

## THE PRAYERS OF THE NEW CREATION

The *object* of prayer is to bring the heart and the mind of the child of God into contact with the heart of God, that he may be enabled thus most fully to realize the Fatherhood of God, His love and His deep interest in every item of our welfare; that in deep affliction we may unburden our hearts to God and thus have forcibly brought to our attention His love and care and wisdom – for *our* encouragement, not *His*; for *our* strengthening, not *His*, and for *our joy*.

This opportunity is not for us to instruct Jehovah how to arrange matters for the best, but to bring our hearts to realize Him as the Center of wisdom and power, that having unburdened our hearts, we may be prepared to listen for His answer and advice through His Word. And he whose knowledge of prayer is confined to the meager information he has imparted to God with "much speaking," and who has never learned to listen for the answer to his prayer from the Word of God, has, as yet, measurably failed to appreciate the object of prayer.

Earnestness in God's service will bring His children to Him frequently, to realize at His feet His sympathy with them in the difficulties, discouragements and trials of life, as well as to ask His guidance and overruling of every affair of life, and through His Word to hearken to His wisdom, which will enable them to serve Him acceptably.

The *province* of prayer is to ask for only such things as God has already declared Himself well pleased to grant. And while we may freely speak to Him as a Father, and tell Him how we understand His Word, and the confidence and trust we have in its ultimate fulfilment, yet we must not only avoid telling the Lord of *our* will and *our* plans, and what *we* would like, but we must avoid and put far from us *any such spirit*, and must recognize, and bring ourselves into full accord with His will and His plan for accomplishing it. If this thought were

appreciated, it would cut short some of the "long prayers," "much speaking," and "vain repetitions" by which some endeavor to instruct the Lord in *their* wishes regarding every matter under heaven. It would send them speedily to the Word of God to search diligently the Plan of God that they might labor as well as pray in harmony with it.

While assuring us that the Father cares for us, and is well pleased to have us come to Him with sincere hearts, the Master informs us of the conditions upon which we may expect an answer. He says, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." – John 15:7.

### "ABIDE IN ME"

The conditions of the above statement, or promise, are two; the first is, *abiding in Christ*. But what is it to *abide in Christ*? Only those can abide in Christ who are *in* Christ, who have come into Him by faith, repentance [R4983 : page 78] and consecration; and to abide in Him means that the faith will abide, the repentance for sin and the opposition to it will abide, and the consecration to the Lord and His service will abide, and it will be manifest that our will has been wholly consecrated – swallowed up in the will of Christ.

The other condition is also a weighty one: "If My Word abide in you." Ah! how evident it is that our Lord meant to associate Himself and His Word, the Scriptures, in the minds, in the hearts, in the lives of all who are truly His! They must search the Scriptures to know the will of the Lord; to know what He has promised and what He has *not* promised; to know what they may ask and what they may *not* ask; and, ascertaining these, one fully consecrated – one controlled entirely by the will of God – will not want to *be*, to *have*, or to *do* anything except that which will be pleasing to the Lord in respect to himself.

When this position has been reached, the will of Christ governing him, the words of Christ abiding in him, we can readily see that

whatever would be asked by one thus well informed with respect to the Divine promises and fully submissive to the Divine will would be things which the Father would be pleased to grant in answer to his requests.

These requests would probably be as simple as was the Master's petition when He prayed, "Not *My will*, but *Thine*, be done!" (Luke 22:42.) In such a condition prayers are *always* answered; but in such a condition the prayers would be very modest. One's prayers under such circumstances would be more a thanksgiving for blessings, an expression of confidence and trust, and the committal of his way unto the Lord, confidently realizing the promise that to him under such conditions, *all things* (even seeming disasters and troubles) shall work together for good. Hence, whatever came, such a one could realize his prayer answered. He could rejoice evermore because he is prepared to rejoice in tribulation as well as in prosperity, in the path of service. He has no will to oppose whatever God permits, knowing that it will work out good.

Such, amongst the Lord's people, *could* not pray that their own will be done; for they *have no will* except *God's*. Those who abide in Christ, and in whom His Word abides, can pray for their enemies and those who despitefully use them and persecute them, though they cannot pray God to open the blinded eyes of their enemies at once, nor in *their* way. Realizing from the indwelling Word of God's promise that the blinded eyes shall all be opened to the Truth, they can abide His time. Going to God in prayer they may express their forgiveness of their persecutor, their interest in him, and their patient waiting for the day when "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth as the waters cover the sea" – *ocean deep* – and His will shall be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. – Isa. 11:9.

### **ANSWERS OFTEN DELAYED**

The answer to our prayer is not always granted immediately; but after we have made sure that our requests are in accord with the

promises, those things which lie very close to our hearts become our continual prayer, associating in our minds with all of life's duties and interests, the heart gravitating continually toward the thing we have desired of the Lord, and on suitable opportunities repeating to Him the request. This is the kind of prayer which the Lord commended, saying, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." (Luke 18:1.) The Lord's people ought to continue asking for the right things with some degree of persistency, and should not grow weary, hopeless, faithless, faint in their hearts.

Doubtless there are many reasons why the Lord does not promptly grant all of our requests which are in accordance with His will, in harmony with His Word. We may not know all of these reasons; but some of them are apparent. Undoubtedly one reason for the Lord's delay in answering us is often to test the strength and the depth of our desires for the good things that we request of Him.

For instance, He informs us that He is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to us who ask than are earthly parents to give good things to their children. Yet the giving of His Holy Spirit is a gradual process; and we are enabled to receive it only in proportion as we are emptied of the worldly or selfish spirit. It requires time to become thus emptied of self and prepared for the mind of Christ; in some it requires longer for this than in others; but all need emptying in order to receive the refilling.

He that seeketh findeth, but the more he seeketh the more he findeth; to him that knocketh it shall be opened, but his continual knocking and his increasing interest in the knocking means his increasing desire to enter, so that as the door of privilege, of opportunity, swings slowly open before him, his courage and his strength increase as he seeks to avail himself of the opening. Thus every way the blessing is greater than if the Lord were to answer the petitions hastily.

We are to think of our Heavenly Father as rich and benevolent, kind and generous, yet *wise* as well as *loving*. We are to suppose that He will have pleasure in giving us the desires of our hearts if those desires are in harmony with His plan, which He has already framed on such lines as to include not only our very highest and best interests, but the highest and best interests of all His creatures. Then, whatever comes, His well-informed children can have all the desires of their hearts, because their hearts are in full accord with the Lord; and they desire nothing of the Lord except the good things of His purpose and promise.

### **"DESIRE, UTTERED OR UNEXPRESSED"**

When thus considered, not as a begging arrangement, nor as an occasion of instructing the Lord as to our wills, but as a season of union and communion of heart with **[R4984 : page 78]** the Father, in which we may relieve our burdened or perplexed hearts and realize Divine sympathy, calling to mind Divine promises, reviewing Divine care, and expressing our confidence in God's many promises, thus bringing those promises afresh and close to our hearts, as though God now audibly uttered them in our hearing – thus considered, how proper, yea, how necessary is prayer to the true child of God! He cannot live without it. To break off this communion would be like stripping a tree of its leaves; their removal would stunt and hinder its development.

But to suppose that Christian life depends *solely* upon prayer without earnest study of God's Word, is like supposing that a tree could flourish from its leaves only, without roots and soil. Both are needful. As good soil and roots will produce leaves and fruitage, so, likewise, the promises of God's Word absorbed by us will naturally lead to good works and to communion with God in prayer, without which the fruits of the Spirit would soon wither and disappear.

No wonder, then, that Jesus both by precept and by example said, "Watch and pray" (Matt. 26:41), uniting the conditions necessary to our development. Some *pray* **[R4984 : page 79]** and neglect

to *watch*; others *watch* and neglect to *pray*. Both these errors are serious; and it is not possible for us to decide which is the more serious neglect, since either would work disastrous loss of the great "prize" for which we are running.

Nowhere is prayer defined as a *duty*, though its *necessity* is stated. The Father desireth such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23); and it would be contrary to this principle to define prayer as a duty, and to stipulate a set time or place or a formal manner. The earnestness of the service and the peculiarity of the circumstance will regulate the frequency and the subject matter of prayer.

No *form* of prayer is furnished in the Scriptures. Even the Master, when asked by the disciples for instruction on the subject, gave them, not a *form* to repeat, but merely an idea or example of how to arrange their prayers to God. He did not say, Pray this prayer, but, "After *this manner* pray ye." Our prayers, then, should be after this *manner* – not an assortment of extravagant demands, but the simple expression of the earnest heart: first, acknowledging and paying homage to God as our Father, the Almighty and Hallowed One; second, expressing our expectation and trust that His Kingdom is coming according to promise, and our eagerness for it, and for the time when His will shall be done on earth as in Heaven; third, our reliance upon Him for "daily bread," which He has promised us; fourth, our acknowledgment that our ways are not perfect and of our reliance upon His favor (granted through Christ Jesus) for forgiveness; and our willingness to exercise forgiveness toward our debtors, toward those who trespass against us.

### **"OUR FATHER, WHICH ART IN HEAVEN"**

The term, "Our Father," is one of special endearment. The affection of a true father for his child, being one of the most precious in the world, is used to illustrate the relationship of the Lord's consecrated members to the Creator. It is necessary to be some time in the School of Christ as disciples, learners, before we are able properly to appreciate the meaning of this word "Father" as applied to God; but

the more we come to know of the love of God, which passes all understanding, and the more we are enabled to draw near to Him through faith and obedience, the more precious will this term Father become.

*"Hallowed be Thy name,"* expresses adoration, appreciation of Divine goodness and greatness, and a corresponding reverence. In addressing our petition to the Lord our first thought is to be, not a selfish one respecting ourselves, nor respecting the interests of others precious to us; but God is to be first in all of our thoughts and aims and calculations. We are to pray for nothing that would not be in accord with the honor of our Heavenly Father's Name; we are to wish for nothing for ourselves or for our dear ones that He would not fully approve and commission us to pray for.

Perhaps no quality of heart is in more danger of being blotted out amongst professing Christians today than this thought of *reverence* for God. However much we have grown in knowledge, and however much we have gotten free from superstitions and errors, and however advanced in some respects is the Christian's position of today over that of a century ago, we fear that reverence has been losing ground, not only in the nominal church, but with many of the members of the one "Church of the Firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." (Heb. 12:23.) Every loss of reverence is a distinct disadvantage, both to the Church and to the world, paving the way to various evils, and ultimately to anarchy.

As God and His glory and honor are to be first in the minds of His children, so their next thought should be for the coming glorious Kingdom, which He has promised shall bless the world. However much our own personal interests and affairs may be pressing upon us, and however much we may desire to have the Lord's blessing and guidance in them, they are not to outrank our appreciation of His beneficent arrangements which He has so clearly promised in His Word. We are to remember that the Kingdom, when it shall come, will

be a panacea for every ill and every trouble, not only for us, but for the whole world of mankind. We are not, therefore, to permit our own personal needs to be too prominent, but are to remember that the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting for this glorious Kingdom and the blessing upon all the families of the earth, which our Heavenly Father has promised shall yet come through the Seed of Abraham.

This thought respecting the Kingdom, its necessity, and the blessings that it will bring will keep prominently before our minds our own High Calling to joint-heirship with our Lord in this Kingdom. And in proportion as that hope is clearly before our minds it will be, as the Apostle explains, as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." – Heb. 6:19.

This anchorage of hope in the future, in the Kingdom, will enable us to pass safely, and with comparative quiet, through the trials and storms and difficulties of this present evil world. More than this, our thoughts respecting the Kingdom will remind us that if we are to be heirs of the Kingdom it will be necessary that we have the appropriate discipline and training *now*. This thought in turn will make all the afflictions and trials of this present time seem to us light afflictions; for we know that they are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Thus the very offering of this prayer in its proper order will bring us a measure of relief from our perplexities, trials and disappointments before we reach the appropriate place to mention them at the Throne of grace.

### **"THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH"**

This petition offered from the heart implies that the one offering it has made a full consecration of his will, his heart, to the Lord; and that as he hopes for the Kingdom by and by to come and subdue all unrighteousness and to establish the Divine will from sea to sea, and from pole to pole, so now, the petitioner, being in accord with the Lord's will, and thus wishing that it might be universally in control,



will see to it that this will is ruling in his own heart; that in his own affairs God's will is done to the best of his ability in his earthly condition, even as he hopes to have it perfected in the Kingdom soon to be established.

No one can intelligently and honestly offer this petition, unless he both desires and endeavors to have the Lord's will done in himself while on earth. Thus a blessing comes to the one who offers this petition before he has asked any special blessing upon himself or others. The mere thought of the Divine arrangement brings a blessing, a peace, a rest, a satisfaction of heart.

### **"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"**

The thought in this petition seems to be that of continual dependence upon the Lord, day by day, for the things needed – accepting for each day the Lord's providential care and direction of our affairs. Daily bread should here be understood in the broad sense of food and raiment **page 80** – things necessary. The Lord's people, who recognize Him as their Father, must trust Him as children, while seeking to use the various instrumentalities and opportunities within their reach. They are to provide the things necessary for themselves, yet to recognize the Divine provision and care which has pre-arranged matters so as to make their present conditions and blessings attainable.

Agnosticism and Higher Criticism in general may deny, if they please, Divine providence in connection with the grains and other supplies for man's necessities; but the eye of faith sees behind these supplies the Love, the Wisdom and the Power of God, making ready for man's necessities, and giving the things necessary in such a manner as will be for the advantage of mankind – through sweat of face, etc.

### **"FORGIVE US OUR SINS"**

To petition the Lord for forgiveness of sins implies that we are at heart opposed to sin, and that any sins committed have not been wilful;

and that the Lord, according to His Covenant of grace with us, agrees to accept the intentions of our hearts instead of the actual, full, complete, perfect obedience to the Divine requirement, in thought, in word and in act. This petition, then, signifies that we recognize that the Robe of Christ's righteousness granted to us has become spotted or sullied; and that we desire to be cleansed, so that we may again be "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." This cannot refer to wilful sins, for as the Apostle explains, "If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins," and hence, no more a basis for forgiveness; and the end of wilful sin is the Second Death. (Heb. 10:26.) It is, however, proper to remark that there are what might be termed *mixed sins* – sins in which a measure of wilfulness may have combined with a measure of ignorance or inherited weakness.

In the case of such sins the Lord expresses His willingness to cancel the wrong upon its being promptly repented of; but He reserves to Himself the giving of stripes, or chastisements appropriate and necessary to His child as an instruction in righteousness and correction of weaknesses, etc.

Happy are they who, with growth in grace and knowledge, find their hearts so fully in accord with the principles of the Divine arrangement that they will never transgress with any measure of wilfulness; but blessed also are those who, finding some measure of wilfulness in their deflection from the Divine rule, are pained thereby, and who, as the Apostle says, are led to discipline or correct themselves that they may the more quickly learn the lessons, and bring their bodies more completely into subjection to the new mind – "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." – I Cor. 9:27; 11:31.

## "THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US"

As *we* are imperfect and cannot keep the Divine Law, so likewise *others* are imperfect. As the degrees of deflection from the Divine Law vary with the degrees of the fall, so also we must expect that the trespasses of ourselves and others, one against another, will vary, according to the natural temperament, weakness, etc. As we realize that we have received, and will still need Divine compassion and mercy in respect to our shortcomings, so the Lord teaches us that we must exercise similar benevolence toward our fellow creatures, both in the Church and outside.

Elsewhere He lays down this rule very stringently, that if we do not from our heart forgive those trespassing against us, neither will our Heavenly Father forgive us our trespasses. Thus the Lord would develop in His consecrated people the spirit of the Father, even as He instructed us, saying, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." – Matt. 5:48.

*Perfection* is to be the standard. However far short of it we may come, we can have no *lower standard*; and in proportion as we are striving for that standard and realize our own weaknesses and imperfections, we should have proportionate compassion upon fellow creatures and their shortcomings toward us. This is love, sympathy, compassion; and whoever does not attain this degree of love which will have compassion upon others and their weaknesses, and which would be ready and glad to forgive them, is deficient in love; and whoever does not succeed in this matter to the extent of being able to love his enemies, so as to even pray for them, that person fails to reach the mark of character which the Lord demands, and he may be sure that his own deviations from perfect rectitude will not be overlooked; for he is lacking in the one important quality of love, which covers a multitude of sins of every kind. None, surely, will gain a place in the Kingdom class, in the Bride class, except those who have this forgiving quality, this quality of love.

## "BRING US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

We are to remember the words of the Apostle (James 1:13) to the effect that God tempteth no man, and are to apply this thought to our prayer. So our prayer will not signify that we fear that God will tempt us; but that *we entreat* Him that He may guide our steps, our cares in life, so that no temptation, no trial, shall come upon us that would be too severe for us; that He may bring us by a way in which we shall not be tempted above that we are able, and provide a way of escape when we are sore distressed. The Apostle assures us that *this is the Divine will*; and that such a prayer would be in accordance with it. He says that God *will not* suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with every temptation provide also a way of escape. The temptations are of the Adversary, and of our own fallen natures – through our own flesh, and through the weaknesses of others. God is not responsible for these; but He is able to guide the way of His people that they shall not be overwhelmed in these natural difficulties, weaknesses, besetments, nor by the wiles of the Adversary.

## "DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE"

There never was a time when there was greater need of this petition than at the present. The Evil One is specially seeking to trap and ensnare the Lord's people at the present time; and the Scriptures inform us that God is permitting this; and that thus He is sending strong delusions upon the world and upon the nominal church. Our Father is permitting this because the time has come for a complete separation of the "wheat" from the "tares." He has promised, however, that those who are truly of the "wheat" class – the sanctified in Christ Jesus, who are seeking to walk in His steps – shall not be stumbled, shall never fall, but shall have an abundant entrance ministered unto them into the everlasting Kingdom. The question, then, is one of loyalty of heart to the Lord.

The trial of this "day shall try the work of every man [in the Church] of what sort it is." This trial will be so **page 81** severe that if

it were possible the "very elect" would be deceived; but this will not be possible; for the Lord will specially care for these. Nevertheless, the Lord will be inquired of by His people in respect to these matters which He has already promised, and as they *pray*, "Deliver us from the Evil One," they surely will *labor* in the same direction. It is our expectation that very shortly now the forces of evil will gain much greater strength than at present, "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness." Meantime the Lord is staying the adverse forces that His true people may put on the armor of God and be able to stand when the evil day shall come.

