

THE
LORD'S PRAYER
AND OTHER RELATED ARTICLES

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The Lord's Prayer

1887 – 1903

Introduction

Signs of the Times, February 24, 1887

Matthew 6:9

WHEN Christ was on earth He prayed often, sometimes spending whole nights in prayer. Of course none of these prayers are recorded.

We have, however, the record of several prayers which He offered in public, prominent among which are the prayer at the grave of Lazarus, and the one for His disciples, just before His betrayal and crucifixion.

But neither of these is referred to by the term, “the Lord’s prayer.” That prayer is the brief petition which our Saviour gave as a model for all prayers. And a model it is indeed. It comprehends everything that it is possible for man to desire from God. There are no circumstances or conditions in life that are not covered by this petition.

Yet this must be understood as applying to followers of Christ, and not to unconverted persons, even though they be convicted of sin. This will appear in the course of our comments upon the prayer.

There is no other form of words ever devised which can be used as a prayer over and over again for years, and still retain its freshness. This is simply because this one was given by One who knew man’s needs.

But our Saviour did not design that His disciples should simply repeat the words which He gave them. This is evident from the introduction:

Matthew 6

⁹ After this manner therefore pray.

It was designed as we have said, as a comprehensive model. Let us consider it well, that we may henceforth pray with more of the Spirit and the understanding.

1. The Lord's Prayer

Signs of the Times, November 17, 1887

Matthew 6:9-13

THE Sabbath-school lesson for November 26, being on the Lord's Prayer, we know not what better we can do for the Sabbath-school scholars and the general readers than to reprint the following, which we wrote as a comment on the International lessons, when the Lord's Prayer was the subject.

The Model Prayer

Verses 9-13 of *Matthew* contain the model prayer. In introducing it the Saviour said,

Matthew 6

⁹ After this manner therefore pray you.

This indicates not that the prayer which follows is to be invariably used, although it is very often fitting to use it, but that it should serve as a model for our petitions. Since it is the model petition, framed by divine wisdom, it must necessarily, and does, cover everything which man needs, both temporal and spiritual.

It is because of this comprehensiveness that the Lord's Prayer may be repeated by all of people, both young and old, in all time. It never grows old. It is the only prayer ever written which was worthy of being repeated by others than the one who composed it. This is because it is the only prayer ever composed for man by a divine being.

Prayer in which petitions made by men are used, must necessarily be largely mechanical, and therefore destitute of the real essence of prayer, which is the sincere desire of the individual at the present time. When a man is in extremity he will have no difficulty in forming his own petition, and he would have no use for a petition made by someone else. A prayer-book would have been of very little use to Peter when he was

sinking in the Sea of Galilee.

Our Father

Matthew 6

⁹ Our Father...

From this prayer we learn that we are to come to God not as to a judge or a governor who is to be appeased, but as to a father who is all sympathy and love.

Many people have entertained a wrong idea from the parable of the unjust judge, recorded in *Luke* 18:1-7. The unjust judge at first refused to grant the request of the poor widow, yet he finally granted it because of her importunity.

The idea too commonly drawn from this is, that if we persevere in prayer God will relent and answer our petitions; but the parable is not designed to compare God with the unjust judge, but to make a contrast. If the unjust judge who neither feared God nor regarded man, would grant the widow's petition, because of her importunity, then most surely God will avenge His own elect who cry earnestly unto Him.

This parable and the first two words of the Lord's Prayer are sufficient in themselves to give Christians the most perfect confidence when they pray. Add to this the fact that we have a merciful and faithful High Priest who is...

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ ...touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was tempted in all points like as we are...

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

We have seen it stated that the term "Our Father" implies that all men are brethren, because children of the same Father. But this is a mistake. All men are not children of the same father. Paul says that we are all...

Ephesians 2

³ ...by nature the children of wrath,

because we are...

² ...the children of disobedience.

And as the devil is the author of sin, Christ directly charged the disobedient Jews with whom He was talking, with being the children of the devil.

John 8

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

And in *Matthew* 13:38-42 He expressly states that those who do iniquity “are the children of the wicked one.”

The apostle John also speaks of those who keep the commandments, and of those who transgress them, and says,

1 John 3

¹⁰ By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil,

—thus showing a direct contrast between those who have God for their Father, and those whose father is Satan. Moreover, we learn in *Romans* 8:14-17 and *Galatians* 4:4-7 that people become the children of God by adoption, and that the mark or seal of adoption is the Holy Spirit.

But if they were by nature the children of God, they would not need to be adopted. Paul also declares that:

Romans 8

⁹ If any man have not the Spirit Christ, he is none of His.

Your Kingdom Come

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

This is nothing less than a prayer for Christ's second coming, for His coming and kingdom are associated together.

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.

When He was on earth, Christ told His disciples, who thought that His kingdom should immediately appear, that He was like:

Luke 19

¹² A certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return,

—thus indicating His return to Heaven to receive His kingdom, and His second coming to gather the subjects of it. In harmony with this we find in *Daniel 7:13-14* a prophetic description of Christ appearing before the Father, and receiving:

Daniel 7

¹⁴ ...dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him.

And Christ himself said that when He should come in His glory with all His holy angels with Him, then would be the time that He should sit on the throne of His glory, and that He would then say to the righteous,

Matthew 25

³⁴ Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

This kingdom is entirely distinct from the kingdom of grace, upon the throne of which God the Father sits, and before which Christ ministers as priest. That kingdom has already

come, and if that were the kingdom referred to in the Lord's Prayer, it would be out of place to use that petition. But the kingdom referred to there is the one of which the faithful followers of God are at present only heirs, waiting for the promised possession.

Your Will Be Done

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

The will of God is simply the law of God, see *Psalms* 40:8 and *Romans* 2:17-20, where we learn that those who know the will of God are they who are instructed out of the law. How the will of God is done in Heaven is told in:

Psalm 103

²⁰ Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven will be when all the works of the devil had been destroyed, and when the new heavens and the new earth have been given, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Then will be fulfilled the words of the prophet:

Isaiah 60

²¹ Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Therefore the uttering of this part of the Lord's Prayer, if the petitioner is sincere, indicates a complete submission to the will of God, and an earnest desire to keep every portion of the ten commandments.

Forgive Us Our Debts

Matthew 6

¹² And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

In this is implied what is plainly stated in:

Matthew 6

¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

¹⁵ But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Therefore it is utterly useless for anyone to use this prayer, or to expect God to pardon his sins, unless he freely forgives all who have trespassed against Him. Paul says:

Ephesians 4

³² Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

This is the merest glance at the Lord's Prayer, but it is all that we have space for. To give it any adequate study, not less than an entire lesson should be spent upon each clause of the prayer.

But perhaps even with this glance some may see a depth of meaning in the prayer which they have never before realized, and may be led to study it more carefully until they can pray it...

1 Corinthians 14

¹⁵ ...with the spirit and with the understanding.

2. Our Father (1887)

Signs of the Times, February 24, 1887

Matthew 6:9

Matthew 6

⁹ Our Father...

WHAT tenderness is expressed in those words! What infinite condescension it reveals on the part of God to allow poor, frail mortals to address Him thus. His greatness is unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Before Him,

Isaiah 40

¹⁵ The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing.

¹⁶ And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

¹⁷ All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.

Psalms 104

³ [He walks] upon the wings of the wind.

Nahum 1

³ [He] has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

And yet this awful God has the tenderness of a parent, and His ear is open to the supplications of those who whisper, even in faintest accents, “Our Father;” for we are told that:

Psalms 103

¹³ Like as a father pities His children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.

Although God is the...

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ ...high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy,

He has assured us that He dwells with him that is...

¹⁵ ...of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Thus the first words of the Lord's prayer bring us into the most intimate relation with the great Creator.

Even in the first word alone there is a great truth conveyed. It shows the relation of those who can call God Father. They are brethren, having common hopes and needs. Even in his secret devotions, the Christian is not to make his petitions wholly personal. He is not to be shut up to his own needs, but is to remember that he is only one of a great family, whose welfare ought to be with him scarcely second to his own. Paul wrote to the Romans:

Romans 1

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.

It is possible for a person to be selfish even in his petitions for overcoming grace; but it will be found in that case, as in all others, that selfishness defeats itself. Every Christian will bear witness to the fact that the richest blessings have come to him when, even though almost overwhelmed with a sense of his own need, he has coupled his petition for pardon and strength, with a request for a blessing upon others besides himself. And so, even in the closet, we are to say, "Our Father."

It is not everybody, however, who can say, "Our Father." We hear much of the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," but the Bible says nothing about such a thing. All men are not sons of God. Paul reminds the Ephesians of the time before they were converted, saying,

Ephesians 2

¹² That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the

covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

In the first verses he shows still more plainly that men are not by nature the children of God. He says:

Ephesians 2

¹ And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

² Wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience;

³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Again the apostle warns the Ephesian brethren against the sins to which they had formerly been addicted, saying,

Ephesians 5

⁶ For because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience.

Colossians 3

⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience.

But the plainest statement of all, that men are not by nature the children of God, was given by our Saviour himself. To the wicked Jews who said,

John 8

⁴¹ We have one Father, even God,

He said:

⁴² If God were your Father, you would love me; for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me.

⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.

Putting these texts together, we learn that all who know not God are the children of wrath; they are the children, or recipients, of wrath, because they are children of disobedience because they are the children of the devil. Now a person cannot at the same time be a child of God and a child of Satan. Nor is it necessary that one should be as hardened as were the Jews to whom Christ spoke, in order that they may be called children of Satan.

John 8

³⁴ Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin.

If a person is a child of disobedience and of darkness, he is not a child of God.

Romans 3

²³ All have sinned.

And therefore none are by nature children of God. How do people become children of God? If they are not natural children, it must be by adoption. So Paul says:

Romans 8

¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

¹⁵ For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba [Father], Father.

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

In like manner he writes to the Galatians:

Galatians 4

⁴ But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

⁷ Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In the above text it will be noticed that the Spirit is the pledge of our adoption. It is called the Spirit of adoption, because only those who have it are sons of God. Indeed, its reception constitutes us sons of God. If we are children, then we are heirs of God; and so Paul says that the Spirit is:

Ephesians 1

¹⁴ ...the earnest [or pledge] of our inheritance.

If we are heirs of God, we are joint heirs with Christ. All that Christ has or is to have, we shall have also. He is the Son of God by birth; the only begotten Son of God. Angels are the sons of God¹ by creation. Adam was a son of God in the same way, only a little lower than the angels. If he had not sinned against God, his descendants would like him have been sons of God. But he transferred his allegiance to Satan, and so no man from Adam down can be a son of God except by adoption.

John 3

³ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

From this brief study of the Scripture it is clearly evident that since the Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father," it cannot be used by one who is not a child of God. For those who are in a state of nature, and thus children of wrath, there is another prayer. It is,

Luke 18

¹³ God be merciful to me, a sinner.

They cannot address the Creator as Father, but only as God,

¹ **Job 38:** ⁷ When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

the Judge who, however, is able to save as well as to destroy. If they have once been adopted into the family of God, and have lost their heirship through sin, the same prayer is applicable. With David, under like circumstances, they may cry:

Psalm 51

¹ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

¹² Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free Spirit.

But only those with whose spirits the Spirit of God bears witness that they are children of God, can with confidence repeat the tender words, “Our Father.”

Yet not a long time must the sinner lie a suppliant at the throne of God, unable to utter those words. God is longing for the world to become reconciled to Him. When the prodigal son, who had forfeited his right to a place in his father’s house, said,

Luke 15

¹⁸ I will arise, and go unto my father,

—not as a son but as a servant seeking mercy, his father met him while he was yet a long way off. He met him not as a master, but as a father. The humble prodigal did not have time to call himself a servant before he was embraced as a son.

And so, although no one in a state of nature can properly repeat the Lord’s prayer, at the first sincere petition for mercy, which the repentant sinner puts up to God, the Spirit of God is sent forth into his heart, and he becomes a son, and can confidently and joyfully say, “Father, Father.”

3. Our Father (1905)

Medical Missionary, September 1905

Original title: The Lord's Prayer

JESUS taught His followers to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven." Much has been said on the term "Our Father," as indicating our common brotherhood with our fellowmen; but that which it should above all impress on our minds is the fact that both Jesus and we have one Father.

"Our Father" is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." *2 Corinthians* 11:31. When, therefore, we from the heart, in childlike trustfulness, look up to God and say:

Matthew 6

⁹ Our Father, who is in heaven...

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

¹² And forgive us our trespasses.

We should remember that the fulfillment of our request is as certain to follow as if made by Jesus Christ in person. We have the same right in the Father's house and at His table that Jesus has, and the same right to share in the inheritance.

If we are children of God, then we are heirs,

Romans 8

¹⁷ ...heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

4. Our Father, in Heaven

Present Truth, June 26, 1902

Matthew 6

⁹ Our Father, who is in Heaven.

Who is He?

Jeremiah 10

¹⁰ He is the living God, and an everlasting King.

He is more than a king; He is the King of kings. He is King only of kings; there is no lower rank in His kingdom. Then what does it mean when we call Him our Father? It means that we claim our birthright as kings. All who receive Christ receive power, the right, to become sons of God.

Revelation 1

⁵ [He] loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

⁶ And has made us kings and priests unto God.

Being sons of God, not subjects merely, we must be kings. Do you see what rights and privileges this confers upon you? It places you...

Ephesians 1

²¹ ...above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.

And you can begin at once and demonstrate this marvelous authority given you, by controlling yourself. God has given to each one the right and the power to be master, first of himself, then of everything in the universe that would stand in the way of this perfect control over yourself.

All creation is the inheritance and the servant of the man who knows that he is king solely by virtue of his being a son of the Almighty God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

5. In Heaven

Signs of the Times, March 3, 1887

Matthew 6

⁹ ...who is in Heaven.

THE fact that God is in Heaven is often used to indicate His power and majesty. The expression occurring in the model prayer indicates that whoever prays should recognize the greatness of the Being whom He addresses.

Hebrews 11

⁶ He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

We quote a few texts to show the comprehensiveness of the expression, “who is in Heaven.”

Psalms 103

¹⁹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the Heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.

Psalms 115

³ But our God is in the Heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased.

These texts show the power of God. The same thing is found in:

2 Chronicles 20

⁶ O Lord God of our fathers, are you not God in Heaven? and do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in your hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand you?

Whenever it is designed to indicate the power and majesty of God, His dwelling-place in Heaven is mentioned.

Psalms 11

⁴ The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in Heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.

Here God's dwelling-place in Heaven is mentioned to show His omniscience.

Jeremiah 23

²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the Lord.

Here the omnipresence of God is indicated, as also in:

1 Kings 8

²⁷ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the Heaven and Heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built.

And also:

Isaiah 66

¹ Thus says the Lord, The Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

Ecclesiastes 5

² Be not rash with your mouth and let not your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in Heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

Here the fact that God is in Heaven is given as a reason for sobriety and carefulness of speech. Thus we find that the expression in the Lord's Prayer, "Who is in Heaven," stands for a recognition of the power, the majesty, the omnipotence, and the omniscience of God. All these things should be borne in mind when we approach the throne of grace. This thought will tend to produce reverence and awe.

Multiplication of words and "vain repetitions," for which Christ condemned the heathen, arise from the fact that the petitioner thinks more of himself than he does of the one whom he is addressing. The heathen gods were so contemptible that the heathen worshiper could not help thinking more of himself than of his god; for heathen worship, in its inception, was self-worship. See *Romans* 1:21-23.

But the God whom we worship sits upon the circle of the

heavens, and he who has a just sense of His greatness will come with reverence into His presence, and will confine his words to just the things which he needs.

Hallowed Be Your Name

Matthew 6

⁹ ...Hallowed be your name.

This follows as a natural consequence of that which precedes. The one who remembers the words,

Deuteronomy 33

²⁶ There is none like unto the God of Jerusalem, who rides upon the heavens in your help, and in His excellency on the sky,

–will of necessity:

Deuteronomy 28

⁵⁸ ...fear that glorious and fearful name, THE LORD YOUR GOD.

6. Our Father (1905)

Medical Missionary, November 1905

Luke 11:1-2

Luke 11

¹ 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, as John also taught his disciples.

The same request is as pertinent now as it was then,

Romans 8

²⁶ For we know not how to pray as we ought [and therefore] the Spirit also helps our infirmities,

—not only by making intercession for us, but also by creating desires in our hearts, and putting right words into our mouths.

Men who have never had any verbal instruction, instinctively give expression to their wants to God, especially if they are in deep trouble, because the Spirit teaches all; but the most complete instruction that the Spirit has ever given concerning prayer is found in the model prayer which Jesus by the Spirit gave to His disciples.

While we are not confined to the exact form of words which Jesus uttered in response to the request of the disciples, we need to study them much; for they are so comprehensive that they cover the needs of every person in the world, in all conceivable circumstances; and no prayer is complete that does not in effect contain the petitions expressed in the Lord's prayer.

First of all we have:

Our Father

Luke 11

² And He said unto them, When you pray, say, Our Father...

No heathen worshiper could ever address these words to a god of wood or stone. Only he can use them who recognizes a God so great that all created beings are His offspring, and whose relationship as Father is so close and constant that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”

It is to a Father, not a king nor a judge, that we approach in prayer. Even though we know that we are coming to a “throne of grace,” the only thing that does or can draw us, and cause us to “come boldly,” is the all-absorbing thought that our Father sits upon it.

Afterward, when a sense of His tenderness as a Father has led us to confide in Him, and to pour out our hearts before Him, we exultingly proclaim Him king, because that is our assurance that to Him belongs power to do for us all that His love designs for us.

When we with understanding hearts say “our Father,” we feel the confidence and rest and comfort of the “everlasting arms” that are underneath us, clasping us to His bosom.

But there is nothing selfish in true prayer. God is “our” Father. There are crises in our lives, as when Jesus was in the garden, when the urgency of the case, and our extreme danger or need, shut out the consciousness of everything except our individual self and God. Then we can say only “my Father.”

But on all ordinary occasions we are to remember that we are only one of many, all of whom have equal rights to claim God as their Father. The one “God over all”², is the...

Ephesians 4

⁶ ...Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

This thought is the basis of all real missionary effort; for any work done for heathen, either at home or abroad, is effective

² **Romans 9:** ⁵ Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

only as it is prompted by the loving consciousness that they are our brothers.

When...

John 1

¹⁸ ...the only begotten Son...

Luke 19

¹⁰ ...[came] to seek and to save that which was lost,

it was with these words to the Father:

Hebrews 2 [Psalm 22:22]

¹² I will declare your name unto my brethren.

All who are...

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ ...partakers of flesh and blood,

are acknowledged by Christ as His brothers. Instead of feeling that His unsullied goodness gives Him superior claims on the Father's love, He gladly makes known that the Father loves us even as He loves Him.

If at any time we feel that the wickedness of any fallen men makes them inferior to us, we put ourselves above the Lord, and really separate ourselves from God's family, in that we cannot then unreservedly say "our Father."

There is in the first two words of the Lord's prayer a world of instruction and of admonition. If we always followed this teaching of the Spirit in our prayers, every prayer would be a consecration to missionary work.

In all this there is no denial of the fact that the great majority of the world do not know God as their Father, and do not acknowledge Him as such; and that by our acceptance of this truth we are drawn nearer to Him. But those who are nearest to Him, instead of boasting of it, or feeling that there is a great gulf between them and those who have not an acquaint-

tance with God, are, like Christ, most conscious that the prodigal sons are their brethren.

Who is in Heaven

Luke 11

² Our Father who is in heaven...

Psalm 119

³ Our God is in the heavens; He has done whatsoever He has pleased.

The fact that our Father is in heaven is the assurance that He has all power, and can do whatsoever He will.

1 Chronicles 29

¹⁰ Blessed be You, Lord God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever.

¹¹ Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is yours.

Note that the Scriptures will not let us lose sight of the fact that this mighty God in the heavens, who inhabits eternity, is our Father; and thus far in our prayer, although we know that He is King, that view of God is swallowed up in the one that He is our Father.

The thought that our Father is in heaven is not designed, however, to cause us to feel that He is far from any one of us.

Isaiah 57

¹⁵ [He who dwells] in the high and holy place [dwells] with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.

Acts 17

²⁷ [He is] not far from every one of us.

Because:

²⁸ In Him we live, and move, and are.

Jeremiah 23

²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill the heaven and earth? says the Lord.

So whether we ascend into heaven, or lie in the depths of the earth, or fly on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there the Father's hand leads us, and His right hand holds us.

Psalm 139

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

In life, in death, in dark and light,
All are in God's care;
Sound the black abyss, pierce the deep of night,
And He is there!³

This thought is enough for us to meditate upon, and to mold our prayers for a month, when we can learn more of how to pray.

³ John Greenleaf Whittier, Poem: *My Soul and I*, 1847.

7. The Holy Name

Medical Missionary, December 1905
Luke 11:2

Luke 11

² Hallowed be your name.

AN essential element in all true prayer is recognition of the goodness and the greatness of God. The more we know of God, the more understandingly and confidently we can pray to Him.

Hebrews 11

⁶ Without faith it is impossible to please Him for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Satan is always ready to try to discourage people with the very truths of Scripture that were written for our comfort; and too often he succeeds. So he tries to frighten us away from God by the thought of His holiness. The sinful one says:

“I dare not come to the Lord: He is so holy, and I am so vile, that He could not have anything to do with me.”

We must learn that just because God is absolute goodness, He receives sinners. Only the wicked turn from the wicked, and point the finger of scorn at them. The good are pitiful and merciful. So the name of the Lord is:

Exodus 34

⁶ The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

When the psalmist, in his extremity and desolation, called on the Lord, he said:

Psalms 22

⁵ But You are holy, O You that inhabits the praises of Israel.

God's holiness is the only hope of fallen humanity.

Proverbs 18

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples went everywhere preaching always in "the Name." When the lame man at the gate of the temple had risen at Peter's command:

Acts 3

⁶ In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,

...Peter preached Jesus to the wondering multitude, saying:

¹⁶ His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong.

The next day he said to the council:

Acts 4

¹⁰ In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, even in Him, does this man stand here before you whole.

From this last text we learn that Jesus himself is His name. "Jesus" means Saviour, and that is what Jesus of Nazareth is. So God's name is His own character, His own being; and His name is in Christ, in whose name we pray.

Therefore in coming to God and presenting petitions "in the name of Jesus," it is as though Christ came to the Father in person, making that request. God cannot reject any such request made in sincerity, for to do so would be to dishonor His own name.

Even among men the name stands for the person. If a business man breaks his word, or fails to meet his obligations, then his name is no longer of any value. The prophet Jeremiah applied this principle to the Lord when, having acknowledged his sin and the sins of the people, he boldly said:

Jeremiah 14

²¹ Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us.

This is in reality what we all say to the Lord when we say in our prayers, "Hallowed be your name." It is an appeal to the Lord to remember His name and His covenant:

Exodus 34

⁷ ...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,

—and not to disgrace His name, but to honor it by doing all that it stands for. But this reminder to the Lord is not on His account, but on our own, for it serves to remind us that:

2 Timothy 2

¹³ He cannot deny himself.

Thus we are taught by the Lord Jesus that in true prayer there can be no shadow whatever of doubt. We are not to pray, and then to wonder whether or not God has listened to our petition, or will answer it. At the very beginning of every prayer we are to express our perfect confidence that God will certainly give us all that we ask for in the name of Jesus, and...

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

The least doubt in prayer is to deny God, and to place Him, in our own minds, on a level with the gods of the heathen; for it is a denial that...

Hebrews 11

⁶ ...He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

His name is holy, and must remain so, and therefore we come with the boldness of absolute trust, making our requests known to God. How natural and easy, therefore, is it to:

Psalm 30 [Psalm 97:12]

⁴ Give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness,
even before we make our request.

8. Your Kingdom Come (1887)

Signs of the Times, March 10, 1887

Matthew 6:10

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

IN THIS brief petition is contained one of the most comprehensive requests ever made by mortal man. Thousands have repeated the simple phrase thoughtlessly, and thousands who have pronounced the words with all the reverence possible for them, have had very limited ideas of what they were asking for. Someone has well written:

“Your kingdom come;” thus day by day
We lift our hands to God, and pray;
But who has ever duly weighed
The meaning of those words he said?⁴

Let us try to weigh the meaning of the words, that we may utter them more intelligently. It is certain that if we know the full meaning of the petition, we shall not lightly make use of it.

A Future Kingdom

First, we will notice that the Lord’s prayer shows the kingdom to be still future. That prayer is for all Christians; it is a model for us, just as much as it was for the personal followers of Christ. We are to pray for the kingdom of God to come; but that would be out of place if the kingdom were already set up.

That it was not set up in the days of Christ’s first advent, is shown by the question which His disciples asked as they stood upon the Mount of Olives, just before he was taken out of their sight. Said they,

⁴ *Unknown*, circa 1840.

Acts 1

⁶ Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Christ did not say, “It has already been restored,” but:

⁷ It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power.

That is, it is not for the disciples to know when the kingdom will come; but they are to pray for it; if they knew that the time for the kingdom were fixed, it would be useless to pray for it. That God has not made known the time of the coming kingdom, is shown by the statement that he has put it “in His own power.” He is not under obligations to set up the kingdom at any specified time, for He has not appointed any; it is all within His own power.

Many people have the idea that:

Ephesians 5

⁵ ...the kingdom of Christ and of God,

is a spiritual kingdom, that it is simply the reign of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. It is true that the gospel plan is termed a kingdom, as in:

Colossians 1

¹³ Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.

Revelation 1

⁹ I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

But that kingdom,—the kingdom of grace,—began as soon as man fell, as soon as he had need of:

Titus 2

¹¹ The grace of God which brings salvation.

But the kingdom referred to in the Lord’s prayer is, as we have seen, still future; consequently that kingdom cannot be

the gospel. Moreover, the apostle James says:

James 2

⁵ Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He has promised to them that love Him?

Here he speaks of a kingdom that is promised to those who love the Lord,—a kingdom of which they are heirs through faith. It is this kingdom for whose coming we are to pray.

What the Kingdom Is

When Adam was created, he was made king of the earth, as is shown by these words:

Genesis 1

²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

This dominion was forfeited by the fall, and the world passed into the hands of the one who had conquered Adam—Satan,—who is now...

2 Corinthians 4

⁴ ...god of this world.

Not that God has no control over the earth; for even when He gave the dominion to Adam, He did not relinquish any part of His own universal dominion; but Satan took as much of the dominion as was given to Adam. He is not able, however, to go beyond the bounds which God sets for him:

Job 1

¹² And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.

Job 2

⁶ And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in your hand; but save his life.

When David was king over Israel, God promised him that:

2 Samuel 7

¹⁶ ...your throne shall be established forever.

This promise was often repeated, and God said,

Psalms 89

³⁴ My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

³⁵ Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

³⁶ His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.

³⁷ It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.

Yet notwithstanding this promise, it was not long before the whole kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and the people were taken into captivity; and although many of the people were afterward allowed to return to their own land, the kingdom was never restored. The kings who afterward reigned in Jerusalem were simply the creatures of the Roman power, which controlled Judea and all the rest of the civilized world.

But David himself, it seems, never expected that his throne should be established forever with earthly monarchs upon it. He understood that Christ was the one referred to, who should rule over the kingdom. So Peter, after quoting David's words in *Psalms* 16:8-10, said:

Acts 2

²⁹ Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day.

³⁰ Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, ac-

according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

³¹ He seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [the grave], neither His flesh did see corruption.

Christ, then, is the one who is to...

Acts 1

⁶ ...restore again the kingdom to Israel.

It is to be a literal kingdom for He is to sit upon the throne of David. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she should be the mother of Jesus, he said:

Luke 1

³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David,

³³ And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

The coming kingdom must, therefore be as literal a kingdom as was that of David. The kingdom is, however, to be different, in that it will be perfect and sinless. Said the prophet, addressing Christ by inspiration:

Micah 4

⁸ And you, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

And the Lord himself, in His promise to David, said:

2 Samuel 7

¹⁰ Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more.

These two texts teach us that the dominion of Christ is to be

the same as that given to Adam:

Micah 4

⁸ ...the first dominion,

—that it will be the earth in its Eden beauty and freedom from the oppression of sin. And so we read the words of Peter, who, after speaking of the fire which shall melt the earth, and shall destroy sin and sinners out of it, says,

2 Peter 3

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

This promise is recorded in:

Isaiah 65

¹⁷ For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

¹⁹ And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

²⁰ There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.

²¹ And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

²² They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and my elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

²³ They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.

²⁴ And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the ser-

pent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

Now read the parallel passage in:

Amos 9

¹³ Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that sows seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

¹⁴ And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

¹⁵ And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, says the Lord thy God.

Then read:

¹¹ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, says the Lord that does this.

You can see that this new heavens and new earth is in the time when the Lord has restored the kingdom to Israel. So we learn that when we pray, "Your kingdom come," we are simply praying for God to set up His own reign of righteousness in the earth made new.

Setting Up of the Kingdom

But let not the subject be dismissed with this simple statement of the truth. Around the fulfillment of this promise cluster the grandest and most tremendously important events. That kingdom is ushered in by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul indicates in his charge to Timothy:

2 Timothy 4

¹ I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom;

² Preach the word.

This kingdom Christ receives before He returns to earth; for He himself compared himself and kingdom to a certain nobleman that...

Luke 19

¹² ...went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

See the account of His receiving this kingdom, in:

Daniel 7

¹³ I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.

¹⁴ And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

So it is, that when Christ comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, He will be sitting upon the throne of His glory, and to the righteous He will say:

Matthew 25

³⁴ Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

This again shows that the kingdom which the saints are to inherit is the dominion of the earth. In this kingdom righteousness, and that alone shall dwell.

2 Peter 3

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

The prophet says of that time:

Isaiah 60

²¹ Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.

Read the verses preceding this one, and then read the 21st chapter of *Revelation*, the last verse of which says:

Revelation 21

²⁷ And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This state of righteousness will not be brought about by the conversion of all men, for we read that as the end approaches,

Matthew 25

¹² Iniquity shall abound,

and that:

2 Timothy 3

¹³ Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.

And that in the days when the Son of man shall be revealed, it shall be as it was in the days of Noah and of Lot:

Matthew 24

³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,

³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Luke 17

²⁶ And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

²⁷ They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the

ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

²⁸ Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built;

²⁹ But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

³⁰ Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

So when God gives to Christ the heathen for this inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, for a possession, the first thing He does is to rule them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalm 2

⁸ Ask of me, and I shall give You the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Says the prophet:

Isaiah 13

⁹ Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.

And we also read that when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels, it will be...

2 Thessalonians 1

⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;

⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power;

¹⁰ When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.

Thus we learn that to pray, "Your kingdom come," is to pray for the coming of the Lord to destroy the wicked, and to cleanse the earth of everything that defiles, and to give immortality to His people. God is no respecter of persons.

Whosoever shall not be found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire:

Revelation 20

¹⁵ And whoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

It will avail nothing that men have said, “Lord, Lord,”—that they have prayed earnestly, even praying for the kingdom of God to come, if in that day any defilement is found in them, they will be cast into the lake of fire.

Who is there, then, that realizing what the kingdom of God is, who alone can inherit it, and what will be the fate of those who are unfit,—can pray, “Your kingdom come,” and still cherish sin in his heart?

How carefully and unblamably we must live if we are able to unite, in saying,

Revelation 22

²⁰ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

9. Your Kingdom Come (1893)

Present Truth, November 16, 1893

THERE is no thought which is given greater prominence in the word of God than that expressed in the above sentence. All through the pages of both the Old and New Testaments, it stands out prominently as a leading thought in the minds of prophets and the apostles.

Paul in *Titus* 2:13, calls it “the blessed hope.” It was that to which the church in all ages looked forward, as the brightest prospect which their faith revealed, and the realization of their fondest hopes.

In the heart of every true Christian this thought, this hope, will be uppermost. We are taught to give it this prominence by the Lord himself. The very first petition of the “Lord’s prayer” is:

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

And this prayer is one for all Christ’s followers. In the sermon on the mount, also, the first utterance is one concerning the coming kingdom:

Matthew 5

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Other sentences which follow allude to the same thing.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

This inheritance cannot be until the coming of the kingdom, by which the wicked shall be destroyed⁵, and the earth made

⁵ **2 Thessalonians 1:** ⁸ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.

ready for its future inheritors.

Psalm 37

¹⁰ For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

Matthew 5

⁴ Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The time of comfort of the saints is when:

Revelation 21

³ The tabernacle of God is with men,...

⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying.

Matthew 5

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

They shall see Him at the coming of His kingdom.

¹⁰ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The blessings which come to the poor in spirit, the meek, the pure in heart, and other possessors of heavenly graces, are many in this life; but they are not to be compared with those that will be realized at the coming of the kingdom of God.

The very first prophecy that was ever uttered by inspiration, so far as we have any record, is a prophecy of the coming of Christ in His kingdom. We find the record in:

Jude

¹⁴ And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord comes, with ten thousands of His saints,

¹⁵ To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.

Note the very last prophecy of the Bible is also a prophecy of the same event.

Revelation 22

²⁰ He which testifies these words says, Surely I come quickly.

The sacred writer adds,

²⁰ ...Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

This is the prayer of every Christian heart, the goal toward which he strives, the event for which he labors. Let others make their pilgrimages to Mecca, or to the shrine of “our lady,” or to Rome; the Christian’s pilgrimage is to Mount Zion. And the one inspiring thought that leads him on over the rough and narrow passage is:

Titus 2

¹³ That blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Would you be of the mind of Enoch, and of John, and of Paul, and of Christ? If so you will say with them,

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

For that you will hope, that you will pray, for that you will work. And in the hour of trial you will find comfort in the thought,

Isaiah 33

¹⁷ Your eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off.

Your Kingdom Come

Your kingdom come! thus day by day,
We lift our hands to God and pray;
But who has ever duly weighed
The meaning of the words he said?

Your kingdom come! O day of joy,
When praise shall every tongue employ;
When hate and strife and war shall cease,
And man with man shall be at peace!

Jesus shall reign on Zion's hill,
And all the earth with glory fill;
His word shall paradise restore
And sin and death afflict no more.

Then bears and wolves, no longer wild,
Obey the leading of a child;
The lions with the oxen eat,
And dust shall be the serpent's meat.

God's holy will shall then be done
By all who live beneath the sun;
For saints shall then as angels be,
All changed to immortality.

- *Unknown, ~1840*

10. Your Kingdom Come (1895)

Present Truth, September 5, 1895

We are taught to pray,

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

THE only part of this earth in which we are directly responsible that the will of the Lord shall be done is in our own hearts. Therefore it is impossible to pray this prayer unless the heart is surrendered to the Lord for the working of His own will.

As It Is In Heaven

One Scripture which shows how the will God is done in heaven is

Psalms 103

²⁰ Bless the Lord, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

The attitude of the angels is that of waiting and listening to catch the first word of the Father's command, then hastening to do His will. There is no hesitancy; for they go and return...

Ezekiel 1

¹⁴ ...as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

So In Earth

The believer's attitude is to be the same:

- The heart yielded in willing obedience to the Master;
- The clamor of self silenced;
- Ears open to hear the first whisper of the Divine voice;
- Then with feet swift to run in the way of righteousness.

That strength that excels is for us also; for we are to...

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ ...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

With “His glorious power” working in the heart “mightily”⁶, there can be no doubtful hesitating over the question of how the work can be done. As the Word is received the strength comes, and we may hasten joyfully forth to do His commandments.

⁶ **Colossians 1:** ²⁹ Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily.

11. Your Will Be Done (1887)

Signs of the Times, March 24, 1887

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your will be done.

IT IS probable that this part of the Lord's prayer is the least understood of any. The sentence, "Your will be done," is thought by most people to be applicable only in cases of sickness or other trial, to indicate that the sufferer is willing to endure patiently.

But this is but a very limited view of the expression. As a matter of fact there is no more comprehensive sentence in the Bible, or that can be uttered by man, than the simple words, "Your will be done." It all depends on what the will of the Lord is, which point we must investigate.

The 2nd chapter of *Romans* has reference especially to the Jews, to show that they, as well as the Gentiles, are sinners, and the apostle speaks to them directly, in these words:

Romans 2

¹⁷ Behold, you are called a Jew, and rest in the law, and make your boast of God,

¹⁸ And know His will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.

How does Paul say the Jew knew the will of God? Because he was instructed out of the law. The obvious conclusion, then, is that the will of God may be known only by a study of the law, which makes necessary the further conclusion that the law of God is his will.

This conclusion is verified most plainly by the words which the psalmist utters prophetically in behalf of Christ:

Psalms 40

⁷ Then said I, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me,

⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; yea, your law is within my heart.

It is first stated that Christ delighted to do the will of the Father; and then to make this statement emphatic, it is added,

⁸ ...yea, your law is within my heart.

Proverbs 4

²³ Out of the heart are the issues of life.

Proverbs 23

⁷ As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

That is, a man's actions correspond to that which is in his heart; he does just what is in his heart. Therefore if the law of God being in a man's heart, leads him to delight to do the will of God, it follows that the law of God is the will of God.

In *Revelation* 22:14 we read that they who keep the commandments shall have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city; and in *Matthew* 7:21 we read that only those who do the will of God, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Here again we see the identity of the will of God and the commandments.

If there is any doubt in anyone's mind as to what law it is that is the will of God, it may be settled by reading *Romans* 2:21-22 in connection with verses 17-20, the first two of which have been quoted. The ten commandments are the will of God.

Therefore when we pray, "Your will be done," we in reality pray that the commandments of God may be kept by us and by all others who dwell on the earth. We pray that they may be kept even as they are kept in Heaven, where:

Psalms 103

²⁰ [The angels] do His commandment, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

It follows, therefore, that whoever utters the Lord's prayer

or a prayer modeled after it, and does not in his heart...

Romans 7

¹⁶ ...consent unto the law that it is good,

and honestly desires to conform to all its requirements, is guilty of mockery before God. Such a one cannot hope to have his petition regarded; and so we may understand the words of the psalmist:

Psalms 66

¹⁸ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

And of Solomon:

Proverbs 28

⁹ He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

When will this petition be granted? When shall the will of God be done in earth as it is now done in Heaven? The preceding clause, upon which we commented in our [last article](#), answers this question. It is when the kingdom of God is established upon the earth; for in the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness alone shall dwell.

2 Peter 3

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

Isaiah 60

²¹ Your people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever.

The law of God, His holy will, is righteousness:

Psalms 119

¹⁷² My tongue shall speak of your word: for all your commandments are righteousness.

And the keeping of it constitutes the righteousness of God's people:

Deuteronomy 6

²⁵ And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.

The Lord's prayer, therefore teaches us to long for the coming and kingdom of our Lord, when the law of God shall be in the hearts of all men, even as it was in the heart of the Son of God when he was on earth.

But the coming of the Lord, and the establishment of His kingdom, will not bring about this state of things. When Christ comes, the only change which is wrought in men is the change from mortality to immortality. He does not change men's characters from sinfulness to righteousness, for just before he comes the decree goes forth:

Revelation 22

¹¹ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

Men will be ushered into eternity with just the same characters that they have when probation closes. Those who inhabit the new earth will all be righteous, simply because the transgressors will have been rooted out of it:

Proverbs 2

²² But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

And the perfect will be permitted to remain in it, just because they are perfect in the midst of unrighteousness, even as Noah was.

This being the case, it follows that to utter the Lord's prayer with honesty of heart, is to pray that God will work in us that which is good; it indicates a willingness to submit ourselves in all things to the will of God, that we may become like Him. Certainly no one who knows what the will of God is, and who

knows how it will come to pass that the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven, could utter that prayer and not really desire to have that law written in his heart.

Although God's ways are as much higher than our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth⁷, we have the assurance that every petition offered in humility and sincerity will be answered, and as we may attain to this high standard.

Matthew 5

⁶ They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled.

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ 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.

⁷ **Isaiah 55:** ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

12. Your Will Be Done (1902)

Present Truth, September 4, 1902

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

THIS petition is the most difficult of all for human beings to utter from the heart. Indeed, often as it is repeated, it is scarcely ever thought of as really a petition, but rather as a concession to the Lord.

People in general, perhaps without being conscious of it, regard the will of God as something to be submitted to and endured; they talk about being “resigned to the will of God,” and think it the highest attainment of piety if they do not exhibit or express impatience under it.

That this is altogether the wrong view of the case, may readily be understood if one but stop to think where the expression, “Your will be done” is found. It is in the prayer that the Lord Jesus has taught us to pray, and ranks as a petition, a request, along with,

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your kingdom come,...

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

and

¹² Forgive us our trespasses.

It is therefore a thing to be ardently desired, as much as our daily bread or the forgiveness of our sins. It is not something against us, but a thing for our benefit.

It is not the will of God that any should perish; but, on the contrary,

1 Timothy 2

⁴ [He] will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Thessalonians 4

³ This is the will of God, even your sanctification.

He wills that which is best for us, and therefore when we pray, “Your will be done,” we are only asking Him to do the best thing possible for us. That prayer really embraces all things, so that when we have asked for all the things that we can think of in detail, we can add, “Your will be done,” which will be equivalent to saying,

“And do everything else for us that You think is necessary for our welfare.”

Ephesians 3

²⁰ [He is] able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And that is His will for us. His good will toward us is as boundless as His power; if therefore we ask according to our own will we shall get but little, but if we ask according to His will, we are sure of having all things.

13. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

Signs of the Times, March 31, 1887

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

NOTHING less than divine wisdom could have framed this petition, so simple and so reasonable is it.

Human greed would ask for enough today to supply all possible wants for the future; but if that were granted, the person could use no more of it today than he would use if he had only enough for today's needs.

Not only so, but human greed would overreach itself. Thus, if the man should today receive enough for all time, he would have no occasion to ask for anything tomorrow. He would trust in his possession instead of God, and would soon forget God.

Thus cutting himself off from the only power that can bestow and preserve, he would soon lose what he has, and then have nothing either for today or tomorrow. Riches make to themselves wings and fly away.

But the man who every day asks for provision sufficient for that day, with the assurance that he will receive it, is far better off. He has enough for today, and that is all he could use anyway. And then he does not wear himself out in the vain effort to take care of property that he has stored up for the future. His future supply is in the hands of God, who thus becomes his banker.

Surely the man who has all he needs, just when he needs it, while someone else takes care of that which he does not actually need, is far better off than the man who has only what he needs today, but who is burdened with the care of a lot of stuff that he may never need.

This petition teaches contentment. The conclusions in the preceding paragraph are in harmony with the teaching of the apostle Paul. Said he:

1 Timothy 6

⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain.

⁷ For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

¹⁰ For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Here the apostle brings out an additional danger from not trusting God for our daily bread. It is that the man having more than he needs for today, is tempted to use more than he needs. Thus his thoughts become centered entirely on self and the gratification of his own desires and lusts, which increase and multiply with the gratification, until he is finally drowned in perdition. The apostle continues:

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

This is in harmony with the petition which the Lord has taught us. We are not taught that to have riches is sin, for the Lord gives some men power to get wealth, but that the sin comes in setting one's heart upon them. The possession of riches is a great danger for Christ says:

Mark 10

²³ How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

This is because it is next to impossible for one who has riches to keep from setting his heart upon them, and so ne-

glecting to trust in the living God, and forgetting that it is God who gives us all things richly to enjoy. This is taught by the parable in *Luke 12*:

Luke 12

¹⁶ The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.

Here we see that it was not the man's superior skill that brought him his wealth, but the providence of God in giving "rain and fruitful seasons." And the man thought:

¹⁷ What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

¹⁸ And he said, This will I do. I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods,

¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.

If he had listened to the Lord, he might have known what to do with his goods. Says the inspired word:

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich...

¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Instead of this, the man trusted in his riches, and had nothing.

Luke 12

²⁰ But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall those things be which you have provided?

Why is the man called a fool? Because the fool, according to the Bible, is one who says...

Psalm 14

¹ ...in his heart, There is no God.

This man acted as though there were no God, because he assumed that he must take care of himself, and left God out of the account altogether. He may have been a professor of religion, but he was practically an atheist.

There are thousands of such men in the world today. But no matter how much they exalt themselves (for the man who by his actions assumes that his prosperity depends upon himself alone, virtually puts himself in the place of God), they will in the end be put in fear, and be made to know that they are but men.

Luke 12

²¹ So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

We have already read from Paul the injunction to rich men to lay up store for themselves...

1 Timothy 6

¹⁹ ...a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ said:

Matthew 6

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and where thieves break through and steal;

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, and where thieves do not break through nor steal;

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Neither of these texts implies that the kingdom of God can be bought with money. But they both teach that no man can reach Heaven unless he has his treasure there. It is not that his wealth buys him a place in the kingdom of God, but that

his thoughts are of God and Heaven, and thus he prepares for Heaven. In all his ways he acknowledges God, and thus God directs his paths.

At the present time the principle contained in the petition, “Give us this day our daily bread,” needs to be taught; because the tendency of the last days is all against it. We read:

James 5

¹ Go to now, you rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth eaten.

³ Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. You have heaped treasure together for the last days.

This does not apply to the millionaires alone, but to all who are heaping treasure. That is, to all who allow their treasures to “heap” up or accumulate.

Some time ago we saw a gold piece that was discolored by rust. We asked what caused it, and learned that it had been paid out by a woman who, having a little more money than she needed, had buried the surplus in the ground. She was not a rich woman, but we could not help thinking of the words of James. But the principle of heaping up treasure was there, which showed distrust of God. And what made it worse was that the woman professed to believe in the soon coming of the Lord.

Whether we are poor or rich, let us...

Luke 12

¹⁵ ...beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

And let us not fear to trust the Lord, knowing that if God clothes the grass and the lilies of the field in beauty, and provides for the sustenance of the birds of the air, He will much

more care for those whom He has bought with the blood of His own dear Son. The sacrifice of Christ is the pledge of God's care for us.

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

14. Our Daily Bread (1900)

Present Truth, December 13, 1900

HAVE you ever thought of the wonderful working of God's power that provides for you your daily bread?

The Lord God made man "from the dust of the ground," in the beginning, and He is still by the same creative power, forming our bodies from the dust of the ground. But if we should take a handful of dust and feed upon it, it would not do us any good, but only harm, for we could not digest nor assimilate it.

The word "assimilate" means, to become like unto. And we must assimilate our food, before it can do us any good. Yet we could never assimilate the dust of the ground; that is, it could never be made into our substance, into flesh and blood, so as to become a part of us.

So God takes the dust and prepares it for us in a beautiful and pleasant way; He changes it so that we can feed upon it and assimilate it, and in thus changing it, He puts lovely colors upon it, sweet and pleasant saviors into it, and makes it "pleasant to the sight" as well as "good for food." *Genesis 2:9*. The grains, fruits, and nuts are what He has provided for our food. He says,

Genesis 1

²⁹ Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

The plants take up the dust of the ground, which is food for them, and the life of God working in them changes the dust and prepares it for our food. Then that same wondrous life of the Creator working in us takes the substance of the plant, and makes it a part of our flesh and blood. And thus God makes our bodies from the dust of the ground.

Think what wonderful power there is in the words which God spoke of the trees and plants, when He said, "To you it shall be for meat." And how much meaning there is in the daily prayer,

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

It means far more than that God should provide us with something to eat. For nothing could be meat or food for us, except by the working of the same mighty power that made us and that made the food, changing it into flesh and blood to build up our bodies.

You eat when you are hungry, and it seems a most natural thing to you that your food should nourish you. But the food must be prepared in your stomach, where it is changed into a kind of milky substance that can be carried in your veins to your heart, from which it is pumped into the lungs, where it is purified and sent down again into the heart. Then it is sent through your arteries into every part of your body, and without your thought or care, the food that the blood carries is formed into your skin, your nails, your bones, your muscles, and the hairs of your head.

Will you not keep these things in mind, not only when you ask your Heavenly Father for your daily bread, but when you take that which He provides and feed upon it?

If you do, your heart will be filled with love for Him whose power is thus working in you every moment, and you will let Him use for His own glory the life and strength that He imparts to you day by day, in giving you your daily bread.

15. Our Daily Bread (1903)

Present Truth, March 26, 1903

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

WE ARE accustomed to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” and to include in this petition not only the physical bread which nourishes our bodies, but that spiritual food which will supply the needs of our soul, making us strong to do the will of God.

But the blessings of God often come to us in such disguise that we fail to recognize the answer to our prayer. The “bread” that the Lord sends us may take the form of:

- trials to be borne,
- taxing labor to be performed, or
- temptations and difficulties to be overcome.

16. Praying for Daily Bread

Medical Missionary, December 1903

Original title: Healing through Faith, part 2

WE DEPEND upon the Lord for life, and the Lord teaches us to pray:

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

We are to pray for our daily bread, and to realize that it comes from heaven. We have the record that on certain occasions bread came down ready made, as the manna and the giving of bread in the wilderness. Suppose we say:

“We are taught to pray for our daily bread, and therefore we will not use means; we will pray, and expect the Lord to feed us right out of His hand with bread already made. If we expect bread in any other way, it shows lack of faith.”

I can understand why people think that it does; it is because they leave God out of all the operations of nature, and so they speak of God and nature as if they were two different things. They seem to think that God does some things, and nature some things; then the idea becomes prevalent that nature does more things than God does: and then at last nature does everything, and God is left without any occupation at all.

But all those miracles, as we have seen, are to show us that God works in the visible creation; not that nature is God, but that what men call nature, or natural laws, is the working of God.

You are all familiar, at least by title, with Drummond's book, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. He simply had the thing turned upside down. Natural law does not work in the spiritual world, but spiritual law works in the natural world; and all the law that is manifest in the natural world is spiritual law. These things show us God.

People think that God does not have anything or at most very little to do with providing us with our daily bread. When they have plowed the field, and taken the grain and cast it into the earth, and then have harvested the grain, and threshed it, and ground it into flour and made it into bread they think that they have done it all. But they have really done very little.

The birds do not plow nor sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, yet our Heavenly Father feeds them; and we are much better than they; therefore we are to expect that in far greater measure the Lord will feed us.

What shall we do, then? Sit with open mouths and wait for the bread to drop in? Oh, no. The birds are not fed that way, except when they are too young to fly, too feeble to walk; and then it is only by their own parents. But as soon as they get old enough to move for themselves, they have to do just what their parents did,—fly about and gather what the Lord has scattered for them.

Now that is all that man does. Man does not do anything more toward getting a living than the birds do. He gathers—reaps what the Lord has strewn. The grain is strewn about, and man gathers it and eats it; but God does all the providing of it; and man is just as directly fed from heaven, from the hand of God, as the birds are.

Psalm 104

²⁸ What You give them, they gather,

And that is all we can do. God has given us food as the means of perpetuating our life, in order that we may see and trust Him. If the life of all men were continued and renewed day by day without any of these means, without our eating bread and drinking water, men would say that they were self-existent. They would think:

“We are not dependent upon anybody for life; we are our

own masters, and life is inherent in us.”

And there would be no means by which you could convince them it is not so. There would be no means of showing them God’s rightful claim upon their obedience. They would say:

“I do not owe Him anything. I do not receive anything from Him. This life proceeds from myself.”

Why, people say this to a large extent anyhow; they act as if that were the case, when it is patent to every one of us that it is not so. How much more so would it be the case if there were no invisible means for the maintenance of our life?

The prayer, “Give us this day our daily bread,” uttered in faith, is not at all inconsistent with going out and plowing the fields, and sowing the seed, in reaping the harvest, and threshing the grain, and making it into bread. He that prays that prayer in faith, recognizing that it is God who gives him the power even to do that work, will see himself working together with God. The farmer, whether he knows it or not, is a worker together with God.

Hebrews 10

³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith.

“We live,” we say, “by eating.” True; and if we live in the right way, we eat only to live, the pleasure we get out of it being incidental. It is God’s will that we should get pleasure out of all the things that are right; but the object of eating is to get life, and thereby to recognize God as the giver of life.

Then the next logical thing, the only consistent thing, is that, recognizing God as the giver of life, we shall acknowledge that He is the only one who has the right to say how that life shall be used. And, stronger yet, that He is the only one that has the right to use the life.

So we shall acknowledge all the time that it is God that works in us both to will and to do, and the man who recog-

nizes this all the time, and who is consistent with what he sees, will have all his ways right. Why? because he won't use the life of the Lord, but he will let the life of the Lord use him. Our bodies are to be instruments of the life of the Lord. The Lord is to use our bodies as He will, and then everything that we do will be right; and thus the just live by faith.

Food as Medicine

What did the Lord give us in the beginning, and what does He still give as the means of healing, restoring us, as our bodies undergo waste; in short, what does God give to man, as his medicine?

Why, the food that we eat; it is man's natural medicine, is it not? The food and the drink, the sunlight and the air,—they are medicine, medicine which God has put in our hands. God has designed that the food that we eat, should be the means of keeping us in life and health.

That being so, it is clear that when by some means or other, through our own fault or through the fault of somebody else, we have failed to allow that life to flow through us unhindered—have dammed up the stream—and there has come stagnation, congestion, disease, we are to be healed by coming to our senses, and recognizing that the life comes alone from God, and accepting His gifts which convey life to us,—coming into harmony with them.

The Lord does not pander to people's laziness, and so He does not do the thing which He has given to man the power to do for himself. He did not roll away the stone from the grave of Lazarus. The people could do that as well as not. Why should they sit there with their hands folded, and allow the Lord to do that He had given them power to do?

Then Lazarus came forth, bound around the head with a napkin. You know as well as I do that the Lord could have brought Lazarus out of the grave with the napkin taken off

and laid aside just as well as He could do what He did do. But He did not roll the stone neither did He take the napkin off. He said:

“Loose him, and let him go.”

They could do that by the power that He gave them: but there was a certain thing that they could not do. There was power above the measure of power they had received, and the Lord exercised that independently.

Jesus raised the ruler’s daughter. Then as soon as she had come to life He commanded that they should give her food. Why? In bringing her to life He had exercised the power and the life which was entirely beyond their comprehension or their power to co-operate with.

Then when He had come to the point where they had the means of life which God had put into their hands, He let them go on and use it. He brought the damsel back to life, but in that weakened condition that she was in before she died. Then having brought her to life, and healed the disease, He told them to give her something to eat, so that she could recover her strength.

He could have brought her to health, and made her perfectly strong, so that she would not have had any need for food—not for a while, at least—just as He could keep us alive without eating at all; but when He had brought her to that point, then it was a simple thing: Give her something to eat, and she will get her strength again.

All these things show that God works through means. In the greatest miracle, that of raising the dead, the Holy Spirit is the means by which the life is bestowed. The Lord has given life, and shown it everywhere. Now we are to see it, and find out the ways in which the Lord’s life manifests itself, and come into harmony with its workings, and we shall live,—and that is living by faith. And it is thus only that the Christian

should live.

17. Forgive Us Our Debts (1887)

Signs of the Times, May 5, 1887

Matthew 6

¹² Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

THIS may be called the crowning petition in this wonderful prayer.

In the beginning of these comments we said that this prayer is only for those who have given themselves to Christ,—who can truly say “Our Father.” This proves that still more plainly. We do not mean that it is for none but those who are perfect, but that it is for those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord that he may work in them...

Philippians 2

¹³ ...both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

To be able always to pray understandingly and from the heart, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,” is something that can be done by but comparatively few who profess to be Christians. The one who can do it is in possession of the greatest of all Christian graces—charity; for:

1 Corinthians 13

⁴ Charity suffers long, and is kind,

⁵ ...is not easily provoked, thinks no evil.

And this is the way we would be to have the Lord deal with us.

No Self-Justification

A great many people think that they are of a forgiving disposition when they are not. When they have done wrong, and someone takes revenge on them, they think that they are deserving of considerable credit if they can take it patiently; but they think that they are perfectly justifiable in harboring harsh thoughts, at least, if they are injured without cause. This

is indicated by the common saying,

“If I had done anything to deserve this treatment, I would not say anything; but I have not done anything, and I won’t stand it.”

That is as far from the forgiveness that our Saviour taught, as the east is from the west.

1 Peter 2

²⁰ For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

It has been truly said that to forgive is divine. Certainly it is not human. Human nature knows nothing of forgiveness. Human nature stands upon its dignity, and says,

“I’ll have my rights; nobody shall trample on me with impunity.”

But the divine Son of God, who did no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile,

1 Peter 2

²³ When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judges righteously.

You who say,

“All I ask is simple justice; I demand only my rights,”

—how would you fare if you should go immediately after such an assertion and repeat the Lord’s prayer, and the Lord should take you at your word? Who could stand if the Lord should mark iniquity?

Suppose the Lord should give you simple justice—just what you deserve, and nothing more—what would be the result? Not only would you be deprived of eternal life, but your

present life would not be continued for another moment; for there is not one of us who deserves a single blessing from the hand of God;

Lamentations 3

²² It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.

There is in us no good thing; we have all gone out of the way, and are unprofitable⁸; now when our rights have been invaded, and we cherish resentment, we cannot utter the Lord's prayer without asking the Lord not to forgive us. What a terrible thing it is not to have a forgiving spirit.

Nor can we avoid the consequence above indicated, by refusing to use our Saviour's prayer. Whether we ask or not, we shall be forgiven just as we forgive. Says the Saviour:

Matthew 6

¹⁴ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

¹⁵ But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

God's Forgiveness is the Standard

We have said that forgiveness is not natural to the human heart. Only to the extent that one is partaker of the divine nature, can he exercise true forgiveness. God's forgiveness is the standard for us. Says Paul:

Ephesians 4

³² And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.

No one can know how to forgive, unless he knows how God forgives; and nobody can fully understand how God forgives,

⁸ **Romans 3:** ¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

¹¹ There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.

¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.

until he has felt in his own soul the fullness of divine pardon. It will be worth our while to note a few texts which show how God forgives, so that we may know what spirit we should have. Let us read a few texts:

John 3

¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Romans 8

⁵ But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Peter 3

¹⁸ For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

1 John 4

⁹ In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

¹⁰ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹⁹ We love Him, because He first loved us.

We have heard it claimed that we are not required to forgive an offender unless he asks for forgiveness; that until he repents and begs for pardon, we are warranted in holding him off. But the above texts convey a different idea. We are to forgive as God forgives.

Now suppose that God had made no movement towards the salvation of rebellious men until they humbled themselves before Him; there never would have been any salvation for men. It is only because of His love for us while we were rebels, that we are enabled to come to Him. He was under no obligation to mankind; the obligation was all on the other side; yet He took the initiative.

God loved the world. He harbored no malice or enmity in

His heart, because He had been insulted, and His laws trampled upon, but was filled with love and pity for poor, erring mortals. It grieved Him to think that man would pursue a course that would inevitably end in his ruin, and He made the way easy for him to return to his allegiance, and begged him to come and be forgiven.

The same spirit should actuate us. No matter how much we may have been misused, we are not warranted in entertaining the slightest feeling of enmity toward the offender. On the contrary, we should have such love for him that our only feeling would be that of sorrow that he should pursue a course so detrimental to himself. The thought of the personal injury we have sustained should be lost sight of in the thought of the greater injury which the offender's course will bring upon himself. It is not natural for us to do this; we can do it only when we are partakers of the divine nature.

It may be said that God does not actually forgive men until they repent. This is true; but He desires that they shall receive His pardon, and therefore, so far as He is concerned, He has pardoned them. All that is lacking is for them to accept the pardon which He offers them; if they will not, He is clear, and the responsibility of their ruin rests upon themselves.

God could not actually pardon an unrepentant sinner, for the reason that when He pardons it means far more than when we forgive. If a man has maliciously injured us, and we forgive him, it makes no difference with his guilt; but when God forgives the sinner, his guilt is by that pardon taken away; and it is evident that God cannot take away the guilt of a man who has no desire nor intention to abstain from his sins, but who is determined to retain his guilty practices.

Forgive and Forget

This brings us to another feature of forgiveness. It is very common for people to say that they can forgive but they can-

not forget. That is not true forgiveness. The man who does not forget the injury, will brood over it until the bitter feelings will come up again with more than their original force; the harsh feelings are not put away, but only smothered for a time.

The man who does not forget an injury done him, has never really forgiven the offender; he has not allowed love for the erring one to eclipse all thought of the injury done to himself, and without this there can be no forgiveness such as God exercises toward us.

Divine pardon is justification; God pardons the believer in Christ, by imputing His righteousness...

Romans 3

²⁵ ...for the remission of sins that are past.

The pardoned one is as though he had never sinned; where there was nothing but guilt before, God beholds nothing but righteousness—righteousness put there through His own wonderful love. Then if we forgive as God forgives, we must regard the repentant offender as though he had done nothing against us. We must forget that he ever injured us. We must treat him and regard him as though he had done us nothing but good instead of nothing but evil.

The man who forgives in this manner is a true disciple of Christ, because no one can do this unless he has experienced, and does at the time experience, the blessing of divine forgiveness. It is not enough that we have once been forgiven; we must have a vivid sense of the love of God toward us now, if we would not forgive as we ought.

Under these circumstances the most difficult thing in the world to do, becomes the easiest. Because when we realize how sinful we are, and how much God has forgiven us, it seems a small matter in comparison to forgive the petty wrong done us by a fellow-man. When we contemplate the

magnitude of our sin against God, all the wrongs that all men may have done to us, sink into insignificance.

We think that the servant who had received a free gift of ten thousand talents from his lord was mean and ungrateful because he would not give his fellow-servant one hundred pence. If he had any sense of what had been done for him, he would have told his fellow-servant to keep the paltry sum, and would have thought no more about it.

So if we have any just sense of God's love to us, we cannot fail to exhibit corresponding love to our fellows.

18. Forgive Us Our Debts (1896)

Present Truth, July 23, 1896

Matthew 6

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

ONE million eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds is a large sum,—and yet that is the amount owed by the servant who was called upon for his accounting in our Lord's parable in the latter part of the 18th chapter of *Matthew*.

Suspicion must attach to such an enormous arrearage. Either there was dishonesty in his transactions or at least extreme negligence and unfaithfulness. The discrepancy in his accounts was so great that not even the sale of all his property, and of himself and family into slavery, could suffice to return to his master anything more than a small moiety⁹ of the great sum he owed.

Yet when, at last, in hopeless contrition, he pleaded in anguish at the feet of his master, he was forgiven. The immense debt he owed was freely and entirely forgiven him. The account was balanced. It was hopeless that it could ever be expected that he could repay it, indeed that was impossible. He was not asked to repay it. He went out a free man, relieved of any necessity of ever paying his debt, and still in possession of the property which he had acquired and retained—went out a free man to wife and children at home which he had forfeited and but for the gracious mercy of his master had lost beyond the possibility of recovery.

Yet notwithstanding this, almost immediately, apparently, as he went out from the presence of his master, he met with his fellow-servant who owed him but little more than three pounds, and, treating him with personal violence, refused to listen to his appeals for merciful extension of time in which to

⁹ Moiety: a part or portion, especially a lesser share.

pay his debt, and cast him into the debtor's prison to remain there until payment should be made.

This was in strong contrast to the treatment which he had received from the Lord. And how insignificant was the sum which his fellow-servant owed him, compared with the amount in which he was indebted—nearly two millions of pounds as against a little more than three pounds!

No wonder his fellow-servants were sorry and came and told what he had done. No doubt they concurred in the justice of the punishment which then fell upon him.

So, unquestionably, at the last day will all agree as to the justice of the penalties which will be meted out when the last words of this parable shall be fulfilled:

Matthew 18

³⁵ So likewise shall my Father do also unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Will that not be just? Who can say it will not, when they remember the words of the daily prayer:

Matthew 6

¹² Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

19. The Debt Forgiven

Present Truth, June 15, 1899

WHEN the Saviour taught His disciples how to pray, He put into their mouths the words,

Matthew 6

¹² Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

It is clear from this that God does not hold anything against man. If He did, Christ would not have taught us to make such a request. It is this truth, too seldom apprehended, which makes the message of the Gospel:

Luke 2

¹⁰ ...tidings of great joy to all people.

If only it were believed, it would lift every cloud that overhangs this life, and cause the hearts of men to sing for joy.

Every sin is committed against God. The Lamb of God bears the sin of the world. David confessed,

Psalms 51

⁴ Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done, this evil in your sight.

Men realize that they are sinful in His sight, and that there is enmity in their own hearts. They judge God by themselves, and count Him "a hard man." It seems to them that God has nothing but stern condemnation for them, and they avoid His Word, because they fear its reproof.

But God is love, He feels the gap which men make between themselves and Him, and His one desire is to draw all to himself. When Adam sinned, he sought to hide from God, though he needed Divine help more than ever. God looked at his need, and sought out the trembling sinner, not to embitter his life with reproaches, but to bring the comforting promise of a Saviour who should recover what Adam had lost, and restore

all things.

Ever since that time, sinful men have thought to hide from God, as though He were pursuing them in His wrath, but it was His goodness and mercy that followed them every day of their lives. Still God sends His messengers into all the world, not to condemn, but to speak the glad tidings to every creature.

And what is the message that the ambassadors bear? Theirs is a ministry, not of reproach, but of reconciliation. They declare that God was in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself,

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ ...not imputing their trespasses unto them,

—and through them He beseeches all to be reconciled to Him:

²⁰ Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.

Since every sin is against God, if He does not impute sin, no one else can.

¹⁹ ...not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Truly this is a message meet to be sounded in the ears of every sinful, discouraged creature. All have wished at same time in their lives that the miserable record of the past might be blotted out, as though it had never been, and they could start afresh. This is the very thing that the Gospel brings to men.

The old debt is freely forgiven. They are clear with God, and can come to Him with confidence, for all that stood between them and Him is taken out of the way. He has destroyed the enmity, and asks simply that men will acknowledge that He does indeed love them, and be reconciled to Him.

If, after this, men die in their sins, it is their own fault entirely. God does not impute sin to them, but they choose to

impute it to themselves by deciding to still bear it when God has set them free. It is not the sins of their lives that condemn men, but the fact that, with the chance of getting rid of the sins, they prefer to retain them.

John 3

¹⁹ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.

God challenges all men to declare one thing which He might have done for His people that He has not done for them:

Isaiah 5

⁴ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

He gives every advantage that the weakest can ask for.

- He declares the past to be disposed of, imputing nothing to men.
- In place of the sin which He takes away, He bestows His own righteousness, and imparts His own power, for the Gospel is the power of God.
- He takes away all the old things, and makes all things new, creating a clean heart.
- His angels are commissioned to minister to the heirs of salvation, and His Spirit is given without measure.
- He does for all exceeding abundantly above all that they can ask or think.

Hebrews 2

³ How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

20. Lead Us Not Into Temptation

Signs of the Times, May 19, 1887

Matthew 6

¹³ And lead us not into temptation...

THIS petition cannot well be considered apart from that which immediately follows it:

¹³ ...but deliver us from evil.

Both together form a fitting climax to this wonderful prayer, for they indicate, if used understandingly, the soul's desire for purity of heart.

There are two senses in which the word tempted is used in the Bible. The apostle says:

James 1

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations.

Again he says:

¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

Now it is evident that the apostle would not exhort men to count it a joyful thing to be drawn away of their own lust, and enticed into sin; therefore the temptation of the second verse is different from that of the fourteenth.

The temptation of the second verse is that which is successfully met, and which leaves the individual stronger than ever. It is the trying of faith.

Ephesians 6

¹⁶ Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Here we learn that faith is the shield by which the darts of the wicked may be quenched. The office of a shield is to pro-

tect the person.

If a missile is received upon the shield, the person at whom it was aimed receives no injury; he does not feel it. The temptations, then, which work patience, and which strengthen, are those which meet with no response in our own hearts, but which are instantly repelled.

The other temptations are those which are entertained in the heart. The sin presents itself, and the mind goes out towards it, and longs for it. It may be that the overt act is never committed, but since

Proverbs 24

⁹ The thought of foolishness is sin,

—the one who only in imagination does the sinful act is in the sight of God accounted guilty. Such temptations as those are natural to every human being,

Mark 7

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts.

The petition “lead us not into temptation,” must be understood as meaning, “suffer us not to fall into temptation;” and it must also be understood as referring to the second class of temptations—those which proceed from within. The reason is:

1. That we are not to ask freedom from trials, but rather to count them a blessing, and
2. That God cannot and does not lead people into sin.

The prayer, then, is:

“Suffer us not to fall into foolish and hurtful lust, but deliver us (keep us back) from evil.”

This cannot mean that God will not allow a man to act out the evil that is in him, for that would be impossible; if evil is in the heart, it must show itself.

We are expressly told that at one time God left a man to do what his heart prompted him to do. The man was Hezekiah. After he had been healed, the Babylonian ambassadors came to congratulate, and he showed them all the treasures of his kingdom:

2 Kings 20

¹² At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

¹³ And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not.

This action was prompted by pride:

2 Chronicles 32

²⁴ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the Lord: and He spoke unto him, and He gave him a sign.

²⁵ But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

The historian, speaking of this, says:

2 Chronicles 32

³¹ Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

We must therefore conclude that the petition “lead us not into temptation” does not mean that God is to interpose His mighty power to miraculously preserve us from the wickedness that is in our own hearts.

There can be, then, but one conclusion, and that is that the

prayer implies a renunciation and hatred of sin, and a desire to have the heart cleansed from it, and to be strengthened again allowing it to pass the shield of faith, and gain access to the heart. This is the only way that temptations can be instantly repelled, since, as we have read, evil thoughts are natural to the human heart.

It was to effect this that Christ came into the earth. It is not enough that we be freed from the guilt of sin—from past transgressions—but we must be freed from the love of sin. Paul says that:

Galatians 1

¹ [Christ] gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

This “present evil world” does not mean the physical creation, but:

1 John 2

¹⁶ All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Again we read that:

Titus 2

¹⁴ [He] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

This is what God wants to do for us; it is what we are to ask Him to do for us, for He will not do it against our will. What is there to hinder His doing it? Nothing, if we offer the prayer in all sincerity, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

We cannot cleanse ourselves from the defilement of sin, however much we may desire to be freed from it:

Proverbs 20

⁹ Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from

my sin?

But if we do earnestly desire to be kept from sin, God will work in us:

Philippians 2

¹³ For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Hebrews 13

²⁰ Now the God of peace...

²¹ Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

But while this is in one sense a passive state, in that it is an entire yielding of self to God, it is by no means a state of inactivity.

James 4

⁷ Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

Luke 13

²⁴ Strive to enter in at the strait gate.

There is to be a constant watchfulness against the insidious assaults of the enemy. A reaching out after God implies a drawing away from sin.

This part of the Lord's prayer cannot be uttered from the heart, except of him who with the psalmist can say,

Psalms 119

¹¹³ I hate vain thoughts, but your law do I love.

And this cannot be done until the individual realizes that fellowship with God is the only thing to be desired—that the loving-kindness of God is better than life.

Every man in the world will have just what he wants. If he loves the pleasures of sin, he will be left to its lusting enjoyment; but if his heart and his soul cry out after God, the promise is that he shall be filled.

21. The Doxology

Signs of the Times, August 10 & 17, 1888

Matthew 6

¹³ For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THIS close of the Lord's prayer, which is called the "doxology," from two Greek words meaning an ascription of praise or honor, has been omitted in the *Revised Version* of the New Testament. It is therefore necessary, before commenting upon it, to give the reasons for commenting upon it at all.

The reason which the Revision Committee gave for rejecting it, is that it does not appear in the most ancient versions. Dr. Roberts gives, however, after stating the objection to it, this testimony in its favor:

"There is indeed, one mighty argument in its favor. It is found in most of the ancient versions, such as the Ethiopic, the Armenian, the Gothic, and, above all, the Syriac. And could we be sure that the doxology existed from the first in such an ancient version as the Peshit Syriac, its genuineness would perhaps no longer be disputed."¹⁰

And the whole argument, pro and con, is thus briefly put in the *Speaker's Commentary*:

"The doxology is omitted by the majority of modern editors (Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Wordsworth), who regard it as an interpolation derived from the use of the prayer in the early liturgies of the church, with an ascription of praise added. The principal argument against it rests on its absence from four of the oldest uncial (A B D Z) and five cursive MSS., from the Latin and Coptic versions, and from the citations of the Latin Fathers.

On the other hand, it is found, with occasional variations, in the nine uncials and at least 150 cursives, and in the Syr-

¹⁰ *Companion to the Revised Version.*

iac, Sahdic, Ethiopic, Gothic, and Armenian versions, and is supported by preponderating evidence from the Greek Fathers.”

It seems, therefore, that the evidence against the genuineness is at the best but negative. This would be sufficient, if the ideas expressed by it were not in harmony with the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. But that the doxology does express perfectly scriptural ideas, is evident from the following sample texts.

On “yours is the kingdom,” read:

Psalm 22

²⁸ For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and He is the Governor among the nations.

On “the power,” read:

Psalm 62

¹¹ God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God.

For “the glory,” and all the rest, forever and ever, read:

Revelation 5

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

Now since the kingdom, and the power, and the glory are the Lord’s, it would certainly be proper to ascribe them to Him in our prayers, even though it were proved beyond all controversy that the doxology was not originally given with the Lord’s prayer.

Let us therefore see what lessons we may learn, and what aids to devotion we may find, in the closing words of that petition as it stands in the common version, and as it naturally comes from the lips of thousands of reverent worshipers.

For Yours is the Kingdom

This statement, if remembered, tends to beget confidence as well as reverence and awe.

Psalm 103

¹⁹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the Heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.

Malachi 1

¹⁴ For the Lord most high is terrible; He is a great king, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

Now while the greatness of God as king may strike terror to the hearts of the wicked, it is a source of joy to the Christian, for he knows that his confidence is not in a vain thing. He knows that God is love, and therefore he loves to think that He is great, for that means great love. So while...

Isaiah 33

¹⁴ The sinners in Zion are afraid,

—the upright in heart may say with all confidence:

Isaiah 33

²² For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us.

And the Power

In the thought that “power belongs unto God,” there is the same comfort that there is in the thought that the kingdom is the Lord’s. For immediately following the verse in which the psalmist says so emphatically that “power belongs unto God,” we read,

Psalm 62

¹² Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy.

Power without mercy is terrible; mercy without power is despicable; but power and mercy combined form a character worthy of love and respect. And when that power and that

mercy are infinite, then the One in whom they are found is worthy of all worship.

The creation of the world stands as the great evidence of God's power. Says the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 10

¹⁰ But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king; at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.

¹¹ Thus shall you say unto them, the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.

¹² He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens by His discretion.

Again the same prophet says:

Jeremiah 51

¹⁵ He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heaven by His understanding.

¹⁶ When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures.

Again the prophet repeats the statement, and couples with it, or rather draws from it, a comforting thought. He says:

Jeremiah 32

¹⁷ Ah Lord God! behold, You have made the heaven and the earth by your great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for You;

¹⁸ You show lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompense the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is His name,

¹⁹ Great in counsel, and mighty in work; for your eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his do-

ings.

Although this also speaks of God's power to execute judgment upon the wicked, it nevertheless contains comfort to the righteous; for as strong as God is to execute judgments, so strong is He to protect His people. And so Moses, in "the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel," said:

Deuteronomy 33

²⁶ There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in your help, and in His excellency on the sky.

²⁷ The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them.

As the Christian comes to God with his humble petition for strength, what could give him greater assurance than this thought? When he knows that all the power of God is pledged to the support of His children, will he not come with the greater boldness, the more he realizes the power of God? When he reads that:

2 Chronicles 16

⁹ The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him,

—is it not a comfort to know that God is omnipotent? When he says, "Hallowed be your name," and remembers that it is a glorious and fearful name, what an encouragement to be assured that:

Proverbs 18

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe.

Once more we read of the power of God, as described by the prophet Isaiah. Says the prophet:

Isaiah 40

¹⁵ Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He takes up the isles as a very little thing.

¹⁷ All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity.

Again he says of God, that:

²² It is He that sits upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in.

²⁵ To whom then will you liken me, or shall I be equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number; He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails.

But why are we interested in learning of this great power of God? Read on:

²⁸ Have you not known? have you not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faints not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding.

²⁹ He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increases strength.

³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall;

³¹ But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

God's power, then, is for the benefit of His children. He clothes them with His own power. The fullness of His power may become theirs in the strife against evil, if they but earnestly desire it. This will be brought out more fully further on.

The power of God as manifested in the healing of disease can be noticed only in the most general way:

- The dead have been raised;
- The lame made to walk;
- The blind to see;
- The dumb to speak, and
- The deaf to hear.
- Withered limbs have been made whole in a moment of time.
- Men full of leprosy have had their flesh become like that of a child.

Now why are all these exhibitions of the power of God placed on record? For the purpose of begetting confidence in God.

When the child of God offers the Lord's prayer or its equivalent, he is not to utter the words, "For yours is...the power," as a matter of form, but is to come with an intelligent sense of the power of God. That knowledge, coupled with his knowledge of God's willingness to help, is the assurance that his petition, if it is a proper one, will be granted.

The expression, then, "For yours is...the power," is virtually a statement of the petitioner's confidence in God. Says Paul:

Romans 1

¹⁶ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

Not only is the gospel the power by which God saves those who believe, but it is the manifestation of all the power of God for the salvation of those who will accept it.

1 Corinthians 1

²⁴ [Christ is] the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

He represents all the power in the universe, because:

Colossians 2

⁹ In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And it was:

Colossians 1

¹⁶ By Him that all things were created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.

Therefore when God in His great, love for the world gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, He gave all that Heaven had to bestow. And this is further indicated in the words of Paul:

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The greater includes the less. Since God has already given us His Son, which is a greater gift than all things else combined, how is it possible for us to ask or expect too much from Him? Christ, who is our Advocate with the Father, says:

Matthew 28

¹⁸ All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth.

And He is with His people always, even unto the end. Surely, then, it is not without reason that we are taught to acknowledge in our prayers the power of God. What confidence such knowledge begets!

Beneath His watchful eye
His saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears all nature up,
Shall guard His children well.

And the Glory

This is a most fitting climax for a prayer. It is utterly impos-

sible that human language should describe the glory of God. Let one read the 1st and 10th chapters of *Ezekiel*, and he will see the inability of human language to give any just conception of God's glory. Perhaps the best idea, the one conveying the most meaning to our minds, is given in:

Psalms 19

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.

Psalms 8

¹ O Lord our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth! who has set your glory above the heavens.

The second statement naturally follows from the first. Since God created the heavens, His own glory must be greater than the glory of the heavens. Therefore when we see the sun shining in its strength, we have only a faint conception of the glory of God.

This point was well illustrated once by a Jew who was asked by a heathen to exhibit his God. The Jew replied that his God could not be seen. When the heathen expressed the opinion that if the Jew had a God he ought to be able to show Him, the Jew bade him look at the sun. The sun was at that time in its midday splendor, and the heathen said,

"I cannot look at it; it blinds my eyes."

The Jew replied,

"Well, if you are unable to look upon one of God's creatures, how can you expect to be able to look upon God himself?"

This was a just and wise answer. God, as Creator of the heavens and the earth, has set His glory above the heavens.

Whenever the priests went into the most holy place of the earthly tabernacle, where the glory of God was manifested, they were obliged to have a cloud of incense go up before

them to shield their eyes from the glory, or else its brightness would have caused their instant death. See *Leviticus* 16:2, 12, 13. But even this precaution was insufficient whenever the Lord manifested more of His glory. Thus we read of the dedication of Solomon's temple:

2 Chronicles 7

¹ Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

² And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house.

When the Lord came down to speak His law,

Exodus 19

¹⁸ Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

Exodus 24

¹⁷ And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

So great was the glory of God that the reflected glory that shone from the face of Moses after he had been for a time in the presence of God, was such that the people could not look upon him. *Exodus* 34:29-35.

When Christ comes to judge the world and to save His people, it will be in all the glory of the Father.

Matthew 16

²⁷ For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels...

Of that glory we read as follows:

Habakkuk 3

³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount

Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise.

⁴ And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand; and there was the hiding of His power.

⁵ Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at His feet.

⁶ He stood, and measured the earth; He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow; His ways are everlasting.

But why say more as to the glory of God? Human language cannot do it justice; the highest flights of the imagination must fall far short of the reality. And what is there of strength or comfort in the contemplation of it? A few texts will answer.

Ephesians 3

¹⁴ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

¹⁵ Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

¹⁶ That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;

¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

A finer passage cannot be found in any book in the world. It would seem as though Inspiration itself could not use human language to furnish a more magnificent climax.

Paul prays for the same thing that we ought to pray for, namely, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that so we may be filled with all the fullness of God; and this is nothing less than that we should be able to resist all evil, and to keep it out of our hearts.

But how can we do this, seeing we are weak? Why, God will

strengthen us with might by His Spirit. But how much might will He give us by His Spirit?

¹⁶ According to the riches of His glory.

And so when the Christian approaches the throne of grace, that he may find grace to help in time of need, he may remember that all power and glory belong to God; and the thought that his draft upon the supply of strengthening grace will be honored to an amount equal to the inconceivable glory of God, must necessarily tend to make him come with boldness.

The same thought is emphasized in a most wonderful manner by the prophet Jeremiah in his prayer to God for the backslidden Jews. He says:

Jeremiah 15

²⁰ We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against You.

²¹ Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory; remember, break not your covenant with us.

Surely the prophet must have been filled with the Spirit when he uttered that prayer, else he would not have dared say to the Lord, "Do not disgrace the throne of your glory." What may we learn from it? Simply this:

God's throne is a throne of grace; it is also a throne of glory, and He has promised to give grace "according to the riches of His glory." Therefore if He should fail to impart this full measure of grace to those to whom it is promised, His glorious throne would cease to be a throne of glory; it would be disgraced. What confidence we may have when we remember that God's honor and glory are pledged to the support of those who trust Him. What excuse can we have for not overcoming?

Psalm 84

¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.

“The Lord will give grace and glory.” Grace now, and glory hereafter. Yet the measure of grace which He will give is according to the riches of His glory, so that, believing in and loving Christ, whom we have not seen, we may...

1 Peter 1

⁸ ...rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And so, with Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, being children of God,

Ephesians 1

⁶ To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved,

—the trying of our faith will certainly...

1 Peter 1

⁷ ...be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

The words, “Yours is the glory,” which we utter in the Lord’s prayer, are freighted with a glorious hope for the Christian. Even now are we the sons of God, though it is not yet made manifest what we shall be;

1 John 3

² But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

Romans 8

¹⁶ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God;

¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

Glorified together with Jesus Christ! Read the description of

the glory of Christ, as Isaiah saw it:

Isaiah 6

¹ In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple.

² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly.

³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.

⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

⁶ Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

⁷ And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.

⁸ Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

⁹ And He said, Go, and tell this people, Hear indeed, but understand not; and see indeed, but perceive not.

¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

John 12

⁴⁰ He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

⁴¹ These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spoke of Him.

Now try to realize that the children of God are to be glori-

fied together with Him. That means that these faces will shine as does Christ's, for:

Philippians 3

²¹ [He shall] change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Yes; it means that the glory of Christ, from which even seraphim hide their faces, shall be shared by His now-de-spised followers; for the holy prophet has said that:

Daniel 12

³ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.

And Christ himself said that when He shall come,

Matthew 13

⁴³ Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The Christian may feel wearied with the battle, and crushed by anguish either of body or spirit, or both. Then he can recall Paul's words:

Romans 8

¹⁸ For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Paul had experienced far more than the ordinary lot of human sorrow. He had been in labors abundant, even in weakness and trembling. He had been in prison many times. Five times he had received from the Jews the full number of stripes that the law would allow; three times he had been beaten with rods; and once he was stoned and left for dead. He had been shipwrecked, had been in perils of robbers, and worst of all,

2 Corinthians 11

²⁶ ...in perils among false brethren.

But he had been permitted to see something of the glory which God has in reserve for those who love Him and he gave it as his deliberate opinion that all the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

Take all the sufferings of this life, and place them in one scale, and place in the other the glory that God has for His children, and the glory would so outweigh the sufferings that no comparison could be made between them. The sufferings could be expressed only by zero. And so the apostle says:

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen.

Of all this we should be reminded when we repeat the Lord's prayer, or, indeed, when we pray at all; for that is the true model for all prayers.

So the prayer which begins with "Our Father in Heaven," and passes through all the wants of our fallen humanity, closes with a joyful anticipation of the time when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; when He shall take to himself His great power and shall reign; and when those who love and serve Him shall shine forth as the sun in the everlasting kingdom of glory.

And as our hearts contemplate the glorious time when we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls, there is in the joy that we feel a foretaste of the glory that shall be revealed in us, and we exclaim with the prophet,

Revelation 22

²⁰ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

22. Yours is the Kingdom (1896)

Present Truth, August 20, 1896

Matthew 6

¹³ Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

THIS is an everlasting truth, for the Lord himself has spoken it; yet to how many who daily utter the words are they little more than a form of speech.

As a matter of fact, it is a confession, which, if made with the spirit and with the understanding, brings the soul into the closest and most perfect relation to God.

The kingdom belongs to God. How exhaustive is it?

Psalms 103

¹⁹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.

Habakkuk 2

²⁰ The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Psalms 24

¹ The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Daniel 4

¹⁷ The Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.

Psalms 47

⁷ For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding.

⁸ God reigns over the heathen; God sits upon the throne of His holiness.

Wherever in the universe created beings can look up and see a canopy of space above them, there is God's kingdom.

Psalm 139

¹ O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.

² You know my downsitting and my uprising, You understand my thought afar off.

³ You compass my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, You know it altogether.

⁵ You have beset me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

¹² Yea, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You.

People in general do not recognize God as universal King, but that makes no difference with the fact. A portion of God's dominion is in rebellion against Him; but that does not destroy the fact that the kingdom is His by right. Many people worship gods of their own making, but that does not destroy the fact that there is but one God.

In the beginning God gave the dominion of this earth to man¹¹, but He did not thereby renounce His right to it. God is the King of kings, and it pleased Him to rule this portion of this dominion through man, whom He had made in His image. Man was to be simply the agent through whom God

¹¹ **Genesis 1:** ²⁷ So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

would manifest His power on earth. The fact that man has refused to be the instrument of God's will, does not in the least impair God's original and eternal right to the kingdom.

But our confession to God comes closer home. When the unbelieving Pharisees demanded that Jesus should tell when the kingdom of God should come, He replied:

Luke 17

²⁰ The kingdom of God comes not with observation;

²¹ Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

There is a story of a king who visited a school and questioned the pupils. Taking up a paper weight, he asked them to what kingdom it belonged. They replied,

“To the mineral kingdom.”

Then pointing to a plant, he asked the same question, and they said,

“To the vegetable kingdom.”

Then he asked,

“To what kingdom do I belong?”

The children were afraid to say that he belonged to the animal kingdom, and, as they hesitated, one said,

“To God's kingdom.”

That was a truth, for every created thing in the universe belongs to God's kingdom, and there is but one law for all, namely, God's law. Someone will say,

“But God does not rule in wicked men's hearts.”

Quite true, because His rule is love, which they reject; but the fact remains that every human heart is God's rightful kingdom. His right is demonstrated by the fact that:

Acts 17

²⁵ He gives to all life, and breath, and all things,

²⁸ For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.

It was with His life alone that we live, for we have none of our own; and since the life belongs to Him, He alone has the right to direct it.

That which may be known of God, that is, “His eternal power and Godhead” is manifest in men, even in the heathen, as well as in all the things that God has made:

Romans 1

¹⁹ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God has showed it unto them.

²⁰ For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

But men, unlike the trees of the field,

¹⁸ ...hold down the truth in unrighteousness,

—choosing rather to be their own masters than to allow God to rule. But,

Jeremiah 10

²³ The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

Man has no more power in himself than the grass of the field has, and therefore when he attempts to rule the kingdom himself, he makes a sad failure.

Who alone has the right to rule? He to whom the kingdom belongs. So when we say to the Lord, “Yours is the kingdom,” we acknowledge that He alone has the right to rule, not only in our hearts, but in all the earth. But if we truly acknowledge the fact, we yield the kingdom fully to His control. Just here is where many make a fatal mistake. They say,

“The kingdom is the Lord’s, but people in general will not acknowledge it, therefore we must compel them to submit to Him.”

Such a course as that is virtually a denial of the fact that the kingdom is the Lord’s. To say the least, God is as able to use force as we are, and if He wished people to be forced to submit to Him, He would do it. The fact that He does not compel people to serve Him, is sufficient evidence that He does not wish man to seek to do so. His law is love, and therefore force is in direct opposition to His kingdom.

All that we are called upon to do, no matter who we may be, is to acknowledge God’s right to the kingdom. Whoever acknowledges that the kingdom—that is, all mankind, including himself—belongs to God, will very naturally refrain from attempting to rule any part of it. He to whom the kingdom belongs has the sole right to rule, and if we are sincere in our acknowledgment of God’s right, we will not meddle with His affairs. We will leave Him to deal with other people as He sees best.

By acknowledging His right to rule all the kingdom, we ourselves disclaim the right to rule any portion of it, even to our own lives. The only part of the kingdom, however, that we can yield up to God, is ourselves. When we have done this, then we may tell others how good His rule is, and persuade them also to yield to His dominion.

There is strength in the heartfelt confession, “Yours is the kingdom,” for God is able to protect His own. The battle is not ours, but His to whom we belong—“the King of glory.”

Psalms 24

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

2 Chronicles 20

¹⁵ Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.

In His hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand Him.

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

His thoughts toward us are thoughts of peace, and He desires nothing so much as our welfare both here and in eternity.

Jeremiah 29

¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

What a blessed thing to know that:

Isaiah 33

²² The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us.

23. The Power and the Glory

Present Truth, September 10, 1896

Matthew 6

¹³ Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

THE kingdom is the Lord's, and it includes the whole universe. Nothing is outside His jurisdiction. Every creature in the heavens and on earth rightfully belongs to His dominion.

The Power

But a king without power is king only in name. God is really King, and therefore to Him belongs power.

Psalm 62

¹¹ God has spoken once; twice have I heard this: that power belongs unto God.

We must not fall into the error of limiting God, by thinking that power is divided, and that He has merely a share of it, even though it be the largest share.

Matthew 6

¹³ Yours is the kingdom and the power.

Psalm 103

¹⁹ His kingdom rules over all.

And wherever His kingdom is, His power is supreme. God alone has power. God is the Almighty One. That is to say, He has all might. Therefore no other being possesses any might in himself.

Because God possesses all the power in the universe, Christ, the only begotten Son could say,

Matthew 28

¹⁸ All power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

Acts 17

²⁸ In Him we live, and move, and have our being.

Every motion that is made, every thought, every word, requires the exercise of power; but the power is not inherent in the man who moves, but in God.

Romans 12

¹ There is no power but of God.

The power which men have to fight and blaspheme God, and to commit all sorts of wickedness, is but God's power perverted, just as the performance of righteous acts, and the utterance of praise, is God's power given free course.

Light-minded persons may see in this occasion for charging God foolishly; but others will see in it His superabounding grace and His everlasting love. While some think that God's seeming non-interference is an evidence of weakness, or of complicity with crime, the well-instructed will...

2 Peter 3

¹⁵ ...account that the long-suffering of our God is salvation.

If God were not sure of His "everlasting strength," He could not sit still and see men defy Him to His face, and even use His own power in opposition to Him. He has the patience of conscious omnipotence. Knowing that He really has power, He cannot, like puny man, be tempted to make an exhibition of it simply to demonstrate to scoffers that He possesses it.

God desires that men should be saved, and in the Gospel He manifests His power to save them. All God's power, and every revelation of it, is for the purpose of leading men to trust Him for their soul's salvation.

The fact that men misunderstand God, even willfully, and pervert the power which He reveals in them for their salvation, does not discourage Him or throw Him into a passion. Still He graciously manifests His power in them, in hope that

at last they will allow Him to use it to His own glory in their salvation.

God's power is the power of love, and love does not use force; therefore He patiently waits, until He is positively and definitely rejected.

What wonderful joy comes with the recognition that all power is God's!

Ephesians 2

¹⁰ For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God.

Our salvation depends on Him, and He has the power. His kingdom is in our hearts, but His enemy has been allowed to come in and raise the standard of rebellion. Nevertheless, as soon as we definitely choose the Lord for our King and our Lawgiver, He will save us by His mighty power.

Isaiah 33

²² For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us.

He has power to drive out every enemy. What comfort to rest confidently in the almighty power of our God.

The Glory

His is the glory. Not only ought it to be, but it is. The last message before the coming of the Lord, calls loudly upon men to:

Revelation 14

⁷ Fear God, and give glory to Him, [as the One who] made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

We are to give glory to Him, because it belongs to Him. His is the glory, because His is the power. Whoever takes glory to himself for anything that he possesses or has done, thereby robs God.

Jeremiah 9

²³ Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches;

²⁴ But he that glories let him glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.

Wisdom, power, and riches, all come from the Lord; therefore,

1 Corinthians 1

³¹ He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

Take a single example, in the line of wisdom. On the day of Pentecost, and in any times thereafter, God gave His servants power on the instant to talk foreign languages. Unlettered Galilean fishermen suddenly began to speak intelligently in languages that before were but meaningless jargon to them. It was manifestly a gift of God, and one instinctively shudders at the thought of one with such a gift boasting of his possession, as though the glory of it were due to him. Very well; but:

Proverbs 2

⁶ The Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

If a man by study has acquired several languages, he has done it only by the power which God gave him, and therefore his knowledge is the gift of God just as truly as was the knowledge of the apostles.

Whoever not simply openly, but in his inmost thoughts, continually gives God the glory, will be kept...

Ephesians 1

⁶ To the praise of the glory of His grace.

Proverbs 3

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Men foolishly think that it is beneath their dignity, and a limitation of their freedom, to acknowledge that God alone has power, and that all glory belongs to Him; but how much better it is to acknowledge the truth, and thus be:

Colossians 1

¹¹ Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power,

than to deny Him, and thus be left to our own disgraceful impotence.

Jude

²⁴ Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

²⁵ To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

24. Yours is the Kingdom (1902)

Present Truth, November 6, 1902

Matthew 6

¹³ For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

THESE are some of the words that our Saviour taught us to say every day. We know that the Lord's Prayer is to be offered daily, because in it we have the petition,

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.

We need bread every day, and we are to ask for it as we need it; so day by day we are to acknowledge to God in heaven that the kingdom belongs to Him.

What will be the effect of this prayer when prayed in faith that is well-instructed? First of all it will bring forcibly before our minds what and where God's kingdom is. We pray to our Father in heaven, and are reminded that:

Psalms 103

¹⁹ The Lord prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all.

Psalms 115

³ Our God is in the heavens; for He has done whatsoever He has pleased.

He has all power, and nothing is too great for Him to perform in and for His kingdom. If there is rebellion, He can subdue it. If reforms are needed, He can carry them out. But we must not forget that great as is the kingdom of God, the Saviour has said,

Luke 17

²¹ The kingdom of God is within you.

This surely means that those who know and acknowledge the truth shall have...

1 Kings 4

²⁹ ...largeness of heart,

—breadth of understanding. Our hearts are to be large enough to take in the world; for we read that:

Ecclesiastes 3

¹¹ He has set the world in their heart.

This means obedience; for “largeness of heart” means wisdom:

1 Kings 4

²⁹ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

³⁰ And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

³¹ For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

³² And he spoke three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

³³ And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall: he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

And:

Job 28

²⁸ The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Daily to say to God, “Yours is the kingdom,” knowing that the kingdom of God is right within us, is to agree to keep His commandments; for we read again:

Psalms 119

³² I will run the way of your commandments, when You shall enlarge my heart.

This acknowledgment contains our assurance of righteous-

ness. When we long for holiness of life, and are inclined to despond because of the natural perverseness of our hearts, that causes evil to be present with us even when we would do good, we have but to remember, continually remember, and acknowledge with the whole heart, that we are God's kingdom, and that He can do whatsoever He pleases in us. Nothing is too hard for Him. Our weakness only gives Him the opportunity more effectually to exhibit His power. He can work in us to His fulfill all the good pleasure of His will.

Psalms 11

⁴ The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven.

But we are His temple, and His throne is in us. So our acknowledgment, "Yours is the kingdom" ought to be a request to the Lord to take to himself His great power and to reign supreme in His kingdom, doing what He will with His own. When we utter the prayer understandingly, we virtually say to Him,

"I give the reins of government over to You; cast down and out every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of You, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. Drive out everything that offends. I cannot cleanse the temple—the task is too great for me—so I give it over into your hands, and shall depend on You to see that it is wholly cleansed."

And with this word comes the comforting assurance that He has never failed any who trusted in Him; for:

Hebrews 10

²³ He is faithful that promised.

So as His is the power, to Him shall be the glory, for we shall be "to the praise of His glory" as we trust in Him.

Ephesians 1

¹² That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first

trusted in Christ.

25. The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory

Present Truth, October 23, 1902

Matthew 6

¹³ For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

THIS what the Lord Jesus has taught us to say to our Father in heaven, who, because He is in heaven, rules over all, doing whatsoever He will.

Psalms 103

¹⁹ The Lord has prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom rules over all.

Psalms 115

³ But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatsoever He has pleased.

But the same Lord Jesus tells us:

Luke 17

²¹ The kingdom of God is within you.

Therefore since “the power and the glory” belong to the kingdom, it is evident that all the power and the glory of God will be manifested and revealed in every one in whom God is allowed to reign supreme. When other lords that have had dominion over us, are cast out, and God’s kingdom fills us, then the power and the glory that pertain to His kingdom, must also fill us.

What a high and holy calling this is! In Christ,

John 1

¹⁶ Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.

2 Corinthians 9

¹⁵ Thanks be unto God for at His unspeakable gift!

May the grace of God, and the gift by grace, abound more and more in our hearts.

26. The Amen

Present Truth, October 1, 1896

Matthew 6

¹³ Amen.

THERE is probably no other word of importance in the language, that is used with less thought as to its meaning than the word "Amen."

It is used in prayer by all Christian people, no matter what their nation or language, and it is worthy of note that it is used only in Christian worship; yet to most it probably means little if anything more than a sign to indicate that prayer is ended.

True, there is so much knowledge of its meaning, that it is often used as an expression of assent to what is prayed or spoken by others, yet in the main people use it as the close of a prayer much as though they would say,

"Now I have finished."

The word itself is simply the Hebrew root signifying "to be firm or established." It conveys the idea of stability and certainty. As a noun, we find it signifying "foundation," and in one form of the verb it signifies "to believe," as in the statements,

Genesis 15

⁶ [Abraham] believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness;

and,

Isaiah 28

¹⁶ Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believes shall not make haste.

The words "believe" and "believes" are from the Hebrew

word amen, which, in the form here used signifies to build upon, thus holding the root idea. To believe in God is to build upon Him as a sure foundation.

1 Corinthians 3

¹¹ Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

In Him are all the promises of God:

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Therefore whoever accepts and follows His words is said to build on the rock:

Matthew 7

²⁴ Therefore whoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

Everything depends on Christ, for:

Hebrews 1

³ [He] upholds all things by the word of His power.

Colossians 1 [RV]

¹⁶ For in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him;

¹⁷ And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.

Read now:

Revelation 3

¹⁴ These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

Christ is the Amen, the sure foundation, because He is all creation's source and supporter. When we pray in faith—and the prayer of faith is the only real prayer—we pray in the name of Christ; for the promise is that when we ask anything in His name we shall receive it.

If we do not ask in the name of Jesus, we have no promise of receiving anything; because to ask in His name is simply to ask for only such things as God has promised in Christ. It is to ask according to the will of God, and not according to our own fancies.

When we pray in such a manner, then we may be as sure of receiving the things we ask for as we are that God lives. Then we have a right to the word amen. The man who doubts when he prays, who is not sure that he is asking according to the will of God, and who doesn't know whether or not he will receive the things that he has prayed for, has no right to close his petition with the word Amen. His prayer is simply an experiment, and for him to say "Amen," is to take the name of the Lord in vain, for "Amen" is one of the Lord's titles.

He who uses the word amen understandably, closes his prayer in a tone of triumphant confidence. He has already the thing asked for.

Matthew 6

¹³ For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

The Lord as universal King possesses all things, He has all power and it is His glory to do deeds of kindness, and therefore we are sure of our requests as we are that Christ is the eternal Foundation. Amen: "so it shall be," is what we say, because Christ, the Amen, is the one in whom all things are. As long as the sun and moon endure, so long we know that His word of promise is sure.

The Christian is the only one who has this confidence. The

heathen cannot know the word, for they are:

Ephesians 2

¹² ...without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world.

Truly,

Deuteronomy 32

³¹ Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

Prayer in General

(Miscellaneous)

1. No “Perhaps”

Signs of the Times, February 17, 1888

IN THE first chapter of *2 Corinthians*, we find the following positive statements:

2 Corinthians 1

¹⁸ But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea.

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

In this fact alone can the sinner find any confidence in approaching to God.

Hebrews 13

⁸ Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

This is the sinner's only hope. It is not to taunt them, nor to glory in disappointing them, that the gracious call is given to men.

Isaiah 55

¹ Ho, every one that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Says Jesus,

John 6

³⁷ Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

And Paul says that:

Hebrews 7

²⁵ He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.

And the same apostle also says:

Hebrews 4

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

¹⁵ For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Again we read:

Hebrews 11

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Faith, then, and boldness, are characteristics that the Lord wants those to manifest who come to Him. Our mind was forcibly turned to this line of thought a few days ago, by reading an old hymn, the first three stanzas of which are as follows:

Come, humble sinner, in whose breast
A thousand thoughts revolve;
Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve:

I'll go to Jesus, though my sins
Have like a mountain rose;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.

Prostrate I'll lie before His throne,
And there my guilt confess;
I'll tell Him I'm a wretch undone
Without His sovereign grace.¹²

That is good; no better resolve could possibly be made; it is just what God wants every sinner to do. He says:

¹² Edmund Jones, *Come, Humble Sinner*, Sacred Poems (1760).

Isaiah 55

⁶ Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near;

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

This is the language of positive assurance. What then shall we say to the sentiment expressed in the fourth stanza of the hymn above referred to? It reads thus:

Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.¹³

Such language might be excusable in one who knew nothing of God; but uttered by one who has known God, or, rather, is known of God, it can be regarded only as a libel upon God's word. The sinner is exhorted to resolve to throw himself prostrate before God, to confess his sins, and plead for mercy, and then is "encouraged" with the thought that *perhaps* God will hear his prayer, and admit his plea.

Not in that manner does God encourage those who are sick of sin. Says the beloved disciple,

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

He promises that He will "have mercy" upon and "abundantly pardon" those who turn to Him confessing and forsaking their sins. There is no such thing as "perhaps" with God. His promises to the penitent, and His threats to the impenitent, are equally positive.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Mark 16

¹⁶ He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.

To the straying He says:

Jeremiah 29

¹² Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

¹³ And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.

Again He says:

Isaiah 45

⁹ I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain; I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

Christ says:

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.

There is no “perhaps” about this.

1 John 4

⁸ God is love.

He has revealed himself to us as:

Micah 7

¹⁸ A God...that...delights in mercy.

The surety of this is found in the fact that Jesus died for us:

Romans 5

⁸ God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

And,

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Since He came for this express purpose, how can there be any doubt about His receiving those who come humbly to Him?

When Queen Esther was implored to go in before Ahasuerus, to beg for the life of her people, she at first refused, because it was death to go before him without being summoned; but finally she yielded, saying:

Esther 4

¹⁶ Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law; and if I perish, I perish.

Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was a heathen king, and an unreasonable despot. In going before him, the queen took her life in her hand. But our God has held out His scepter to us; He wants us to come, and entreats us to come.

Ezekiel 33

¹¹ Say unto them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn, turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

We said that there is no such thing as “perhaps” with God. James says that:

James 1

¹⁷ [With Him is] no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Then those who come to Him, doubtful if they will receive what they ask for, must displease Him, because they reflect upon His truthfulness. That God is displeased with the one who doubts, is evident from:

Hebrews 11

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

And also from the following words:

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

⁷ For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

The man who thinks that “perhaps” God will hear his prayer, thinks that “perhaps” He will not; such a one cannot ask in faith, nothing wavering, and consequently cannot receive anything. The only way to come is to come boldly:

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The violent take the kingdom of Heaven by force:

Matthew 11

¹² And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

One thought more. God is pleased to have us come to Him with confidence, because it shows that we believe what He says; and His own glory depends on the fulfillment of His promises. Says Paul:

Ephesians 2

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us,

⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved;)

⁶ And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;

⁷ That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

That is, God intends to exhibit us throughout eternity, as an evidence of the exceeding riches of His grace; the souls that are saved will be an everlasting trophy of His unchanging goodness; how then can it be imagined that He will not hear the prayer of the contrite soul, with whom He has said that He delights to dwell?

Have you repented of your sins? Do you hate them, and long for a better life? Have you confessed them? Then take the assurance of God's word as evidence that your sins are forgiven, and that you are entitled to peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then you may say with the prophet:

Isaiah 12

¹ And in that day you shall say, O Lord, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and You comforted me.

² Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.

2. Praying in Public

Signs of the Times, March 2, 1888

WE HAVE received a letter from a subscriber in the East, who challenges the custom of praying in public. We have not space for the entire letter, but will state his points. He claims that:

There is not only no command for any such practice, but that it is a positive violation of our Saviour's directions in *Matthew 6:6*¹⁴; that it is a custom of man's devising, because it is in harmony with the whole world, and that therefore the one who prays in public is the friend of the world, and the enemy of God.

We do not think there are many who hold such views, but the few who do are quite active in talking them to others; and while they may not make many converts to their theory, they may cause many timid souls to rest all the more easily when they deprive themselves of the blessings of the prayer-meeting. So we think it worthwhile to give the matter a little attention.

In the first place, it is not true that the habit of public prayer is "in harmony with the world," for it is not the custom of the world to pray. Neither is it true that the custom is one of man's devising, as anyone must know who has read the Bible, and as we shall show. When we find that the apostles, and our Lord himself, prayed in public, we know without any question that public prayer is not in opposition to our Saviour's words in *Matthew 6:6*.

Old Testament Examples

In the 8th chapter of *1 Kings* we have not only the recorded fact that Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, but

¹⁴ **Matthew 6:** ⁶ But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

we have the prayer repeated in full:

1 Kings 8

²² And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

²³ And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like You, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keep covenant and mercy with your servants that walk before You with all their heart:

²⁴ Who has kept with your servant David my father that You promised him: You spoke also with your mouth, and have fulfilled it with your hand, as it is this day.

²⁵ Therefore now, Lord God of Israel, keep with your servant David my father that You promised him, saying, There shall not fail you a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that your children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as you have walked before me.

²⁶ And now, O God of Israel, let your word, I pray You, be verified, which You spoke unto your servant David my father.

²⁷ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built?

²⁸ Yet have respect unto the prayer of your servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which your servant prays before You to-day:

²⁹ That your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which You have said, My name shall be there: that You may hearken unto the prayer which your servant shall make toward this place.

³⁰ And hearken to the supplication of your servant, and of your people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear in heaven your dwelling place: and when You hear, forgive.

³¹ If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before your altar in this house:

³² Then hear in heaven, and do, and judge your servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and

justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness.

³³ When your people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against You, and shall turn again to You, and confess your name, and pray, and make supplication unto You in this house:

³⁴ Then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which You gave unto their fathers.

³⁵ When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You; if they pray toward this place, and confess your name, and turn from their sin, when You afflict them:

³⁶ Then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, and of your people Israel, that You teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon your land, which You have given to your people for an inheritance.

³⁷ If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be;

³⁸ What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all your people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:

³⁹ Then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart You know; (for You, even You only, know the hearts of all the children of men;)

⁴⁰ That they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave unto our fathers.

⁴¹ Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of your people Israel, but comes out of a far country for your name's sake;

⁴² (For they shall hear of your great name, and of your strong hand, and of your stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house;

⁴³ Hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calls to You for: that all people of the earth may know your name, to fear You, as do your people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have buildt,

is called by your name.

⁴⁴ If your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You shall send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which You have chosen, and toward the house that I have built for your name:

⁴⁵ Then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

⁴⁶ If they sin against You, (for there is no man that sins not,) and You be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

⁴⁷ Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land where they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto You in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness;

⁴⁸ And so return unto You with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto You toward their land, which You gave unto their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for your name:

⁴⁹ Then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven your dwelling place, and maintain their cause,

⁵⁰ And forgive your people that have sinned against You, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against You, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them:

⁵¹ For they be your people, and your inheritance, which You brought forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron:

⁵² That your eyes may be open unto the supplication of your servant, and unto the supplication of your people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto You.

⁵³ For You separated them from among all the people of the earth, to be your inheritance, as You spoke by the hand of Moses your servant, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord God.

⁵⁴ And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he

arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

Now turn to *2 Chronicles* 6:13-42, where you find the same account, and then read this additional statement:

2 Chronicles 7

¹ Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

Here we find that God heard and accepted that prayer. This He would not have done if Solomon had been a hypocrite; for the Lord does not pay any attention to the prayers of hypocrites.

John 9

³¹ Now we know that God hears not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and does His will, him He hears.

Job 27

⁸ For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?

⁹ Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?

In Solomon's prayer we find the following petition:

2 Chronicles 6

²⁴ And if your people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against You; and shall return and confess your name, and pray and make supplication before You in this house;

²⁵ Then hear from the heavens, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which You gave to them and to their fathers.

Here Solomon showed that he expected the people to make united prayer in the temple, in any time of trouble. But this prayer is a part of inspiration, and therefore it teaches us that public prayer is right. Moreover the Lord made a specific answer to this request, as we learn from the following:

2 Chronicles 7

¹² And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

¹³ If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

¹⁴ If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

¹⁵ Now my eyes shall be open, and my ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place.

This is in harmony with the words of God through the prophet:

Isaiah 56

⁷ For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

The temple was built for this very purpose, and there were set times for prayer in the temple.¹⁵

New Testament Examples

What we have already given is sufficient to settle the question, but we will bring more evidence. In the 17th chapter of *John* we have a wonderful prayer of our Lord, which was uttered in the presence of the eleven. If this was not a public prayer, we should like to know how many persons must be present, in order that a prayer uttered in their presence may be public? In this prayer, too, there are all the elements of prayer—supplication, thanksgiving, and praise.

But if it is thought that there were too few present for this to be called a public prayer, then turn to our Saviour's prayer at the grave of Lazarus:

¹⁵ **Acts 3:** ¹ Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

John 11

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You heard me.

⁴² And I knew that You hear me always: but because of the multitude that stands around I said it, that they may believe that You sent me.

On this occasion not only the disciples, but a great company of Jews, were present. Now if Jesus had designed by His words in *Matthew* 6:6 to condemn public prayer, it is certain that He himself would not have prayed in public.

Take the occasion of the transfiguration.

Luke 9

²⁸ [Jesus] took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

It is certain that He prayed at that time in the presence of those three disciples, for it was...

²⁹ As He prayed...

that:

Mark 9

² He was transfigured before them.

When we take the record concerning the disciples and the apostles of Christ, we find numerous instances of public prayer. After Jesus had ascended, the eleven returned to the upper room where they dwelt, and:

Acts 1

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus.

It was while they were thus daily joining in prayer, that Peter stood up in the midst of them (and there were a hundred and twenty gathered together¹⁶) and laid before them the ne-

¹⁶ **Acts 1:** ¹⁵ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and

cessity of having another apostle chosen; and after appointing two men, they prayed and asked the Lord to show which one He had chosen; and their prayer was answered.

Acts 1

²⁴ And they prayed, and said, You, Lord, which know the hearts of all men, show which of these two You have chosen,

²⁵ That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

²⁶ And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

After Peter and John had been released from the imprisonment which followed the healing of the lame man, they returned to their own company and reported what had been done. When the company had heard that, they lifted up their voices in thanksgiving to God;

Acts 4

³¹ And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Thus God again showed His acceptance of united prayer. Another instance of availing public prayer is found in the 12th chapter of *Acts*. Herod had put James to death,

Acts 12

³ And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

⁵ Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

If the narrative ended here, it might be claimed that the prayers for Peter's deliverance were offered by individual members of the church at their homes; and no doubt many prayers were offered in secret. But in verse 12 we read that after Peter had been miraculously delivered from the prison,

twenty).

¹² He came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

Here was united prayer by the church, and the prayer was answered. It was not hypocritical prayer, nor prayer offered for the applause of men; it was such prayer as the Lord delights in.

Again when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at Miletus, to hold a meeting with the elders of the church at Ephesus. After an affecting discourse,

Acts 20

³⁶ He kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

This may mean simply that Paul alone prayed, although it seems more likely that they all prayed; but whichever way it was it is another instance of public prayer.

Once more, while Paul was on this same journey, we find him praying in public. At Tyre, where the ship discharged her cargo, the travelers found disciples, with whom they tarried seven days.

Acts 21

⁵ And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city; and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

Whoever can say that the prayers in either of these instances were offered in a hypocritical spirit, or with a desire for the praise of men, must be entirely ignorant of Christian love and fellowship.

Directions

Other instances of public prayer might be given, but we proceed to notice some directions concerning public prayer, and some direct commands therefore, which we find in the

Bible.

In *1 Corinthians* 11:4-13 the apostle Paul gives directions concerning the fitness of things in prayer, stating that a woman ought not to pray with her head uncovered, nor a man with his head covered. This was a direction for the public assembly.

And in *1 Corinthians* 14 the apostle argues as follows concerning praying in an unknown tongue:

1 Corinthians 14

¹⁴ For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.

¹⁵ What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

¹⁶ Else when you shall bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupies the room of the unlearned say Amen at your giving of thanks, seeing he understands not what you say?

Now when a man prays in secret, it does not make any difference what language he uses, so long as he himself knows what he is saying; for the Lord can understand any language. And it makes no difference in how low a tone he speaks.

But this will not do in the kind of prayer that Paul speaks of in *1 Corinthians* 14:14-16. In that, the person must pray so as to be understood, so that those who listen may say, Amen. This inspired direction concerning prayer is another proof that public prayer is not displeasing to God.

Hebrews 10

²⁴ And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;

²⁵ Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.

Now when the same apostle says:

1 Timothy 2

⁸ I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,

—we must conclude that he intends that when the brethren assemble themselves together to exhort one another, they shall also pray together. And that this is what they should do, we learn from our Saviour's words in:

Matthew 18

¹⁹ 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 which is in heaven.

²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

In these texts we have the authority for a prayer-meeting. But now read a direct command for public prayer:

James 5

¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

¹⁶ Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed.

Does anybody believe that James intended that the elders of the church should come to the sick man's house, and then each retire to a room by himself to pray? No; for it is expressly stated that they are to "pray over him." The next verse provides for mutual confession and united prayer; and no one who has experienced the blessedness of praying with the afflicted and needy, would wish to be forever debarred from the privilege.

He who would not be convinced by this array of Scripture testimony that public prayer is not a sin, but is required by the Lord, would not be persuaded,

Luke 16

³¹ ...though one rose from the dead.

But while we have thus pleaded the case of public prayer, we would not be understood as depreciating secret prayer in the least. The man who does not pray in secret, cannot offer an acceptable prayer in public. For in every true prayer the soul must enter into the holy of holies and there hold communion with God, and it is in the closet that the intimate acquaintance with God is gained which enables one to do this.

There are some petitions which one can make only in secret; they cannot be expressed before men. All matters of a strictly personal character are for the closet alone. Our Lord reproved the spirit of parading one's secret wants, or his piety, before the world; but while He emphasized the necessity of secret prayer, He did not thereby condemn public prayer.

It is true that public prayer may be perverted, and may become a mere form, or may be engaged in merely for display. The same may be said of secret prayer. We have known people who were careful that people should know their hours for secret devotion, and others who did not need to tell people when they prayed, as everybody in the immediate neighborhood could hear. Such prayers, although uttered in the closet, are as much condemned by our Lord as are the street-corner prayers.

And as for form, there are few who will not have to confess that, even when by themselves, they have sometimes engaged in prayer in a listless, perfunctory manner, and have literally "said their prayers."

But some will urge, as a last resort, that they "can't possibly pray in public." We don't believe any such thing. We have heard people make such an excuse for not taking part in prayer-meeting, and in some cases they were the most talkative people in the meeting, and would, if allowed, monopolize

all the time of the social meeting.

Peter was not afraid to pray in public when he felt the waters of the Sea of Galilee giving way beneath his feet. Perhaps when these people feel their foundation giving way beneath them, and see nothing between them and destruction, they will not stop to consider who may hear, when they cry, “Lord, save me.”

3. Prayer that Prevails

Signs of the Times, November 23, 1888

THERE is some very important instruction given in regard to prayer, in the 18th chapter of *Luke*.

What stronger assurance that prayer will be answered can be asked for than that given in the parable of the unjust judge? Note the contrast that is drawn.

Luke 18

² There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man.

His own ease and self-gratification absorbed all his thoughts. From sheer heartlessness he paid no attention to the poor widow's appeal. But she was importunate; she could not give up her claim.

No doubt her little property was in the hands of some extortioner, and her living depended upon the judge's decision. It was a matter of life and death with her. She presses her claim at unseasonable hours.

At last the judge, fearful lest his selfish ease will be seriously interfered with, avenges her of her adversary. He granted her request, although he had no interest in it, simply to get rid of her.

Now mark the contrast.

⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

Not for the same reason that the unjust judge avenged the poor widow, but because He pities as a father, and His ear is ever open to the prayers of His children. The invitation is:

Matthew 11

²⁸ Come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and

I will give you rest.

Psalm 55

²² Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you.

Let the fearful one take courage. Do not hesitate to cast upon Him the burden that, although too heavy for your own unaided strength, seems too small to be noticed by Him. Surely He who takes note of the tiny sparrow's fall, and numbers the hairs of our heads, will not refuse to notice the simplest matter that affects the interest of one of His children.

If we fail to ask aid in the smallest affairs of life, we must displease God. It is a virtual denial of His willingness to interest himself in little matters.

But we should consider that God is infinitely greater than we, and the things that to us seem very great are very easy for Him to perform. We cannot grasp the infinite, therefore it is idle to speculate upon what things are great and what small, in the eyes of God. Better far to take God at His word and:

Philippians 4

⁶ In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

But good and evil are ever side by side. It is easy for the human heart to be deceived, and to mistake self-confidence for faith. This is illustrated in the Pharisee's prayer. We seldom hear the Pharisee's sentiments expressed so plainly, but who is not in danger of harboring them? That spirit is as much to be guarded against in our conversation as in our prayers.

Many people do not speak of their own good deeds, but loudly condemn the faults of others, in order that their hearers may think that they themselves are free from such failings. Is not this Pharisaic spirit the secret of all gossip concerning scandals?

People naturally prone to evil deeds, love to dwell upon and

magnify the faults of others, for by so doing they lose sight of their own. They make out so bad a case against their neighbor that their own short-comings seem small in comparison. We all need to heed the injunction,

Romans 12

³ Let no man think more highly of himself than he ought to think.

The publican's prayer was answered, while the Pharisee's was not heard, for:

James 4

⁶ God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble.

Who wishes to have the mighty God for his adversary? Let us all read carefully and heed *James* 4:6-11.

4. Prevailing Prayer

Signs of the Times, August 18, 1890

Luke 18:1-14

Luke 18

¹ And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

² Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man;

³ And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.

⁴ And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

⁵ Yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says.

⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though He bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

⁹ And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others;

¹⁰ Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

¹² I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

IT IS highly probable that a majority of those who read this simple parable fail to learn the lesson from it that they should. They look at it as though it designed to teach that the

unjust judge is a type of God, which cannot by any possibility be the case. If it were, then it would poorly serve the object of encouraging men always to pray, and not to grow weary. Few persons would have the heart to hold out against oft-repeated rebuffs.

By Way of Contrast

The parable was spoken in order that men might, according to the Syriac, pray at every opportunity, and not grow weary. Surely this parable would not help men to that end, if it taught that God is like the unjust judge—hard to move. There would be no encouragement in that. Such an idea does violence to the whole tenor of Scripture. Hear what the character of God is:

Psalms 103

¹³ Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.

1 Peter 3

¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.

Exodus 34

⁶ And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.

Micah 7

¹⁸ Who is a God like unto you, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy.

Isaiah 65

¹ I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not; I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

² I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts;

³ A people that provoke me to anger continually to my face.

John 15

¹³ Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Romans 5

⁸ But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Add to all these the following:

Matthew 7

⁹ Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

¹⁰ Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Here Christ is both compared and contrasted with earthly parents. He has the same kind of love for His children who are in need that an earthly parent has for his children, but He is infinitely greater and better, and His love for His children is as much greater than that of an earthly parent for his children, as God is greater than man.

If a person, then, wishes to know how willing God is to answer prayer, let him think of his own willingness, yes, eagerness, to give his children needed things, and then multiply that degree of willingness by infinity. Besides this, we read:

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

He does not upbraid us because we have not asked before, nor because we have squandered that which He has previ-

ously given us; when we ask in faith, He gives freely, without taunting us with our short-comings.

Praying at Every Time of Need

Now we can readily understand the parable of the unjust judge. He was utterly hardened.

Luke 18

² He feared not God neither regarded man.

It made no difference to him what people said about him. He was sure of his position for this life, and he had no thought of God and the future life. All he lived for was his own selfish pleasure. This poor widow had a just cause; but he knew nothing of justice, and paid no attention to her.

But she persisted; she could not rest without having her cause decided. Her life depended on it. So she kept coming again and again, until finally the judge's comfort was interfered with. So, at last, in order to get rid of her, so that he might enjoy his own pleasures undisturbed, he granted the widow's request.

⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says.

⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though He bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

He who concludes from this that in order to get judgment from God it is necessary to plead and urge as long as the widow did the judge, in order to overcome His indifference, or to gain His attention, maligns the character of God. The parable contrasts God with the unjust judge, instead of comparing them. If the unjust judge, with his callous heart, could be moved to do justice by the importunity of the poor widow, shall not God, who delights in mercy, avenge His own loved ones? Who can doubt it.

⁷ Though he bear long with them.

The *Revised Version* renders this passage literally:

⁷ And He is long-suffering over them.

That deepens the contrast. The unjust judge was cruel, and had no care for man; God loves His people, and is tender and compassionate with them. What a world of encouragement there is in this, to pray at every opportunity, at every time of need, and not to grow weary, thinking that God is weary of granting our request.

Not Vain Repetitions

“But,” says one, “I thought that we had to strive, to agonize, to enter in; that the kingdom of heaven must be taken by force.”

Very true; we must “pray without ceasing;” but that does not necessarily mean that we must importune forever in order to get one thing. We are not heard for our much speaking; God does not wish us to be like the heathen, who imagine that the more frantic they become in their appeals, the more likely they are to be heard.

Note the difference between the prayers of the prophets of Baal, and that of Elijah.

1 Kings 18

²⁶ And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

²⁷ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked.

²⁸ And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

²⁹ And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they

prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

³⁶ And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

³⁷ Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their heart back again.

Consider the reverent calmness of the prayer of Christ at the tomb of Lazarus.

John 11

⁴¹ Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard me.

⁴² And I know that You hear me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that You have sent me.

Praying in Faith

When we pray, we are to believe that our request is granted, and it is granted.

Mark 11

²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

The instant Daniel began to pray to God, an angel was dispatched to give him the knowledge he desired.

Daniel 9

²³ At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show You; for You are greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

Daniel 10

¹² Then he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that you did set your heart to understand, and to chasten yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I am come for your words.

Circumstances, and the interests of others, of whom we may know nothing, may delay the messenger, and our faith may thus be tested; but God is not unfaithful. By the cases and the assurances put on record, we may know of a surety that if the answer is delayed, it is coming.

But having received one petition, we are just as needy. And so we must continue “instant in prayer.” *Romans* 12:12. We must not lose heart and become weary. Men ought to pray at every opportunity, at every time of need. This is what the Scriptures mean.

The Pharisee and Publican

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican, which follows, emphasizes this, and shows how readily God answers prayer. It also shows what really constitutes prayer. Since the parable was spoken to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, it is evident that such ones do not offer prayer acceptable to God. The one who would receive anything from God must pray...

James 1

⁶ ...in faith, nothing wavering.

But faith does not and cannot exist in that soul that is “lifted up.”

Habakkuk 2

⁴ Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Faith is dependence on another. Faith comes to a man when self goes out. The man who trusts in himself that he is righteous cannot expect to receive anything from the Lord, be-

cause he doesn't ask for anything. Why should he? If he has righteousness by his own works, why should he ask the Lord for it?

This was the case with the Pharisee. He "stood"—struck an attitude—

Luke 18

¹¹ ...and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are.

He prayed "with himself," and not to God. Apparently he began by thanking God, but actually he was congratulating himself.

¹³ And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

He had no confidence in himself. He did not, like the Pharisee, compare himself with others, to their disadvantage; he had no thought of others, but only of himself as the chief sinner. He used the definite article:

"God be merciful to me, *the* sinner."

He acknowledged his own sin, but didn't confess for anybody else. Thus he put himself directly in the class of those upon whom God delights to have mercy. The prayer was short, but it was long enough to get all that he wanted.

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than [instead of] the other.

What had he done to secure this? He had simply trusted in the Lord. He went up to the temple a sinner; he went down to his house a righteous man; not having his own righteousness, but...

Philippians 3

⁹ ...that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

5. Praying to One's Self

Present Truth, March 9, 1893

“Surely nobody does such a thing as that!”

WELL, they used to, and since human nature has not changed, it must be that some do still.

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican was spoken for the benefit of a class. It was for those:

Luke 18

⁹ [who] trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

The Pharisee, having this trust in himself

¹¹ Stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

And then followed a list of his own virtues. The Saviour said that he prayed “with himself.” Notice carefully. He expressed thanks that he was not like other men, but he trusted himself that he was righteous. He thought that goodness sprung from himself—that he was justified by his own works. This is why he despised others, whom he thought were not so good as he was.

If he had trusted in God for righteousness, knowing and acknowledging that there is no righteousness except that which God gives freely by His own grace, he would not have despised others; for he would then have realized that he himself was entitled to no credit over others, even though he had more righteousness than they.

The fact then that he trusted in himself that he was righteous, shows that he did not think that his righteousness came from God. Therefore it is evident that whatever thankfulness he felt for the righteousness which he thought he had, was di-

rected to himself. So that really he himself was the god to whom he returned thanks. If his righteousness came from himself, why should he not thank himself? So although he was in God's temple, and seemed to pray to God, he was really praying with himself.

Such is the prayer of the self-righteous man. He is his own god, and his prayers are directed to himself, as the one from whom all his goodness flows. But let us beware lest in our consideration of the parable we fall into the same pit as the Pharisee.

If we begin to congratulate ourselves that we are not like him, we thereby show that we are exactly like him. Who has not found himself doing that very thing?

Moreover, this making a god of self is not confined to those who profess justification by works. While expressing full belief in justification by faith only, we may be in the same condition as the Pharisee; and while thinking that we have the righteousness of Christ; we may be trusting in our own righteousness.

How can this be? Remember that the Pharisee's manifestation of self-righteousness was by the fact that he "despised others." So whenever we find ourselves indulging a critical disposition, marking this one's faults, and secretly congratulating ourselves that we do not make such mistakes, we are showing the possession of the Pharisaic spirit. It is an exhibition of self-righteousness, and shows that we are worshipping ourselves, and not God.

The possession of the righteousness of God, which comes by the faith of Jesus Christ, is not characterized by criticism and fault-finding. There is in it nothing of self-exaltation, or self-congratulation. There is no despising of others in it.

James 3

¹⁴ If you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory

not, and lie not against the truth.

¹⁵ This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

¹⁶ For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

¹⁸ And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace.

There is one other condition closely allied to the above. It is when a person prays to the Lord for forgiveness, and then looks to himself, to his own feelings—for evidence of forgiveness. That is simply praying to God, and then looking to ourselves for the answer to our prayers.

But if we are going to look to ourselves for the answer to our prayers, why not pray directly to ourselves in the first place? Why go through the form of praying to God, taking His name in vain, when we expect the answer from ourselves?

Is it not plain that in such a case we are really praying to ourselves? That we are in the condition of the Pharisee, who trusted in himself that he was righteous? If after we have prayed to God for righteousness, we look to ourselves, to our feelings, for evidence that we have it, are we not to some degree, at least, trusting in ourselves that we are righteous? Let us rather direct our prayer only to God, and look up, expecting to receive the answer from Him.

Lamentations 3

⁴¹ Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

6. Giving Thanks

Present Truth, April 20, 1893

1 Thessalonians 5

¹⁸ In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

THIS is one of the most important commands in the Bible. On it depends all our peace, and the receiving of all the blessings which God has for us.

No matter if everything does not appear favorable, we are to give thanks therein. This, like all of God's commandments, is not an arbitrary rule for us to follow blindly, but is most reasonable when we consider it from the side of God.

Very often people think that they have nothing for which to be thankful. This is the greatest mistake in the world. Even professed Christians often give way to such thoughts. Of course if they were to give candid thought to the matter they could see enough to give thanks for under all circumstances.

But fortunately God has not left to us the task of searching out among the affairs of our lives those things for which we should be thankful. Here are the Divine directions:

Ephesians 5

¹⁸ Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

¹⁹ Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

²⁰ Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that instead of there ever not being anything for which we may return thanks, there is never anything for which we may not thank the Lord. Someone may say,

“I don't see how this can be done; there are some things of which it is impossible to be thankful.”

Not if one is a Christian. Someone will bring up to me some circumstance, and will ask,

“How can I be thankful for that? What is there about that to be thankful for?”

I cannot answer those questions. You must take them to the Lord, and let Him answer them for you. It is not necessary for us to know everything. It is sufficient for us to know that:

- God knows all things;
- He knows the way that we take, and is leading us, if we yield to Him;
- He cares for us far more than we can care for ourselves; and
- He has all power to do the good for us that His love prompts Him to do.

If we know but one thing, and really know that, we may be thankful under all circumstances, and for all things.

Romans 8

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Some will ask,

“How may we know that?”

We may know it because God says so. That is reason enough. We are not called upon to know how it can be, but only to know the fact.

“But perhaps I am not one of them who love the Lord?”

You can settle that very easily. It is the easiest thing in the world to love God. But we must not think that we are to force ourselves to love Him. No; that which is easy does not require force; and where there is force there is never love. Force de-

stroys love.

How may we love God? By thinking about Him. We cannot help loving things that are altogether lovely, if we but know them. God is love. He has shown His love for us in giving himself for us.

Romans 5

⁸ God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Whosoever meditates upon this one thing, cannot fail to love God.

1 John 4 [RV]

¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us.

Now if we love God we shall know that all things work together for our good. We shall know it because He says so; and if we love Him we shall believe Him. Mark, that it does not say that all things shall work together for our good, but that all things do work for good. We do not have to wait until some future time for the good, but we get it as we go along. Everything that comes to the Christian is good.

Romans 8

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

³⁶ As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Well, then, if everything that comes to the Christian is

good, and he knows that it is good, how can he help giving thanks? Wouldn't he be a surly fellow, who would complain all the time, while he was all the time receiving good things? It is not for us to ask,

“How can any good come from this or that thing?”

We have nothing to do with that. God has taken on himself the task of making all things work out for good, and as long as He knows how to do it, and is able to do it, that should be enough for us.

But we may see this much, for the encouragement of our faith: Everything is in Christ.

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Mark it “all things.” Both the things that seem bad, and the things that seem to be good. All come to us in Christ, if we are only His. The devil seeks our destruction, but Christ has conquered him, and has power to turn the greatest curses that he would bring upon us into blessings. He can make the wrath of man to praise Him. See how He overruled the hatred of Joseph's brethren, and made it work out His own purposes.

Galatians 3

¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree;

¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

This one thing contains everything. The mystery of the cross has in it all other mysteries. It is by means of it that all things work together for our good. The law has for sinners only curses and death. But Christ receives in himself, on the

cross, the curse of the law, and suffers the death that the law pronounces upon the ungodly, and, lo, to every one who believes Christ, and through faith hides in Him, the law brings life and blessing.

In His body death is turned to life, and cursing is turned to blessing. Here is Divine alchemy, far surpassing the wildest dreams of the old philosophers. They thought to find a means whereby all metals could be turned into perishing gold; but in Christ everything is transmuted into the gold of the everlasting kingdom of God—into eternal life and glory.

In view of the cross, therefore, how plain becomes the exhortation and promises,

Philippians 4

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. Thanksgiving for what? Why, for all things, as we have already read. Thank God not only for blessings in the past, but for the blessings that you are about to receive. Thank Him for the things for which you are making supplication. Only on this condition are you sure of receiving anything.

Mark 11

²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

“How can we believe that we have the things, when we don’t have them?”

We can’t, and we are not expected to. But we are to believe that we have the things, because we have them in the very promises of God, which are the basis of our prayers.

If it were not for the promises of God, we could not pray at all. Prayer is simply coming to God with the promises He has made, and presenting them to Him, and claiming all that there is in them. The word of the Lord is a creative word. The things named is in the name. The substance of the thing promised is in the promise. When we take the promises in faith, then we have the things promised, and of course we can thank the Lord for them.

Faith is the appropriating of the words of God. When it is said that we cannot receive anything without faith, that means that we cannot receive anything unless we take it. But if we believe the promises of God, then we do have the things asked for, and our thanksgiving from the heart is the evidence of our faith. If we have not faith enough to thank God for the things asked for, we have not faith enough to take the things that God has promised.

If everyone would strictly follow the Divine injunction, to give thanks in everything and for everything, and in every prayer, there would be fewer lifeless prayers. Indeed there would not be any. There would be no talking at random in prayer. No one would dare ask for a thing for which he could not thank the Lord at the time, and that means that he would not dare ask for things for which there is no warrant in the word of the Lord.

We should ask only in accordance with His will, and then we should know that God hears us, and that we have the things desired.

1 John 5

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, he hears us:

¹⁵ And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

And then the peace of God, that passes all understanding would keep our hearts and minds.

Philippians 4

⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Peace would flow as a river, and we should be filled with righteousness, even as the waves fill the sea.

Isaiah 48

¹⁸ O that You had hearkened to my commandments! then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

One thing more: the good from thanksgiving is all to us. We do not thank the Lord for His benefit, but for our own salvation. Unthankfulness is the first step towards idolatry. The heathen became such,

Romans 1

²¹ Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, *neither were thankful*.

Thankfulness must necessarily result from a recognition of God and of His goodness. No one can realize that:

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,

—without being deeply grateful to Him. Therefore whoever is not thankful, does not worship God. Unthankfulness arises from selfishness. The unthankful person is so because he is absorbed in himself, and worships self rather than God.

Let us beware, then, lest we, through unthankfulness, lose not only the blessings which God has for us, but even the knowledge of God himself. True worship consists not in making petitions to God, but in thanksgiving to God.

7. Keep Watch

Present Truth, July 27, 1893

Original title: Front Page

Psalm 5

³ My voice shall You hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up.

THE *Revised Version* renders its, “and will keep watch.” For what would he look up and keep watch? Evidently for the blessings for which he prayed. Said he:

Psalm 121

¹ I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from whence comes my help.

² My help comes from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

Too many people make their requests known to God, but don't keep watch, so that, although the blessings are extended to them, they do not see them.

The Lord loves to have people do Him the honor of acting as though they expected to receive from Him the things that He has promised.

8. Exhaustless Stores of Mercy

Present Truth, August 10, 1893

Original title: Front Page

Psalm 33

²² Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You.

WHAT infinite resources there are for us in that sentence.

It is true that it is only a prayer, but it is a prayer inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is equal to a promise by the Holy Spirit. It is a promise that we may have, from the mercy of God, anything that we hope for.

We cannot exhaust His mercy. Not only may we have all that we hoped for from God, but:

Ephesians 3

²⁰ [He is] able to do it exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And whatever God is able to do, He will do. Then let us put on love, the bond of perfectness, that...

1 Corinthians 13

⁷ ...hopes all things,

—and all things are ours.

9. Asking Amiss

Present Truth, September 14, 1893

James 4

³ You ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss.

SO WROTE the apostle James in his letter to the church. Thus it is with a great many prayers that are offered to-day.

1 John 5

¹⁴ If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

But the majority of prayers that are offered are not asked “according to His will,” but according to the will of man. A notable instance of this is now before the public. The committee on religious congresses at the World’s Fair have issued a request for universal prayer on behalf of these great religious conclaves, in which we find this paragraph:

“It is suggested that on one day in September the religious teachers of the world call public attention to this first great effort of mankind to realize their common religious fraternity. And the request is earnestly preferred, and sent out to all those who believe in a divine order and the government of the world, and to work and wait for a kingdom of God on earth, that during the month of September in 1893, at some special time and places of public worship, devout supplication should be made that this historic meeting of the children of one Heavenly Father may be blessed to the glory of His name, to the advancement of spiritual enlightenment, to the promotion of peace and goodwill among the races and nations, and to the deepening and widening of the sense of universal human brotherhood.”

Thus all sounds pretty good, but we can have no faith whatever in any prayer that is offered to God with the spirit and the understanding that the Christian religion can unite with pagan systems of worship and be placed on a level with them

in a common religious fraternity, or in behalf of the enterprise which seeks to bring this about. Nothing of this kind can be according to the will of God; for the will of God is revealed in His word, which makes a difference as high as the heavens between the Christian religion and all other religions whatsoever.

We would suggest that this great congress be opened by reading these words from:

2 Corinthians 6

¹⁴ What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what concord has Christ with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel?

¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

Pending the answers to these questions, it will be in order to entertain a motion to adjourn *sine die*.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Sine die*: without any future date being designated (as for resumption); indefinitely.

10. Prayer

Present Truth, October 5, 1893

PRAYER is the channel of the soul's communion with God. Through it our faith ascends to God, and His blessings descend to us. The prayer of the saints ascend as incense before God. They come actually into His presence.

Psalm 141

² Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Revelation 5

⁸ And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

Revelation 8

³ And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

⁴ And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

Prayer is the index of the soul's spirituality. There is "the prayer of faith," spoken of by James¹⁸, and there is also the wavering prayer, mentioned by the same writer.¹⁹ There is:

James 5

¹⁶ ...the effectual, fervent prayer, [which] avails much,

—and there is also the cold, formal prayer, which avails nothing. Our prayers show the exact measure of our spiritual-

¹⁸ **James 5:** ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

¹⁹ **James 1:** ⁶ But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavers is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

ity.

The effectual prayer takes hold by faith upon the word of God. Faith not only believes that God is, but that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11

⁶ But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

It is offered not formally, but with a sense of need; not doubtingly nor despairingly, but with full confidence that it is heard, and will receive an answer in due time.

The effectual prayer is not argumentative, for it is not the province of man to argue with God. Its statements are not for the purpose of conveying information to God, or of persuading Him to do what He had not intended to do. God cannot be persuaded by man. The arguments and appeals of a finite man cannot change the mind of the Omniscient.

The man of faith does not plead with God for any such purpose. He does not want to persuade God to work in man's way, for he believes God's statement that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than man's ways. His prayer is ever,

“Your will, not mine, be done.”

What then is prayer, and what the purpose for which it is offered? It is the expression of our assent to that which God is willing and waiting to do for us. It is expressing to God our willingness to let Him do for us what He wants to do. It is not left for us to instruct the Lord in regard to what we need.

Matthew 6

³² Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

⁸ Your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him.

He knows what we need much better than we know ourselves.

Romans 8

²⁶ For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

God knows every need that we have, and is ready and anxious to give us that which will supply them; but He waits for us to realize our need of Him. He cannot consistently with the infinitely wise principles by which He works, bestow upon men spiritual blessings of which they would have no appreciation. He cannot work for man without man's cooperation.

The heart must be in a condition to receive an appropriate gift before it can be bestowed. And when it is in that condition, it will feel an earnest longing which will naturally take the form of prayer. And when this longing is felt, when the soul feels an intense desire for the help that God alone can give, when the language of the soul is,

Psalms 42

¹ As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God,

—the effect is to open the channel between God and the soul and let the flood of blessings which was already waiting to descend. And it is the intensity of the desire that determines how wide the door shall be opened.

We need to realize more the great truth that God sees and knows everything that we need and has every provision made for all our wants, before we have even considered those wants ourselves. Our work is not to determine what must be done to relieve them, but:

- to place ourselves in a position where God can relieve them by the means which He has provided;
- to conduct ourselves with Him,

- to know His mind and thus to move according to His plans, and not set about the fruitless task of trying to make Him work for us according to some plans of our own.

11. Spiritual Power

Present Truth, December 7, 1893

Original title: Front Page

PHYSICAL power moves the arm of men, intellectual power the arm of the nation; but spiritual power moves the arm of God. Prayer can set in motion the mightiest force in the universe.

James 5

¹⁷ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,

—although he stands out boldly in sacred history as one who had power to shut up heaven so that it should not rain, and to open heaven and bring down its rain or its fire upon the earth.

We are not to think of Elias, or Moses, or Isaiah, or the other prophets, as men different in their origin or nature from ourselves. They were all subject to the same passions, and of themselves had no more power than we have; but they yielded themselves to God, and thus became instruments in His hands. That is all the difference.

When we will fully yield ourselves to Him, God will make us His instruments,—not, perhaps, to call down fire or to withhold rain, but to do work which is no less His work, and no less honorable and needful than that done by His prophets of old.

We are apt to think that the work of God is some visibly great work, something that affords some striking manifestation of superhuman power and majesty, like some of the mighty miracles performed by the prophets or the apostles.

But this opinion comes only from the finite nature of our human minds. The human mind would naturally have concluded that the Lord was in the wind, or the fire, or the earthquake, that passed before the fugitive Elijah on Mount Horeb; but we learn from the record that God was not in these, but in

this...

1 Kings 19

¹² ...still, small voice.

It is...

Zechariah 4

⁶ Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

We are told that John the Baptist...

John 10

⁴¹ ...did no miracle,

and yet Jesus said,

Matthew 11

¹¹ Among men that are born of woman, there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.

His work was the work of preparing the way for the Son of God, and as the prophet tells us, every valley was exalted, and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked was made straight, and the rough places plain. *Isaiah* 40:3. That was as great a work as was ever done through men.

And so likewise our work is no less a great work though there be nothing about it especially calculated to arrest the eye or startle the senses. If through us the still small voice speaks, and is heard by other hearts around us, we are doing a greater work than that of producing tornadoes and earthquakes. It is a mightier miracle to work upon and change the human heart, than to work upon inanimate matter, which has been given no will power of its own.

The power of God is the same power in all ages, and the same in all persons through whom it is manifested. And all persons through whom God manifests His power are the same in nature; all are of like passions with ourselves. If we will believe this, it will be to us a source of much encourage-

ment.

Elias had power to shut up the rain or to call it down, and to bring down fire from heaven. These are the two grand agents of destruction,—the one, that which destroyed the earth in the days of Noah, the other, that which will destroy it again in the day of Judgment, which comes in our day.

But to the righteous, God places even these agencies of His wrath in subjection. And so we, men of like passions with Elias and all the prophets, having like them the righteousness of God, who is:

Romans 10

¹² The same God over all [and equally] rich unto all them that call upon Him,

—may have all confidence in the day of His appearing.

12. Asking in His Name

Present Truth, December 21, 1893

Jesus said,

John 14

¹² He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

¹³ And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

¹⁴ If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

THIS is as comprehensive a promise as can be found in the Bible. Who believes it? There is no qualification to this statement:

¹⁴ If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

There is no limit. Someone will say,

“I have been asking for something in the name of Jesus, and I have not received it.”

That cannot be, for Jesus Christ is...

Revelation 3

¹⁴ ...the faithful and true Witness,

and He cannot lie. Perhaps you do not know what it is to ask in the name of Jesus. The Apostle Paul tells us that:

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

The name of Christ, therefore, stands to all the promises of God. God is good, and therefore He gives only that which is good.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and

comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

But this text assures us that God gives everything that is good. He withholds nothing.

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Since all the promises of God are in Christ, it is evident that we do not ask in the name of Christ unless we ask for something that God has promised. God will honor every draft presented at the bank of heaven, if it has the name of Jesus upon it.

But let everyone beware how he attempts to forge that name. That name is written in blood, even the blood of Christ, and every forgery will be detected instantly. He who puts the name of Jesus to a request for a thing that God has never promised, is taking that name in vain;

Deuteronomy 5

¹¹ And the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.

13. According to His Will

Present Truth, December 21, 1893

IN CLOSE relation to the above promise²⁰ is the following statement:

1 John 5

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us;

¹⁵ And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

Here is something definite. It is positive knowledge. On this basis we do not have to imagine that we receive the things that we ask for, nor to wonder if we shall receive them; but we know, every step of the way.

Of course the first question that will arise is this,

“How may we know that we are asking according to the will of God?”

We may know by His word. The word of God contains His will. In it He has recorded the...

2 Peter 1

⁴ ...exceeding great and precious promises,

which guide us in our request. Let us note a few of the statements of what His will is:

Galatians 1

³ Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

⁴ Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

This gives us a wide range for requests. Anything that pertains to this present evil world—the lust of the flesh, the lust

²⁰ *John* 14:14, from the previous article, “[Asking in His Name](#).”

of the eyes and the pride of life—we may know that it is the will of God to deliver us from. Therefore whatever evil thing we wish deliverance from, we have only to ask for deliverance, and we know that God hears us; and we know that He hears us, we also know that we have the thing that we asked for. Therefore in asking the Lord for deliverance from evil, we may thank Him for the deliverance granted.

Here are some more promises:

Hosea 14

⁴ I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely.

Revelation 21

⁶ I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

Psalms 50

¹⁵ Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

Isaiah 43

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.

²⁵ I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins.

Isaiah 44

³ I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring.

But time and space would fail us if we should attempt to repeat all the statements of the will of God concerning us. There are things enough in the Bible—things that it is the will of God to give to us—to keep us asking as long as we live; and whenever we ask for one of them we not only may, but must, know that He hears us, and that He gives us what we ask for. It is His will to do so, and He cannot deny himself.

But suppose now that there is something concerning which we do not know the will of God; what shall we do? Well, we

may ask Him to reveal His will to us. He is able to do it, and it is likely that the reason that we do not know it is that we have not given close enough heed to His word. Often our impatience, or our selfish desire for a certain thing, prevents us from hearing the voice of the Lord in the matter.

We will suppose, however, that the will of the Lord has not been made known to us, in a certain case. Shall we then not ask at all? Certainly we may ask, but only according to His will; for what confidence can we have that our request will be granted, if we do not know that God is willing to give it to us?

This is a very simple thing, if our wills are only submitted to God. The Saviour left us an example, when He prayed,

Matthew 26

³⁹ O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.

When we do not know what the will of God is, we may ask that His will, whatever it may be, may be done. This does not mean that God has to be asked to do His own will, but it is simply telling Him that we are willing that He should do His will in our case, whatever it may be.

What shall we then do? Leave the matter with the Lord, and await the result, and be sure that whatever the result is, it is according to the will of God, and be satisfied with it.

The trouble with so many who pray in this way is that they allow their desires to destroy the force of their prayers. They decide in their own minds what the result ought to be, and when that result does not follow, they say that the Lord did not hear their prayers. This is charging God foolishly.

If we do not know what the will of the Lord is, then we are not to allow our desires to become fixed upon what may prove to be a forbidden thing to us.

There is a text that opens up a vast field for our prayers:

Psalm 37

⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

This is unlimited. The one whose delight is in the Lord, can make any request he pleases, and it will be granted. Such a one will not make any selfish request.

14. Requests with Thanksgiving

Present Truth, December 21, 1893

Philippians 4

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

THIS does not give another condition besides faith, by which we are to receive blessings from God; but it shows a feature of faith, which many people do not understand. Thanksgiving is just as much a part of acceptable prayer, as is the request itself. Jesus said,

Mark 11

²³ Verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be removed, and be cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he says.

²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

The promise is sure only to him who believes. Faith makes the promise a present reality, for:

Hebrews 11

¹ Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

He who believes that he really has that which he asks for, has it. This is not imagination, but fact. The promise of God holds out the reality; faith lays hold of it.

Now ordinary politeness demands that one shall return thanks for what he receives. Therefore thanksgiving must necessarily attend a prayer of faith, for such a prayer brings the things that it asks for. He who has not enough faith to thank the Lord for the thing asked for, even while asking for

it, has not enough faith to claim the thing that he asked for.

Unthankfulness leads to heathenism. The heathen became such,

Romans 1

²¹ Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, and *neither were thankful*.

He who is not thankful is not a worshiper of God; for,

Hebrews 11

⁶ He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

He who does not believe that God is a rewarder of them that seek Him, does not believe that He is, therefore he who does not thank God for what he asks from Him, does not really ask anything from Him. He does not worship God.

So as soon as men cease to thank God, they begin to lapse into a heathenism. Let us then remember the exhortation,

1 Thessalonians 5

¹⁸ In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

15. Asking and Receiving (1893)

Present Truth, December 21, 1893

1 John 2

²¹ Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

²³ And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

THE first verse quoted, concerning heart condemnation and confidence toward God, has been dealt with in a previous number of the paper.²¹ There we found that the only just reason for our hearts not condemning us is that God himself does not condemn us. When God justifies us, our hearts have no business to condemn us; and so our ground of confidence toward God is not our righteousness, but God's mercy.

Now for the next verse,

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Many souls have been discouraged by the faulty use of this verse, namely, taking it out of its connection. They have supposed that before we can expect to receive anything that we ask of the Lord, we must be able to show that we have kept all the commandments, and that if after a careful examination of the commandment and our own hearts, we are not able to demonstrate that we have kept them all, then it is useless for us to ask. True, people who have that idea do go through the

²¹ The article Waggoner is referring to is called "Heart Condemnation," from *Present Truth*, November 30, 1893. It has been included in the collection called *Studies in the Gospel of John*, in the second section devoted to "Articles from the Epistles of John."

form of asking, but they never really expect to receive anything.

If it were the case that our confidence that we shall receive what we ask from the Lord grew out of our knowledge that we have lived perfect lives, then we should not be asking favors of the Lord, but demanding our just deserts.

Romans 4

⁴ Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

⁵ But to him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

The same apostle declares that it is...

Titus 3

⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Romans 4

⁵ To him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Faith is what brings the blessings of God; for:

Hebrews 11

¹ Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Now this is just what is taught by the text at the head of this article, as will be seen when it is not cut off from its connection. Thus:

1 John 2

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

²³ And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ.

Is faith in Christ, then, a substitute for the keeping of the

commandments? Not by any means; it is the keeping of the commandments. The Jews asked Jesus,

John 6

²⁸ What shall we do, that we might work in the works of God?

Jesus replied,

²⁹ This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.

Romans 10

¹⁰ With the heart man believes unto righteousness.

The law of God is unfathomable. The human mind will never be able to explore its utmost depths. Eternity will ever have something new to reveal to us in it, because it is the very life of God, and no man can by searching find out God. Therefore no man can ever be able to declare that he has kept all the commandments of God.

Proverbs 20

⁹ Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin.

Only God can declare a soul to be righteous, and then only as the soul accepts His righteousness through Christ by faith. Faith brings not only freedom from the consequences of past transgressions, but it also brings the keeping of the commandments in the present time.

Galatians 3

¹¹ The just shall live by faith.

Faith works by love. The only righteousness that will enable one to stand in the day of Lord's coming, is:

Philippians 3

⁹ That which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

And this is real righteousness, because it is the active righteousness of God. It will be manifested in the life, although its possessor will be too unconscious of it to boast. Boasting is excluded by faith, although the believing one will be showing forth in his life the excellencies of the Lord.

It is just because it is the righteousness of the Lord, who dwells in him, that he will have nothing of which to boast. And so we may still continue to sing, and may we sing it from the heart:

Just as I am, You will receive,
Will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because your promise I believe;
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.²²

²² Charlotte Elliott (1781-1871), Hymn: *Just as I Am*.

16. Wrestling

Present Truth, December 21, 1893

WRESTLING was much more common in the ancient times than it is now, because warfare was then a hand-to-hand matter, and victory in a battle depended more on the athletic skill of the combatants, than it does these days of long-range rifles.

The great battles were often little else than huge wrestling contests. This is why the Apostle Paul describes the warfare of the Christian as wrestling.

Ephesians 6

¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

This contest is to be carried on with the strength that the Lord gives, and the armor that He supplies. The wrestler is exhorted to:

Ephesians 6

¹⁰ Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

He is to strive, but it is to be according to the working of God in him:

Colossians 1

²⁹ Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily.

The power all comes from God, and it is really God that gains the victory over the enemy, working through the man who yields to Him. Jesus says,

John 16

³³ In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good

cheer; I have overcome the world.

Therefore we read,

1 John 5

⁴ This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

⁵ And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

In the 36th *Psalm*, we have a reference to this wrestling against the wickedness of this world:

Psalm 36

¹¹ Let not the foot of pride come against you, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

¹² There are the workers of iniquity fallen; they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

The hands and feet play the principal part in wrestling. Each wrestler seeks to trip up his antagonist with his feet. There is no foot so dangerous in wrestling as the foot of pride, because:

Proverbs 16

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Therefore it is that the psalmist prays to be kept from the foot of pride. Only He can keep us from this dangerous foe, because He is meek and lowly in heart. *Matthew* 11:29. Whoever abides in Him will be kept from the pride of man.

It is an unfortunate thing that most people have made a wrong use of the account of Jacob's wrestling with the angel, who was the Lord Jesus himself. They read the account of His wrestling all night, and then in the morning receiving a blessing, and think that means that we are to wrestle with the Lord in order to get a blessing from Him. Because of this mistaken idea, many people fail to receive the blessings that they might otherwise have. Let us study the case a little.

Wrestling Against God

A moment's thought should be sufficient to show us that the Lord is not our adversary. He is not opposed to us. Therefore we do not have to fight with Him. Wrestling is fighting, and it is a dangerous position for one to occupy, to be fighting against God. God is for us, to protect us from all that come against us. We do not want to fight with the only Friend we have.

But of course the idea of fighting is not in the minds of those who speak of wrestling with God. Their idea is that of striving with Him to get Him to give us His blessing. But God has come to us with His blessing before we ever felt the need of it.

Acts 3

²⁶ Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

If we were half as anxious to receive the blessings of God as He is to bestow them upon us, we should have more than we ever dreamed of.

But did not Jacob wrestle all night with the Lord? Yes, he did, but do not forget that he did not know that it was the Lord. He thought all the time that it was an enemy. And that illustrates the position of those who think that they must wrestle with the Lord for a blessing. Unconsciously they are regarding the Lord as their adversary, instead of their Helper.

Now let us see what we are to learn from the case of Jacob. When was it that he first found that the One with whom he was wrestling was not a man, but the Lord himself? It was

when the Angel put forth His hand, and put Jacob's thigh out of joint with a touch. Read the account in *Genesis* 32:24-28.

How much longer did Jacob wrestle after he found out that he was wrestling with the Lord? Not a minute, because such a thing was impossible. It was the dislocation of his thigh that made him know with whom he was wrestling; and no man can wrestle with a thigh out of joint. A man with his thigh out of joint would be at a greater disadvantage in wrestling, than a man with only one leg, because in addition to having only one leg to stand on, he would have the inconvenience and the intense pain of the useless one.

What, therefore, did Jacob do as soon as his dislocated thigh made known unto him with whom he was wrestling? He did the only thing that he could do, namely, he threw his arms around the Lord for support.

If one were wrestling or walking, or even standing still, and his thigh should suddenly be thrown out of joint, he would immediately fall to the ground. So Jacob would have fallen, if he had not held on to the Lord. And this we learn from the record. As soon as Jacob's thigh was out of joint, the Angel said,

Genesis 32

²⁶ Let me go, for the day breaks.

And Jacob replied,

²⁶ I will not let You go, except You bless me.

This shows, what we should naturally conclude, that as soon as Jacob learned that it was the Lord with whom he was wrestling, he ceased wrestling, and threw himself upon Him for support.

And it was then that Jacob prevailed. During all the night of wrestling he had not been able to gain anything, but as soon as he stopped wrestling with the Lord, and hung helpless

upon Him, he gained a blessing. And so it will ever be.

Isaiah 30

¹⁵ For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall you be saved; and quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.

Isaiah 26

⁴ Trust in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.

Then instead of striving with the Lord, let us yield to Him, and allow Him to do our fighting for us.

Psalms 25

¹ Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

² O my God, I trust in You: let me not be ashamed, let not my enemies triumph over me.

We shall find all that we wish to do, in keeping our wills subject to His. Power belongs to Him²³, and He will exert all in our behalf, if we will throw ourselves upon Him.

²³ **Psalm 62:** ¹¹ God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God.

17. Speedy Deliverance

Present Truth, December 28, 1893

1 Thessalonians 5

¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.

This is the inspired injunction. Here is another expression:

Romans 12 [RV]

¹² Continuing steadfast in prayer.

Philippians 4

⁶ In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

The Saviour said:

Luke 18

¹ Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

Few understand the reason for these directions, and that is the reason why there is so much praying that seems to be to no purpose.

Prayer is not for the purpose of changing the mind of God, nor to make Him favorably disposed toward us. That is the heathen idea of prayer, and so the heathen connects with his prayer a sacrifice made by himself. Often it is a money offering as a bribe to God, and sometimes it is a self-inflicted injury, as was the case with the prophets of Baal, as recorded in:

1 Kings 18

²⁶ And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

²⁷ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleeps, and must be awaked.

²⁸ And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

But God himself has provided the sacrifice which brings the things that we ask for, and is willing and anxious to bestow good gifts upon us even before we are ready to receive them. It is His promise alone that is the basis of all true prayer.

The fact that God has made...

2 Peter 1

⁴ ...exceeding great and precious promises

to us, and that in our prayers we have only to claim those promises, shows that prayer, instead of changing the mind of God, is simply coming to take what He unchangeably holds out to us.

Psalms 145

¹⁶ [He] satisfies the desire of every living thing.

Wherever there is an intense, earnest desire for God's good gifts, there follows the bestowal of them.

Matthew 5

⁶ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

Why, then, the necessity for continual, unceasing prayer? Because there is continual need.

John 3

²⁷ A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above

We are to pray every day,

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

—because we need food every day. The fact that we have eaten and been satisfied today, will not do away with the necessity for food tomorrow. So with all spiritual blessings. Our inward man must be...

2 Corinthians 4

¹⁶ ...renewed day by day.

And it is just when we realize the necessity for natural food, that we get a continual supply.

This is the lesson conveyed by the parable of the importunate one and the unjust judge. The widow kept coming continually, because she realized that she was in extreme need. Her very existence depended upon her being delivered from the adversary who was about to devour her property. She would not be satisfied with anything less than complete deliverance.

The widow in the parable is an apt illustration of our case. We are in great need.

1 Peter 5

⁸ [Our] adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour.

His power is the power of death:

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

With this power, he would devour our life; and the sting of it is sin, which he leads us into.

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.

1 John 3

⁸ He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned

from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

What we need is deliverance from sin; the only difference between us and the widow is that she realized her need, while as a general thing we do not.

Revelation 3

¹⁷ Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

The poor widow obtained her request even from the judge who...

Luke 18

² ...feared not God, neither regarded man,

because she would not give him any rest until he granted it. He finally said,

⁵ Because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming.

⁶ And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says.

⁷ And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

The Greek word rendered “though” in the above, is a regular word for “and,” which is given in the *Revised Version*. The whole sentence is,

“And He is long-suffering over them.”

Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon renders the same expression, “long-suffering towards.” Wycliffe rendered it “patience,” instead of “long-suffering,” the meaning, of course, being the same. We may therefore read the passage thus:

“And shall not God avenge [give satisfaction to] His own elect, that cry to Him day and night, and He is long-suffering [or patient] toward them?”

Now we see the contrast clearly brought out between the Lord, “the righteous judge,” and the unrighteous judge. The latter forced the poor people to “bear long” with him; taxed their patience to the utmost. But with the righteous Judge, it is different; it is He that is long-suffering and patient.

Whereas the unjust judge did not wish to do justice, and forced the people to wait long upon him, God is most intensely anxious to confer benefits, and is begging us to come to Him and be saved, but yet is extremely patient with our unwillingness.

Here is the sharp contrast: The unjust judge did finally, much against his will, give the poor widow satisfaction, because her need made her importunate, how much more, then, we may expect God to give satisfaction to those who cry to Him, since He has long been imploring them to come to Him for deliverance, and has been patiently waiting upon them.

But what about their crying day and night unto Him? Does that mean that He will keep them waiting a long time? Will He hold them off as long as possible? By no means.

Luke 18

⁸ I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.

When will He avenge them, or give them satisfaction speedily? When they are so in earnest that they will cry day and night for deliverance.

When we ask God once or twice for deliverance from sin, but have so little burden for it that we may forget it for days, or even weeks, there is no real sense of need, and consequently no real desire for help, nor willingness to receive it.

But when our whole being cries out for the righteousness of God, just as every fiber of a starving man’s body cries out for food, then the promise is, “He will give speedy deliverance.” What a blessed comfort is given us in the parable of the unjust judge.

Have we sins that have long beset us, with which we have kept up an intermittent struggle, sometimes in dead earnest, and sometimes willingly overcome, yet all the time feeling guilty and ashamed? Let us fully realize that those sins will shut us out of heaven, so that we shall cry out:

Romans 7

²⁴ Who will deliver me from this body of death?

—and be so much in earnest that we must have that deliverance above all things else, and the promise is that it will speedily come.

Hebrews 4

¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

¹⁵ For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

18. Visible Prayers

Present Truth, January 4, 1894

David prayed to the Lord:

Psalms 141

² Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

THIS has reference to the morning and evening worship of the sanctuary when incense was offered while all the people were praying without:

Exodus 30

⁷ And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it.

⁸ And when Aaron lights the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.

Luke 1

⁹ According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

In the book of *Revelation* we read that an angel came to the altar in heaven,

Revelation 7

³ Having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne.

⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God, out of the angel's hand.

Still more emphatic is the statement that:

Revelation 5

⁸ The four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

From these things we may know that prayers offered in faith, and there is no other real prayer, are not empty sounds before the Lord, but that they come before Him in visible form. They appeal not to His ears only, but to His eyes as well.

This is an additional proof that He gives to us that He will not forget to answer them. He has them continually before Him.

19. Paganism in Prayers

Present Truth, February 1, 1894

THE folly of vindictive prayers is well shown in the following newspaper item:

It has been customary on Christmas day for the priests in the churches of St. Petersburg, during the celebration of High Mass, to say a prayer anathematizing the French for their invasion of Russia in 1812. This traditional prayer was, for the first time since that year, omitted this Christmas day by the direction of the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, as a mark of the appreciation in which the French demonstrations were regarded in Russia.

All these many years the priests have been commissioned by the State to pray the Lord to send destruction upon the French. But now the French have behaved so handsomely that they are to be let off.

This is done in the name of the religion of Christ, and yet could anything be more utterly pagan than such prayers? The avowed pagan calls on all his gods to curse his enemy; but the gods of the heathen are like unto themselves. When men call on God to curse and destroy their enemies they make Him such a one as themselves. But the Lord says:

Matthew 5

⁴⁴ Bless them that curse you, and pray for [not against] them which despitefully use you.

This is Christianity, and nothing less than this is. Of a piece with this Russian custom, is the very common one of blessing gunboats, and saying prayers over the immense cannons which are designed to slaughter men by the score.

Of course those who do these things are commissioned by the State authority to do them, and that is their business. But the Lord never commissions men, save to preach His Gospel.

The world talks of Christian nations, but there never will be Christian nations until the nations of the saved walk in the light of the city of God.

It is easy to see the paganism in such prayers as the Russian priests have been praying, but have we ourselves been guiltless? The paganism consists in making God a creature, a servant to carry out the selfish desires. Have we not often come to Him as the disciples did with the request,

Mark 10

³⁵ Master, we would that you should do for us whatsoever we desire.

We have desired the blessing of the Lord upon the way, but have pleaded with Him to bless our way. We would make the Lord our servant to grant us what we wanted. This is sheer paganism again.

Luke 22

⁴² Not my will but yours be done.

This is the prayer of Christ. "Bend your will to my will," was really at the bottom of many of our prayers. This brings us again to the truth that "there is no difference."

The pagan hewed his god out of a tree, fashioning it according to his ideas of a god. We have thought of God as in heaven, and yet have clothed Him with our own ideas, and while professing to know Him that He might live His own life in us in His own way. And the life of self that we have lived we have professed to be His life, making Him just what we are.

When the Lord reveals himself to us in His saving fullness we find that we have to repent even of our prayers.

20. The Turning Point

Present Truth, January 18, 1894

WHO has not had the experience of resolving again and again to turn away from some evil habit, and yet finding the thing asserting itself just the same?

The resolution was no stronger than we were, and was of no force against the evil. Putting confidence in the resolution led to the neglect which Daniel confessed in his prayer,

Daniel 9

¹³ Yet we did not make our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities.

The turning point is reached when we have learned our helplessness by turning and resolving, and have put up the petition,

Lamentations 3

²¹ Turn us unto You, O Lord, and we shall be turned.

The Lord does not reserve the blessing until we have put away iniquity; He blesses that it may be put away.

Acts 3

²⁶ Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

21. Thanksgiving

Present Truth, February 8, 1894

Philippians 4

⁶ With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

THANKS are the basket for carrying away the blessing of God. You will carry away just as much as your thanks show that you believe in.

22. Having Our Way

Present Truth, February 8, 1894

THE only question involved in the problem of right living is whether we will have our way or let God have His way. If we insist on having our own way, it is certain that right living will not follow.

The heart of man is very deceitful, and prone to have its own way. Indeed, there is nothing more natural than for a person to think he knows better what is best for him than God does. Of course it is not anything bad that he wants; it is something good and desirable, and he has the best of reasons for wanting it.

But that which is good and desirable in itself, may or may not be suited to the circumstances of the individual desiring it. His desire for it is based on the assumption that just the right time and circumstances exist in his case for what he seeks—an assumption which only the possession of superhuman wisdom could justify.

King Hezekiah, one of the best kings of Judah, was at one time...

2 Kings 20

¹ ...sick unto death,

and received word from the Lord by the prophet Isaiah that he should...

¹ ...die, and not live.

Hezekiah, however, did not wish to die, but thought it would be better for him to live; and he...

³ ...wept sore,

and prayed that he might live. He expressed his reasons for desiring to live:

Isaiah 38

¹⁰ I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates

of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years.

¹¹ I said, I shall not seek the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living.

¹⁸ The grave cannot praise You; death cannot celebrate You; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for your truth.

Certainly, if reason can ever show a better way than the one indicated in the word of the Lord, it was so in the case of Hezekiah.

The Lord heard Hezekiah's prayer, and sent Isaiah to him with the word that his life should be prolonged fifteen years. But these fifteen years added nothing to Hezekiah, but rather took from the luster of his reign. For we read that:

2 Chronicles 32

²⁵ Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Also,

³¹ In the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land [in causing the sun to return ten degrees backward], God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

And Hezekiah died, leaving on the throne a son that had been born to him during the added fifteen years; and thus the wicked reign of Manasseh followed.

It is never safe, even with apparently the best of motives and of reasons, to seek our own way in opposition to the word of the Lord. The only place any person can afford to be in, is the place where God puts him; and when in His providence the time comes, if it does, that we are to be put in the grave, it will not be wise for us to prefer and seek life in preference to death. The language of wisdom is always,

Luke 22

⁴² Your will, not mine, be done;

and

Job 13

¹⁵ Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.

23. Boldness to Enter In

Present Truth, February 15, 1894

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

²² Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

Luke 1

⁷⁴ That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.

AS WE have access by Christ unto the Father, of what need we be afraid?

One who has free access to the palace and the table of royalty will not tremble with fear in the presence of some lower officer of State. Such a one enters the presence of the highest in the kingdom, and it is only a light matter to come before ordinary people.

How can it be that one who has boldness to enter into the presence of the King of kings, even into His secret chamber, not merely into the outer court, but into

Psalms 91

¹ ...the secret place of the Most High,

—and not only to enter there, but to abide, as a friend who has a right there—how can such a one be afraid of anything else in the universe? We have that privilege, and the Lord desires us to use it.

How would any parent feel, who has a parent's heart, if his children should start with fear when he came into the room? if when they wanted something they should come cringing in a fearful manner, as though they did not know whether or not

they had a right to live? We like them to have that confidence in us that they will come with boldness and ask for that which they want, knowing that it will be given them if it is for the best.

So we can imagine how God must feel to have those for whom He has done everything, for whom He has given His life to bring all things to them, and has given them all things before they ask, fearing to come to Him to claim anything, almost apologizing for their very existence. He does not want us to be afraid of Him.

The Lord came down to earth to show us how gentle He is. He lived and talked with people. He sat down by the wayside with them. He took children in His arms and blessed them, and they were not afraid of Him. Whosoever will receive the kingdom of God must receive it as a child, with trusting confidence. He is goodness, and mercy, and tender-heartedness itself. He is pleased at our very boldness.

The boldness is not presumption; it is not arrogance. No one who is puffed up with pride, who is haughty, can ever come into the presence of the Lord with boldness. The pride and arrogance of men is simply the result of their separation from Him. When they put him far off, and hide Him from them, they can be very bold.

But when they come into the presence of God, every mouth will be stopped. It is impossible for one to come into the presence of the Lord with arrogance, knowing that he is in His presence.

But the believer may come with boldness, lifting up the head. It shows that we believe that He is a God who keeps His word, that He is just what He is, a God of tenderness and infinite lovingkindness. And dwelling in the secret place, and abiding under His shadow there is no fear.

Psalm 91

⁵ You shall not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day;

⁶ Nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Isaiah 33

¹⁸ Your heart shall meditate terror.

But there will be no fear in it. If we can endure the time of greatest trouble, such as is here described, when destruction shall be over all the land, then we can have no fear now.

No matter what persecution might be stirred up, we are free in the Lord, without fear, because we are walking and talking with the Lord; enduring as seeing Him who is invisible.

We can stand in the presence of authorities and kings, if need be, to answer for the faith, and not be afraid; because we are living in the presence of the King of kings.

24. Wonderful Assurance

Present Truth, February 15, 1894

Jeremiah prayed:

Jeremiah 14

²⁰ We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against You.

²¹ Do not abhor us, for your name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of your glory: remember, break not your covenant with us.

We come to the throne of glory. The apostle prays that:

Ephesians 3

¹⁶ ...according to the riches of His glory, [we might] be strengthened with might.

And so Jeremiah prays that the Lord will not disgrace the throne of His glory.

If it were possible to conceive of such a thing as our coming to the Lord acknowledging ourselves sinners, cast down by a sense of the sinfulness, and claiming His righteousness, and yet He neglect to give it, the glory would depart from His throne. God's word, which word upholds all things, would be broken, and the universe would come to an end.

Therefore in our sinfulness we may come boldly to the throne of grace and glory, knowing that it will not be disgraced; the glory will not depart from it.

25. The Altar

Present Truth, March 15, 1894

A WRITER in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette* refers to *Isaiah* 56:7, and asks,

“Can this be a prediction of an altarless church?”

No; it is not. But the altar is not one lighted with candles, for the performance of the mass. The verse reads:

Isaiah 56

⁷ Even them will I bring to my mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

The apostle in *Hebrews* tells us what the sacrifice is:

Hebrews 13

¹⁵ By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

And the altar is described by John in the *Revelation*:

Revelation 8

³ And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

⁴ And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

This is the altar to which we have access by the faith of Jesus. There is courage in the thought that not a petition that comes from the heart is lost, but all are offered up before God, mingled with the sweet grace of Christ, His merits and intercessions.

Let no timid soul find discouragement in the fact that it is

the prayers of all saints that are offered before the throne. The saints of the Bible are people who know that they are sinners, and who know that Christ died to save them from their sins.

26. Talking with a Friend

Present Truth, March 1, 1894

WHEN we meet our friends to have a conversation with them, we do not approach them with stilted forms and set phrases, but we simply talk with them, and if we are honest we say the things we have in mind. We tell that which we wish them to know, and if we want something, we ask directly for that thing.

So the Lord wishes us to know Him as a Friend. He calls us friends, because He will make known to us His secrets. We are to be on intimate terms with God the Maker of all things. His life is ours. We should expect Him to do great things because He is great.

Prayer is simply talking to a wealthy Friend, who is our loving Father. And the talk is not to be one-sided. If we really talk to Him, we shall hear Him talking to us.

27. Near at Hand

Present Truth, March 29, 1894

TO VERY MANY who pray, God seems afar off. They do not know whether He hears or not. They do not hear His voice.

That is not the way to pray to God. What is the difference between praying to a god that has ears but hears not, and has eyes but sees not, and a mouth but speaks not, and praying to the true God, and not knowing whether He sees or hears or speaks?

Psalm 115

² Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

³ But our God is in the heavens: He has done whatever He has pleased.

⁴ Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

⁵ They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

⁶ They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:

⁷ They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither do they speak through their throat.

⁸ They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusts in them.

⁹ O Israel, trust in the Lord: He is their help and their shield.

God is not a long way off.

Acts 17

²⁷ He is not far from every one of us,

—said the apostle, speaking to heathen men;

²⁸ For in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.

28. The Great Gift

Present Truth, March 29, 1894

Divine Arithmetic

2 Peter 1

² Grace and peace be multiplied unto you...

³ According as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

HAVE we, then, all things that pertain to life and godliness? If we believe that, there isn't the like of it anywhere in the world as to possession. It discounts everything. "All the things that pertain unto life and godliness." They are all ours.

I can claim it all, and note it is mine, and yet not rob you in the least. It is all yours too. Grace is not divided; it is multiplied, the apostle says. It is not, "Grace and peace be divided among you." The Lord's arithmetic is always in progressive ratio. Having His grace and righteousness, we may take for the multiplier just as many people as there are in the world, so that every one of us has the whole of it.

Not only so, but it is multiplied to every individual as well. How can anybody believe that and be gloomy, or despondent and discouraged? He has given to you by His power all things that pertain to life and godliness. If you believe that, and always believed it, there will be steady progress in Divine life.

Prayer with Thanksgiving

All the time is the time to believe the Scriptures. But many professed Christians do not believe the Scriptures when they pray. They go to the place of prayer, and leave the promises behind. They go to the bank, and leave the cheque book at home, and then wonder that they get nothing.

Hebrews 11

⁶ He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him.

His Divine power has given unto us all things, and they are ours to possess now. He who believes that he has been given all things, righteousness and life, and holds to that belief, finds in it righteousness. That is our victory; for:

1 John 5

⁴ This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

The man who believes this word will never go to the Lord and be disappointed. All that he has to do is to take, and take, and keep taking. By this we can understand what the apostle says,

Philippians 4

⁶ In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

How can a person who believes the word of God contain himself for thankfulness? It cannot be otherwise than that thanksgiving will accompany every prayer of faith; and that which is not a prayer of faith is useless.

We have as good a title to life and godliness as the Lord Jesus Christ himself, because it is His by divine right, and He gives it to us. He has as good a right to give it to us as He has to possess it. Then we have as good a right to it as He has. No one can convey to another a better title than he himself has; but in this case the Lord has given us himself, and so we have His right and title.

We do not come to the Lord, then, in an uncertain, halting way, to ask for we know not what; not as the Samaritans, of whom Jesus said to the woman,

John 4

²² You worship you know not what. We know what we worship.

Instead of coming to the Lord, and praying and going away without knowing that we have received anything, feeling as in a fog, we can walk in the sunlight all the time, thanking

God in all of our petitions that He has given us all things, and finding strength in our knowledge of the fact.

But there are so many professed Christians who are always living in a fog bank. Clouds are always over them. They do not know whether they have anything or not, and are always talking about how needy and helpless they are.

But it is a true and faithful saying that God's Divine power has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness. *2 Peter* 1:3. Then take of the Lord's free gift.

Exceeding Great and Precious Promises

The Apostle Peter goes on from the words with which we began,

2 Peter 1

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the Divine nature.

Oh, the wonder of the promises of God! We take the promises and by them become partakers of the Divine nature. All we have to do to be partakers of the Divine nature is to believe that He has given it to us.

How can there be any dull thankless prayers? How can there be any half-hearted lifeless testimonies? Every heart that believes must sing for joy, for this same apostle says that,

1 Peter 1

⁸ ...believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

We have been groping in darkness, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and He comes to us with all things, and says,

“All are yours. Take them. Buy without money.”

It is because the things that He gives cannot be purchased

with money. They have been bought by the precious blood of Christ.

1 Peter 2

⁷ Unto you that believe He is precious.

Because His promises are precious. All the promises of God are in Him; and so believing His promises we are simply laying hold upon Christ. Christ dwells in the word. “Christ lives in me,” is the cry of the believer.

There is power in that to put the devil to flight. Maintain it in the face of the enemy, and that Name that is above every name—that power that has spoiled principalities and powers—dwelling in you will accomplish the same thing for you that it did before the world. That is resisting the devil steadfast in the faith; and when we resist, he flees.

1 Peter 5

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour:

⁹ Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

James 4

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

29. Our Teacher

Present Truth, April 12, 1894

Original title: Front Page

Psalm 27

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path,
because of my enemies.

Psalm 25

⁴ Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

This is a prayer that all need to utter continually, because:

Jeremiah 10

²³ It is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

And God's way, which is infinitely higher than man's way, or his comprehension, is the only right way. We are so ignorant, and so dull of comprehension, that we have need to pray with emphasis,

Psalm 5

⁸ Make your way straight before my face.

Well for us is it that we have a Teacher who is very considerate,

Hebrews 5

² Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.

Even though we have neglected, or even despised, previous instruction, He is still patient to give wisdom,

James 1

⁵ ...and upbraids not.

Here are some good promises for our encouragement:

Psalm 25

¹² What man is he that fears the Lord? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose.

¹⁴ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He

will show them His covenant.

John 7

¹⁷ If any man wills to do His will, he shall know the teaching.

Psalms 25

⁹ The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way.

Moses was the meekest man, and:

Psalms 103

⁷ He made known His ways unto Moses.

Who can estimate the favor of being taught the way of the Lord, and being allowed to share His secret? But there is one indispensable requisite to gaining this knowledge, and that is meekness:

1 Peter 5

⁵ Be clothed with humility; for God resists the proud, and gives grace unto the humble.

Who has this clothing? Nobody, for meekness and humility are foreign to human nature. All men are by nature:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

But God provides white raiment, and He himself will take away the filthy rags, and clothe us with “change of raiment.”

Zechariah 3

⁴ And He answered and spoke unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment.

That is, the Lord teaches His people, and himself provides the clothing necessary for attending the school.

30. God's Care

Present Truth, May 17, 1894

THOSE who have a hazy idea that they are buying the Lord's favor, or putting Him under special obligations to them by their performance of religious exercises hurl the greatest possible insult in the face of the Almighty.

Yet that very idea enters into the thoughts of many who would be horrified at a plain statement of the real significance of their attitude. An incident supposed to be amusing, is vouched for by one writer as follows:

William, a child of seven or eight, went to visit his grandmother, who asked him, on the morning after his arrival, if he had said his prayers the night previous.

W.: "No, I forgot it."

She: "You mustn't neglect to say your prayers, William, God will take care of you if you do."

W.: "Well, He did."

What an accursed thing to teach a child, who might be taught to look upon God as a compassionate Father, before whom to come with thankfulness and love, rather than as a being whose good will must be secured by such methods as might be employed to appease an earthly despot.

31. A Personal Message to You

Present Truth, May 24, 1894

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his son in the Gospel,

2 Timothy 1

³ Without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day;

⁴ Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears.

Many readers of the Bible pass over passages like this, getting no comfort or encouragement from them, as they seem to them to be restricted in their application to those immediately addressed.

But who put this feeling into the heart of the apostle? It was Christ, of course. Paul said,

Galatians 2

²⁰ Christ lives in me.

The apostle is dead, and cannot address to us the sympathetic message that he sent to Timothy; and yet those words show the feeling of Christ our Lord, toward every toiling child of the Gospel today.

Without ceasing He remembers us, and prays for us, too. When Peter was once about to go into sore trial, the Lord said to him,

Luke 22

³² I have prayed for you.

Do you wish that you might hear the same words in your trial of faith? You have them.

John 17

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

That means you, if you believe on Jesus through the word. Even now He remembers His own, and makes intercession for

them, marks their trials and tears, and longs to see them in His kingdom.

32. Tell the Lord About It

Present Truth, May 31, 1894

YOU find it very natural, when a very intimate friend calls, to talk over the little occurrences of the day. It is a relief sometimes to tell the perplexities that have troubled, and receive the sympathy of a friend.

If every day you would treat the Lord in this way, with the confidence and assurance of sympathy and help that you have in the case of an earthly friend, you would find Him more precious to you than tongue can tell. If you have tried it, you can bear witness to the truth of it.

When the disciples returned from the villages and towns to which they had been sent, they found the Lord, and:

Luke 9

¹⁰ ...told Him all that they had done.

The Lord of all was not above listening to their story, either. No more will He turn from your story of the work and trials and triumphs of the day. He is the same Jesus, yesterday, today, and for ever.

Those who are well enough acquainted with the Lord to talk with Him all through the day about their work, find that He is not only patient to hear the story, but glad to bestow the help and blessing that lightens the burden and gives rest in perplexing toil. The place of work may be in public, or within the four walls of the room at home. It may all be done as unto Him, and He will gladly give His presence in the daily tasks.

If you have not tried it, try talking over your work with the Lord. It will be a help that you have never known before, if you will treat Him as you would an intimate friend. He is not too great to notice the little things of life. It is because He is so great and good that He does do so.

33. Elements of Faith

Present Truth, June 14, 1894

TO HAVE faith is to believe God's word; not merely a part of it, but all of it, so far as the individual has heard it. It is to believe not only that God is, and that He rewards them that seek Him, but also that we ourselves are:

Revelation 3

¹⁷ ...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Unless we believe this, our faith will lack one essential element, namely, a deep, earnest longing for God's help.

God gives to people in proportion to the earnestness of their desire; and the reason why people who seem to approach God and petition Him intelligently do not receive more from Him, is simply that they do not want it badly enough.

It was the poor helpless woman who suffered for years and spent all her living upon physicians in vain efforts to find relief,—she it was who obtained immediate help when she touched the hem of Christ's garment, while the multitude who thronged Him, feeling no need of His help, received nothing.

It is earnest, importunate faith that prevails.

34. Answering Prayers

Present Truth, July 5, 1894

MOST people make the mistake of considering the answering of a prayer as identical with the petition. If a man prays for a thing, and does not receive it, they say that his prayer was not answered.

The Apostle Paul prayed three times for a certain thing, and did not receive it; but he did not charge God with neglecting his petition. On the contrary, he tells us that he received the answer,

2 Corinthians 12

⁹ My grace is sufficient for you.

When the child makes a request of its mother, and the mother kindly but firmly says “No” the child has no reason to say that the prayer has not been answered.

The trouble is that people are usually so unconsciously bent on having their own way that they do not recognize the right of the Lord to say “No,” even though He adds, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

35. The Sinner

Present Truth, August 16, 1894

The literal rendering of the publican's prayer is:

Luke 18 [RV, margin]

¹³ God be merciful to me, the sinner.

That presents the most marked contrast to the prayer of the Pharisee, who saw everybody's sins except his own.

The publican saw himself as the only sinner. That is the characteristic of true conviction of sin. He who has learned of the Lord, will see himself to be so great a sinner that he cannot imagine anyone else as bad as himself. So Paul said:

1 Timothy 1

¹⁵ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

The closer we get to the Lord, the keener becomes our consciousness of imperfection, and therefore the farther we are from criticizing our neighbors.

36. Knocking

Present Truth, August 30, 1894

The Saviour says,

Matthew 7

⁷ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

⁸ For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

THIS is said to show how surely prayers to the Lord are answered. Yet many people fail to receive any answers to their prayers. Why is it?

Very often it is because they do not stay to see the door opened, but, like the mischievous boy in the street, run away as soon as they have knocked. People are in too great a hurry to be off. The instruction is:

Psalms 27

¹⁴ Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.

And David said:

Psalms 5 [RV]

³ O Lord, in the morning shall You hear my voice; in the morning will I order my prayer unto You, and will keep watch.

37. Praying for Wisdom

Present Truth, November 29, 1894

James 1

⁵ If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.

THERE is only one condition to this promise, and that is that the one who desires wisdom ask for it in faith.

⁶ Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

The promise is absolutely unlimited: "If any of you lack wisdom." There are no exceptions. It is open to the child as well as to the man; to the very ignorant as well as to the one who has had great advantages of education.

The kind of wisdom is not specified. It includes everything that may be called wisdom. Everything that is worth knowing, and that is necessary, may be asked for and received under this promise.

Someone may say that it means only knowledge of the way of salvation. Take it so if you please; but remember that every act of life has something to do with one's salvation, and that therefore the promise of wisdom must include wisdom for every duty and for all circumstances in life.

We have the record of at least one who proved this promise to the full. The young king Solomon said to the Lord,

1 Kings 3

⁷ I am but a little child; I know not how to go out or to come in.

⁹ Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this your so great a people?

¹⁰ And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing.

¹¹ And God said unto him, Because you have asked this

thing, and have not asked for yourself long life; neither have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies; but have asked for yourself understanding to discern judgment;

¹² Behold, I have done according to your word: lo, I have given you a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like you before you, neither after you shall any arise like unto you.

That the wisdom given to Solomon in answer to his request was such as is not despised even by the world, may be seen from the following:

1 Kings 4

²⁹ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

³⁰ And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

³¹ ...and his fame was in all nations round about.

³² And he spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five.

³³ And he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

³⁴ And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

Someone will say,

“Well, I have asked the Lord for wisdom, but the wisdom doesn't come; I asked in faith, too, because I believed that the Lord would give it; but I have waited a long time, to no purpose.”

And you may wait a long time yet to no purpose, if that is your idea of the promise. Let us see where the trouble is. The word is,

James 1

⁶ Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.

Romans 10

¹⁷ But faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The man whose trust is not according to the word of God, has not faith. There is another very striking text which tells us how we are to ask for wisdom; and it derives additional interest from the fact that it was written by Solomon, whose prayer for wisdom was so richly rewarded. Let us read it:

Proverbs 2

¹ My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you;

² So that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding;

³ Yea, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding;

⁴ If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures;

⁵ Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

⁹ Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

These are the words of the Lord to Solomon, which he has passed on to us. It is the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer for wisdom. It tells us how Solomon obtained his great wisdom.

That "there is no royal road to learning" was as true in the days of Solomon as it is today. We greatly mistake if we suppose that Solomon obtained his great knowledge without any effort. It would have done him no good if he had.

He valued wisdom so much that he was willing to search for it as for gold and silver, and the Lord gave it to him. And

so the Lord will do for us, if we also have a longing desire to know true wisdom. Therefore when we wish for wisdom we must ask the Lord for it:

Proverbs 2

⁶ For the Lord gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

And we must ask in faith. But since faith comes by hearing the word of God, we must not ignore the text that we have read from *Proverbs*.

James 1

⁶ Nothing wavering.

We must not become weary nor discouraged. Keep the mind fixed upon the word of God, as the speculator does upon the stock report. Is not this reasonable? If we ask the Lord for wisdom, do we not thereby indicate that we expect Him to tell us something? Then where should we go except to His word?

Try it, and you will find that in Christ even this promise is yea, and amen; because in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2 Corinthians 1

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Colossians 2

³ In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

38. Asking and Receiving (1895)

Present Truth, April 4, 1895

The Lord says,

Matthew 7

⁷ Ask, and it shall be given unto you.

Already the Lord has given men everything; for:

John 3

¹⁶ God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And:

Romans 8

³² He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Christ is heaven's greatest gift; and the giving of Him is proof that "all things" have been freely given. Therefore we do not need to importune God to bestow upon us good gifts, but only to express our belief that He has given them, and our gratitude to Him that it is so. This is the prayer of faith.

The fact that people often ask God for things which they do not get, is no evidence that God has not given us liberally as His word has said. God gives men only good things, and He alone knows the needs of the soul. While we pray,

Romans 8

²⁶ The Spirit also helps our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ [The Spirit] makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Prayer must not be offered according to the will of man, without reference to God's will; and then whatever God sends

in answer must be taken as being in harmony with His will, even though it may seem at first quite otherwise.

Romans 8

²⁸ All things work together for good to them that love God.

In this way we can believe that we receive the things we ask, as we are told to do²⁴, although we may not recognize them in the shapes God's hand has given them for our good.

The devil tries to get people to stop at the mere asking for needed blessings. But an essential step in the process of realization consists in grasping them. And this must be done by faith. Faith is that by which we lay hold upon the object sought.

If we ask and then wait for God to make it apparent to our natural senses that we have the blessing, before believing that it is ours, we are very likely to lose it altogether. This is one of Satan's most successful cheats. Faith says,

Mark 11

²⁴ Believe that you receive them.

And if we will do so, we can be as thankful to God as though they had appeared in the form we would have given them ourselves.

It must not be forgotten that the attitude of the receiver toward God must be one of praise. God can work marvelously for the person who will give Him the glory. But He cannot work for the one who would take the glory to himself.

²⁴ **Mark 11:** ²⁴ Therefore I say unto you, What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

39. True Prayer

Present Truth, August 22, 1895

MANY people think that prayer consists merely in asking. That is the reason why it is so often done mechanically.

The fact is that true prayer consists in asking and receiving. Every true prayer is offered in the name of Christ, and the promise is,

John 14

¹⁴ If you shall ask anything in my name I will do it.

And again,

Mark 11

²⁴ What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

True prayer is thus enjoined:

Philippians 4

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known.

The thanksgiving is for the reception of the things asked, which faith grasps. When it is understood that the same prayer that conveys our request to God, brings in return His blessings to us, prayer will be pleasure, and will be fresh with praise and thanksgiving.

40. Praying to Be Excused

Present Truth, October 17, 1895

THERE is no more dangerous practice than that of praying to the Lord for permission to disobey Him. Yet this is often done. Some duty or service is revealed in the Word which brings the cross with it. It seems too hard a thing to do, and weak, faithless human nature asks to be excused.

Sometimes people feel that the Lord hears them and excuses them from doing what He says. The prayer to be excused is a confession that the command is there; and God cannot contradict His own Word.

But the Lord does not force man's choice. When the heart is set to disobey, He allows the desire of the fleshly heart to have its way.

Ezekiel 14

⁴ Every man of the house of Israel that sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that comes according to the multitude of his idols.

It is a terrible thing to be left to one's own way.

41. A Father's Prayers

Present Truth, August 29, 1895

JOHN G. PATON, the devoted missionary to the New Hebrides, was the son of a devout Scotch stocking-weaver. Having toiled at his father's trade through childhood and early youth, he left the parental roof for Glasgow and the world.

His father accompanied him a distance as he set out with all his earthly store tied up in a pocket handkerchief. This is the beautiful account that he gives of that walk with his father. As we read it, we cannot but wish that all boys and girls should leave home with such holy memories:

My dear father walked with me the last six miles of the way. His counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are as fresh in my heart as if it had been yesterday; and tears are on my cheeks as freely now as then, whenever memory steals me away to the scene.

For the last half mile or so we walked on together in almost unbroken silence,—my father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand, while his long, flowing yellow hair (then yellow, but in later years white as snow) streamed like a girl's down his shoulders. His lips kept moving in silent prayers for me, and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain.

We halted on reaching the appointed parting-place; he grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence, and then solemnly and affectionately said: "God bless you, my son! Your father's God prosper you, and keep you from all evil!"

Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer; in tears we embraced and parted. I ran off as fast as I could, and when about to turn a corner in the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him still standing with head uncovered where I had left him. Waving my hat in adieu, I was round the corner and out of sight in an instant.

But my heart was too full and sore to carry me farther, so I

darted into the side of the road and wept for a time. Then rising up cautiously, I climbed the dyke to see if he yet stood where I had left him, and just at that moment caught a glimpse of him climbing the dyke and looking out for me!

He did not see me, and after he had gazed eagerly in my direction for awhile, he got down, turned his face towards home, and began to return,—his head still uncovered, and his heart, I felt sure, still risen in prayers for me. I watched through blinding tears till his form faded from my gaze; and then, hastening on my way, vowed deeply and oft by the help of God, to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father and mother as He had given me.

The appearance of my father when we parted,—his advice, prayers, and tears,—the road, the dyke, the climbing up on it and then walking away, head uncovered, have often, often, all through life, risen vividly before my mind, and do so now while I am writing, as if it had been but an hour ago.

In my earlier years particularly, when exposed to many temptations, his parting form rose before me as that of a guardian angel. It is no Pharisaism, but deep gratitude, which makes me here testify that the memory of that scene not only helped, by God's grace, to keep me pure from the prevailing sins, but also stimulated me in all my studies, that I might not fall short of his hopes, and in all my Christian duties, that I might faithfully follow his shining example.

42. Good Things

Present Truth, September 19, 1895

SOMETIMES people get discouraged because they do not receive from the Lord the things they think they need. But nearly every one knows what it is to think they need a certain thing at one time, and then to find later that it was a good thing they did not get what they desired at first.

The Lord wants to give us good things.

Matthew 7

¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him.

When we ask in our ignorance for the stone or the scorpion, our heavenly Parent does not give us the evil thing, and afterwards we always find that He knew best.

It will save as much fretting and discontent if we remember that all the time He is giving us only the good things.

43. Secret Prayer

Present Truth, December 5, 1895

Matthew 6 [RV]

⁶ But you, when you pray, enter into your inner chamber, and having shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret, and your Father which sees in secret shall recompense you.

THIS is one of the most definite and assuring promises of the Word of God. What a comfort it is as one goes to the place of sacred prayer, to know that God hears him, and that his petition is sure to be granted.

When one is by himself, with no one near but the Lord, he cannot pray as he might in public. If he is indeed in secret with the Lord, he will ask for only such things as he knows are right. Face to face with God, it is impossible to pray merely for the sake of multiplying words.

The soul makes humble confession to God, and, in spite of its failures in the past, boldly claims mercy and grace to help in time of need, and goes away with the positive assurance that the things asked for are his.

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Mark 11

²⁴ What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

44. The Prayer of Faith (1896)

Present Truth, July 16, 1896

CHRIST'S words in regard to the answer to prayer are unequivocal. In one place he says:

Matthew 18

¹⁹ If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

There is no mistaking the plain language of the statement. To him who believes, then, all things that are worthy to be accomplished are possible,—for wherever two agree, in asking, their prayer of faith will be effectual. Then what remains is to believe, have faith, and pray.

Mark 9

²³ If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.

Mark 11

²² Have faith in God.

²⁴ What things soever you desire, when you pray believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

45. Out of the Depths

Present Truth, March 31, 1898²⁵

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.

SURELY it is from the depths that one needs to cry unto the Lord, if from any place. The time to call for help is when one is in the greatest need; yet that is just the time that many feel that it is of no use to call.

“I have sinned too greatly, and that too in the face of light, for the Lord to pay any attention to me.”

This is too often the discouraged wail of the sinner. That is a great mistake.

Proverbs 17

¹⁷ A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

How much more must this be true of the Father of all. A striking instance in point is the case of Jonah. He was going directly contrary to the commandment of the Lord, running away from Him, trying to get entirely out of His sight, when the Lord arrested him and threw him into the sea, where he was swallowed by a fish. Now indeed he was in the depths.

Jonah 2

¹ Then Jonah cried unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said:

² I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and You heard my voice.

³ For You had cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about; all your billows and your waves passed over me.

⁵ The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped

²⁵ The Pioneer Writings collection has misfiled some periodicals. This one, dated as March 31, 1897 in the Advent Pioneer Library, should be March 31, 1898. There was no March 31 periodical in 1897.

about my head.

⁶ I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever.

It would scarcely be possible for one to be in a worse situation than this. It was most literally from the depths that Jonah cried unto the Lord, and he was heard. And he was in the depths entirely through his own fault, too.

Now to see that Jonah was not an exceptional case, but that God just as readily hears all who are in the depths because of their folly, let us read the following words to His praise:

Psalms 107

⁹ He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

¹⁰ Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron;

¹¹ Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High;

¹² Therefore He brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and there was none to help.

¹³ Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.

¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder.

That is just like the Lord, for:

Psalms 145

⁹ The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works.

¹⁴ The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all that be bowed down.

But we haven't yet done with Jonah in the depths. Here comes one who always sees the difficulties of the situation, and asks,

“How could a man live and preserve his consciousness, and be able to pray in the belly of a fish? If that thing really happened, it must have been an exceptional case, and the Lord

must have wrought a miracle to keep him alive.”

Most certainly the Lord wrought a miracle in this case, which was just as real as yours is, and it was not an exceptional one by any means. It was written for our sakes, in order that we might have comfort and hope in similar circumstances.

It shows us that God does not forsake us even in the depths, and when we are there as the direct result of sinning against Him. He even works a miracle to keep us alive in the depths, that we may call on Him. What a blessing that story is to the one who believes it!

It shows us that no man can get away from the presence of the Lord. Thank God for that. We have all tried it, haven't you? And are you not glad that you did not succeed? Perhaps you think that you have succeeded all too well, and are now sorrowing over it, imagining that you are lost. Don't believe in it for a moment. Listen to one who knows:

Psalm 139

⁷ Whither shall I go from your Spirit? or whither shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

¹⁰ Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

No; we cannot get away from the presence of the Lord, even by plunging into the depths.

Jeremiah 23

²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.

Christ has ascended into the heavens,

Hebrews 9

²⁴ ...now to appear in the presence of God for us.

But:

Ephesians 4

⁹ Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

You get down into the very lowest place, and there you find Christ Jesus the Lord, waiting to lift you up and save you, for Him no depths can drown.

Lamentations 3

³¹ For the Lord will not cast off ever.

“But He cast Jonah into the sea, into the depths!”

Indeed, He did, but it was in order that Jonah might find Him; for bear in mind that God was there first. It was He that delivered up His only begotten Son, casting Him into the depths, yet not casting Him. He sent Him there, in order that he might be recovered. Then we can with good confidence cry unto Him out of the depths.

Psalms 95

⁴ In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also.

Every atom of matter even in the lowest parts of the earth is charged with force, which is nothing else than the power of the living Christ,

Hebrews 9

¹⁴ Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God [for our offenses].

Go then even into the lowest depths, in your mad attempt to flee from the presence of the Lord, and there you will find the cross of Him who is “mighty to save.” *Isaiah* 63:1. And He is not there as a detective, on the hunt for evil, and magnifying the smallest thing into the greatest, in order that He may

make out a case.

Psalm 130

³ If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁹ God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Therefore,

Psalm 130

⁷ Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him there is plenteous redemption.

Remember it is hope, not presumption. We must not presume on His mercy, to allow us to continue in sin with impunity; but we must hope in it, that it will deliver us from all our iniquities.

Psalm 50

¹⁵ Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you.

“But I don’t know how to pray; I can’t express myself.”

Of course not. The Lord knows that. It is He who has told us that...

Romans 8

²⁶ ...we know not what we should pray for as we ought.

Our wants are too great for us to be able to express them, and His gifts too great for us to be able to comprehend them.

“What then shall we do?”

Well, what ought one to do in a case where he does not know anything?

“Evidently the best thing for him to do is to keep still, and listen to someone who does know.”

Exactly that. Therefore the best thing for men to do in the matter of praying is to keep still.

“What! do you mean to say that a man should never open his mouth in prayer, and that his voice should never be heard?”

Not by any means. The Lord says,

Hosea 14

² Take with you words, and turn to the Lord.

By all means use words, nevertheless keep still.

Habakkuk 2

²⁰ The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

He says,

Psalms 46

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God.

“Be still.” What for? To know that the Lord is God. But if we come to the knowledge that He is God, what will we know about Him? Just this, that He fills heaven and earth; that there is no place where His spirit is not.

The trouble with us is that we do not keep still long enough to find this out. When we do, then we shall continue to keep still before Him, realizing that since He is everything, we are nothing.

Ecclesiastes 5

² God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

Yes; let your words be few; the fewer the better. Use His words. He says,

Psalms 81

¹⁰ Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Keep silence before Him, until you realize that:

Ephesians 4

⁶ [He is] above all, and through all, and in all.

Let Him fill you with a sense of His greatness, and thereby with a sense of your own needs. Then allow the Spirit to help your infirmity, making intercession for you. *Romans* 8:26. When He thus fills you, your utterance will be but the breathing of the Spirit in you.

Why should not your prayers, and everybody's prayers, be inspired of the Holy Spirit, just as much as were the prayers of David? Indeed they ought to be, for we are told,

1 Peter 4

¹¹ If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.

Colossians 3

¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.

Then you will always have all confidence in calling upon Him, because:

2 Timothy 2

¹³ He cannot deny himself.

46. Concerning Prayer

Present Truth, June 17, 1897

Psalm 50

¹⁵ Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

THUS says the Lord; and what He says in this place is repeated many times in the Scriptures.

Matthew 7

⁷ Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

Immediately following this statement, we find a striking illustration of God's willingness, nay, His anxiety, to answer prayer.

⁹ What man is there of you, when if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?

¹⁰ Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

There can be but one answer; no real father would deal so heartlessly with his child.

¹¹ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?

This is something that parents especially can appreciate. Whenever anyone who is a parent feels despondent, and thinks that God does not care for him, let him ask himself,

“Why should I think myself better than God? I would not think of refusing my children any good thing that lay in my power to bestow; but I am selfish even at the best, and even my best wishes for my children are limited by my lack of resources; God, on the contrary, is infinite love and compassion, and has power to perform whatever His love prompts; therefore as surely as I live I know that God does hear my prayers.”

Think further of the illustration here given. The parent is not only willing to supply the child's needs, but provides for them beforehand. The child never thinks of food until it is hungry. Suppose now that the parents likewise had not thought about providing food, until the child's request brought it to their attention; then the child would be obliged to wait, and would suffer hunger.

But such is never the case. Long before the child thought of eating, the parents were at work providing something against the time of need. This is the work of parents, to look ahead, and provide for their children's wants.

Even so it is with God. He knows what we need, so that, as the child to the parent, we come to Him, not to let Him know that we are in need, but to take what He has before prepared for us. Our asking is not to make Him willing to give, but to show our willingness to receive.

God wishes that we should be saved from sin, that we should receive eternal life; and, as the greater includes the less, He also wishes that we should have all things necessary for this life.

1 Timothy 4

⁸ Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

In His Word God has made known His will. The commandments show that it is God's will that we should live righteously, that we should love Him supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves.

But how can we attain to all this? The question is easily answered.

1 John 5

¹⁴ This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

¹⁵ And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we

know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

We cannot begin or continue our own lives, either in this world or the world to come; but God can, and it is His pleasure to do so; if therefore we are willing to accept God's good gifts, then we may know without any shadow of doubt, that we have them whenever we ask for them; and if we...

1 Thessalonians 5

¹⁷ Pray without ceasing,

then we are always in possession of every good gift.

“Well, isn't it tiresome continually to be asking for what we need?”

That depends on whom we ask. The parable of the unjust judge (*Luke 18:1-8*) was given to teach us that:

Luke 18

¹ ...men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

The judge feared not God, neither regarded man, and so when a widow asked redress for her wrongs he paid no attention to her for a while. But afterwards he thought that his ease might be disturbed much more by her repeated requests than by complying with them, and so he granted them.

If we read no further, we should not be encouraged to pray always and not to faint; for even if we did not become discouraged after a few unheeded petitions, and give up without receiving the thing desired, we would at least say,

“I will not ask any oftener than I am absolutely obliged to.”

But:

1 John 1

⁹ [God is] faithful and just,

—not unjust; He cares for us²⁶, and desires our welfare far

²⁶ **1 Peter 5:** ⁷ Casting all your care upon Him; for He cares for you.

more than we do. What then?

Luke 18 [RV]

⁷ And shall not God avenge His elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is longsuffering over them?

⁸ I say unto you, that He will avenge them speedily.

The parable is a contrast. If the unjust judge, who had no regard whatever for men, would grant a request simply that he might not be further disturbed, how much more will God grant the request of His chosen ones, with whose failings He is so long-suffering. He will not keep them waiting; nay,

⁸ He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?

In spite of the fact that everything, not only in the Bible, but in God's open book of nature, speaks of God's readiness and parental anxiety to give good gifts, it is a rare thing to find people with faith enough to continue asking and receiving.

"But why continue to ask, if God is so ready to give?" unbelief asks.

"What means that statement that God's elect cry day and night to Him, if He is so willing to give?"

How ready and seemingly anxious people are to make God out unfeeling, and the way of life hard! God's people cry day and night to Him, for the very reason that He answers them so speedily, not even waiting till they have done speaking.

Psalms 116

¹ I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.

² Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.

Because He inclines His ear to us, bending over toward us, so as not to miss the faintest whisper, and even anticipates our words, because He reads the heart's desire, and knows what we would ask for far better than we know how to ex-

press it, we are encouraged to keep calling on Him continually. This is why we can always pray and not faint: God does not weary us by keeping us waiting.

But when we go no further in the consideration of prayer than to agree that God answers prayer, although that is a good thing to know, it is far from a true realization of what prayer really is. We speak now, of course, of sincere prayer. We speak about God's hearing us, when the question really turns on whether or not we hear God.

In our ordinary thought and talk about prayer, we seem to have the idea that we speak first, and that our part is to call God's attention to us. That is a step in the direction of the heathen idea, that they must awaken their god, so that he may be conscious of their presence.

It is this idea, more or less fully developed, which holds many people back from God. They fear to approach Him; they fear that they will be intruding on His time and patience, and they have no courage to ask an audience with Him, regarding Him much as they would an earthly autocrat, only infinitely greater and therefore proportionally unapproachable.

If it were indeed the case that we must approach the throne alone, and ask to gain an audience with God on our own account,—if we had to take the initiative—then it would indeed be presumptuous for us to think of it, and we might well shrink from the trial.

But the fact is, God has spoken first; He has called us to Him, and therefore instead of its being presumption for us to approach and speak to Him, it is rudeness in the highest degree if we turn away and say nothing. Common civility demands that we reply to a fellow-man when he speaks to us; how much more should we give heed and reply when God speaks to us.

God speaks to us, and offers us forgiveness, righteousness,

everlasting riches. When we come to Him in prayer, it is only because He has called us to Him; it is only to take what He has already said He freely gives us. The question is not, therefore, whether God will hear us, but whether we will hear God; and true prayer consists more in listening than in talking.

Therefore it is that Christ tells us not to use vain repetitions, or an overflow of words, as the heathen who think that they shall be heard for their much speaking;

Matthew 6

⁷ But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

⁸ For your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him.

God has called us to Him to receive rich gifts, and He says:

Isaiah 55

³ Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live.

But since it is a fact that God has spoken first, that He has made known His will to us, and that true prayer is our response to His offer, with thanksgiving for what He has given, it necessarily follows that a study of God's will as revealed in His Word is necessary to prayer. He who is best acquainted with God's will, can pray best.

But what if we should ask too much? Is there not danger of presuming on God's generosity, overtaxing it? No fear whatsoever. He is able, and therefore willing,

Ephesians 3

²⁰ ...to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And when we hear His voice, that offers us so many good things, and come to Him, and receive them at His hands, what shall we give in return? That is just what the Psalmist asked,

after God's readiness to hear had made him determined to call upon the Lord as long as he lived.

Psalms 116

¹² What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?

That is a most natural question, and the inspired answer immediately follows:

¹³ I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.

How shall I pay the Lord for what He has given me? By taking more. That is the only way.

"But then I will owe Him more than before!"

Certainly, and so are you under obligation to take more than before; and as you are in duty bound to pay your debt by taking twice as much as before, so you make your debt four times as large, and in order to pay it you must now take eight times as much as before, and so on in endless progression.

Romans 11

³³ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

Hebrews 4

¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

47. The Prayer of Faith (1897)

Present Truth, November 4, 1897

A father prays,

Matthew 6

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread,

—and God gives the daily bread. But the faith of the father leads him to use the strength and wisdom and all the means provided by God to enable him to earn his livelihood. And all the time he lives by faith.

James 5

¹⁵ The prayer of faith shall save the sick.

This is the promise. But faith in this case no more neglects to make use of all the wisdom and means that Providence affords than in the matter of the daily bread.

The use of all the wisdom that may be available in supplying proper conditions for the body in illness is no more a denial of faith than is the use in faith of all the wisdom and means provided for earning a livelihood to supply the needs of the body in health.

48. The Motive

Present Truth, November 18, 1897

John 15

⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.

THE motive of true fruit-bearing, in the Christian life is to glorify God.

The vine does not think of itself: it bears for others; it rewards the husbandman's toil. So the Christian will forget self in his desire to labor for God.

"Much fruit" for God's glory will be his desire. This will demand much prayer. His asking will not be for selfish things. His will is God's will. The Lord's good pleasure is his pleasure. To such it is said,

John 15

⁷ You, shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

But the asking will be for God—asking, receiving, abiding, fruit-bearing.

49. How to Pray

Present Truth, January 20, 1898

Matthew 6:5-15

THE Bible contains a great deal more on the subject of prayer than is found in the verses constituting this lesson; for to know how to pray is to know how to live the Christian life.

Space does not allow anything like a detailed consideration even of these verses, much less a study of the others bearing on the subject; but we may refer to some of them that the student may read them in connection with the lesson. Read especially:

- *Mark* 11:24;
- *Luke* 11:1-13; 18:1-14;
- *John* 14:13-14;
- *Romans* 8:26-27;
- *James* 1:5-6; 5:13-18 RV;
- *1 John* 5:14-15.

He who makes these scriptures his own, need never lack any good thing.

Public Prayer

Matthew 6

⁵ And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

⁶ But you, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret; and your Father which sees in secret shall reward you openly.

Here we are told that we should not pray as do the hypocrites, in public places to be seen of men, but should pray to

God in secret. That this is not a prohibition of all prayer in public is evident from the example of our Lord himself:

- The 17th chapter, of *John* is the prayer of Jesus in the presence of His disciples, just before His arrest.
- In the 11th chapter of *John* we read His prayer at the grave of Lazarus, in the presence of His disciples and a multitude of the Jews.
- *Matthew* 11:27-28 and *John* 12:28 also note public prayers of Christ.
- The 8th chapter of *1 Kings* contains the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, in the presence of thousands.
- Elijah prayed in the presence of hundred and fifty prophets of Baal for “all Israel,” including the king; and the Lord answered the prayer in a remarkable manner. *1 Kings* 18:17-37.
- Paul prayed with the elders of Ephesus (*Acts* 20:36), and with the church at Tyre, together with his traveling companions on the sea-shore. *Acts* 11:5.

The gist of the exhortation lies in the statement that the hypocrites pray “to be seen of men,” and that in the notice and the applause of men, they get all that they pray for. God is in secret, and He “sees in secret.”

Now while it is true that men ought literally to go alone, into secluded places to pray, it is not always absolutely necessary that one should be physically alone in order to pray in secret. By the blood of Jesus we have boldness...

Hebrews 10

¹⁹ ...to enter into the holiest of all,

—even into God’s inner sanctuary; and not only may we occasionally enter in, but it is our privilege to:

Psalms 91

¹ ...dwell in the secret place of the Most High, [and to] abide

under the shadow of the Almighty.

He who has this knowledge of God may be alone with the Lord in the presence of thousands.

The true prayer, therefore, is that which the petitioner loses himself in the thought of God, and prays from the heart to Him who sees the heart. Such a prayer, although uttered in the hearing of people, is not directed to them, but nevertheless the hearers may be greatly strengthened by hearing a man talking with God by the aid of the Spirit. Obedience to the exhortation,

Philippians 2

³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory,

would shut off anything like making an exhibition in prayer. Ostentation and display have no place in the worship of God.

John 4

²⁴ God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Unnecessary Words—Long Prayers

Matthew 6

⁷ But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

⁸ Be not therefore like unto them; for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.

God is our Father; we are His children. His care for us, His solicitude for our welfare, and His ability to do all that His love conceives, are as much greater than the care and oversight of any earthly parent, as God is greater than man.

It is the duty of a parent to provide for his children. “Provide” means to “see before,” to look after beforehand. If parents did not think about food and clothing for their children

before their children remind them of their need, the children would starve and freeze. When hunger makes the child conscious of its need of food, it finds that the parent has thought of it long before, and has provided for its wants.

Now it would be folly and affectation for the child to make a long, flowery speech, in asking for food, and to multiply words for the purpose of making the request in as many ways as possible, so as to impress the parent with a sense of its need, when the parent already has the things that he needs ready to give him. Such a course would indeed be most disrespectful to the parent. How much more so, then, to act in the same way toward God, who is the loving Father of all, the universal Provider.

Long prayers find no warrant in the Bible:

- The longest prayer on record is that of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. That was a great occasion, and the prayer was very comprehensive; yet it can be read slowly in six minutes.
- The prayer of Jesus in *John* 17 may be read with deliberation in four minutes.
- Of the other prayers recorded in the Bible, including the Lord's Prayer, none of them would occupy a whole minute.

Contrast Elijah's prayer with those of the prophets of Baal. They prayed from morning till evening, saying, "O Baal, hear us," and leaped and cut themselves, with of course no result. Elijah quietly addressed the Lord in a prayer less than half a minute long, and fire came down and consumed the sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones of the altar, and the water that was in the trench.

The heathen gods cannot hear; therefore those who trust them, not getting any response when they pray, must needs vociferate and multiply their words; but why should the ser-

vants of the living God give the impression by their prayers that He is like the gods of the heathen?

Prayer is not for the purpose of making God acquainted with our needs, not to make Him willing to give, for He knows what we need before we ask Him, and has prepared the gifts for us. We come to Him only in response to His call. Therefore true prayer is simply the manifestation and expression of our willingness to receive the good things that come down from the Father of lights.

God is not like the unjust judge, so that He needs to be nagged into granting our requests, but He assures us that He will do us justice speedily. *Luke 18:1-8*. It is because of this readiness on the part of God to hear, that His servants “cry day and night unto Him.”

Psalm 116

¹ I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications.

² Because He has inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

We do indeed read that Jesus on more than one occasion spent the entire night in prayer, but it was by himself, and not in company with others. When men get something of the acquaintance with the Father that He had, they also will delight to hold long conversations with Him alone, as friend with friend; but for one to pray all night just because the Lord did, without the Spirit that led Him to do it, would be mockery.

Not only is it not necessary to use repetitions in asking for anything, but it is not necessary to multiply words in order to ask for the many, many things that we need. This is shown in the model prayer before us, which includes every possible want of man. We cannot go into a detailed study of the separate petitions in this prayer; if we should attempt to analyze them, we could not exhaust them, for they are infinite. We shall best arrive at an understanding of this prayer by rever-

ently praying it, and by carefully studying the Word.

In short, when we pray it is necessary for us to remember the commandment:

Exodus 20

⁷ You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Men can take the name of God in vain in other things than profane swearing.

- Any unnecessary repetition of “that glorious and fearful name” (*Deuteronomy* 28:58) is a taking of it in vain.
- To ask for unnecessary things, is to take it in vain.
- To pray without faith, is also to take the name of God in vain.

Remember that God is, He knows, He cares, and He is almighty, and that He has already given us all things. Then study His will, and in the simple directness of faith make your requests to God with thanksgiving.

Philippians 4

⁶ In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Ecclesiastes 5

² God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.

Habakkuk 2

²⁰ The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.

Psalms 46

¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God.

50. Daniel's Prayer

Present Truth, May 26, 1898

NOTED as Daniel is as a prophet, it is as a man of prayer that he is best known in the world.

Everybody is familiar with the story of the plot against his life, in the securing of the decree that whoever should “ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days,” save of the king, should be cast into the den of lions, and how:

Daniel 6

¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

There was no compromising, no shuffling, no attempt at concealment. Why should he hide the fact that he prayed to the God of heaven? It was nothing to be ashamed of.

Suppose there was a law against it, and this life was threatened, should he, by heeding the decree, or at least pretending to heed it, by seeming not to pray, give those heathen the impression that he was afraid to trust in God? Should he allow them to believe that the king of the Medes and Persians was greater than that King of the universe? What a fearful denial of God that would of been! If he had done so, we may be sure that his life would not have been saved.

How naturally the counsel of expediency comes forward in such times.

“There is no need of deliberately putting your head into the lion’s mouth. You know the decree; it is unchangeable; if you continue to pray as you have been in the habit of doing, you will be virtually committing suicide.

“You don’t need to violate your conscience at all; the decree doesn’t say that you must make petitions to the king instead

of God; you will be all safe if you will simply omit praying for a month; that will not be idolatry.

“Or, if you must pray to God, why then, think your prayer in your own mind as you go about your work, without opening your lips, or after you go to bed. In the dark you can even move your lips and frame words silently, and nobody will be the wiser.”

Thus argues Mr. Worldly Wiseman. If such temptations did not come to Daniel, he was more than human; but they had no affect on him. He knew the Lord. He would not dishonor his King for fear of what one of his fellow-subjects with the title of king might do to him.

In the first place he knew that he wouldn't be safe thirty days without prayer. Even if instead of threatening death to all who should make the request of anyone except himself, the king has offered the highest possible rewards and the protection of his kingdom to those who would not ask anything of any other, Daniel would not be safe.

Psalm 118

⁸ It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.

Psalm 146

³ Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

⁵ Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for its help, whose hope is in the Lord his God,

⁶ Which made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; which keeps truth for ever.

What is a god good for, that cannot save in times of trouble? Strange that men who profess to be Christians, who pity the poor heathen who worship gods that can do nothing, will, when danger threatens, act as though the God whom they profess to serve were like the gods of the heathen. That is just when God's power is seen at its best.

Psalm 46

¹ God is our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble.

There was never a time in the world when Daniel needed to pray more than when that decree went forth against prayer. And since he was sent to Babylon as a witness for God, he needed above all things to avoid giving the impression that his God was not able to keep him. What is a witness good for, if he doesn't give straight testimony when others are swearing falsely?

There was nothing of the bravado about Daniel. He didn't bluster. He didn't tell what he should do in spite of the decree of the king. He didn't prate about his "rights." He quietly did what was right, without making any unnecessary display.

He didn't change his custom. If he had been in the habit of praying with his windows shut, no doubt he would have continued praying with them shut after the decree was signed. He would not open them to parade his devotions, nor to show his defiance of the king's decree. But he wouldn't change his habit, and shut them, now that praying was declared unlawful. That would have shown lack of confidence in his God; and it was trust in God, not defiance of the king, that moved Daniel.

Daniel was intimately acquainted with the Lord. He was accustomed to talk with Him, and when he prayed, he expected to have his prayer is answered. And God did not disappoint him.

Read the story in the 2nd chapter of *Daniel*. King Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed a dream, and had forgotten it, and he asked his professional wise men to recall the dream for him, and to tell him what it meant. Of course they could not do it. Then the king ordered them all to be put to death as a set of frauds and impostors. Daniel did not know anything about this affair until the officers came to take him to execution

with the rest, when he said:

Daniel 2

¹⁵ Why is the decree so hasty about the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

¹⁶ Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.

A bold promise that. If Daniel failed after that, his fate would be worse than that of the others. But he knew that he should not fail, for he was acquainted with his God. There was no presumption in his promise to make known the dream and its interpretation. He knew what he would do. He at once went to his house, and joined with his three companions in prayer to God; and the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.

There was a good understanding between God and Daniel, and that was why Daniel would not pay any attention to a decree forbidding him to pray to God. What a grand thing to be so well acquainted with the God that made heaven and earth! You and I may be on terms of as close intimacy with God as Daniel was, and we shall find that He is near for all things that we call upon Him for.

Psalms 125

¹ They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever.

² As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even for ever.

Psalms 9

⁹ The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble.

¹⁰ And they that know your name will put their trust in You; for You, Lord, have not forsaken them that seek You.

Here is the description of the mass of people in the last days:

2 Timothy 3

⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

A form of godliness, without power, is like salt that has lost its savor. It is absolutely worthless.

Now there is no power but of God; the Holy Spirit's power is the only thing that makes a profession of religion of any value. Religion according to law is therefore only a lifeless form.

Why then should one who knows the Lord bother himself in the least as to what the laws of the land say about religion? How can one who is acquainted with the substance busy himself with what at best is only a shadow?

Rather preach the Gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost, and all who accept it will have both the form and the power. As for those who know not the power, they are in a more hopeful condition without the form than with it.

51. Power with God

Present Truth, November 17, 1898

Genesis 32

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

²⁵ And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

²⁶ And he said, Let me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let you go, except you bless me.

²⁷ And he said unto him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob.

²⁸ And he said, your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince you have power with God and with men, and have prevailed.

“As a prince you have power with God.”

THE way people for the most part use this test, one would think that it read,

“As a prince you have power *against* God.”

It is read as though Jacob had all night been consciously wrestling with the Lord, and had at last worn Him out, so that the Lord had been obliged to yield, and bless him. And so people regard prayer as a sort of wrestling contest with the Lord, imagining that if they can hold out long enough they will weary the Lord into granting what they ask.

There are very few, however, who have this idea, who persevere very long in prayer, because they do not find prayer a pleasant occupation. Such a view of the test does the greatest dishonor to God, who is not the hard, unjust, unfeeling judge, but the tender, loving Father, who anticipates all His children's wants.

Think of the situation for a minute. Put yourself in Jacob's place. Would you have the boldness to enter into a wrestling

contest with the Lord, knowing it to be He? Do you know of anybody who you think would dare lay hands on the Lord, or one of His messengers from heaven, and try to throw him on the ground?

We cannot think of a person so presumptuous and so irreverent that he could venture to lay violent hands on the Lord, knowing Him to be the Lord. If the wicked men who put Christ to death had known who He really was,

1 Corinthians 2

⁸ They would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

They might have known, but they did not. The very fact that Jacob wrestled with the angel, who was none other than the Lord, shows that he did not know Him to be the Lord. He thought that it was an enemy that had seized upon him.

The touch of the Lord as the day began to break showed Jacob at once the futility of the struggle, and made it impossible for him to continue it. With his thigh out of joint, there was nothing for him to do but to cling to his late antagonist for support.

Then the Lord said, "Let me go." Anybody can see that this was said merely to test Jacob, because He who could with a touch dislocate a man's thigh could easily disengage himself from his grasp. But Jacob is now no longer wrestling with an enemy; he is embracing a Friend, and he is determined to cling.

Hosea 12

³ By his strength he had power with God.

When was it that Jacob received his blessing? It was when he was leaning on the Lord for support, unable to stand alone. What then was his strength? Manifestly it was his weakness. When he found that he was without strength, then he prevailed. His power with God was his absolute helplessness.

Remember now that the text says that Jacob had power with God, and not against Him. Jacob had no power at all, but he was made sharer of God's power, and that was his strength. His faith made him a prince of God. The son of a king is a prince. Those who believe on the name of the Lord become sons of God:

John 1

¹² But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.

As a son of the King of kings, and therefore a prince of God, one must necessarily have power with God; not power against Him, but power derived from Him.

This power God gives to every one who truly believes. Absolute trust is the only condition, and that absolute trust must arise from the knowledge of God's loving power, and consciousness of our own helplessness.

1 Samuel 2

⁸ [God] raises up the poor out of the dust, and the needy from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.

When we believe, He adopts us into His own family, so that all His people are of royal birth. He lifts us up from the death of sin, and sets us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that is, on His throne, so that in Christ we are given power with God; we are made sharers of the Divine power.

When one has received this power—and it is the portion of every one who is wholly the Lord's—it follows as a natural consequence that he will have power with men. It is with this power that God clothes His servants, in order that they may make known the Gospel. What is the Gospel? It is the power of God. It is evident then that no one can show forth the Gospel, unless he has that power of God.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and is set down with His Father in His throne. As Son of God, the heathen are His heritage, and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. He has not yet taken possession, but it is not lack of power that prevents His doing so; He is manifesting His power in drawing men to himself. The power by which at the last He will destroy the reprobate, and renew the earth, is the power by which He now works to save men. Indeed, the manifestation of that power at the last, in the destruction of the wicked, will be for the salvation, of His own faithful people.

The fact that Jesus even now has power over the heathen is shown by the statement that He is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly places,

Ephesians 1

²¹ Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

But God has bestowed this wonderful love on us who believe, that we should be called the sons of God. This being called the sons of God is not a fancy title, but, as stated in the *Revised Version*:

1 John 3

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.

² Now are we the sons of God.

It is in Christ that we become sons, and in Him we are raised up to sit with Him in the heavenly places, and that means that God has placed us “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.”

In all this there is nothing for us to boast about, for we are nothing. The power is the Lord’s, which He is pleased to manifest through us, when we fully yield to Him, and depend on Him. Then comes the promise of Christ,

Revelation 2

²⁶ He that overcomes and keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations;

²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I have received of my Father.

Here Christ says that His disciples shall share the same power and authority that the Father gives to Him—the authority mentioned in the 2nd *Psalm*. Someone will say:

“Yes, but this is all future.”

Very true, and even so it is future in the case of Christ. Not yet does He rule the nations with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter’s vessel; but the power to do so is His, nevertheless. His power is exerted to save them, until they absolutely and finally refuse to be saved, when it will remove them.

When He begins to execute judgment, His saints will share the honor with Him²⁷, and in the meantime He imparts to them His own power, that they may carry forward His work of reconciliation.

Romans 5

¹⁷ If by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.

“Shall reign in life.” When? Why, when life comes, of course. And when does life come? When we are risen with Christ from the dead, to...

²⁷ **Psalm 149:** ⁵ Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. ⁶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; ⁷ To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; ⁸ To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; ⁹ To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints. Praise the Lord.

Romans 6

⁴ ...walk in newness of life.

When men yield themselves to God,

¹³ ...as those that are alive from the dead,

—sin shall not have dominion over them.

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.

Instead of being ruled, they will rule. From slaves, they will be transformed into kings, with power over the flesh.

Proverbs 16

³² He that rules his spirit is greater than he that takes a city.

For the power by which he rules himself is the power by which the whole earth is to be made new, and the first dominion restored.

52. Power Over Lions

Present Truth, December 15, 1898

Original title: Back Page

THE power that closed the mouths of the lions when Daniel was cast into their den was not a new experience in his life. It was the same power that was always present with him, continually working in no less marvelous a fashion than when it demonstrated its ability to control wild beasts. Daniel was like all other men.

He had like passions with others, and in him, as in all men, there was that...

James 3

⁸ ...unruly evil, full of deadly poison,

of which Inspiration declares, that while...

James 3

⁷ Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and has been tamed of mankind,

⁸ Yet the tongue can no man tame.

It is evident, therefore, that if there was any power in Daniel's life to control his tongue, it was a comparatively easy thing to stop the mouths of lions, and it was because Daniel allowed this power to work in him that he was as safe in the den as out of it. The power that works in the Christian is...

Philippians 3

²¹ ...able even to subdue all things,

—and this is demonstrated where the power is not restrained. Thus Paul fought with wild beasts at Ephesus and lived to tell of it.

How do we know that Daniel allowed this invincible power to operate in his life? It was seen in the fact that even his enemies could find no ground in him for accusation. They were

obliged to confess, after making the attempt,

Daniel 6

⁵ We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

Daniel knew why God had sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths;

²² Forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before you, O king, have I done no hurt.

This was not because Daniel was naturally better, than other men. He needed, like all others, to pray,

Psalms 141

³ Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

That which distinguished him from others was the fact that he prayed this prayer in faith, that is, He believed the Lord would do it and let Him do it.

He thus learned that there was nothing too hard for God, and the confidence did not desert him when it became necessary that a lesser work should be wrought in setting a watch over the mouths of the lions and keeping the door of their lips.

53. In the Name of Jesus

Present Truth, July 13, 1899

Original title: Back Page

DID you ever close a prayer with the words, “in the name of Jesus?”

“What a strange question!” [you exclaim,] “I never pray any other way.”

Good! but did you ever, after praying, wonder if your prayer would be answered, and, if appearances were contrary, doubt it entirely?

You are obliged to confess that you often have; that sometimes even while you were praying, there was in your mind a question whether it was of any use to make the request, or not. Your prayer was something of an experiment, was it not? You did not think of it in that way, but now that the case is stated, you see that it is so.

Now do you know what it means to use those words when praying, whether at the beginning or at the close? You ought to; yet if you did, you would never doubt when you pray. They mean that we are certain of receiving the blessings we ask for. It is the expression of positive assurance that the matter is settled, and that the things desired are coming in good time.

What is our warrant for saying, “In the name of Jesus”? What right have we to use His name when we pray? We have His authority for it. He says:

John 14

¹³ Whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

¹⁴ If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.

If it were not for that assurance, we should never think of using His name in prayer. Then when we do use it, why

should we not use it for the purpose for which He gives it to us? Any other use is to take it in vain.

But you say,

“Perhaps I ought not to have the things that I have asked for; how can I then be sure that I shall have them?”

If you are not sure, find out. Instead of asking positively for a thing that you are not sure you ought to have, and thus paving the way for doubt, ask the Lord if you ought to have it, and thus leave the matter with Him, confident that if it is good for you it will come, and be perfectly content if it does not come.

There are many, many things which we may be sure it is God’s will to give us. If we study His Word, the revelation of His will, we shall know them.

1 John 5

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us:

¹⁵ And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

Then we can give thanks when we pray, which we cannot do if we are in doubt. We are told to let our requests be made known to God with thanksgiving:

Philippians 4

⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God.

If there is doubt, there can be no thanksgiving; and if there is no thanksgiving, there is no true prayer. Then do not doubt, but,

1 Thessalonians 5

¹⁷ Pray without ceasing.

54. Precepts and Promises

Present Truth, March 29, 1900

Matthew 7:7-12

PRECEPTS and promises are both very plain, and yet, like every word of the Lord, they contain much that we have never yet learned. The promises alone will be enough for our present study.

The promise is,

Matthew 7

⁷ Ask, and it shall be given unto you.

Yet many say,

“I have asked, again and again, and nothing has been given me; if this promise is true, why do I not receive?”

You have answered your own question, When you say,

“If this promise is true,”

or,

“If this means what it says,”

you show that you do not believe. And how can you call upon Him in whom you have not believed? He who does not ask in faith, does not really ask at all. You would not go to a haberdasher's and ask for diamonds. Why not? Because you do not believe that diamonds are to be found there. Even if you should say the words,

“Please show me some diamonds,”

anybody would know that you were but joking, and did not mean what you said, so that you do not really ask for them.

Even so it is with many so-called prayers to the Lord. People say over certain words, often without any thought of what they mean; and if they do give a thought to the meaning, they

do not really expect actually to get the thing that they ask for: and then they complain that God does not answer prayer. Yes, He does; but they have never prayed. They have not asked for anything.

It, is useless to try to deceive God, God can hear sounds that are muffled to the ear of mortals. He hears the thought of the heart. Empty words, not prompted by the heart, are but inarticulate sounds; it is what the heart desires, that the Lord hears. Wherever there is a sincere desire for any good thing, be assured that God understands it, and gratifies it, even though not a word be uttered.

Psalm 34

¹⁰ The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not lack *any good thing*.

“Any good thing.” Ah, there is the secret of many a failure in prayer. God is good, and deals only in good things.

James 1

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights.

He has never promised anything but good; but we have not always desired the good. We desired to feel well, to be free from smitings of conscience, while continuing to do that which is not good. So we did not really ask for the things which God keeps in stock. He supplies every good thing, and we ought to be glad that He does not offer anything else.

1 John 5

¹⁴ This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us;

¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

And how comprehensive is His will! He wills that we should be saved, and that we should have everything that pertains to life. If we know that God hears us when we pray, we

know that we have the things that we asked for. And we know that He hears us when we ask according to His will, that is, ask from the heart for the good things that He has to bestow.

Than do we not have to wait a long time for the answer to our prayers? Certainly not. What is the promise of the Lord?

Matthew 7

⁸ Everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened.

Do you take notice that the receiving is in the same tense as the asking? He that asks—a present act—receives also a present act. The receiving is coincident with the asking. As soon as we ask, we receive. That is the promise of Him who cannot lie.

But here comes an honest man, who says he has asked for things that he did not immediately receive. He was sincere in the asking, too. What shall we say in such a case? We shall say,

Romans 3

⁴ Let God be true, but every man a liar.

Yet we do not need to accuse this man of lying in this matter. We may, however, ask him a question. Was the thing for which you asked something that you needed immediately?

“Oh, no; I did not need it at the time; but I thought I should like to have it beforehand, so that there would be no doubt about getting it in time.”

Ah, yes; quite so; you did not feel certain about the promise of God, to give you grace in every time of need, and so you thought that you would experiment a little. And you called that faith!

Now begin over again, and begin right. Be content with what you need for today, and do not try to pile up blessings

ahead. Ask for such things as you have need of. Do not go to trying experiments with the Lord.

Matthew 6

³⁴ Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

And therefore the good with which to meet the evil can well wait until the day comes.

God is better than man. Some may think that this is an unnecessary statement; but the fact is that many people do not believe it. There are many people who call themselves Christians, who think that they are a great deal better than the Lord is; for they would deem it an insult to be thought capable of acting as they expect God to act. They would interrupt a man if he began to make an apology to them, and would say,

“Never mind that; say no more about it; it is all right, the same as though the thing had never happened.”

Yet they do not believe that God forgives their sins, which they have confessed again and again. But God says that the case is reversed.

A parent studies how to find out some new thing with which to please his children; he delights in the gratification that it gives them. He loves to see their faces light up, as they undo the new treasure which their father's love has devised for them.

Very good; but God is our Father, and His love for us is as much greater than the love of any earthly father for his child, as God is greater than any man. Take the delight which a father feels in giving good things to his children, and multiply that by the number which expresses the difference between God and the man, and you have the readiness with which God gives the best things to His children. It is infinity.

Matthew 7

¹² Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men

should do to you, do even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

There are many men of the world, men who call themselves infidels, who nevertheless have no fault to find with this rule, which is called “the golden rule.” They decry all talk about God; they do not believe in faith, and in answers to prayer; but they say that they believe in the religion of the golden rule. That is good enough for them.

It ought to be good enough for them; for it is the sum of the entire Bible. It is the law and the prophets. No one can keep the golden rule, who does not keep all the commandments of God, and who does not believe all that the prophets have written.

Moreover let it be remembered that the golden rule hinges on faith in God’s readiness to answer prayer. God is infinitely more willing to give us good things than we are to provide for our children, therefore we should do unto others as we would have them do to us.

All we have to give is what the Lord has already given to us, but He gives abundantly, therefore we ought to be willing to give freely. We cannot do anything good to any person except as God acts in us. But God is near, for all things that we call upon Him for:

Deuteronomy 4

⁷ For what nation is there so great, who has God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?

And our reaching out to do good to others is the only evidence that we appreciate good things, and wish God to deal them to us.

This brings us to the thought with which we may well close, that real prayer is receiving. He who does not receive, does not pray. That is just what the text teaches:

Matthew 7

⁸ Everyone that asks receives.

Praying is not begging, it is not trying to move God to do something, to which it is possible He may be disinclined; least of all is it an attempt to have God act contrary to His law, or to nature.

No; it is simply the coming to God, with hearts open, saying in our inmost being that we are now ready to take the things which He has so long held out to us. It is the saying to God that we are willing that He should act in us according to His unchangeable law, according to unperverted nature.

Giving is the law of God's life; therefore every one who is willing to receive of God, must of necessity have the good things desired.

1 Timothy 6

¹⁷ [He] gives us richly all things to enjoy.

Let us enjoy them.

55. Fearlessness from Prayer

Present Truth, August 23, 1900

Original title: Back Page

HE WHO can come boldly to the throne of grace, can go with boldness anywhere in the universe.

The one who has seen God face to face, and who is not consumed, need never fear the face of any creature, nor can he have any fear if he keeps the divine vision continually before him.

He [John the Baptist] looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was forgotten. He beheld the majesty of holiness, and felt himself to be inefficient and unworthy. He was ready to go forth as Heaven's messenger, unawed by the human, because he had looked upon the Divine. He could stand erect and fearless in the presence of earthly monarchs, because he had bowed low before the King of kings.²⁸

²⁸ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 103.

56. When to Pray

Present Truth, September 20, 1900

Original title: Back Page

HAVE you noticed that when you have been overtaken in a fault, or have been indulging in some sinful pleasure, that you feel less like praying than at any other time? It doesn't seem to you then as though you dared to pray; you feel ashamed to come into the presence of the Lord.

Well, fix it in your minds that when you feel least like praying is when you most need to pray. Do not let Satan keep you back from it, by any feeling of shame or unworthiness.

You are in the presence of God anyhow, because you cannot possibly go from the presence of His Spirit. You cannot hide from Him; why not then freely confess the sin, and receive forgiveness; that you may stand clean before Him, and not with the shamefulness of sin?

Our need is our recommendation to mercy.

Psalm 25

² For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great.

⁸ Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

Psalm 69

²⁹ I am poor and sorrowful; let your salvation, O God, set me up on high.

57. Vain Repetitions

Present Truth, March 21, 1901

WE ARE commanded, when we pray, not to use vain repetitions, as the heathen do; and we should do well to carry out the injunction in all the affairs of Christian life. If we did, we should be faithful and true witnesses, and not mere retailers of what others have said.

In a review of a new *Introduction to the New Testament*, it is said that the author...

“...loyally follows Harnack, and in matters of pure scholarship he could hardly do better. But his real master is Ritschl.”

The involuntary question is, “What is the use?” If one man has given testimony in court, such a thing would not be tolerated, as that another, having listened intently, and taken notes, should proceed to tell the same story. Yet this is what is being done continually in the most important case in the world. How can men be content to be mere copyists?

We do not mean that there should not be unity and agreement among Christians, or that people should seek to be different from others. Far from it. But unity is not slavish copying of one another. God has given to every man a mind, and if the mind be submitted to God, He will lead all into all truth, and there will be unity but not identity.

Jeremiah 23

³⁰ I am against the prophets, says the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.

How much more, then, will He be against those who steal from their neighbors words that are not His?

Matthew 23

⁸ One is your Master, even Christ,

Colossians 2

³ In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

He who gives us an infinite variety of color in sky and flowers, with always the same light, can give us His one truth in endless variety of forms, through all the different souls who absorb and reflect the light of life.

58. Muscular Christianity

Original title: Back Page

Present Truth, August 1, 1901

ASKING, in the Bible use of the term, means more than a mere verbal petition. The heart and the flesh must cry out for God.

Psalms 84

² My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God.

This is in very deed “muscular Christianity,” and it strengthens both muscles and nerves.

59. The True Prayer-Book

Present Truth, October 10, 1901

THERE is in some “advanced” church circles a prejudice against using the language of the Bible in prayer; yet the very ones who object to the use of inspired language, have no fault to find with the repetition of prayers composed by a committee, and learned by heart.

To all we would say,

“Let the Bible be your Prayer-Book.”

Let it, in fact, do your praying for you. That is, let the inspired Word so permeate you, that it will come spontaneously from your lips.

There is no true prayer except that which the Holy Spirit indicts, for...

Romans 8

²⁶ ...we know not what we should pray for as we ought,

—and we shall pray in vain, no matter how fine our language, unless the Spirit helps our infirmities.

We must not pray by rote; but this is not the case when the Word of Christ dwells in us; then His Word is our word, and we utter the petitions of the Spirit as though we ourselves had originated them.

Every phase of human experience is covered in the Bible, and when the Bible language comes naturally to our lips, we know that we have the things asked for, because we ask according to the will of God.

60. The Kingdom Within

Present Truth, October 17, 1901

Original title: Back Page

Revelation 1 [RV]

⁵ Unto Him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood;

⁶ ...to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever.

This is equivalent to the clause in the Lord's prayer:

Matthew 6

¹³ For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.

It is an acknowledgment that Christ is our rightful Ruler, and a request that He will exert His power in us, and reign in us in glory. He has all power in heaven and earth:

Matthew 28

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

So that when we allow Him to occupy His proper place of authority over us, we can rest on His assurance:

Romans 6

¹⁴ Sin shall not have dominion over you.

Oh, then let us yield to Him His own right, that the work which He has began He may finish to His own eternal glory, and to our own glory in Him.

61. The Hermannsburg Mission

Present Truth, October 31, 1901

IN THE story of the Moravians and their mission enterprises, and in individual mission enterprises, the Lord has furnished object lessons in the power of prayer in behalf of missions.

Pastor Harms assumed the pastorate of Hermannsburg about 1844. His soul was made alive with missionary zeal as he read of the needs of the heathen world. A sketch of his life tells the simple story of the work wrought out by prayer and consecration.

The parish included seven of the villages that dot the Luneburg Heath, an expanse of thinly-peopled moorland. The parishioners, about forty-five hundred in number, were, for the most part, sturdy, self-reliant German yeomanry and peasantry. The religious life of the pariah was cold and formal, with little spirituality.

The new pastor, by his singularly devout life, fed by deep communion and unceasing prayer, soon raised the people to a higher spiritual level, and a great religious awakening followed. He soon succeeded in kindling the fires of missionary enthusiasm throughout his parish. The first-fruits were three gifts—six shillings from a widow, a six-pence from a laborer, and a penny from a little child.

Erelong men as well as money began to be offered, until soon a company of twelve stood ready to go wherever God would send them. These untaught peasants, though filled with the Spirit, with faith and heroism, were by no means prepared for the work.

A training school is established, and the prospective missionaries enter upon a four years' course. Besides a daily round of manual labor, the curriculum included Bible study,

church history, dogmatics, history of missions, etc.—a formidable array of subjects to men unused to study. This, however, as all else connected with Hermannsburg, was accomplished through prayer. The missionary enthusiasm ran high. As many as sixty offered themselves. Eight more were accepted and put under training.

Perplexing questions arise. How is this large company to be sent to the field? The field chosen was a district in south-eastern Africa, occupied by a fierce and bloodthirsty tribe to whom as yet no Gospel herald had carried the story of the cross. “Build a ship,” was suggested. “The proposal is good,” says Harms, “but the money.”

That was a time of great conflict, and I wrestled with God. No one encouraged me. My friends hinted that I was out of my senses. I was spending a night in prayer. I laid the whole matter in the Lord’s hands. As I rose from my knees at midnight, I said, “Forward, now, in God’s name!”

The crisis was passed. The contract is let. The ship is built. Hermannsburg is a scene of activity. The women and girls by their sewing and knitting have contributed. The outfit is complete. Eight of the missionaries have completed the course and are ordained. Farewell services are held. The pastor’s final counsel is given: “Give heed to the reading of the Word, and pray without ceasing;” and on October 28, 1853, the first missionary colony from Hermannsburg set sail.

Year after year the work grew. As the demands exhausted the local supply of funds, the little people who had consecrated all to God, sought Him in prayer, and the Lord was able to open treasuries in the hearts of people outside of their community. Prayer and the spirit of consecration brought the community into the place where God could cooperate with their efforts.

So greatly was the mission blessed of God that in 1860, seven years after the first missionaries sailed, the Hermannsburg mission in the homeland owned, and had in successful operation, the mission house occupied by forty-five students,

a mission farm, a refuge farm, and a printing house; owned in Africa, ten thousand acres of land, occupied by eight stations, at each of which comfortable houses and workshops had been erected. One hundred of their own number were on the field, and fifty converts had been gathered from the African tribes. Besides they owned a ship and a mission magazine. The work of one pastor and his congregation of humble peasants!

The financial record of the mission has been a marvel. Such operations demanded large outlays of money, and neither Harms nor his people were rich in anything but faith. Though they gave with great liberality, one missionary giving his farm, and some others all they had, it was quite impossible for them to furnish more than a tithe of the whole amount. Where did it come from? God, who manifestly directed the enterprise, sent it in answer to prayer. Contributions came unsought from all parts of the world. How richly his faith was rewarded! His experiences of answered prayer were as remarkable as those of George Müller.

While they were so busily engaged in sending the Gospel to the heathen, the windows of heaven were opened to them. During the whole period of Louis Harm's pastorate, there was an uninterrupted revival in the Hermannsburg parish, in which it is said ten thousand souls were brought into the kingdom. Professor Park, who spent three weeks with Pastor Harms during this period, says:

Supposing the parish was then in a state of special revival, I asked, "How long has this revival continued?" "About seventeen years," was the reply, "ever since Pastor Harms came among us."

The missionary interest grows out of persons experience. And missionary effort reacts in continuous blessing at home. A thoroughly united effort in behalf of lands and needs beyond our borders is the sure way, of keeping hearts in the home churches aglow with the love of God and the joy of service.

The work to which we are now called so urgently in other

lands will prove God's way of bringing new life and power into the home work.

62. The Place of Communion with God

Present Truth, February 13, 1902

WHEN God told Moses to let the people build the sanctuary, that He might dwell among them, He gave directions concerning the construction of the ark to contain His law, the cover to which was called the mercy-seat, and said:

Exodus 25

²² And there I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony.

That was only because the people did not know the simple truth that:

Acts 7

⁴⁸ The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands.

But what are the facts?

Psalms 119

⁶⁴ The earth, O Lord, is full of your mercy...

This mercy has intimate connection with God's law, as indicated by the ark in the sanctuary; for the verse continues,

⁶⁴ ...teach me your statutes.

God's presence is in heaven and earth:

Jeremiah 23

²⁴ Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.

His presence is even in the very interior of the earth itself:

Psalms 139

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, You are there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

Therefore wherever we turn, wherever we are, we find the

mercy-seat—the place of communion with God.

Although God is everywhere, He is hidden from the eyes of those who are not spiritual; He dwells in secret; and whoever knows and recognizes God's presence ever, and who holds communion with Him, at all times and everywhere, dwells in the secret place of the Most High, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 91

¹ He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

63. He That Asks, Receives

Present Truth, January 2, 1902

Original title: Back Page

Mark 11

²⁴ What things soever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.

BUT the Lord does not wish us to believe what is not so; He does not tell us to believe that we have a thing, when we do not have it; for that would be to believe a lie.

Therefore He means that when we pray we receive the things that we ask for, while we are asking.

Matthew 7

⁸ He that asks, receives.

But of course we must ask in faith, that is, according to God's will and Word. The man who does not ask in faith, need not expect to receive anything.

But whoever asks for the things that God has promised to give us, should know that he gets them in the asking.

64. We Have an Advocate

Present Truth, April 24, 1902

Shall we look at our sins, and begin to mourn, and say,

“I have done wrong, and I cannot come to God with any degree of confidence”?

The Bible says,

1 John 1

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

It is a proper thing for us to have a realization of the terrible character of sin. It was sin that caused Christ to suffer an ignominious death on Calvary.

But while we should understand that sin is a terrible thing, we should not listen to the voice of our adversary, who says,

“You have sinned, and you have no right to claim the promises of God.”

You should say to the adversary, It is written,

1 John 2

¹ If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

65. Prayer and Doubt

Present Truth, May 22, 1902

Original title: Back Page

NEVER allow yourself to give utterance to doubt or discouragement; for words always react on the mind, and tend to deepen the impression of the thought which they express.

To say of a thing that God's Word has led you to pray for, "But I haven't got it yet," in a tone that implies a doubt as to its ever coming, is the same in effect as to say:

Matthew 24

⁴⁸ My Lord delays His coming.

Don't ever admit the shadow of the possibility of failure. Know that you cannot think of anything too great for God to give you.

Abraham had to wait twenty-five years for Isaac after God had promised him a son. A year before Isaac was born there was not the slightest indication that the long time of waiting was nearing its end. What a sad thing it would have been if Abraham had lost faith then.

Hebrews 3

¹⁴ We are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

66. Meditation

Present Truth, August 21, 1902

Psalm 1

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law does he meditate day and night.

THIS is something that is very much neglected, to the detriment of the individual soul, and of society as well.

It is common for people to allow the press of work in business to crowd out meditation; they think they “have no time for it.” That is a short-sighted policy; they might as well say that they have no time to eat.

It is the man who meditates, not merely occasionally, but “day and night,” who has prosperity in whatever he undertakes.

Christians are in danger of adopting the world’s methods, and the world’s standard of success. Real success is not always by any means that which is described by the highest figures.

67. Not My Will, But Yours, Be Done

Present Truth, September 25, 1902

Luke 22

⁴² ...nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done.

IN READING the account of Christ's prayer in the garden, people quite naturally get the idea that the well-known words just quoted, which He uttered, were a sort of protest, as though He would say,

"Well, if I cannot have what I desire, let your will be done."

This is because we judge Him by ourselves, who are so apt to regard God's will as a hardship to be endured, rather than a blessing to be desired. We should remember that the words are a request, and are but the continuation of what Jesus had already prayed:

Luke 22

⁴² Father, if You be willing, remove this cup from me...

Christ's prayer was all in harmony with what He had taught His disciples to pray, namely,

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your will be done.

This prayer recognizes the fact that God's will is the only perfect will, and that only what He wills is right and good. Nothing is more disastrous for any man than to have his own way.

We are to meditate upon God's ways until we know that His ways and His will are as much better than ours as the heaven is higher than the earth, and then we shall ardently long for His will to be done.

Thus we shall most earnestly pray to be saved from having our own way and doing our own will.

68. Wrestling, But Not With God

Present Truth, November 20, 1902

ONE of the most common misapplications of a Scripture incident is to speak of earnest prayer as “wrestling with God.”

The reference is of course to Jacob’s wrestling all night with the Lord; but, unfortunately for the application, Jacob did not know that he was wrestling with the Lord until his thigh was put out of joint, and he was unable to wrestle any longer. As soon as he discovered that his supposed antagonist was the Lord, he ceased wrestling, for he could not even stand alone with his dislocated thigh, and hung helplessly on the Lord for support, crying,

Genesis 32

²⁶ I will not let You go, except You bless me.

Then it was, and not when he was wrestling, that he prevailed with God. His helplessness was the strength by which he had power with God. We may be sure that Jacob would not have wrestled for a moment, if he had known that he was trying conclusions²⁹ with the Lord; and nobody in his senses could think of so presumptuous of thing.

We must wrestle, however, not with the Lord, not with flesh and blood, but:

Ephesians 6

¹² ...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

And in this contest it is really the Lord who does the wrestling, not against us, but for us; for it is only with...

¹¹ ...the whole armor of God,

²⁹ **Editor’s note:** “trying conclusions” is an old-fashioned term which means “To engage someone in a battle or contest.”

that the victory can be won, and none but the Lord can wield God's armor. Indeed, the armor is the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are exhorted to "put on":

Romans 13

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

For He is our righteousness, our peace, and our salvation, and it is His faith alone that overcomes the world.

1 John 5

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Romans 3

²² Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.

Galatians 2

¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Philippians 2

¹³ It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And,

Romans 16

²⁰ The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet shortly.

So we may rejoice in the knowledge that:

Micah 7

¹⁹ He will turn again and have compassion upon us; He will tread our iniquities under foot.

What a glorious thing, to be able to trample on the cruel sin

that once had dominion over us! It can be done by every one who does not love his sin more than he loves liberty.

69. Christ's Prayers and Tears

Present Truth, June 18, 1903³⁰

Hebrews 5

⁵ Christ did not glorify himself to be made High Priest; but He that said unto Him, You are my Son, today have I begotten You,

⁶ Also said in another place, You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek.

⁷ Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared.

Christ Prayed on Earth

THE Gospel narrative abounds in references to the prayers of Jesus. The first thing He did after being baptized in Jordan, was to pray, and it was while He was praying that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in visible form, and witnessed to His Sonship.

Luke 3

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened,

²² And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.

Immediately afterward He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where He was tempted forty days and forty nights by the devil.

Mark 1

¹² And immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness.

¹³ And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of

³⁰ This study is from a series called "The Bible Class," which were Sabbath School Lessons for 1902. The whole series is included in the volume, "Studies in Hebrews".

Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.

We have only to read the 22nd *Psalm*, to know that both day and night He cried to God in prayer for deliverance:

Psalm 22

² O my God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

Soon after His return from the wilderness of temptation, while by the power of the indwelling Spirit He was going about healing all manner of diseases, and casting out devils, we hear of Him rising up a great while before day:

Mark 1

³⁵ And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.

In the height of His fame, when great multitudes came together to hear Him, and to be healed of their infirmities,

Luke 5

¹⁵ But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by Him of their infirmities.

¹⁶ And He withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Still later when His marvelous powers had aroused the jealousy of the priests and scribes and Pharisees, so much so that “they were filled with madness, and communed one with another” concerning how to destroy Him, we read that:

Luke 6

¹² It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

When He had fed thousands of hungry people in the wilderness with bread that came directly from His own body before their eyes, and they were determined to make Him king, He sent them away;

Matthew 14

²³ And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray.

It was while He was alone with Peter and James and John in a mountain whither He had gone to pray, that:

Luke 9

²⁸ As He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering.

Matthew 17

² And He was transfigured before them.

And it was “as He was praying in a certain place,” that at the request of one of His disciples, He taught them the prayer which has been the model for all generations since.

Luke 11

¹ 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, as John also taught his disciples.

² And He said unto them, When you pray, say, Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

As He came down from the mount of transfiguration, a severe case of lunacy, epilepsy, and possession by the devil was brought to Him, which the disciples had vainly attempted to heal. After He had driven out the devil with a word, the disciples asked Him why they could not cast him out, and He replied:

Matthew 17

²¹ This kind does not go out but by prayer and fasting,

—showing plainly the secret of His own never-failing power. And lastly we have the story of His prayer in the garden, the night that He was betrayed, when in the agony of His supplication,

Luke 22

⁴⁴ His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Why Did He Pray?

It ought not to be necessary to ask this question, because the reason is so apparent it is evident that Jesus prayed because He felt the need of prayer. In the story of Christ's prayers we have the most convincing evidence that:

Hebrews 2

¹⁷ [He was] touched with the feeling of our infirmities,...[being made] in all things...like unto His brethren,

and that:

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ He was in all points tempted like as we are.

No one dare hint that the prayers of Jesus were for show—that they were only a form of words, and not wrung from His heart; and just as surely as His prayers were real, expressing the real longings of His soul, so surely were His temptations real. They pressed upon His flesh and spirit.

Only through prayer could He find wisdom for teaching, power for healing, strength to remain humble amid the applause of the people, and courage and calmness and steadfastness of purpose in the face of the angry, threatening mob. In these words we find the reason why He did not fail, nor become discouraged:

Isaiah 50

⁴ The Lord God has given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; He wakens morning by morning; He wakens my ear to hear as the learned.

⁶ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

⁷ For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

⁸ He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? let us stand together; who is mine adversary? let him come near to me.

⁹ Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Heard and Delivered

Hebrews 5

⁷ [He] was heard.

Just as in the Bible hearing by men is the same as obeying, so hearing by the Lord means the answering of the petitions offered to Him. God does not hear for nothing.

1 John 5

¹⁵ If we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

No one could imagine God turning away from the cries of His only-begotten Son, and refusing to help Him and supply His need. Christ's prayers were heard by the Father; His strong crying and tears were heeded; and He received the deliverance that He pleaded for.

Delivered from Sin and Death

For what did Christ pray? The answer is found in the statement that He cried,

Hebrews 5

⁷ ...unto Him that was able to save Him from death.

It was this cry that was heard. Evidently, then, He prayed to be saved from death.

“But He died, nevertheless,” someone will say.

Yes, He died, but He was saved from death. He died, but He

was not overcome. His life was not taken from Him, but He laid it down of His own free will.

He went into the grave a conqueror, stronger than the “strong man armed” who kept his palace; and He overcame him, and took from him all his armor wherein he trusted.

Luke 11

²¹ When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace:

²² But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he takes from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divides his spoils.

Colossians 2

¹⁵ And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

¹⁵ And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

He came from the grave by the power of His own word, the commandment given Him by the Father.

John 10

¹⁸ No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death;

Acts 2

²⁴ Because it was not possible that He should be held of it.

His deliverance was complete, and thus He is the Deliverer. Why was it not possible for Jesus to be held by death? The answer is, Because He did not sin.

1 John 3

⁵ You know that He was manifested to take away our sins: and in Him is no sin.

It is only by sin that death has power over men.

Romans 5

¹² By one man sin came into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

James 1

¹⁵ Sin when it is finished brings forth death.

The only thing that can cause fear of death is sin. Now as Jesus “did no sin,” and yet prayed in anguish to be delivered from death; it is evident that He prayed to be kept from sin, and that His prayers were the reason why He did no sin. He felt the burden of sin in His flesh, and prayed to be delivered from its mortal power, and was heard. Life was given Him, which swallowed up the sin; so that, though the sins of the whole world were upon Him, no man ever saw one of them revealed in His life and character.

Bruised For Our Iniquities

Not for himself did Jesus suffer, and not for himself was He delivered.

Isaiah 53

⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.

⁵ He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

He who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf;

2 Corinthians 5

²¹ ...that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Because of His prayers our iniquities are pardoned; through His struggles our warfare is accomplished.

How often do you stop to think that everything that Jesus passed through on this earth was wholly for our sakes? He had no need to come to earth and be tempted, in order to prove His own loyalty to the Father.

It was our nature and our sins, our sinfulness, that the Word which...

John 1

² ...was in the beginning with God,

¹ [and] was God,

—took upon himself when:

¹⁴ [He] became flesh, and dwelt among us.

It was our flesh—yours and mine—that the Spirit that filled Him strove against. Therefore, glorious thought! all our sins, even the worst and most obstinate, have been already overcome. Every temptation that is common to men has been met and successfully resisted.

When we meet the enemy that lurks in our flesh, we have only to lay hold of the victory that has already been won over it, and claim it as ours. Then we shall demonstrate that:

1 John 5

⁴ This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

It was through the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered himself without spot to God. By that same Spirit He abides with us, dwelling in us, so that we may say,

Galatians 2

²⁰ I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

So the temptation that we meet is His temptation. He, being...

Hebrews 4

¹⁵ ...touched with the feeling of our infirmities,

has the temptation to deal with; and as surely as He resisted it...

Hebrews 5

⁷ ...in the days of His flesh,

will He overcome it now in the days of our flesh. It is already overcome; and the knowledge of this turns our mourning into dancing:

Psalms 30

¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing: You have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

2 Peter 1

³ His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue.

Making Intercession for the Saints

Although Christ is not visibly present in the flesh, the Spirit as His representative is poured out upon all flesh; and thus it is really the same as though He had never left the earth, but had been multiplied indefinitely. Of the Comforter who comes in His name, He says:

John 14

¹⁷ He dwells with you, and shall be in you.

¹⁸ I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.

Now we may know more fully what it is to pray in the name of Jesus. It is to consider ourselves dead, and Christ living in our place, reanimating our body, and speaking with our mouth. So when we ask for deliverance, we are asking it not for ourselves, but for Him; we ask for His sake, on His ac-

count. Or, better still, it is Christ asking through us as for himself.

Then, remembering that when He cried He was always heard, we know that not one of our petitions offered in His name can be neglected.

Romans 8

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit; because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

The Spirit that so successfully made supplication in Christ still lives and makes intercession for us. Jesus has gone into the heavens,

Hebrews 9

²⁴ ...there to appear in the presence of God for us.

But by His Spirit He is still on earth dwelling with men. So by the Spirit in us we ourselves have access to the heavens, in the person of Jesus we ourselves are in the holiest, close by the throne of grace, boldly making our requests to God.

And He has called us there for the express purpose of supplying all our need according to His riches in glory. Surely if we know this we shall never more go empty.

Why Was Jesus Heard?

Hebrews 5

⁷ [He was heard] in that He feared.

Not, as the margin has it, “for His piety,” but, as in *Hebrews* 12:28, where the same word occurs, for His “godly fear.” The Greek word has the significance of caution, circumspection. He was heard, and delivered from sin, because He feared to

sin, and thus displease God. He was saved from sin, because He wanted to be saved.

Here is our assurance. God gives to every man the desire of his heart:

Psalms 21

¹ The king shall joy in your strength, O Lord, and in your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

² You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips.

His mercy is upon us according as we hope in Him:

Psalms 33

²² Let your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in You.

He grants us according to our own heart:

Psalms 20

¹ The Lord...

⁴ Grant you according to your own heart, and fulfill all your counsel.

Psalms 145

¹⁹ He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.

Every unspoken longing, every aspiration of the heart, is an articulate voice in the ears of God, who hears the cry of the blood of the slain, and of the wages of which the poor are defrauded. Not one longing desire is overlooked by...

Ephesians 3

¹⁹ Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,

Psalms 17

⁹ For He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

Therefore,

2 Corinthians 9

¹⁵ Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift,

1 Corinthians 15

⁵⁷ ...[of] victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

70. Christ's Prayer for His Disciples

Present Truth, October 8, 1903

John 17:9-23

IT MUST have been a wonderful privilege to bow in prayer with Jesus. No wonder that the men who had this privilege should come to Him with the request,

Luke 11

¹ Lord, teach us to pray.

Heaven must have seemed very near to them when the Son of God brought His petitions to the throne of grace, and they heard Him speak, “strong in faith,” to His Father in heaven.

The prayer that is recorded in this chapter is a mine of wealth, from which believers have never ceased to draw hope and courage and inspiration. It must have revealed to the Saviour's listening disciples new heights and depths of His thoughts for them, although they could not then take it in. In after years the words of the prayer would be treasured and studied with an ever-growing appreciation of its depth of meaning.

If we would study it, we must remember that it is a prayer, and should be studied in the spirit of prayer. Its secrets are revealed, not to the cold inquiry of the critic, but to the heart that is melted with the love that inspires it.

John 17

⁹ I pray for them.

This prayer was not for the world. Christ pleads for the world, and His life is freely given for the sinner, but this prayer deals with things that the world can never know until it takes the place of the disciple. Every one of us who has accepted Christ as our Saviour is included in the prayer, for He says:

John 17

²⁰ Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

We too may draw near and listen to this prayer, as the disciples did, knowing that it is made in our behalf. We were present to the mind of Christ on that night, as well as the eleven disciples.

Christ was always praying for His disciples. In the night watches, while they slept, He was pleading on their behalf for the gifts they valued then so lightly. He said to Peter,

Luke 22

³² I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.

And still it is Christ...

Romans 8

³⁴ ...who also makes intercession for us.

1 John 2

¹ We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

In this Christ is our example. We are to take a responsibility for others, even if they fail to feel it for themselves,

Ephesians 6

¹⁸ Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

John 17

¹¹ Keep through your own name.

It was in the name of the Father that Christ came. It was God who showed Him what to do, and what to say, and the name of the Father was His defense.

Proverbs 18

¹⁰ The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe.

Into that name the believer is baptized, so that henceforth it is his own. He goes in the name of the Lord, and that name, through faith, makes men whole. The man who takes the name of the Lord as his protection will not take His name in vain, for God always honors His own name.

John 17

¹⁴ I have given them your Word.

Here is the report of one who did God's will. Happy the servant who can thus give account of his work to God. Many ministers are not following Christ in this respect. Instead of giving the people the Word they are giving them the chaff of human speculations. Their work is not leading men to Pentecost.

God was able to pour out His Spirit upon the church within a few weeks, because Christ had done a great work in the hearts and minds of the disciples by giving them the Word of God. That Word makes...

2 Timothy 3

¹⁷ The man of God...perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Paul followed the example of Christ and:

Acts 20

²⁷ ...shunned not to declare...all the counsel of God.

The equipment of the disciples was a complete one. As soon as the Spirit should come upon them, they were to go throughout the earth, preaching the Gospel. As Christ himself had been sent, so He was sending the disciples. As He himself had been equipped for His work, so He had equipped them.

Jesus Christ connects every believer with himself in His great mission. Not one is left out from the work. The idea that the work of Christ's church is to be done by a certain section, known as ministers, has no countenance in the Scriptures. Ev-

ery man has his work. Every one is sent into the world as Christ was sent into the world.

John 17

¹⁵ I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil.

¹⁸ As You have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Perhaps your lot is cast in unpleasant surroundings, and you have thought it difficult to be a Christian where you are. You wish that you could be as favorably situated as others are, and not be obliged to associate with those who delight in sinful pleasures.

Remember that Jesus has sent you into the world, as He was sent himself. You are safer where you are, if you serve Him, than you would be in an easier place. He has prayed for you that the Father would keep you through His own name. He does not pray that you might be taken out of the world, but that you might be kept from the evil.

The life of Christ is a missionary life, and therefore it is safest where the need is greatest. He left heaven for the dark corners of this world, but He had more of heaven here in seeking the lost than He could have had in staying with those who had not gone astray.

John 17

¹⁷ Sanctify them through your truth.

It is truth that sanctifies. Error will not do it, hence the need of knowing and loving the truth. Just as men may be always growing in the knowledge of the truth, so sanctification is to be a progressive, life-long work.

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Jesus sanctified himself that we might be sanctified. It was not for His own gain but for ours that He submitted to all the

experiences which sanctified Him. We are to show the same spirit, and not to seek sanctification for our own sakes, but because of the increased power it will give us wherewith to help others. We are to become ever more and more helpful, as we learn more and more of the sanctifying truth of God. Christ made himself one with us.

Hebrews 2

¹⁴ Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same.

It is in becoming one with others that we can help them.

John 17

²¹ That they all may be one.

It was a wonderful unity for which Christ prayed. Nothing less than the perfect oneness existing between His Father and himself is the measure of the unity that Christ will work in His church.

There seems now to be discord and strife in the church, but because Satan has sown tares among the wheat, that does not make the wheat worthless. Both will grow together until the harvest, and then Christ's work will appear free from counterfeits.

Where there is a spirit of love and unity, there are members of Christ's church. Where self is lifted up, and strife and divisions appear, we may know that Satan has been at work and has sown tares. Sectarian divisions are not of Christ, and they will not long exist among those who are sanctified through the truth, and are separate from the world as Christ was. The world may hate them as it did Him, but notwithstanding this, they will serve others, as He did.

Some hold the opinion that sectarian divisions are necessary. If they are, it is the flesh that makes them so, for they are entirely opposite to that for which Christ prayed. There is only one body and one Spirit, one faith, one baptism, and one

God, who is in all³¹: how then can His body be divided into several parts? Division is a work of the flesh, not a fruit of the Spirit.

John 17

²² The glory which You gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

²³ I in them, and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one.

It takes something more than pertains to our fallen nature to bring about the oneness for which Christ prayed. Only the glory which Jesus had with the Father is sufficient for it. When the oneness is seen, the glory will be revealed.

The glory of heaven is the spirit of self-surrender that prevails there. Self-denial is the test of discipleship and the sign of true greatness. The spirit that took Christ to Calvary was the glory of heaven. Heaven delights in self-sacrifice, and when this rules, there can be perfect unity.

John 17

²³ That the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them, as You have loved me.

The world derides the idea of self-sacrifice, but to every man and woman there come times when the glory of this world reveals its hollowness, and their hearts cry out for the living God. At such times a man in whom the Saviour's prayer is fulfilled can be to them as cold water in a thirsty land. His unworldliness is the very thing that appeals to them then, for they long for a like deliverance.

Christ is praying still. Now it is we for whom He asks that

³¹ **Ephesians 4:** ¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ One Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

we may be sanctified through His truth; it is we to whom He has given His Word, it is for us He asks that we may be one as He and His Father are one, that in this day of educated doubt and spiritual dearth, the hungry world may once more be compelled to believe the love that He has for them, because they see it fully manifested in His disciples.

71. Is Any Afflicted? Let Him Pray

Medical Missionary, October 1905

James 5

¹³ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

¹⁴ Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

THE second part of this portion of Scripture has been often quoted and acted upon by believers in prayer for the sick; and it is not proposed at present to dwell upon it any more than is necessary in order to bring the first part sharply into prominence: for it seems as if the attention of believers has been directed to the latter part almost to the overlooking of the first.

It is evident at a glance that two different conditions are here presented, and these conditions are respectively indicated by the words rendered “afflicted” and “sick.” It is also evident that the condition indicated by the word “sick” is more serious than that indicated by “afflicted.” In the first instance, the individual’s own prayer is sufficient: but in the second the case is so grave that the combined prayers of the elders of the church are needed, and anointing with oil is added.

Notice further that the promise in the case of prayer by the elders of the church with anointing is explicit and unequivocal. There is nothing conditional. That is, when the given conditions—prayer by the elders and anointing—are met, there is no doubt as to the result.

¹⁵ The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.

There is no intimation in this case that the elders are to pray that the sick one may be raised up, if it be the Lord’s will, and

are then to wait and see what He will do; the instruction and promise are positive: pray, and the Lord shall raise him up.

How is this? Are we to understand that there is ever a time when we are warranted in praying, regardless of the will of God? that we can ever, under any conditions, make a request in the shape of a demand to God, and expect that He will unconditionally yield to our ultimatum? Not by any means.

There is no ground for expecting an answer to any prayer that does not contain through it all,

Matthew 6

¹⁰ Your will be done.

Ephesians 1

¹¹ [God] works all things after the counsel of His own will.

His will must be done, and will be done, in spite of all opposition. Our only ground of positive confidence in any prayer at any time is this:

1 John 5

¹⁴ If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us;

¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

What, then, is the conclusion as to the case before us? Simply this, that when the elders are called for, and anointing takes place with the prayer, positive evidence has been received beforehand that it is the Lord's will that the person prayed for should be raised up at that particular time.

Those praying having received the assurance that it is the Lord's will to raise up this particular person at this particular time,—the individual himself having received the same personal assurance before sending for them,—all that they have to do is to make their request in harmony with the Lord's plainly expressed will. Having the positive assurance that it is the Lord's will to do a certain thing, it would be a manifestation of unbelief if they should say:

“Lord, if it be your will, let this be done.”

This is more apparent when we take into consideration the promise that is coupled with the promise of healing: Let us read them both together.

James 5

¹⁵ The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Suppose anybody, acknowledging that he has sinned, should pray:

“Lord, if it be your will, forgive my sins.”

Would it not be evident that he did not know the promise of God, or else did not fully believe it? The publican did not pray:

“Lord, if it be your will, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

If he had so prayed, he would *not* have gone down to his house justified. God is good, and ready to forgive, and plentiful in mercy to all that call upon Him.

There are to be no conditions in our prayer for the pardon of our sins; our sincere prayer itself is the only condition, because we have beforehand, each one individually, the positive assurance that it is God’s will that we should be saved from sin. Even so it is in the case referred to in *James* 5:14-15.

Just how any sick person may know positively what is the Lord’s will in his case, is not a matter for discussion. No one could tell another how he may know, and nobody who knows could tell anybody else how he knows. It is a personal matter between the individual himself and the Lord. But...

Luke 18

¹ ...men ought always to pray.

Therefore:

James 5

¹³ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.

For what shall he pray? For relief, of course, and he should expect to get it, too; for surely we would not be told to pray, if nothing were to come of it.

Isaiah 45

¹⁹ I said not to the seed of Jacob, Seek me in vain.

It will be noticed that there has been no attempt in this article to distinguish between and to define the two different states indicated in *James* 5:13-15 by the terms “afflicted” and “sick.” All that is desired is that it shall be recognized that there are two different conditions, and that in any case prayer is to be made to God.

The relation of prayer to the healing of disease has been much misunderstood, even by many believers in the efficacy of prayer. Too often it is regarded as a last resort. How often words like these are heard:

“We have done everything, and tried every remedy that we know, and now there is nothing left to do but to pray.”

The idea seems to obtain that prayer is another remedy, to be used when all others fail; that the Lord is merely a consulting physician, to be called in only in an extremity, when the regular physician’s skill is exhausted. This is a great mistake.

God is the physician, and there is none besides Him that can heal. But God accepts whosoever will,

2 Corinthians 6

¹ ...as workers together with Him,

and He imparts to the sons of men wisdom, and knowledge of His ways, according to their willingness and ability to receive.

Whenever any person is healed of any disease, it is because

the Lord healed him; and whenever any nurse or physician, or any minister of any kind, is instrumental in the recovery of the sick, it is only because such ones have applied the Lord's remedies, or have cooperated with God in the application of them.

When this is fully recognized, there will be no question as to the use of "means" for the restoration of the sick. Prayer for the sick does not necessitate the abandoning of personal effort for them, any more than prayer that God will "give us this day our daily bread;" means that we are to fold our hands and expect God to drop the food into our mouths.

It is God's will that men in this world shall eat bread in the sweat of their face; but however hard they work, and however much they sweat, it is God alone who gives them their food, and to Him and Him alone are thanks due.

When God rained down bread from heaven for the Israelites, they had to gather it. He can feed us without any effort on our part, as in the case of Elijah in the wilderness; but His usual way is through the sowing of the seed and the cultivation and harvesting of it by man.

Our work, however, does not shut out prayer. Both are in harmony, and both, with the well-instructed person, indicate submission to the will of God. Even so should it be in the case of sickness.

This subject has recently come into especial prominence in medical circles. There have always been Christian physicians, who believed in prayer, and who, however blindly they have worked, have regarded themselves as only working under a Chief Physician, who alone had the power to heal: but probably never before the present year has prayer been mentioned in a medical society as a therapeutic agent.

That, however, has been done, and in no obscure corner. At the recent annual meeting of the *British Medical Association*,

Dr. Theodore B. Hyslop, superintendent of *Bethlehem Royal Hospital*, who has a high reputation as a specialist in neurology, and in the treatment of mental disease, gave the following testimony to the therapeutic value of prayer:

As an alienist, and one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depressed spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a disturbed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer.

Let there be but a habit of nightly connection, not as a mendicant or repeater of words more adapted to the tongue of a sage, but as a humble individual who submerges or asserts his individuality as an integral part of a greater whole. Such a habit does more to clean the spirit and strengthen the soul to overcome mere incidental emotionalism than any other therapeutic agent known to me.

No doubt the doctor's language, and probably his ideas, may be open to criticism; nevertheless, we have here a recognition by a scientist, in an assemblage of scientific men, of the fact that the principles of the gospel are in the highest sense scientific.

There is much "science falsely so-called;" but there is real science, nevertheless, and that science consists primarily in recognizing that:

Ephesians 4

⁶ There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all,

—and that:

Romans 11

³⁶ Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.

Dr. Hyslop speaks only of prayer in nervous and mental diseases, because that is his specialty; but what he says may be applied to all cases. The effect is not imaginary: it is real. We

all know the comfort and help there is in mere human sympathy. The mother's loving embrace and kiss have soothed the real pain of many a child.

Think, then, of what must be the effect upon one who is racked by physical pain, when his mind grasps the truth that:

Deuteronomy 33

²⁷ ...underneath are the everlasting arms,

—to soothe him,

Isaiah 66

¹³ As one whom his mother comforts,

—when he knows of a surety that this One sympathizes with him to the full, because He actually suffers with him.

And when the sufferer can realize that God does not merely share his suffering, but that God bears it all, and that he himself only shares a portion of God's sufferings, this knowledge can cause him so to sink out of himself and be swallowed up in God, that he will lose all consciousness of his own pain in the contemplation of the sufferings of His Saviour; and this relief may be not merely temporary, but permanent.

This has been the personal experience of many; and it is a cause for rejoicing that there is one medical college in the world, having a reputation in the world as a scientific institution, where God is recognized as the one healer; and where, both in the simple case for which the divinely ordained remedy is plainly apparent, and also in the complicated case which leaves human skill utterly at fault, prayer to God is recognized and taught as the first scientific requisite.

