to tell them before they asked: *This lineage of demons does not go out but by prayer and fasting.* As faith is the simplest exercise of spiritual life, so it is the highest, where our spirit yields itself in perfect receptivity to God’s Spirit and is strengthened to its highest activity. This faith depends upon the state of the spiritual life; only when the spiritual life is strong and in full health, and the Spirit of God has full sway in our life, is there the power of faith to do its mighty deeds.

Therefore, Jesus added, *Howbeit this lineage of demons does not go out but by prayer and fasting.* The faith that can overcome stubborn resistance such as you have seen in this evil spirit, Jesus tells them, is not possible except for men living in very close fellowship with God and in very special separation from the world – in prayer and fasting. And so He teaches us two lessons of deep importance about prayer. The one is that faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and keep strong. The other is that prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect development.

Faith needs a life of prayer for its full growth. In all the different parts of the spiritual life, there is such close union, such unceasing action and

reaction, that each may be both cause and effect. Thus it is with faith. There can be no true prayer without faith; some measure of faith must precede prayer. And yet prayer is also the way to more faith; there can be no higher degrees of faith except through much prayer. This is the lesson Jesus teaches here. Nothing needs to grow as much as our faith. *Your faith grows exceedingly* is said of one church (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

When Jesus spoke the words, *According to your faith be it unto you*, He announced the law of the kingdom, which tells us that all people do not have the same degrees of faith; one person may have varying degrees, and the amount of faith will always determine the amount of power and of blessing. If we want to know where and how our faith is to grow, the Master points us to the throne of God. It is in prayer, in the exercise of the faith I have, in fellowship with the living God that faith can increase. Faith can only live by feeding on what is divine – God Himself.

It is in the adoring worship of God, the waiting on Him and for Him, the deep silence of soul that yields itself for God to reveal Himself that the capacity for knowing and trusting God will be developed. As we take His Word from the blessed Book and bring it to Him and ask Him to speak it to us with His living, loving voice, the power will come to believe and receive the Word as God's own Word to us. In prayer, in living contact with God in living faith, the power to trust God and accept everything He says, to accept every possibility He has offered to our faith, will become strong in us. Many Christians cannot understand what is meant by much prayer, and they cannot form a perception or feel the need of spending hours with God. But what the Master says, the experience of His people has confirmed – men of strong faith are men of much prayer.

This brings us back to the lesson we learned when Jesus first said, *Have faith in God*. It is God, the living God, into whom our faith must strike its roots deep and broad; then it will be strong enough to remove mountains and cast out demons. *If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible to you*. Oh, if we give ourselves up to the work God has for us in the world, and

come into contact with the mountains and the demons to be cast away and cast out, we would soon comprehend the need for much faith and much prayer. In this soil, faith can be cultivated. Christ Jesus is our life and the life of our faith. His life in us makes us strong and makes us simple to believe. *The exposition of thy words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple* (Psalm 119:130). In the dying to self, which much prayer implies, and in closer union with Jesus, the spirit of faith will come in power. Faith needs prayer for its full growth.

And prayer needs fasting for its full growth; this is the second lesson. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting is the other with which we let loose and cast away the visible. Nothing connects man more closely to the world of sense than his need for food and his enjoyment of it. It was the fruit, good for food, which tempted man and caused him to fall from Paradise. It was with bread to be made from stones that Jesus was tempted when He hungered in the wilderness, but by fasting, He triumphed. The body has been redeemed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit; it is in body as well as spirit that Scripture says we are to glorify God by eating and drinking. This eating to the glory of God has not yet become a spiritual reality to many Christians. The first thought suggested by Jesus' words about fasting and prayer is that it is only in a life of moderation and temperance and self-denial that there will be the heart or the strength to pray much.

But there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its feasts with eating and drinking. There may come times of intense desire when it is felt strongly how the body with its appetites, lawful though they are, still hinders the spirit in its battle with the powers of darkness, and the need is felt to keep it under control. We are creatures of the senses. Our mind is helped by what comes to us embodied in concrete form; fasting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm our resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything – to sacrifice ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. He who accepted the fasting and sacrifice of

the Son knows to value and accept and reward with spiritual power the soul that is thus ready to give up all for Christ and His kingdom.

Then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the reaching out after God and the unseen; fasting is the letting go of all that is of the seen and temporal. Ordinary Christians imagine that all that is not positively forbidden and sinful is lawful to them, and they seek to retain as much as possible of this world with its property, its literature, and its enjoyments. The truly consecrated soul is as the soldier who carries only what he needs for the warfare. Laying aside every weight, as well as the irresistible sin, afraid of entangling himself with the affairs of this life, he seeks to lead a Nazarite life as one specially set apart for the Lord and His service. Without such voluntary separation, even from what is lawful, no one will attain power in prayer. *This lineage of demons does not go out but by prayer and fasting.*

Disciples of Jesus, you have asked the Master to teach you to pray; come now and accept His lessons. He tells you that prayer is the path to faith, strong faith that can cast out demons. He tells you, *If ye have faith . . . nothing shall be impossible to you*; let this glorious promise encourage you to pray much. Is the prize not worth the price? Shall we not give up all to follow Jesus in the path He opens to us here? Shall we not fast if need be? Shall we not refrain from doing anything that the body or the world could hinder us in our great life work – having communication with our God in prayer that we may become men of faith whom He can use in His work of saving the world?

* * * *

Oh, Lord Jesus, how continually You have to reprove us for our unbelief! How strange, this terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises must appear to You. Lord, let Your reproof with its searching, *Because of your unbelief*, sink into the very depths of our hearts and reveal to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our fault. Teach us, blessed Lord,

that there is a place where faith can be learned and gained – even in the prayer and fasting that brings us into living and abiding fellowship with You and the Father.

Oh Savior, You are the Author and the Perfecter of our faith; teach us what it is to let You live in us by Your Holy Spirit. Lord, our efforts and prayers for grace to believe have been so ineffective. We know why; we sought for strength in ourselves to be given from You. Holy Jesus, teach us the mystery of Your life in us and how by Your Spirit You live in us the life of faith and insure that our faith will not fail. Oh, let us see that our faith will be a part of that wonderful prayer life which You give to those who expect their training for the ministry of intercession to come not only in words and thoughts but also from the inflowing of the Spirit of Your own life. Teach us how, in fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith for which nothing shall be impossible. Amen.

* * * *

Note

At the time when Blumhardt passed through his terrible conflict with the evil spirits in those who were possessed and sought to cast them out by prayer, he often wondered what it was that hindered the answer. One day a friend to whom he had spoken of his trouble directed his attention to our Lord's words about fasting. Blumhardt resolved to give himself to fasting, sometimes for more than thirty hours. From reflection and experience, he gained the conviction that it is more important than is generally thought. He said, "Since fasting is a practical proof of a matter of true and pressing interest, and it strengthens the intensity and power with the unceasing practical expression of a prayer without words, I could believe that it would not be without results, especially as the Master's words had reference to a case like the present. I tried it without telling anyone, and in truth, the later conflict was lightened by it. I could speak with much greater restfulness and

decision. I did not need to be with the sick one for so long, and I felt that I could influence without being present.”

OceanofPDF.com

Fourteenth Lesson

Love, Forgiveness, and Prayer

And when ye are praying, forgive if ye have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in the heavens will also forgive you your trespasses. – Mark 11:25

These words follow the great prayer promise, *Everything that ye ask for, praying, believe that ye receive it, and it shall come upon you* (Mark 11:24). We have already seen how the words that preceded that promise, *Have faith in God*, taught us that in prayer everything depends upon our relationship with God being upright; these words that follow remind us that our relationship with fellow men must be blameless too. Love for God and love for our neighbor are inseparable; the prayer from a heart that is not right with either God or men cannot prevail. Faith and love are essential to each other.

We find that our Lord frequently expressed this thought. In the Sermon on the Mount, He taught His disciples that if everything was not right with the brother, acceptable worship to the Father was impossible. *If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother has something against thee; leave thy gift there before the altar, and go; first restore friendship with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift* (Matthew 5:23-24).

Later, after teaching us to pray, *Set us free from our debts, as we set free our debtors*, He added, *But if ye do not set men free from their trespasses, neither will your Father set you free your trespasses* (Matthew 6:12, 15). At the close of the parable of the unmerciful servant, He applied His teaching in the words, *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you unless*

from your hearts ye forgive every one his brother their trespasses (Matthew 18:35).

So in the book of Mark, as they saw the dried-up fig tree, Jesus spoke of the wonderful power of faith and the prayer of faith. All at once, apparently without connection, He introduced the thought, *When ye are praying, forgive if ye have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in the heavens will also forgive you your trespasses*. It is as if during His life in Nazareth and afterwards, He had learned that disobedience to the law of love to men was the great sin of praying people and the great cause of the ineffectiveness of their prayers. And it is as if He wanted to lead us into His own blessed experience. He wanted us to know that nothing gives such liberty of access and such power in believing as the consciousness that we have given ourselves in love and compassion for those whom God loves.

The first lesson taught is that of a forgiving disposition. We pray, *So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you*. Scripture says, *Forgiving one another even as God has forgiven you in Christ* (Ephesians 4:32). God's full and free forgiveness is to be the rule of ours with men. Otherwise, our reluctant, halfhearted forgiveness, which is not forgiveness at all, will be God's rule with us. Every prayer rests upon our faith in God's pardoning grace. If God dealt with us after our sins, not one prayer could be heard. Pardon opens the door to all God's love and blessing; because God has pardoned all our sin, our prayer can prevail to obtain all we need. The deep, sure ground of answer to prayer is God's forgiving love. When it has taken possession of the heart, we pray in faith.

But also, when it has taken possession of the heart, we live in love. God's forgiving disposition, revealed in His love to us, becomes a disposition in us. With the power of His forgiving love that dwells within us, we forgive even as He forgives. If there is great and grievous injury or injustice done to us, we seek first to possess a godlike disposition to be kept from a sense of wounded honor – from a desire to maintain our rights or from the intent to reward the offender as he deserved.

In the little annoyances of daily life, we are watchful not to excuse the hasty temper, the sharp word, or the quick judgment with the thought that we mean no harm and do not stay angry long. We cannot say that it would be too much to expect from our weak human nature to forgive the way God and Christ do. No, we take the command literally: *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye* (Colossians 3:13). The blood that cleanses the conscience from dead works cleanses us from selfishness too; the love it reveals is pardoning love that takes possession of us and flows through us to others. Our forgiving love to men is the evidence of the reality of God's forgiving love in us, and such is the condition of the prayer of faith.

There is a second, more general lesson: our daily life in the world is the test of our communication with God in prayer. How often the Christian, when he comes to pray, does his utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind that he thinks will be pleasing. He does not understand or he forgets that life does not consist of many loose pieces which can be addressed one at a time. Life is a whole, and the pious hour of prayer is judged by God from the ordinary frame of the daily life where the hour of prayer is only a small part. Not the feeling I call up but the tone of my life during the day is God's criterion of what I really am and desire. Drawing near to God is one piece of my communication with men and earth; failure here will cause failure there. Not only can the distinct consciousness of something wrong between my neighbor and me hinder my prayer, but also my thinking and judging and the unloving thoughts and words I allow to pass unnoticed. The effectual prayer of faith comes out from a life given up to the will and the love of God. He deals with my prayer not according to what I try to be when praying but what I am when not praying.

We may gather these thoughts into a third lesson: In our life with men, the one thing on which everything depends is love. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. Because God is love, He forgives. It is only when we dwell in love that we can forgive as God forgives. In love to our brothers,

we have the evidence of love to the Father, the basis of confidence before God, and the assurance that our prayer will be heard.

If anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he that does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? (1 John 4:20)

Let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And in this we know that we are of the truth and have our hearts certified before him. And if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, then we have confidence in God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he has commanded us. (1 John 3:18-23)

Let us love in deed and truth; in this way we will assure our hearts before Him. *If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence in God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him.* Neither faith nor work will profit if we don't have love; love unites us with God; love proves the reality of our faith. As essential as Jesus' instruction to *have faith in God* is, the one that follows, *love one another*, is just as essential. The right relationship to the living God above me, and the living men around me, are the conditions of effectual prayer.

This love is of special consequence when we labor and pray for those around us. We sometimes give ourselves to work for Christ out of zeal for His cause or for our own spiritual health without giving ourselves in self-sacrificing love to those whose souls we seek. No wonder our faith is weak and does not conquer. To look on each wretched one, however unlovable he may be, in the light of the tender love of Jesus as the Shepherd seeking the lost and see him as Jesus Christ sees him is the secret of believing prayer and successful effort. To take him up for Jesus' sake in a heart that really loves is the evidence of Christ in us. When speaking of forgiveness, Jesus

spoke of love as its root. Just as in the Sermon on the Mount, He connected His teaching and promises about prayer with the call to be merciful, as the Father in heaven is merciful (Matthew 5:7, 38-48). We see that a loving life is the condition of believing prayer.

It has been said that there is nothing so heart-searching as believing prayer or the honest effort to pray in faith. Oh, let's not turn the edge of that self-examination with the thought that God does not hear our prayer for reasons known only to Him. By no means. *Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss* (James 4:3). Let that word of God search us. Let's ask whether our prayer is indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of man. Love is the only soil in which faith can strike its roots and thrive. The Father always looks to see if while love throws its arms up and opens its heart toward heaven, it has opened towards the evil and the unworthy too. In that love of fixed purpose and sincere obedience, faith alone can obtain the blessing. He who gives himself to let the love of God dwell in him and to love as God loves in the practice of daily life will have the power to believe in the love that hears his every prayer. The merciful shall obtain mercy; the meek shall inherit the earth.

* * * *

Blessed Father, You are love, and only he that abides in love abides in You and in fellowship with You. The blessed Son has taught me how true this is of my fellowship with You in prayer. Oh, my God, let Your love fill my heart by the Holy Spirit and be a fountain of love to all around me, that out of a life in love may spring the power of believing prayer. Oh, my Father, grant that this may be my experience – that a life in love to all around me is the gate to a life in the love of my God. And let me find proof that Your forgiveness to me is a power and a life in the joy with which I forgive whoever might offend me.

Lord Jesus, my blessed Teacher, teach me to forgive and to love. Let the power of Your blood make the pardon for my sins such a reality that Your

forgiveness to me and to others may be the very joy of heaven. Show me what might hinder my fellowship with God, so that my daily life in my own home and in society may be the school in which strength and confidence are gathered for the prayer of faith. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Fifteenth Lesson

The Power of United Prayer

Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. – Matthew 18:19-20

One of the first lessons of our Lord in His school of prayer was to not be seen of men. Enter your inner chamber and be alone with the Father. After He has taught us that the meaning of prayer is personal contact with God, He came with a second lesson: You don't only need secret, solitary prayer but also shared, united prayer. He gave us a special promise for the united prayer of two or three who agree in what they ask. As a tree has its root hidden in the ground and its stem growing up to the sunlight, for full development prayer needs the hidden secrecy in which the soul meets God alone as well as fellowship with those who find their common meetingplace in the name of Jesus.

The reason this must be so is plain. The bond that unites a man to his fellow men is no less real and close than that which unites him to God; he is one with them. Grace renews not only our relationship to God but to man also. We not only learn to say, "My Father," but also "Our Father." Nothing would be more unnatural than for the children of a family to always meet their father alone but never in the united expression of their desires or their love. Believers are not only members of one family, but they are also even of one body. Just as each member of the body depends on the others, and the full action of the Spirit dwelling in the body depends on the union and

cooperation of all, so Christians cannot reach the full blessing God is ready to bestow through His Spirit except when they seek and receive it in fellowship with each other. In the union and fellowship of believers, the Spirit can manifest His full power. It was to the 120 continuing in one place together and praying with one accord that the Spirit came from the throne of the glorified Lord (Acts 1:14-15).

The marks of true united prayer are given to us in these words of our Lord. The first is agreement as to the thing asked. There must not only be general consent to agree with anything another may ask, but there must also be some special thing, a matter of distinct united desire. As in all prayer, the agreement must be in spirit and in truth. In such agreement, it will become clear to us what we are asking, whether we may confidently ask according to God's will, and whether we are ready to believe that we have received what we ask.

The second mark is the gathering in the name of Jesus. We will have more to learn of the need and the power of the name of Jesus in prayer; here our Lord teaches us that the name must be the center of union to which believers gather, the bond of union that makes them one, just as a home contains and unites all who are in it. *The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous shall run into it, and be raised up* (Proverbs 18:10). That name is such a reality to those who understand and believe it that to meet within it is to have Him present. The love and unity of His disciples have infinite attraction to Jesus: *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*. The living presence of Jesus in the fellowship of His loving, praying disciples gives united prayer its power.

The third mark is the sure answer: *It shall be done for them of my Father*. A prayer meeting for maintaining religious fellowship or seeking our own edification may have its use, but this was not the Savior's view of prayer. He meant it as a means of securing special answer to prayer. A prayer meeting without recognized answer to prayer should be an abnormality.

When any of us have distinct desires but feel too weak to exercise the necessary faith, we ought to seek strength in the help of others. In the unity of faith and of love and of the Spirit, the power of the name and the presence of Jesus act more freely, and the answer comes more surely. The evidence that there has been true united prayer is the fruit, the answer, the receiving of the thing we have asked: *I say unto you, . . . it shall be done for them of my Father who is in the heavens.*

What an unspeakable privilege this united prayer is, and what a power it might be. If the believing husband and wife knew that they were joined together in the name of Jesus to experience His presence and power in united prayer, their prayers would not be hindered (1 Peter 3:1-7). If friends recognized what mighty help two or three praying in concert could give each other, how much more would they pray. If there was in every prayer meeting the coming together in the name, with faith in the Presence, and the expectation of the answer, members would stand in the foreground. If united, effectual prayer in every church were regarded as one of the chief purposes for which they are banded together, it would become the highest exercise of their power as a church. If in the universal church, the coming of the kingdom and the coming of the King with the mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit and then in His own glorious person were really a matter of unceasing, united crying to God, would the church not raise its voice to the heavens? Oh, who can say what blessing might come to and through those who agreed to prove God in the fulfillment of His promise.

In the apostle Paul we see distinctly what a reality his faith in the power of united prayer was. To the Romans he wrote, *I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Spirit, that ye help me with prayers to God for me* (Romans 15:30). He expects to be delivered from his enemies and his work to prosper. To the Corinthians Paul wrote, *He [God] will yet deliver us; ye also helping us with prayer, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf* (2 Corinthians 1:10-11). Their prayer was to have a real share in

His deliverance. To the Ephesians he wrote, *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching in this with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints and for me, that utterance may be given unto me* (Ephesians 6:18-19).

He depended on their prayers for his power and for success in his ministry. With the Philippians he expected that his trials would turn to his salvation and the progress of the gospel *through your prayer and the nourishment of the Spirit of Jesus Christ* (Philippians 1:19). To the Colossians he added to the injunction to continue steadfast in prayer: *Praying also together for us that God would open unto us the door of the word* (Colossians 4:3). And to the Thessalonians he wrote, *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 perverse and wicked men* (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

It is evident everywhere that Paul felt he was a member of a body – a body on which he was dependent for sympathy and cooperation. He counted on the prayers of these churches to gain for himself what otherwise might not be given. To him the prayers of the church were as real a factor in the work of the kingdom as the power of God.

Who can say what power a church could develop and exercise if it gave itself to the work of prayer day and night for the coming of the kingdom, for God's power on His servants, and to His Word for the glorifying of God in the salvation of souls? Most churches think their members are gathered simply to take care of and build up each other. They don't know that God rules the world by the prayers of His saints, that prayer is the power by which Satan is conquered, or that by prayer the church on earth has disposal of the powers of the heavenly world. They don't remember that by His promise Jesus has consecrated every assembly in His name to be a gate of heaven where His presence is to be felt and His power experienced in the Father as He fulfills their desires.

We cannot sufficiently thank God for the blessed week of united prayer

with which Christendom opens every year. As proof of our unity and our faith in the power of united prayer, as a training school for the enlargement of our hearts to take in all the needs of the universal church, and as a help to united, persevering prayer, it is of unspeakable value. But specifically, its blessing has been great as a stimulus to continued prayer in the smaller circles. It will become even greater as God's people recognize what a blessing it is for all to meet as one in the name of Jesus, to have His presence in the midst of a body united in the Holy Spirit, and to boldly claim the promise that what they ask shall be done by the Father.

* * * *

Blessed Lord, You who asked so earnestly for the unity of Your people, teach us how You invite and urge us to this unity by Your precious promise given to united prayer. It is when we are one in love and desire that our faith has Your presence and the Father's answer.

Oh Father, we pray for Your people and for every small circle of those who meet together that they may be one. Remove, we pray, all selfishness and self-interest, all narrowness of heart and estrangement by which that unity is hindered. Cast out the spirit of the world and the flesh through which Your promise loses all its power. Oh, let the thought of Your presence and the Father's favor draw us all nearer to each other.

Blessed Lord, grant that Your church may believe that it is by the power of united prayer that she can bind and loose in heaven, that Satan can be cast out, that souls can be saved, that mountains can be removed, and that the kingdom can be hastened. Good Lord, grant also that in the circle with which I pray, the prayer of the church may indeed be the power through which Your name and Word are glorified. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Sixteenth Lesson

The Power of Persevering Prayer

And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that it behooves us always to pray and not faint. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him though he bears long regarding them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. – Luke 18:1, 6-8

Of all the mysteries in the prayer world, the need for persevering prayer is one of the greatest. That the Lord, who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be asked time after time, sometimes year after year, before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is also one of the greatest, practical difficulties in the exercise of believing prayer. When, after persevering petitions, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easy for our slothful flesh with the appearance of pious submission to think that we must cease praying because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request.

It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When our faith has taken its stand upon God's Word and the name of Jesus, and when it has yielded itself to the leading of the Spirit to seek God's will and honor alone in its prayer, we need not be discouraged by delay. We know from Scripture that the power of believing prayer is simply irresistible; real faith can never be disappointed. We know how faith, like water, can exercise the irresistible power it has and be gathered up and accumulated, until the stream can rush in full force; likewise, there must often be a heaping up of prayer, until God sees that the measure is full, and the answer comes.

Just as the plowman has to take ten thousand steps to sow ten thousand

seeds, each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so there is a need for repeated, persevering prayer to work out some desired blessing. Not a single believing prayer can fail in its effect in heaven but has influence and is treasured up to work out an answer in due time to him who perseveres to the end. The answer does not depend on human thoughts or possibilities but on the Word of the living God. Therefore, even as Abraham, *who believed to wait against all hope* (Romans 4:18), and *by faith and patience inherit[ed] the promises* (Hebrews 6:12), we see that the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation and hastening the coming of the Lord to fulfill His promise.

When the answer to our prayer does not come at once, we must try to understand the two words of our Lord to combine quiet patience and joyful confidence in our persevering prayer. He set forth the character and conduct not of the unjust judge but of our God and Father towards those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him: He is *patient with us* (2 Peter 3:9); *he will avenge them speedily* (Luke 18:8).

He will avenge them speedily, the Master says. The blessing is all prepared; He is not only willing but also most anxious to give them what they ask. Everlasting love burns with the longing desire to reveal itself fully to its beloved and to satisfy their needs. God will not delay one moment longer than is absolutely necessary; He will do all in His power to hasten and speed the answer.

If this is true and His power is infinite, why does it often take so long for the answer to prayer to come? And why must God's own elect often cry day and night in the midst of suffering and conflict? He is *patient with us*. *Behold, the husbandman waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently until it receives the early and latter rain* (James 5:7). The husbandman does indeed long for his harvest but knows that it must have its full time of sunshine and rain, and thus he has long patience. A child often wants to pick the half-ripe fruit; the husbandman knows to wait until the proper time. Man, in his spiritual nature too, is under the law of gradual

growth that reigns in all created life. Only in the path of development can he reach his divine destiny. Only the Father, in whose hands are the times and seasons, knows the moment when the soul or the church is ripened to that fullness of faith when it can take and keep the blessing. As a father who longs to have his only child home from school but waits patiently until the time of training is completed, so it is with God and His children: He is the longsuffering One who answers speedily.

The insight into this truth leads the believer to cultivate the corresponding dispositions: patience and faith, waiting and hastening – the secret of his perseverance. By faith in the promise of God, we know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him. Faith takes and holds the answer in the promise, as an unseen spiritual possession, rejoices in it, and praises God for it.

But there is a difference between the faith that holds the word and knows it has the answer, and the clearer, fuller, riper faith that obtains the promise as a present experience. It is in persevering, not unbelieving, but confident and praising prayer that the soul grows up into full union with the Lord where that faith can enter upon the possession of the blessing in Him. There may be things that have to be put right through our prayer with those around us, in the society of which we are part, or in God's government before the answer can fully come.

The faith that has believed according to the command that it has received can allow God to take His time. We know it has prevailed and must prevail. In quiet, persistent, and determined perseverance, we continue in prayer and thanksgiving until the blessing comes. In this way, we see combined what at first sight appeared so contradictory: the faith that rejoices in the answer of the unseen God as a present possession with the patience that cries day and night until it is revealed. The *speedily* of God's *longsuffering* is met by the triumphant but patient faith of His waiting child.

Our great danger in this school of delayed answer is the temptation to think that it may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer is

according to God's Word and under the leading of the Spirit, let's not surrender to these fears. Let's learn to give God time. God needs time with us. If we only give Him time in daily fellowship to exercise the full influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in the course of our waiting for faith to prove its reality and fill our whole being, He Himself will lead us from faith to vision. We shall see the glory of God.

Let no delay shake our faith. Of faith, it holds true that first comes the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each believing prayer brings us a step nearer the final victory. Each believing prayer helps to ripen the fruit and bring us nearer to it; it fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone. It conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens the end. Child of God, give the Father time. He is longsuffering for you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and full, and sure; give Him time while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.*

The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable. There is nothing as heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess and give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing – everything that may not be in accordance with the Father's will. It leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach us to pray, a more entire surrender to draw near with no covering but the blood and the Spirit. It calls for a closer and simpler abiding in Christ alone. Christian, give God time. As David said, *He will perfect that which concerns me* (Psalm 138:8). *Longsuffering* and *speedily* – these are God's watchwords as you enter the gates of prayer. Let them be yours too.

Let it be whether you pray for yourself or for others. All labor, bodily or mental, needs time and effort; we must give up ourselves to it. Nature discovers her secrets and yields her treasures only to diligent and thoughtful labor. However little we can understand it, in the spiritual husbandry it is the same. The seed we sow in the soil of heaven, the efforts we put forth, and the influence we seek to exert in the world above need our whole being.

We must give ourselves to prayer. But let's hold fast the great confidence that in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

And let's learn the lesson as we pray for the church of Christ. She is indeed like the poor widow in the absence of her Lord, apparently at the mercy of her adversary, and helpless to obtain redress. When we pray for His church or any portion of it, let's ask Him to visit her with the mighty workings of His Spirit and prepare her for His coming. Let's pray in the assured faith that prayer does help; praying always and not fainting will bring the answer. Only give God time. And then keep crying day and night. *Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him though he bears long regarding them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily* (Luke 18:6-8).

* * * *

Oh Lord, my God, teach me to know Your way and in faith to comprehend what Your beloved Son has taught: *He will avenge them speedily*. Let Your tender love and the delight You have in hearing and blessing Your children lead me implicitly to accept Your promise that we receive what we believe, that we have the petitions we ask, and that the answer will be seen in due time. Lord, we understand the seasons in nature and wait with patience for the fruit we long for. Oh, fill us with the assurance that not one moment longer than is needed will You delay, and faith will hasten the answer.

Blessed Master, You have said that it is a sign of God's elect that they cry day and night. Oh, teach us to understand this. You know how speedily we grow faint and weary. It is as if the divine Majesty is so much beyond the need or the reach of continued supplication that it does not become us to be too insistent.

Oh Lord, teach me how real the labor of prayer is. I know how I have failed in an undertaking, but I can often succeed by renewed and more continuing effort by giving more time and thought. Show me how I shall obtain what I ask by giving myself more entirely to prayer. And above all,

oh, my blessed Teacher, Author and Perfecter of faith, by Your grace let my whole life be one of faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me – in whom my prayer gains acceptance, in whom I have the assurance of the answer, and in whom the answer will be mine. Lord Jesus, in this faith I will pray always and not faint. Amen.

* * * *

Note

The need of persevering, insistent prayer appears to some to be at variance with the faith which knows that it has received what it asks (Mark 11:24). One of the mysteries of the divine life is the harmony between the gradual and the sudden, and between immediate, full possession and slow, imperfect appropriation. Persevering prayer appears to be the school in which the soul is strengthened for the boldness of faith. And with the diversity of operations of the Spirit, there may be some in whom faith takes more the form of persistent waiting, while to others triumphant thanksgiving appears to be the only proper expression of the assurance of having been heard.

In a very remarkable way, the need of persevering prayer and the gradual rising into greater ease in obtaining an answer is illustrated in the life of Blumhardt. Complaints had been lodged against him for neglecting his work as a minister of the gospel and devoting himself to the healing of the sick – especially in regard to his unauthorized healing of the sick belonging to other congregations. In his defense, he wrote:

I simply ventured to do what becomes one who has the charge of souls and to pray according to the command of the Lord in James 1:6-7. In no way did I trust to my own power or imagine that I had any gift that others had not. But this is true; I set myself to the work as a minister of the gospel, who has a right to pray. But I speedily discovered that the gates of heaven were not fully opened to me. Often, I was inclined to retire in despair. But the sight of the sick ones, who could find help nowhere, gave me no rest. I thought of the word of the Lord: *Ask, and it shall be given you* (Luke 11:9).

And further, I thought that if the church and her ministers had through unbelief, sloth, and disobedience lost what was needed for the overcoming of the power of Satan, it was for such times of leanness and famine that the Lord had spoken the parable of the friend at midnight and his three loaves. I felt that I was not worthy thus at midnight, in a time of great darkness, to appear before God as His friend and ask for what a member of my congregation needed. And yet, I could not leave him uncared for. So, I kept knocking, as the parable directs, or as some have said, with great presumption and tempting God. Be this as it may, I could not leave my guest unprovided for.

At this time, the parable of the widow became very precious to me. I saw that the church was the widow, and I was a minister of the church. I had the right to be her mouthpiece against the adversary, but for a long time, the Lord would not. I asked nothing more than the three loaves – what I needed for my guest. At last, the Lord listened to the insistent beggar and helped me. Was it wrong of me to pray like that? The two parables must surely be applicable somewhere, and where was greater need to be conceived?

And what was the fruit of my prayer? The friend who was at first unwilling did not say, “Go now; I will give to your friend what he needs. I do not require you.” But he gave it to me as His friend to give to my guest. And so, I used the three loaves and had some to spare. But the supply was small, and new guests came because they saw I had a heart to help them, and I would take the trouble even at midnight to go to my friend. When I asked for them too, I got what was needed again, and there was some to spare. How could I help that the needy continually came to my house? Was I to harden myself and say, “Why do you come to me? There are larger and better homes in the city; go there.”

Their answer was, “Dear sir, we cannot go there. We have been there, and they were very sorry to send us away so hungry, but they could not undertake to go and ask a friend for what we wanted. Do go and get us bread for we suffer great pain.”

What could I do? They spoke the truth, and their suffering touched my heart. However much labor it cost me, I went each time again and got the three loaves. Often, I got what I asked much quicker than the first time and also much more abundantly. But all did not care for this bread, so some left my home hungry.

In his first struggles with the evil spirits, it took him more than eighteen months of much prayer and labor before the final victory was gained. Afterwards, he had such ease of access to the throne and stood in such close communication with the unseen world that often, when letters came asking for prayer for sick people, after just looking upward for a single moment, he could obtain the answer as to whether they would be healed.

OceanofPDF.com

Seventeenth Lesson

Prayer in Harmony with God

Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always. – John 11:41-42

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. – John 10:27

In the New Testament, we find a distinction between faith and knowledge. *For to one is given by the Spirit a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-9).* In a child or a simple-minded Christian, there may be much faith with little knowledge. Childlike simplicity accepts the truth without difficulty and often cares little to give any reason for its faith except this: God has said. But the will of God is that we should love and serve Him not only with all the heart but also with all the mind – that we should grow up with an insight into the divine wisdom and beauty of all His ways and words and works. Only in this way can the believer fully approach and adore the glory of God's grace correctly. And only in this way can our heart intelligently comprehend the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in redemption and be prepared to enter into the highest note of the song that rises before the throne: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!* (Romans 11:33).

In our prayer life, this truth has its full application. While prayer and faith are so simple that the newborn convert can pray with power, true Christian science finds in the doctrine of prayer some of its deepest problems. How far-reaching is the power of prayer? How can God grant such mighty power to prayer? How can the action of prayer be harmonized with the will and

the decrees of God? How can God's sovereignty and our will, God's liberty and ours, be reconciled? These and other similar questions are fit subjects for Christian meditation and inquiry. The more earnestly and reverently we approach such mysteries, the more we will fall in adoring wonder to praise Him who has given such power to man.

One of the secret difficulties with regard to prayer – though not expressed that it often hinders prayer – is derived from the perfection of God in His absolute independence of all that is outside of Himself. Is He not the infinite Being who owes what He is to Himself alone, who determines Himself, and whose wise and holy will has determined all that is to be? How can prayer influence Him? How can He be moved by prayer to do what otherwise would not be done? Isn't the promise of an answer to prayer simply a condescension to our weakness? Is what is said of the power – the much-availing power – of prayer anything more than an accommodation to our thinking because the Deity can never be dependent on any action from outside? And isn't the blessing of prayer simply the influence it exercises upon us?

In seeking an answer to such questions, we find the key in the very being of God, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. If God was only one Person, shut up within Himself, there would be no thought of nearness to Him or influence on Him. But in God, there are three Persons: Father and Son with the Holy Spirit as their living bond of unity and fellowship. When the Father gave the Son a place next to Him, there was a way opened for prayer and its influence in the very inmost life of Deity itself. Just as on earth, so in heaven, the whole relationship between Father and Son is that of giving and receiving. If that receiving is to be as voluntary and self-determined as the giving, there must be an asking and receiving on the part of the Son. In the holy fellowship of the divine Persons, this asking of the Son was one of the great operations of the blessed life of God. Hence, we have it in Psalm 2:7-8: *This day I have begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee.* The

Father gave the Son the place and the power to act upon Him. Jesus said, *I knew that thou hearest me always* (John 11:42).

Just as the sonship of Jesus on earth may not be separated from His sonship in heaven, even so, His prayer on earth is the continuation and the counterpart of His asking in heaven. The prayer of the man Christ Jesus is the link between the eternal asking of the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father and the prayer of men upon earth. Prayer has its rise and its deepest source in the very being of God. In the bosom of Deity, nothing is ever done without prayer – the asking of the Son and the giving of the Father.

This may help us understand how the prayer of man, coming through the Son, can have an effect upon God. The decrees of God are not decisions made by Him without reference to the Son, His petition, or the petition sent through Him. By no means. The Lord Jesus is the first-begotten, the Head and heir of all things: *for by him were all things were created, that are in the heavens and that are in earth, . . . all things were created by him and in him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist* (Colossians 1:16-17). As representative of all creation, the Son always has a voice with the Father. In the decrees of the eternal purpose, there was always room left for the Son as Mediator and Intercessor for the petitions of all who draw near to the Father through the Son.

And if this liberty and power of the Son to act upon the Father seems to be at variance with the immutability of the divine decrees, remember there is not a past by which He is irrevocably bound. God does not live in time with its past and future; the distinctions of time have no reference to Him, for He inhabits eternity, and eternity is an ever-present “now” in which the past is never past, and the future is always present. To meet our human weakness, Scripture must speak of past decrees and a coming future. In reality, the immutability of God’s counsel⁴ is still in perfect harmony with His liberty to do whatever He wills. The prayers of the Son and His people weren’t included in the eternal decrees simply for show. Instead, the Father listens

with His heart to every prayer that rises through the Son. God does allow Himself to be influenced by prayer to do what He otherwise would not have done.

This perfect harmony and union of divine sovereignty and human liberty is to us an unfathomable mystery because God as the Eternal One transcends all our thoughts. But let it be our comfort and strength to be assured that in the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son, the power of prayer has its origin and certainty. God's decrees are no iron framework against which man's liberty would vainly struggle. No. God Himself is the living love, who in His Son as man has entered into the most tender relationship with all that is human. Through the Holy Spirit, He takes up all that is human into the divine life of love and keeps Himself free to give every human prayer its place in His government of the world.

In the light of such thoughts, the doctrine of the blessed Trinity is no longer an abstract speculation, but it is the living manifestation of the way in which it was possible for man to be taken up into the fellowship of God with his prayer becoming a real factor in God's rule of this earth. We can catch a glimpse of the light shining from the eternal world in words such as these: *Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father* (Ephesians 2:18).

* * * *

Everlasting God, in deep reverence and veiled face I worship before the holy mystery of Your divine Being. And if it pleases You, oh, most glorious God, to unveil any of that mystery, I would bow with fear and trembling lest I sin against You, as I meditate on Your glory.

Father, I thank You that You bear this name not only as the Father of Your children here on earth but also as having from eternity subsisted as the Father with Your only begotten Son. I thank You that as Father You can hear our prayer, because from eternity You have given a place in Your counsels to the asking of Your Son. I thank You that we have seen in Him on earth

what the blessed communication was that He had with You in heaven and how from eternity in all Your counsels and decrees there had been room left for His prayer and their answers. I thank You above all that through His true human nature on Your throne and through Your Holy Spirit in our human nature, a way has been opened up by which every human cry of need can be taken up into and touch the life and the love of God and receive in answer whatsoever it shall ask.

Blessed Jesus, in whom the path of prayer has been opened up, and who gives us assurance of the answer, we ask You to teach Your people to pray. Oh, let this be the sign of our sonship every day, that like You, we know that the Father hears us always. Amen.

* * * *

Note

God hears prayer. This simple view of prayer is found throughout Scripture. It doesn't dwell on the reflex influence of prayer on our heart and life, although it abundantly shows the connection between prayer as an act and prayer as a state. It rather fixes with great definiteness the objective or real purposes of prayer – to obtain blessing, gifts, and deliverances from God. *Ask, and it shall be given* is what Jesus said.

However true and valuable the reflection may be, God, foreseeing all things, has also foreseen our prayers as links in the chain of events, as cause and effect, and as a real power. Yet we feel convinced that this is not the light in which the mind can find peace in this great subject, nor do we think that here is the attractive power to draw us in prayer. We feel rather that such a reflection diverts the attention from the Object whence comes the impulse, life, and strength of prayer. The living God, *present* and not merely eternal, the living, merciful, Holy One, God manifesting Himself to the soul, God saying, *Seek my face* (Hosea 5:15) – this is the magnet that draws us; this alone can open heart and lips.

In Jesus Christ the Son of God, we have the full solution to the difficulty.

He prayed on earth not merely as man but also as the Son of God incarnate. His prayer on earth is only the manifestation of His prayer from all eternity, when in the divine counsel He was set up as the Christ. The Son was appointed to be heir of all things. From all eternity, the Son of God was the Way, the Mediator. To use our imperfect language, He was from eternity speaking unto the Father on behalf of the world.

– Adolph Saphir, *The Hidden Life*, chapter VI, p. 136.

⁴ See this thought developed in R. Lobber, *Die Lehre vom Gebet*.

Eighteenth Lesson

Prayer in Harmony with Man's Destiny

He said unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? –

Matthew 22:20

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. –

Genesis 1:26

W*hose is this image?* Jesus foiled His enemies and settled the matter of duty in regard to the tax when they tried to trap Him. The question and the principle it involves are of universal application, particularly to man himself. The image he bears decides his destiny. Bearing God's image, man belongs to God, and prayer is what he was created for. Prayer is part of the wondrous likeness he bears to His divine Creator. Prayer is the earthly likeness of the deep mystery of the fellowship of love in which the Trinity has His blessedness.

The more we meditate on what prayer is and the wonderful power with God that it has, the more we feel constrained to ask who and what man is that such a place in God's plan should have been allotted to him. Sin has so degraded him that, from what he is now, we can form no concept of what man was meant to be. We must turn back to God's own record of man's creation to discover what God's purpose was and what He provided man with for the fulfillment of that purpose.

Man's destiny appears from God's language at creation. It was to *fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over . . . every beast that moves upon the earth* (Genesis 1:28). All three expressions show us that man was meant to rule here on earth. As God's agent, he was to subject himself to God and keep all else in subjection to Him. It was the will of God that all

was to be done on earth through man: the history of the earth was to be entirely in his hands.

In accordance with such a destiny was the position he was to occupy and the power at his disposal. When an earthly sovereign sends an ambassador to a distant province, he still advises as to the policy to be adopted, and that advice is acted on. That ambassador is at liberty to apply for troops and other means necessary for carrying out the policy or maintaining the dignity of the empire. If his policy is not approved of, he is recalled to make way for someone who understands his sovereign's desires. As long as he is trusted, his advice is carried out.

As God's representative, man was to have ruled; all was to have been done under his will and rule. On his advice and at his request, heaven was to have bestowed its blessing on earth. His prayer was to have been the wonderful, though simple and most natural, channel in which the communication between the King in heaven and His faithful servant, as lord of this world, was to have been maintained. The destinies of the world were given into the power of the wishes, the will, and the prayer of man.

All of this underwent a terrible change when man sinned. His fall brought all creation under the curse. With redemption, however, the beginning of a glorious restoration was seen. No sooner had God begun to form a people in Abraham from whom kings, even the Great King, should come forth, than we see what power the prayer of God's faithful servant possesses to decide the destinies of those who come into contact with him. In Abraham, we see how prayer is not only the means of obtaining blessing for ourselves but also the exercise of his royal prerogative to influence the destinies of men and the will of God which rules them. We never find Abraham praying for himself. His prayer for Sodom and Lot, for Abimelech, and for Ishmael prove what power a man who is God's friend has to determine the history of those around him.

This had been man's destiny from the beginning. Scripture not only tells us this but also teaches us how God could entrust man with such a high

calling. It was because He had created him *in his own image and in his own likeness*. The external rule was not committed to him without the inner fitness; bearing God's image in having dominion and being lord of all had its root in the inner likeness – in his nature. There was an inner agreement and harmony between God and man, an incipient godlikeness, which made man fit for being the mediator between God and His world. Man was to be prophet and priest; he was to interpret God's will, represent nature's needs, and receive and dispense God's bounty.

In bearing God's image, man could bear God's rule; he was indeed so like God and so capable of entering into God's purposes and carrying out His plans that God could trust him with the wonderful privilege of asking and obtaining what the world might need. And although sin has for a time frustrated God's plans, prayer still remains what it would have been if man had never fallen – proof of man's godlikeness, the vehicle of his communication with the infinite, unseen One, and the power to hold the hand that holds the destinies of the universe. Prayer is not merely the cry of the petitioner for mercy, it is also the highest form of putting forth his will by man as he knows he is of divine origin and created for and capable of being the executor of the plans of the Eternal.

What sin destroyed, grace has restored. What the first Adam lost, the second Adam has won back. In Christ, man regains his original position, and the church, abiding in Christ, inherits the promise: *Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you* (John 15:7). Such a promise has reference to our position as the fruit-bearing branches of the heavenly Vine, who only live for the work and glory of the Father.

It is for those who abide in Him, who have forsaken self to take up their abode in Him with His life of obedience and self-sacrifice, who have lost their life and found it in Him, and are entirely given up to the interests of the Father and His kingdom. They understand how their new creation has brought them back to their original destiny and restored God's image and likeness with the power to have dominion. They have the power to obtain

and dispense the powers of heaven here on earth in their own circles. With holy boldness, they make known what they will; they live as priests in God's presence and are kings who have powers of the world to come.⁵ They enter upon the fulfillment of the promise: *Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Church of the living God, your calling is higher and holier than you know. Through your members, God desires to rule the world, and your prayers grant and withhold the blessings of heaven. In His elect who are not just content to be saved but yield themselves completely, the Father will fulfill all His glorious plans as He does through His Son. In His elect, who cry day and night unto Him, God wants to prove how wonderful man's original destiny was. Man was the image-bearer of God on earth, which was given into his hand.

When man fell, all fell with him; the whole creation groans and travails in pain together. But now he is redeemed; the restoration of the original dignity has begun. God's purpose is that the fulfillment of His eternal purpose and the coming of His kingdom should depend on those of His people who abide in Christ and are ready to take up their position in Him, their Head, the great Priest-King. In their prayers, they are bold enough to say what they want God to do. As image-bearer and representative of God on earth, redeemed man must determine the history of this earth. Man was created and has again been redeemed to pray and by his prayer to have dominion.

* * * *

Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou dost visit him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and beauty. Thou hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet . . . O LORD our Lord, how great is thy name in all the earth! (Psalm 8:4-6, 9)

Lord God, how low sin has made man sink. And how terribly has it darkened his mind that he does not even know his divine destiny – to be Your servant and representative. Even Your people, when their eyes are opened, are so little ready to accept their calling and seek to have power with God that they may have power with men to bless them.

Lord Jesus, it is in You that the Father has again crowned man with glory and honor and opened the way for us to be what He would have us be. Oh Lord, have mercy on Your people – Your heritage! Work mightily in Your church and teach Your believing disciples to go forth in the power of prayer to which You have given such wonderful promises – to serve Your kingdom, to have rule over the nations, and to make the name of God glorious in the earth. Amen.

5 Priesthood is the appointed link between heaven and earth, the channel of communication between the sinner and God. Such a priesthood is in the hands of the Son of God alone; insofar as it is to be the medium of communication between Creator and creature, it is also in the hands of redeemed men – the church of God.

God is seeking rulers (Luke 19:17), but not out of the ranks of angels. Fallen man must furnish Him with the rulers of His universe. Human hands must wield the scepter; human heads must wear the crown.

– *The Rent Veil*, by Dr. H. Bonar

OceanofPDF.com

Nineteenth Lesson

Power for Prayer and Work

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do. – John 14:12-13

As the Savior opened His public ministry with His disciples with the Sermon on the Mount, so He closed it with the parting address preserved for us by John. He spoke more than once of prayer in both of these but with a difference. In the Sermon on the Mount, He spoke to disciples who had just entered His school and barely knew that God was their Father; their prayer chiefly referenced their personal needs. In His closing address, He spoke to disciples whose training time had come to an end and who were ready as His messengers to take His place and His work.

In the first lesson, He told them to be childlike, pray believingly, and trust the Father that He would give them all good gifts. Here He pointed to something higher: they were now His friends to whom He had made known all that He had heard of the Father. His messengers had joined His plans, and the care of His work and kingdom on earth was to be entrusted to them. They were to go out and do His works, and in the power of His approaching exaltation, they would do even greater works. Prayer was to be the channel through which that power was to be received for their work. With Christ's ascension to the Father, a new epoch began for both their working and praying.

This connection comes out in our text from John. As His body here on earth, as those who were one with Him in heaven, they were to do greater

works than He had done. Their success and their victories were to be greater than His. He mentioned two reasons for this. One was that He was to go to the Father and receive all power; the other was that they could now ask and expect everything in His name.

Because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do. His going to the Father would bring the double blessing: they could ask and receive everything in His name, and as a consequence, they would do the greater works. This first mention of prayer in our Savior's parting words thus teaches us two important lessons. He that would do the works of Jesus must pray in His name. He that would pray in His name must work in His name.

He who would work must pray; in prayer, the power for work is obtained. He who in faith wants to do the works that Jesus did must pray in His name. As long as Jesus was here on earth, He did the greatest works; demons that the disciples could not cast out fled at His word. When He went to the Father, He was no longer here in the body to work directly. The disciples became His body; all His work from the throne in heaven had to be done through them. One might have thought that because He was leaving the scene and could only work through ambassadors, the works might be fewer and weaker. He assures us of the contrary: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do.*

His approaching death was to be an end of the power of sin. With the resurrection, the powers of the eternal life were to take possession of the human body and obtain supremacy over human life. With His ascension, He was to receive the power to communicate the Holy Spirit to His own. The union, the oneness between Himself on the throne and them on earth, was to be so intensely and divinely perfect that He meant it as the literal truth – *Greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father.*

And how true it was. During three years of personal labor on earth, Jesus gathered little more than five hundred disciples, and most of them were so

feeble that they were little credit to His cause, so it was given to men like Peter and Paul to do greater things than He had done. From the throne, He could do through them what He in His humiliation could not do.

But there was one condition: *He that believes in me, . . . greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.* Christ's going to the Father would give Him a new power to hear prayer. For the doing of the greater works, two things were needed: His going to the Father to receive all power, and our prayer in His name to receive all power from Him again. As He asks the Father, He receives and gives us the power of the new dispensation for the greater works. As we believe and ask in His name, the power comes and takes possession of us to do the greater works.

Sadly, there is little or nothing to be seen of the power to do anything like Christ's works, not to mention greater works. There can only be one reason for this: believing Him and believing prayer in His name are lacking. Every laborer and leader in church, school, home philanthropy, or foreign missions must learn this lesson: Prayer in the name of Jesus is the way to share in the mighty power that Jesus received from the Father for His people. In this power alone, he who believes can do the greater works.

Jesus gives an answer to every complaint of weakness, unfitness, difficulties, or lack of success: *He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go into the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.* We must understand that the first and chief thing for everyone who wants to do the work of Jesus is to believe and thereby be linked to Him, the Almighty One. Then one must pray the prayer of faith in His name. Without this, our work is human and carnal; it may have some use in restraining sin or preparing the way for blessing, but the real power is lacking. Effectual working needs effectual prayer.

The second lesson is that he who wants to pray must work. It is for power to work that prayer has such great promises. The power for the effectual

prayer of faith will be gained through working. In the parting words of our blessed Lord, we find that He repeats those prayer promises – that have often awakened our questions and curiosity – no fewer than six times (John 14:13-14; 15:7, 16; 16:23-24). How many believers have read *whatsoever, anything, what ye will, and ask, and ye shall receive* with joy and hope, and in deep earnestness of soul sought to plead these words for their own needs but have come out disappointed. The simple reason was that they had split the promise from its surroundings.

The Lord gave the wonderful promise of the free use of His name with the Father in connection with the doing of His works. The disciple who gives himself completely for Jesus' work and kingdom and for His will and honor will receive the power to appropriate the promise. He who would gladly grasp the promise when he wants something special for himself will be disappointed, because that would make Jesus the servant of his own comfort. But to him who seeks to pray the effectual prayer of faith, because he needs it for the work of the Master, will be given the power to learn it, because he has made himself the servant of his Lord's interests. Prayer not only teaches and strengthens us to work, but work also teaches and strengthens us to pray.

This is in perfect harmony in both the natural and the spiritual world. *Whosoever has, to him shall be given* (Matthew 13:12); *He that is faithful with little is faithful also with much* (Luke 16:10). With the small amount of grace we have already received, let us give ourselves to the Master for His work. That work will be to us a real school of prayer. When Moses had to take charge of a rebellious people, he felt the need, but also the courage, to speak boldly to God and ask great things of Him (Exodus 33:12, 15, 18). As we give ourselves entirely to God for His work, we will feel that nothing less than these great promises is what we need. Nothing less is what we may confidently expect.

Believer in Jesus, you are called and appointed to do the works of Jesus, and even greater works, because He has gone to the Father to receive the

power to do them in and through you. *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.* Give yourself and live to do the works of Christ, and you will learn how to obtain wonderful answers to prayer. Give yourself and live to pray, and you will learn how to do the works He did – and greater works. With disciples full of faith in Him and bold in prayer, Christ can conquer the world.

* * * *

Oh, my Lord, I have again heard words from You that surpass my comprehension. And yet I cannot do anything except to receive them as Your gift to me in simple, childlike faith. You have said that because of Your going to the Father, anyone who believes in You will do the works that You have done – and greater works. Lord, I worship You as the glorified One and look for the fulfillment of Your promise. May my whole life be one of continued believing in You. So, purify and sanctify my heart; make it so tenderly susceptible to You and Your love that believing in You will be its very life.

And You have said that because of Your going to the Father, whatsoever we ask, You will do. From Your throne of power, You want Your people to share the power given to You and work as the members of Your body in response to their believing prayers in Your name. Power in prayer with You and power in work with men is what You have promised Your people and me.

Blessed Lord, forgive us for not believing You and Your promise and not proving Your faithfulness. Oh, forgive us that we have so little honored Your all-prevailing name in heaven and upon earth.

Lord, teach me to pray so that I may prove that Your name is all prevailing with God and men and devils. Yes, teach me to work and pray, so that You can glorify Yourself in me as the Omnipotent One and do Your great works through me too. Amen.

Twentieth Lesson

The Chief End of Prayer

I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. –
John 14:12-13

That the Father may be glorified in the Son. This is why Jesus, on His throne in glory, will do all we ask in His name. Every answer to prayer that He gives will have this as its objective. When there is no potential for this objective, He will not answer. This must be the essential element in our petitions: the glory of the Father must be the purpose and end, the very soul and life of our prayer.

It was so with Jesus when He was on earth: *He that speaks of himself seeks his own glory, but he that seeks the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him* (John 7:18). In such words we have the keynote of His life. In the first words of the priestly prayer, He gave utterance to it: *Father, . . . clarify thy Son, that thy Son may also clarify [glorify] thee* (John 17:1). *I have clarified thee on earth; . . . clarify thou me with thine own self* (John 17:4-5). The basis on which He asks to be taken up into the glory He had with the Father is twofold: He has glorified Him on earth; He will still glorify Him in heaven. What He asks is only to enable Him to glorify the Father more.

As we enter into sympathy with Jesus on this point and glorify Him by making the Father's glory our chief objective in prayer, our prayer will not fail to receive an answer. The beloved Son has said there is nothing that will glorify the Father more distinctly than this – His doing what we ask. He will not, therefore, let any opportunity slip by without securing this objective.

Let us make His purpose ours; let the glory of the Father be the link between our asking and His doing. Such prayer must prevail.⁶

This word of Jesus comes as a sharp, *twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12). In His prayers on earth, in His intercession in heaven, and in His promise of an answer to us, Jesus makes this His first objective – the glory of His Father. Is it so with us also? Or are self-interest and self-will not the strongest motives urging us to pray? Or do we not see that we have not acknowledged that the distinct, conscious longing for the glory of the Father is not what energizes our prayers? And yet it must be so.

It is not that the believer doesn't desire it, but he must mourn that he has attained so little. Man knows the reason for his failure. It was because the separation between the spirit of daily life and the spirit of the hour of prayer was too wide. We begin to see that the desire for the glory of the Father is not something that we can awake and present to our Lord when we prepare ourselves to pray. No, it is only when the whole life in all its parts is given to God's glory that we can pray to His glory too. *Do everything for the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31), and *Ask all* for the glory of God. These twin commands are inseparable: obedience to the former is the secret of grace for the latter. A life to the glory of God is the condition of the prayers that Jesus can answer, *that the Father may be glorified*.

This demand in connection with prevailing prayer – that it should be to the glory of God – is no more than right and natural. There is none glorious but the Lord; there is no glory but His and what He gives His creatures. Creation exists to show His glory; all that is not for His glory is sin and darkness and death. Only in the glorifying of God can the creatures find glory. What the Son of Man did in completely giving Himself, His whole life, to glorify the Father is nothing but the simple duty of every redeemed person. Christ's reward will be his too. Because He gave Himself so entirely to the glory of the Father, the Father crowned Him with glory and

honor, giving the kingdom into His hands with the power to ask whatever He desired. As Intercessor, He will answer our prayers. And as we become one with Christ in this, and as our prayer is part of a life surrendered to God's glory, the Savior will be able to glorify the Father by the fulfillment of the promise: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.*

We cannot attain such a life with God's glory as our purpose by any effort of our own. Only in the man Christ Jesus can such a life be seen; in Him, it is found for us. Yes, blessed be God, His life is our life; He gave Himself for us; He is now our life. It is essential to discover, confess, and deny our self because self takes the place of God. Only the presence and rule of the Lord in our hearts can rid us of self-seeking and self-trusting. We cannot accomplish this in our own strength. The presence and rule of the Lord Jesus in our heart, who glorified the Father on earth and now is glorified with Him, can cast out our self-glorifying and give us His own God-glorifying life and Spirit. Jesus longs to glorify the Father by hearing our prayers, and He will teach us to live and pray to the glory of God.

And what motive, what power is there that can urge our lazy hearts to yield themselves to our Lord to work in us? Surely nothing more is needed than seeing how glorious the Father is. In adoring worship may we bow before Him to ascribe to Him alone the kingdom, the power, and the glory to yield ourselves to His light as the ever-blessed, ever-loving One. Surely, we shall be stirred to say, *To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory* (Jude 1:25). We shall look to our Lord Jesus with new intensity of desire for a life that refuses to see or seek anything but the glory of God. When there is little prayer that can be answered, the Father is not glorified. It is a duty for the glory of God to live and pray so that our prayer can be answered. For the sake of God's glory, let us learn to pray well.

What a humbling thought that so often there is earnest prayer for a child, a friend, our work, or associations in which the thought of our joy or our pleasure is far stronger than any yearnings for God's glory. No wonder there

are so many unanswered prayers; here we have the secret. God would not be glorified when that glory was not our objective. He who would pray the prayer of faith will have to give himself to live so that the Father may be glorified in all things. This must be his purpose; without this there cannot be the prayer of faith. *How can ye believe, said Jesus, who take glory one from another, and seek not the glory that comes only from God?* (John 5:44). All seeking of our own glory with men makes faith impossible; the deep, intense self-sacrifice is what gives up its own glory, seeks the glory of God alone, and awakens in the soul that spiritual sensitivity to the Divine One, which is faith. The surrender to God to seek His glory and the expectation that He will show His glory in hearing us are one at the heart; He who seeks God's glory will see it in the answer to his prayer.

How shall we reach this position? We must begin with confession. How little has the glory of God been an all-absorbing passion; how little are our lives and our prayers full of that passion. How little have we lived in the likeness of the Son and in sympathy with Him – for God and His glory. We must take time until the Holy Spirit reveals it to us, and we see how lacking we have been in this. True knowledge and confession of sin are the sure path to deliverance.

Then let us look to Jesus. In Him, we can see how death glorifies God. In death He glorified God; through death He was glorified with Him. It is by dying – being dead to self and living to God – that we can glorify Him. This death to self, this life to the glory of God, is what Jesus gives and lives in each one who can trust Him for it. Let the spirit of our daily lives make the decision to live only for the glory of the Father as Christ did, receive the acceptance of Him with His life and strength working in us, and secure the joyful assurance that we can live to the glory of God because Christ lives in us. Jesus provides certainty for our living in this way, and the Holy Spirit is given and waiting to make it our experience if we will trust and allow Him. Oh, let us not hold back in unbelief but confidently take as our watchword – *Everything for the glory of God* (1 Corinthians 10:31). The Father is pleased

with our obedience; the Holy Spirit will seal us within with the consciousness that we are living for God and His glory.

What quiet peace and power will be in our prayers when we know we are in perfect harmony with Him who promises to do what we ask, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son*. With our whole being yielded to the inspiration of the Word and Spirit, our desires will no longer be ours but His; their chief purpose will be the glory of God. With increasing liberty, we shall be able to say, “Father, You know we ask it only for Your glory.” And the condition for answers, instead of being as a mountain we cannot climb, will only give us greater confidence that we shall be heard, because we have seen that prayer has no higher beauty or blessedness than this – it glorifies the Father. And the precious privilege of prayer will become doubly precious because it brings us into perfect union with the beloved Son in the wonderful partnership He proposes: You ask, and I do, *that the Father may be glorified in the Son*.

* * * *

Blessed Lord Jesus, I come again to You. Every lesson You give me convinces me more deeply of how little I know how to pray correctly. But every lesson also inspires me with hope that You are going to teach me and that You are teaching me not only to know what prayer should be but also to actually pray as I should. Oh, my Lord, I look with courage to You, the Great Intercessor. You alone pray and hear prayer for the purpose of glorifying the Father. Teach me to live and pray to the glory of God.

Savior, to this end I yield myself to You again. I would be nothing. I have given myself as already crucified with You. Through the Spirit, the workings of self are mortified and made dead. Your life and Your love of the Father are taking possession of me. A new longing fills my soul that every day, every hour, and in every prayer, the glory of the Father may be everything to me. Oh, my Lord, I am in Your school to learn this: Teach it to me.

My God and Father of glory, accept the desire of a child who has seen that Your glory is worth living for. Oh Lord, show me Your glory. Let it overshadow me. Let it fill the temple of my heart. Let me dwell in it as revealed in Christ. Fulfill in me Your good pleasure, that Your child will find his glory in seeking the glory of his Father. Amen.

⁶ See in the note on George Müller, at the close of this volume, how he was led to make God's glory his first objective.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-First Lesson

If Ye Abide in Me

If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. – John 15:7

In God's communication with us, the promise and its conditions are inseparable. If we fulfill the conditions, He fulfills the promise. What He is to us depends upon what we are to Him. *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you* (James 4:8). So, in prayer, the unlimited promise, *ask what ye will*, has its one simple and natural condition: *If ye abide in me*. The Father always hears Christ; God is in Christ and can only be reached by those in Him. To be in Him is the way to have our prayer heard; abiding in Him, we have the right to ask whatsoever we will with the promise that it will be done unto us.

When we compare this promise with the experience of most believers, we are startled by a terrible discrepancy. Who can count the number of prayers that rise and bring no answer? The reason must be either that we do not fulfill the condition, or God does not fulfill the promise. Believers are not willing to admit either and, therefore, have devised a way of escape from the dilemma. They put into the promise the qualifying clause that our Savior did not put there – if it be God's will. In this way, they maintain both God's integrity and their own. Oh, if they could only accept it and hold it fast as it stands, trusting Christ to prove His truth. If only they could confess their failure in fulfilling the needed condition as one sufficient explanation for unanswered prayer. God's Spirit could then lead them to see how appropriate such a promise is to those who abide in Christ and believe He means it. The Holy Spirit could then make our weakness in prayer one

of the mightiest motives for us to discover the secret and obtain the blessing of fully abiding in Christ.

If ye abide in me. As a Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he is often surprised to find how the words of God grow in the new and deeper meaning with which they come to him. He can look back to the day when some word of God was opened up to him, and he rejoiced in the blessing he found in it. After a time, some deeper experience gave it a new meaning, and it was as if he had never seen what it contained. And yet, as he advanced in the Christian life, the same word stood before him again as a great mystery, until the Holy Spirit led him still deeper into its divine fullness. One of these ever-growing, never-exhausted words, opening up to us step by step the fullness of the divine life, is the Master's precious *Abide in me*. As the union of the branch with the vine is one of growth, never-ceasing growth with increase, so our abiding in Christ is a life process in which the divine life takes fuller and more complete possession of us. The young and weak believer may be abiding in Christ to a limited extent, but if he reaches onward to attain what the Master desired with full abiding, he will inherit all the promises connected with it.

In the growing life of abiding in Christ, the first stage is that of faith. As the believer sees that with his weakness, the command is really meant for him, his great aim is simply to believe that abiding in Christ is his immediate duty and a blessing within his reach. He is especially occupied with the love and power and faithfulness of the Savior; he feels his one need is to believe.

Before long, however, he sees that something more is needed. Obedience and faith must go together. Not as though he must add obedience to faith, but faith must be made manifest in obedience. Faith is obedience at home and looking to the Master; obedience is faith going out to do His will. He realizes he has been more occupied with the privilege and the blessings of this abiding than with its duties and its fruit. He has not noticed or tolerated much of self and of self-will; the peace that he could enjoy in believing

goes from him; it is in practical obedience that the abiding must be maintained.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love (John 15:10). As before, his great aim was through the *mind*, and the truth allowed the heart to rest on Christ and His promises. Now in this stage, his chief effort is to get his will united with the will of his Lord, so the heart and the life can be entirely under His rule.

And yet, something seems lacking. The will and the heart are on Christ's side; man obeys and loves his Lord. But why does the fleshly nature still have so much power? Why aren't the spontaneous motions and emotions of the inmost being what they should be? Why is there not much positive commission to condemn? Why is so much omitted of that beauty of holiness, zeal of love, and conformity to Jesus and His death? There must surely be something in our abiding in Christ and Christ in us that the believer has not yet experienced.

Faith and obedience are just the pathway of blessing. Before giving us the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus had distinctly told us what the full blessing is. Three times over He had said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*, and spoke of the threefold blessing with which He would crown such obedient love: The Holy Spirit would come from the Father; the Son would manifest Himself; the Father and the Son would come and make their abode.

As our faith grows into obedience, and in obedience and love our whole being goes out and clings to Christ, our inner life opens up. The capacity to receive the life and spirit of the glorified Jesus is formed within us as a distinct and conscious union with Christ and with the Father. We shall see the fulfillment of His promise: *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you* (John 14:20). As Christ is in God and God in Christ, not only in will and in love but also in identity of nature and life, they exist in each other. So we understand we are in Christ and Christ is in us in union not only of will and love but of life and nature too.

After Jesus had spoken of our knowing that He is in the Father and we are in Him and He in us, He said, “Abide in me, and I in you. As you abide in me, I also abide in you, even as I abide in the Father. So that your life is mine and mine is yours.” This is the true abiding, the occupying of the position in which Christ can come and abide; so, by abiding in Him the soul has come away from self to find that He has become our life. Like little children who have no cares, we find happiness in trusting and obeying the love that has done all for us.

To those who abide, the promise comes as their rightful heritage: Ask whatsoever ye will. It cannot be any other way. Christ has full possession of them. Christ dwells in their love, their will, and their life. Not only has their will been given up, but Christ has also entered and dwells and breathes in it by His Spirit. He whom the Father always hears prays in them; they pray in Him, and what they ask shall be done unto them.

Beloved believer, let us confess that it is because we do not abide in Christ as He would have us to, that the church is so impotent in the presence of infidelity and worldliness and heathendom where the Lord is able to make her more than conqueror. Let us believe that He means what He promises and accept the condemnation that confession implies.

But let us not be discouraged. The abiding of the branch in the Vine is a life of eternal growth. The abiding, as the Master meant it, is within our reach, for He lives to give it to us. Let us be ready to count all things loss and say, *Not as though I had already attained it, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if I may lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ, Jesus* (Philippians 3:12). Let us not be so preoccupied with the abiding, as with *Him* to whom the abiding links us and His fullness. Let it be Him, the whole Christ in His obedience and humiliation, in His exaltation and power, in whom our soul moves and acts. He Himself will fulfill His promise in us.

And then as we abide and grow into the full abiding, let us exercise our right – the will to enter into all of God’s will. Obeying what that will

commands, let us claim what it promises. Let us yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit to show each of us, according to his growth and measure, what the will of God is that we claim in prayer. And let us rest content with nothing less than the personal experience of what Jesus gave when He said, *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

* * * *

Beloved Lord, teach me to take this promise in all its simplicity and be sure that the only measure of Your holy giving is our holy willing. Lord, let each word of this promise be quick and powerful in my soul.

You say, *Abide in me!* Oh, my Master, my Life, my All, I do abide in You. Let me grow up into all Your fullness. You living in me as in the Father is all that can satisfy me – not the effort of faith that seeks to cling to You, the rest of faith that trusts You to keep me, or the obedience of the will that keeps the commandments. It is You, my Lord, no longer before me and above me but one with me and abiding in me that I need, and I seek. I trust You for this.

You say, *Ask what ye will!* Lord, I know that the life of full and deep abiding will renew, sanctify, and strengthen my will that I shall have the light and the liberty to ask great things. Lord, let my will that is dead in Your death and living in Your life be bold and large in its petitions.

You say, *It shall be done.* Oh, You who are the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, give me the joyous confidence that You will make this word more wonderfully true to me than ever, because it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). Amen.

* * * *

Note

On a thoughtful comparison of what we mostly find in books or sermons on prayer with the teaching of the Master, we shall find one great difference: the importance assigned to the answer to prayer is by no means the same. In the former, we find a great deal on the blessing of prayer as a spiritual exercise even if there is no answer, and the reasons why we should be content without an answer. In that view, God's fellowship should be more to us than the gift we ask; only His wisdom knows what is best, and He may give something better than what He withholds. Though this teaching looks very high and spiritual, it is remarkable that we don't find it in the Word.

The more carefully we gather all He said about prayer, the clearer it becomes that He wanted us to think of prayer simply as the means to an end. The answer was to be proof that we and our prayer are acceptable to the Father in heaven. It is not that Christ wants us to consider the gifts of higher value than the fellowship and favor of the Father. By no means. But the Father means the answer is the token of His favor and the reality of our fellowship with Him. As Joab said in 2 Samuel 14:22, *Today thy slave knows that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king has fulfilled the word of his slave.*

A life marked by daily answer to prayer is evidence of spiritual maturity. We have then attained to the true abiding in Christ, and our will is truly at one with God's will. Our faith has grown strong to see and take what God has prepared for us. The name of Christ and His nature have taken full possession of us, and we have been found fit to be among those whom God admits to His counsels and according to whose prayer He rules the world. These are the ones whose original dignity has been restored, and as they abide in Christ, the glory of His name is shown. Prayer is very blessed, and the answer is more blessed, as the response from the Father that our prayer, our faith, and our will are indeed as He would want them to be.

My desire with these remarks is to lead my readers to put together all that Christ has said on prayer and yield themselves to the full impression of the

truth that when prayer is what it should be, or rather, when we are what we should be – abiding in Christ – the answer must be expected. It will bring us out from that refuge where we have comforted ourselves with unanswered prayer. We will discover the place of power Christ has appointed for His church, where it occupies so little. It will reveal the terrible weakness of our spiritual life as the cause of our not knowing enough to pray boldly in Christ's name. It will urge us to rise to a life in the full union with Christ and in the fullness of the Spirit as the secret of effectual prayer. And it will lead us on to realize our destiny: *In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled* (John 16:23-24). Prayer that is spiritually in union with Jesus is always answered.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Second Lesson

The Word and Prayer

If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. – John 15:7

The vital connection between the Word and prayer is one of the simplest and earliest lessons of the Christian life. As that newly converted heathen put it: “I pray – I speak to my Father; I read – my Father speaks to me.” Before prayer, God’s Word prepares me by revealing what the Father has bid me ask. In prayer, God’s Word strengthens me by giving my faith its pledge and its plea. And after prayer, God’s Word brings me the answer, for in it the Spirit allows me to hear the Father’s voice.

Prayer is not monologue but dialogue; God’s voice in response to mine is its most essential part. Listening to God’s voice is the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine. *Bow down thine ear and hear* (Proverbs 22:17) and *Give ear to my words, . . . Hearken unto the voice of my cry* (Psalm 5:1-2) are words which God speaks to man as well as man to God. His hearkening will depend on ours; the entrance His words find with me will be the measure of the power of my words with Him. What God’s words are to me is the test of what He is to me and of the uprightness of my desire for Him in prayer.

This connection between His Word and our prayer is what Jesus pointed to when He said, *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 deep importance of this truth becomes clear if we notice the expression which this one replaces. More than once Jesus had said, *Abide in me, and I in you*. His abiding in us was the complement and the crown of our abiding in Him. But here, instead

of *Ye in me and I in you*, He said, *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you*. His words abiding are the equivalent of Him abiding.

What a view is opened up here to us of the place the Word of God in Christ is to have in our spiritual life and especially in our prayer life. A man reveals himself in his words. In his promises, he gives himself away; he binds himself to the one who receives his promise. In his commands, he sets forth his will and seeks to make himself master of him whose obedience he claims to guide and use him as if he were part of himself. Through our words, our spirit holds fellowship with spirit, that the spirit of one man passes over and transfers itself into another. Through the words of a man that are heard, accepted, held fast, and obeyed, he can impart himself to another. But this is in a relative and limited sense.

But when God, the infinite Being – in whom everything is life, power, spirit, and truth in the deepest meaning of the words – reveals Himself in His words, He does indeed give Himself, His love, His life, His will, and His power to those who receive these words and comprehend them. In every promise, God puts Himself in our power to receive and possess Him; in every command, He allows us to share His will, His holiness, and His perfection. In God's Word, God gives Himself to us; His Word is nothing less than the eternal Son, Christ Jesus. All Christ's words are God's words, full of a divinely quickening life and power. *The words that I have spoken unto you, they are Spirit and they are life* (John 6:63).

Those who study the deaf and mute tell us how much the power of speaking depends on that of hearing and how the loss of hearing in children is followed by loss of speaking too. This is true in a wider sense: As we hear, so we speak. This is also true in the highest sense in our communication with God. To offer a prayer – to give utterance to certain wishes and appeal to certain promises – is an easy thing and can be learned by human wisdom. But to pray in the Spirit – to speak words that reach and touch God and affect and influence the powers of the unseen world – depends entirely upon our hearing God's voice. We must listen to the voice

and language of God and receive His thoughts, His mind, and His life into our heart. Then we will learn to speak in the voice and the language that God hears. The ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning, prepares him to speak to God as well as to men (Isaiah 1:2-4).

Hearing the voice of God is more than the thoughtful study of the Word. There may be a study and knowledge of the Word where there is little real fellowship with the living God. But there is also a reading of the Word, in the very presence of the Father and under the leading of the Spirit, in which the Word comes to us in living power from God Himself. This is to us the very voice of the Father, a real, personal fellowship with Him. The living voice of God enters the heart, brings blessing and strength, and awakens the response of a living faith that reaches the heart of God.

The power to obey and believe depends on hearing God's voice. The chief thing isn't knowing what God has said we must do, but that God Himself says it to us. It is not the law, not the Book, and not the knowledge of what is right that works obedience, but the personal influence of God and His living fellowship. It is not even the knowledge of what God has promised, but it is the presence of God Himself as the Promiser that awakens faith and trust in prayer. Only in the full presence of God are disobedience and unbelief impossible.

If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. We see what this means. In these words the Savior gives Himself. We must have the words in us, taken up into our will and life, and reproduced in our disposition and conduct. We must have them abiding in us – our whole life as one continued exposition of the words that are within and fill us. These words reveal Christ within, and our life reveals Him without. As the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our life, and influence it, our words will enter His heart and influence Him. My prayer will depend on my life; my words will be to God and in God what His words are to me and in me. If I do what God says, God will do what I say.

How well the Old Testament saints understood this connection between God's words and ours, and how prayer with them was the loving response to what they had heard God speak! If the word was a promise, they expected God to do as He had spoken. *Do as thou hast said* (1 Chronicles 17:23); *according to thy word* (Psalm 119:28) – such expressions showed that what God spoke in promise was the root and the life of what they spoke in prayer. If the word was a command, they simply did as the Lord had spoken: *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken* (Genesis 12:4). Their life was fellowship with God, the interchange of word and thought. What God spoke, they heard and did; what they spoke, God heard and did. In each word that He speaks to us, the whole Christ gives Himself to fulfill it for us. For each word, He asks that we give the whole man to keep that word and receive its fulfillment.

If my words abide in you. The condition is simple and clear. His will is revealed in His words. As the words abide in me, His will rules me. My will becomes the empty vessel that His will fills, the willing instrument that His will uses. He fills my inner being. In the exercise of obedience and faith, my will becomes stronger; it is brought into deeper inner harmony with Him. He can fully trust it to will nothing but what He wills; He is not afraid to give the promise, *If . . . my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* To all who believe it and act upon it, He will make it true.

Disciples of Christ, isn't it becoming more clear that while we have been excusing our unanswered prayers and our ineffectiveness in prayer with a fancied submission to God's wisdom and will, the real reason has been that our own weak life has been the cause of our weak prayers? Nothing can make strong men except the Word coming to us from God's mouth. We must live by that. The Word of Christ – loved, lived in, abiding in us, and producing obedience and action – makes us one with Christ and fits us spiritually for touching God. All that is of the world passes away; he that does the will of God abides forever. Oh, let us yield heart and life to the

words of Christ, the words in which He gives Himself, the personal, living Savior, and His promise will be our rich experience: *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

* * * *

Blessed Lord, Your lesson has again revealed my folly. My prayer has not been more believing and prevailing. I was more occupied with my speaking to You than Your speaking to me. I did not understand that the secret of faith is that there can only be as much faith as there is of the living Word dwelling in the soul.

And Your Word taught me clearly: *Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak* (James 1:19); *Do not let thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God* (Ecclesiastes 5:2). Lord, teach me that it is only with Your Word taken into my life that my words can be taken into Your heart and Your Word; if it is a living power within me, it will be a living power with You. What Your mouth has spoken, Your hand will perform.

Lord, deliver me from the uncircumcised ear. Give me the opened ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning to hear the Father's voice. Even as You spoke what You heard, may my speaking be the echo of You speaking to me. *When Moses entered into the tabernacle of the testimony to speak with Him, then he heard the voice of the one speaking unto him from above the seat of reconciliation* (Numbers 7:89). Lord, may it be so with me too. Let a life and character bearing the one mark – that Your words abide and are seen in it – be the preparation for the full blessing: *Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Third Lesson

Obedience: The Path to Power in Prayer

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 whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you. – John 15:16

The effectual prayer of the righteous is very powerful. – James 5:16

The promise of the Father's giving whatever we ask is once again renewed here to show us to whom it is that such wonderful influence in the chamber of the Most High is to be granted. *I have chosen you*, the Master said, *and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*. Then He added, *that whatever ye [the fruit-bearing ones] shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you*. This is nothing but a more complete expression of what He had spoken earlier – *If ye abide in me*. He said the reason for this abiding was to bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. God was glorified in this, and the mark of discipleship was seen. Therefore, He now added that the abundant fruit of the abiding is the qualification for praying to obtain what we ask. Entire consecration to the fulfillment of our calling is the condition of effectual prayer and the key to the unlimited blessings of Christ's wonderful promises.

Some Christians fear that such a statement is at variance with the doctrine of free grace, but surely not of free grace understood correctly, nor with so many statements from God's blessed Word. Take the words of John: *Let us not love in word neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And in this we . . . have our hearts certified before him. And whatsoever we ask, we receive*

of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:18-19, 22). Or consider the often-quoted words of James: *The effectual prayer of the righteous is very powerful*, that is, the prayer of a man of whom it can be said, *he that does righteousness is righteous, even as he also is righteous* (1 John 3:7).

Note the confident appeal in many of the Psalms to the integrity and righteousness of the petitioner. In Psalm 18, David said, *The LORD will reward me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he shall recompense me. I was perfect before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness* (Psalm 18:20, 23-24).² If we carefully consider such utterances in light of the New Testament, we will find them in perfect harmony with the explicit teaching of the Savior's parting words: *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love* (John 15:10); *Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you* (John 15:14). The word is meant literally: *I . . . ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and . . . that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you* (John 15:16).

Let's seek to enter into the spirit of what the Savior taught us. There is a danger in our evangelical religion of looking too much at what prayer offers as an experience to be obtained in prayer and faith. The other side is that of obedience as the only path to blessing. According to God's Word, we need both. We need to realize that in our relationship with the infinite Being whom we call God, our Creator and Redeemer, the first sentiment that should energize us is that of subjection. We need to surrender to His supremacy, His glory, His will, and His pleasure; that should be the first and uppermost thought of our lives. The question is not how we are to obtain and enjoy His favor, for the main hindrance may still be self. But what God rightfully claims, and is infinitely and unspeakably worthy of, is that His glory and pleasure should be my one objective.

The beauty and charm of heaven is surrender to His perfect and blessed

will with a life of service and obedience. Service and obedience were the thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of the Son when He dwelt upon earth. Service and obedience must become our chief objective of desire and purpose; it is more than rest, or light, or joy, or strength. We shall find the path to all the higher blessedness that awaits us in service and obedience.

Just note what a prominent place the Master gave it in connection with the abiding, as He spoke of the indwelling of the Trinity. He said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments; and I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever* (John 14:15-16). Then He said, *He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me* (John 14:21). He shall have the special love of the Father resting on him with the special manifestation of Himself. Then He promised, *He who loves me will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and dwell with him* (John 14:23).

Could any words put it more clearly that obedience is the way to the indwelling of the Spirit, to His revealing the Son within us, and to His preparing us to be the home of the Father? The indwelling of the Trinity is the heritage of those who obey. Obedience and faith are only two aspects of one act – surrender to God and His will. As faith strengthens us for obedience, it is in turn strengthened by it. Faith is made perfect by works. However, often our efforts to believe have been nonproductive because we have not taken the only position in which a large faith is legitimate or possible – that of entire surrender to the honor and the will of God. The man who is entirely consecrated to God and His will, will find the power to claim everything that His God has promised for him.

The application of this in the school of prayer is very simple but very solemn. *I have chosen you*, the Master said, *and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit much fruit*, as in verses 5 and 8], *and that your fruit should remain*. In this way, your life might be one of abiding fruit and abiding fruitfulness, that as fruitful branches abiding in Him, *whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you*.

Oh, how often we have sought to be able to pray the effectual prayer for much grace to bear fruit and have wondered why the answer didn't come. It was because we were reversing the Master's order. We wanted to have the comfort and the joy and the strength first, so that we might do the work easily and without any feeling of difficulty or self-sacrifice. He wanted us to come in faith without asking whether we felt weak or strong, or whether the work was hard or easy, in obedience to do what He said. The path of fruit-bearing would have led us to the place and the power of prevailing prayer. Obedience is the only path that leads to the glory of God – not obedience instead of faith, nor obedience to supply the shortcomings of faith. No, faith's obedience gives access to all the blessings our God has for us. In the Gospel of John, we see the abiding of the Spirit (14:16), the manifestation of the Son (14:21), the love of the Father (14:23), the abiding in Christ's love (15:10), the privilege of His holy friendship (15:14), and the power of all-prevailing prayer (15:16) – all wait for the obedient.

Let's take home the lessons. Now we know why we have not had power in faith to pray successfully. Our life was not as it should have been; simple, downright obedience with abiding fruitfulness was not its chief direction. With our whole heart, we approve of the divine appointment of men to whom God gives power to rule the world, and at their request, He does what otherwise would not have taken place. He gives other men to guide the path where His will needs men who have learned obedience and whose loyalty and submission to authority is above all suspicion. If we approve the law that obedience and fruit-bearing are the path to prevailing prayer, we must acknowledge with shame how little our lives have demonstrated this.

Let's yield ourselves to take up the appointment the Savior gives us. Let's concentrate on His relationship to us as Master and no longer start each new day with thoughts of comfort, or joy, or blessing. Let the first thought be: I belong to the Master. Every moment and every movement I must act as His property, as a part of Him, and as one who only seeks to know and do His will. Let us be a servant, a slave of Jesus Christ. Let this be the spirit that

motivates me. If He says, *I do not call you slaves, . . . but I have called you friends*, let us accept the place of friends. *Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

The one thing He commands us as His branches is to bear fruit. Let's live to bless others and to testify of the life and the love there is in Jesus. In faith and obedience, let's give our whole life to that which Jesus chose us for and appointed us to – fruit-bearing. As we consider His electing us to this and take up our appointment from Him who always gives all He demands, we shall grow strong in the confidence that a life of fruit-bearing and abiding is within our reach. We will understand why this fruit-bearing alone can be the path to all prevailing prayer. The man in obedience to the Christ of God proves that he is doing what his Lord wills and will receive whatever he desires: *Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight* (1 John 3:22).

* * * *

Blessed Master, teach me to comprehend what I only partly realize – that it is only through the will of God, accepted and acted out in obedience to His commands, that we obtain the power to grasp His will in His promises and to appropriate them in our prayers. Teach me that it is through fruit-bearing that the deeper growth of the branch into the Vine can be perfected, and that we attain to that perfect oneness with You in which we ask whatsoever we will.

Oh Lord, reveal to us, we pray, how with all the hosts of heaven, with You the Son on earth, and with all the men of faith who have glorified You on earth, obedience to God is our highest privilege. It gives access to oneness with Him in that which is His highest glory – His all-perfect will. Reveal to us, we pray, how in keeping Your commandments and bearing fruit according to Your will, our spiritual nature will grow to the full stature of the perfect man with power to ask and receive whatsoever we will.

Oh, Lord Jesus, reveal Yourself to us and the reality of Your purpose and power to make these wonderful promises the daily experience of all who yield themselves to You and Your words. Amen.

Z See also Psalm 7:3-5; 15:1-2; 17:3, 6; 26:1-6; 119:121, 153.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Fourth Lesson

In My Name

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do. . . . If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it. – John 14:13-14

That whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it unto you. – John 15:16

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be fulfilled. – John 16:23-24

Previously, the disciples had not asked in the name of Christ, nor had He ever used the expression. The closest phrase was *gathered together in my name* (Matthew 18:20). In His parting words, however, He repeated words continually in connection with the promises of unlimited meaning – *Whatsoever, Any thing, What ye will* – to teach them and us that His name is our only, but also our all-sufficient, plea. The power of prayer and its answer depend on the right use of the name.

What is a person's name? It is that word or expression in which the person is called upon or represented to us. When I mention or hear a name, it reminds me of the whole man, what I know of him, and the impression he has made on me. The name of a king includes his honor, his power, and his kingdom. His name is the symbol of his power. And so, each name of God embodies and represents some part of the glory of the unseen One, and the name of Christ is the expression of all He has done and all He is and lives to do as our Mediator.

And what does it mean to do a thing in the name of another? It is to come

with the power and authority of that other as his representative and substitute. Use of another's name always assumes a common interest. No one would give another the free use of his name without first being assured that his honor and interest were as safe with that other person as with himself.

And what is it when Jesus gives us power over His name, the free use of it, with the assurance that whatever we ask in it will be given to us? The ordinary comparison of one person giving another the liberty to ask something in his name comes altogether short here – Jesus solemnly gives to all His disciples a general and unlimited power of the free use of His name at all times for all they desire. He could not do this if He did not know that He could trust us with His interests and that His honor would be safe in our hands.

The free use of the name of another is always the token of great confidence and close union. He who gives his name to another stands aside to let that person act for him; he who takes the name of another gives up his own name as of no value. When I go in the name of another, I deny myself; I take not only his name but also who and what he is, instead of myself and what I am.

Such a use of the name of a person may have the authority of a legal union. A merchant leaving his home and business gives his chief clerk general power by which he can draw thousands of pounds in the merchant's name. The clerk does this not for himself but only in the interests of the business. Because the merchant knows and trusts him as devoted to his interests and business, he can dare to put his name and property in the clerk's power.

When the Lord Jesus went to heaven, He left His work, the management of His kingdom on earth, in the hands of His servants. Therefore, He also gave them His name to draw all the supplies they needed to conduct His business. They had the spiritual power to avail themselves of the name of Jesus to the extent that they yielded to the interests and the work of the

Master. The use of the name always requires the surrender of our interests to Him whom we represent.

Such a use of the name may also be in agreement with a life union. In the case of the merchant and his clerk, the union is temporary, but we know how oneness of life on earth gives oneness of name. A child has the father's name because he has his life. Often the child of a good father has been honored or helped by others for the sake of his father's name. But this would not last long if it were found that it was only a name and that the father's character was deficient. The name and the character or spirit must be in harmony. When this is the case, the child will have a double claim on the father's friends. The character secures and increases the love and esteem rendered first for the name's sake. It is the same with Jesus and the believer: we are one; we have one life – one Spirit with Him. For this reason, we may come in His name. Our power in using that name, whether with God, men, or devils, depends on the measure of our spiritual life-union. The use of the name rests on the unity of life; the name and the Spirit of Jesus are one.⁸

He that believes in me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it. And I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth. (John 14:12-14, 16-17)

Or, the union that empowers the use of the name may be the union of love. When a bride, whose life has been one of poverty, becomes united to the bridegroom, she gives up her own name, to be called by his; she receives the full right to use it. She purchases in his name, and that name is not refused. This is done because the bridegroom has chosen her for himself and depends on her to care for his interests; they are now one.

The heavenly Bridegroom can do nothing less; having loved us and made us one with Himself, what could He do except give those who bear His

name the right to present it before the Father or come with it to Himself for all they need. No one who gives himself to live in the name of Jesus does not receive an increasing measure of the spiritual capacity to ask and receive in that name whatever he will.

If I bear the name of another, I have given up my own name and my own independent life. Then I will certainly possess all there is in the name I have taken instead of my own.

Such illustrations show us how defective the common view is of a messenger sent to ask in the name of another or a guilty one appealing to the name of a guarantor. No, Jesus Himself is with the Father; we do not come in the name of an absent one. When we pray, we must pray in His name. The name represents the person; to ask in the name is to ask in full union of interest and life and love with Him as one who lives in and for Him. Let only the name of Jesus have undivided supremacy in our heart and life.

My faith will grow to the assurance that what I ask in that name cannot be refused. The name and the power of asking go together: when the name of Jesus has become the power that rules my life, its power in prayer with God will be seen too.

Everything depends on our own relationship to the name: the power it has on my life is the power it will have in my prayers. There is more than one expression in Scripture which can make this clear to us. When it says, *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus* (Colossians 3:17), we see how this is the counterpart of the other, *Ask all*. To do all and to ask all in His name go together. When we read, *We will walk in the name of the LORD our God* (Micah 4:5), we see how the power of the name must rule in our whole life. Only then will it have power in prayer. It is not to the lips but to the life that God looks for what the name is to us. When Scripture speaks of men who have given their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus or of one ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus, we see what our relationship to the name

must be. When it is everything to me, it will obtain everything for me. If I let it have all I have, it will let me have all it has.

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do. Jesus means this promise literally. Christians have sought to limit it because it looked too free. It was hardly safe to trust man so unconditionally. We did not understand that the words *in my name* are its own safeguard. It is a spiritual power that no one can use beyond what his living and acting in that name allows. As we bear that name before men, we have power to use it before God.

Oh, let's plead for God's Holy Spirit to show us what the name means and the right use of it. It is through the Spirit that the name, which is above every name in heaven, will take the place of supremacy in our hearts and lives too.

Disciples of Jesus, let these lessons enter deep into your hearts. The Master instructed to pray in His name: *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, that will I do.* Heaven is set open to you; the treasures and powers of the world of spirit are placed at your disposal on behalf of men around you.

Oh, come and let us learn to pray in the name of Jesus. As to the disciples, He says to us, *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive* (John 16:24). Let each disciple of Jesus seek to avail himself of the rights of his royal priesthood and use the power placed at his disposal for his social contacts and his work. Let Christians awake and hear the message: your prayer can obtain what otherwise will be withheld; it can accomplish what otherwise remains undone. Oh, awake and use the name of Jesus to open the treasures of heaven for this perishing world. Learn as the servants of the King to use His name: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do.*

* * * *

Blessed Lord, each lesson You give me has such fullness and depths of meaning that if I can only learn that one, I will know how to pray correctly.

Today I feel as if I needed just one prayer every day: Lord, teach me what it is to pray in Your name. Teach me to live and act, to walk and speak, to do all in the name of Jesus – that my prayer cannot be anything else but in that blessed name too.

And teach me, Lord, to hold fast the precious promise that whatsoever we ask in Your name, You will do, and the Father will give. Though I do not fully understand and have attained even less what You mean with this wonderful union when You say, *in my name*, I still hold fast the promise until it fills my heart with the undoubting assurance: anything in the name of Jesus.

Oh, my Lord, let Your Holy Spirit teach me this. You said, *The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name* – He knows what it is to be sent from heaven in Your name to reveal and to honor the power of that name in Your servants and use that name alone to glorify You.

Lord Jesus, let Your Spirit dwell in me and fill me. I would, I do, yield my whole being to His rule and leading. Your name and Your Spirit are one; through Him Your name will be the strength of my life and my prayer. Then I will be able to forsake all for Your name's sake and in Your name speak to men and to God to prove that this is indeed the name above every name.

Lord Jesus, teach me by Your Holy Spirit to pray in Your name. Amen.

* * * *

Note

What is meant by praying in Christ's name? It cannot mean simply appearing before God with faith in the mediation of the Savior. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He supplied them with petitions. Afterwards, Jesus said to them, *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name*. Until the Spirit came, the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer lay almost dormant within them. When Christ descended into their hearts by the Holy Spirit, they desired the blessings that Christ obtains for us by His prayer as our High Priest before the Father. Such petitions are always

answered. The Father is always willing to give what Christ asks. The Spirit of Christ always teaches and influences us to offer the petitions that Christ confirms and presents to the Father.

To pray in Christ's name is therefore to identify with Christ as to our righteousness and to be identified with Christ in our desires by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. To pray in the Spirit, to pray according to the will of the Father, or to pray in Christ's name are identical expressions. The Father loves us and is willing to hear us. Two intercessors, Christ the Advocate above and the Holy Spirit the Advocate within, are the gifts of His love.

This view may appear less consoling at first than a more prevalent one, which refers prayer in Christ's name chiefly to our trust in Christ's merit. The defect of this opinion is that it does not combine the intercession of the Savior with the will of the Father and the indwelling Spirit's aid in prayer. Neither does it fully realize the mediation of Christ. The mediation consists not only in that the Father is able to regard me and my prayer for Christ's sake but also in that Christ Himself presents my petitions as His petitions, desired by Him for me – even as all blessings are purchased for me by His precious blood.

In all prayer, the one essential condition is that we are able to pray in the name of Jesus according to His desire for us, according to the Father's will, and according to the Spirit's teaching. And thus, praying in Christ's name is impossible without self-examination, reflection, and self-denial – in short, without the aid of the Spirit.

– Adolph Saphir⁹

⁸ "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name," that is, in my nature; for things with God are called according to their nature. We ask in Christ's name, not when at the end of some request we say, "This I ask in the name of Jesus Christ," but when we pray according to His nature, which is love, which seeketh not its own, but only the will of God and the good of all creatures. Such asking is the cry of His own Spirit in our hearts. – Andrew Jukes

⁹ Adolph Saphir, *The Lord's Prayer*, 1872, pp. 410-412.

Twenty-Fifth Lesson

The Holy Spirit and Prayer

In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give you. Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled. In that day ye shall ask in my name, and I do not say unto you that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you. – John 16:23-24, 26-27

Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God. – Jude 1:20-21

The words of John to little children, to young men, and to fathers suggest the thought that often there are three great stages of experience in the Christian life:

I write unto you, little children, that your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, that ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, that ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, that ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, that ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, that ye are strong and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. (1 John 2:12-14)

The first stage is that of the newborn child with the assurance and the joy of forgiveness. The second is the transition stage of struggle and growth in knowledge and strength: young men growing strong as God's Word does its work in them and gives them victory over the Evil One. And then the final

stage of maturity and ripeness is the fathers, who have entered deeply into the knowledge and fellowship of the Eternal One.

In Christ's teaching on prayer, there appear to be three stages in the prayer life which are somewhat analogous. In the Sermon on the Mount, we have the initial stage: His teaching is all comprised in one word – *Father*. Pray to your Father; your Father sees, hears, knows, and will reward much more than any earthly father. But we must be childlike and trustful.

Later comes something like the transition stage of conflict and conquest in words like these: *This lineage of demons does not go out but by prayer and fasting* (Matthew 17:21) and *shall not God avenge his own elect who cry day and night unto him?* (Luke 18:7).

Then we have a higher stage in the parting words. The children have become men. They are now the Master's friends from whom He keeps no secrets and to whom He says, *All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you* (John 15:15). In the frequently repeated or similarly phrased *whatsoever ye will*, He hands over the keys of the kingdom. Now the time has come for the power of prayer in His name to be proved.

The contrast between this final stage and the previous preparatory ones our Savior marks most distinctly in these words: *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name* and *In that day*. We know what *in that day* means. It is the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The great work that Christ was to do on the cross – the mighty power and the complete victory manifested in His resurrection and ascension – was to issue in the coming from heaven of the glory of God to dwell in men. The Spirit of the glorified Jesus was to come and be the life of His disciples. And one of the marks of that wonderful dispensation of the Spirit was to be a power in prayer unknown until this time. Prayer in the name of Jesus, asking and obtaining whatever they needed, demonstrates the reality of the Spirit's indwelling.

To understand how the coming of the Holy Spirit was to begin a new age in the prayer world, we must remember who He is, what His work is, and

why it is significant that He was not given until Jesus was glorified. It is in the Spirit that God exists, for He is Spirit. It is in the Spirit that the Son was begotten of the Father. Father and the Son are one in the Spirit. The eternal giving to the Son is the Father's prerogative, and the eternal asking and receiving is the Son's right and blessedness. It is in the Spirit that this communion of life and love is maintained.

This has been true from all eternity but is especially true now, when the Son as Mediator lives to pray. The great work of reconciling God and man in His own body that Jesus began on earth He carries on in heaven. To accomplish this, He took up the conflict between God's righteousness and our sin in His own person. On the cross, He once for all ended the struggle in His own body. Then He ascended to heaven that He might carry out the deliverance and manifest the victory He had obtained. This is why He lives to pray. In His unceasing intercession, He places Himself in living fellowship with the unceasing prayer of His redeemed ones. Or rather, it is His unceasing intercession that shows itself in their prayers and gives them a power they never had before.

Jesus does this through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of the glorified Jesus was not and could not be manifested until Jesus had been glorified. This gift of the Father was something distinctively new – entirely different from what Old Testament saints had known. The work that the blood accomplished in heaven when Christ entered within the veil was so true and new that the redemption of our human nature into fellowship with His resurrection power and His exalted glory was intensely real. The taking up of our humanity in Christ into the life of the Trinity was an event of such inconceivable significance that the Holy Spirit, who had to come from Christ's exalted humanity to testify in our hearts of what Christ had accomplished, was indeed no longer restricted to what He had been in the Old Testament.

It was literally true, *for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified* (John 7:39). He came now as the Holy Spirit. Even as

the Son, who was God from eternity, He had entered upon a new existence as man and returned to heaven with what He didn't have before. He received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father (Acts 2:33) – a promise to come to us with a new life that He had not previously communicated. Under the Old Testament, He was invoked as the Spirit of God; at Pentecost, He descended as the Holy Spirit, bringing down and communicating to us the full fruit and power of the accomplished redemption.

With the intercession of Christ, the continued effectiveness and application of His redemption is maintained. Through the Holy Spirit descending from Christ to us, we are drawn into the great stream of His eternal prayers. The Spirit prays for us without words; in the depths of a heart where thoughts are sometimes formless, the Spirit takes us into the wonderful flow of the life of the Three-in-One God. Through the Spirit, Christ's prayers become ours, and ours are made His. We ask what we will, and it is given to us. We then understand from experience, *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; . . . In that day ye shall ask in my name* (John 16:24, 26).

Brothers and sisters, what we need to pray in the name of Christ and ask that we may receive so our joy may be full is the baptism of this Holy Spirit. This is more than the Spirit of God under the Old Testament. This is more than the Spirit of conversion and regeneration that the disciples had before Pentecost. This is more than the Spirit with a measure of His influence and working. This is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God sent by the glorified Jesus in His exalted power, coming on us as the Holy Spirit who reveals the Son and the Father to us (John 14:16-23).

When this Spirit is the Spirit not of our hours of prayer but of our whole life and walk, when this Spirit glorifies Jesus in us by revealing the completeness of His work and making us wholly one with Him and like Him, we can pray in His name, because we are indeed one with Him. At that time, we have immediate access to the Father, of which Jesus says, *I do*

*not say unto you that I will ask the Father for you (John 16:26). Oh, we need to understand and believe that to be filled with the Spirit of God is the one need of God's believing people. Then shall we realize what Scripture means when it says, *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:18) and *praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God* (Jude 1:20-21). *In that day ye shall ask in my name.**

Once again the lesson comes: What our prayer accomplishes depends upon what we are and what our life is. Living in the name of Christ is the secret of praying in the name of Christ; living in the Spirit fits us for praying in the Spirit. Abiding in Christ gives us the right and power to ask what we will. The extent of the abiding is the exact measure of the power in prayer. The Spirit who dwells within us prays – not always in words and thoughts but in a breathing that is deeper than utterance. As much as there is of the Holy Spirit in us is there real prayer. Our lives, our lives, oh, let our lives be full of Christ and full of His Spirit, and the unlimited promises to our prayers will no longer appear strange. *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled. In that day ye shall ask in my name* (John 16:24, 26). *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you* (John 16:23).

* * * *

Oh, my God, in holy awe I bow before You, the Three-in-One. Again, I have seen how the mystery of prayer is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. I adore the Father who always hears, the Son who always lives to pray, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son to lift us up into the fellowship of that blessed, eternal asking and receiving. I bow, my God, in adoring worship and humility through the Holy Spirit who takes us and our prayers into the divine life and its fellowship of love.

Oh, my blessed Lord Jesus, teach me to understand Your lesson that it is the indwelling Spirit, streaming from You and uniting to You who is the Spirit of prayer. Teach me what it is as an empty, consecrated vessel to yield

myself to His being my life. Teach me to honor and trust Him as a living Person to lead my life and my prayer. Teach me especially in prayer to wait in holy silence and give Him place to breathe His unutterable intercession within me. And teach me that through Him it is possible to pray without ceasing and without failing, because He makes me a partaker of the never-ceasing and never-failing intercession in which You appear before the Father. Yes, Lord, fulfill in me Your promise – *In that day ye shall ask in my name. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you.* Amen.

* * * *

Note

Prayer has often been compared to breathing: we only have to carry out the comparison fully to see how wonderful the place is that the Holy Spirit occupies. With every breath, we expel the impure air, which would soon cause our death, and then inhale the fresh air to which we owe our life. So, in confession we give out the sins and in prayer the needs and desires of our heart. In drawing our breath again, we inhale the fresh air of the promises and the love and the life of God in Christ. We do this through the Holy Spirit who is the breath of our life.

And this is because He is the breath of God. The Father breathes Him into us to unite Himself with our life. And then, just as on every expiration there follows again the inhaling of the breath, so God draws in His breath, and the Spirit returns to Him laden with the desires and needs of our hearts. And thus, the Holy Spirit is the breath of the life of God and the breath of the new life in us. As the Spirit of God, in whom the Father and the Son are one, and the intercession of the Son reaches the Father, He is to us the Spirit of prayer. True prayer is the living experience of the truth of the Holy Trinity. The Spirit's breathing, the Son's intercession, the Father's will – these three become one in us.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Sixth Lesson

Christ the Intercessor

But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. – Luke 22:32

I do not say unto you that I will ask the Father for you. – John 16:26

He ever lives to make intercession. – Hebrews 7:25

All growth in the spiritual life is connected to clearer insight into what Jesus is to us. The more I realize that Christ must be all to me and in me and that all in Christ is indeed for me, the more I learn to live the real life of faith – dying to self to live in Christ. The Christian life is no longer the vain struggle to live right, but it is the resting in Christ and finding strength in Him as our life to fight the fight and gain the victory of faith.

This is especially true of the life of prayer. As it comes under the law of faith alone and is seen in the light of the fullness and completeness in Jesus, the believer understands that prayer need no longer be a matter of anxious care but an experience of what Christ will do for him and in him. This experience is a participation in the life of Christ, which is the same on earth as in heaven, always ascending to the Father as prayer. And the believer begins to pray. He trusts not only in the merits of Jesus or His intercession, by which our unworthy prayers are made acceptable, but also in that near and close union through which He prays in us and we in Him.¹⁰ The whole of salvation is Christ Himself: He has given Himself to us; He lives in us. Because He prays, we pray too. As when the disciples saw Jesus pray they asked Him to make them partakers of what He knew of prayer, so we now see Him as Intercessor on the throne and know that He makes us participate with Him in the life of prayer.

This comes out clearly in the last night of His life. In His high-priestly

prayer (John 17), He shows us how and what He prays to the Father and will pray when He ascends to heaven. In His parting address, He repeatedly connected His going to the Father with the disciples' new life of prayer. The two would be ultimately connected: His entrance into the work of His eternal intercession would be the commencement and the power of their new prayer – life in His name. It is the sight of Jesus in His intercession that gives us power to pray in His name. All right and power of prayer is Christ's; He makes us share in His intercession.

To understand this, think first of His intercession. He lives to make intercession. The work of Christ on earth as High Priest was only a beginning. As Aaron offered sacrifices, Jesus shed His blood. As Melchizedek, He now lives within the veil to continue His work for the power of the eternal life. As Melchizedek is more glorious than Aaron, so in the work of intercession, the atonement has its true power and glory. *Christ, Jesus, is he who died and, even more, he that also rose again, who furthermore is at the right hand of God, who also makes entreaty for us* (Romans 8:34). That intercession is an intense reality – a work that is absolutely necessary – without which the continued application of redemption cannot take place.

In the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, the wondrous reconciliation took place by which man became a partaker of the divine life and blessedness. But the real personal appropriation of this reconciliation in each of His members cannot take place without the unceasing exercise of His divine power by the Head in heaven. In all conversion and sanctification, in every victory over sin and the world, there is a real effort of the power of Him who is mighty to save. And this exercise of His power only takes place through His prayer; He asks of the Father and receives from the Father. *He is able also to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them* (Hebrews 7:25). There is not a need of His people that He does not receive and intercede for what the godhead has to give. His mediation on the throne

is as real and indispensable as on the cross. Nothing takes place without His intercession: it engages His time and powers and is His unceasing occupation at the right hand of the Father.

And we participate not only in the benefits of His work but also in the work itself. This is because we are His body. Body and members are one: *The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you* (1 Corinthians 12:21). We share with Jesus in all He is and has: *The clarity which thou gavest me I have given them* (John 17:22). We are partakers of His life, His righteousness, and His work. We share with Him in His intercession too; it is not a work He does without us.

We do this because we are partakers of His life: *Christ, who is our life* (Colossians 3:4). *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ lives in me* (Galatians 2:20). The life in Him and in us is identical, one and the same. His life in heaven is an ever-praying life. When His life descends and dwells in us, it does not lose its character. In us too it is the ever-praying life – a life that asks and receives from God without ceasing. And this is not as if there were two separate currents of prayer rising upwards – one from Him and one from His people. No, but the substantial life-union is also prayer-union. What He prays passes through us; what we pray passes through Him. He is the angel with the golden censer: *There was given unto him much incense of the prayers of all the saints, the secret of acceptable prayer, that he should offer upon the golden altar* (Revelation 8:3). We live and we abide in Him, the interceding One.

The Only Begotten is the only one who has the right to pray, but we can *come boldly unto the throne of his grace* because the Son has become our High Priest (Hebrews 4:16). As in all other things, the fullness dwells in Him, so the true-prayer fullness does too. He alone has the power of prayer; we have power in prayer through Him. *The effectual prayer of the righteous is very powerful* (James 5:16). *For he has made him to be sin for us, who*

knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Growth in the spiritual life consists of a deeper belief that all the treasures are in Him, and that we are also in Him. Each moment we receive what we possess in Him – grace for grace; prayer life is the same. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).* Our faith in the intercession of Jesus must not only be that He prays in our stead, when we do not or cannot pray, but as the Author of our life and our faith, He also draws us to pray in unison with Himself. Our prayer must be a work of faith in the sense that as we know that Jesus communicates His whole life in us, He also breathes into us our praying.

To many a believer, it was a new era in his spiritual life when it was revealed to him how truly and entirely Christ was his life, securing his faithfulness and obedience. It was then that he began to live a life of faith. No less blessed will be the discovery that Christ is the guarantee for our prayer life too. As the center and embodiment of all prayer, it is communicated by Him through the Holy Spirit to His people. *He ever lives to make intercession* as the Head of the body and the Leader in the new and living way that He has opened up as the Author and the Perfecter of our faith. He provides everything for the life of His redeemed ones by giving His own life in them; He cares for their life of prayer by taking them into His heavenly prayer life by giving and maintaining His prayer life within them. *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not (Luke 22:32).* Our faith and prayer of faith is rooted in His. *If ye abide in me, the eternal Intercessor, and pray with Me and in Me, ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

The thought of our fellowship in the intercession of Jesus reminds us of what He has taught us more than once before – how all these wonderful prayer promises have the glory of God in the manifestation of His kingdom and the salvation of sinners as their aim and justification. As long as we

chiefly pray for ourselves, the promises of the last night must remain a sealed book to us. The promises are given to the fruit-bearing branches of the Vine, to disciples sent into the world to live for perishing men. They are given to His faithful servants and intimate friends who take up the work He leaves behind. Like their Lord, they become as the seed corn, losing their lives to multiply them.

Let us each find out what our work is and which souls are entrusted to our special prayers. Let us make our intercession for them our life of fellowship with God. We shall not only find the promises of power in prayer made true to us, but we shall also then begin to realize how our abiding in Christ and His abiding in us make us share in His own joy of blessing and saving men.

Oh, most wonderful intercession of our blessed Lord Jesus. We not only owe everything to that intercession, but we are also taken up as active partners and fellow workers through it. Now we understand what it is to pray in the name of Jesus and why it has such power. To pray in His name, in His Spirit, in Him, in perfect union with Him is the active and most effective intercession of Christ Jesus. When will we be wholly taken up into it and always pray in it?

* * * *

Blessed Lord, in lowly adoration I again bow before You. Your whole redemptive work has now passed into prayer; prayer is what occupies You in maintaining and dispensing what You purchased with Your blood. You live to pray. Because we abide in You, we have direct access to the Father, and our lives can be lives of unceasing prayer, and the answer to our prayer is certain.

Blessed Lord, You have invited Your people to be Your fellow workers in a life of prayer. You have united Yourself with Your people. As Your body, they share with You in the ministry of intercession through which the world can be filled with the fruit of Your redemption and the glory of the Father. With more liberty than ever, I come to You, my Lord, and beseech You:

Teach me to pray. Your life is prayer; Your life is mine. Lord, teach me to pray in You and like You.

Oh, my Lord, let me know, as You promised Your disciples, that You are in the Father, I am in You, and You are in me. Let the uniting power of the Holy Spirit make my whole life an abiding in You and Your intercession. May my prayer be its echo, so the Father hears me in You and You in me. Lord Jesus, let Your mind be in everything in me, and let my life be in everything in You. In this way, I shall be prepared to be the channel through which Your intercession pours its blessing on the world. Amen.

* * * *

Note

The new era of prayer in the name of Jesus is pointed out by Christ as the time of the outpouring of the Spirit in which the disciples entered upon a more enlightened comprehension of the plan of redemption and became conscious of their oneness with Jesus as of His oneness with the Father. Their prayer in the name of Jesus was directed to the Father. Jesus said, *I do not say unto you that I will ask the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you* (John 16:26-27). He had previously spoken of the time before the Spirit's coming: *I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter* (John 14:16). The central thought of this prayer is the insight into our being united to God in Christ. The living bond of union between God and us is expressed in John 17:23: *I in them, and thou in me*. In Jesus we behold the Father as united to us, and ourselves as united to the Father. Jesus Christ must have been revealed to us not only through the truth in the mind but also in our inmost personal consciousness as the living, personal reconciliation. God's fatherhood and Father-love have been perfectly united with human nature in Christ. The immediate prayer to the Father does not negate the role of Christ as Mediator. It is no longer looked upon as external that exists outside of us, but as a real, living, spiritual existence within us, so that Christ for us, the Mediator, has really become Christ in us. When the

consciousness of this oneness between God in Christ and us in Christ is lacking or has been darkened by the sense of guilt, then the prayer of faith looks to our Lord as the Advocate who asks the Father for us. (Compare John 16:26 with 14:16-17; Luke 22:32; 1 John 2:1.)

To take Christ as Advocate is according to John 16:26, but it is not perfectly the same as the prayer in His name. Christ's advocacy is meant to lead us to that life-union with Him and with the Father in Him. Christ is the One in whom God enters into immediate relationship and unites Himself with us and in whom we enter into immediate relationship with God. Even so, the prayer in the name of Jesus does not consist of our prayer at His command. The disciples had prayed in that way ever since the Lord had given them His *Our Father*, and yet He said, *Until now ye have asked nothing in my name.*

When the mediation of Christ has become life and power within us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, His mind will take possession of and fill our personal consciousness and will. In faith and love we have Jesus in us as the Reconciler who has actually made us one with God. His name, which includes His nature and His work, then becomes truth and power in us (and not only for us), and we have in the name of Jesus the free, direct access to the Father and are sure of being heard. Prayer in the name of Jesus is the liberty of a son with the Father, just as Jesus had this as the Firstborn. We pray in the place of Jesus – not as if we could put ourselves in His place but as far as we are in Him and He in us. We go directly to the Father. When the inner man does not live in Christ and does not have Him present as the living One, His Word will not rule in the heart where His truth and life have not become the life of our soul. It is vain to think that a formula like “for the sake of Thy dear Son” will avail.

– *Christliche Ethik*, von Dr. I. T. Beck, Tübingen, 3.39

¹⁰ Note the difference between having Christ as an Advocate or Intercessor who stands outside of us and having Him within us – we abiding in Him and He in us through the Holy Spirit that perfects our union with Him, so that we ourselves can come directly to the Father in His Name.

– The note from Beck of Tübingen.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Seventh Lesson

Christ the High Priest

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am. – John 17:24

In His parting address, Jesus gives His disciples the full revelation of what the new life was to be when the kingdom of God had come in power. They were to find their calling and their blessedness with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in union with the heavenly Vine as they went forth to witness and to suffer for Him. As He set forth their future new life, the Lord had repeatedly given the most unlimited promises of power their prayers might have.

And now in closing, He proceeds to pray. To let His disciples have the joy of knowing what His intercession for them as their High Priest in heaven will be, He gives this precious legacy of His prayer to the Father. He does this at the same time because they are to share as priests in His work of intercession that they and we might know how to perform this holy work. In the teaching of our Lord on this last night, we have learned to understand that these astonishing prayer promises have not been given on our behalf but in the interest of the Lord and His kingdom. It is from the Lord that we can learn what prayer in His name is to be. We have understood that to pray in His name is to pray in perfect unity with Him; the high-priestly prayer will teach all that the prayer in the name of Jesus may ask and expect.

This prayer is ordinarily divided into three parts. Our Lord first prays for Himself (John 17:1-5), then for His disciples (17:6-19), and lastly for all the believing people through all ages (17:20-26). The follower of Jesus who gives himself to the work of intercession and gladly prays blessing down

upon his circle of friends in the name of Jesus will in all humility let himself be led by the Spirit to study this wonderful prayer as one of the most important lessons in the school of prayer.

First of all, Jesus prays for Himself, for His glorification that He may glorify the Father. *Father, the hour is come; clarify thy Son, . . . And now, O Father, clarify thou me* (John 17:1, 5). Then He brings forward the grounds on which He prays. A holy covenant had been concluded between the Father and the Son in heaven. The Father had promised Him power over all flesh as the reward of His work; He had done the work; He had glorified the Father. His one purpose now is still to glorify Him. With the utmost boldness, He asks that the Father may glorify Him that He may be and do for His people all He has undertaken.

Disciple of Jesus, here you have the first lesson in your work of intercession to be learned from the example of your Great High Priest. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray in unity and sympathy with Him. As the Son began His prayer by making clear His relationship to the Father, He pled His work and obedience and His desire to see the Father glorified. We must also do so. Draw near and appear before the Father in Christ. Plead His finished work. Say that you are one with that finished work and that you trust in it and live by it. Say that you too have given yourself to finish the work the Father has given you to do and to live for His glory. Ask confidently that the Son may be glorified in you. This is praying in the name, in the very words, in the Spirit of Jesus, in union with Jesus Himself. Such prayer has power. If you glorify the Father with Jesus, the Father will glorify Jesus by doing what you ask in His name. Only when your own personal relationship is clear with God, and you are glorifying Him and seeking all for His glory like Christ will you have power to intercede for those around you.

Our Lord next prays for His disciples. He speaks of them as those whom the Father has given Him. Their chief mark is that they have received Christ's Word. He says the Father now sends them into the world in His

place, just as the Father had sent Him. He asks two things for them: that the Father keep them from the Evil One and that He sanctify them through His Word.

Just like the Lord, each believing intercessor has his own immediate circle of friends that he prays for first. Parents have their children, teachers their pupils, pastors their flocks, all workers their special charges, and all believers those whose care lies upon their hearts. Intercession should be personal, pointed, and definite; our first prayer must always be that they will receive the Word. But this prayer will not avail unless with our Lord we say, *I have given them thy word* (John 17:14). This gives us liberty and power in intercession for souls – not only to pray for them but also to speak to them.

And when they have received the Word, let us pray they are kept from the Evil One and sanctified through that Word. Instead of giving up on those who fall, let us pray for our circle, *Father, . . . keep them in thy name and Sanctify them in thy truth* (John 17:11, 17). Prayer in the name of Jesus avails much: *Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you* (John 15:7).

Our Lord's prayer follows, only for a still-wider circle. *Neither do I pray for these alone, but also for those who shall believe through their word* (John 17:20). His priestly heart enlarges itself to embrace all places and all time, and He prays that all who belong to Him may everywhere be one as God's proof to the world of the divinity of His mission and that they may always be with Him in His glory. Until then, *that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them* (John 17:26).

The disciple of Jesus who has proved the power of prayer first in his own circle cannot confine himself within its limits; he prays for the universal church and its different branches. He prays especially for the unity of the Spirit and of love. He prays for the church being one in Christ as a witness to the world that Christ, who has worked such a wonder as to make love triumph over selfishness and separation, is indeed the Son of God sent from

heaven. Every believer ought to pray much that the unity of the church may be made manifest, not in external organizations but in spirit and in truth.

So much for the matter of the prayer. Now consider its form. Jesus said, *Father, I will* (John 17:24). On the basis of His right as Son, the Father's promise to Him, and His finished work, He might do so. The Father had said to Him, *Ask of me, and I shall give thee* (Psalm 2:8). He simply availed Himself of the Father's promise. Jesus has given us a similar promise: *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, that will I do* (John 14:13). He asks me in His name to say what I will. Abiding in Him, in a living union with Him in which man is nothing and Christ is all, the believer has the liberty to take up that word of his High Priest and in answer to the question, *What wilt thou?* say, "Father, I will all that You have promised." This is nothing but true faith; this is honoring God – to be assured that such confidence in saying what I will is indeed acceptable to Him.

At first sight, our heart shrinks from that expression. We feel neither the liberty nor the power to speak like that. But grace will be given most assuredly to each one who loses his will in his Lord's. He that loses his will shall find it; he that gives up his will entirely shall find it again, renewed and strengthened with a divine strength. *Father, I will* – this is the keynote of the everlasting, ever-active, all-prevailing intercession of our Lord in heaven. It is only in union with Him that our prayer helps; in union with Him it benefits much. If we abide in Him, living, walking, and doing all things in His name, and if we bring each separate petition, tested and touched by His Word and Spirit, and cast it into the mighty stream of intercession that goes up from Him to be presented before the Father, then we shall have the full confidence that we receive the petitions we ask for. *Father, I will*, will be breathed into us by the Spirit Himself. We shall lose ourselves in Him and become nothing; we will find that in our impotence we have power and will prevail.

Disciples of Jesus, you are called to be like your Lord in His priestly intercession. When, oh when, will we awaken to the glory of our destiny to

plead and prevail with God for perishing men? Oh, when will we shake off the sloth that clothes itself with the pretense of humility and yield ourselves wholly to God's Spirit that He may fill our wills with light and with power – to know, and to take, and to possess all that our God is waiting to give to a will that lays hold of Him?

* * * *

Oh, my blessed High Priest, who am I that You should invite me to share with You in Your power of prevailing intercession? And why am I so slow of heart to understand and believe and exercise this wonderful privilege to which You have redeemed Your people? Oh Lord, give Your grace that this may be my unceasing life work – praying without ceasing to draw the blessing of heaven on all my surroundings on earth.

Blessed Lord, I come now to accept my calling. For this I would forsake all and follow You. Into Your hands I would yield my whole being; form, train, and inspire me to be one of Your prayer legion, wrestlers who watch and strive in prayer, God's princes who have power and prevail. Take possession of my heart and fill it with the one desire for the glory of God at the ingathering, sanctification, and union of those whom the Father has given You. Take my mind and let this be my study and my wisdom – to know when prayer can bring a blessing. Take me wholly and fit me to stand before God and to bless in His name.

Blessed Lord, let this be through all the spiritual life: You all, I nothing. And let my experience be that he who has and seeks nothing for himself receives all, even to the wonderful grace of sharing with You in Your everlasting ministry of intercession. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Eighth Lesson

Christ the Sacrifice

And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. – Mark 14:36

What a contrast within the space of a few hours! What a transition from the quiet elevation of when He lifted His eyes to heaven and said, *Father, I will*, to falling on the ground and crying in agony, *Abba, Father, not what I will*. In the one, we see the High Priest within the veil in His all-prevailing intercession; in the other, the sacrifice on the altar opening the way through the rent veil. The high-priestly *Father, I will* precedes the sacrificial *Father, not what I will*, but this was only to show what the intercession would be when once the sacrifice was brought. In reality, it was that prayer at the altar, *Father, not what I will*, in which the prayer before the throne, *Father, I will*, had its origin and its power. It is from the entire surrender of His will in Gethsemane that the High Priest on the throne has the power to ask what He will and the right to allow His people to share in that power and ask what they will.

For all who learn to pray in the school of Jesus, this Gethsemane lesson is one of the most sacred and precious. To a superficial scholar, it may appear to take away the courage to pray in faith. If even the earnest supplication of the Son was not heard, and the Beloved had to say, *Not what I will*, how much more do we need to speak in the same manner. And thus, it appears impossible that the promises which the Lord had given only a few hours previously, *Whatsoever ye ask, Whatever ye shall ask*, could have been meant literally. A deeper insight into the meaning of Gethsemane would

teach us that we have here the basis and the open way to the assurance of an answer to our prayer. Let us draw near in reverent and adoring wonder to gaze on this great sight – God’s Son thus offering up prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears and not obtaining what He asks. He is our Teacher who will open up to us the mystery of His holy sacrifice as revealed in this wondrous prayer.

To understand the prayer, let’s note the infinite difference between what our Lord had prayed earlier as a royal High Priest and what He seeks here in His weakness. As High Priest, it was for the glorifying of the Father that He prayed and the glorifying of Himself and His people as the fulfillment of distinct promises that had been given Him. He asked what He knew to be according to the word and the will of the Father; He could boldly say, *Father, I will.*

In Gethsemane, He prays for something in regard to what the Father’s will was but that had not yet been made clear to Him. As far as He knows, it is the Father’s will that He should drink the cup. He had told His disciples of the cup He had to drink. A little later He would again say, *The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* It was for this He had come to this earth.

But when, in the unutterable agony of soul that burst upon Him as the power of darkness came upon Him, He began to taste the first drops of death as the wrath of God against sin, His human nature shuddered in the presence of the awful reality of being made a curse, and He cried in anguish that He might be spared the awful cup if God’s purpose could be accomplished without it: *Let this cup pass from me* (Matthew 26:39).

That desire was the evidence of the intense reality of His humanity. The *not as I will* kept that desire from being sinful, as He pleadingly cries, *All things are possible unto thee*, and returns again to still more earnest prayer that the cup may be removed. Three times He repeated, *Not what I will*, which constitutes the very essence and worth of His sacrifice. He had asked for something that He could not say: I know it is Thy will. He had pleaded

God's power and love and then withdrew it in His final *Thy will be done*. The prayer that the cup should pass away could not be answered; the prayer of submission that God's will be done was heard and gloriously answered in His victory over the fear and then over the power of death.

In this denial of His will, this complete surrender of His will to the will of the Father, is Christ's obedience at its highest perfection. It is from the sacrifice of the will in Gethsemane that the sacrifice of the life on Calvary derives its value. Scripture says that He learned obedience and became the Author of everlasting salvation to all who obey Him. Because He became obedient unto death in that prayer, even the death on the cross, God has highly exalted Him and given Him the power to ask what He will. It was in that *Father, not what I will* that He obtained the power for that *Father, I will*. It was by Christ's submission in Gethsemane to not have His will done that He secured for His people the right to say to them, *Whatsoever ye shall ask*.

Let's look again at the deep mysteries that Gethsemane offers to our view. There is the first: The Father offers His Well-Beloved the cup – the cup of wrath. The second: The Son, always so obedient, yet implores that He may not have to drink it. The third: The Father does not grant the Son His request but still gives the cup. And then the last: The Son yields His will, is content that His will is not done, and goes out to Calvary to drink the cup. Oh Gethsemane, in you I see how my Lord could give me such unlimited assurance of an answer to my prayers. As my guarantee, He won it for me by His consent to have His petition unanswered.

This is in harmony with the whole scheme of redemption. Our Lord always wins for us the opposite of what He suffered. He was bound that we might go free. He was made sin that we might become the righteousness of God. *For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (2 Corinthians 5:21). He died that we might live. *Who [Jesus] died for us, that whether we watch or sleep, we should live together with him* (1 Thessalonians 5:10). He bore God's curse

that God's blessing might be ours. He endured the not answering of His prayer, so that our prayers might find an answer. Yes, He said, *Not as I will*, that He might say to us, *If ye abide in me . . . ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Yes, the words *If ye abide in me* in Gethsemane acquire new force and depth. Christ is our Head, who as our guarantee stands in our place and bears what we would have forever borne. We deserved for God to turn a deaf ear to us and never listen to our cry. Christ came and suffered this for us: He suffered what we deserved; He suffered for our sins beneath the burden of that unanswered prayer. But now His suffering benefits me. What He has borne is taken away from me; His merit has won for me the answer to every prayer if I abide in Him.

Yes, in Him, as He bowed in Gethsemane, I must abide. As my Head, He not only suffered once for me but He also forever lives in me. He breathes and works His own disposition in me too. The eternal Spirit, through whom He offered Himself unto God, is the Spirit that dwells in me too and makes me a partaker of the very same obedience and the same sacrifice of the will unto God. That Spirit teaches me to yield my will entirely to the will of the Father, to give it up even unto death, and in Christ to be dead to it.

Whatever is my own mind, thought, and will, even though it is not directly sinful, He teaches me to fear and flee. He opens my ear to wait in great gentleness and teachableness of soul for what the Father has day by day to speak and to teach. He reveals to me how union with God's will in His love is union with God Himself – how entire surrender to God's will is the Father's claim, the Son's example, and the true blessedness of the soul. He leads my will into the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection; my will dies in Him to be made alive again. He breathes into it as a renewed and quickened will and a holy insight into God's perfect will. It is a holy joy in yielding itself to be an instrument of that will and a holy liberty and power to lay hold of God's will to answer prayer. With my whole will, I learn to live for the interests of God and His kingdom, to exercise the power

of that will – crucified but risen again – in nature and in prayer, on earth and in heaven, with men and with God. The more deeply I enter into the *Father, not what I will* of Gethsemane and into Him who spoke those words and abide in Him, the fuller my spiritual access will be into the power of His *Father, I will*. The soul experiences that it is the will, which has become nothing that God's will may be all, that now becomes inspired with a divine strength to will what God wills, and to claim what has been promised in the name of Christ.

Oh, let us listen to Christ in Gethsemane as He calls, *If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*. Being of one mind and spirit with Him in His giving up everything to God's will and living like Him in obedience and surrender to the Father is abiding in Him; this is the secret of power in prayer.

* * * *

Blessed Lord Jesus, Gethsemane was Your school where You learned to pray and to obey. It is still Your school where You lead all Your disciples who would gladly learn to obey and to pray even as You. Lord, teach me to pray in the faith whereby You have atoned for and conquered our self-will and have given us grace to pray like You.

Oh, Lamb of God, I would follow You to Gethsemane to become one with You and to abide in You as You yield Your will unto the Father even unto death. With You, through You, and in You, I do yield my will in absolute and entire surrender to the will of the Father. Conscious of my own weakness and the secret power with which self-will would assert itself and take its place on the throne, I claim in faith the power of Your victory. You triumphed over it and delivered me from it. In Your death I would live daily; in Your life I would die daily. Abiding in You, let my will, through the power of Your eternal Spirit, be the tuned instrument which yields to every touch of the will of my God. With my whole soul do I say with You and in You, *Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt*.

And then, blessed Lord, open my heart and the hearts of all Your people to take in the glory of the truth that a will given up to God is a will accepted by God to be used in His service – to desire, purpose, determine, and will what is according to God’s will. It is a will that in the power of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling God, is to exercise its royal prerogative in prayer, to loose and to bind in heaven and upon earth, to ask whatsoever it will, and to say it shall be done.

Oh, Lord Jesus, teach me to pray. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Twenty-Ninth Lesson

Boldness in Prayer

And this is the confidence that we have in God, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the petitions that we asked of him. – 1 John 5:14-15

One of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is undoubtedly this: people don't know if what they ask is according to the will of God. As long as they are in doubt on this point, they cannot have the boldness to ask with the assurance that they certainly shall receive. And they soon begin to think that once they have made known their requests and receive no answer, it is best to leave it to God to do according to His good pleasure. As they understand the words of John, *If we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us*, they are persuaded that the answer to prayer is impossible, because they cannot be sure of what really may be the will of God. They think of God's will as His hidden counsel, so how should man be able to fathom what really may be the purpose of the all-wise God?

This is the very opposite of what John aimed at in writing this. He wished to prompt us to boldness, to confidence, to full assurance of faith in prayer. He says, *This is the confidence that we have in God*, that we can say, "Father, You know and I know that I ask according to Your will; I know You hear me." This is the boldness that *if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us*. On this account He immediately adds, *If we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the petitions that we asked of him*. John supposes that when we pray, we first find out if our prayers are according to the will of God. They may be according to God's

will, but the answers might not be apparent at once, or the persevering prayer of faith may be missing. We are to have courage to persevere and be strong in faith, so He tells us that this gives us boldness or confidence in prayer, *if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us*. It is evident that if we are uncertain as to whether our petitions are according to His will, we cannot have the comfort when He says, *We also know that we have the petitions that we asked of him*.

But just this is the difficulty. More than one believer says, “I do not know if what I desire is according to the will of God. God’s will is the purpose of His infinite wisdom; it is impossible for me to know whether He may count something else better for me than what I desire or have some reasons for withholding what I ask.” Everyone knows how with such thoughts the prayer of faith to receive whatever we ask becomes an impossibility. There may be the prayer of submission and of trust in God’s wisdom, but there cannot be the prayer of faith. The great mistake here is that God’s children do not really believe that it is possible to know God’s will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time and trouble to discover it. What we need is to see clearly how the Father leads His waiting, teachable child to know that his petition is according to His will. It is through God’s Holy Word, taken up and kept in the heart, the life, and the will, and through God’s Holy Spirit, accepted in His indwelling and leading, that we shall learn to know that our petitions are according to His will.

In the Word is a secret will of God with which we often fear that our prayers may be at variance. It is not *this* will of God but His will, as revealed in His Word, that we should seek in prayer. Our notions of what the secret will may have decreed and of how it might render the answers to our prayers impossible are mostly erroneous. Childlike faith in what He is willing to do for His children simply strengthens the Father’s assurance that it is His will to hear prayer and to do what faith in His Word desires and accepts. In the Word, the Father has revealed the great principles of His will to His people. The child has to take the promise and apply it to the special

circumstances in his life to which it has reference. Whatever he asks within the limits of that revealed will, he can know to be according to the will of God, and he may confidently expect it. In His Word, God has given us the revelation of His will and plans for us, for His people, and for the world. He will carry out His plans and do His work according to the most precious promises of His grace and power. As faith becomes strong and bold enough to claim the fulfillment of the general promise in the special case, we may have the assurance that our prayers are heard and that they are according to God's will. (Note the excerpts from George Müller at the end of this volume.)

Consider the words of John in the verse following our text as an illustration: *If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask God, and he shall give him life.* Such is the general promise, and the believer who pleads on the ground of this promise prays according to the will of God. John would give him boldness to know that he has the petition that he asks.

But this comprehension of God's will is something spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. It is not as a matter of logic that we can argue: God has said it; I must have it. Nor has every Christian the same gift or calling. While the general will revealed in the promise is the same for all, there is for each one a special different will according to God's purpose. And herein is the wisdom of the saints – to know this special will of God for each of us, according to the measure of grace given us. So we can ask in prayer just what God has prepared and made possible for each of us. It is to communicate this wisdom that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Holy Spirit is given to us to lead us in personal application of the general promises of the Word to our special personal needs.

Many do not understand this union of the teaching of the Word and the Spirit, so there is a twofold difficulty in knowing what God's will may be. Some seek the will of God in an inner feeling or conviction and would have the Spirit lead them without the Word. Others seek it in the Word without

the leading of the Holy Spirit. The two must be united – the Word and the Spirit – because only in these can we know for sure the will of God and learn to pray according to it. In the heart, the Word and the Spirit must meet; it is only by such indwelling that we can experience their teaching.

The Word must dwell and abide in us; the heart and life must be under its influence day by day. Not from without, but from within, comes the quickening of the Word by the Spirit. Only he who yields himself entirely in his whole life to the supremacy of the Word and the will of God can expect in special cases to discern what that Word and will permit him to ask boldly.

And even as with the Word, just so with the Spirit; if I would have the leading of the Spirit in prayer to assure me what God's will is, my whole life must be yielded to that leading. Only in this way can mind and heart become spiritual and capable of knowing God's holy will. Only he who lives in the will of God by doing it through Word and Spirit will know how to pray according to that will in the confidence that He hears us.

If only Christians could see what incalculable harm they do to themselves by the thought that because possibly their prayer is not according to God's will, they must be content without an answer. God's Word tells us that the great reason for unanswered prayer is that we do not pray correctly. *Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss* (James 4:3). In not granting an answer, the Father tells us that there is something wrong in our praying. He wants to teach us to discover it and confess it; He wants to educate us about true believing and prevailing prayer. He will only attain His objective when He brings us to see that we are to blame for the withholding of the answer – our aim, or our faith, or our life is not what it should be.

But this purpose of God is frustrated as long as we are content to say that it is perhaps because my prayer is not according to His will that He does not hear me. Oh, let's not throw the blame for our unanswered prayers on the secret will of God, but recognize instead our own praying amiss. Let that Word, *Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss*, be as the lantern of the Lord that searches heart and life to prove that we are indeed like those to

whom Christ gave His promises of certain answers. Let's believe that we can know if our prayer is according to God's will. Let's yield ourselves unreservedly to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us to abide in Christ and to dwell in the Father's presence, and we shall soon understand how the Father's love longs that the child should know His will and should know that He hears the petitions which we ask with confidence. *This is the confidence that we have in God, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us.*

* * * *

Blessed Master, with my whole heart I thank You for this blessed lesson – that the path to a life full of answers to prayer is through the will of God. Lord, teach me to know this blessed will by living it, loving it, and always doing it. In this way I shall learn to offer prayers according to that will and find my boldness in prayer and my confidence in accepting the answer in harmony with my prayer and God's will.

Father, it is Your will that Your child should enjoy Your presence and blessing. It is Your will that everything in the life of Your child should be in accordance with Your will and that the Holy Spirit should work this in him. It is Your will that Your child should live in the daily experience of distinct answers to prayer in order to enjoy living and direct fellowship with You. It is Your will that Your name should be glorified in and through Your children, and it will be in those who trust You. Oh, my Father, let Your will be my confidence in all I ask.

Blessed Savior, teach me to believe in the glory of Your will, which is the eternal love as divine power works its purpose in each human who will yield himself. Lord! teach me this. You can make me see how every promise and every command of the Word is indeed the will of God, and its fulfillment is secured to me by God Himself. So, let the will of God become to me the sure rock on which my prayer and my assurance of an answer rest forever. Amen.

* * * *

Note

There is often great confusion as to the will of God. People think that what God wills must inevitably take place. This is by no means the case. God wills a great deal of blessing for His people that never comes to them. He wills it most earnestly, but they do not will it, and it cannot come to them. This is the great mystery of man's creation with a free will but also of the renewal of his will in redemption, that God has made the execution of His will dependent on the will of man in many things. In regard to God's will revealed in His promises, much will be fulfilled as our faith accepts it. Prayer is the power by which that comes to pass which otherwise would not take place – and by faith, the power by which it is decided how much of God's will shall be done in us. When once God reveals to a soul what He is willing to do for it, the responsibility for the execution of that rests with us.

Some are afraid that this is putting too much power into the hands of man. But all power is put into the hands of man in Christ Jesus. The key of all prayer and all power is His. When we learn to understand that He is just as much one with us as with the Father, and we are also as much one with Him as He with the Father, we shall see how natural, right, and safe it is to those who abide in Him, as He in the Father, that such power should be given. Christ the Son has the right to ask what He will; by abiding in Him and His abiding in us (in a divine reality of which we have too little comprehension), His Spirit breathes in us what He wants to ask and obtain through us. We pray in His name – the prayers are really ours and really His.

Others fear the prayer that has such power in limiting the liberty and the love of God. Oh, if we only knew how we are limiting His liberty and His love by not allowing Him to act in the only way in which He chooses to act now that He has taken us into fellowship with Himself – through our prayers and our faith. A brother in the ministry once asked whether there

was not a danger in thinking that our love for souls and our willingness to see them blessed were able to move God's love and God's willingness to bless them. As we spoke, we were passing some large water pipes by which water was being carried over hill and dale from a large mountain stream to a town for some distance. "Just look at these pipes," was the answer. "The pipes did not make the water willing to flow down from the hills, nor did they give it its power of blessing and refreshment. That is the water's very nature. All the pipes could do was to decide its direction."

And just so, it is the very nature of God to love and to bless. Downward and ever downward His love longs to come with its quickening and refreshing streams. But He has left it to prayer to say where the blessing is to go. He has committed it to His believing people to bring the living water to the desert places. The will of God to bless is dependent upon the will of man to ask for the blessing to descend. *This honour have all His saints (Psalm 149:9 KJV). And this is the confidence that we have in God, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we also know that we have the petitions that we asked of him.*

OceanofPDF.com

Thirtieth Lesson

The Ministry of Intercession

A holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, well pleasing to God by Jesus, the Christ. – 1 Peter 2:5

Ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD. – Isaiah 61:6

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me because the LORD has anointed me (Isaiah 61:1) are the words of Jesus in Isaiah. As the fruit of His work, all redeemed ones are fellow partakers with Him through the anointing by the Spirit as High Priest. Now he who confirms us with you unto Christ and has anointed us is God; who has also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). Like the precious ointment upon the head, that runs down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that goes down to the skirts of his garments (Psalm 133:2).¹¹ As every son of Aaron had a right to the priesthood, so every member of Jesus' body has a right to the priesthood. But not everyone lives accordingly; many are still entirely ignorant of opportunity. And yet it is the highest privilege of a child of God, the mark of greatest nearness and likeness to Him, as he ever lives to make intercession (Hebrews 7:25). Do you doubt that this is so? Think of what constitutes Christ's role as our High Priest.

First, there is the work of the Old Testament priesthood. This has two sides: one is Godward, the other manward. *Every priest is . . . constituted on behalf of men in things relating to God (Hebrews 5:1).* Or, as Moses said in Deuteronomy 10:8, *The LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name.* On the one hand, the priest had the power to draw

near to God, to dwell with Him in His house, and to present before Him the blood of the sacrifice or the burning incense. This work he did not do, however, on his own behalf, but for the sake of the people whose representative he was. Likewise, Christ became our High Priest and representative as He was sacrificed for our salvation. *For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

For the other side of his work, the priest received sacrifices from the people, presented them before God, and then came out to bless in His name to give the assurance of His favor and to teach them His law. In the same way, Christ lives to make intercession for us, and we can pray and intercede for all men (Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:1).

A priest was thus a man who did not live for himself. He lived with God and for God. His work was as God's servant to care for His house, His honor, and His worship, and to make known to men His love and His will. He lived with men and for men (Hebrews 5:2). His work was to bring the people's confession and needs before God, to offer sacrifice and incense in their name, to obtain forgiveness and blessing for them, and then to come out and bless them in His name.

This is the same high calling of every believer. As the apostle Paul declared, *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Galatians 2:20). *This shall be glory for all his merciful ones* (Psalm 149:9). They have been redeemed for the purpose of being in the midst of the perishing millions around them as God's ambassadors, who in conformity to Jesus, the Great High Priest, are to be the ministers and stewards of the grace of God to all around them. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did exhort you by us; we beseech you in Christ's name, be ye reconciled to God* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

And then the walk of the priesthood should be in harmony with its work.

As God is holy, so the priest was to be especially holy. This meant not only being separated from everything unclean but also being holy unto God, set apart, and given to God for His disposal. The separation from the world and the setting apart unto God was indicated in many ways.

This separation was seen in the clothing: the holy garments, made after God's own order, marked them as His (Exodus 28). We see this separation in the command about their special purity and freedom from all contact with death and defilement (Leviticus 21:11). Much that was allowed for an ordinary Israelite was forbidden for the priests. It was seen in the injunction that the priest must have no bodily defect or blemish; bodily perfection was to be the type of wholeness and holiness in God's service (Leviticus 21:18-22). And it was seen in the arrangement by which the priestly tribes were to have no inheritance with the other tribes; God was to be their inheritance, for He told Ezekiel, *And this shall be unto them for an inheritance: I shall be their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession* (Ezekiel 44:28). Their life was to be one of faith; set apart unto God, they were to live on Him as well as for Him.

All this is the sign of what the character of the New Testament believer is to be. Our power with God depends on our personal life and walk. We must be like those of whose walk on earth Jesus said, *they have not defiled their garments* (Revelation 3:4).

In the surrender of what may appear lawful to others in our separation from the world, we must prove that our consecration to be holy to the Lord is wholehearted and entire. As Paul wrote:

I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies in living sacrifice, holy, well pleasing unto God, which is your rational worship. And be not conformed to this age, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your soul that ye may experience what is that good and well pleasing and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

The bodily perfection of the priest has its counterpart for us also as we read

in Ephesians where *Christ also loved the congregation and gave himself for her, that he might present her glorious for himself, a congregation, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish* (Ephesians 5:25, 27). The message is clear that *the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (2 Timothy 3:17) and *perfect and entire, not lacking in anything* (James 1:4). And above all, we consent to give up all inheritance on earth and to forsake all, and like Christ, to have only God as our portion – to possess as not possessing and hold all for God alone. *For if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's* (Romans 14:8). These were marks of the true priest in the Old Testament, but they also describe the man who lives only for God and his fellow men today.

If we consider the way to the priesthood, we see that God had chosen Aaron's sons to be priests – each of them was a priest by birth. They could not enter upon their work without a special act of ordinance or consecration. Every believer becomes a child of God through his rebirth – his blood relationship to the Great High Priest. Then he can exercise his power as he walks in the Spirit and submits and is *holy and unblameable and unproveable* (Colossians 1:22).

With Aaron and his sons, this consecration took place in Exodus 29. After being washed and clothed, they were anointed with the holy oil (Exodus 29:4-9). Sacrifices were then offered, and the right ear, the right hand, and the right foot were touched with the blood. Then they and their garments were sprinkled with the blood and the oil together (Exodus 29:20-21).

As a comparison, the child of God is washed with His blood, for in Him *we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace*, and he is *sealed with that Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 1:7, 13). Therefore, the believer is already a fellow heir and partaker by the effectual working of His power. The blood removes all unworthiness, and the Spirit gives gifts for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12).

Notice what was new in the application of the blood to the priest. If he had ever as a penitent sought forgiveness by bringing a sacrifice for his sin, the blood was sprinkled on the altar but not on his person. But for priestly consecration, there was to be closer contact with the blood. The ear, hand, and foot were by a special act brought under its power, and the whole being was sanctified for God.

Today, when the believer is led to seek full access to God, he might feel the need of a fuller experience of the power of the blood. He now desires personal sprinkling and cleansing of the heart from an evil conscience, so that he can hold *fast faith and a good conscience* as cleansing from all sin (1 Timothy 1:19). So, he gets to enjoy that he is awakened to his wonderful right of the most intimate access to God and the full assurance of his intercessions.

As the blood gives the right, so the Spirit gives the power and fits the individual for believing intercession. He breathes into us the burning love for God's honor and the saving of souls. He makes us one with Jesus, so that prayer in His name is a reality. He strengthens us for believing, effectual prayer. The more the Christian is truly filled with the Spirit of Christ, the more spontaneous will be his giving of himself to the life of intercession. Beloved fellow Christians, God needs – greatly needs – believers who can draw near to Him, who live in His presence, and who by their intercession draw the blessings of His grace on others. *Those who live should not live from now on unto themselves, but unto him who died and rose again for them* (2 Corinthians 5:15). And the world needs – greatly needs – believers who will bear the burden of the perishing ones and intercede on their behalf, who will be *ambassadors for Christ* (2 Corinthians 5:20). As the apostle Paul said, *I will very gladly spend and be utterly spent for your souls* (2 Corinthians 12:15); may we also be so spent.

Are you willing to offer yourself for this holy work? You know the surrender it demands – nothing less than the Christlike giving up of everything, so that the saving purposes of God's love may be accomplished

among men. Oh, don't be one of those who are content if they have salvation and work enough just to keep themselves warm and lively. Oh, let nothing keep you back from giving yourselves to be entirely ambassadors – nothing else, nothing less than ministers of the Most High God.

The thought of unworthiness or inadequacy does not need to keep you back. In the blood, the objective power of the perfect redemption works in you; in the Spirit, the full, subjective personal experience as a divine life is secured. The blood of Christ provides an infinite worthiness to make your prayers most acceptable. The Spirit provides divine strength and teaches you to pray according to the will of God. Every priest knew that when he presented a sacrifice according to the law of the sanctuary, it was accepted. Under the covering of the blood and Spirit, you have the assurance that all the wonderful promises of prayer in the name of Jesus will be fulfilled in you.

Abiding in union with the Great High Priest, *you shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.* You will have power to pray the effectual prayer of the righteous man that availeth much. You will not only join in the general prayer of the church for the world, but you will also be able to take up your special work of prayer in your own sphere to transact it with God, to receive and know the answer, and thereby to bless in His name. Come, brother, come, and give yourself wholly to God. Seek to walk before the Lord in the full consciousness that you have been set apart for the holy ministry of interceding for your circle of family and friends. This is the true blessedness of conformity to the image of God's Son.

* * * *

Oh, my blessed High Priest, accept the consecration in which my soul can respond to Your message. I believe I can have boldness and confidence with power to appear before the Father, and in the prayer that avails much, I will bring blessing on the perishing around me.

I believe in the power of Your precious blood to cleanse me from all sin,

to give me perfect confidence toward God, and to bring me near in the full assurance of faith that my prayer will be heard.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who comes down from You, my Great High Priest, to sanctify me, to fill me with the consciousness of my calling and with a love for souls, to teach me what is according to God's will and how to pray the prayer of faith.

I believe that as You, my Lord Jesus, are in all things my life, so You are the assurance for me and You will draw me into the fellowship of Your wondrous work of intercession. In this faith, I yield myself this day to my God as His ambassador to stand before His face to intercede on behalf of sinners and to come out and bless them in His name.

Lord Jesus, accept and seal my consecration. Yes, Lord, lay Your hands on me and consecrate me to this holy work. Let me walk among men with the consciousness and the character of a believer of the Most High God.

Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

¹¹ Editor's note: Sheep are anointed with oil for three reasons: (1) to keep bugs and flies from nesting in the nose and ears and ultimately even causing the death of the animal; (2) to cause the sheep's heads to glance off each other without doing harm when they butt heads; and (3) to bring healing to wounds incurred in daily life. So, when Aaron was anointed with oil, it was to show that God would protect him from harm, strengthen him in trials, and heal him when wounded. Understanding how the anointing was used in a practical way also sheds light on Psalm 23: *Thou hast anointed my head with oil.*

Thirty-First Lesson

A Life of Prayer

Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks. – 1
Thessalonians 5:16-18

Our Lord told the parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that men ought to pray always and not faint (Luke 18:1-8). As the widow persevered in seeking one definite thing, the unjust judge chose to answer her. The parable appears to have reference to persevering prayer when God delays or appears to refuse.

The words in the epistles, *constant in prayer* (Romans 12:12), *persevere in prayer and watch in the same with thanksgiving* (Colossians 4:2), and *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:18), appear to refer to the whole life being one of prayer. As the soul is filled with the longing for the manifestation of God's glory to us, in us, through us, and around us, and with the confidence that He hears the prayers of His children, the inmost life of the soul is continually rising in dependence, faith, longing desire, and trustful expectation.

At the close of our meditations, it will not be difficult to say what is needed to live such a life of prayer. The first thing is undoubtedly the entire submission of the life to God and His glory. He who seeks to pray without ceasing because he wants to be pious and good will never attain to it. It is the forgetting of self and yielding ourselves to live for God and His honor that enlarges the heart, that teaches us to regard everything in the light of God and His will, and that instinctively recognizes that the need for God's help and blessing in everything around us is an opportunity for His being glorified. Everything is weighed and tested by the one thing that fills the

heart – the glory of God – and the soul has learned that only what is of God can really be to Him and His glory. Therefore, the whole life becomes a cry from the inmost heart for God to prove His power and love and show forth His glory. The believer awakens to the consciousness that he is like one of the watchmen on Zion's walls, one of the Lord's remembrancers, whose call touches and moves the King in heaven to do what would otherwise not be done. He understands how real Paul's exhortation was to pray *always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit . . . for all the saints and for me and praying also together for us*. To forget oneself and to live for God and His kingdom among men is the way to learn to pray without ceasing.

This life devoted to God must be accompanied by the deep confidence that our prayer is effectual. We have seen how our blessed Lord insisted upon nothing as much as faith in the Father as a God who most certainly does what we ask. *Ask, and ye shall receive*; be assured an answer is with Him; it is the beginning and the end of His teaching (compare Matthew 7:8 and John 16:24).

As this assurance masters us and becomes a settled thing that God does what we ask, we dare not neglect the use of this wonderful power; the soul turns wholly to God, and our life becomes prayer. The Lord needs and takes time, because we and those around us are the creatures of time under the law of growth. Knowing that not one single prayer of faith can possibly be lost and that there is sometimes a need for the storing and accumulating of prayer, persevering prayer becomes an irresistible, quiet, persistent living of our life of desire and faith in the presence of our God. Oh, do not let us limit and weaken such free and sure promises of the living God by robbing them of their power and ourselves of the wonderful confidence they are meant to inspire. Not in God, not in His secret will, not in the limitations of His promises, but in us, in ourselves is the hindrance. We might not be what we should be to obtain the promise. Let's open our hearts to God's words of promise in all their simplicity and truth. They will search us and humble us; they will lift us up and make us glad and strong. And to the faith that knows

it gets what it asks, prayer is not a work or a burden but a joy and a triumph; it becomes a necessity and a second nature.

This union of strong desire and firm confidence is nothing but the life of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, hides Himself in the depths of our being, and stirs the desire after the unseen and the Divine One, after God Himself – now in groanings that cannot be uttered, then in clear and conscious assurance; now in special distinct petitions for the deeper revelation of Christ, then in pleadings for a soul, a work, the church, or the world. It is always only the Holy Spirit who draws the heart to thirst for God, to long for Him to be made known and glorified. When the child of God really lives and walks in the Spirit, he is not content to remain carnal but seeks to be spiritual as a fit organ for the Spirit to reveal Christ. The eternal interceding life of the blessed Son will reveal and repeat itself in our experience. Because it is the Spirit of Christ who prays in us, our prayer must be heard. Because we pray in the Spirit, there is need of time, patience, and continual renewing of the prayer, until every obstacle is conquered, and the harmony between God's Spirit and ours is perfect.

But the chief thing we need for such a life of unceasing prayer is to know that Jesus teaches us to pray. We have begun to understand a little of what His teaching is. He teaches not the communication of new thoughts or views, not the discovery of failure or error, not the stirring up of desire and faith, but the including of us in the fellowship of His own prayer life before the Father. The sight of the praying Jesus was what made the disciples ask to be taught to pray. The faith of the ever-praying Jesus, who alone has the power to pray, teaches us to pray.

We know why: He who prays is our Head and our Life. All He has is ours and is given to us when we give ourselves all to Him. By His blood, He leads us into the immediate presence of God. The inner sanctuary is our home where we dwell. And He that lives near God and knows that He has been brought near to bless those who are far away cannot but pray. Christ makes us partakers with Himself in His prayer power and prayer life. We

understand then that our true aim must not be to work much and have prayer enough to keep the work right, but to pray much and then to work enough for the power and blessing obtained in prayer to find its way through us to men.

Christ lives forever to pray; He saves and reigns. He communicates His prayer life to us; He maintains it in us if we trust Him. He is a guarantee for our praying without ceasing. Yes, Christ teaches us to pray by showing how He does it, by doing it in us, and by leading us to do it in Him and like Him. Christ is the life and the strength for a never-ceasing prayer life.

It is the sight of this, the sight of the praying Christ as our life, that enables us to pray without ceasing. Because His priesthood is the power of an endless life, that resurrection life that never fades and never fails, and because His life is our life, praying without ceasing can become nothing less than the joy of heaven to us. So, the apostle said, *Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.* Supported by never-ceasing joy and the never-ceasing praise, never-ceasing prayer is the manifestation of the power of the eternal life where Jesus always prays.

The union between the Vine and the branch is indeed a prayer union. The highest conformity to Christ and the most blessed participation in the glory of His heavenly life is that we take part in His work of intercession. Together with Him, we live forever to pray. In the experience of our union with Him, praying without ceasing becomes a possibility, a reality, and the holiest and most blessed part of our holy and blessed fellowship with God. We have our dwelling within the veil – in the presence of the Father. What the Father says, we do; what the Son says, the Father does. Praying without ceasing is the earthly manifestation of heaven come down to us, the foretaste of the life where they rest not day or night in the song of worship and adoration.

* * * *

Oh, my Father, I praise You with my whole heart for this wondrous life of

never-ceasing prayer, never-ceasing fellowship, never-ceasing answers, and never-ceasing experience of my oneness with Him who forever lives to pray. Oh, my God, keep me dwelling and walking in the presence of Your glory, so that prayer may be the spontaneous expression of my life with You.

Blessed Savior, I praise You with my whole heart that You came from heaven to share with me in my needs and cries, that I might share with You in Your all-prevailing intercession. And I thank You that You have taken me into the school of prayer to teach the blessedness and the power of a life that is in prayer, and most of all, that You have taken me into the fellowship of Your life of intercession, and through me Your blessings may be given to those around me.

Holy Spirit, with deep reverence I thank You for Your work in me. It is through You that I share in the communication between the Son and the Father and enter into the fellowship of the life and love of the Holy Trinity. Spirit of God, perfect Your work in me; bring me into perfect union with Christ my Intercessor. Let Your unceasing indwelling make my life one of unceasing intercession. And let my life become one that is always to the glory of the Father and to the blessing of those around me. Amen.

OceanofPDF.com

Notes

George Müller and the Secret of His Power in Prayer

When God wishes to teach His church a truth that is not being understood or practiced, He mostly does so by raising some man to be in word and deed a living witness to its blessedness. And so, God raised up George Müller and others in the nineteenth century to be His witnesses that He is indeed the Hearer of prayer. I know of no way in which the principal truths of God's Word about prayer can be more effectually illustrated and established than with a short review of his life and of what he tells of his prayer experiences.

Müller was born in Prussia on September 27, 1805, and is thus now eighty years of age at this writing. His early life, even after entering the University of Halle as a theological student, was wicked in the extreme. But when just twenty years old, a friend took him to a prayer meeting one evening. He was deeply impressed and soon after came to know the Savior. Not long after, he began reading missionary papers, and in the course of time, he offered himself to the London Society for Promoting Christianity Amongst the Jews.

He was accepted as a student but soon found that he could not submit to the rules of the Society in all things, because it left too little liberty for the leading of the Holy Spirit. The affiliation was dissolved in 1830 by mutual consent, and he became the pastor of a small congregation at Teignmouth. In 1832, he was led to Bristol, and as pastor of Bethesda Chapel, he was led to the Orphan House and other works, where God has remarkably led him to trust His Word and experience how He fulfills that Word.

A few excerpts about his spiritual life will prepare the way for what we wish to quote of his experiences in reference to prayer.

In connection with this, I would mention that the Lord graciously gave me a measure of simplicity and of childlike disposition in spiritual things from

the commencement of my divine life. While I was exceedingly ignorant of the Scriptures and still from time to time overcome even by outward sins, yet I was enabled to carry most minute matters to the Lord in prayer. I have found *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come* (1 Timothy 4:8). Though very weak and ignorant, yet I had, by the grace of God, some desire to benefit others, and he who so faithfully had once served Satan, sought now to win souls for Christ.

It was at Teignmouth that he learned how to use God's Word and trust the Holy Spirit as the Teacher given by God to make that Word clear. He writes:

God then began to show me that the Word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things, that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit, and that in our day as well as in former times, He is the Teacher of His people. I had not experientially understood the office of the Holy Spirit before that time.

My beginning to understand this latter point in particular had a great effect on me, for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience by laying aside commentaries and most other books and simply reading and studying the Word of God.

The result of this was that the first evening I shut myself into my room to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, and I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously.

But the particular difference was that I received real strength for my soul in doing this. I now began to test with the Scriptures the things that I had learned and seen, and I found that only those principles that stood the test were of real value.

On obedience to the Word of God, he writes as follows, in connection with his being baptized:

It had pleased God in His abundant mercy to bring my mind into such a state that I was willing to carry out whatever I should find in the Scriptures.

I could say, “I will do His will.” Because of this, I believe that I saw which doctrine of God I would observe here. By the way, the passage to which I have just alluded (John 7:17) has been most remarkable for me on many doctrines and precepts of our most holy faith. For instance, *Resist not with evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone desires to sue thee at the law, and take away thy clothing, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two. Give to him that asks of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. . . . Love your enemies, bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray for those who speak evil about you, and persecute you (Matthew 5:39-44). Sell what ye have and give alms (Luke 12:33). Owe no one anything, but love one unto another (Romans 13:8).*

It may be said, “Surely these passages cannot be taken literally, for how then would the people of God be able to survive in the world?” The state of mind of John 7:17 will cause such objections to vanish: *If anyone desires to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself.* I believe that whoever is willing to act out these commandments of the Lord literally, will be led with me to see that taking them literally is the will of God. Those who do so will doubtless often be brought into difficulties which are hard to bear. These will have a tendency to make them feel that they are strangers and pilgrims here, that this world is not their home, and thus to throw them more upon God, who will assuredly help us through any difficulty into which we may be brought by seeking to act in obedience to His Word.

This implicit surrender to God’s Word led Müller to certain views and conduct in regard to money, which mightily influenced his future life. They had their root in the conviction that money was a divine stewardship, and that all money had to be received and dispensed in direct fellowship with God Himself. This led him to adopting the following four great rules: (1) not to receive any fixed salary, both because in the collecting of it there was

often much that was at variance with the freewill offering with which God's service is to be maintained, and in the receiving of it there was a danger of placing more dependence on human sources of income than on the living God Himself; (2) never to ask any human being for help, however great the need might be, but to make his wants known to the God who has promised to care for His servants and to hear their prayer; (3) to take the command to *sell what ye have and give alms* literally and never save up money but spend all that God entrusted to him on God's poor for the work of His kingdom; and (4) to take Romans 13:8, *Owe no one anything*, literally, and never buy on credit or be in debt for anything, but to trust God to provide.

This manner of living was not easy at first. Müller testifies it was most blessed in bringing the soul to rest in God and drawing it into closer union with Him when he was inclined to backslide: "For it will not do, it is not possible to live in sin and at the same time, by communion with God, to draw from heaven everything one needs for the present life."

Not long after his settlement at Bristol, The Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad was established for aiding in day school, Sunday school, and mission and Bible work. From this institution, the Orphan House work, for which Mr. Müller is best known, became a branch. It was in 1834 that his heart was touched by the case of an orphan brought to Christ in one of the schools. This child had to go to a poorhouse where his spiritual needs would not be cared for. Meeting shortly after, he writes (November 20, 1835), "Today I have had it very much laid on my heart no longer merely to think about the establishment of an Orphan Home, but actually to set about it, and I have been very much in prayer respecting it, in order to ascertain the Lord's mind. May God make it plain."

And again on November 25 of that year he wrote, "I have been again much in prayer, yesterday and today, about the Orphan Home and am more and more convinced that it is of God. May He in mercy guide me. The three chief reasons are (1) that God may be glorified if He is pleased to furnish me with the means, as it is seen that it is not a vain thing to trust Him, so the

faith of His children may be strengthened; (2) the spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children; and (3) their temporal welfare.”

After months of prayer and waiting on God, a house was rented with room for thirty children, and in the course of time, three more houses were rented, housing 120 children in all. The work was carried on in this way for ten years; the supplies for the needs of the orphans was asked and received of God alone. Often it was a time of sore need and much prayer, but it became a trial of faith more precious than gold unto praise and honor and glory of God.

The Lord was preparing His servant for greater things. By His providence and His Holy Spirit, Mr. Müller was led to desire and wait upon God until he received the sure promise of £15,000 (pounds sterling, British currency) from Him for a home to house 300 children. This first home was opened in 1849. In 1858, a second and a third home for 950 more orphans were opened, costing £35,000. And in 1869 and 1870, a fourth and a fifth home for 850 more children opened at an expense of £50,000, making the total number of the orphans 2,100.

In addition to this work, God has given him almost as much for other work – the support of schools and missions, and Bible and tract circulation – as for the building of the Orphan Homes and the maintenance of the orphans. In all he has received from God, to be spent in His work during these fifty years, more than one million pounds sterling. How little he knew that when he gave up his little salary of £30 a year in obedience to the leading of God’s Word and Holy Spirit, God was preparing to give him the reward for obedience and faith, and how wonderfully the Word was fulfilled to him: *Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will set thee over many things.* (Matthew 25:23)

And these things have happened for an example to us. God calls us to be followers of George Müller, even as he is of Christ. His God is our God; the same promises are for us; the same service of love and faith in which he labored is calling for us on every side. Let us study in our lessons the way

God gave George Müller power as a man of prayer. We shall find the most remarkable illustration of some of the lessons which we have been studying with the blessed Master in the Word. We shall have impressed upon us His first great lesson – that if we will come to Him in the way He has pointed out with definite petitions, made known to us by the Spirit through the Word according to the will of God, we may most confidently believe that whatsoever we ask shall be done.

Prayer and the Word of God

We have more than once seen that God's listening to our voice depends upon our listening to His voice (Lessons 22 and 23). We must not only have a special promise to plead when we make a special request, but also our whole life must be under the supremacy of the Word; the Word must be dwelling in us. The testimony of George Müller on this point is most instructive. He tells us how the discovery of the true place of the Word of God and the teaching of the Spirit was the commencement of a new era in his spiritual life. He writes:

Now the scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God has condescended to become an author, and I am ignorant about that precious Book which His Holy Spirit has caused to be written through the instrumentality of His servants. It contains what I ought to know and the knowledge of what will lead me to true happiness. Therefore, I ought to read again and again this most precious Book, this Book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation. I ought to continue this practice all the days of my life, for I was aware that I knew scarcely anything of it because I only read it a little.

But instead of acting and being led by my ignorance of the Word of God to study it more, my difficulty in understanding it and the little enjoyment I had in it made me careless about reading it. (For much prayerful reading of the Word gives not merely more knowledge but also increases the delight we have in reading it.) Thus, like many believers, for the first four years of

my divine life, I practically preferred the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God.

The consequence was that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge, I say, for all true knowledge must be derived by the Spirit from the Word. And as I neglected the Word, I was so ignorant for nearly four years that I did not clearly know even the fundamental points of our holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the ways of God. For when it pleased the Lord in August 1829 to bring me to the Scriptures, my life and walk became very different. And though ever since I have fallen short of what I might and ought to be, yet by the grace of God, I have been enabled to live much nearer to Him than before. If any believers read this who practically prefer other books to the Holy Scriptures and enjoy the writings of men much more than the Word of God, may they be warned by my loss. I shall consider this book to have been the means of doing much good, if through it, some of His people no longer neglect the Holy Scriptures but give them that preference, which they have given to the writings of men before.

Before I leave this subject, I would only add that if the reader understands very little of the Word of God, he ought to read it very often, for the Spirit explains the Word by the Word. And if he enjoys the reading of the Word little, that is the reason he should read it much, for the frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them. The more we read them, the more we desire to do so.

Above all, he should seek to have it settled in his own mind that God alone by His Spirit can teach him, and therefore, as he asks God for blessings, it serves him to seek God's blessing prior to reading and while reading.

He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind that although the Holy Spirit is the best and sufficient Teacher, yet this Teacher does not always teach immediately when we desire it. Therefore, we may have to entreat Him again and again for the explanation of certain passages, but He will

surely teach us at last, if indeed we are seeking for light prayerfully, patiently, and with a view to the glory of God.¹²

We find in Müller's journal frequent mention made of his spending two or three hours in prayer over the Word for the feeding of his spiritual life. As the fruit of this, when he had need of strength and encouragement in prayer, the individual promises were not many arguments from a book to be used with God but living words which he had heard the Father's living voice speak to him and which he could now bring to the Father in living faith.

Prayer and the Will of God

One of the greatest difficulties for young believers is to know how they can find out whether what they desire is according to God's will. I count it one of the most precious lessons God wants to teach through the experience of George Müller – that He is willing to make known things His Word says nothing directly about, that they are His will for us, and that we may ask them. The teaching of the Spirit – not without or against the Word but as something above and beyond it and in addition to it, without which we cannot see God's will – is the heritage of every believer. It is through the Word and the Word alone that the Spirit teaches, applying the general principles or promises to our special need. And it is the Spirit and the Spirit alone who can make the Word a light on our path, whether it is the path of duty in our daily walk or the path of faith in our approach to God. Let's try to notice in what childlike simplicity and teachableness it was that the discovery of God's will was made known to His servant.

With regard to the building of the first home and the assurance he had of its being God's will, Müller writes in May 1850, just after it had been opened, speaking of the great difficulties there were, and how little likely it appeared that they would be removed, "But while the prospect before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it naturally, I was never even for once permitted to question how it would end. For as from the beginning, I was sure it was the will of God that I should build this large

Orphan Home for Him; so also from the beginning, I was as certain that the whole would be finished as if the home had been already filled.”

The way in which he found out what was God’s will comes out with special clearness in his account of the building of the second home. I ask the reader to study with care the lesson the narrative conveys:

December 5, 1850 – Under these circumstances, I can only pray that the Lord in His tender mercy would not allow Satan to gain an advantage over me. By the grace of God, my heart says, “Lord, if I could be sure that it is Your will that I go forward in this matter, I would do so cheerfully. On the other hand, if I could know that these are vain, foolish, proud thoughts and not from You, I would, by Your grace, hate them and entirely put them aside.”

My hope is in God; He will help and teach me. Judging, however, from His former dealings with me, it would not be a strange thing to me, nor surprising, if He called me to labor still more in this way.

The thoughts about enlarging the orphan work have not come from an abundance of money that has come in. I have had to wait upon God for about seven weeks, while little, very little comparatively, came in. About four times as much was going out as came in. If the Lord had not previously sent me large sums, we would have indeed been distressed.

“Lord, how can Your servant know Your will in this matter? Will You be pleased to teach him?”

December 11 – During the last six days since writing the above, I have been waiting upon God day after day concerning this matter. It has generally been more or less on my heart all the day. When I have been awake at night, it has not been far from my thoughts. Yet all this has been without the least anxiety. I am perfectly calm and quiet respecting it. My soul would be rejoiced to go forward in this service, if I could be sure that the Lord would have me do so; for then, notwithstanding the numberless difficulties, all would be well, and His name would be magnified.

On the other hand, if I were assured that the Lord would have me be satisfied with my present sphere of service, I would not pray about enlarging the work, and by His grace I could cheerfully do it without an effort. He has brought me into such a state of heart that I only desire to please Him in this matter. Moreover, until now I have not spoken about this thing even to my beloved wife, the sharer of my joys, sorrows, and labors for more than twenty years. Nor is it likely that I shall do so for some time to come, for I prefer to wait on the Lord quietly without discussing this subject, in order that I may be kept more easily by His blessing from being influenced by things from without. The burden of my prayer concerning this matter is that the Lord would not allow me to make a mistake and that He would teach me to do His will.

December 26 – Fifteen days have elapsed since I wrote the preceding paragraph. Every day since then I have continued to pray about this matter with a good measure of earnestness by the help of God. There has scarcely been a time during these days when this matter has not been more or less before me in my waking hours. But this is all without even a shadow of anxiety. I converse with no one about it. Until now, I have not even done so with my dear wife. I still refrain from this and deal with God alone about the matter in order that no outward influence and no outward anxiousness keep me from attaining a clear discovery of His will.

I have the fullest and most peaceful assurance that He will clearly show me His will. This evening I have had again a special solemn season for prayer to seek to know the will of God. But while I continue to entreat and ask the Lord that He would not allow me to be deluded in this business, I may say I have scarcely any doubt remaining on my mind that I should go forward in this matter. As this, however, is one of the most momentous steps that I have ever taken, I judge that I cannot go about this matter with too much caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation. I am in no hurry about it. By God's grace, I could wait for years, if this was His will, before even

taking one single step towards this thing or even speaking to anyone about it.

On the other hand, I would set to work tomorrow if the Lord bid me to do so. This calmness of mind, this having no will of my own in the matter, this only wishing to please my heavenly Father in it, this seeking His and not my honor in it – this state of heart, I say, is the fullest assurance to me that my heart is not under a fleshly excitement, and if I am helped thus to go on, I shall know the will of God to the full. But while I write this, I cannot help but add at the same time that I do crave the honor and the glorious privilege to be more and more used by the Lord.

I desire to be allowed to provide scriptural instruction for a thousand orphans, instead of doing so for three hundred. I desire to expound the Holy Scriptures regularly to a thousand orphans, instead of doing so for three hundred. I desire that it may be more abundantly manifested that God is still the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, and He is the living God now as He always was and ever will be, when He simply answers my prayer to provide me with a house for seven hundred orphans and the means to support them.

This last consideration is the most important point in my mind. The Lord's honor is the principal point with me in this whole matter; and because this is the case, if He would be more glorified by not going forward in this business, by His grace I would be perfectly content to give up all thoughts about another Orphan House. Surely, in such a state of mind, obtained by the Holy Spirit, You, oh, my heavenly Father, will not allow Your child to be mistaken, much less deluded. By the help of God, I shall continue further day by day to wait upon Him in prayer concerning this thing, until He shall bid me to act.

January 2, 1851 – A week ago, I wrote the preceding paragraph. During this week, I have still been helped day by day, and more than once every day, to seek the guidance of the Lord about another Orphan House. The burden of my prayer has still been that in His great mercy He would keep me from making a mistake. During the last week, the book of Proverbs has

come in the course of my Scripture reading, and my heart has been refreshed in reference to this subject by the following passages: *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6). By the grace of God, I do acknowledge the Lord in all my ways and in this thing in particular; I have therefore the comfortable assurance that He will direct my paths concerning this part of my service, as to whether I shall be occupied in it or not.

Furthermore, *The perfection of the upright shall guide them* (Proverbs 11:3). By the grace of God, I am upright in this business. My honest purpose is to get glory to God. Therefore, I expect to be guided correctly. Additionally, *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established* (Proverbs 16:3). I do commit my works unto the Lord and therefore expect that my thoughts will be established. My heart is more and more coming to a calm, quiet, and settled assurance that the Lord will choose to use me further in the orphan work. Here, Lord, is Your servant.

Later, when he decided to build two additional houses, Numbers 4 and 5, he writes thus again:

Twelve days have passed since I wrote the last paragraph. Day by day I have still been enabled to wait upon the Lord about enlarging the orphan work, and during the whole of this period, I have also been in perfect peace, which is the result of seeking only the Lord's honor and the temporal and spiritual benefit of my fellow men. By His grace, I could put aside all thoughts about this whole affair without an effort, if I was assured that it is the will of God that I should do so.

On the other hand, I would at once go forward, if He would have it be so. I have still kept this matter entirely to myself. Though it is now about seven weeks since day by day my mind has been more or less occupied with it, and since I have been praying daily about it, yet not one human being knows of it. I have not even mentioned it to my dear wife, in order that by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be influenced by what might be said

to me on the subject. This evening has been particularly set apart for prayer, asking the Lord once more not to allow me to be mistaken in this thing and much less to be deluded by the devil. I have also sought to let all the reasons against building another Orphan House and all the reasons for doing so pass before my mind. Now, for the clearness and definiteness, write them down. . . .

Much, however, as the nine previous reasons weigh on me, yet they would not persuade me if it were not for one more. It is this: After having months to ponder the matter and look at it in all its bearings and with all its difficulties, and then after much prayer, having been finally led to decide on this enlargement, my mind is at peace. The child who has again and again asked his heavenly Father not to allow him to be deluded or make a mistake is at peace, perfectly at peace, concerning this decision. He has the assurance that after much prayer during weeks and months, the decision is the leading of the Holy Spirit. He therefore purposes to go forward, believing that he will not be confounded, for he trusts in God. Many and great may be his difficulties; thousands and ten thousands of prayers may have ascended to God, before the full answer may be obtained, and much exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen that His servant who trusts in Him has not been disappointed.

Prayer and the Glory of God

We have sought more than once to enforce the truth that while we ordinarily assume the reason for our prayers not being heard is that they are not according to the will of God, Scripture warns us to find the cause in ourselves, in our not being in the right state or not asking in the right spirit. The thing may be in full accordance with His will, but the asking, the spirit of the supplicant, might not be; then we are not heard. As the great root of all sin is self and self-seeking, so there is nothing in our more spiritual desires that so effectively hinders God in answering as when we pray for

our own pleasure or glory. To have power and prevail, prayer must ask for the glory of God, and man can only do this as he is living for God's glory.

In George Müller we have one of the most remarkable instances on record of God's Holy Spirit leading a man deliberately and systematically at the beginning of a course of prayer to make the glorifying of God his first and only objective. Let's ponder what he says and learn the lesson God would teach us through him:

Constantly, I had cases brought before me, which proved that one of the things that the children of God needed in our day was to have their faith strengthened.

I longed, therefore, to have something to point my brethren to as a visible proof that our God and Father is the same faithful God as ever He was. He is as willing as ever to prove Himself to be the living God in our day as in former days to *all those that put their trust in him* (Psalm 2:12).

My spirit longed to be instrumental in strengthening their faith by giving them not only instances from the Word of God of His willingness and ability to help all who rely upon Him but to also show them by proofs that He is the same in our day. I knew that the Word of God should be enough, and it was by grace enough for me, but I still felt I should lend a helping hand to my brethren.

I therefore judged myself bound to be the servant of the church of Christ in the particular point that I had obtained mercy, namely, in being able to take God at His Word and rely upon it. The first objective of the work was and is still that God might be magnified by the fact that the orphans under my care are provided with all they need only by prayer and faith without anyone being asked. In this way, it may be seen that God is still faithful and still hears prayer.

These last days I have again prayed much about the Orphan House and have frequently examined my heart that if it were at all my desire to establish it for the sake of gratifying myself, I might discover it. For as I

desire only the Lord's glory, I shall be glad to be instructed through my brother, if the matter is not of Him.

When I began the orphan work in 1835, my chief objective was the glory of God. I wanted to give a practical demonstration as to what could be accomplished simply through prayer and faith. This would benefit the church at large and lead a careless world to see the reality of the things of God by showing them that the living God is still the same living God as He was four thousand years ago. This purpose of mine has been abundantly honored.

Multitudes of sinners have been converted; multitudes of the children of God in all parts of the world have benefited by this work, even as I had anticipated. But the larger the work has grown, the greater has been the blessing, given in the very way where I looked for blessing. The attention of hundreds of thousands has been drawn to the work, and many tens of thousands have come to see it. All this leads me to desire to labor more and more in this way to bring greater glory to the name of the Lord. That He may be looked at, magnified, admired, trusted in, and relied on at all times is my goal in this service – and particularly in this intended enlargement. I am led to this further enlargement so it may be seen how much one poor man, simply by trusting in God, can bring about by prayer. I desire other children of God to be led to carry on the work of God in dependence upon Him and be led increasingly to trust in Him in their individual positions and circumstances.

Prayer and Trust in God

I would be glad to mention other points from Mr. Müller's narrative, but one more must suffice. It is the lesson of firm and unwavering trust in God's promise as the secret of persevering prayer. If once we have, in submission to the teaching of the Spirit in the Word, believed God's promise and believed that the Father has heard us, we must not allow

ourselves to be shaken in our faith by any delay or unfavorable appearances. Müller writes:

The full answer to my daily prayers was far from being realized, yet there was abundant encouragement granted by the Lord to continue in prayer. But suppose far less had come in than was received, even after coming to the conclusion on scriptural grounds with much prayer and self-examination that I ought to go on without wavering in the exercise of faith and patience. All the children of God, when satisfied that anything they bring before God in prayer is according to His will, should continue in believing, expecting, persevering prayer until the blessing is granted.

Likewise, I am now waiting upon God for certain blessings for which I have asked Him daily for ten years and six months without missing one day. Still, the full answer is not yet given concerning the conversion of certain individuals, though in the meantime I have received many thousands of answers to prayer. I have also prayed daily without interruption for the conversion of some individuals for ten years – for others six or seven years, for others from two to three years. Still the answer is not yet granted concerning those persons, while in the meantime, many thousands of my prayers have been answered, and souls converted for whom I had been praying.

I lay particular stress on this for the benefit of those who may suppose that I need only to ask of God and receive at once; or that I might pray concerning anything, and the answer would surely come. One can only expect to obtain answers to prayers that are according to the mind of God. Even then, patience and faith may be exercised for many years, as mine are exercised, in the matter to which I have referred. Yet I am continuing in prayer daily and expecting the answer – so surely expecting the answer that I have often thanked God that He will give it, even though now for nineteen years, faith and patience have thus been exercised. Be encouraged, dear Christians, with fresh earnestness to give yourselves to prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask things which are for the glory of God.

But the most remarkable point is this: the six pounds, six shillings, and six pennies that Scotland supplied me, as far as can be known, completes all the means necessary for fitting and promoting the new Orphan Houses. For six years and eight months, I have been asking the Lord daily to give me the needed funds for this enlargement of the orphan work. This was according to calculations made in the spring of 1861 and appeared to be about fifty thousand pounds. At a later period, it was found to be about fifty-eight thousand pounds. I have now received the total of this amount.

I praise and magnify the Lord for putting this enlargement of the work into my heart and for giving me courage and faith for it. Above all, I praise Him for sustaining my faith day by day without wavering. When the last portion of the money was received, I was no more assured about the whole thing than I was at the time I had not received one single donation towards this large sum. I was at the beginning, after discerning His mind through patient and heart-searching waiting upon God, as fully assured that He would bring it about as if the two houses with their hundreds of orphans were already before me.

I make a few remarks here for the sake of young believers in connection with this subject: (1) Be slow to take new steps in the Lord's service, in your business, or in your families; weigh everything well; weigh all in the light of the Holy Scriptures and in the fear of God. (2) Seek to have no will of your own in order to determine the mind of God regarding any steps you propose taking, so you can honestly say you are willing to do the will of God if He will instruct you. (3) But when you have found out what the will of God is, seek His help, and seek it earnestly, perseveringly, patiently, believingly, expectantly; and you will surely in His own time and way obtain it.

To suppose that we have difficulty only about money would be a mistake. There are hundreds of other wants and difficulties. It is a rare thing that a day occurs without some difficulty or some want, but often there are many difficulties and many wants to be met and overcome the same day. All these

are met by prayer and faith, our universal remedy; we have never been disappointed. Patient, persevering, believing prayer that is offered up to God in the name of the Lord Jesus has always brought the blessing sooner or later. By God's grace, I do not despair of obtaining any blessing, provided I can be sure it would be for any real good and for the glory of God.

¹² Excerpts from *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller*, 4 Volumes; London: J. Nisbet & Co., 1895.

Andrew Murray – A Brief Biography

Andrew Murray had a rich religious ancestry. His grandfather (Andrew) left the occupation of being a shepherd in order to work in the flour mills of Scotland. He was a godly man, and his deathbed prayers influenced his son John to enter the work of the ministry. John became an ordained minister in Scotland. John's younger brother, Andrew, became licensed in the Church of Scotland and was ordained by the Presbytery of Aberdeen. He became a missionary with the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

While in South Africa, Andrew met the woman who would become his wife – Maria Susanna Stegmann. She was of German ancestry, and her great-grandfather was a Huguenot who had been driven out of France when the Edict of Nantes, which had granted the French Protestants some religious liberty, was revoked. Andrew and Susanna's first son was named John, and their second son, Andrew, is the subject of this brief biography and the author of this book.

Andrew Murray was born in South Africa on May 9, 1828. His father often read stories of revivals to his family. When Andrew was ten years old, he and his brother John were sent to Scotland to be educated. They stayed with their uncle John, the Scottish minister. In 1840, William Burns, the revivalist, spoke in Aberdeen, Scotland. He stayed with their uncle John while there, and Burns' preaching, along with his long, impassioned prayers for revival and the salvation of the lost greatly impacted young Andrew.

Andrew and John went on to attend Marischal College in Aberdeen when Andrew was almost seventeen years old, from which they graduated with the master of arts degree in 1845. From there they studied theology and refreshed themselves in the Dutch language at the University of Utrecht in Holland. Rationalism was popular then. Mr. Murray in South Africa had

written to his sons in Holland to be careful of the teaching. In a letter to his sons, dated April 23, 1845, he wrote: “You may soon hear sentiments broached among the students, and even by professors, on theological subjects which may startle you, but be cautious in receiving them, by whatever names or number of names they may be supported. Try to act like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11). By studying your Bibles and your own hearts I doubt not, under the guidance of the blessed Spirit, you will be led into all truth. . . . Whatever books may be recommended to you, be sure not to neglect the study of the Holy Scriptures. This must be a daily exercise, and must be attended to with humility and much prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Reminiscent of George Whitefield and the Wesleys and their Holy Club at Oxford, the Murray brothers joined a similar group at the University of Utrecht. It was called *Sechor Dabar* (Remember the Word), and its purpose was “to promote the study of the subjects required for the ministerial calling in the spirit of the Revival.” The members of this group were often mocked, but they desired to live fully for God. On May 9, 1848, John and Andrew Murray were ordained by the Hague Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church, and they returned to South Africa to begin their ministry work.

At the age of twenty-one, Andrew was given the responsibility of being the only minister in a 50,000 square-mile territory in remote South Africa. For weeks at a time, Andrew would ride on horseback to preach to the Dutch-speaking farmers. Andrew married Emma Rutherford, the daughter of an English pastor, in 1856. They had eight children together – four boys and four girls.

In 1860, Andrew Murray accepted the pastorate of a church in Worcester, South Africa, where they heard some speakers tell stories of revivals in North American and Europe. Murray and others prayed earnestly for revival, and experienced somewhat of a revival, though not as Murray had expected. He became increasingly interested in sanctification and what is now commonly called “the holiness movement.”

Andrew Murray became the pastor of a church in Cape Town in 1864, and then became a pastor in Wellington in 1877. Also in 1877, Murray traveled to the United States and spent five weeks learning about Sunday schools, Moody's revivals, and the Dutch Reformed Church in America. Murray also attended the Presbyterian Council in Scotland and spoke elsewhere throughout the land, including visits to Holland and Germany.

Murray returned to South Africa where he became increasingly involved in Christian education and in training people for ministry. Murray's speaking schedule over the past few years led to an interesting and influential time in his life. His voice toward the end of 1879 began to be strained, and this difficulty continued for about two years, where he was not often able to speak publicly. He would write out his message at times, and it would be read to the congregation by others. Andrew tried visiting various doctors, traveling to drier climates, and more, but his throat did not improve. He did spend more time studying and writing, though.

After finding only temporary and inadequate improvements, Andrew Murray began studying more about healing by faith. In 1881, Murray was in London. He had wanted to be able to go to Switzerland to visit with a man he had met earlier in life and who was now the head of an institute for faith healing. Murray learned that this man, Otto Stockmaier, was then in London. They met together and discussed biblical passages related to healing and faith. Stockmaier urged Murray to attend the meetings of an American, Dr. Boardman, who had written on the topic of healing by faith and who then had an institute in London. Murray visited the institute and remained there for three weeks. He was taught that healing by faith was not just to heal the body, but to help one on to holiness and a life of consecration to God.

Murray's voice improved, and he wrote and spoke much on healing by faith after that. He did occasionally have less serious voice trouble later in life at times, and seemed not to place such an emphasis on healing by faith

for everyone, but his experience and study certainly caused him to believe in the power and possibility of healing by faith for the rest of his life.

Andrew Murray continued writing and speaking. He was a speaker at the famous annual holiness Keswick conference. He was chosen to be the moderator of his church synod six different times. He wrote over 200 books and pamphlets, many on holiness and the deeper life. His books include *Absolute Surrender*, *Humility*, *Abide in Christ*, *The Deeper Christian Life*, *The School of Obedience*, *Waiting on God*, *The Ministry of Intercession*, *The New Life*, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, *The Two Covenants and the Second Blessing*, and more.

Andrew Murray spent his last moments on earth praying and rejoicing in the goodness of God. He passed from this life on January 18, 1917, at the age of eighty-eight.

OceanofPDF.com

We love hearing from our readers. Please contact us at www.anekopress.com/questions-comments with any questions, comments, or suggestions.

With Christ in the School of Prayer – Andrew Murray

Revisions Copyright © 2018

Originally published in 1885

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the publisher.

Scripture quotations are taken from the Jubilee Bible, copyright © 2000, 2001, 2010, 2013 by Life Sentence Publishing, Inc. Used by permission of Life Sentence Publishing, Inc., Abbotsford, Wisconsin. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked KJV is taken from the public domain King James Version

Cover Design: J. Martin

Cover Photography: Galyna Andrushko/Shutterstock

eBook Icon: Icons Vector/Shutterstock

Editors: Sheila Wilkinson and Ruth Clark

Printed in the United States of America

Aneko Press

www.anekopress.com

Aneko Press, Life Sentence Publishing, and our logos are trademarks of

Life Sentence Publishing, Inc.

203 E. Birch Street

P.O. Box 652

Abbotsford, WI 54405

RELIGION / Christian Life / Prayer

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-62245-565-2

eBook ISBN: 978-1-62245-566-9

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

OceanofPDF.com