

1 With Christ In the School of Prayer

2  
3 Thoughts on Our Training

4  
5 for the

6  
7 Ministry of Intercession

8  
9 by

10  
11 Andrew Murray

12  
13 Lord, teach us to pray.

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21  
22 PREFACE.

23  
24  
25  
26 Of all the promises connected with the command, ABIDE  
27 IN ME,' there is none higher, and none that sooner brings  
28 the confession, Not that I have already attained, or am  
29 already made perfect,' than this: If ye abide in me, ask  
30 whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Power  
31 with God is the highest attainment of the life of full abiding.

32  
33 And of all the traits of a life LIKE CHRIST there is none  
34 higher and more glorious than conformity to Him in the

35 work that now engages Him without ceasing in the Father's  
36 presence—His all-prevailing intercession. The more we  
37 abide in Him, and grow unto His likeness, will His priestly  
38 life work in us mightily, and our life become what His is, a  
39 life that ever pleads and prevails for men.

40

41 Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God.' Both in the  
42 king and the priest the chief thing is power, influence,  
43 blessing. In the king it is the power coming downward; in  
44 the priest, the power rising upward, prevailing with God. In  
45 our blessed Priest-King, Jesus Christ, the kingly power is  
46 founded on the priestly He is able to save to the uttermost,  
47 because He ever liveth to make intercession.' In us, His  
48 priests and kings, it is no otherwise: it is in intercession that  
49 the Church is to find and wield its highest power, that each  
50 member of the Church is to prove his descent from Israel,  
51 who as a prince had power with God and with men, and  
52 prevailed.

53

54 It is under a deep impression that the place and power of  
55 prayer in the Christian life is too little understood, that this  
56 book has been written. I feel sure that as long as we look on  
57 prayer chiefly as the means of maintaining our own  
58 Christian life, we shall not know fully what it is meant to  
59 be. But when we learn to regard it as the highest part of the  
60 work entrusted to us, the root and strength of all other work,  
61 we shall see that there is nothing that we so need to study  
62 and practise as the art of praying aright. If I have at all  
63 succeeded in pointing out the progressive teaching of our  
64 Lord in regard to prayer, and the distinct reference the  
65 wonderful promises of the last night (John xiv. 16) have to  
66 the works we are to do in His Name, to the greater works,  
67 and to the bearing much fruit, we shall all admit that it is  
68 only when the Church gives herself up to this holy work of

69 intercession that we can expect the power of Christ to  
70 manifest itself in her behalf. It is my prayer that God may  
71 use this little book to make clearer to some of His children  
72 the wonderful place of power and influence which He is  
73 waiting for them to occupy, and for which a weary world is  
74 waiting too.

75

76 In connection with this there is another truth that has come  
77 to me with wonderful clearness as I studied the teaching of  
78 Jesus on prayer. It is this: that the Father waits to hear every  
79 prayer of faith, to give us whatsoever we will, and  
80 whatsoever we ask in Jesus' name. We have become so  
81 accustomed to limit the wonderful love and the large  
82 promises of our God, that we cannot read the simplest and  
83 clearest statements of our Lord without the qualifying  
84 clauses by which we guard and expound them. If there is  
85 one thing I think the Church needs to learn, it is that God  
86 means prayer to have an answer, and that it hath not entered  
87 into the heart of man to conceive what God will do for His  
88 child who gives himself to believe that his prayer will be  
89 heard. God hears prayer; this is a truth universally admitted,  
90 but of which very few understand the meaning, or  
91 experience the power. If what I have written stir my reader  
92 to go to the Master's words, and take His wondrous  
93 promises simply and literally as they stand, my object has  
94 been attained.

95

96 And then just one thing more. Thousands have in these last  
97 years found an unspeakable blessing in learning how  
98 completely Christ is our life, and how He undertakes to be  
99 and to do all in us that we need. I know not if we have yet  
100 learned to apply this truth to our prayer-life. Many complain  
101 that they have not the power to pray in faith, to pray the  
102 effectual prayer that availeth much. The message I would

103    fain bring them is that the blessed Jesus is waiting, is  
104    longing, to teach them this. Christ is our life: in heaven He  
105    ever liveth to pray; His life in us is an ever-praying life, if  
106    we will but trust Him for it. Christ teaches us to pray not  
107    only by example, by instruction, by command, by promises,  
108    but by showing us HIMSELF, the ever-living Intercessor, as  
109    our Life. It is when we believe this, and go and abide in  
110    Him for our prayer-life too, that our fears of not being able  
111    to pray aright will vanish, and we shall joyfully and  
112    triumphantly trust our Lord to teach us to pray, to be  
113    Himself the life and the power of our prayer.

114

115    May God open our eyes to see what the holy ministry of  
116    intercession is to which, as His royal priesthood, we have  
117    been set apart. May He give us a large and strong heart to  
118    believe what mighty influence our prayers can exert. And  
119    may all fear as to our being able to fulfil our vocation  
120    vanish as we see Jesus, living ever to pray, living in us to  
121    pray, and standing surety for our prayer-life.

122

123    ANDREW MURRAY

124

125    WELLINGTON, 28<sup>th</sup> October 1895

126

127

128

129    FIRST LESSON.

130

131    Lord, teach us to pray;’

132

133    Or, The Only Teacher .

134

135 And it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place,  
136 that when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him,  
137 Lord, teach us to pray.’—Luke xi. 1.

138

139 THE disciples had been with Christ, and seen Him pray.  
140 They had learnt to understand something of the connection  
141 between His wondrous life in public, and His secret life of  
142 prayer. They had learnt to believe in Him as a Master in the  
143 art of prayer—none could pray like Him. And so they came  
144 to Him with the request, Lord, teach us to pray.’ And in  
145 after years they would have told us that there were few  
146 things more wonderful or blessed that He taught them than  
147 His lessons on prayer.

148

149 And now still it comes to pass, as He is praying in a certain  
150 place, that disciples who see Him thus engaged feel the  
151 need of repeating the same request, Lord, teach us to pray.’  
152 As we grow in the Christian life, the thought and the faith of  
153 the Beloved Master in His never-failing intercession  
154 becomes ever more precious, and the hope of being Like  
155 Christ in His intercession gains an attractiveness before  
156 unknown. And as we see Him pray, and remember that  
157 there is none who can pray like Him, and none who can  
158 teach like Him, we feel the petition of the disciples, Lord,  
159 teach us to pray,’ is just what we need. And as we think  
160 how all He is and has, how He Himself is our very own,  
161 how He is Himself our life, we feel assured that we have but  
162 to ask, and He will be delighted to take us up into closer  
163 fellowship with Himself, and teach us to pray even as He  
164 prays.

165

166 Come, my brothers! Shall we not go to the Blessed Master  
167 and ask Him to enrol our names too anew in that school  
168 which He always keeps open for those who long to continue

169 their studies in the Divine art of prayer and intercession?  
170 Yes, let us this very day say to the Master, as they did of  
171 old, Lord, teach us to pray.’ As we meditate, we shall find  
172 each word of the petition we bring to be full of meaning.

173

174 Lord, teach us to pray.’ Yes, to pray. This is what we need  
175 to be taught. Though in its beginnings prayer is so simple  
176 that the feeblest child can pray, yet it is at the same time the  
177 highest and holiest work to which man can rise. It is  
178 fellowship with the Unseen and Most Holy One. The  
179 powers of the eternal world have been placed at its disposal.  
180 It is the very essence of true religion, the channel of all  
181 blessings, the secret of power and life. Not only for  
182 ourselves, but for others, for the Church, for the world, it is  
183 to prayer that God has given the right to take hold of Him  
184 and His strength. It is on prayer that the promises wait for  
185 their fulfilment, the kingdom for its coming, the glory of  
186 God for its full revelation. And for this blessed work, how  
187 slothful and unfit we are. It is only the Spirit of God can  
188 enable us to do it aright. How speedily we are deceived into  
189 a resting in the form, while the power is wanting. Our early  
190 training, the teaching of the Church, the influence of habit,  
191 the stirring of the emotions—how easily these lead to prayer  
192 which has no spiritual power, and avails but little. True  
193 prayer, that takes hold of God’s strength, that availeth  
194 much, to which the gates of heaven are really opened  
195 wide—who would not cry, Oh for some one to teach me  
196 thus to pray?

197

198 Jesus has opened a school, in which He trains His redeemed  
199 ones, who specially desire it, to have power in prayer. Shall  
200 we not enter it with the petition, Lord! it is just this we need  
201 to be taught! O teach us to pray.

202

203 Lord, teach us to pray.’ Yes, us, Lord. We have read in Thy  
204 Word with what power Thy believing people of old used to  
205 pray, and what mighty wonders were done in answer to  
206 their prayers. And if this took place under the Old  
207 Covenant, in the time of preparation, how much more wilt  
208 Thou not now, in these days of fulfilment, give Thy people  
209 this sure sign of Thy presence in their midst. We have heard  
210 the promises given to Thine apostles of the power of prayer  
211 in Thy name, and have seen how gloriously they  
212 experienced their truth: we know for certain, they can  
213 become true to us too. We hear continually even in these  
214 days what glorious tokens of Thy power Thou dost still give  
215 to those who trust Thee fully. Lord! these all are men of like  
216 passions with ourselves; teach us to pray so too. The  
217 promises are for us, the powers and gifts of the heavenly  
218 world are for us. O teach us to pray so that we may receive  
219 abundantly. To us too Thou hast entrusted Thy work, on our  
220 prayer too the coming of Thy kingdom depends, in our  
221 prayer too Thou canst glorify Thy name; Lord teach us to  
222 pray.’ Yes, us, Lord; we offer ourselves as learners; we  
223 would indeed be taught of Thee. Lord, teach us to pray.’

224

225 Lord, teach us to pray.’ Yes, we feel the need now of being  
226 taught to pray. At first there is no work appears so simple;  
227 later on, none that is more difficult; and the confession is  
228 forced from us: We know not how to pray as we ought. It is  
229 true we have God’s Word, with its clear and sure promises;  
230 but sin has so darkened our mind, that we know not always  
231 how to apply the word. In spiritual things we do not always  
232 seek the most needful things, or fail in praying according to  
233 the law of the sanctuary. In temporal things we are still less  
234 able to avail ourselves of the wonderful liberty our Father  
235 has given us to ask what we need. And even when we know  
236 what to ask, how much there is still needed to make prayer

237 acceptable. It must be to the glory of God, in full surrender  
238 to His will, in full assurance of faith, in the name of Jesus,  
239 and with a perseverance that, if need be, refuses to be  
240 denied. All this must be learned. It can only be learned in  
241 the school of much prayer, for practice makes perfect. Amid  
242 the painful consciousness of ignorance and unworthiness, in  
243 the struggle between believing and doubting, the heavenly  
244 art of effectual prayer is learnt. Because, even when we do  
245 not remember it, there is One, the Beginner and Finisher of  
246 faith and prayer, who watches over our praying, and sees to  
247 it that in all who trust Him for it their education in the  
248 school of prayer shall be carried on to perfection. Let but  
249 the deep undertone of all our prayer be the teachableness  
250 that comes from a sense of ignorance, and from faith in Him  
251 as a perfect teacher, and we may be sure we shall be taught,  
252 we shall learn to pray in power. Yes, we may depend upon  
253 it, He teaches to pray.

254  
255 Lord, teach us to pray.’ None can teach like Jesus, none but  
256 Jesus; therefore we call on Him, LORD, teach us to pray.’  
257 A pupil needs a teacher, who knows his work, who has the  
258 gift of teaching, who in patience and love will descend to  
259 the pupil’s needs. Blessed be God! Jesus is all this and  
260 much more. He knows what prayer is. It is Jesus, praying  
261 Himself, who teaches to pray. He knows what prayer is. He  
262 learned it amid the trials and tears of His earthly life. In  
263 heaven it is still His beloved work: His life there is prayer.  
264 Nothing delights Him more than to find those whom He can  
265 take with Him into the Father’s presence, whom He can  
266 clothe with power to pray down God’s blessing on those  
267 around them, whom He can train to be His fellow-workers  
268 in the intercession by which the kingdom is to be revealed  
269 on earth. He knows how to teach. Now by the urgency of  
270 felt need, then by the confidence with which joy inspires.



271 Here by the teaching of the Word, there by the testimony of  
272 another believer who knows what it is to have prayer heard.  
273 By His Holy Spirit, He has access to our heart, and teaches  
274 us to pray by showing us the sin that hinders the prayer, or  
275 giving us the assurance that we please God. He teaches, by  
276 giving not only thoughts of what to ask or how to ask, but  
277 by breathing within us the very spirit of prayer, by living  
278 within us as the Great Intercessor. We may indeed and most  
279 joyfully say, Who teacheth like Him?’ Jesus never taught  
280 His disciples how to preach, only how to pray. He did not  
281 speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of  
282 praying well. To know how to speak to God is more than  
283 knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men, but  
284 power with God is the first thing. Jesus loves to teach us  
285 how to pray.

286  
287 What think you, my beloved fellow-disciples! would it not  
288 be just what we need, to ask the Master for a month to give  
289 us a course of special lessons on the art of prayer? As we  
290 meditate on the words He spake on earth, let us yield  
291 ourselves to His teaching in the fullest confidence that, with  
292 such a teacher, we shall make progress. Let us take time not  
293 only to meditate, but to pray, to tarry at the foot of the  
294 throne, and be trained to the work of intercession. Let us do  
295 so in the assurance that amidst our stammerings and fears  
296 He is carrying on His work most beautifully. He will  
297 breathe His own life, which is all prayer, into us. As He  
298 makes us partakers of His righteousness and His life, He  
299 will of His intercession too. As the members of His body, as  
300 a holy priesthood, we shall take part in His priestly work of  
301 pleading and prevailing with God for men. Yes, let us most  
302 joyfully say, ignorant and feeble though we be, Lord, teach  
303 us to pray.’

304

305 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. ’

306

307 ———0———

308

309 Blessed Lord! who ever livest to pray, Thou canst teach me  
310 too to pray, me too to live ever to pray. In this Thou lovest  
311 to make me share Thy glory in heaven, that I should pray  
312 without ceasing, and ever stand as a priest in the presence of  
313 my God.

314

315 Lord Jesus! I ask Thee this day to enrol my name among  
316 those who confess that they know not how to pray as they  
317 ought, and specially ask Thee for a course of teaching in  
318 prayer. Lord! teach me to tarry with Thee in the school, and  
319 give Thee time to train me. May a deep sense of my  
320 ignorance, of the wonderful privilege and power of prayer,  
321 of the need of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of prayer, lead  
322 me to cast away my thoughts of what I think I know, and  
323 make me kneel before Thee in true teachableness and  
324 poverty of spirit.

325

326 And fill me, Lord, with the confidence that with such a  
327 teacher as Thou art I shall learn to pray. In the assurance  
328 that I have as my teacher, Jesus who is ever praying to the  
329 Father, and by His prayer rules the destinies of His Church  
330 and the world, I will not be afraid. As much as I need to  
331 know of the mysteries of the prayer-world, Thou wilt unfold  
332 for me. And when I may not know, Thou wilt teach me to  
333 be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

334

335 Blessed Lord! Thou wilt not put to shame Thy scholar who  
336 trusts Thee, nor, by Thy grace, would he Thee either. Amen.

337

338

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339

340 SECOND LESSON.

341

342 In spirit and truth.’

343

344 Or, The True Worshippers.

345

346 The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers  
347 shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the  
348 Father seek to be His worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they  
349 that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.’—  
350 John iv. 23, 24.

351

352 THESE words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria are His  
353 first recorded teaching on the subject of prayer. They give  
354 us some wonderful first glimpses into the world of prayer.  
355 The Father seeks worshippers: our worship satisfies His  
356 loving heart and is a joy to Him. He seeks true worshippers,  
357 but finds many not such as He would have them. True  
358 worship is that which is in spirit and truth. The Son has  
359 come to open the way for this worship in spirit and in truth,  
360 and teach it us. And so one of our first lessons in the school  
361 of prayer must be to understand what it is to pray in spirit  
362 and in truth, and to know how we can attain to it.

363

364 To the woman of Samaria our Lord spoke of a threefold  
365 worship. There is first, the ignorant worship of the  
366 Samaritans: Ye worship that which ye know not.’ The  
367 second, the intelligent worship of the Jew, having the true  
368 knowledge of God: We worship that which we know; for  
369 salvation is of the Jews.’ And then the new, the spiritual  
370 worship which He Himself has come to introduce: The hour  
371 is coming, and is now, when the true worshippers shall  
372 worship the Father in spirit and truth.’ From the connection

373 it is evident that the words in spirit and truth' do not mean,  
374 as is often thought, earnestly, from the heart, in sincerity.  
375 The Samaritans had the five books of Moses and some  
376 knowledge of God; there was doubtless more than one  
377 among them who honestly and earnestly sought God in  
378 prayer. The Jews had the true full revelation of God in His  
379 word, as thus far given; there were among them godly men,  
380 who called upon God with their whole heart. And yet not in  
381 spirit and truth,' in the full meaning of the words. Jesus  
382 says, The hour is coming, and now is;' it is only in and  
383 through Him that the worship of God will be in spirit and  
384 truth.

385

386 Among Christians one still finds the three classes of  
387 worshippers. Some who in their ignorance hardly know  
388 what they ask: they pray earnestly, and yet receive but little.  
389 Others there are, who have more correct knowledge, who  
390 try to pray with all their mind and heart, and often pray  
391 most earnestly, and yet do not attain to the full blessedness  
392 of worship in spirit and truth. It is into this third class we  
393 must ask our Lord Jesus to take us; we must be taught of  
394 Him how to worship in spirit and truth. This alone is  
395 spiritual worship; this makes us worshippers such as the  
396 Father seeks. In prayer everything will depend on our  
397 understanding well and practising the worship in spirit and  
398 truth.

399

400 God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship  
401 Him in spirit and truth.' The first thought suggested here by  
402 the Master is that there must be harmony between God and  
403 His worshippers; such as God is, must His worship be. This  
404 is according to a principle which prevails throughout the  
405 universe: we look for correspondence between an object  
406 and the organ to which it reveals or yields itself. The eye

407 has an inner fitness for the light, the ear for sound. The man  
408 who would truly worship God, would find and know and  
409 possess and enjoy God, must be in harmony with Him, must  
410 have the capacity for receiving Him. Because God is Spirit,  
411 we must worship in spirit. As God is, so His worshipper.

412

413 And what does this mean? The woman had asked our Lord  
414 whether Samaria or Jerusalem was the true place of  
415 worship. He answers that henceforth worship is no longer to  
416 be limited to a certain place: Woman, believe Me, the hour  
417 cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem,  
418 shall ye worship the Father.' As God is Spirit, not bound by  
419 space or time, but in His infinite perfection always and  
420 everywhere the same, so His worship would henceforth no  
421 longer be confined by place or form, but spiritual as God  
422 Himself is spiritual. A lesson of deep importance. How  
423 much our Christianity suffers from this, that it is confined to  
424 certain times and places. A man, who seeks to pray  
425 earnestly in the church or in the closet, spends the greater  
426 part of the week or the day in a spirit entirely at variance  
427 with that in which he prayed. His worship was the work of a  
428 fixed place or hour, not of his whole being. God is a Spirit:  
429 He is the Everlasting and Unchangeable One; what He is,  
430 He is always and in truth. Our worship must even so be in  
431 spirit and truth: His worship must be the spirit of our life;  
432 our life must be worship in spirit as God is Spirit.

433

434 God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship  
435 Him in spirit and truth.' The second thought that comes to  
436 us is that the worship in the spirit must come from God  
437 Himself. God is Spirit: He alone has Spirit to give. It was  
438 for this He sent His Son, to fit us for such spiritual worship,  
439 by giving us the Holy Spirit. It is of His own work that  
440 Jesus speaks when He says twice, 'The hour cometh,' and

441 then adds, and is now.’ He came to baptize with the Holy  
442 Spirit; the Spirit could not stream forth till He was glorified  
443 (John i. 33, vii. 37, 38, xvi. 7). It was when He had made an  
444 end of sin, and entering into the Holiest of all with His  
445 blood, had there on our behalf received the Holy Spirit  
446 (Acts ii. 33), that He could send Him down to us as the  
447 Spirit of the Father. It was when Christ had redeemed us,  
448 and we in Him had received the position of children, that  
449 the Father sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to  
450 cry, Abba, Father.’ The worship in spirit is the worship of  
451 the Father in the Spirit of Christ , the Spirit of Sonship.

452

453 This is the reason why Jesus here uses the name of Father.  
454 We never find one of the Old Testament saints personally  
455 appropriate the name of child or call God his Father. The  
456 worship of the Father is only possible to those to whom the  
457 Spirit of the Son has been given. The worship in spirit is  
458 only possible to those to whom the Son has revealed the  
459 Father, and who have received the spirit of Sonship. It is  
460 only Christ who opens the way and teaches the worship in  
461 spirit.

462

463 And in truth. That does not only mean, in sincerity. Nor  
464 does it only signify, in accordance with the truth of God’s  
465 Word. The expression is one of deep and Divine meaning.  
466 Jesus is the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and  
467 truth.’ The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came  
468 by Jesus Christ.’ Jesus says, I am the truth and the life.’ In  
469 the Old Testament all was shadow and promise; Jesus  
470 brought and gives the reality, the substance, of things hoped  
471 for. In Him the blessings and powers of the eternal life are  
472 our actual possession and experience. Jesus is full of grace  
473 and truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; through Him  
474 the grace that is in Jesus is ours in deed and truth, a positive

475 communication out of the Divine life. And so worship in  
476 spirit is worship in truth; actual living fellowship with God,  
477 a real correspondence and harmony between the Father,  
478 who is a Spirit, and the child praying in the spirit.

479  
480 What Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, she could not at  
481 once understand. Pentecost was needed to reveal its full  
482 meaning. We are hardly prepared at our first entrance into  
483 the school of prayer to grasp such teaching. We shall  
484 understand it better later on. Let us only begin and take the  
485 lesson as He gives it. We are carnal and cannot bring God  
486 the worship He seeks. But Jesus came to give the Spirit: He  
487 has given Him to us. Let the disposition in which we set  
488 ourselves to pray be what Christ's words have taught us. Let  
489 there be the deep confession of our inability to bring God  
490 the worship that is pleasing to Him; the childlike  
491 teachableness that waits on Him to instruct us; the simple  
492 faith that yields itself to the breathing of the Spirit. Above  
493 all, let us hold fast the blessed truth—we shall find that the  
494 Lord has more to say to us about it—that the knowledge of  
495 the Fatherhood of God, the revelation of His infinite  
496 Fatherliness in our hearts, the faith in the infinite love that  
497 gives us His Son and His Spirit to make us children, is  
498 indeed the secret of prayer in spirit and truth. This is the  
499 new and living way Christ opened up for us. To have Christ  
500 the Son, and the Spirit of the Son, dwelling within us, and  
501 revealing the Father, this makes us true, spiritual  
502 worshippers.

503  
504 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

505  
506 ———0———  
507

508 Blessed Lord! I adore the love with which Thou didst teach  
509 a woman, who had refused Thee a cup of water, what the  
510 worship of God must be. I rejoice in the assurance that  
511 Thou wilt no less now instruct Thy disciple, who comes to  
512 Thee with a heart that longs to pray in spirit and in truth. O  
513 my Holy Master! do teach me this blessed secret.

514

515 Teach me that the worship in spirit and truth is not of man,  
516 but only comes from Thee; that it is not only a thing of  
517 times and seasons, but the outflowing of a life in Thee.  
518 Teach me to draw near to God in prayer under the deep  
519 impression of my ignorance and my having nothing in  
520 myself to offer Him, and at the same time of the provision  
521 Thou, my Saviour, makest for the Spirit's breathing in my  
522 childlike stammerings. I do bless Thee that in Thee I am a  
523 child, and have a child's liberty of access; that in Thee I  
524 have the spirit of Sonship and of worship in truth. Teach  
525 me, above all, Blessed Son of the Father, how it is the  
526 revelation of the Father that gives confidence in prayer; and  
527 let the infinite Fatherliness of God's Heart be my joy and  
528 strength for a life of prayer and of worship. Amen.

529

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530

531

532 THIRD LESSON.

533

534 Pray to thy Father, which is in secret;'

535

536 Or, Alone with God.

537

538 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber,  
539 and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in  
540 secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall  
541 recompense thee'—Matt. vi. 6.



542

543 AFTER Jesus had called His first disciples, He gave them  
544 their first public teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. He  
545 there expounded to them the kingdom of God, its laws and  
546 its life. In that kingdom God is not only King, but Father,  
547 He not only gives all, but is Himself all. In the knowledge  
548 and fellowship of Him alone is its blessedness. Hence it  
549 came as a matter of course that the revelation of prayer and  
550 the prayer-life was a part of His teaching concerning the  
551 New Kingdom He came to set up. Moses gave neither  
552 command nor regulation with regard to prayer: even the  
553 prophets say little directly of the duty of prayer; it is Christ  
554 who teaches to pray.

555

556 And the first thing the Lord teaches His disciples is that they  
557 must have a secret place for prayer; every one must have  
558 some solitary spot where he can be alone with his God.  
559 Every teacher must have a schoolroom. We have learnt to  
560 know and accept Jesus as our only teacher in the school of  
561 prayer. He has already taught us at Samaria that worship is  
562 no longer confined to times and places; that worship,  
563 spiritual true worship, is a thing of the spirit and the life; the  
564 whole man must in his whole life be worship in spirit and  
565 truth. And yet He wants each one to choose for himself the  
566 fixed spot where He can daily meet him. That inner  
567 chamber, that solitary place, is Jesus' schoolroom. That spot  
568 may be anywhere; that spot may change from day to day if  
569 we have to change our abode; but that secret place there  
570 must be, with the quiet time in which the pupil places  
571 himself in the Master's presence, to be by Him prepared to  
572 worship the Father. There alone, but there most surely,  
573 Jesus comes to us to teach us to pray.

574

575 A teacher is always anxious that his schoolroom should be  
576 bright and attractive, filled with the light and air of heaven,  
577 a place where pupils long to come, and love to stay. In His  
578 first words on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus  
579 seeks to set the inner chamber before us in its most  
580 attractive light. If we listen carefully, we soon notice what  
581 the chief thing is He has to tell us of our tarrying there.  
582 Three times He uses the name of Father: Pray to thy  
583 Father; Thy Father shall recompense thee; Your Father  
584 knoweth what things ye have need of. The first thing in  
585 closet-prayer is: I must meet my Father. The light that  
586 shines in the closet must be: the light of the Father's  
587 countenance. The fresh air from heaven with which Jesus  
588 would have it filled, the atmosphere in which I am to  
589 breathe and pray, is: God's Father-love, God's infinite  
590 Fatherliness. Thus each thought or petition we breathe out  
591 will be simple, hearty, childlike trust in the Father. This is  
592 how the Master teaches us to pray: He brings us into the  
593 Father's living presence. What we pray there must avail. Let  
594 us listen carefully to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

595

596 First, Pray to thy Father which is in secret. God is a God  
597 who hides Himself to the carnal eye. As long as in our  
598 worship of God we are chiefly occupied with our own  
599 thoughts and exercises, we shall not meet Him who is a  
600 Spirit, the unseen One. But to the man who withdraws  
601 himself from all that is of the world and man, and prepares  
602 to wait upon God alone, the Father will reveal Himself. As  
603 he forsakes and gives up and shuts out the world, and the  
604 life of the world, and surrenders himself to be led of Christ  
605 into the secret of God's presence, the light of the Father's  
606 love will rise upon him. The secrecy of the inner chamber  
607 and the closed door, the entire separation from all around  
608 us, is an image of, and so a help to that inner spiritual

609 sanctuary, the secret of God's tabernacle, within the veil,  
610 where our spirit truly comes into contact with the Invisible  
611 One. And so we are taught, at the very outset of our search  
612 after the secret of effectual prayer, to remember that it is in  
613 the inner chamber, where we are alone with the Father, that  
614 we shall learn to pray aright. The Father is in secret: in these  
615 words Jesus teaches us where He is waiting us, where He is  
616 always to be found. Christians often complain that private  
617 prayer is not what it should be. They feel weak and sinful,  
618 the heart is cold and dark; it is as if they have so little to  
619 pray, and in that little no faith or joy. They are discouraged  
620 and kept from prayer by the thought that they cannot come  
621 to the Father as they ought or as they wish. Child of God!  
622 listen to your Teacher. He tells you that when you go to  
623 private prayer your first thought must be: The Father is in  
624 secret, the Father waits me there. Just because your heart is  
625 cold and prayerless, get you into the presence of the loving  
626 Father. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth  
627 you. Do not be thinking of how little you have to bring God,  
628 but of how much He wants to give you. Just place yourself  
629 before, and look up into, His face; think of His love, His  
630 wonderful, tender, pitying love. Just tell Him how sinful  
631 and cold and dark all is: it is the Father's loving heart will  
632 give light and warmth to yours. O do what Jesus says: Just  
633 shut the door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret. Is it  
634 not wonderful? to be able to go alone with God, the infinite  
635 God. And then to look up and say: My Father!

636

637 And thy Father, which seeth in secret, will recompense  
638 thee.' Here Jesus assures us that secret prayer cannot be  
639 fruitless: its blessing will show itself in our life. We have  
640 but in secret, alone with God, to entrust our life before men  
641 to Him; He will reward us openly; He will see to it that the  
642 answer to prayer be made manifest in His blessing upon us.

643 Our Lord would thus teach us that as infinite Fatherliness  
644 and Faithfulness is that with which God meets us in secret,  
645 so on our part there should be the childlike simplicity of  
646 faith, the confidence that our prayer does bring down a  
647 blessing. He that cometh to God must believe that He is a  
648 rewarder of them that seek Him.’ Not on the strong or the  
649 fervent feeling with which I pray does the blessing of the  
650 closet depend, but upon the love and the power of the  
651 Father to whom I there entrust my needs. And therefore the  
652 Master has but one desire: Remember your Father is, and  
653 sees and hears in secret; go there and stay there, and go  
654 again from there in the confidence: He will recompense.  
655 Trust Him for it; depend upon Him: prayer to the Father  
656 cannot be vain; He will reward you openly.

657

658 Still further to confirm this faith in the Father-love of God,  
659 Christ speaks a third word: Your Father knoweth what  
660 things ye have need of before ye ask Him.’ At first sight it  
661 might appear as if this thought made prayer less needful:  
662 God knows far better than we what we need. But as we get  
663 a deeper insight into what prayer really is, this truth will  
664 help much to strengthen our faith. It will teach us that we do  
665 not need, as the heathen, with the multitude and urgency of  
666 our words, to compel an unwilling God to listen to us. It  
667 will lead to a holy thoughtfulness and silence in prayer as it  
668 suggests the question: Does my Father really know that I  
669 need this? It will, when once we have been led by the Spirit  
670 to the certainty that our request is indeed something that,  
671 according to the Word, we do need for God’s glory, give us  
672 wonderful confidence to say, My Father knows I need it and  
673 must have it. And if there be any delay in the answer, it will  
674 teach us in quiet perseverance to hold on: FATHER! THOU  
675 KNOWEST I need it. O the blessed liberty and simplicity of  
676 a child that Christ our Teacher would fain cultivate in us, as

677 we draw near to God: let us look up to the Father until His  
678 Spirit works it in us. Let us sometimes in our prayers, when  
679 we are in danger of being so occupied with our fervent,  
680 urgent petitions, as to forget that the Father knows and  
681 hears, let us hold still and just quietly say: My Father sees,  
682 my Father hears, my Father knows; it will help our faith to  
683 take the answer, and to say: We know that we have the  
684 petitions we have asked of Him.

685

686 And now, all ye who have anew entered the school of Christ  
687 to be taught to pray, take these lessons, practise them, and  
688 trust Him to perfect you in them. Dwell much in the inner  
689 chamber, with the door shut—shut in from men, shut up  
690 with God; it is there the Father waits you, it is there Jesus  
691 will teach you to pray. To be alone in secret with THE  
692 FATHER: this be your highest joy. To be assured that THE  
693 FATHER will openly reward the secret prayer, so that it  
694 cannot remain unblest: this be your strength day by day.  
695 And to know that THE FATHER knows that you need what  
696 you ask; this be your liberty to bring every need, in the  
697 assurance that your God will supply it according to His  
698 riches in Glory in Christ Jesus.

699

700 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

701

702 ———0———

703

704 Blessed Saviour! with my whole heart I do bless Thee for  
705 the appointment of the inner chamber, as the school where  
706 Thou meetest each of Thy pupils alone, and revealest to him  
707 the Father. O my Lord! strengthen my faith so in the  
708 Father’s tender love and kindness, that as often as I feel  
709 sinful or troubled, the first instinctive thought may be to go  
710 where I know the Father waits me, and where prayer never

711 can go unblest. Let the thought that He knows my need  
712 before I ask, bring me, in great restfulness of faith, to trust  
713 that He will give what His child requires. O let the place of  
714 secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot of earth.

715  
716 And, Lord! hear me as I pray that Thou wouldest  
717 everywhere bless the closets of Thy believing people. Let  
718 Thy wonderful revelation of a Father's tenderness free all  
719 young Christians from every thought of secret prayer as a  
720 duty or a burden, and lead them to regard it as the highest  
721 privilege of their life, a joy and a blessing. Bring back all  
722 who are discouraged, because they cannot find ought to  
723 bring Thee in prayer. O give them to understand that they  
724 have only to come with their emptiness to Him who has all  
725 to give, and delights to do it. Not, what they have to bring  
726 the Father, but what the Father waits to give them, be their  
727 one thought.

728  
729 And bless especially the inner chamber of all Thy servants  
730 who are working for Thee, as the place where God's truth  
731 and God's grace is revealed to them, where they are daily  
732 anointed with fresh oil, where their strength is renewed, and  
733 the blessings are received in faith, with which they are to  
734 bless their fellow-men. Lord, draw us all in the closet nearer  
735 to Thyself and the Father. Amen.

736

737

738

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739 FOURTH LESSON

740

741 After this manner pray;'

742

743 Or, The Model Prayer.

744

745 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in  
746 heaven.’—Matt. vi. 9.

747

748 EVERY teacher knows the power of example. He not only  
749 tells the child what to do and how to do it, but shows him  
750 how it really can be done. In condescension to our  
751 weakness, our heavenly Teacher has given us the very  
752 words we are to take with us as we draw near to our Father.  
753 We have in them a form of prayer in which there breathe  
754 the freshness and fulness of the Eternal Life. So simple that  
755 the child can lisp it, so divinely rich that it comprehends all  
756 that God can give. A form of prayer that becomes the model  
757 and inspiration for all other prayer, and yet always draws us  
758 back to itself as the deepest utterance of our souls before  
759 our God.

760

761 Our Father which art in heaven!’ To appreciate this word of  
762 adoration aright, I must remember that none of the saints  
763 had in Scripture ever ventured to address God as their  
764 Father. The invocation places us at once in the centre of the  
765 wonderful revelation the Son came to make of His Father as  
766 our Father too. It comprehends the mystery of redemption—  
767 Christ delivering us from the curse that we might become  
768 the children of God. The mystery of regeneration—the  
769 Spirit in the new birth giving us the new life. And the  
770 mystery of faith—ere yet the redemption is accomplished or  
771 understood, the word is given on the lips of the disciples to  
772 prepare them for the blessed experience still to come. The  
773 words are the key to the whole prayer, to all prayer. It takes  
774 time, it takes life to study them; it will take eternity to  
775 understand them fully. The knowledge of God’s Father-love  
776 is the first and simplest, but also the last and highest lesson  
777 in the school of prayer. It is in the personal relation to the  
778 living God, and the personal conscious fellowship of love

779 with Himself, that prayer begins. It is in the knowledge of  
780 God's Fatherliness, revealed by the Holy Spirit, that the  
781 power of prayer will be found to root and grow. In the  
782 infinite tenderness and pity and patience of the infinite  
783 Father, in His loving readiness to hear and to help, the life  
784 of prayer has its joy. O let us take time, until the Spirit has  
785 made these words to us spirit and truth, filling heart and life:  
786 Our Father which art in heaven.' Then we are indeed within  
787 the veil, in the secret place of power where prayer always  
788 prevails.

789  
790 Hallowed be Thy name.' There is something here that  
791 strikes us at once. While we ordinarily first bring our own  
792 needs to God in prayer, and then think of what belongs to  
793 God and His interests, the Master reverses the order. First,  
794 Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will; then, give us, forgive  
795 us, lead us, deliver us. The lesson is of more importance  
796 than we think. In true worship the Father must be first, must  
797 be all. The sooner I learn to forget myself in the desire that  
798 HE may be glorified, the richer will the blessing be that  
799 prayer will bring to myself. No one ever loses by what he  
800 sacrifices for the Father.

801  
802 This must influence all our prayer. There are two sorts of  
803 prayer: personal and intercessory. The latter ordinarily  
804 occupies the lesser part of our time and energy. This may  
805 not be. Christ has opened the school of prayer specially to  
806 train intercessors for the great work of bringing down, by  
807 their faith and prayer, the blessings of His work and love on  
808 the world around. There can be no deep growth in prayer  
809 unless this be made our aim. The little child may ask of the  
810 father only what it needs for itself; and yet it soon learns to  
811 say, Give some for sister too. But the grown-up son, who  
812 only lives for the father's interest and takes charge of the



813 father's business, asks more largely, and gets all that is  
814 asked. And Jesus would train us to the blessed life of  
815 consecration and service, in which our interests are all  
816 subordinate to the Name, and the Kingdom, and the Will of  
817 the Father. O let us live for this, and let, on each act of  
818 adoration, Our Father! there follow in the same breath Thy  
819 Name, Thy Kingdom, Thy Will;—for this we look up and  
820 long.

821

822 Hallowed be Thy name.' What name? This new name of  
823 Father. The word Holy is the central word of the Old  
824 Testament; the name Father of the New. In this name of  
825 Love all the holiness and glory of God are now to be  
826 revealed. And how is the name to be hallowed? By God  
827 Himself: I will hallow My great name which ye have  
828 profaned.' Our prayer must be that in ourselves, in all God's  
829 children, in presence of the world, God Himself would  
830 reveal the holiness, the Divine power, the hidden glory of  
831 the name of Father. The Spirit of the Father is the Holy  
832 Spirit: it is only when we yield ourselves to be led of Him,  
833 that the name will be hallowed in our prayers and our lives.  
834 Let us learn the prayer: Our Father, hallowed be Thy name.'

835

836 Thy kingdom come.' The Father is a King and has a  
837 kingdom. The son and heir of a king has no higher ambition  
838 than the glory of his father's kingdom. In time of war or  
839 danger this becomes his passion; he can think of nothing  
840 else. The children of the Father are here in the enemy's  
841 territory, where the kingdom, which is in heaven, is not yet  
842 fully manifested. What more natural than that, when they  
843 learn to hallow the Father-name, they should long and cry  
844 with deep enthusiasm: Thy kingdom come.' The coming of  
845 the kingdom is the one great event on which the revelation  
846 of the Father's glory, the blessedness of His children, the

847 salvation of the world depends. On our prayers too the  
848 coming of the kingdom waits. Shall we not join in the deep  
849 longing cry of the redeemed: Thy kingdom come'? Let us  
850 learn it in the school of Jesus.

851  
852 Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.' This petition is  
853 too frequently applied alone to the suffering of the will of  
854 God. In heaven God's will is done, and the Master teaches  
855 the child to ask that the will may be done on earth just as in  
856 heaven: in the spirit of adoring submission and ready  
857 obedience. Because the will of God is the glory of heaven,  
858 the doing of it is the blessedness of heaven. As the will is  
859 done, the kingdom of heaven comes into the heart. And  
860 wherever faith has accepted the Father's love, obedience  
861 accepts the Father's will. The surrender to, and the prayer  
862 for a life of heaven-like obedience, is the spirit of childlike  
863 prayer.

864  
865 Give us this day our daily bread.' When first the child has  
866 yielded himself to the Father in the care for His Name, His  
867 Kingdom, and His Will, he has full liberty to ask for his  
868 daily bread. A master cares for the food of his servant, a  
869 general of his soldiers, a father of his child. And will not the  
870 Father in heaven care for the child who has in prayer given  
871 himself up to His interests? We may indeed in full  
872 confidence say: Father, I live for Thy honour and Thy work;  
873 I know Thou carest for me. Consecration to God and His  
874 will gives wonderful liberty in prayer for temporal things:  
875 the whole earthly life is given to the Father's loving care.

876  
877 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our  
878 debtors.' As bread is the first need of the body, so  
879 forgiveness for the soul. And the provision for the one is as  
880 sure as for the other. We are children but sinners too; our

881 right of access to the Father's presence we owe to the  
882 precious blood and the forgiveness it has won for us. Let us  
883 beware of the prayer for forgiveness becoming a formality:  
884 only what is really confessed is really forgiven. Let us in  
885 faith accept the forgiveness as promised: as a spiritual  
886 reality, an actual transaction between God and us, it is the  
887 entrance into all the Father's love and all the privileges of  
888 children. Such forgiveness, as a living experience, is  
889 impossible without a forgiving spirit to others: as forgiven  
890 expresses the heavenward, so forgiving the earthward,  
891 relation of God's child. In each prayer to the Father I must  
892 be able to say that I know of no one whom I do not heartily  
893 love.

894

895 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil  
896 one.' Our daily bread, the pardon of our sins, and then our  
897 being kept from all sin and the power of the evil one, in  
898 these three petitions all our personal need is comprehended.  
899 The prayer for bread and pardon must be accompanied by  
900 the surrender to live in all things in holy obedience to the  
901 Father's will, and the believing prayer in everything to be  
902 kept by the power of the indwelling Spirit from the power  
903 of the evil one.

904

905 Children of God! it is thus Jesus would have us to pray to  
906 the Father in heaven. O let His Name, and Kingdom, and  
907 Will, have the first place in our love; His providing, and  
908 pardoning, and keeping love will be our sure portion. So the  
909 prayer will lead us up to the true child-life: the Father all to  
910 the child, the Father all for the child. We shall understand  
911 how Father and child, the Thine and the Our, are all one,  
912 and how the heart that begins its prayer with the God-  
913 devoted THINE, will have the power in faith to speak out  
914 the OUR too. Such prayer will, indeed, be the fellowship

915 and interchange of love, always bringing us back in trust  
916 and worship to Him who is not only the Beginning but the  
917 End: FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE  
918 POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER, AMEN.’ Son  
919 of the Father, teach us to pray, OUR FATHER.’

920

921 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

922

923 ———0————

924

925 O Thou who art the only-begotten Son, teach us, we  
926 beseech Thee, to pray, OUR FATHER.’ We thank Thee,  
927 Lord, for these Living Blessed Words which Thou has  
928 given us. We thank Thee for the millions who in them have  
929 learnt to know and worship the Father, and for what they  
930 have been to us. Lord! it is as if we needed days and weeks  
931 in Thy school with each separate petition; so deep and full  
932 are they. But we look to Thee to lead us deeper into their  
933 meaning: do it, we pray Thee, for Thy Name’s sake; Thy  
934 name is Son of the Father.

935

936 Lord! Thou didst once say: No man knoweth the Father  
937 save the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal  
938 Him.’ And again: I made known unto them Thy name, and  
939 will make it known, that the love wherewith Thou hast  
940 loved Me may be in them.’ Lord Jesus! reveal to us the  
941 Father. Let His name, His infinite Father-love, the love with  
942 which He loved Thee, according to Thy prayer, BE IN US.  
943 Then shall we say aright, OUR FATHER!’ Then shall we  
944 apprehend Thy teaching, and the first spontaneous breathing  
945 of our heart will be: Our Father, Thy Name, Thy Kingdom,  
946 Thy Will.’ And we shall bring our needs and our sins and  
947 our temptations to Him in the confidence that the love of  
948 such a Father care for all.

949

950 Blessed Lord! we are Thy scholars, we trust Thee; do teach  
951 us to pray, OUR FATHER.’ Amen.

952

953

954

955 FIFTH LESSON.

956

957 Ask, and it shall be given you;

958

959 Or, The Certainty of the Answer to Prayer.

960

961 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;  
962 knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that  
963 asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that  
964 knocketh it shall be opened,’—Matt. vii. 7, 8.

965

966 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.’—Jas. iv. 3.

967

968 OUR Lord returns here in the Sermon on the Mount a  
969 second time to speak of prayer. The first time He had  
970 spoken of the Father who is to be found in secret, and  
971 rewards openly, and had given us the pattern prayer (Matt.  
972 vi. 5-15). Here He wants to teach us what in all Scripture is  
973 considered the chief thing in prayer: the assurance that  
974 prayer will be heard and answered. Observe how He uses  
975 words which mean almost the same thing, and each time  
976 repeats the promise so distinctly: Ye shall receive, ye shall  
977 find, it shall be opened unto you;’ and then gives as ground  
978 for such assurance the law of the kingdom: He that asketh,  
979 receiveth; he that seeketh, findeth; to him that knocketh, it  
980 shall be opened.’ We cannot but feel how in this sixfold  
981 repetition He wants to impress deep on our minds this one  
982 truth, that we may and must most confidently expect an

983 answer to our prayer. Next to the revelation of the Father's  
984 love, there is, in the whole course of the school of prayer,  
985 not a more important lesson than this: Every one that  
986 asketh, receiveth.

987  
988 In the three words the Lord uses, ask, seek, knock, a  
989 difference in meaning has been sought. If such was indeed  
990 His purpose, then the first, ASK, refers to the gifts we pray  
991 for. But I may ask and receive the gift without the Giver.  
992 SEEK is the word Scripture uses of God Himself; Christ  
993 assures me that I can find Himself. But it is not enough to  
994 find God in time of need, without coming to abiding  
995 fellowship: KNOCK speaks of admission to dwell with Him  
996 and in Him. Asking and receiving the gift would thus lead  
997 to seeking and finding the Giver, and this again to the  
998 knocking and opening of the door of the Father's home and  
999 love. One thing is sure: the Lord does want us to count most  
1000 certainly on it that asking, seeking, knocking, cannot be in  
1001 vain: receiving an answer, finding God, the opened heart  
1002 and home of God, are the certain fruit of prayer.

1003  
1004 That the Lord should have thought it needful in so many  
1005 forms to repeat the truth, is a lesson of deep import. It  
1006 proves that He knows our heart, how doubt and distrust  
1007 toward God are natural to us, and how easily we are  
1008 inclined to rest in prayer as a religious work without an  
1009 answer. He knows too how, even when we believe that God  
1010 is the Hearer of prayer, believing prayer that lays hold of  
1011 the promise, is something spiritual, too high and difficult for  
1012 the half-hearted disciple. He therefore at the very outset of  
1013 His instruction to those who would learn to pray, seeks to  
1014 lodge this truth deep into their hearts: prayer does avail  
1015 much; ask and ye shall receive; every one that asketh,  
1016 receiveth. This is the fixed eternal law of the kingdom: if

1017 you ask and receive not, it must be because there is  
1018 something amiss or wanting in the prayer. Hold on; let the  
1019 Word and the Spirit teach you to pray aright, but do not let  
1020 go the confidence He seeks to waken: Every one that asketh,  
1021 receiveth.

1022

1023 Ask, and it shall be given you.’ Christ has no mightier  
1024 stimulus to persevering prayer in His school than this. As a  
1025 child has to prove a sum to be correct, so the proof that we  
1026 have prayed aright is, the answer. If we ask and receive not,  
1027 it is because we have not learned to pray aright. Let every  
1028 learner in the school of Christ therefore take the Master’s  
1029 word in all simplicity: Every one that asketh, receiveth. He  
1030 had good reasons for speaking so unconditionally. Let us  
1031 beware of weakening the Word with our human wisdom.  
1032 When He tells us heavenly things, let us believe Him: His  
1033 Word will explain itself to him who believes it fully. If  
1034 questions and difficulties arise, let us not seek to have them  
1035 settled before we accept the Word. No; let us entrust them  
1036 all to Him: it is His to solve them: our work is first and fully  
1037 to accept and hold fast His promise. Let in our inner  
1038 chamber, in the inner chamber of our heart too, the Word be  
1039 inscribed in letters of light: Every one that asketh, receiveth.

1040

1041 According to this teaching of the Master, prayer consists of  
1042 two parts, has two sides, a human and a Divine. The human  
1043 is the asking, the Divine is the giving. Or, to look at both  
1044 from the human side, there is the asking and the receiving—  
1045 the two halves that make up a whole. It is as if He would  
1046 tell us that we are not to rest without an answer, because it  
1047 is the will of God, the rule in the Father’s family: every  
1048 childlike believing petition is granted. If no answer comes,  
1049 we are not to sit down in the sloth that calls itself  
1050 resignation, and suppose that it is not God’s will to give an

1051 answer. No; there must be something in the prayer that is  
1052 not as God would have it, childlike and believing; we must  
1053 seek for grace to pray so that the answer may come. It is far  
1054 easier to the flesh to submit without the answer than to yield  
1055 itself to be searched and purified by the Spirit, until it has  
1056 learnt to pray the prayer of faith.

1057

1058 It is one of the terrible marks of the diseased state of  
1059 Christian life in these days, that there are so many who rest  
1060 content without the distinct experience of answer to prayer.  
1061 They pray daily, they ask many things, and trust that some  
1062 of them will be heard, but know little of direct definite  
1063 answer to prayer as the rule of daily life. And it is this the  
1064 Father wills: He seeks daily intercourse with His children in  
1065 listening to and granting their petitions. He wills that I  
1066 should come to Him day by day with distinct requests; He  
1067 wills day by day to do for me what I ask. It was in His  
1068 answer to prayer that the saints of old learned to know God  
1069 as the Living One, and were stirred to praise and love (Ps.  
1070 xxxiv., lxvi. 19, cxvi. 1). Our Teacher waits to imprint this  
1071 upon our minds: prayer and its answer, the child asking and  
1072 the father giving, belong to each other.

1073

1074 There may be cases in which the answer is a refusal,  
1075 because the request is not according to God's Word, as  
1076 when Moses asked to enter Canaan. But still, there was an  
1077 answer: God did not leave His servant in uncertainty as to  
1078 His will. The gods of the heathen are dumb and cannot  
1079 speak. Our Father lets His child know when He cannot give  
1080 him what he asks, and he withdraws his petition, even as the  
1081 Son did in Gethsemane. Both Moses the servant and Christ  
1082 the Son knew that what they asked was not according to  
1083 what the Lord had spoken: their prayer was the humble  
1084 supplication whether it was not possible for the decision to



1085 be changed. God will teach those who are teachable and  
1086 give Him time, by His Word and Spirit, whether their  
1087 request be according to His will or not. Let us withdraw the  
1088 request, if it be not according to God's mind, or persevere  
1089 till the answer come. Prayer is appointed to obtain the  
1090 answer. It is in prayer and its answer that the interchange of  
1091 love between the Father and His child takes place.

1092

1093 How deep the estrangement of our heart from God must be,  
1094 that we find it so difficult to grasp such promises. Even  
1095 while we accept the words and believe their truth, the faith  
1096 of the heart, that fully has them and rejoices in them, comes  
1097 so slowly. It is because our spiritual life is still so weak, and  
1098 the capacity for taking God's thoughts is so feeble. But let  
1099 us look to Jesus to teach us as none but He can teach. If we  
1100 take His words in simplicity, and trust Him by His Spirit to  
1101 make them within us life and power, they will so enter into  
1102 our inner being, that the spiritual Divine reality of the truth  
1103 they contain will indeed take possession of us, and we shall  
1104 not rest content until every petition we offer is borne  
1105 heavenward on Jesus' own words: Ask, and it shall be given  
1106 you.'

1107

1108 Beloved fellow-disciples in the school of Jesus! let us set  
1109 ourselves to learn this lesson well. Let us take these words  
1110 just as they were spoken. Let us not suffer human reason to  
1111 weaken their force. Let us take them as Jesus gives them,  
1112 and believe them. He will teach us in due time how to  
1113 understand them fully: let us begin by implicitly believing  
1114 them. Let us take time, as often as we pray, to listen to His  
1115 voice: Every one that asketh, receiveth. Let us not make the  
1116 feeble experiences of our unbelief the measure of what our  
1117 faith may expect. Let us seek, not only just in our seasons of  
1118 prayer, but at all times, to hold fast the joyful assurance:

1119 man's prayer on earth and God's answer in heaven are  
1120 meant for each other. Let us trust Jesus to teach us so to  
1121 pray that the answer can come. He will do it, if we hold fast  
1122 the word He gives today: Ask, and ye shall receive.'

1123  
1124 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1125

1126 ———0—————

1127

1128 O Lord Jesus! teach me to understand and believe what  
1129 Thou hast now promised me. It is not hid from Thee, O my  
1130 Lord, with what reasonings my heart seeks to satisfy itself,  
1131 when no answer comes. There is the thought that my prayer  
1132 is not in harmony with the Father's secret counsel; that  
1133 there is perhaps something better Thou wouldest give me;  
1134 or that prayer as fellowship with God is blessing enough  
1135 without an answer. And yet, my blessed Lord, I find in Thy  
1136 teaching on prayer that Thou didst not speak of these things,  
1137 but didst say so plainly, that prayer may and must expect an  
1138 answer. Thou dost assure us that this is the fellowship of a  
1139 child with the Father: the child asks and the Father gives.

1140

1141 Blessed Lord! Thy words are faithful and true. It must be,  
1142 because I pray amiss, that my experience of answered  
1143 prayer is not clearer. It must be, because I live too little in  
1144 the Spirit, that my prayer is too little in the Spirit, and that  
1145 the power for the prayer of faith is wanting.

1146

1147 Lord! teach me to pray. Lord Jesus! I trust Thee for it; teach  
1148 me to pray in faith. Lord! teach me this lesson of today:  
1149 Every one that asketh receiveth. Amen.

1150

1151

1152

1153 SIXTH LESSON.

1154

1155 How much more?’

1156

1157 Or, The Infinite Fatherliness of God.

1158

1159 Or what man is there of you, who, if his son ask him for a  
1160 loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will  
1161 give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give  
1162 good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your  
1163 Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask  
1164 Him?’—Matt. vii. 9-11

1165

1166 IN these words our Lord proceeds further to confirm what  
1167 He had said of the certainty of an answer to prayer. To  
1168 remove all doubt, and show us on what sure ground His  
1169 promise rests, He appeals to what every one has seen and  
1170 experienced here on earth. We are all children, and know  
1171 what we expected of our fathers. We are fathers, or  
1172 continually see them; and everywhere we look upon it as  
1173 the most natural thing there can be, for a father to hear his  
1174 child. And the Lord asks us to look up from earthly parents,  
1175 of whom the best are but evil, and to calculate HOW  
1176 MUCH MORE the heavenly Father will give good gifts to  
1177 them that ask Him. Jesus would lead us up to see, that as  
1178 much greater as God is than sinful man, so much greater our  
1179 assurance ought to be that He will more surely than any  
1180 earthly father grant our childlike petitions. As much greater  
1181 as God is than man, so much surer is it that prayer will be  
1182 heard with the Father in heaven than with a father on earth.

1183

1184 As simple and intelligible as this parable is, so deep and  
1185 spiritual is the teaching it contains. The Lord would remind  
1186 us that the prayer of a child owes its influence entirely to

1187 the relation in which he stands to the parent. The prayer can  
1188 exert that influence only when the child is really living in  
1189 that relationship, in the home, in the love, in the service of  
1190 the Father. The power of the promise, Ask, and it shall be  
1191 given you,' lies in the loving relationship between us as  
1192 children and the Father in heaven; when we live and walk in  
1193 that relationship, the prayer of faith and its answer will be  
1194 the natural result. And so the lesson we have today in the  
1195 school of prayer is this: Live as a child of God, then you  
1196 will be able to pray as a child, and as a child you will most  
1197 assuredly be heard.

1198

1199 And what is the true child-life? The answer can be found in  
1200 any home. The child that by preference forsakes the father's  
1201 house, that finds no pleasure in the presence and love and  
1202 obedience of the father, and still thinks to ask and obtain  
1203 what he will, will surely be disappointed. On the contrary,  
1204 he to whom the intercourse and will and honour and love of  
1205 the father are the joy of his life, will find that it is the  
1206 father's joy to grant his requests. Scripture says, As many as  
1207 are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God:'  
1208 the childlike privilege of asking all is inseparable from the  
1209 childlike life under the leading of the Spirit. He that gives  
1210 himself to be led by the Spirit in his life, will be led by Him  
1211 in his prayers too. And he will find that Fatherlike giving is  
1212 the Divine response to childlike living.

1213

1214 To see what this childlike living is, in which childlike  
1215 asking and believing have their ground, we have only to  
1216 notice what our Lord teaches in the Sermon on the Mount of  
1217 the Father and His children. In it the prayer-promises are  
1218 imbedded in the life-precepts; the two are inseparable. They  
1219 form one whole; and He alone can count on the fulfilment  
1220 of the promise, who accepts too all that the Lord has

1221 connected with it. It is as if in speaking the word, Ask, and  
1222 ye shall receive,' He says: I give these promises to those  
1223 whom in the beatitudes I have pictured in their childlike  
1224 poverty and purity, and of whom I have said, They shall be  
1225 called the children of God' (Matt. v. 3-9): to children, who  
1226 let your light shine before men, so that they may glorify  
1227 your Father in heaven:' to those who walk in love, that ye  
1228 may be children of your Father which is in heaven,' and  
1229 who seek to be perfect even as your Father in heaven is  
1230 perfect' (v. 45): to those whose fasting and praying and  
1231 almsgiving (vi. 1-18) is not before men, but before your  
1232 Father which seeth in secret;' who forgive even as your  
1233 Father forgiveth you' (vi. 15); who trust the heavenly Father  
1234 in all earthly need, seeking first the kingdom of God and  
1235 His righteousness (vi. 26-32); who not only say, Lord, Lord,  
1236 but do the will of my Father which is in heaven (vii. 21).  
1237 Such are the children of the Father, and such is the life in  
1238 the Father's love and service; in such a child-life answered  
1239 prayers are certain and abundant.

1240

1241 But will not such teaching discourage the feeble one? If we  
1242 are first to answer to this portrait of a child, must not many  
1243 give up all hope of answers to prayer? The difficulty is  
1244 removed if we think again of the blessed name of father and  
1245 child. A child is weak; there is a great difference among  
1246 children in age and gift. The Lord does not demand of us a  
1247 perfect fulfilment of the law; no, but only the childlike and  
1248 whole-hearted surrender to live as a child with Him in  
1249 obedience and truth. Nothing more. But also, nothing less.  
1250 The Father must have the whole heart. When this is given,  
1251 and He sees the child with honest purpose and steady will  
1252 seeking in everything to be and live as a child, then our  
1253 prayer will count with Him as the prayer of a child. Let any  
1254 one simply and honestly begin to study the Sermon on the

1255 Mount and take it as his guide in life, and he will find,  
1256 notwithstanding weakness and failure, an ever-growing  
1257 liberty to claim the fulfilment of its promises in regard to  
1258 prayer. In the names of father and child he has the pledge  
1259 that his petitions will be granted.

1260

1261 This is the one chief thought on which Jesus dwells here,  
1262 and which He would have all His scholars take in. He  
1263 would have us see that the secret of effectual prayer is: to  
1264 have the heart filled with the Father-love of God. It is not  
1265 enough for us to know that God is a Father: He would have  
1266 us take time to come under the full impression of what that  
1267 name implies. We must take the best earthly father we  
1268 know; we must think of the tenderness and love with which  
1269 he regards the request of his child, the love and joy with  
1270 which he grants every reasonable desire; we must then, as  
1271 we think in adoring worship of the infinite Love and  
1272 Fatherliness of God, consider with how much more  
1273 tenderness and joy He sees us come to Him, and gives us  
1274 what we ask aright. And then, when we see how much this  
1275 Divine arithmetic is beyond our comprehension, and feel  
1276 how impossible it is for us to apprehend God's readiness to  
1277 hear us, then He would have us come and open our heart for  
1278 the Holy Spirit to shed abroad God's Father-love there. Let  
1279 us do this not only when we want to pray, but let us yield  
1280 heart and life to dwell in that love. The child who only  
1281 wants to know the love of the father when he has something  
1282 to ask, will be disappointed. But he who lets God be Father  
1283 always and in everything, who would fain live his whole  
1284 life in the Father's presence and love, who allows God in all  
1285 the greatness of His love to be a Father to him, oh! he will  
1286 experience most gloriously that a life in God's infinite  
1287 Fatherliness and continual answers to prayer are  
1288 inseparable.

1289

1290 Beloved fellow-disciple! we begin to see what the reason is  
1291 that we know so little of daily answers to prayer, and what  
1292 the chief lesson is which the Lord has for us in His school.  
1293 It is all in the name of Father. We thought of new and  
1294 deeper insight into some of the mysteries of the prayer-  
1295 world as what we should get in Christ's school; He tells us  
1296 the first is the highest lesson; we must learn to say well,  
1297 Abba, Father!' Our Father which art in heaven.' He that can  
1298 say this, has the key to all prayer. In all the compassion with  
1299 which a father listens to his weak or sickly child, in all the  
1300 joy with which he hears his stammering child, in all the  
1301 gentle patience with which he bears with a thoughtless  
1302 child, we must, as in so many mirrors, study the heart of our  
1303 Father, until every prayer be borne upward on the faith of  
1304 this Divine word: How much more shall your heavenly  
1305 Father give good gifts to them that ask Him.'

1306

1307 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1308

1309 ———0———

1310

1311 Blessed Lord! Thou knowest that this, though it be one of  
1312 the first and simplest and most glorious lessons in Thy  
1313 school, is to our hearts one of the hardest to learn: we know  
1314 so little of the love of the Father. Lord! teach us so to live  
1315 with the Father that His love may be to us nearer, clearer,  
1316 dearer, than the love of any earthly father. And let the  
1317 assurance of His hearing our prayer be as much greater than  
1318 the confidence in an earthly parent, as the heavens are  
1319 higher than earth, as God is infinitely greater than man.  
1320 Lord! show us that it is only our unchildlike distance from  
1321 the Father that hinders the answer to prayer, and lead us on  
1322 to the true life of God's children. Lord Jesus! it is fatherlike

1323 love that wakens childlike trust. O reveal to us the Father,  
1324 and His tender, pitying love, that we may become childlike,  
1325 and experience how in the child-life lies the power of  
1326 prayer.

1327  
1328 Blessed Son of God! the Father loveth Thee and hath given  
1329 Thee all things. And Thou lovest the Father, and hast done  
1330 all things He commanded Thee, and therefore hast the  
1331 power to ask all things. Lord! give us Thine own Spirit, the  
1332 Spirit of the Son. Make us childlike, as Thou wert on earth.  
1333 And let every prayer be breathed in the faith that as the  
1334 heaven is higher than the earth, so God's Father-love, and  
1335 His readiness to give us what we ask, surpasses all we can  
1336 think or conceive. Amen.

1337

1338 NOTE.^1

1339

1340 Your Father which is in heaven.' Alas! we speak of it only  
1341 as the utterance of a reverential homage. We think of it as a  
1342 figure borrowed from an earthly life, and only in some faint  
1343 and shallow meaning to be used of God. We are afraid to  
1344 take God as our own tender and pitiful father. He is a  
1345 schoolmaster, or almost farther off than that, and knowing  
1346 less about us—an inspector, who knows nothing of us  
1347 except through our lessons. His eyes are not on the scholar,  
1348 but on the book, and all alike must come up to the standard.

1349

1350 Now open the ears of the heart, timid child of God; let it go  
1351 sinking right down into the inner most depths of the soul.  
1352 Here is the starting-point of holiness, in the love and  
1353 patience and pity of our heavenly Father. We have not to  
1354 learn to be holy as a hard lesson at school, that we may  
1355 make God think well of us; we are to learn it at home with  
1356 the Father to help us. God loves you not because you are



1357 clever not because you are good, but because He is your  
1358 Father. The Cross of Christ does not make God love us; it is  
1359 the outcome and measure of His love to us. He loves all His  
1360 children, the clumsiest, the dullest, the worst of His  
1361 children. His love lies at the back of everything, and we  
1362 must get upon that as the solid foundation of our religious  
1363 life, not growing up into that, but growing up out of it. We  
1364 must begin there or our beginning will come to nothing. Do  
1365 take hold of this mightily. We must go out of ourselves for  
1366 any hope, or any strength, or any confidence. And what  
1367 hope, what strength, what confidence may be ours now that  
1368 we begin here, your Father which is in heaven!

1369

1370 We need to get in at the tenderness and helpfulness which  
1371 lie in these words, and to rest upon it—your Father. Speak  
1372 them over to yourself until something of the wonderful truth  
1373 is felt by us. It means that I am bound to God by the closest  
1374 and tenderest relationship; that I have a right to His love and  
1375 His power and His blessing, such as nothing else could give  
1376 me. O the boldness with which we can draw near! O the  
1377 great things we have a right to ask for! Your Father. It  
1378 means that all His infinite love and patience and wisdom  
1379 bend over me to help me. In this relationship lies not only  
1380 the possibility of holiness; there is infinitely more than that.

1381

1382 Here we are to begin, in the patient love of our Father.  
1383 Think how He knows us apart and by ourselves, in all our  
1384 peculiarities, and in all our weaknesses and difficulties. The  
1385 master judges by the result, but our Father judges by the  
1386 effort. Failure does not always mean fault. He knows how  
1387 much things cost, and weighs them where others only  
1388 measure. YOUR FATHER. Think how great store His love  
1389 sets by the poor beginnings of the little ones, clumsy and  
1390 unmeaning as they may be to others. All this lies in this

1391 blessed relationship and infinitely more. Do not fear to take  
1392 it all as your own.

1393

1394 ^1From Thoughts on Holiness, by Mark Guy Pearse. What  
1395 is so beautifully said of the knowledge of God's  
1396 Fatherliness as the starting-point of holiness is no less true  
1397 of prayer.

1398

1399

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1400

1401 SEVENTH LESSON.

1402

1403 How much more the Holy Spirit;

1404

1405 Or, The All-Comprehensive Gift.

1406

1407 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto  
1408 your children, how much more shall the heavenly Father  
1409 give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?'—Luke xi. 13.

1410

1411 IN the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord had already given  
1412 utterance to His wonderful HOW MUCH MORE? Here in  
1413 Luke, where He repeats the question, there is a difference.  
1414 Instead of speaking, as then of giving good gifts, He says,  
1415 How much more shall the heavenly Father give THE HOLY  
1416 SPIRIT?' He thus teaches us that the chief and the best of  
1417 these gifts is the Holy Spirit, or rather, that in this gift all  
1418 others are comprised The Holy Spirit is the first of the  
1419 Father's gifts, and the one He delights most to bestow. The  
1420 Holy Spirit is therefore the gift we ought first and chiefly to  
1421 seek.

1422

1423 The unspeakable worth of this gift we can easily  
1424 understand. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as the promise of the

1425 Father;’ the one promise in which God’s Fatherhood  
1426 revealed itself. The best gift a good and wise father can  
1427 bestow on a child on earth is his own spirit. This is the great  
1428 object of a father in education—to reproduce in his child his  
1429 own disposition and character. If the child is to know and  
1430 understand his father; if, as he grows up, he is to enter into  
1431 all his will and plans; if he is to have his highest joy in the  
1432 father, and the father in him,—he must be of one mind and  
1433 spirit with him. And so it is impossible to conceive of God  
1434 bestowing any higher gift on His child than this, His own  
1435 Spirit. God is what He is through His Spirit; the Spirit is the  
1436 very life of God. Just think what it means—God giving His  
1437 own Spirit to His child on earth.

1438

1439 Or was not this the glory of Jesus as a Son upon earth, that  
1440 the Spirit of the Father was in Him? At His baptism in  
1441 Jordan the two things were united,—the voice, proclaiming  
1442 Him the Beloved Son, and the Spirit, descending upon Him.  
1443 And so the apostle says of us, Because ye are sons, God  
1444 sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying,  
1445 Abba, Father.’ A king seeks in the whole education of his  
1446 son to call forth in him a kingly spirit. Our Father in heaven  
1447 desires to educate us as His children for the holy, heavenly  
1448 life in which He dwells, and for this gives us, from the  
1449 depths of His heart, His own Spirit. It was this which was  
1450 the whole aim of Jesus when, after having made atonement  
1451 with His own blood, He entered for us into God’s presence,  
1452 that He might obtain for us, and send down to dwell in us,  
1453 the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of the Father, and of the Son,  
1454 the whole life and love of the Father and the Son are in  
1455 Him; and, coming down into us, He lifts us up into their  
1456 fellowship. As Spirit of the Father, He sheds abroad the  
1457 Father’s love, with which He loved the Son, in our hearts,  
1458 and teaches us to live in it. As Spirit of the Son, He breathes

1459 in us the childlike liberty, and devotion, and obedience in  
1460 which the Son lived upon earth. The Father can bestow no  
1461 higher or more wonderful gift than this: His own Holy  
1462 Spirit, the Spirit of sonship.

1463  
1464 This truth naturally suggests the thought that this first and  
1465 chief gift of God must be the first and chief object of all  
1466 prayer. For every need of the spiritual life this is the one  
1467 thing needful, the Holy Spirit. All the fulness is in Jesus; the  
1468 fulness of grace and truth, out of which we receive grace for  
1469 grace. The Holy Spirit is the appointed conveyancer, whose  
1470 special work it is to make Jesus and all there is in Him for  
1471 us ours in personal appropriation, in blessed experience. He  
1472 is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; as wonderful as the life  
1473 is, so wonderful is the provision by which such an agent is  
1474 provided to communicate it to us. If we but yield ourselves  
1475 entirely to the disposal of the Spirit, and let Him have His  
1476 way with us, He will manifest the life of Christ within us.  
1477 He will do this with a Divine power, maintaining the life of  
1478 Christ in us in uninterrupted continuity. Surely, if there is  
1479 one prayer that should draw us to the Father's throne and  
1480 keep us there, it is this: for the Holy Spirit, whom we as  
1481 children have received, to stream into us and out from us in  
1482 greater fulness.

1483  
1484 In the variety of the gifts which the Spirit has to dispense,  
1485 He meets the believer's every need. Just think of the names  
1486 He bears. The Spirit of grace, to reveal and impart all of  
1487 grace there is in Jesus. The Spirit of faith, teaching us to  
1488 begin and go on and increase in ever believing. The Spirit  
1489 of adoption and assurance, who witnesses that we are God's  
1490 children, and inspires the confiding and confident Abba,  
1491 Father! The Spirit of truth, to lead into all truth, to make  
1492 each word of God ours in deed and in truth. The Spirit of

1493 prayer, through whom we speak with the Father; prayer that  
1494 must be heard. The Spirit of judgment and burning, to  
1495 search the heart, and convince of sin. The Spirit of holiness,  
1496 manifesting and communicating the Father's holy presence  
1497 within us. The Spirit of power, through whom we are strong  
1498 to testify boldly and work effectually in the Father's  
1499 service. The Spirit of glory, the pledge of our inheritance,  
1500 the preparation and the foretaste of the glory to come.  
1501 Surely the child of God needs but one thing to be able really  
1502 to live as a child: it is, to be filled with this Spirit.

1503  
1504 And now, the lesson Jesus teaches us today in His school is  
1505 this: That the Father is just longing to give Him to us if we  
1506 will but ask in the childlike dependence on what He says: If  
1507 ye know to give good gifts unto your children, HOW  
1508 MUCH MORE shall your heavenly Father give the Holy  
1509 Spirit to them that ask Him.' In the words of God's promise,  
1510 I will pour out my Spirit abundantly;' and of His command,  
1511 Be ye filled with the Spirit' we have the measure of what  
1512 God is ready to give, and what we may obtain. As God's  
1513 children, we have already received the Spirit. But we still  
1514 need to ask and pray for His special gifts and operations as  
1515 we require them. And not only this, but for Himself to take  
1516 complete and entire possession; for His unceasing  
1517 momentary guidance. Just as the branch, already filled with  
1518 the sap of the vine, is ever crying for the continued and  
1519 increasing flow of that sap, that it may bring its fruit to  
1520 perfection, so the believer, rejoicing in the possession of the  
1521 Spirit, ever thirsts and cries for more. And what the great  
1522 Teacher would have us learn is, that nothing less than God's  
1523 promise and God's command may be the measure of our  
1524 expectation and our prayer; we must be filled abundantly.  
1525 He would have us ask this in the assurance that the

1526 wonderful HOW MUCH MORE of God's Father-love is the  
1527 pledge that, when we ask, we do most certainly receive.

1528

1529 Let us now believe this. As we pray to be filled with the  
1530 Spirit, let us not seek for the answer in our feelings. All  
1531 spiritual blessings must be received, that is, accepted or  
1532 taken in faith.^1 Let me believe, the Father gives the Holy  
1533 Spirit to His praying child. Even now, while I pray, I must  
1534 say in faith: I have what I ask, the fulness of the Spirit is  
1535 mine. Let us continue steadfast in this faith. On the strength  
1536 of God's Word we know that we have what we ask. Let us,  
1537 with thanksgiving that we have been heard, with  
1538 thanksgiving for what we have received and taken and now  
1539 hold as ours, continue steadfast in believing prayer that the  
1540 blessing, which has already been given us, and which we  
1541 hold in faith, may break through and fill our whole being. It  
1542 is in such believing thanksgiving and prayer, that our soul  
1543 opens up for the Spirit to take entire and undisturbed  
1544 possession. It is such prayer that not only asks and hopes,  
1545 but takes and holds, that inherits the full blessing. In all our  
1546 prayer let us remember the lesson the Saviour would teach  
1547 us this day, that, if there is one thing on earth we can be  
1548 sure of, it is this, that the Father desires to have us filled  
1549 with His Spirit, that He delights to give us His Spirit.

1550

1551 And when once we have learned thus to believe for  
1552 ourselves, and each day to take out of the treasure we hold  
1553 in heaven, what liberty and power to pray for the outpouring  
1554 of the Spirit on the Church of God, on all flesh, on  
1555 individuals, or on special efforts! He that has once learned  
1556 to know the Father in prayer for himself, learns to pray most  
1557 confidently for others too. The Father gives the Holy Spirit  
1558 to them that ask Him, not least, but most, when they ask for  
1559 others.

1560

1561 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

1562

1563 ———0———

1564

1565 Father in heaven! Thou didst send Thy Son to reveal  
1566 Thyself to us, Thy Father-love, and all that that love has for  
1567 us. And He has taught us, that the gift above all gifts which  
1568 Thou wouldst bestow in answer to prayer is, the Holy Spirit.

1569

1570 O my Father! I come to Thee with this prayer; there is  
1571 nothing I would—may I not say, I do—desire so much as to  
1572 be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The blessings He  
1573 brings are so unspeakable, and just what I need. He sheds  
1574 abroad Thy love in the heart, and fills it with Thy self. I  
1575 long for this. He breathes the mind and life of Christ in me,  
1576 so that I live as He did, in and for the Father’s love. I long  
1577 for this. He endues with power from on high for all my walk  
1578 and work. I long for this. O Father! I beseech Thee, give me  
1579 this day the fulness of Thy Spirit.

1580

1581 Father! I ask this, resting on the words of my Lord: HOW  
1582 MUCH MORE THE HOLY SPIRIT.’ I do believe that  
1583 Thou hearest my prayer; I receive now what I ask; Father! I  
1584 claim and I take it: the fulness of Thy Spirit is mine. I  
1585 receive the gift this day again as a faith gift; in faith I  
1586 reckon my Father works through the Spirit all He has  
1587 promised. The Father delights to breathe His Spirit into His  
1588 waiting child as He tarries in fellowship with Himself.  
1589 Amen.

1590

1591 ^1The Greek word for receiving and taking is the same.  
1592 When Jesus said, Everyone that asketh receiveth,’ He used  
1593 the same verb as at the Supper, Take, eat,’ or on the

1594 resurrection morning, Receive, ' accept, take, the Holy  
1595 Spirit.' Receiving not only implies God's bestowment, but  
1596 our acceptance.

1597

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1598

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1599

1600 EIGHTH LESSON.

1601

1602 Because of his importunity;'

1603

1604 Or, The Boldness of God's Friends.

1605

1606 And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend,  
1607 and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend  
1608 me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a  
1609 journey, and I have nothing to set before him' and he from  
1610 within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is  
1611 now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise  
1612 and give thee. I say unto you, though he will not rise and  
1613 give him because he is his friend, yet because of his  
1614 importunity he will rise and give him as many as he  
1615 needeth.'—Luke xi. 5-8.

1616

1617 THE first teaching to His disciples was given by our Lord in  
1618 the Sermon on the Mount. It was near a year later that the  
1619 disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In answer He  
1620 gave them a second time the Lord's Prayer, so teaching  
1621 them what to pray. He then speaks of how they ought to  
1622 pray, and repeats what he formerly said of God's  
1623 Fatherliness and the certainty of an answer. But in between  
1624 He adds the beautiful parable of the friend at midnight, to  
1625 teach them the two fold lesson, that God does not only want  
1626 us to pray for ourselves, but for the perishing around us, and



1627 that in such intercession great boldness of entreaty is often  
1628 needful, and always lawful, yea, pleasing to God.

1629

1630 The parable is a perfect storehouse of instruction in regard  
1631 to true intercession. There is, first, the love which seeks to  
1632 help the needy around us: my friend is come to me.’ Then  
1633 the need which urges to the cry I have nothing to set before  
1634 him.’ Then follows the confidence that help is to be had:  
1635 which of you shall have a friend, and say, Friend, lend me  
1636 three loaves.’ Then comes the unexpected refusal: I cannot  
1637 rise and give thee.’ Then again the perseverance that takes  
1638 no refusal: because of his importunity.’ And lastly, the  
1639 reward of such prayer: he will give him as many as he  
1640 needeth.’ A wonderful setting forth of the way of prayer and  
1641 faith in which the blessing of God has so often been sought  
1642 and found.

1643

1644 Let us confine ourselves to the chief thought: prayer as an  
1645 appeal to the friendship of God; and we shall find that two  
1646 lessons are specially suggested. The one, that if we are  
1647 God’s friends, and come as such to Him, we must prove  
1648 ourselves the friends of the needy; God’s friendship to us  
1649 and ours to others go hand in hand. The other, that when we  
1650 come thus we may use the utmost liberty in claiming an  
1651 answer.

1652

1653 There is a twofold use of prayer: the one, to obtain strength  
1654 and blessing for our own life; the other, the higher, the true  
1655 glory of prayer, for which Christ has taken us into His  
1656 fellowship and teaching, is intercession, where prayer is the  
1657 royal power a child of God exercises in heaven on behalf of  
1658 others and even of the kingdom. We see it in Scripture, how  
1659 it was in intercession for others that Abraham and Moses,  
1660 Samuel and Elijah, with all the holy men of old, proved that

1661 they had power with God and prevailed. It is when we give  
1662 ourselves to be a blessing that we can specially count on the  
1663 blessing of God. It is when we draw near to God as the  
1664 friend of the poor and the perishing that we may count on  
1665 His friendliness; the righteous man who is the friend of the  
1666 poor is very specially the friend of God. This gives  
1667 wonderful liberty in prayer. Lord! I have a needy friend  
1668 whom I must help. As a friend I have undertaken to help  
1669 him. In Thee I have a Friend, whose kindness and riches I  
1670 know to be infinite: I am sure Thou wilt give me what I ask.  
1671 If I, being evil, am ready to do for my friend what I can,  
1672 how much more wilt Thou, O my heavenly Friend, now do  
1673 for Thy friend what he asks?  
1674

1675 The question might suggest itself, whether the Fatherhood  
1676 of God does not give such confidence in prayer, that the  
1677 thought of His Friendship can hardly teach us anything  
1678 more: a father is more than a friend. And yet, if we consider  
1679 it, this pleading the friendship of God opens new wonders to  
1680 us. That a child obtains what he asks of his father looks so  
1681 perfectly natural, we almost count it the father's duty to  
1682 give. But with a friend it is as if the kindness is more free,  
1683 dependent, not on nature, but on sympathy and character.  
1684 And then the relation of a child is more that of perfect  
1685 dependence; two friends are more nearly on a level. And so  
1686 our Lord, in seeking to unfold to us the spiritual mystery of  
1687 prayer, would fain have us approach God in this relation  
1688 too, as those whom He has acknowledged as His friends,  
1689 whose mind and life are in sympathy with His.  
1690

1691 But then we must be living as His friends. I am still a child  
1692 even when a wanderer; but friendship depends upon the  
1693 conduct. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command  
1694 you.' Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by

1695 works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled  
1696 which saith, And Abraham believed God, and he was called  
1697 the friend of God.’ It is the Spirit, the same Spirit,’ that  
1698 leads us that also bears witness to our acceptance with God;  
1699 likewise, also,’ the same Spirit helpeth us in prayer. It is a  
1700 life as the friend of God that gives the wonderful liberty to  
1701 say: I have a friend to whom I can go even at midnight. And  
1702 how much more when I go in the very spirit of that  
1703 friendliness, manifesting myself the very kindness I look for  
1704 in God, seeking to help my friend as I want God to help me.  
1705 When I come to God in prayer, He always looks to what the  
1706 aim is of my petition. If it be merely for my own comfort or  
1707 joy I seek His grace, I do not receive. But if I can say that it  
1708 is that He may be glorified in my dispensing His blessings  
1709 to others, I shall not ask in vain. Or if I ask for others, but  
1710 want to wait until God has made me so rich, that it is no  
1711 sacrifice or act of faith to aid them, I shall not obtain. But if  
1712 I can say that I have already undertaken for my needy  
1713 friend, that in my poverty I have already begun the work of  
1714 love, because I know I had a friend Who would help me,  
1715 my prayer will be heard. Oh, we know not how much the  
1716 plea avails: the friendship of earth looking in its need to the  
1717 friendship of heaven: He will give him as much as he  
1718 needeth.’

1719

1720 But not always at once. The one thing by which man can  
1721 honour and enjoy his God is faith. Intercession is part of  
1722 faith’s training-school. There our friendship with men and  
1723 with God is tested. There it is seen whether my friendship  
1724 with the needy is so real, that I will take time and sacrifice  
1725 my rest, will go even at midnight and not cease until I have  
1726 obtained for them what I need. There it is seen whether my  
1727 friendship with God is so clear, that I can depend on Him  
1728 not to turn me away and therefore pray on until He gives.

1729

1730 O what a deep heavenly mystery this is of persevering  
1731 prayer. The God who has promised, who longs, whose fixed  
1732 purpose it is to give the blessing, holds it back. It is to Him  
1733 a matter of such deep importance that His friends on earth  
1734 should know and fully trust their rich Friend in heaven, that  
1735 He trains them, in the school of answer delayed, to find out  
1736 how their perseverance really does prevail, and what the  
1737 mighty power is they can wield in heaven, if they do but set  
1738 themselves to it. There is a faith that sees the promise, and  
1739 embraces it, and yet does not receive it (Heb. xi. 13, 39). It  
1740 is when the answer to prayer does not come, and the  
1741 promise we are most firmly trusting appears to be of none  
1742 effect, that the trial of faith, more precious than of gold,  
1743 takes place. It is in this trial that the faith that has embraced  
1744 the promise is purified and strengthened and prepared in  
1745 personal, holy fellowship with the living God, to see the  
1746 glory of God. It takes and holds the promise until it has  
1747 received the fulfilment of what it had claimed in a living  
1748 truth in the unseen but living God.

1749

1750 Let each child of God who is seeking to work the work of  
1751 love in his Father's service take courage. The parent with  
1752 his child, the teacher with his class, the visitor with his  
1753 district, the Bible reader with his circle, the preacher with  
1754 his hearers, each one who, in his little circle, has accepted  
1755 and is bearing the burden of hungry, perishing souls,—let  
1756 them all take courage. Nothing is at first so strange to us as  
1757 that God should really require persevering prayer, that there  
1758 should be a real spiritual needs-be for importunity. To teach  
1759 it us, the Master uses this almost strange parable. If the  
1760 unfriendliness of a selfish earthly friend can be conquered  
1761 by importunity, how much more will it avail with the  
1762 heavenly Friend, who does so love to give, but is held back

1763 by our spiritual unfitness, our incapacity to possess what He  
1764 has to give. O let us thank Him that in delaying His answer  
1765 He is educating us up to our true position and the exercise  
1766 of all our power with Him, training us to live with Him in  
1767 the fellowship of undoubting faith and trust, to be indeed  
1768 the friends of God. And let us hold fast the threefold cord  
1769 that cannot be broken: the hungry friend needing the help,  
1770 and the praying friend seeking the help, and the Mighty  
1771 Friend, loving to give as much as he needeth.

1772

1773 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

1774

1775 ———0—————

1776

1777 O my Blessed Lord and Teacher! I must come to Thee in  
1778 prayer. Thy teaching is so glorious, and yet too high for me  
1779 to grasp. I must confess that my heart is too little to take in  
1780 these thoughts of the wonderful boldness I may use with  
1781 Thy Father as my Friend. Lord Jesus! I trust Thee to give  
1782 me Thy Spirit with Thy Word, and to make the Word quick  
1783 and powerful in my heart. I desire to keep Thy Word of this  
1784 day: Because of his importunity he will give him as many as  
1785 he needeth.’

1786

1787 Lord! teach me more to know the power of persevering  
1788 prayer. I know that in it the Father suits Himself to our need  
1789 of time for the inner life to attain its growth and ripeness, so  
1790 that His grace may indeed be assimilated and made our very  
1791 own. I know that He would fain thus train us to the exercise  
1792 of that strong faith that does not let Him go even in the face  
1793 of seeming disappointment. I know He wants to lift us to  
1794 that wonderful liberty, in which we understand how really  
1795 He has made the dispensing of His gift dependent on our

1796 prayer. Lord! I know this: O teach me to see it in spirit and  
1797 truth.

1798

1799 And may it now be the joy of my life to become the  
1800 almoner of my Rich Friend in heaven, to care for all the  
1801 hungry and perishing, even at midnight, because I know  
1802 MY FRIEND, who always gives to him who perseveres,  
1803 because of his importunity, as many as he needeth. Amen.

1804

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1805

1806

1807 NINTH LESSON.

1808

1809 Pray the Lord of the harvest;’

1810

1811 Or, Prayer provides Labourers.

1812

1813 Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is  
1814 plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the  
1815 Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into  
1816 His harvest.’—Matt. ix. 37-38.

1817

1818 THE Lord frequently taught His disciples that they must  
1819 pray, and how; but seldom what to pray. This he left to their  
1820 sense of need, and the leading of the Spirit. But here we  
1821 have one thing He expressly enjoins them to remember: in  
1822 view of the plenteous harvest, and the need of reapers, they  
1823 must cry to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers.  
1824 Just as in the parable of the friend at midnight, He would  
1825 have them understand that prayer is not to be selfish; so here  
1826 it is the power through which blessing can come to others.  
1827 The Father is Lord of the harvest; when we pray for the  
1828 Holy Spirit, we must pray for Him to prepare and send forth  
1829 labourers for the work.

1830

1831 Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray  
1832 for this? And could He not pray Himself? And would not  
1833 one prayer of His avail more than a thousand of theirs? And  
1834 God, the Lord of the harvest, did He not see the need? And  
1835 would not He, in His own good time, send forth labourers  
1836 without their prayer? Such questions lead us up to the  
1837 deepest mysteries of prayer, and its power in the Kingdom  
1838 of God. The answer to such questions will convince us that  
1839 prayer is indeed a power, on which the ingathering of the  
1840 harvest and the coming of the Kingdom do in very truth  
1841 depend.

1842

1843 Prayer is no form or show. The Lord Jesus was Himself the  
1844 truth; everything He spake was the deepest truth. It was  
1845 when (see ver. 36) He saw the multitude, and was moved  
1846 with compassion on them, because they were scattered  
1847 abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,' that He called on the  
1848 disciples to pray for labourers to be sent among them. He  
1849 did so because He really believed that their prayer was  
1850 needed, and would help. The veil which so hides the  
1851 invisible world from us was wonderfully transparent to the  
1852 holy human soul of Jesus. He had looked long and deep and  
1853 far into the hidden connection of cause and effect in the  
1854 spirit world. He had marked in God's Word how, when God  
1855 called men like Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Samuel  
1856 and Daniel, and given them authority over men in His  
1857 name, He had at the same time given them authority and  
1858 right to call in the powers of heaven to their aid as they  
1859 needed them. He knew that as to these men of old, and to  
1860 Himself for a time, here upon earth, the work of God had  
1861 been entrusted, so it was now about to pass over into the  
1862 hands of His disciples. He knew that when this work should  
1863 be given in charge to them, it would not be a mere matter of

1864 form or show, but that on them, and their being faithful or  
1865 unfaithful, the success of the work would actually depend.  
1866 As a single individual, within the limitations of a human  
1867 body and a human life, Jesus feels how little a short visit  
1868 can accomplish among these wandering sheep He sees  
1869 around Him, and He longs for help to have them properly  
1870 cared for. And so He tells His disciples now to begin and  
1871 pray, and, when they have taken over the work from Him on  
1872 earth, to make this one of the chief petitions in their prayer:  
1873 That the Lord of the harvest Himself would send forth  
1874 labourers into His harvest. The God who entrusted them  
1875 with the work, and made it to so large extent dependent on  
1876 them, gives them authority to apply to Him for labourers to  
1877 help, and makes the supply dependent on their prayer.

1878

1879 How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of  
1880 labourers in the fields of the world so white to the harvest.  
1881 And how little they believe that our labour-supply depends  
1882 on prayer, that prayer will really provide as many as he  
1883 needeth.' Not that the dearth of labour is not known or  
1884 discussed. Not that efforts are not sometimes put forth to  
1885 supply the want. But how little the burden of the sheep  
1886 wandering without a Shepherd is really borne in the faith  
1887 that the Lord of the harvest will, in answer to prayer, send  
1888 forth the labourers, and in the solemn conviction that  
1889 without this prayer fields ready for reaping will be left to  
1890 perish. And yet it is so. So wonderful is the surrender of His  
1891 work into the hands of His Church, so dependent has the  
1892 Lord made Himself on them as His body, through whom  
1893 alone His work can be done, so real is the power which the  
1894 Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that  
1895 the number of the labourers and the measure of the harvest  
1896 does actually depend upon their prayer.

1897



1898 Solemn thought! O why is it that we do not obey the  
1899 injunction of the Master more heartily, and cry more  
1900 earnestly for labourers? There are two reasons for this. The  
1901 one is: We miss the compassion of Jesus, which gave rise to  
1902 this request for prayer. When believers learn that to love  
1903 their neighbours as themselves, that to live entirely for  
1904 God's glory in their fellow-men, is the Father's first  
1905 commandment to His redeemed ones, they will accept of  
1906 the perishing ones as the charge entrusted to them by their  
1907 Lord. And, accepting them not only as a field of labour, but  
1908 as the objects of loving care and interest, it will not be long  
1909 before compassion towards the hopelessly perishing will  
1910 touch their heart, and the cry ascend with an earnestness till  
1911 then unknown: Lord! send labourers. The other reason for  
1912 the neglect of the command, the want of faith, will then  
1913 make itself felt, but will be overcome as our pity pleads for  
1914 help. We believe too little in the power of prayer to bring  
1915 about definite results. We do not live close enough to God,  
1916 and are not enough entirely given up to His service and  
1917 Kingdom, to be capable of the confidence that He will give  
1918 it in answer to our prayer. O let us pray for a life so one  
1919 with Christ, that His compassion may stream into us, and  
1920 His Spirit be able to assure us that our prayer avails.

1921  
1922 Such prayer will ask and obtain a twofold blessing. There  
1923 will first be the desire for the increase of men entirely given  
1924 up to the service of God. It is a terrible blot upon the  
1925 Church of Christ that there are times when actually men  
1926 cannot be found for the service of the Master as ministers,  
1927 missionaries, or teachers of God's Word. As God's children  
1928 make this a matter of supplication for their own circle or  
1929 Church, it will be given. The Lord Jesus is now Lord of the  
1930 harvest. He has been exalted to bestow gifts—the gifts of  
1931 the Spirit. His chief gifts are men filled with the Spirit. But

1932 the supply and distribution of the gifts depend on the co-  
1933 operation of Head and members. It is just prayer will lead to  
1934 such co-operation; the believing suppliants will be stirred to  
1935 find the men and the means for the work.

1936  
1937 The other blessing to be asked will not be less. Every  
1938 believer is a labourer; not one of God's children who has  
1939 not been redeemed for service, and has not his work  
1940 waiting. It must be our prayer that the Lord would so fill all  
1941 His people with the spirit of devotion, that not one may be  
1942 found standing idle in the vineyard. Wherever there is a  
1943 complaint of the want of helpers, or of fit helpers in God's  
1944 work, prayer has the promise of a supply. There is no  
1945 Sunday school or district visiting, no Bible reading or  
1946 rescue work, where God is not ready and able to provide. It  
1947 may take time and importunity, but the command of Christ  
1948 to ask the Lord of the harvest is the pledge that the prayer  
1949 will be heard: I say unto you, he will arise and give him as  
1950 many as he needeth.'

1951  
1952 Solemn, blessed thought! this power has been given us in  
1953 prayer to provide in the need of the world, to secure the  
1954 servants for God's work. The Lord of the harvest will hear.  
1955 Christ, who called us so specially to pray thus, will support  
1956 our prayers offered in His name and interest. Let us set  
1957 apart time and give ourselves to this part of our intercessory  
1958 work. It will lead us into the fellowship of that  
1959 compassionate heart of His that led Him to call for our  
1960 prayers. It will elevate us to the insight of our regal position,  
1961 as those whose will counts for something with the great  
1962 God in the advancement of His Kingdom. It will make us  
1963 feel how really we are God's fellow-workers on earth, to  
1964 whom a share in His work has in downright earnest been  
1965 entrusted. It will make us partakers in the soul travail, but

1966 also in the soul satisfaction of Jesus, as we know how, in  
1967 answer to our prayer, blessing has been given that otherwise  
1968 would not have come.

1969

1970 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

1971

1972 ———0———

1973

1974 Blessed Lord! Thou hast this day again given us another of  
1975 Thy wondrous lessons to learn. We humbly ask Thee, O  
1976 give us to see aright the spiritual realities of which Thou  
1977 hast been speaking. There is the harvest which is so large,  
1978 and perishing, as it waits for sleepy disciples to give the  
1979 signal for labourers to come. Lord, teach us to look out  
1980 upon it with a heart moved with compassion and pity. There  
1981 are the labourers, so few. Lord, show us how terrible the sin  
1982 of the want of prayer and faith, of which this is the token.  
1983 And there is the Lord of the harvest, so able and ready to  
1984 send them forth. Lord, show us how He does indeed wait  
1985 for the prayer to which He has bound His answer. And there  
1986 are the disciples, to whom the commission to pray has been  
1987 given: Lord, show us how Thou canst pour down Thy Spirit  
1988 and breathe upon them, so that Thy compassion and the  
1989 faith in Thy promise shall rouse them to unceasing,  
1990 prevailing prayer.

1991

1992 O our Lord! we cannot understand how Thou canst entrust  
1993 such work and give such power to men so slothful and  
1994 unfaithful. We thank Thee for all whom Thou art teaching  
1995 to cry day and night for labourers to be sent forth. Lord,  
1996 breathe Thine own Spirit on all Thy children, that they may  
1997 learn to live for this one thing alone—the Kingdom and  
1998 glory of their Lord—and become fully awake to the faith of  
1999 what their prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in

2000 this, as in every petition, be filled with the assurance that  
2001 prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God, will bring  
2002 certain and abundant answer. Amen.

---

2003

2004

2005

2006 TENTH LESSON.

2007

2008 What wilt thou?’

2009

2010 Or, Prayer must be Definite.

2011

2012 And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I  
2013 should do unto thee?’—Mark x. 51; Luke xviii. 41.

2014

2015 THE blind man had been crying out aloud, and that a great  
2016 deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.’ The cry had  
2017 reached the ear of the Lord; He knew what he wanted, and  
2018 was ready to grant it him. But ere He does it, He asks him:  
2019 What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’ He wants to  
2020 hear from his own lips, not only the general petition for  
2021 mercy, but the distinct expression of what his desire was.  
2022 Until he speaks it out, he is not healed.

2023

2024 There is now still many a suppliant to whom the Lord puts  
2025 the same question, and who cannot, until it has been  
2026 answered, get the aid he ask. Our prayers must not be a  
2027 vague appeal to His mercy, an indefinite cry for blessing,  
2028 but the distinct expression of definite need. Not that His  
2029 loving heart does not understand our cry, or is not ready to  
2030 hear. But He desires it for our own sakes. Such definite  
2031 prayer teaches us to know our own needs better. It demands  
2032 time, and thought, and self-scrutiny to find out what really  
2033 is our greatest need. It searches us and puts us to the test as

2034 to whether our desires are honest and real, such as we are  
2035 ready to persevere in. It leads us to judge whether our  
2036 desires are according to God's Word, and whether we really  
2037 believe that we shall receive the things we ask. It helps us to  
2038 wait for the special answer, and to mark it when it comes.

2039

2040 And yet how much of our prayer is vague and pointless.  
2041 Some cry for mercy, but take not the trouble to know what  
2042 mercy must do for them. Others ask, perhaps, to be  
2043 delivered from sin, but do not begin by bringing any sin by  
2044 name from which the deliverance may be claimed. Still  
2045 others pray for God's blessing on those around them, for the  
2046 outpouring of God's Spirit on their land or the world, and  
2047 yet have no special field where they wait and expect to see  
2048 the answer. To all the Lord says: And what is it now you  
2049 really want and expect Me to do? Every Christian has but  
2050 limited powers, and as he must have his own special field of  
2051 labour in which he works, so with his prayers too. Each  
2052 believer has his own circle, his family, his friends, his  
2053 neighbours. If he were to take one or more of these by  
2054 name, he would find that this really brings him into the  
2055 training-school of faith, and leads to personal and pointed  
2056 dealing with his God. It is when in such distinct matters we  
2057 have in faith claimed and received answers, that our more  
2058 general prayers will be believing and effectual.

2059

2060 We all know with what surprise the whole civilised world  
2061 heard of the way in which trained troops were repulsed by  
2062 the Transvaal Boers at Majuba. And to what did they owe  
2063 their success? In the armies of Europe the soldier fires upon  
2064 the enemy standing in large masses, and never thinks of  
2065 seeking an aim for every bullet. In hunting game the Boer  
2066 had learnt a different lesson: his practised eye knew to send  
2067 every bullet on its special message, to seek and find its man.

2068 Such aiming must gain the day in the spiritual world too. As  
2069 long as in prayer we just pour out our hearts in a multitude  
2070 of petitions, without taking time to see whether every  
2071 petition is sent with the purpose and expectation of getting  
2072 an answer, not many will reach the mark. But if, as in  
2073 silence of soul we bow before the Lord, we were to ask such  
2074 questions as these: What is now really my desire? do I  
2075 desire it in faith, expecting to receive? am I now ready to  
2076 place and leave it in the Father's bosom? is it a settled thing  
2077 between God and me that I am to have the answer? we  
2078 should learn so to pray that God would see and we would  
2079 know what we really expect.

2080

2081 It is for this, among other reasons, that the Lord warns us  
2082 against the vain repetitions of the Gentiles, who think to be  
2083 heard for their much praying. We often hear prayers of great  
2084 earnestness and fervour, in which a multitude of petitions  
2085 are poured forth, but to which the Saviour would  
2086 undoubtedly answer 'What wilt thou that I should do unto  
2087 thee?' If I am in a strange land, in the interests of the  
2088 business which my father owns, I would certainly write two  
2089 different sorts of letters. There will be family letters giving  
2090 expression to all the intercourse to which affection prompts;  
2091 and there will be business letters, containing orders for what  
2092 I need. And there may be letters in which both are found.  
2093 The answers will correspond to the letters. To each sentence  
2094 of the letters containing the family news I do not expect a  
2095 special answer. But for each order I send I am confident of  
2096 an answer whether the desired article has been forwarded.  
2097 In our dealings with God the business element must not be  
2098 wanting. With our expression of need and sin, of love and  
2099 faith and consecration, there must be the pointed statement  
2100 of what we ask and expect to receive; it is in the answer that

2101 the Father loves to give us the token of His approval and  
2102 acceptance.

2103

2104 But the word of the Master teaches us more. He does not  
2105 say, What dost thou wish? but, What does thou will? One  
2106 often wishes for a thing without willing it. I wish to have a  
2107 certain article, but I find the price too high; I resolve not to  
2108 take it; I wish, but do not will to have it. The sluggard  
2109 wishes to be rich, but does not will it. Many a one wishes to  
2110 be saved, but perishes because he does not will it. The will  
2111 rules the whole heart and life; if I really will to have  
2112 anything that is within my reach, I do not rest till I have it.  
2113 And so, when Jesus says to us, What wilt thou?' He asks  
2114 whether it is indeed our purpose to have what we ask at any  
2115 price, however great the sacrifice. Dost thou indeed so will  
2116 to have it that, though He delay it long, thou dost not hold  
2117 thy peace till He hear thee? Alas! how many prayers are  
2118 wishes, sent up for a short time and then forgotten, or sent  
2119 up year after year as matter of duty, while we rest content  
2120 with the prayer without the answer.

2121

2122 But, it may be asked, is it not best to make our wishes  
2123 known to God, and then to leave it to Him to decide what is  
2124 best, without seeking to assert our will? By no means. This  
2125 is the very essence of the prayer of faith, to which Jesus  
2126 sought to train His disciples, that it does not only make  
2127 known its desire and then leave the decision to God. That  
2128 would be the prayer of submission, for cases in which we  
2129 cannot know God's will. But the prayer of faith, finding  
2130 God's will in some promise of the Word, pleads for that till  
2131 it come. In Matthew (ix. 28) we read Jesus said to the blind  
2132 man: Believe ye that I can do this?' Here, in Mark, He says:  
2133 What wilt thou that I should do?' In both cases He said that  
2134 faith had saved them. And so He said to the Syrophenician

2135 woman, too: Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou  
2136 wilt.' Faith is nothing but the purpose of the will resting on  
2137 God's word, and saying: I must have it. To believe truly is  
2138 to will firmly.

2139

2140 But is not such a will at variance with our dependence on  
2141 God and our submission to Him? By no means; it is much  
2142 rather the true submission that honours God. It is only when  
2143 the child has yielded his own will in entire surrender to the  
2144 Father, that he receives from the Father liberty and power to  
2145 will what he would have. But, when once the believer has  
2146 accepted the will of God, as revealed through the Word and  
2147 Spirit, as his will, too, then it is the will of God that His  
2148 child should use this renewed will in His service. The will is  
2149 the highest power in the soul; grace wants above everything  
2150 to sanctify and restore this will, one of the chief traits of  
2151 God's image, to full and free exercise. As a son, who only  
2152 lives for his father's interests, who seeks not his own but his  
2153 father's will is trusted by the father with his business, so  
2154 God speaks to His child in all truth, What wilt thou?' It is  
2155 often spiritual sloth that, under the appearance of humility,  
2156 professes to have no will, because it fears the trouble of  
2157 searching out the will of God, or, when found, the struggle  
2158 of claiming it in faith. True humility is ever in company  
2159 with strong faith, which only seeks to know what is  
2160 according to the will of God, and then boldly claims the  
2161 fulfilment of the promise: Ye shall ask what ye will, and it  
2162 shall be done unto you.'

2163

2164 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

2165

2166 ———0———

2167



2168 Lord Jesus! teach me to pray with all my heart and strength,  
2169 that there may be no doubt with Thee or with me as to what  
2170 I have asked. May I so know what I desire that, even as my  
2171 petitions are recorded in heaven, I can record them on earth  
2172 too, and note each answer as it comes. And may my faith in  
2173 what Thy Word has promised be so clear that the Spirit may  
2174 indeed work in me the liberty to will that it shall come.  
2175 Lord! renew, strengthen, sanctify wholly my will for the  
2176 work of effectual prayer.

2177  
2178 Blessed Saviour! I do beseech Thee to reveal to me the  
2179 wonderful condescension Thou showest us, thus asking us  
2180 to say what we will that Thou shouldest do, and promising  
2181 to do whatever we will. Son of God! I cannot understand it;  
2182 I can only believe that Thou hast indeed redeemed us  
2183 wholly for Thyself, and dost seek to make the will, as our  
2184 noblest part, Thy most efficient servant. Lord! I do most  
2185 unreservedly yield my will to Thee, as the power through  
2186 which Thy Spirit is to rule my whole being. Let Him take  
2187 possession of it, lead it into the truth of Thy promises, and  
2188 make it so strong in prayer that I may ever hear Thy voice  
2189 saying: Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’  
2190 Amen.

2191

2192

2193

2194 ELEVENTH LESSON.

2195

2196 Believe that ye have received;’

2197

2198 Or, The Faith that Takes.

2199

2200 Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and  
2201 ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall  
2202 have them.’—Mark xi. 24

2203

2204 WHAT a promise! so large, so Divine, that our little hearts  
2205 cannot take it in, and in every possible way seek to limit it  
2206 to what we think safe or probable; instead of allowing it, in  
2207 its quickening power and energy, just as He gave it, to enter  
2208 in, and to enlarge our hearts to the measure of what His love  
2209 and power are really ready to do for us. Faith is very far  
2210 from being a mere conviction of the truth of God’s word, or  
2211 a conclusion drawn from certain premises. It is the ear  
2212 which has heard God say what He will do, the eye which  
2213 has seen Him doing it, and, therefore, where there is true  
2214 faith, it is impossible but the answer must come. If we only  
2215 see to it that we do the one thing that He asks of us as we  
2216 pray: BELIEVE that ye have received; He will see to it that  
2217 He does the thing He has promised: Ye shall have them.’  
2218 The key-note of Solomon’s prayer (2 Chron. vi. 4), Blessed  
2219 be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with His hands fulfilled  
2220 that which He spake with His mouth to my father David,’ is  
2221 the key-note of all true prayer: the joyful adoration of a God  
2222 whose hand always secures the fulfilment of what His  
2223 mouth hath spoken. Let us in this spirit listen to the promise  
2224 Jesus gives; each part of it has its Divine message.

2225

2226 All things whatsoever.’ At this first word our human  
2227 wisdom at once begins to doubt and ask: This surely cannot  
2228 be literally true? But if it be not, why did the Master speak  
2229 it, using the very strongest expression He could find: All  
2230 things whatsoever.’ And it is not as if this were the only  
2231 time He spoke thus; is it not He who also said, If thou canst  
2232 believe, ALL THINGS are possible to him that believeth;’  
2233 If ye have faith, NOTHING shall be impossible to you.’

2234 Faith is so wholly the work of God's Spirit through His  
2235 word in the prepared heart of the believing disciple, that it is  
2236 impossible that the fulfilment should not come; faith is the  
2237 pledge and forerunner of the coming answer. Yes, ALL  
2238 THINGS WHATSOEVER ye shall ask in prayer believing,  
2239 ye receive.' The tendency of human reason is to interpose  
2240 here, and with certain qualifying clauses, if expedient,' if  
2241 according to God's will,' to break the force of a statement  
2242 which appears dangerous. O let us beware of dealing thus  
2243 with the Master's words. His promise is most literally true.  
2244 He wants His oft repeated ALL THINGS' to enter into our  
2245 hearts, and reveal to us how mighty the power of faith is,  
2246 how truly the Head calls the members to share with Him in  
2247 His power, how wholly our Father places His power at the  
2248 disposal of the child that wholly trusts Him. In this all  
2249 things' faith is to have its food and strength: as we weaken  
2250 it we weaken faith. The WHATSOEVER is unconditional:  
2251 the only condition is what is implied in the believing. Ere  
2252 we can believe we must find out and know what God's will  
2253 is' believing is the exercise of a soul surrendered and given  
2254 up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit; but when  
2255 once we do believe nothing shall be impossible. God forbid  
2256 that we should try and bring down His ALL THINGS to the  
2257 level of what we think possible. Let us now simply take  
2258 Christ's WHATSOEVER' as the measure and the hope of  
2259 our faith: it is a seed-word which, if taken just as He gives  
2260 it, and kept in the heart, will unfold itself and strike root, fill  
2261 our life with its fulness, and bring forth fruit abundantly.

2262

2263 All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for.' It is in prayer  
2264 that these all things' are to be brought to God, to be asked  
2265 and received of Him. The faith that receives them is the  
2266 fruit of the prayer. In one aspect there must be faith before  
2267 there can be prayer; in another the faith is the outcome and

2268 the growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the  
2269 Saviour, in intercourse with Him, that faith rises to grasp  
2270 what at first appeared too high. It is in prayer that we hold  
2271 up our desire to the light of God's Holy Will, that our  
2272 motives are tested, and proof given whether we ask indeed  
2273 in the name of Jesus, and only for the glory of God. It is in  
2274 prayer that we wait for the leading of the Spirit to show us  
2275 whether we are asking the right thing and in the right spirit.  
2276 It is in prayer that we become conscious of our want of  
2277 faith, that we are led on to say to the Father that we do  
2278 believe, and that we prove the reality of our faith by the  
2279 confidence with which we persevere. It is in prayer that  
2280 Jesus teaches and inspires faith. He that waits to pray, or  
2281 loses heart in prayer, because he does not yet feel the faith  
2282 needed to get the answer, will never learn to believe. He  
2283 who begins to pray and ask will find the Spirit of faith is  
2284 given nowhere so surely as at the foot of the Throne.

2285  
2286 Believe that ye have received.' It is clear that what we are to  
2287 believe is, that we receive the very things we ask. The  
2288 Saviour does not hint that because the Father knows what is  
2289 best He may give us something else. The very mountain  
2290 faith bids depart is cast into the sea. There is a prayer in  
2291 which, in everything, we make known our requests with  
2292 prayer and supplication, and the reward is the sweet peace  
2293 of God keeping heart and mind. This is the prayer of trust. It  
2294 has reference to things of which we cannot find out if God  
2295 is going to give them. As children we make known our  
2296 desires in the countless things of daily life, and leave it to  
2297 the Father to give or not as He thinks best. But the prayer of  
2298 faith of which Jesus speaks is something different,  
2299 something higher. When, whether in the greater interests of  
2300 the Master's work, or in the lesser concerns of our daily life,  
2301 the soul is led to see how there is nothing that so honours

2302 the Father as the faith that is assured that He will do what  
2303 He has said in giving us whatsoever we ask for, and takes  
2304 its stand on the promise as brought home by the Spirit, it  
2305 may know most certainly that it does receive exactly what it  
2306 asks. Just see how clearly the Lord sets this before us in  
2307 verse 23: Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall  
2308 believe that what he saith cometh to pass, he shall have it.’  
2309 This is the blessing of the prayer of faith of which Jesus  
2310 speaks.

2311  
2312 Believe that ye have received.’ This is the word of central  
2313 importance, of which the meaning is too often  
2314 misunderstood. Believe that you have received! now, while  
2315 praying, the thing you ask for. It may only be later that you  
2316 shall have it in personal experience, that you shall see what  
2317 you believe; but now, without seeing, you are to believe that  
2318 it has been given you of the Father in heaven. The receiving  
2319 or accepting of an answer to prayer is just like the receiving  
2320 or accepting of Jesus or of pardon, a spiritual thing, an act  
2321 of faith apart from all feeling. When I come as a supplicant  
2322 for pardon, I believe that Jesus in heaven is for me, and so I  
2323 receive or take Him. When I come as a supplicant for any  
2324 special gift, which is according to God’s word, I believe  
2325 that what I ask is given me: I believe that I have it, I hold it  
2326 in faith; I thank God that it is mine. If we know that He  
2327 heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the  
2328 petitions which we have asked of Him.’

2329  
2330 And ye shall have them.’ That is, the gift which we first  
2331 hold in faith as bestowed upon us in heaven will also  
2332 become ours in personal experience. But will it be needful  
2333 to pray longer if once we know we have been heard and  
2334 have received what we asked? There are cases in which  
2335 such prayer will not be needful, in which the blessing is

2336 ready to break through at once, if we but hold fast our  
2337 confidence, and prove our faith by praising for what we  
2338 have received, in the face of our not yet having it in  
2339 experience. There are other cases in which the faith that has  
2340 received needs to be still further tried and strengthened in  
2341 persevering prayer. God only knows when everything in  
2342 and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the  
2343 blessing that has been given to faith. Elijah knew for certain  
2344 that rain would come; God had promised it; and yet he had  
2345 to pray the seven times. And that prayer was no show or  
2346 play; an intense spiritual reality in the heart of him who lay  
2347 pleading there, and in the heaven above where it had its  
2348 effectual work to do. It is through faith and patience we  
2349 inherit the promises.' Faith says most confidently, I have  
2350 received it. Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift  
2351 bestowed in heaven is seen on earth. Believe that ye have  
2352 received, and ye shall have.' Between the have received in  
2353 heaven, and the shall have of earth, believe: believing praise  
2354 and prayer is the link.

2355

2356 And now, remember one thing more: It is Jesus who said  
2357 this. As we see heaven thus opened to us, and the Father on  
2358 the Throne offering to give us whatsoever we ask in faith,  
2359 our hearts feel full of shame that we have so little availed  
2360 ourselves of our privilege, and full of fear lest our feeble  
2361 faith still fail to grasp what is so clearly placed within our  
2362 reach. There is one thing must make us strong and full of  
2363 hope: it is Jesus who has brought us this message from the  
2364 Father. He Himself, when He was on earth, lived the life of  
2365 faith and prayer. It was when the disciples expressed their  
2366 surprise at what He had done to the fig-tree, that He told  
2367 them that the very same life He led could be theirs; that they  
2368 could not only command the fig-tree, but the very mountain,  
2369 and it must obey. And He is our life: all He was on earth He

2370 is in us now; all He teaches He really gives. He is Himself  
2371 the Author and the Perfecter of our faith: He gives the spirit  
2372 of faith; let us not be afraid that such faith is not meant for  
2373 us. It is meant for every child of the Father; it is within  
2374 reach of each one who will but be childlike, yielding  
2375 himself to the Father's Will and Love, trusting the Father's  
2376 Word and Power. Dear fellow-Christian! let the thought that  
2377 this word comes through Jesus, the Son, our Brother, give  
2378 us courage, and let our answer be: Yea, Blessed Lord, we  
2379 do believe Thy Word, we do believe that we receive.

2380

2381 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

2382

2383 ———0————

2384

2385 Blessed Lord! Thou didst come from the Father to show us  
2386 all His love, and all the treasures of blessing that love is  
2387 waiting to bestow. Lord! Thou hast this day again flung the  
2388 gates so wide open, and given us such promises as to our  
2389 liberty in prayer, that we must blush that our poor hearts  
2390 have so little taken it in. It has been too large for us to  
2391 believe.

2392

2393 Lord! we now look up to Thee to teach us to take and keep  
2394 and use this precious word of Thine: All things whatsoever  
2395 ye ask, believe that ye have received.' Blessed Jesus! it is  
2396 Thy self in whom our faith must be rooted if it is to grow  
2397 strong. Thy work has freed us wholly from the power of sin,  
2398 and opened the way to the Father; Thy Love is ever longing  
2399 to bring us into the full fellowship of Thy glory and power;  
2400 Thy Spirit is ever drawing us upward into a life of perfect  
2401 faith and confidence; we are assured that in Thy teaching  
2402 we shall learn to pray the prayer of faith. Thou wilt train us  
2403 to pray so that we believe that we receive, to believe that we

2404 really have what we ask. Lord! teach me so to know and  
2405 trust and love Thee, so to live and abide in Thee, that all my  
2406 prayers rise up and come before God in Thee, and that my  
2407 soul may have in Thee the assurance that I am heard. Amen.  
2408

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2409

2410

2411 TWELFTH LESSON.

2412

2413 Have faith in God;'

2414

2415 Or, The Secret of Believing Prayer.

2416

2417 Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God. Verily  
2418 I say unto you, Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but  
2419 shall believe that what He saith cometh to pass; he shall  
2420 have it. Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye  
2421 pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye  
2422 shall have them.'—Mark xi. 22-24.

2423

2424 THE promise of answer to prayer which formed our  
2425 yesterday's lesson is one of the most wonderful in all  
2426 Scripture. In how many hearts it has raised the question:  
2427 How ever can I attain the faith that knows that it receives all  
2428 it asks?

2429

2430 It is this question our Lord would answer today. Ere He  
2431 gave that wonderful promise to His disciples, He spoke  
2432 another word, in which He points out where the faith in the  
2433 answer to prayer takes its rise, and ever finds its strength.  
2434 HAVE FAITH IN GOD: this word precedes the other, Have  
2435 faith in the promise of an answer to prayer. The power to  
2436 believe a promise depends entirely, but only, on faith in the  
2437 promiser. Trust in the person begets trust in his word. It is



2438 only where we live and associate with God in personal,  
2439 loving intercourse, where GOD HIMSELF is all to us,  
2440 where our whole being is continually opened up and  
2441 exposed to the mighty influences that are at work where His  
2442 Holy Presence is revealed, that the capacity will be  
2443 developed for believing that He gives whatsoever we ask.

2444

2445 This connection between faith in God and faith in His  
2446 promise will become clear to us if we think what faith really  
2447 is. It is often compared to the hand or the mouth, by which  
2448 we take and appropriate what is offered to us. But it is of  
2449 importance that we should understand that faith is also the  
2450 ear by which I hear what is promised, the eye by which I  
2451 see what is offered me. On this the power to take depends. I  
2452 must hear the person who gives me the promise: the very  
2453 tone of his voice gives me courage to believe. I must see  
2454 him: in the light of his eye and countenance all fear as to my  
2455 right to take passes away. The value of the promise depends  
2456 on the promiser: it is on my knowledge of what the  
2457 promiser is that faith in the promise depends.

2458

2459 It is for this reason that Jesus, ere He gives that wonderful  
2460 prayer-promise, first says, HAVE FAITH IN GOD.' That is,  
2461 let thine eye be open to the Living God, and gaze on Him,  
2462 seeing Him who is Invisible. It is through the eye that I  
2463 yield myself to the influence of what is before me; I just  
2464 allow it to enter, to exert its influence, to leave its  
2465 impression upon my mind. So believing God is just looking  
2466 to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His  
2467 presence, giving Him time and yielding the whole being to  
2468 take in the full impression of what He is as God, the soul  
2469 opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of  
2470 His love. Yes, faith is the eye to which God shows what He  
2471 is and does: through faith the light of His presence and the

2472 workings of His mighty power stream into the soul. As that  
2473 which I see lives in me, so by faith God lives in me too.

2474

2475 And even so faith is also the ear through which the voice of  
2476 God is always heard and intercourse with Him kept up. It is  
2477 through the Holy Spirit the Father speaks to us; the Son is  
2478 the Word, the substance of what God says; the Spirit is the  
2479 living voice. This the child of God needs to lead and guide  
2480 him; the secret voice from heaven must teach him, as it  
2481 taught Jesus, what to say and what to do. An ear opened  
2482 towards God, that is, a believing heart waiting on Him, to  
2483 hear what He says, will hear Him speak. The words of God  
2484 will not only be the words of a Book, but, proceeding from  
2485 the mouth of God, they will be spirit and truth, life and  
2486 power. They will bring in deed and living experience what  
2487 are otherwise only thoughts. Through this opened ear the  
2488 soul tarries under the influence of the life and power of God  
2489 Himself. As the words I hear enter the mind and dwell and  
2490 work there, so through faith God enters the heart, and  
2491 dwells and works there.

2492

2493 When faith now is in full exercise as eye and ear, as the  
2494 faculty of the soul by which we see and hear God, then it  
2495 will be able to exercise its full power as hand and mouth, by  
2496 which we appropriate God and His blessing. The power of  
2497 reception will depend entirely on the power of spiritual  
2498 perception. For this reason Jesus said, ere He gave the  
2499 promise that God would answer believing prayer: HAVE  
2500 FAITH IN GOD.' Faith is simply surrender: I yield myself  
2501 to the impression the tidings I hear make on me. By faith I  
2502 yield myself to the living God. His glory and love fill my  
2503 heart, and have the mastery over my life. Faith is  
2504 fellowship; I give myself up to the influence of the friend  
2505 who makes me a promise, and become linked to him by it.

2506 And it is when we enter into this living fellowship with God  
2507 Himself, in a faith that always sees and hears Him, that it  
2508 becomes easy and natural to believe His promise as to  
2509 prayer. Faith in the promise is the fruit of faith in the  
2510 promiser: the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith.  
2511 And in this way the faith that prays effectually is indeed a  
2512 gift of God. Not as something that He bestows or infuses at  
2513 once, but in a far deeper and truer sense, as the blessed  
2514 disposition or habit of soul which is wrought and grows up  
2515 in us in a life of intercourse with Him. Surely for one who  
2516 knows his Father well, and lives in constant close  
2517 intercourse with Him, it is a simple thing to believe the  
2518 promise that He will do the will of His child who lives in  
2519 union with Himself.

2520

2521 It is because very many of God's children do not understand  
2522 this connection between the life of faith and the prayer of  
2523 faith that their experience of the power of prayer is so  
2524 limited. When they desire earnestly to obtain an answer  
2525 from God, they fix their whole heart upon the promise, and  
2526 try their utmost to grasp that promise in faith. When they do  
2527 not succeed, they are ready to give up hope; the promise is  
2528 true, but it is beyond their power to take hold of it in faith.  
2529 Listen to the lesson Jesus teaches us this day: HAVE  
2530 FAITH IN GOD, the Living God: let faith look to God  
2531 more than the thing promised: it is His love, His power, His  
2532 living presence will waken and work the faith. A physician  
2533 would say to one asking for some means to get more  
2534 strength in his arms and hands to seize and hold, that his  
2535 whole constitution must be built up and strengthened. So  
2536 the cure of a feeble faith is alone to be found in the  
2537 invigoration of our whole spiritual life by intercourse with  
2538 God. Learn to believe in God, to take hold of God, to let  
2539 God take possession of thy life, and it will be easy to take

2540 hold of the promise. He that knows and trusts God finds it  
2541 easy to trust the promise too.  
2542  
2543 Just note how distinctly this comes out in the saints of old.  
2544 Every special exhibition of the power of faith was the fruit  
2545 of a special revelation of God. See it in Abraham: And the  
2546 word of the Lord came unto Abram, saying, Fear not,  
2547 Abram; I am thy shield. And He brought him forth abroad,  
2548 and said . . . AND HE BELIEVED THE LORD.’ And later  
2549 again: The Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, I am  
2550 God Almighty. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked  
2551 with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with  
2552 thee.’ It was the revelation of God Himself that gave the  
2553 promise its living power to enter the heart and work the  
2554 faith. Because they knew God, these men of faith could not  
2555 do anything but trust His promise. God’s promise will be to  
2556 us what God Himself is. It is the man who walks before the  
2557 Lord, and falls upon his face to listen while the living God  
2558 speaks to him, who will really receive the promise. Though  
2559 we have God’s promises in the Bible, with full liberty to  
2560 take them, the spiritual power is wanting, except as God  
2561 Himself speaks them to us. And He speaks to those who  
2562 walk and live with Him. Therefore, HAVE FAITH IN  
2563 GOD: let faith be all eye and ear, the surrender to let God  
2564 make His full impression, and reveal Himself fully in the  
2565 soul. Count it one of the chief blessings of prayer to  
2566 exercise faith in God, as the Living Mighty God who waits  
2567 to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His will, and the work  
2568 of faith with power. See in Him the God of Love, whose  
2569 delight it is to bless and impart Himself. In such worship of  
2570 faith in God the power will speedily come to believe the  
2571 promise too: ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK,  
2572 BELIEVE THAT YE RECEIVE.’ Yes, see that thou dost in  
2573 faith make God thine own; the promise will be thine too.

2574

2575 Precious lessons that Jesus has to teach us this day. We seek  
2576 God's gifts: God wants to give us HIMSELF first. We think  
2577 of prayer as the power to draw down good gifts from  
2578 heaven; Jesus as the means to draw ourselves up to God.  
2579 We want to stand at the door and cry; Jesus would have us  
2580 first enter in and realize that we are friends and children. Let  
2581 us accept the teaching. Let every experience of the littleness  
2582 of our faith in prayer urge us first to have and exercise more  
2583 faith in the living God, and in such faith to yield ourselves  
2584 to Him. A heart full of God has power for the prayer of  
2585 faith. Faith in God begets faith in the promise, in the  
2586 promise too of an answer to prayer.

2587

2588 Therefore, child of God, take time, take time, to bow before  
2589 Him, to wait on Him to reveal Himself. Take time, and let  
2590 thy soul in holy awe and worship exercise and express its  
2591 faith in the Infinite One, and as He imparts Himself and  
2592 takes possession of thee, the prayer of faith will crown thy  
2593 faith in God.

2594

2595 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. ?

2596

2597 ———0———

2598

2599 O my God! I do believe in Thee. I believe in Thee as the  
2600 Father, Infinite in Thy Love and Power. And as the Son, my  
2601 Redeemer and my Life. And as the Holy Spirit, Comforter  
2602 and Guide and Strength. Three-One God, I have faith in  
2603 Thee. I know and am sure that all that Thou art Thou art to  
2604 me, that all Thou hast promised Thou wilt perform.

2605

2606 Lord Jesus! increase this faith. Teach me to take time, and  
2607 wait and worship in the Holy Presence until my faith takes

2608 in all there is in my God for me. Let it see Him as the  
2609 Fountain of all Life, working with Almighty Strength to  
2610 accomplish His will on the world and in me. Let it see Him  
2611 in His love longing to meet and fulfil my desires. Let it so  
2612 take possession of my heart and life that through faith God  
2613 alone may dwell there. Lord Jesus, help me! with my whole  
2614 heart would I believe in God. Let faith in God each moment  
2615 fill me.

2616  
2617 O my Blessed Saviour! how can Thy Church glorify Thee,  
2618 how can it fulfil that work of intercession through which  
2619 Thy kingdom must come, unless our whole life be FAITH  
2620 IN GOD. Blessed Lord! speak Thy Word, HAVE FAITH  
2621 IN GOD,' unto the depths of our souls.

2622

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2623

2624

2625 THIRTEENTH LESSON.

2626

2627 Prayer and fasting;'

2628

2629 Or, The Cure of Unbelief.

2630

2631 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could  
2632 not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of  
2633 your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a  
2634 grain of mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you.  
2635 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and  
2636 fasting'—Matt. xvii. 19-21.

2637

2638 WHEN the disciples saw Jesus cast the evil spirit out of the  
2639 epileptic whom they could not cure,' they asked the Master  
2640 for the cause of their failure. He had given them power and  
2641 authority over all devils, and to cure all diseases.' They had

2642 often exercised that power, and joyfully told how the devils  
2643 were subject to them. And yet now, while He was on the  
2644 Mount, they had utterly failed. That there had been nothing  
2645 in the will of God or in the nature of the case to render  
2646 deliverance impossible, had been proved: at Christ's  
2647 bidding the evil spirit had gone out. From their expression,  
2648 Why could we not?' it is evident that they had wished and  
2649 sought to do so; they had probably used the Master's name,  
2650 and called upon the evil spirit to go out. Their efforts had  
2651 been vain, and in presence of the multitude, they had been  
2652 put to shame. Why could we not?'

2653  
2654 Christ's answer was direct and plain: Because of your  
2655 unbelief.' The cause of His success and their failure, was  
2656 not owing to His having a special power to which they had  
2657 no access. No; the reason was not far to seek. He had so  
2658 often taught them that there is one power, that of faith, to  
2659 which, in the kingdom of darkness, as in the kingdom of  
2660 God, everything must bow; in the spiritual world failure has  
2661 but one cause, the want of faith. Faith is the one condition  
2662 on which all Divine power can enter into man and work  
2663 through him. It is the susceptibility of the unseen: man's  
2664 will yielded up to, and moulded by, the will of God. The  
2665 power they had received to cast out devils, they did not hold  
2666 in themselves as a permanent gift or possession; the power  
2667 was in Christ, to be received, and held, and used by faith  
2668 alone, living faith in Himself. Had they been full of faith in  
2669 Him as Lord and Conqueror in the spirit-world, had they  
2670 been full of faith in Him as having given them authority to  
2671 cast out in His name, this faith would have given them the  
2672 victory. Because of your unbelief' was, for all time, the  
2673 Master's explanation and reproof of impotence and failure  
2674 in His Church.  
2675

2676 But such want of faith must have a cause too. Well might  
2677 the disciples have asked: And why could we not believe?  
2678 Our faith has cast out devils before this: why have we now  
2679 failed in believing? The Master proceeds to tell them ere  
2680 they ask: This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.’  
2681 As faith is the simplest, so it is the highest exercise of the  
2682 spiritual life, where our spirit yields itself in perfect  
2683 receptivity to God’s Spirit and so is strengthened to its  
2684 highest activity. This faith depends entirely upon the state  
2685 of the spiritual life; only when this is strong and in full  
2686 health, when the Spirit of God has full sway in our life, is  
2687 there the power of faith to do its mighty deeds. And  
2688 therefore Jesus adds: Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by  
2689 fasting and prayer.’ The faith that can overcome such  
2690 stubborn resistance as you have just seen in this evil spirit,  
2691 Jesus tells them, is not possible except to men living in very  
2692 close fellowship with God, and in very special separation  
2693 from the world—in prayer and fasting. And so He teaches  
2694 us two lessons in regard to prayer of deep importance. The  
2695 one, that faith needs a life of prayer in which to grow and  
2696 keep strong. The other, that prayer needs fasting for its full  
2697 and perfect development.

2698  
2699 Faith needs a life of prayer for its full growth. In all the  
2700 different parts of the spiritual life, there is such close union,  
2701 such unceasing action and re-action, that each may be both  
2702 cause and effect. Thus it is with faith. There can be no true  
2703 prayer without faith; some measure of faith must precede  
2704 prayer. And yet prayer is also the way to more faith; there  
2705 can be no higher degrees of faith except through much  
2706 prayer. This is the lesson Jesus teaches here. There is  
2707 nothing needs so much to grow as our faith. Your faith  
2708 groweth exceedingly,’ is said of one Church. When Jesus  
2709 spoke the words, According to your faith be it unto you,’ He



2710 announced the law of the kingdom, which tells us that all  
2711 have not equal degrees of faith, that the same person has not  
2712 always the same degree, and that the measure of faith must  
2713 always determine the measure of power and of blessing. If  
2714 we want to know where and how our faith is to grow, the  
2715 Master points us to the throne of God. It is in prayer, in the  
2716 exercise of the faith I have, in fellowship with the living  
2717 God, that faith can increase. Faith can only live by feeding  
2718 on what is Divine, on God Himself.

2719

2720 It is in the adoring worship of God, the waiting on Him and  
2721 for Him, the deep silence of soul that yields itself for God to  
2722 reveal Himself, that the capacity for knowing and trusting  
2723 God will be developed. It is as we take His word from the  
2724 Blessed Book, and bring it to Himself, asking him to speak  
2725 it to us with His living loving voice, that the power will  
2726 come fully to believe and receive the word as God's own  
2727 word to us. It is in prayer, in living contact with God in  
2728 living faith, that faith, the power to trust God, and in that  
2729 trust, to accept everything He says, to accept every  
2730 possibility He has offered to our faith will become strong in  
2731 us. Many Christians cannot understand what is meant by the  
2732 much prayer they sometimes hear spoken of: they can form  
2733 no conception, nor do they feel the need, of spending hours  
2734 with God. But what the Master says, the experience of His  
2735 people has confirmed: men of strong faith are men of much  
2736 prayer.

2737

2738 This just brings us back again to the lesson we learned when  
2739 Jesus, before telling us to believe that we receive what we  
2740 ask, first said, 'Have faith in God.' It is God, the living God,  
2741 into whom our faith must strike its roots deep and broad;  
2742 then it will be strong to remove mountains and cast out  
2743 devils. If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you.'

2744 Oh! if we do but give ourselves up to the work God has for  
2745 us in the world, coming into contact with the mountains and  
2746 the devils there are to be cast away and cast out, we should  
2747 soon comprehend the need there is of much faith, and of  
2748 much prayer, as the soil in which alone faith can be  
2749 cultivated. Christ Jesus is our life, the life of our faith too. It  
2750 is His life in us that makes us strong, and makes us simple  
2751 to believe. It is in the dying to self which much prayer  
2752 implies, in closer union to Jesus, that the spirit of faith will  
2753 come in power. Faith needs prayer for its full growth.

2754  
2755 And prayer needs fasting for its full growth: this is the  
2756 second lesson. Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp  
2757 the invisible; fasting, the other, with which we let loose and  
2758 cast away the visible. In nothing is man more closely  
2759 connected with the world of sense than in his need of food,  
2760 and his enjoyment of it. It was the fruit, good for food, with  
2761 which man was tempted and fell in Paradise. It was with  
2762 bread to be made of stones that Jesus, when an hungered,  
2763 was tempted in the wilderness, and in fasting that He  
2764 triumphed. The body has been redeemed to be a temple of  
2765 the Holy Spirit; it is in body as well as spirit, it is very  
2766 specially, Scripture says, in eating and drinking, we are to  
2767 glorify God. It is to be feared that there are many Christians  
2768 to whom this eating to the glory of God has not yet become  
2769 a spiritual reality. And the first thought suggested by Jesus'  
2770 words in regard to fasting and prayer, is, that it is only in a  
2771 life of moderation and temperance and self-denial that there  
2772 will be the heart or the strength to pray much.

2773  
2774 But then there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and  
2775 anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its feasts with eating and  
2776 drinking. There may come times of intense desire, when it  
2777 is strongly felt how the body, with its appetites, lawful

2778 though they be, still hinder the spirit in its battle with the  
2779 powers of darkness, and the need is felt of keeping it under.  
2780 We are creatures of the senses: our mind is helped by what  
2781 comes to us embodied in concrete form; fasting helps to  
2782 express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are  
2783 ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain  
2784 what we seek for the kingdom of God. And He who  
2785 accepted the fasting and sacrifice of the Son, knows to value  
2786 and accept and reward with spiritual power the soul that is  
2787 thus ready to give up all for Christ and His kingdom.

2788  
2789 And then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the  
2790 reaching out after God and the unseen; fasting, the letting  
2791 go of all that is of the seen and temporal. While ordinary  
2792 Christians imagine that all that is not positively forbidden  
2793 and sinful is lawful to them, and seek to retain as much as  
2794 possible of this world, with its property, its literature, its  
2795 enjoyments, the truly consecrated soul is as the soldier who  
2796 carries only what he needs for the warfare. Laying aside  
2797 every weight, as well as the easily besetting sin, afraid of  
2798 entangling himself with the affairs of this life, he seeks to  
2799 lead a Nazarite life, as one specially set apart for the Lord  
2800 and His service. Without such voluntary separation, even  
2801 from what is lawful, no one will attain power in prayer: this  
2802 kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.

2803  
2804 Disciples of Jesus! who have asked the Master to teach you  
2805 to pray, come now and accept His lessons. He tells you that  
2806 prayer is the path to faith, strong faith, that can cast out  
2807 devils. He tells you: 'If ye have faith, nothing shall be  
2808 impossible to you;' let this glorious promise encourage you  
2809 to pray much. Is the prize not worth the price? Shall we not  
2810 give up all to follow Jesus in the path He opens to us here;  
2811 shall we not, if need be, fast? Shall we not do anything that

2812 neither the body nor the world around hinder us in our great  
2813 life-work,—having intercourse with our God in prayer, that  
2814 we may become men of faith, whom He can use in His  
2815 work of saving the world.

2816  
2817 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. ’

2818

2819 ———0———

2820

2821 O Lord Jesus! how continually Thou hast to reprove us for  
2822 our unbelief! How strange it must appear to Thee, this  
2823 terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises.  
2824 Lord! let Thy reproof, with its searching, Because of your  
2825 unbelief, ’ sink into the very depths of our hearts, and reveal  
2826 to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our  
2827 blame. And then teach us, Blessed Lord, that there is a place  
2828 where faith can be learned and gained,—even in the prayer  
2829 and fasting that brings into living and abiding fellowship  
2830 with Thyself and the Father.

2831

2832 O Saviour! Thou Thyself art the Author and the Perfecter of  
2833 our faith; teach us what it is to let Thee live in us by Thy  
2834 Holy Spirit. Lord! our efforts and prayers for grace to  
2835 believe have been so unavailing. We know why it was: we  
2836 sought for strength in ourselves to be given from Thee.  
2837 Holy Jesus! do at length teach us the mystery of Thy life in  
2838 us, and how Thou, by Thy Spirit, dost undertake to live in  
2839 us the life of faith, to see to it that our faith shall not fail. O  
2840 let us see that our faith will just be a part of that wonderful  
2841 prayer-life which Thou givest in them who expect their  
2842 training for the ministry of intercession, not in word and  
2843 thought only, but in the Holy Unction Thou givest, the  
2844 inflowing of the Spirit of Thine own life. And teach us how,

2845 in fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith to which  
2846 nothing shall be impossible. Amen.

2847

2848 NOTE

2849

2850 At the time when Blumhardt was passing through his  
2851 terrible conflict with the evil spirits in those who were  
2852 possessed, and seeking to cast them out by prayer, he often  
2853 wondered what it was that hindered the answer. One day a  
2854 friend, to whom he had spoken of his trouble, directed his  
2855 attention to our Lord's words about fasting. Blumhardt  
2856 resolved to give himself to fasting, sometimes for more than  
2857 thirty hours. From reflection and experience he gained the  
2858 conviction that it is of more importance than is generally  
2859 thought. He says, Inasmuch as the fasting is before God, a  
2860 practical proof that the thing we ask is to us a matter of true  
2861 and pressing interest, and inasmuch as in a high degree it  
2862 strengthens the intensity and power of the prayer, and  
2863 becomes the unceasing practical expression of a prayer  
2864 without words, I could believe that it would not be without  
2865 efficacy, especially as the Master's words had reference to a  
2866 case like the present. I tried it, without telling any one, and  
2867 in truth the later conflict was extraordinarily lightened by it.  
2868 I could speak with much greater restfulness and decision. I  
2869 did not require to be so long present with the sick one; and I  
2870 felt that I could influence without being present.'

2871

2872

2873

2874 FOURTEENTH LESSON.

2875

2876 When ye stand praying, forgive;'

2877

2878 Or, Prayer and Love.

2879

2880 And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught  
2881 against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven  
2882 may forgive you your trespasses.’—Mark xi. 25.

2883

2884 THESE words follow immediately on the great prayer-  
2885 promise, All things whatsoever ye pray, believe that ye have  
2886 received them, and ye shall have them.’ We have already  
2887 seen how the words that preceded that promise, Have faith  
2888 in God,’ taught us that in prayer all depends upon our  
2889 relation to God being clear; these words that follow on it  
2890 remind us that our relation with fellow-men must be clear  
2891 too. Love to God and love to our neighbour are inseparable:  
2892 the prayer from a heart, that is either not right with God on  
2893 the one side, or with men on the other, cannot prevail. Faith  
2894 and love are essential to each other.

2895

2896 We find that this is a thought to which our Lord frequently  
2897 gave expression. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 23,  
2898 24), when speaking of the sixth commandment, He taught  
2899 His disciples how impossible acceptable worship to the  
2900 Father was if everything were not right with the brother: If  
2901 thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest  
2902 that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift  
2903 before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy  
2904 brother, and then come and offer thy gift.’ And so later,  
2905 when speaking of prayer to God, after having taught us to  
2906 pray, Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our  
2907 debtors,’ He added at the close of the prayer: If you forgive  
2908 not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive  
2909 your trespasses.’ At the close of the parable of the  
2910 unmerciful servant He applies His teaching in the words: So  
2911 shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not  
2912 every one his brother from your hearts.’ And so here, beside

2913 the dried-up fig-tree, where He speaks of the wonderful  
2914 power of faith and the prayer of faith, He all at once,  
2915 apparently without connection, introduces the thought,  
2916 Whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught  
2917 against any one; that your Father also which is in heaven  
2918 may forgive you your trespasses.' It is as if the Lord had  
2919 learned during His life at Nazareth and afterwards that  
2920 disobedience to the law of love to men was the great sin  
2921 even of praying people, and the great cause of the  
2922 feebleness of their prayer. And it is as if He wanted to lead  
2923 us into His own blessed experience that nothing gives such  
2924 liberty of access and such power in believing as the  
2925 consciousness that we have given ourselves in love and  
2926 compassion, for those whom God loves.

2927

2928 The first lesson taught here is that of a forgiving disposition.  
2929 We pray, Forgive, even as we have forgiven.' Scripture  
2930 says, Forgive one another, even as God also in Christ  
2931 forgave you.' God's full and free forgiveness is to be the  
2932 rule of ours with men. Otherwise our reluctant, half-hearted  
2933 forgiveness, which is not forgiveness at all, will be God's  
2934 rule with us. Every prayer rests upon our faith in God's  
2935 pardoning grace. If God dealt with us after our sins, not one  
2936 prayer could be heard. Pardon opens the door to all God's  
2937 love and blessing: because God has pardoned all our sin,  
2938 our prayer can prevail to obtain all we need. The deep sure  
2939 ground of answer to prayer is God's forgiving love. When it  
2940 has taken possession of the heart, we pray in faith. But also,  
2941 when it has taken possession of the heart, we live in love.  
2942 God's forgiving disposition, revealed in His love to us,  
2943 becomes a disposition in us; as the power of His forgiving  
2944 love shed abroad and dwelling within us, we forgive even as  
2945 He forgives. If there be great and grievous injury or  
2946 injustice done us, we seek first of all to possess a Godlike

2947 disposition; to be kept from a sense of wounded honour,  
2948 from a desire to maintain our rights, or from rewarding the  
2949 offender as he has deserved. In the little annoyances of daily  
2950 life, we are watchful not to excuse the hasty temper, the  
2951 sharp word, the quick judgment, with the thought that we  
2952 mean no harm, that we do not keep the anger long, or that it  
2953 would be too much to expect from feeble human nature, that  
2954 we should really forgive the way God and Christ do. No, we  
2955 take the command literally, Even as Christ forgave, so also  
2956 do ye.' The blood that cleanses the conscience from dead  
2957 works, cleanses from selfishness too; the love it reveals is  
2958 pardoning love, that takes possession of us and flows  
2959 through us to others. Our forgiving love to men is the  
2960 evidence of the reality of God's forgiving love in us, and so  
2961 the condition of the prayer of faith.

2962  
2963 There is a second, more general lesson: our daily life in the  
2964 world is made the test of our intercourse with God in  
2965 prayer. How often the Christian, when he comes to pray,  
2966 does his utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind which he  
2967 thinks will be pleasing. He does not understand, or forgets,  
2968 that life does not consist of so many loose pieces, of which  
2969 now the one, then the other, can be taken up. Life is a  
2970 whole, and the pious frame of the hour of prayer is judged  
2971 of by God from the ordinary frame of the daily life of which  
2972 the hour of prayer is but a small part. Not the feeling I call  
2973 up, but the tone of my life during the day, is God's criterion  
2974 of what I really am and desire. My drawing nigh to God is  
2975 of one piece with my intercourse with men and earth:  
2976 failure here will cause failure there. And that not only when  
2977 there is the distinct consciousness of anything wrong  
2978 between my neighbour and myself; but the ordinary current  
2979 of my thinking and judging, the unloving thoughts and  
2980 words I allow to pass unnoticed, can hinder my prayer. The



2981 effectual prayer of faith comes out from a life given up to  
2982 the will and the love of God. Not according to what I try to  
2983 be when praying, but what I am when not praying, is my  
2984 prayer dealt with by God.

2985

2986 We may gather these thoughts into a third lesson: In our life  
2987 with men the one thing on which everything depends is  
2988 love. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. Because  
2989 God is love, He forgives: it is only when we are dwelling in  
2990 love that we can forgive as God forgives. In love to the  
2991 brethren we have the evidence of love to the Father, the  
2992 ground of confidence before God, and the assurance that our  
2993 prayer will be heard, (1 John iv. 20, iii. 18-21, 23.). Let us  
2994 love in deed and truth; hereby shall we assure our heart  
2995 before Him. If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness  
2996 toward God, and whatever we ask, we receive of Him.’  
2997 Neither faith nor work will profit if we have not love; it is  
2998 love that unites with God, it is love that proves the reality of  
2999 faith. As essential as in the word that precedes the great  
3000 prayer-promise in Mark xi. 24, ‘Have faith in God,’ is this  
3001 one that follows it, ‘Have love to men.’ The right relations to  
3002 the living God above me, and the living men around me, are  
3003 the conditions of effectual prayer.

3004

3005 This love is of special consequence when we labour for  
3006 such and pray for them. We sometimes give ourselves to  
3007 work for Christ, from zeal for His cause, as we call it, or for  
3008 our own spiritual health, without giving ourselves in  
3009 personal self-sacrificing love for those whose souls we seek.  
3010 No wonder that our faith is feeble and does not conquer. To  
3011 look on each wretched one, however unloveable he be, in  
3012 the light of the tender love of Jesus the Shepherd seeking  
3013 the lost; to see Jesus Christ in him, and to take him up, for  
3014 Jesus’ sake, in a heart that really loves, —this, this is the

3015 secret of believing prayer and successful effort. Jesus, in  
3016 speaking of forgiveness, speaks of love as its root. Just as in  
3017 the Sermon on the Mount He connected His teaching and  
3018 promises about prayer with the call to be merciful, as the  
3019 Father in heaven is merciful (Matt. v. 7, 9, 22, 38-48), so we  
3020 see it here: a loving life is the condition of believing prayer.

3021

3022 It has been said: There is nothing so heart-searching as  
3023 believing prayer, or even the honest effort to pray in faith. O  
3024 let us not turn the edge of that self-examination by the  
3025 thought that God does not hear our prayer for reasons  
3026 known to Himself alone. By no means. Ye ask and receive  
3027 not, because ye ask amiss.' Let that word of God search us.  
3028 Let us ask whether our prayer be indeed the expression of a  
3029 life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of  
3030 man. Love is the only soil in which faith can strike its roots  
3031 and thrive. As it throws its arms up, and opens its heart  
3032 heavenward, the Father always looks to see if it has them  
3033 opened towards the evil and the unworthy too. In that love,  
3034 not indeed the love of perfect attainment, but the love of  
3035 fixed purpose and sincere obedience, faith can alone obtain  
3036 the blessing. It is he who gives himself to let the love of  
3037 God dwell in him, and in the practice of daily life to love as  
3038 God loves, who will have the power to believe in the Love  
3039 that hears his every prayer. It is the Lamb, who is in the  
3040 midst of the throne: it is suffering and forbearing love that  
3041 prevails with God in prayer. The merciful shall obtain  
3042 mercy; the meek shall inherit the earth.

3043

3044 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

3045

3046 ———0—————

3047

3048 Blessed Father! Thou art Love, and only he that abideth in  
3049 love abideth in Thee and in fellowship with Thee. The  
3050 Blessed Son hath this day again taught me how deeply true  
3051 this is of my fellowship with Thee in prayer. O my God! let  
3052 Thy love, shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit, be in  
3053 me a fountain of love to all around me, that out of a life in  
3054 love may spring the power of believing prayer. O my  
3055 Father! grant by the Holy Spirit that this may be my  
3056 experience, that a life in love to all around me is the gate to  
3057 a life in the love of my God. And give me especially to find  
3058 in the joy with which I forgive day by day whoever might  
3059 offend me, the proof that Thy forgiveness to me is a power  
3060 and a life.

3061

3062 Lord Jesus! my Blessed Teacher! teach Thou me to forgive  
3063 and to love. Let the power of Thy blood make the pardon of  
3064 my sins such a reality, that forgiveness, as shown by Thee  
3065 to me, and by me to others, may be the very joy of heaven.  
3066 Show me whatever in my intercourse with fellowmen might  
3067 hinder my fellowship with God, so that my daily life in my  
3068 own home and in society may be the school in which  
3069 strength and confidence are gathered for the prayer of faith.  
3070 Amen.

3071

3072

3073

3074 FIFTEENTH LESSON.

3075

3076 If two agree;'

3077

3078 Or, The Power of United Prayer

3079

3080 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on  
3081 earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be

3082 done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where  
3083 two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I  
3084 in the midst of them.—Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

3085

3086 ONE of the first lessons of our Lord in His school of prayer  
3087 was: Not to be seen of men. Enter thy inner chamber; be  
3088 alone with the Father. When He has thus taught us that the  
3089 meaning of prayer is personal individual contact with God,  
3090 He comes with a second lesson: You have need not only of  
3091 secret solitary, but also of public united prayer. And He  
3092 gives us a very special promise for the united prayer of two  
3093 or three who agree in what they ask. As a tree has its root  
3094 hidden in the ground and its stem growing up into the  
3095 sunlight, so prayer needs equally for its full development  
3096 the hidden secrecy in which the soul meets God alone, and  
3097 the public fellowship with those who find in the name of  
3098 Jesus their common meeting-place.

3099

3100 The reason why this must be so is plain. The bond that  
3101 unites a man to his fellow-men is no less real and close than  
3102 that which unites him to God: he is one with them. Grace  
3103 renews not alone our relation to God but to man too. We not  
3104 only learn to say 'My Father,' but 'Our Father.' Nothing  
3105 would be more unnatural than that the children of a family  
3106 should always meet their father separately, but never in the  
3107 united expression of their desires or their love. Believers are  
3108 not only members of one family, but even of one body. Just  
3109 as each member of the body depends on the other, and the  
3110 full action of the spirit dwelling in the body depends on the  
3111 union and co-operation of all, so Christians cannot reach the  
3112 full blessing God is ready to bestow through His Spirit, but  
3113 as they seek and receive it in fellowship with each other. It  
3114 is in the union and fellowship of believers that the Spirit can  
3115 manifest His full power. It was to the hundred and twenty

3116 continuing in one place together, and praying with one  
3117 accord, that the Spirit came from the throne of the glorified  
3118 Lord.

3119  
3120 The marks of true united prayer are given us in these words  
3121 of our Lord. The first is agreement as to the thing asked.  
3122 There must not only be generally the consent to agree with  
3123 anything another may ask: there must be some special thing,  
3124 matter of distinct united desire; the agreement must be, as  
3125 all prayer, in spirit and in truth. In such agreement it will  
3126 become very clear to us what exactly we are asking,  
3127 whether we may confidently ask according to God's will,  
3128 and whether we are ready to believe that we have received  
3129 what we ask.

3130  
3131 The second mark is the gathering in, or into, the Name of  
3132 Jesus. We shall afterwards have much more to learn of the  
3133 need and the power of the Name of Jesus in prayer; here our  
3134 Lord teaches us that the Name must be the centre of union  
3135 to which believers gather, the bond of union that makes  
3136 them one, just as a home contains and unites all who are in  
3137 it. The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous  
3138 runneth into it and escape.' That Name is such a reality to  
3139 those who understand and believe it, that to meet within it is  
3140 to have Himself present. The love and unity of His disciples  
3141 have to Jesus infinite attraction: Where two or three are  
3142 gathered in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.' It is  
3143 the living presence of Jesus, in the fellowship of His loving  
3144 praying disciples, that gives united prayer its power.

3145  
3146 The third mark is, the sure answer: It shall be done for them  
3147 of my Father.' A prayer-meeting for maintaining religious  
3148 fellowship, or seeking our own edification, may have its  
3149 use; this was not the Saviour's view in its appointment. He

3150 meant it as a means of securing special answer to prayer. A  
3151 prayer meeting without recognised answer to prayer ought  
3152 to be an anomaly. When any of us have distinct desires in  
3153 regard to which we feel too weak to exercise the needful  
3154 faith, we ought to seek strength in the help of other. In the  
3155 unity of faith and of love and of the Spirit, the power of the  
3156 Name and the Presence of Jesus acts more freely and the  
3157 answer comes more surely. The mark that there has been  
3158 true united prayer is the fruit, the answer, the receiving of  
3159 the thing we have asked: I say unto you, It shall be done for  
3160 them of my Father which is in heaven.’

3161  
3162 What an unspeakable privilege this of united prayer is, and  
3163 what a power it might be. If the believing husband and wife  
3164 knew that they were joined together in the Name of Jesus to  
3165 experience His presence and power in united prayer (1  
3166 Peter); if friends believed what mighty help two or three  
3167 praying in concert could give each other; if in every prayer  
3168 meeting the coming together in the Name, the faith in the  
3169 Presence, and the expectation of the answer, stood in the  
3170 foreground; if in every Church united effectual prayer were  
3171 regarded as one of the chief purposes for which they are  
3172 banded together, the highest exercise of their power as a  
3173 Church; if in the Church universal the coming of the  
3174 kingdom, the coming of the King Himself, first in the  
3175 mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit, then in His own  
3176 glorious person, were really matter of unceasing united  
3177 crying to God;—O who can say what blessing might come  
3178 to, and through, those who thus agreed to prove God in the  
3179 fulfilment of His promise.

3180  
3181 In the Apostle Paul we see very distinctly what a reality his  
3182 faith in the power of united prayer was. To the Romans he  
3183 writes (xv. 30): I beseech you, brethren, by the love of the

3184 Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayer to God  
3185 for me.' He expects in answer to be delivered from his  
3186 enemies, and to be prospered in his work. To the  
3187 Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 11), God will still deliver us, ye also  
3188 helping together on our behalf by your supplications;' their  
3189 prayer is to have a real share in his deliverance. To the  
3190 Ephesians he writes: With all prayer and supplication  
3191 praying at all seasons in the Spirit for all the saints and on  
3192 my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me.' His power  
3193 and success in his ministry he makes to depend on their  
3194 prayers. With the Philippians (i. 19) he expects that his  
3195 trials will turn to his salvation and the progress of the gospel  
3196 through your supplications and the supply of the spirit of  
3197 Jesus Christ.; To the Colossians (iv. 3) he adds to the  
3198 injunction to continue steadfast in prayer: Withal praying for  
3199 us too, that God may open unto us a door for the word.'  
3200 And to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. iii. 1) he writes: Finally,  
3201 brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and  
3202 be glorified, and that we may be delivered from  
3203 unreasonable men.' It is everywhere evident that Paul felt  
3204 himself the member of a body, on the sympathy and co-  
3205 operation of which he was dependent, and that he counted  
3206 on the prayers of these Churches to gain for him, what  
3207 otherwise might not be given. The prayers of the Church  
3208 were to him as real a factor in the work of the kingdom, as  
3209 the power of God.

3210

3211 Who can say what power a Church could develop and  
3212 exercise, if it gave itself to the work of prayer day and night  
3213 for the coming of the kingdom, for God's power on His  
3214 servants and His word, for the glorifying of God in the  
3215 salvation of souls? Most Churches think their members are  
3216 gathered into one simply to take care of and build up each  
3217 other. They know not that God rules the world by the

3218 prayers of His saints; that prayer is the power by which  
3219 Satan is conquered; that by prayer the Church on earth has  
3220 disposal of the powers of the heavenly world. They do not  
3221 remember that Jesus has, by His promise, consecrated every  
3222 assembly in His Name to be a gate of heaven, where His  
3223 Presence is to be felt, and His Power experienced in the  
3224 Father fulfilling their desires.

3225

3226 We cannot sufficiently thank God for the blessed week of  
3227 united prayer, with which Christendom in our days opens  
3228 every year. As proof of our unity and our faith in the power  
3229 of united prayer, as a training-school for the enlargement of  
3230 our hearts to take in all the needs of the Church universal, as  
3231 a help to united persevering prayer, it is of unspeakable  
3232 value. But very specially as a stimulus to continued union in  
3233 prayer in the smaller circles, its blessing has been great.  
3234 And it will become even greater, as God's people recognise  
3235 what it is, all to meet as one in the Name of Jesus to have  
3236 His presence in the midst of a body all united in the Holy  
3237 Spirit, and boldly to claim the promise that it shall be done  
3238 of the Father what they agree to ask.

3239

3240 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY'

3241

3242 ———0———

3243

3244 Blessed Lord! who didst in Thy high-priestly prayer ask so  
3245 earnestly for the unity of Thy people, teach us how Thou  
3246 dost invite and urge us to this unity by Thy precious  
3247 promise given to united prayer. It is when we are one in  
3248 love and desire that our faith has Thy presence and the  
3249 Father's answer.

3250



3251 O Father! we pray for Thy people, and for every smaller  
3252 circle of those who meet together, that they may be one.  
3253 Remove, we pray, all selfishness and self-interest, all  
3254 narrowness of heart and estrangement, by which that unity  
3255 is hindered. Cast out the spirit of the world and the flesh,  
3256 through which Thy promise loses all its power. O let the  
3257 thought of Thy presence and the Father's favour draw us all  
3258 nearer to each other.

3259  
3260 Grant especially Blessed Lord, that Thy Church may  
3261 believe that it is by the power of united prayer that she can  
3262 bind and loose in heaven; that Satan can be cast out; that  
3263 souls can be saved; that mountains can be removed; that the  
3264 kingdom can be hastened. And grant, good Lord! that in the  
3265 circle with which I pray, the prayer of the Church may  
3266 indeed be the power through which Thy Name and Word  
3267 are glorified. Amen.

3268

3269

3270

3271 SIXTEENTH LESSON.

3272

3273 Speedily, though bearing long;'

3274

3275 Or, The Power of Persevering Prayer.

3276

3277 And He spake a parable unto them to the end that they  
3278 ought always to pray, and not to faint. . . . And the Lord  
3279 said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not  
3280 God avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and night,  
3281 and He is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that He  
3282 will avenge them speedily.'—Luke xviii. 108.

3283

3284 OF all the mysteries of the prayer world, the need of  
3285 persevering prayer is one of the greatest. That the Lord,  
3286 who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be  
3287 supplicated time after time, sometimes year after year,  
3288 before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is  
3289 also one of the greatest practical difficulties in the exercise  
3290 of believing prayer. When, after persevering supplication,  
3291 our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our  
3292 slothful flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious  
3293 submission, to think that we must now cease praying,  
3294 because God may have His secret reason for withholding  
3295 His answer to our request.

3296

3297 It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When  
3298 once faith has taken its stand upon God's word, and the  
3299 Name of Jesus, and has yielded itself to the leading of the  
3300 Spirit to seek God's will and honour alone in its prayer, it  
3301 need not be discouraged by delay. It knows from Scripture  
3302 that the power of believing prayer is simply irresistible; real  
3303 faith can never be disappointed. It knows how, just as water,  
3304 to exercise the irresistible power it can have, must be  
3305 gathered up and accumulated, until the stream can come  
3306 down in full force, there must often be a heaping up of  
3307 prayer, until God sees that the measure is full, and the  
3308 answer comes. It knows how, just as the ploughman has to  
3309 take his ten thousand steps, and sow his ten thousand seeds,  
3310 each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so  
3311 there is a need-be for oft-repeated persevering prayer, all  
3312 working out some desired blessing. It knows for certain that  
3313 not a single believing prayer can fail of its effect in heaven,  
3314 but has its influence, and is treasured up to work out an  
3315 answer in due time to him who persevereth to the end. It  
3316 knows that it has to do not with human thoughts or  
3317 possibilities, but with the word of the living God. And so

3318 even as Abraham through so many years in hope believed  
3319 against hope,' and then through faith and patience inherited  
3320 the promise,' it counts that the long-suffering of the Lord is  
3321 salvation, waiting and hasting unto the coming of its Lord to  
3322 fulfil His promise.

3323

3324 To enable us, when the answer to our prayer does not come  
3325 at once, to combine quiet patience and joyful confidence in  
3326 our persevering prayer, we must specially try to understand  
3327 the two words in which our Lord sets forth the character and  
3328 conduct, not of the unjust judge, but of our God and Father  
3329 towards those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him:  
3330 He is long-suffering over them; He will avenge them  
3331 speedily.'

3332

3333 He will avenge them speedily, the Master says. The blessing  
3334 is all prepared; He is not only willing but most anxious to  
3335 give them what they ask; everlasting love burns with the  
3336 longing desire to reveal itself fully to its beloved, and to  
3337 satisfy their needs. God will not delay one moment longer  
3338 than is absolutely necessary; He will do all in His power to  
3339 hasten and speed the answer.

3340

3341 But why, if this be true and His power be infinite, does it  
3342 often last so long with the answer to prayer? And why must  
3343 God's own elect so often, in the midst of suffering and  
3344 conflict, cry day and night? He is long-suffering over them.'  
3345 Behold! the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of  
3346 the earth, being long-suffering over it, till it receive the  
3347 early and the latter rain.' The husbandman does indeed long  
3348 for his harvest, but knows that it must have its full time of  
3349 sunshine and rain, and has long patience. A child so often  
3350 wants to pick the half-ripe fruit; the husbandman knows to  
3351 wait till the proper time. Man, in his spiritual nature too, is

3352 under the law of gradual growth that reigns in all created  
3353 life. It is only in the path of development that he can reach  
3354 his divine destiny. And it is the Father, in whose hands are  
3355 the times and seasons, who alone knows the moment when  
3356 the soul or the Church is ripened to that fulness of faith in  
3357 which it can really take and keep the blessing. As a father  
3358 who longs to have his only child home from school, and yet  
3359 waits patiently till the time of training is completed, so it is  
3360 with God and His children: He is the long-suffering One,  
3361 and answers speedily.

3362

3363 The insight into this truth leads the believer to cultivate the  
3364 corresponding dispositions: patience and faith, waiting and  
3365 hasting, are the secret of his perseverance. By faith in the  
3366 promise of God, we know that we have the petitions we  
3367 have asked of Him. Faith takes and holds the answer in the  
3368 promise, as an unseen spiritual possession, rejoices in it,  
3369 and praises for it. But there is a difference between the faith  
3370 that thus holds the word and knows that it has the answer,  
3371 and the clearer, fuller, riper faith that obtains the promise as  
3372 a present experience. It is in persevering, not unbelieving,  
3373 but confident and praising prayer, that the soul grows up  
3374 into that full union with its Lord in which it can enter upon  
3375 the possession of the blessing in Him. There may be in  
3376 these around us, there may be in that great system of being  
3377 of which we are part, there may be in God's government,  
3378 things that have to be put right through our prayer, ere the  
3379 answer can fully come: the faith that has, according to the  
3380 command, believed that it has received, can allow God to  
3381 take His time: it knows it has prevailed and must prevail. In  
3382 quiet, persistent, and determined perseverance it continues  
3383 in prayer and thanksgiving until the blessing come. And so  
3384 we see combined what at first sight appears so  
3385 contradictory; the faith that rejoices in the answer of the

3386 unseen God as a present possession, with the patience that  
3387 cries day and night until it be revealed. The speedily of  
3388 God's long-suffering is met by the triumphant but patient  
3389 faith of His waiting child.

3390

3391 Our great danger in this school of the answer delayed, is the  
3392 temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God's will  
3393 to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's  
3394 word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give  
3395 way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time. God needs  
3396 time with us. If we only give Him time, that is, time in the  
3397 daily fellowship with Himself, for Him to exercise the full  
3398 influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in the  
3399 course of our being kept waiting, for faith to prove its  
3400 reality and to fill our whole being, He Himself will lead us  
3401 from faith to vision; we shall see the glory of God. Let no  
3402 delay shake our faith. Of faith it holds good: first the blade,  
3403 then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each believing  
3404 prayer brings a step nearer the final victory. Each believing  
3405 prayer helps to ripen the fruit and bring us nearer to it; it  
3406 fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone;  
3407 it conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens  
3408 the end. Child of God! give the Father time. He is long-  
3409 suffering over you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and  
3410 full, and sure; give Him time, while you cry day and night.  
3411 Only remember the word: I say unto you, He will avenge  
3412 them speedily.'

3413

3414 The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable.  
3415 There is nothing so heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It  
3416 teaches you to discover and confess, and give up everything  
3417 that hinders the coming of the blessing; everything there  
3418 may be not in accordance with the Father's will. It leads to  
3419 closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach to pray, to

3420 a more entire surrender to draw nigh under no covering but  
3421 that of the blood, and the Spirit. It calls to a closer and more  
3422 simple abiding in Christ alone. Christian! give God time. He  
3423 will perfect that which concerneth you. Long-suffering—  
3424 speedily,’ this is God’s watchword as you enter the gates of  
3425 prayer: be it yours too.

3426

3427 Let it be thus whether you pray for yourself, or for others.  
3428 All labour, bodily or mental, needs time and effort: we must  
3429 give up ourselves to it. Nature discovers her secrets and  
3430 yields her treasures only to diligent and thoughtful labour.  
3431 However little we can understand it, in the spiritual  
3432 husbandry it is the same: the seed we sow in the soil of  
3433 heaven, the efforts we put forth, and the influence we seek  
3434 to exert in the world above, need our whole being: we must  
3435 give ourselves to prayer. But let us hold fast the great  
3436 confidence, that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

3437

3438 And let us specially learn the lesson as we pray for the  
3439 Church of Christ. She is indeed as the poor widow, in the  
3440 absence of her Lord, apparently at the mercy of her  
3441 adversary, helpless to obtain redress. Let us, when we pray  
3442 for His Church or any portion of it, under the power of the  
3443 world, asking Him to visit her with the mighty workings of  
3444 His Spirit and to prepare her for His coming, let us pray in  
3445 the assured faith: prayer does help, praying always and not  
3446 fainting will bring the answer. Only give God time. And  
3447 then keep crying day and night. Hear what the unrighteous  
3448 judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which  
3449 cry to Him day and night, and He is long-suffering over  
3450 them. I say unto you, He will avenge them speedily.’

3451

3452 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

3453

3454 ———0———

3455

3456 O Lord my God! teach me now to know Thy way, and in  
3457 faith to apprehend what Thy Beloved Son has taught: He  
3458 will avenge them speedily.' Let Thy tender love, and the  
3459 delight Thou hast in hearing and blessing Thy children, lead  
3460 me implicitly to accept Thy promise, that we receive what  
3461 we believe, that we have the petitions we ask, and that the  
3462 answer will in due time be seen. Lord! we understand the  
3463 seasons in nature, and know to wait with patience for the  
3464 fruit we long for—O fill us with the assurance that not one  
3465 moment longer than is needed wilt Thou delay, and that  
3466 faith will hasten the answer.

3467

3468 Blessed Master! Thou hast said that it is a sign of God's  
3469 elect that they cry day and night. O teach us to understand  
3470 this. Thou knowest how speedily we grow faint and weary.  
3471 It is as if the Divine Majesty is so much beyond the need or  
3472 the reach of continued supplication, that it does not become  
3473 us to be too importunate. O Lord! do teach me how real the  
3474 labour of prayer is. I know how here on earth, when I have  
3475 failed in an undertaking, I can often succeed by renewed  
3476 and more continuing effort, by giving more time and  
3477 thought: show me how, by giving myself more entirely to  
3478 prayer, to live in prayer, I shall obtain what I ask. And  
3479 above all, O my blessed Teacher! Author and perfecter of  
3480 faith, let by Thy grace my whole life be one of faith in the  
3481 Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me—in  
3482 whom my prayer gains acceptance, in whom I have the  
3483 assurance of the answer, in whom the answer will be mine.  
3484 Lord Jesus! in this faith I will pray always and not faint.  
3485 Amen.

3486

3487 NOTE

3488

3489 The need of persevering importunate prayer appears to  
3490 some to be at variance with the faith which knows that it  
3491 has received what it asks (Mark xi. 24). One of the  
3492 mysteries of the Divine life is the harmony between the  
3493 gradual and the sudden, immediate full possession, and  
3494 slow imperfect appropriation. And so here persevering  
3495 prayer appears to be the school in which the soul is  
3496 strengthened for the boldness of faith. And with the  
3497 diversity of operations of the Spirit there may be some in  
3498 whom faith takes more the form of persistent waiting; while  
3499 to others, triumphant thanksgiving appears the only proper  
3500 expressions of the assurance of having been heard.

3501

3502 In a remarkable way the need of persevering prayer, and the  
3503 gradual rising into greater ease in obtaining answer, is  
3504 illustrated in the life of Blumhardt. Complaints had been  
3505 lodged against him of neglecting his work as a minister of  
3506 the gospel, and devoting himself to the healing of the sick;  
3507 and especially his unauthorized healing of the sick  
3508 belonging to other congregations. In his defense he writes: I  
3509 simply ventured to do what becomes one who has the  
3510 charge of souls, and to pray according to the command of  
3511 the Lord in James i. 6, 7. In no way did I trust to my own  
3512 power, or imagine that I had any gift that others had not.  
3513 But this is true, I set myself to the work as a minister of the  
3514 gospel, who has a right to pray. But I speedily discovered  
3515 that the gates of heaven were not fully opened to me. Often  
3516 I was inclined to retire in despair. But the sight of the sick  
3517 ones, who could find help nowhere, gave me no rest. I  
3518 thought of the word of the Lord: "Ask, and it shall be given  
3519 you" (Luke xi. 9, 10). And farther, I thought that if the  
3520 Church and her ministers had, through unbelief, sloth, and  
3521 disobedience lost what was needed for overcoming of the



3522 power of Satan, it was just for such times of leanness and  
3523 famine that the Lord had spoken the parable of the friend at  
3524 midnight and his three loaves. I felt that I was not worthy  
3525 thus at midnight, in a time of great darkness, to appear  
3526 before God as His friend and ask for a member of my  
3527 congregation what he needed. And yet, to leave him  
3528 uncared for, I could not either. And so I kept knocking, as  
3529 the parable directs, or, as some have said, with great  
3530 presumption and tempting God. Be this as it may, I could  
3531 not leave my guest unprovided. At this time the parable of  
3532 the widow became very precious to me. I saw that the  
3533 Church was the widow, and I was a minister of the Church.  
3534 I had the right to be her mouthpiece against the adversary;  
3535 but for a long time the Lord would not. I asked nothing  
3536 more than the three loaves; what I needed for my guest. At  
3537 last the Lord listened to the importunate beggar, and helped  
3538 me. Was it wrong of me to pray thus? The two parables  
3539 must surely be applicable somewhere, and where was  
3540 greater need to be conceived?

3541

3542 And what was the fruit of my prayer? The friend who was  
3543 at first unwilling, did not say, Go now; I will myself give to  
3544 your friend what he needs; I do not require you; but gave it  
3545 to me as His friend, to give to my guest. And so I used the  
3546 three loaves, and had to spare. But the supply was small,  
3547 and new guests came; because they saw I had a heart to help  
3548 them, and that I would take the trouble even at midnight to  
3549 go to my friend. When I asked for them, too, I got the  
3550 needful again, and there was again to spare. How could I  
3551 help that the needy continually came to my house? Was I to  
3552 harden myself, and say, Why do you come to me? there are  
3553 large and better homes in the city, go there. Their answer  
3554 was, Dear sir, we cannot go there. We have been there: they  
3555 were very sorry to send us away so hungry, but they could

3556 not undertake to go and ask a friend for what we wanted.  
3557 Do go, and get us bread for we suffer great pain. What  
3558 could I do? They spoke the truth, and their suffering  
3559 touched my heart. However much labour it cost me, I went  
3560 each time again, and got the three loaves. Often I got what I  
3561 asked much quicker than at first, and also much more  
3562 abundantly. But all did not care for this bread, so some left  
3563 my home hungry.’<sup>^1</sup>

3564  
3565 In his first struggles with the evil spirits, it took him more  
3566 than eighteen months of prayer and labour before the final  
3567 victory was gained. Afterwards he had such ease of access  
3568 to the throne, and stood in such close communication with  
3569 the unseen world, that often, with letters came asking prayer  
3570 for sick people, he could, after just looking upward for a  
3571 single moment, obtain the answer as to whether they would  
3572 be healed.

3573  
3574 <sup>^1</sup>From Johann Christophe Blumhardt, Ein Lebenabild von  
3575 F. Etindel.

3576

3577

3578

3579 SEVENTEENTH LESSON.

3580

3581 I know that Thou hearest me always;’

3582

3583 Or Prayer in Harmony with the Being of God.

3584

3585 Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest me. And I knew  
3586 that Thou hearest me always.’—John xi. 41, 42.

3587

3588 Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me,  
3589 and I shall give Thee.’—Ps. ii. 7, 8.

3590

3591 IN the New Testament we find a distinction made between  
3592 faith and knowledge. To one is given, through the Spirit, the  
3593 word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge,  
3594 according to the same Spirit; to another faith, in the same  
3595 Spirit.' In a child or a simple-minded Christian there may be  
3596 much faith with little knowledge. Childlike simplicity  
3597 accepts the truth without difficulty, and often cares little to  
3598 give itself or others any reason for its faith but this: God has  
3599 said. But it is the will of God that we should love and serve  
3600 Him, not only with all the heart but also with all the mind;  
3601 that we should grow up into an insight into the Divine  
3602 wisdom and beauty of all His ways and words and works. It  
3603 is only thus that the believer will be able fully to approach  
3604 and rightly to adore the glory of God's grace; and only thus  
3605 that our heart can intelligently apprehend the treasures of  
3606 wisdom and knowledge there are in redemption, and be  
3607 prepared to enter fully into the highest note of the song that  
3608 rises before the throne: O the depth of the riches both of the  
3609 wisdom and knowledge of God!

3610

3611 In our prayer life this truth has its full application. While  
3612 prayer and faith are so simple that the new-born convert can  
3613 pray with power, true Christian science finds in the doctrine  
3614 of prayer some of its deepest problems. In how far is the  
3615 power of prayer a reality? If so, how God can grant to  
3616 prayer such mighty power? How can the action of prayer be  
3617 harmonized with the will and the decrees of God? How can  
3618 God's sovereignty and our will, God's liberty and ours, be  
3619 reconciled?—these and other like questions are fit subjects  
3620 for Christian meditation and inquiry. The more earnestly  
3621 and reverently we approach such mysteries, the more shall  
3622 we in adoring wonder fall down to praise Him who hath in  
3623 prayer given such power to man.

3624

3625 One of the secret difficulties with regard to prayer,—one  
3626 which, though not expressed, does often really hinder  
3627 prayer,—is derived from the perfection of God, in His  
3628 absolute independence of all that is outside of Himself. Is  
3629 He not the Infinite Being, who owes what He is to Himself  
3630 alone, who determines Himself, and whose wise and holy  
3631 will has determined all that is to be? How can prayer  
3632 influence Him, or He be moved by prayer to do what  
3633 otherwise would not be done? Is not the promise of an  
3634 answer to prayer simply a condescension to our weakness?  
3635 Is what is said of the power—the much-availing power—of  
3636 prayer anything more than an accommodation to our mode  
3637 of thought, because the Deity never can be dependent on  
3638 any action from without for its doings? And is not the  
3639 blessing of prayer simply the influence it exercises upon  
3640 ourselves?

3641

3642 In seeking an answer to such questions, we find the key in  
3643 the very being of God, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. If  
3644 God was only one Person, shut up within Himself, there  
3645 could be no thought of nearness to Him or influence on  
3646 Him. But in God there are three Persons. In God we have  
3647 Father and Son, who have in the Holy Spirit their living  
3648 bond of unity and fellowship. When eternal Love begat the  
3649 Son, and the Father gave the Son as the Second Person a  
3650 place next Himself as His Equal and His Counsellor, there  
3651 was a way opened for prayer and its influence in the very  
3652 inmost life of Deity itself. Just as on earth, so in heaven the  
3653 whole relation between Father and Son is that of giving and  
3654 taking. And if that taking is to be as voluntary and self-  
3655 determined as the giving, there must be on the part of the  
3656 Son an asking and receiving. In the holy fellowship of the  
3657 Divine Persons, this asking of the Son was one of the great

3658 operations of the Thrice Blessed Life of God. Hence we  
3659 have it in Psalm ii.: This day I have begotten Thee: ask of  
3660 me and I will give Thee.’ The Father gave the Son the place  
3661 and the power to act upon Him. The asking of the Son was  
3662 no mere show or shadow, but one of those life-movements  
3663 in which the love of the Father and the Son met and  
3664 completed each other. The Father had determined that He  
3665 should not be alone in His counsels: there was a Son on  
3666 whose asking and accepting their fulfilment should depend.  
3667 And so there was in the very Being and Life of God an  
3668 asking of which prayer on earth was to be the reflection and  
3669 the outflow. It was not without including this that Jesus  
3670 said, “I knew that Thou always hearest me.’ Just as the  
3671 Sonship of Jesus on earth may not be separated from His  
3672 Sonship in heaven, even so with His prayer on earth, it is  
3673 the continuation and the counterpart of His asking in  
3674 heaven. The prayer of the man Christ Jesus is the link  
3675 between the eternal asking of the only-begotten Son in the  
3676 bosom of the Father and the prayer of men upon earth.  
3677 Prayer has its rise and its deepest source in the very Being  
3678 of God. In the bosom of Deity nothing is ever done without  
3679 prayer—the asking of the Son and the giving of the  
3680 Father.^1

3681

3682 This may help us somewhat to understand how the prayer of  
3683 man, coming through the Son, can have effect upon God.  
3684 The decrees of God are not decisions made by Him without  
3685 reference to the Son, or His petition, or the petition to be  
3686 sent up through Him. By no means. The Lord Jesus is the  
3687 first-begotten, the Head and Heir of all things: all things  
3688 were created through Him and unto Him, and all things  
3689 consist in Him. In the counsels of the Father, the Son, as  
3690 Representative of all creation, had always a voice; in the  
3691 decrees of the eternal purpose there was always room left

3692 for the liberty of the Son as Mediator and Intercessor, and  
3693 so for the petitions of all who draw nigh to the Father in the  
3694 Son.

3695

3696 And if the thought come that this liberty and power of the  
3697 Son to act upon the Father is at variance with the  
3698 immutability of the Divine decrees, let us not forget that  
3699 there is not with God as with man, a past by which He is  
3700 irrevocably bound. God does not live in time with its past  
3701 and future; the distinctions of time have no reference to  
3702 Him who inhabits Eternity. And Eternity is an ever-present  
3703 Now, in which the past is never past, and the future always  
3704 present. To meet our human weakness, Scripture must  
3705 speak of past decrees, and a coming future. In reality, the  
3706 immutability of God's counsel is ever still in perfect  
3707 harmony with His liberty to do whatsoever He will. Not so  
3708 were the prayers of the Son and His people taken up into the  
3709 eternal decrees that their effect should only be an apparent  
3710 one; but so, that the Father-heart holds itself open and free  
3711 to listen to every prayer that rises through the Son, and that  
3712 God does indeed allow Himself to be decided by prayer to  
3713 do what He otherwise would not have done.

3714

3715 This perfect harmony and union of Divine Sovereignty and  
3716 human liberty is to us an unfathomable mystery, because  
3717 God as THE ETERNAL ONE transcends all our thoughts.  
3718 But let it be our comfort and strength to be assured that in  
3719 the eternal fellowship of the Father and the Son, the power  
3720 of prayer has its origin and certainty, and that through our  
3721 union with the Son, our prayer is taken up and can have its  
3722 influence in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. God's  
3723 decrees are no iron framework against which man's liberty  
3724 would vainly seek to struggle. No. God Himself is the  
3725 Living Love, who in His Son as man has entered into the

3726 tenderest relation with all that is human, who through the  
3727 Holy Spirit takes up all that is human into the Divine life of  
3728 love, and keeps Himself free to give every human prayer its  
3729 place in His government of the world.

3730

3731 It is in the daybreak light of such thoughts that the doctrine  
3732 of the Blessed Trinity no longer is an abstract speculation,  
3733 but the living manifestation of the way in which it were  
3734 possible for man to be taken up into the fellowship of God,  
3735 and his prayer to become a real factor in God's rule of this  
3736 earth. And we can, as in the distance, catch glimpses of the  
3737 light that from the eternal world shines out on words such as  
3738 these: THROUGH HIM we have access BY ONE SPIRIT  
3739 unto THE FATHER.'

3740

3741 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

3742

3743 ———0———

3744

3745 Everlasting God! the Three-One and Thrice Holy! in deep  
3746 reverence would I with veiled face worship before the holy  
3747 mystery of Thy Divine Being. And if it please Thee, O most  
3748 glorious God, to unveil aught of that mystery, I would bow  
3749 with fear and trembling, lest I sin against Thee, as I  
3750 meditate on Thy glory.

3751

3752 Father! I thank Thee that Thou bearest this name not only as  
3753 the Father of Thy children here on earth, but as having from  
3754 eternity subsisted as the Father with Thine only-begotten  
3755 Son. I thank Thee that as Father Thou canst hear our prayer,  
3756 because Thou hast from eternity given a place in Thy  
3757 counsels to the asking of Thy Son. I thank Thee that we  
3758 have seen in Him on earth, what the blessed intercourse was  
3759 He had with Thee in heaven; and how from eternity in all

3760 Thy counsels and decrees there had been room left for His  
3761 prayer and their answers. And I thank Thee above all that  
3762 through His true human nature on Thy throne above, and  
3763 through Thy Holy Spirit in our human nature here below, a  
3764 way has been opened up by which every human cry of need  
3765 can be taken up into and touch the Life and the Love of  
3766 God, and receive in answer whatsoever it shall ask.

3767

3768 Blessed Jesus! in whom as the Son the path of prayer has  
3769 been opened up, and who givest us assurance of the answer,  
3770 we beseech Thee, teach Thy people to pray. O let this each  
3771 day be the sign of our sonship, that, like Thee, we know that  
3772 the Father heareth us always. Amen.

3773

3774 NOTE.

3775

3776 “God hears prayer.” This simplest view of prayer is taken  
3777 throughout Scripture. It dwells not on the reflex influence of  
3778 prayer on our heart and life, although it abundantly shows  
3779 the connection between prayer as an act, and prayer as a  
3780 state. It rather fixes with great definiteness the objective or  
3781 real purposes of prayer, to obtain blessing, gifts,  
3782 deliverances from God. Ask and it shall be given,” Jesus  
3783 says.

3784

3785 However true and valuable the reflection may be, that God,  
3786 foreseeing and foreordaining all things, has also foreseen  
3787 and foreordained our prayers as links in the chain of events,  
3788 of cause and effect, as a real power, yet we feel convinced  
3789 that this is not the light in which the mind can find peace in  
3790 this great subject, nor do we think that here is the attractive  
3791 power to draw us in prayer. We feel rather that such a  
3792 reflection diverts the attention from the Object whence  
3793 comes the impulse, life, and strength of prayer. The living



3794 God, cotemporary and not merely eternal,<sup>^1</sup> the living,  
3795 merciful, holy One, God manifesting Himself to the soul,  
3796 God saying, “Seek my face;” this is the magnet that draws  
3797 us, this alone can open heart and lips. . .

3798  
3799 In Jesus Christ the Son of God we have the full solution of  
3800 the difficulty. He prayed on earth, and that not merely as  
3801 man, but as the Son of God incarnate. His prayer on earth is  
3802 only the manifestation of His prayer from all eternity, when  
3803 in the Divine counsel He was set up as the Christ. . . . The  
3804 Son was appointed to be heir of all things. From all eternity  
3805 the Son of God was the Way, the Mediator. He was, to use  
3806 our imperfect language, from eternity speaking unto the  
3807 Father on behalf of the world.’—SAPHIR, *The Hidden*  
3808 *Life*, chap. vi. See also *The Lord’s Prayer*, p. 12.

3809  
3810 <sup>^1</sup>Should it not rather be cotemporary, because eternal, in  
3811 the proper meaning of this latter word?

3812

3813

3814

3815 EIGHTEENTH LESSON

3816

3817 Whose is this image?’

3818

3819 Or, Prayer in Harmony with the Destiny of Man.

3820

3821 He saith unto them, Whose is this image and  
3822 superscription?—Matt. xxi. 20.

3823

3824 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our  
3825 likeness.’—Gen. i. 26.

3826

3827 WHOSE is this image?’ It was by this question that Jesus  
3828 foiled His enemies, when they thought to take Him, and  
3829 settled the matter of duty in regard to the tribute. The  
3830 question and the principle it involves are of universal  
3831 application. Nowhere more truly than in man himself. The  
3832 image he bears decides his destiny. Bearing God’s image,  
3833 he belongs to God: prayer to God is what he was created  
3834 for. Prayer is part of the wondrous likeness he bears to His  
3835 Divine original; of the deep mystery of the fellowship of  
3836 love in which the Three-One has His blessedness, prayer is  
3837 the earthly image and likeness.

3838  
3839 The more we meditate on what prayer is, and the wonderful  
3840 power with God which it has, the more we feel constrained  
3841 to ask who and what man is, that such a place in God’s  
3842 counsels should have been allotted to him. Sin has so  
3843 degraded him, that from what he is now we can form no  
3844 conception of what he was meant to be. We must turn back  
3845 to God’s own record of man’s creation to discover there  
3846 what God’s purpose was, and what the capacities with  
3847 which man was endowed for the fulfilment of that purpose.

3848  
3849 Man’s destiny appears clearly from God’s language at  
3850 creation. It was to fill, to subdue, to have dominion over the  
3851 earth and all in it. All the three expressions show us that  
3852 man was meant, as God’s representative, to hold rule here  
3853 on earth. As God’s viceroy he was to fill God’s place:  
3854 himself subject to God, he was to keep all else in subjection  
3855 to Him. It was the will of God that all that was to be done  
3856 on earth should be done through him: the history of the  
3857 earth was to be entirely in his hands.

3858  
3859 In accordance with such a destiny was the position he was  
3860 to occupy, and the power at his disposal. When an earthly

3861 sovereign sends a viceroy to a distant province, it is  
3862 understood that he advises as to the policy to be adopted,  
3863 and that that advice is acted on: that he is at liberty to apply  
3864 for troops and the other means needed for carrying out the  
3865 policy or maintaining the dignity of the empire. If his policy  
3866 be not approved of, he is recalled to make way for some one  
3867 who better understands his sovereign's desires' as long as  
3868 he is trusted, his advice is carried out. As God's  
3869 representative man was to have ruled; all was to have been  
3870 done under his will and rule; on his advice and at his  
3871 request heaven was to have bestowed its blessing on earth.  
3872 His prayer was to have been the wonderful, though simple  
3873 and most natural channel, in which the intercourse between  
3874 the King in heaven and His faithful servant man, as lord of  
3875 this world, was to have been maintained. The destinies of  
3876 the world were given into the power of the wishes, the will,  
3877 the prayer of man.

3878  
3879 With sin all this underwent a terrible change—man's fall  
3880 brought all creation under the curse. With redemption the  
3881 beginning was seen of a glorious restoration. No sooner had  
3882 God begun in Abraham to form for Himself a people from  
3883 whom kings, yea the Great King, should come forth, than  
3884 we see what power the prayer of God's faithful servant has  
3885 to decide the destinies of those who come into contact with  
3886 him. In Abraham we see how prayer is not only, or even  
3887 chiefly, the means of obtaining blessing for ourselves, but is  
3888 the exercise of his royal prerogative to influence the  
3889 destinies of men, and the will of God which rules them. We  
3890 do not once find Abraham praying for himself. His prayer  
3891 for Sodom and Lot, for Abimelech, for Ishmael, prove what  
3892 power a man, who is God's friend, has to make the history  
3893 of those around him.  
3894

3895 This had been man's destiny from the first. Scripture not  
3896 only tells us this, but also teaches us how it was that God  
3897 could entrust man with such a high calling. It was because  
3898 He had created him in His own image and likeness. The  
3899 external rule was not committed to him without the inner  
3900 fitness: the bearing God's image in having dominion, in  
3901 being lord of all, had its root in the inner likeness, in his  
3902 nature. There was an inner agreement and harmony between  
3903 God and man, and incipient Godlikeness, which gave man a  
3904 real fitness for being the mediator between God and His  
3905 world, for he was to be prophet, priest, and king, to interpret  
3906 God's will, to represent nature's needs, to receive and  
3907 dispense God's bounty. It was in bearing God's image that  
3908 he could bear God's rule; he was indeed so like God, so  
3909 capable of entering into God's purposes, and carrying out  
3910 His plans, that God could trust him with the wonderful  
3911 privilege of asking and obtaining what the world might  
3912 need. And although sin has for a time frustrated God's  
3913 plans, prayer still remains what it would have been if man  
3914 had never fallen: the proof of man's Godlikeness, the  
3915 vehicle of his intercourse with the Infinite Unseen One, the  
3916 power that is allowed to hold the hand that holds the  
3917 destinies of the universe. Prayer is not merely the cry of the  
3918 suppliant for mercy; it is the highest forth-putting of his will  
3919 by man, knowing himself to be of Divine origin, created for  
3920 and capable of being, in king-like liberty, the executor of  
3921 the counsels of the Eternal.

3922

3923 What sin destroyed, grace has restored. What the first Adam  
3924 lost, the second has won back. In Christ man regains his  
3925 original position, and the Church, abiding in Christ, inherits  
3926 the promise: Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto  
3927 you.' Such a promise does by no means, in the first place,  
3928 refer to the grace or blessing we need for ourselves. It has

3929 reference to our position as the fruit-bearing branches of the  
3930 Heavenly Vine, who, like Him, only live for the work and  
3931 glory of the Father. It is for those who abide in Him, who  
3932 have forsaken self to take up their abode in Him with His  
3933 life of obedience and self-sacrifice, who have lost their life  
3934 and found it in Him, who are now entirely given up to the  
3935 interests of the Father and His kingdom. These are they who  
3936 understand how their new creation has brought them back to  
3937 their original destiny, has restored God's image and  
3938 likeness, and with it the power to have dominion. Such have  
3939 indeed the power, each in their own circle, to obtain and  
3940 dispense the powers of heaven here on earth. With holy  
3941 boldness they may make known what they will: they live as  
3942 priests in God's presence; as kings the powers of the world  
3943 to come begin to be at their disposal. [1] They enter upon  
3944 the fulfilment of the promise: Ask whatsoever ye will, it  
3945 shall be done unto you.'

3946  
3947 Church of the living God! thy calling is higher and holier  
3948 than thou knowest. Through thy members, as kings, and  
3949 priests unto God, would God rule the world; their prayers  
3950 bestow and withhold the blessing of heaven. In His elect  
3951 who are not just content to be themselves saved, but yield  
3952 themselves wholly, that through them, even as through the  
3953 Son, the Father may fulfil all His glorious counsel, in these  
3954 His elect, who cry day and night unto Him, God would  
3955 prove how wonderful man's original destiny was. As the  
3956 image-bearer of God on earth, the earth was indeed given  
3957 into his hand. When he fell, all fell with him: the whole  
3958 creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. But now  
3959 he is redeemed; the restoration of the original dignity has  
3960 begun. It is in very deed God's purpose that the fulfilment  
3961 of His eternal purpose, and the coming of His kingdom,  
3962 should depend on those of His people who, abiding in

3963 Christ, are ready to take up their position in Him their Head,  
3964 the great Priest-King, and in their prayers are bold enough  
3965 to say what they will that their God should do. As image-  
3966 bearer and representative of God on earth, redeemed man  
3967 has by his prayers to determine the history of this earth.  
3968 Man was created, and has now again been redeemed, to  
3969 pray, and by his prayer to have dominion.

3970

3971 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. ’

3972

3973 ———0—————

3974

3975 Lord! what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the  
3976 son of man, that Thou visitest him? for Thou has made him  
3977 a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with  
3978 glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over  
3979 the work of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things under his  
3980 feet. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the  
3981 earth!

3982

3983 Lord God! how low has sin made man to sink. And how  
3984 terribly has it darkened his mind, that he does not even  
3985 know his Divine destiny, to be Thy servant and  
3986 representative. Alas! that even Thy people, when their eyes  
3987 are opened, are so little ready to accept their calling and to  
3988 seek to have power with God, that they may have power  
3989 with men too to bless them.

3990

3991 Lord Jesus! it is in Thee the Father hath again crowned man  
3992 with glory and honour, and opened the way for us to be  
3993 what He would have us. O Lord, have mercy on Thy  
3994 people, and visit Thine heritage! Work mightily in Thy  
3995 Church, and teach Thy believing disciples to go forth in  
3996 their royal priesthood, and in the power of prayer, to which

3997 Thou hast given such wonderful promises, to serve Thy  
3998 kingdom, to have rule over the nations, and make the name  
3999 of God glorious in the earth. Amen.

4000

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4001

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4002

4003 [1] God is seeking priests among the sons of men. A human  
4004 priesthood is one of the essential parts of His eternal plan.

4005 To rule creation by man is His design; to carry on the  
4006 worship of creation by man is no less part of His design.

4007 Priesthood is the appointed link between heaven and earth,  
4008 the channel of intercourse between the sinner and God.

4009 Such a priesthood, in so far as expiation is concerned, is in  
4010 the hands of the Son of God alone; in so far as it is to be the

4011 medium of communication between Creator and creature, is  
4012 also in the hands of redeemed men—of the Church of God.

4013 God is seeking kings. Not out of the ranks of angels. Fallen  
4014 man must furnish Him with the rulers of His universe.

4015 Human hands must wield the sceptre, human heads must  
4016 wear the crown.—The Rent Veil, by Dr. H. Bonar.

4017

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4018

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4019

4020 NINETEENTH LESSON.

4021

4022 I go unto the Father!’

4023

4024 Or, Power for Praying and Working.

4025

4026 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the  
4027 works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than

4028 these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And  
4029 whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.’—John

4030 xiv. 12, 13.

4031  
4032 AS the Saviour opened His public ministry with His  
4033 disciples by the Sermon on the Mount, so He closes it by  
4034 the Parting Address preserved to us by John. In both He  
4035 speaks more than once of prayer. But with a difference. In  
4036 the Sermon on the Mount it is as to disciples who have only  
4037 just entered His school, who scarcely know that God is their  
4038 Father, and whose prayer chiefly has reference to their  
4039 personal needs. In His closing address He speaks to  
4040 disciples whose training time is now come to an end, and  
4041 who are ready as His messengers to take His place and His  
4042 work. In the former the chief lesson is: Be childlike, pray  
4043 believingly, and trust the Father that He will give you all  
4044 good gifts. Here He points to something higher: They are  
4045 now His friends to whom He has made known all that He  
4046 has heard of the Father; His messengers, who have entered  
4047 into His plans, and into whose hands the care of His work  
4048 and kingdom on earth is to be entrusted. They are now to go  
4049 out and do His works, and in the power of His approaching  
4050 exaltation, even greater works: prayer is now to be the  
4051 channel through which that power is to be received for their  
4052 work. With Christ's ascension to the Father a new epoch  
4053 commences for their working and praying both.

4054  
4055 See how clearly this connection comes out in our text. As  
4056 His body here on earth, as those who are one with Him in  
4057 heaven, they are now to do greater works than He had done;  
4058 their success and their victories are to be greater than His.  
4059 He mentions two reasons for this. The one, because He was  
4060 to go to the Father, to receive all power; the other, because  
4061 they might now ask and expect all in His Name. Because I  
4062 go to the Father, and—notice this and—and, whatsoever ye  
4063 shall ask, I will do.' His going to the Father would thus  
4064 bring the double blessing: they would ask and receive all in



4065 His Name, and as a consequence, would do the greater  
4066 works. This first mention of prayer in our Saviour's parting  
4067 words thus teaches us two most important lessons. He that  
4068 would do the works of Jesus must pray in His Name. He  
4069 that would pray in His Name must work in His Name.

4070

4071 He who would work must pray: it is in prayer that the  
4072 power for work is obtained. He that in faith would do the  
4073 works that Jesus did, must pray in His Name. As long as  
4074 Jesus was here on earth, He Himself did the greatest works:  
4075 devils the disciples could not cast out, fled at His word.  
4076 When He went to the Father, He was no longer here in the  
4077 body to work directly. The disciples were now His body: all  
4078 His work from the throne in heaven here on earth must and  
4079 could be done through them. One might have thought that  
4080 now He was leaving the scene Himself, and could only  
4081 work through commissioners, the works might be fewer and  
4082 weaker. He assures us of the contrary: Verily, verily, I say  
4083 unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall  
4084 he do also, and he shall do greater works.' His approaching  
4085 death was to be such a real breaking down and making an  
4086 end of the power of sin; with the resurrection the powers of  
4087 the Eternal Life were so truly to take possession of the  
4088 human body and to obtain supremacy over human life; with  
4089 His ascension He was to receive the power to communicate  
4090 the Holy Spirit so fully to His own; the union, the oneness  
4091 between Himself on the throne and them on earth, was to be  
4092 so intensely and divinely perfect, that He meant it as the  
4093 literal truth: Greater works than these shall he do, because I  
4094 go to the Father.' And the issue proved how true it was.  
4095 While Jesus, during three years of personal labour on earth,  
4096 gathered little more than five hundred disciples, and the  
4097 most of them so feeble that they were but little credit to His  
4098 cause, it was given to men like Peter and Paul manifestly to

4099 do greater things than He had done. From the throne He  
4100 could do through them what He Himself in His humiliation  
4101 could not yet do.

4102

4103 But there is one condition: He that believeth on me, he shall  
4104 do greater works, because I go to the Father; and whatsoever  
4105 ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.' His going to the  
4106 Father would give Him a new power to hear prayer. For the  
4107 doing of the greater works, two things were needed: His  
4108 going to the Father to receive all power, our prayer in His  
4109 Name to receive all power from Him again. As He asks the  
4110 Father, He receives and bestows on us the power of the new  
4111 dispensation for the greater works; as we believe, and ask in  
4112 His Name, the power comes and takes possession of us to  
4113 do the greater works.

4114

4115 Alas! how much working there is in the work of God, in  
4116 which there is little or nothing to be seen of the power to do  
4117 anything like Christ's works, not to speak of greater works.  
4118 There can be but one reason: the believing on Him, the  
4119 believing prayer in His Name, this is so much wanting. O  
4120 that every labourer and leader in church, or school, in the  
4121 work of home philanthropy or foreign missions might learn  
4122 the lesson: Prayer in the Name of Jesus is the way to share  
4123 in the mighty power which Jesus has received of the Father  
4124 for His people, and it is in this power alone that he that  
4125 believeth can do the greater works. To every complaint as to  
4126 weakness or unfitness, as to difficulties or want of success,  
4127 Jesus gives this one answer: He that believeth on me shall  
4128 do greater works, because I go to the Father, and  
4129 whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.' We  
4130 must understand that the first and chief thing for everyone  
4131 who would do the work of Jesus, is to believe, and so to get  
4132 linked to Him, the Almighty One, and then to pray the

4133 prayer of faith in His Name. Without this our work is but  
4134 human and carnal; it may have some use in restraining sin,  
4135 or preparing the way for blessing, but the real power is  
4136 wanting. Effectual working needs first effectual prayer.  
4137

4138 And now the second lesson: He who would pray must work.  
4139 It is for power to work that prayer has such great promises:  
4140 it is in working that the power for the effectual prayer of  
4141 faith will be gained. In these parting words of our blessed  
4142 Lord we find that He no less than six times (John xiv. 13,  
4143 14, xv. 7, 16, xvi. 23, 24) repeats those unlimited prayer-  
4144 promises which have so often awakened our anxious  
4145 questionings as to their real meaning: whatsoever,'  
4146 anything,' what ye will,' ask and ye shall receive.' How  
4147 many a believer has read these over with joy and hope, and  
4148 in deep earnestness of soul has sought to plead them for his  
4149 own need. And he has come out disappointed. The simple  
4150 reason was this: he had rent away the promise from its  
4151 surrounding. The Lord gave the wonderful promise of the  
4152 free use of His Name with the Father in connection with the  
4153 doing of His works. It is the disciple who gives himself  
4154 wholly to live for Jesus' work and kingdom, for His will  
4155 and honour, to whom the power will come to appropriate  
4156 the promise. He that would fain grasp the promise when he  
4157 wants something very special for himself, will be  
4158 disappointed, because he would make Jesus the servant of  
4159 his own comfort. But to him who seeks to pray the effectual  
4160 prayer of faith, because he needs it for the work of the  
4161 Master, to him it will be given to learn it; because he has  
4162 made himself the servant of his Lord's interests. Prayer not  
4163 only teaches and strengthens to work: work teaches and  
4164 strengthens to pray.  
4165

4166 This is in perfect harmony with what holds good both in the  
4167 natural and the spiritual world. Whosoever hath, to him  
4168 shall be given; or, He that is faithful in a little, is faithful  
4169 also in much. Let us with the small measure of grace  
4170 already received, give ourselves to the Master for His work:  
4171 work will be to us a real school of prayer. It was when  
4172 Moses had to take full charge of a rebellious people that he  
4173 felt the need, but also the courage, to speak boldly to God  
4174 and to ask great things of Him (Ex. xxxiii. 12, 15, 18). As  
4175 you give yourself entirely to God for His work, you will  
4176 feel that nothing less than these great promises are what you  
4177 need, that nothing less is what you may most confidently  
4178 expect.

4179

4180 Believer in Jesus! You are called, you are appointed, to do  
4181 the works of Jesus, and even greater works, because He has  
4182 gone to the Father to receive the power to do them in and  
4183 through you.

4184

4185 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. Give  
4186 yourself, and live, to do the works of Christ and you will  
4187 learn to pray so as to obtain wonderful answers to prayer.  
4188 Give yourself, and live, to pray and you will learn to do the  
4189 works He did, and greater works. With disciples full of faith  
4190 in Himself, and bold in prayer to ask great things, Christ can  
4191 conquer the world.

4192

4193 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.?

4194

4195 ———0———

4196

4197 O my Lord! I have this day again heard words from Thee  
4198 which pass my comprehension. And yet I cannot do aught  
4199 but in simple childlike faith take and keep them as Thy gift

4200 to me too. Thou hast said that in virtue of Thy going to the  
4201 Father, he that believeth on Thee will do the works which  
4202 Thou hast done, and greater works. Lord! I worship Thee as  
4203 the Glorified One, and look for the fulfilment of Thy  
4204 promise. May my whole life just be one of continued  
4205 believing in Thee. So purify and sanctify my heart, make it  
4206 so tenderly susceptible of Thyself and Thy love, that  
4207 believing on Thee may be the very life it breathes.

4208

4209 And Thou hast said that in virtue of Thy going to the Father,  
4210 whatsoever we ask, Thou wilt do. From Thy throne of  
4211 power Thou wouldest make Thy people share the power  
4212 given Thee, and work through them as the members of Thy  
4213 body, in response to their believing prayers in Thy Name.  
4214 Power in prayer with Thee, and power in work with men, is  
4215 what Thou has promised Thy people and me too.

4216

4217 Blessed Lord! Forgive us all that we have so little believed  
4218 Thee and Thy promise, and so little proved Thy faithfulness  
4219 in fulfilling it. O forgive us that we have so little honoured  
4220 Thy all-prevailing Name in heaven or upon earth.

4221

4222 Lord! Teach me to pray so that I may prove that Thy Name  
4223 is indeed all-prevailing with God and men and devils. Yea,  
4224 teach me so to work and so to pray that Thou canst glorify  
4225 Thyself in me as the Omnipotent One, and do Thy great  
4226 work through me too. Amen.

4227

4228

4229

4230 TWENTIETH LESSON.

4231

4232 That the Father may be glorified;'

4233

4234 Or, The Chief End of Prayer.

4235

4236 I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my  
4237 Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the  
4238 Son.'—John xiv. 13.

4239

4240 THAT the Father may be glorified in the Son: it is to this  
4241 end that Jesus on His throne in glory will do all we ask in  
4242 His Name. Every answer to prayer He gives will have this  
4243 as its object: when there is no prospect of this object being  
4244 obtained, He will not answer. It follows as a matter of  
4245 course that this must be with us, as with Jesus, the essential  
4246 element in our petitions: the glory of the Father must be the  
4247 aim and end, the very soul and life of our prayer.

4248

4249 It was so with Jesus when He was on earth. I seek not mine  
4250 own honour: I seek the honour of Him that sent me;' in such  
4251 words we have the keynote of His life. In the first words of  
4252 the high-priestly prayer He gives utterance to it: Father!  
4253 Glorify Thy son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. I have  
4254 glorified Thee on earth; glorify me with Thyself.' The  
4255 ground on which He asks to be taken up into the glory He  
4256 had with the Father, is the twofold one: He has glorified  
4257 Him on earth; He will still glorify Him in heaven. What He  
4258 asks is only to enable Him to glorify the Father more. It is  
4259 as we enter into sympathy with Jesus on this point, and  
4260 gratify Him by making the Father's glory our chief object in  
4261 prayer too, that our prayer cannot fail of an answer. There is  
4262 nothing of which the Beloved Son has said more distinctly  
4263 that it will glorify the Father than this, His doing what we  
4264 ask; He will not, therefore, let any opportunity slip of  
4265 securing this object. Let us make His aim ours: let the glory  
4266 of the Father be the link between our asking and His doing:  
4267 such prayer must prevail.^1

4268

4269 This word of Jesus comes indeed as a sharp two-edged  
4270 sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and  
4271 quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus  
4272 in His prayers on earth, in His intercession in heaven, in His  
4273 promise of an answer to our prayers from there, makes this  
4274 His first object—the glory of His Father. Is it so with us  
4275 too? Or are not, in large measure, self-interest and self-will  
4276 the strongest motives urging us to pray? Or, if we cannot  
4277 see that this is the case, have we not to acknowledge that the  
4278 distinct, conscious longing for the glory of the Father is not  
4279 what animates our prayers? And yet it must be so.

4280

4281 Not as if the believer does not at times desire it. But he has  
4282 to mourn that he has so little attained. And he knows the  
4283 reason of his failure too. It was, because the separation  
4284 between the spirit of daily life and the spirit of the hour of  
4285 prayer was too wide. We begin to see that the desire for the  
4286 glory of the Father is not something that we can awake and  
4287 present to our Lord when we prepare ourselves to pray. No!  
4288 it is only when the whole life, in all its parts, is given up to  
4289 God's glory, that we can really pray to His glory too. Do all  
4290 to the glory of God,' and, Ask all to the glory of God,'—  
4291 these twin commands are inseparable: obedience to the  
4292 former is the secret of grace for the latter. A life to the glory  
4293 of God is the condition of the prayers that Jesus can answer,  
4294 that the Father may be glorified.'

4295

4296 This demand in connection with prevailing prayer—that it  
4297 should be to the glory of God—is no more than right and  
4298 natural. There is none glorious but the Lord: there is no  
4299 glory but His, and what He layeth on His creatures.  
4300 Creation exists to show forth His glory; all that is not for  
4301 His glory is sin, and darkness, and death: it is only in the

4302 glorifying of God that the creatures can find glory. What the  
4303 Son of Man did, to give Himself wholly, His whole life, to  
4304 glorify the Father, is nothing but the simple duty of every  
4305 redeemed one. And Christ's reward will be his too. Because  
4306 He gave Himself so entirely to the glory of the Father, the  
4307 Father crowned Him with glory and honour, giving the  
4308 kingdom into His hands, with the power to ask what He  
4309 will, and, as Intercessor, to answer our prayers. And just as  
4310 we become one with Christ in this, and as our prayer is part  
4311 of a life utterly surrendered to God's glory, will the Saviour  
4312 be able to glorify the Father to us by the fulfilment of the  
4313 promise: Whatsoever ye shall ask, I will do it.'

4314

4315 To such a life, with God's glory our only aim, we cannot  
4316 attain by any effort of our own. It is only in the man Christ  
4317 Jesus that such a life is to be seen: in Him it is to be found  
4318 for us. Yes blessed be God! His life is our life; He gave  
4319 Himself for us; He Himself is now our life. The discovery,  
4320 and the confession, and the denial, of self, as usurping the  
4321 place of God, of self-seeking and self-trusting, is essential,  
4322 and yet is what we cannot accomplish in our own strength.  
4323 It is the incoming and indwelling, the Presence and the Rule  
4324 in the heart, of our Lord Jesus who glorified the Father on  
4325 earth, and is now glorified with Him, that thence He might  
4326 glorify Him in us;—it is Jesus Himself coming in, who can  
4327 cast out all self-glorifying, and give us instead His own  
4328 God-glorifying life and Spirit. It is Jesus, who longs to  
4329 glorify the Father in hearing our prayers, who will teach us  
4330 to live and to pray to the glory of God.

4331

4332 And what motive, what power is there that can urge our  
4333 slothful hearts to yield themselves to our Lord to work this  
4334 in us? Surely nothing more is needed than a sight of how  
4335 glorious, how alone worthy of glory the Father is. Let our



4336 faith learn in adoring worship to bow before Him, to ascribe  
4337 to Him alone the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, to  
4338 yield ourselves to dwell in His light as the ever-blessed,  
4339 ever-loving One. Surely we shall be stirred to say, To Him  
4340 alone be glory.’ And we shall look to our Lord Jesus with  
4341 new intensity of desire for a life that refuses to see or seek  
4342 ought but the glory of God. When there is but little prayer  
4343 that can be answered, the Father is not glorified. It is a duty,  
4344 for the glory of God, to live and pray so that our prayer can  
4345 be answered. For the sake of God’s glory, let us learn to  
4346 pray well.

4347  
4348 What a humbling thought that so often there is earnest  
4349 prayer for a child or a friend, for a work or a circle, in  
4350 which the thought of our joy or our pleasure was far  
4351 stronger than any yearnings for God’s glory. No wonder  
4352 that there are so many unanswered prayers: here we have  
4353 the secret. God would not be glorified when that glory was  
4354 not our object. He that would pray the prayer of faith, will  
4355 have to give himself to live literally so that the Father in all  
4356 things may be glorified in him. This must be his aim:  
4357 without this there cannot be the prayer of faith. How can ye  
4358 believe,’ said Jesus, which receive glory of one another, and  
4359 the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?’ All  
4360 seeking of our own glory with men makes faith impossible:  
4361 it is the deep, intense self-sacrifice that gives up its own  
4362 glory, and seeks the glory of God alone, that wakens in the  
4363 soul that spiritual susceptibility of the Divine, which is  
4364 faith. The surrender to God to seek His glory, and the  
4365 expectation that He will show His glory in hearing us, are  
4366 one at root: He that seeks God’s glory will see it in the  
4367 answer to his prayer, and he alone.  
4368

4369 And how, we ask again, shall we attain to it? Let us begin  
4370 with confession. How little has the glory of God been an  
4371 all-absorbing passion; how little our lives and our prayers  
4372 have been full of it. How little have we lived in the likeness  
4373 of the Son, and in sympathy with Him—for God and His  
4374 glory alone. Let us take time, until the Holy Spirit discover  
4375 it to us, and we see how wanting we have been in this. True  
4376 knowledge and confession of sin are the sure path to  
4377 deliverance.

4378  
4379 And then let us look to Jesus. In Him we can see by what  
4380 death we can glorify God. In death He glorified Him;  
4381 through death He was glorified with Him. It is by dying,  
4382 being dead to self and living to God, that we can glorify  
4383 Him. And this—this death to self, this life to the glory of  
4384 God—is what Jesus gives and lives in each one who can  
4385 trust Him for it. Let nothing less than these—the desire, the  
4386 decision to live only for the glory of the Father, even as  
4387 Christ did; the acceptance of Him with His life and strength  
4388 working it in us; the joyful assurance that we can live to the  
4389 glory of God, because Christ lives in us;—let this be the  
4390 spirit of our daily life. Jesus stands surety for our living  
4391 thus; the Holy Spirit is given, and waiting to make it our  
4392 experience, if we will only trust and let Him; O let us not  
4393 hold back through unbelief, but confidently take as our  
4394 watchword—All to the glory of God! The Father accepts  
4395 the will, the sacrifice is well-pleasing; the Holy Spirit will  
4396 seal us within with the consciousness, we are living for God  
4397 and His glory.

4398  
4399 And then what quiet peace and power there will be in our  
4400 prayers, as we know ourselves through His grace, in perfect  
4401 harmony with Him who says to us, when He promises to do  
4402 what we ask: That the Father may be glorified in the Son.’

4403 With our whole being consciously yielded to the inspiration  
4404 of the Word and Spirit, our desires will be no longer ours  
4405 but His; their chief end the glory of God. With increasing  
4406 liberty we shall be able in prayer to say: Father! Thou  
4407 knowest, we ask it only for Thy glory. And the condition of  
4408 prayer-answers, instead of being as a mountain we cannot  
4409 climb, will only give us the greater confidence that we shall  
4410 be heard, because we have seen that prayer has no higher  
4411 beauty or blessedness than this, that it glorifies the Father.  
4412 And the precious privilege of prayer will become doubly  
4413 precious because it brings us into perfect unison with the  
4414 Beloved Son in the wonderful partnership He proposes:  
4415 You ask, and I do, that the Father may be glorified in the  
4416 Son.’

4417

4418 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

4419

4420 ———0———

4421

4422 Blessed Lord Jesus! I come again to Thee. Every lesson  
4423 Thou givest me convinces me more deeply how little I  
4424 know to pray aright. But every lesson also inspires me with  
4425 hope that Thou art going to teach me, that Thou art teaching  
4426 me not only to know what prayer should be, but actually to  
4427 pray as I ought. O my Lord! I look with courage to Thee,  
4428 the Great Intercessor, who didst pray and dost hear prayer,  
4429 only that the Father may be glorified, to teach me too to live  
4430 and to pray to the glory of God.

4431

4432 Saviour! To this end I yield myself to Thee again. I would  
4433 be nothing. I have given self, as already crucified with Thee,  
4434 to the death. Through the Spirit its workings are mortified  
4435 and made dead; Thy life and Thy love of the Father are  
4436 taking possession of me. A new longing begins to fill my

4437 soul, that every day, every hour, that in every prayer the  
4438 glory of the Father may be everything to me. O my Lord! I  
4439 am in Thy school to learn this: teach Thou it me.  
4440

4441 And do Thou, the God of glory, the Father of glory, my God  
4442 and my Father, accept the desire of a child who has seen  
4443 that Thy glory is indeed alone worth living for. O Lord!  
4444 Show me Thy glory. Let it overshadow me. Let it fill the  
4445 temple of my heart. Let me dwell in it as revealed in Christ.  
4446 And do Thou Thyself fulfil in me Thine own good pleasure,  
4447 that Thy child should find his glory in seeking the glory of  
4448 his Father. Amen.

4449

4450 ^1See in the note on George Muller, at the close of this  
4451 volume, how he was led to make God's glory his first  
4452 object.

4453

4454

4455

4456 TWENTY-FIRST LESSON.

4457

4458 If ye abide in me;'

4459

4460 Or The All-Inclusive Condition.

4461

4462 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask  
4463 whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'—John  
4464 xv. 7.

4465

4466 IN all God's intercourse with us, the promise and its  
4467 conditions are inseparable. If we fulfil the conditions, He  
4468 fulfils the promise. What He is to be to us depends upon  
4469 what we are willing to be to Him. Draw near to God, and  
4470 He will draw near to you.' And so in prayer the unlimited

4471 promise, Ask whatsoever ye will, has its one simple and  
4472 natural condition, if ye abide in me. It is Christ whom the  
4473 Father always hears; God is in Christ, and can only be  
4474 reached by being in Him; to be IN HIM is the way to have  
4475 our prayer heard; fully and wholly ABIDING IN HIM, we  
4476 have the right to ask whatsoever we will, and the promise  
4477 that it shall be done unto us.

4478

4479 When we compare this promise with the experiences of  
4480 most believers, we are startled by a terrible discrepancy.  
4481 Who can number up the countless prayers that rise and  
4482 bring no answer? The cause must be either that we do not  
4483 fulfil the condition, or God does not fulfil the promise.  
4484 Believers are not willing to admit either, and therefore have  
4485 devised a way of escape from the dilemma. They put into  
4486 the promise the qualifying clause our Saviour did not put  
4487 there—if it be God's will; and so maintain both God's  
4488 integrity and their own. O if they did but accept it and hold  
4489 it fast as it stands, trusting to Christ to vindicate His truth,  
4490 how God's Spirit would lead them to see the Divine  
4491 propriety of such a promise to those who really abide in  
4492 Christ in the sense in which He means it, and to confess that  
4493 the failure in the fulfilling the condition is the one sufficient  
4494 explanation of unanswered prayer. And how the Holy Spirit  
4495 would then make our feebleness in prayer one of the  
4496 mightiest motives to urge us on to discover the secret, and  
4497 obtain the blessing, of full abiding in Christ.

4498

4499 If ye abide in me.' As a Christian grows in grace and in the  
4500 knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he is often surprised to find  
4501 how the words of God grow too, in the new and deeper  
4502 meaning with which they come to him. He can look back to  
4503 the day when some word of God was opened up to him and  
4504 he rejoiced in the blessing he had found in it. After a time

4505 some deeper experience gave it a new meaning, and it was  
4506 as if he never had seen what it contained. And yet once  
4507 again, as he advanced in the Christian life, the same word  
4508 stood before him again as a great mystery, until anew the  
4509 Holy Spirit led him still deeper into its Divine fulness. One  
4510 of these ever-growing, never-exhausted words, opening up  
4511 to us step by step the fulness of the Divine life, is the  
4512 Master's precious 'Abide in me.' As the union of the branch  
4513 with the vine is one of growth, never-ceasing growth and  
4514 increase, so our abiding in Christ is a life process in which  
4515 the Divine life takes ever fuller and more complete  
4516 possession of us. The young and feeble believer may be  
4517 really abiding in Christ up to the measure of his light; it is  
4518 he who reaches onward to the full abiding in the sense in  
4519 which the Master understood the words, who inherits all the  
4520 promises connected with it.

4521  
4522 In the growing life of abiding in Christ, the first stage is that  
4523 of faith. As the believer sees that, with all his feebleness,  
4524 the command is really meant for him, his great aim is  
4525 simply to believe that, as he knows he is in Christ, so now,  
4526 notwithstanding unfaithfulness and failure, abiding in Christ  
4527 is his immediate duty, and a blessing within his reach. He is  
4528 specially occupied with the love, and power, and  
4529 faithfulness of the Saviour: he feels his one need to be  
4530 believing.

4531  
4532 It is not long before he sees something more is needed.  
4533 Obedience and faith must go together. Not as if to the faith  
4534 he has the obedience must be added, but faith must be made  
4535 manifest in obedience. Faith is obedience at home and  
4536 looking to the Master: obedience is faith going out to do His  
4537 will. He sees how he has been more occupied with the  
4538 privilege and the blessings of this abiding than with its

4539 duties and its fruit. There has been much of self and of self-  
4540 will that has been unnoticed or tolerated: the peace which,  
4541 as a young and feeble disciple, he could enjoy in believing  
4542 goes from him; it is in practical obedience that the abiding  
4543 must be maintained: 'If ye keep my commands, ye shall  
4544 abide in my love.' As before his great aim was through the  
4545 mind, and the truth it took hold of, to let the heart rest on  
4546 Christ and His promises; so now, in this stage, he chief  
4547 effort is to get his will united with the will of his Lord, and  
4548 the heart and the life brought entirely under His rule.

4549  
4550 And yet it is as if there is something wanting. The will and  
4551 the heart are on Christ's side; he obeys and he loves his  
4552 Lord. But still, why is it that the fleshly nature has yet so  
4553 much power, that the spontaneous motions and emotions of  
4554 the inmost being are not what they should be? The will does  
4555 not approve or allow, but here is a region beyond control of  
4556 the will. And why also, even when there is not so much of  
4557 positive commission to condemn, why so much of  
4558 omission, the deficiency of that beauty of holiness, that zeal  
4559 of love, that conformity to Jesus and His death, in which the  
4560 life of self is lost, and which is surely implied in the  
4561 abiding, as the Master meant it? There must surely be  
4562 something in our abiding in Christ and Christ in us, which  
4563 he has not yet experienced.

4564  
4565 It is so. Faith and obedience are but the pathway of blessing.  
4566 Before giving us the parable of the vine and the branches,  
4567 Jesus had very distinctly told what the full blessing is to  
4568 which faith and obedience are to lead. Three times over He  
4569 had said, 'If ye love me, keep my commandments,' and  
4570 spoken of the threefold blessing with which He would  
4571 crown such obedient love. The Holy Spirit would come  
4572 from the Father; the Son would manifest Himself; the

4573 Father and the Son would come and make their abode. It is  
4574 as our faith grows into obedience, and in obedience and  
4575 love our whole being goes out and clings itself to Christ,  
4576 that our inner life becomes opened up, and the capacity is  
4577 formed within of receiving the life, the spirit, of the  
4578 glorified Jesus, as a distinct and conscious union with Christ  
4579 and with the Father. The word is fulfilled in us: In that day  
4580 ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in  
4581 you.' We understand how, just as Christ is in God, and God  
4582 in Christ, one together not only in will and in love, but in  
4583 identity of nature and life, because they exist in each other,  
4584 so we are in Christ and Christ in us, in union not only of  
4585 will and love, but of life and nature too.

4586

4587 It was after Jesus had spoken of our thus through the Holy  
4588 Spirit knowing that He is in the Father, and even so we in  
4589 Him and He in us, that He said, Abide in me, and I in you.  
4590 Accept, consent to receive that Divine life of union with  
4591 myself, in virtue of which, as you abide in me, I also abide  
4592 in you, even as I abide in the Father. So that your life is  
4593 mine and mine is yours.' This is the true abiding, the  
4594 occupying of the position in which Christ can come and  
4595 abide; so abiding in Him that the soul has come away from  
4596 self to find that He has taken the place and become our life.  
4597 It is the becoming as little children who have no care, and  
4598 find their happiness in trusting and obeying the love that has  
4599 done all for them.

4600

4601 To those who thus abide, the promise comes as their rightful  
4602 heritage: Ask whatsoever ye will. It cannot be otherwise.  
4603 Christ has got full possession of them. Christ dwells in their  
4604 love, their will, their life. Not only has their will been given  
4605 up; Christ has entered it, and dwells and breathes in it by



4606 His Spirit. He whom the Father always hears, prays in them;  
4607 they pray in Him: what they ask shall be done unto them.

4608

4609 Beloved fellow-believer! let us confess that it is because we  
4610 do not abide in Christ as He would have us, that the Church  
4611 is so impotent in presence of the infidelity and worldliness  
4612 and heathendom, in the midst of which the Lord is able to  
4613 make her more than conqueror. Let us believe that He  
4614 means what He promises, and accept the condemnation the  
4615 confession implies.

4616

4617 But let us not be discouraged. The abiding of the branch in  
4618 the Vine is a life of never-ceasing growth. The abiding, as  
4619 the Master meant it, is within our reach, for He lives to give  
4620 it us. Let us but be ready to count all things loss, and to say,  
4621 Not as though I had already attained; I follow after, if that I  
4622 may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of  
4623 Christ Jesus.' Let us not be so much occupied with the  
4624 abiding, as with Him to whom the abiding links us, and His  
4625 fulness. Let it be Him, the whole Christ, in His obedience  
4626 and humiliation, in His exaltation and power, in whom our  
4627 soul moves and acts; He Himself will fulfil His promise in  
4628 us.

4629

4630 And then as we abide, and grow evermore into the full  
4631 abiding, let us exercise our right, the will to enter into all  
4632 God's will. Obeying what that will commands, let us claim  
4633 what it promises. Let us yield to the teaching of the Holy  
4634 Spirit, to show each of us, according to his growth and  
4635 measure, what the will of God is which we may claim in  
4636 prayer. And let us rest content with nothing less than the  
4637 personal experience of what Jesus gave when He said, If ye  
4638 abide in me, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto  
4639 you.'

4640

4641 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!

4642

4643 ———0———

4644

4645 Beloved Lord! do teach me to take this promise anew in all  
4646 its simplicity, and to be sure that the only measure of Thy  
4647 holy giving is our holy willing. Lord! Let each word of this  
4648 Thy promise be anew made quick and powerful in my soul.

4649

4650 Thou sayest: Abide in me! O my Master, my Life, my All, I  
4651 do abide in Thee. Give Thou me to grow up into all Thy  
4652 fulness. It is not the effort of faith, seeking to cling to Thee,  
4653 nor even the rest of faith, trusting Thee to keep me; it is not  
4654 the obedience of the will, nor the keeping the  
4655 commandments; but it is Thyself living in me and in the  
4656 Father, that alone can satisfy me. It is Thy self, my Lord, no  
4657 longer before me and above me, but one with me, and  
4658 abiding in me; it is this I need, it is this I seek. It is this I  
4659 trust Thee for.

4660

4661 Thou sayest: Ask whatsoever ye will! Lord! I know that the  
4662 life of full, deep abiding will so renew and sanctify and  
4663 strengthen the will that I shall have the light and the liberty  
4664 to ask great things. Lord! let my will, dead in Thy death,  
4665 living in Thy life, be bold and large in its petitions.

4666

4667 Thou sayest: It shall be done. O Thou who art the Amen,  
4668 the Faithful and True Witness, give me in Thyself the  
4669 joyous confidence that Thou wilt make this word yet more  
4670 wonderfully true to me than ever, because it hath not  
4671 entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath  
4672 prepared for them that love Him. Amen.

4673

4674 NOTE

4675

4676 On a thoughtful comparison of what we mostly find in  
4677 books or sermons on prayer, and the teaching of the Master,  
4678 we shall find one great difference: the importance assigned  
4679 to the answer to prayer is by no means the same. In the  
4680 former we find a great deal on the blessing of prayer as a  
4681 spiritual exercise even if there be no answer, and on the  
4682 reasons why we should be content without it. God's  
4683 fellowship ought to be more to us than the gift we ask;  
4684 God's wisdom only knows what is best; God may bestow  
4685 something better than what He withholds. Though this  
4686 teaching looks very high and spiritual, it is remarkable that  
4687 we find nothing of it with our Lord. The more carefully we  
4688 gather together all He spoke on prayer, the clearer it  
4689 becomes that He wished us to think of prayer simply as the  
4690 means to an end, and that the answer was to be the proof  
4691 that we and our prayer are acceptable to the Father in  
4692 heaven. It is not that Christ would have us count the gifts of  
4693 higher value than the fellowship and favour of the Father.  
4694 By no means. But the Father means the answer to be the  
4695 token of His favour and of the reality of our fellowship with  
4696 Him. To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in  
4697 thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the  
4698 request of his servant.'

4699

4700 A life marked by daily answer to prayer is the proof of our  
4701 spiritual maturity; that we have indeed attained to the true  
4702 abiding in Christ; that our will is truly at one with God's  
4703 will; that our faith has grown strong to see and take what  
4704 God has prepared for us; that the Name of Christ and His  
4705 nature have taken full possession of us; and that we have  
4706 been found fit to take a place among those whom God  
4707 admits to His counsels, and according to whose prayer He

4708 rules the world. These are they in whom something of  
4709 man's original dignity hath been restored, in whom, as they  
4710 abide in Christ, His power as the all-prevailing Intercessor  
4711 can manifest itself, in whom the glory of His Name is  
4712 shown forth. Prayer is very blessed; the answer is more  
4713 blessed still, as the response from the Father that our prayer,  
4714 our faith, our will are indeed as He would wish them to be.  
4715

4716 I make these remarks with the one desire of leading my  
4717 readers themselves to put together all that Christ has said on  
4718 prayer, and to yield themselves to the full impression of the  
4719 truth that when prayer is what it should be, or rather when  
4720 we are what we should be, abiding in Christ, the answer  
4721 must be expected. It will bring us out from those refuges  
4722 where we have comforted ourselves with unanswered  
4723 prayer. It will discover to us the place of power to which  
4724 Christ has appointed His Church, and which it so little  
4725 occupies. It will reveal the terrible feebleness of our  
4726 spiritual life as the cause of our not knowing to pray boldly  
4727 in Christ's Name. It will urge us mightily to rise to a life in  
4728 the full union with Christ, and in the fulness of the Spirit, as  
4729 the secret of effectual prayer. And it will so lead us on to  
4730 realize our destiny: At that day: Verily, verily, I say unto  
4731 you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it  
4732 you in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy  
4733 may be fulfilled.' Prayer that is really, spiritually, in union  
4734 with Jesus, is always answered.

4735

---

4736

4737

4738 TWENTY-SECOND LESSON.

4739

4740 My words in you.'

4741

4742 Or, The Word and Prayer.

4743

4744 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask  
4745 whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.’—John  
4746 xv. 7.

4747

4748 THE vital connection between the word and prayer is one of  
4749 the simplest and earliest lessons of the Christian life. As that  
4750 newly-converted heathen put it: I pray—I speak to my  
4751 father; I read—my Father speaks to me. Before prayer, it is  
4752 God’s word that prepares me for it by revealing what the  
4753 Father has bid me ask. In prayer, it is God’s word  
4754 strengthens me by giving my faith its warrant and its plea.  
4755 And after prayer, it is God’s word that brings me the answer  
4756 when I have prayed, for in it the Spirit gives me to hear the  
4757 Father’s voice. Prayer is not monologue but dialogue; God’s  
4758 voice in response to mine in its most essential part.

4759 Listening to God’s voice is the secret of the assurance that  
4760 He will listen to mine. Incline thine ear, and hear;’ Give ear  
4761 to me;’ Hearken to my voice;’ are words which God speaks  
4762 to man as well as man to God. His hearkening will depend  
4763 on ours; the entrance His words find with me, will be the  
4764 measure of the power of my words with Him. What God’s  
4765 words are to me, is the test of what He Himself is to me,  
4766 and so of the uprightness of my desire after Him in prayer.

4767

4768 It is this connection between His word and our prayer that  
4769 Jesus points to when He says, If ye abide in me, and my  
4770 words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be  
4771 done unto you.’ The deep importance of this truth becomes  
4772 clear if we notice the other expression of which this one has  
4773 taken the place. More than once Jesus had said, “Abide in  
4774 me and I in you.’ His abiding in us was the complement and  
4775 the crown of our abiding in Him. But here, instead of Ye in

4776 me and I in you,' He says, Ye in me and my words in you.'  
4777 His words abiding are the equivalent of Himself abiding.

4778  
4779 What a view is here opened up to us of the place the words  
4780 of God in Christ are to have in our spiritual life, and  
4781 especially in our prayer. In a man's words he reveals  
4782 himself. In his promises he gives himself away, he binds  
4783 himself to the one who receives his promise. In his  
4784 commands he sets forth his will, seeks to make himself  
4785 master of him whose obedience he claims, to guide and use  
4786 him as if he were part of himself. It is through our words  
4787 that spirit holds fellowship with spirit, that the spirit of one  
4788 man passes over and transfers itself into another. It is  
4789 through the words of a man, heard and accepted, and held  
4790 fast and obeyed, that he can impart himself to another. But  
4791 all this in a very relative and limited sense.

4792  
4793 But when God, the infinite Being, in whom everything is  
4794 life and power, spirit and truth, in the very deepest meaning  
4795 of the words,—when God speaks forth Himself in His  
4796 words, He does indeed give HIMSELF, His Love and His  
4797 Life, His Will and His Power, to those who receive these  
4798 words, in a reality passing comprehension. In every promise  
4799 He puts Himself in our power to lay hold of and possess; in  
4800 every command He puts Himself in our power for us to  
4801 share with Him His Will, His Holiness, His Perfection. In  
4802 God's Word God gives us HIMSELF; His Word is nothing  
4803 less than the Eternal Son, Christ Jesus. And so all Christ's  
4804 words are God's words, full of a Divine quickening life and  
4805 power. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and  
4806 they are life.'

4807  
4808 Those who have made the deaf and dumb their study, tell us  
4809 how much the power of speaking depends on that of

4810 hearing, and how the loss of hearing in children is followed  
4811 by that of speaking too. This is true in a wider sense: as we  
4812 hear, so we speak. This is true in the highest sense of our  
4813 intercourse with God. To offer a prayer—to give utterance  
4814 to certain wishes and to appeal to certain promises—is an  
4815 easy thing, and can be learned of man by human wisdom.  
4816 But to pray in the Spirit, to speak words that reach and  
4817 touch God, that affect and influence the powers of the  
4818 unseen world,—such praying, such speaking, depends  
4819 entirely upon our hearing God’s voice. Just as far as we  
4820 listen to the voice and language that God speaks, and in the  
4821 words of God receive His thoughts, His mind, His life, into  
4822 our heart, we shall learn to speak in the voice and the  
4823 language that God hears. It is the ear of the learner,  
4824 wakened morning by morning, that prepares for the tongue  
4825 of the learned, to speak to God as well as men, as should be  
4826 (Isa. l. 4).

4827  
4828 This hearing the voice of God is something more than the  
4829 thoughtful study of the Word. There may be a study and  
4830 knowledge of the Word, in which there is but little real  
4831 fellowship with the living God. But there is also a reading  
4832 of the Word, in the very presence of the Father, and under  
4833 the leading of the Spirit, in which the Word comes to us in  
4834 living power from God Himself; it is to us the very voice of  
4835 the Father, a real personal fellowship with Himself. It is the  
4836 living voice of God that enters the heart, that brings blessing  
4837 and strength, and awakens the response of a living faith that  
4838 reaches the heart of God again.

4839  
4840 It is on this hearing the voice, that the power both to obey  
4841 and believe depends. The chief thing is, not to know what  
4842 God has said we must do, but that God Himself says it to us.  
4843 It is not the law, and not the book, not the knowledge of

4844 what is right, that works obedience, but the personal  
4845 influence of God and His living fellowship. And even so it  
4846 is not the knowledge of what God has promised, but the  
4847 presence of God Himself as the Promiser, that awakens  
4848 faith and trust in prayer. It is only in the full presence of  
4849 God that disobedience and unbelief become impossible.

4850

4851 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask  
4852 whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.' We see what  
4853 this means. In the words the Saviour gives Himself. We  
4854 must have the words in us, taken up into our will and life,  
4855 reproduced in our disposition and conduct. We must have  
4856 them abiding in us: our whole life one continued exposition  
4857 of the words that are within, and filling us; the words  
4858 revealing Christ within, and our life revealing Him without.  
4859 It is as the words of Christ enter our very heart, become our  
4860 life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart and  
4861 influence Him. My prayer will depend on my life; what  
4862 God's words are to me and in me, my words will be to God  
4863 and in God. If I do what God says, God will do what I say.

4864

4865 How well the Old Testament saints understood this  
4866 connection between God's words and ours, and how really  
4867 prayer with them was the loving response to what they had  
4868 heard God speak! If the word were a promise, they counted  
4869 on God to do as He had spoken. Do as Thou hast said;' For  
4870 Thou, Lord, hast spoken it;' According to Thy promise;'  
4871 According to Thy word;' in such expressions they showed  
4872 that what God spake in promise was the root and the life of  
4873 what they spake in prayer. If the word was a command, they  
4874 simply did as the Lord had spoken: So Abram departed as  
4875 the Lord had spoken.' Their life was fellowship with God,  
4876 the interchange of word and thought. What God spoke they  
4877 heard and did; what they spoke God heard and did. In each



4878 word He speaks to us, the whole Christ gives Himself to  
4879 fulfil it for us. For each word He asks no less that we give  
4880 the whole man to keep that word, and to receive its  
4881 fulfilment.

4882  
4883 If my words abide in you;’ the condition is simple and clear.  
4884 In His words His will is revealed. As the words abide in me,  
4885 His will rules me; my will becomes the empty vessel which  
4886 His will fills, the willing instrument which His will wields;  
4887 He fills my inner being. In the exercise of obedience and  
4888 faith my will becomes ever stronger, and is brought into  
4889 deeper inner harmony with Him. He can fully trust it to will  
4890 nothing but what He wills; He is not afraid to give the  
4891 promise, If my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will,  
4892 it shall be done unto you.’ To all who believe it, and act  
4893 upon it, He will make it literally true.

4894  
4895 Disciples of Christ! is it not becoming more and more clear  
4896 to us that while we have been excusing our unanswered  
4897 prayers, our impotence in prayer, with a fancied submission  
4898 to God’s wisdom and will, the real reason has been that our  
4899 own feeble life has been the cause of our feeble prayers.  
4900 Nothing can make strong men but the word coming to us  
4901 from God’s mouth: by that we must live. It is the word of  
4902 Christ, loved, lived in, abiding in us, becoming through  
4903 obedience and action part of our being, that makes us one  
4904 with Christ, that fits us spiritually for touching, for taking  
4905 hold of God. All that is of the world passeth away; he that  
4906 doeth the will of God abideth for ever. O let us yield heart  
4907 and life to the words of Christ, the words in which He ever  
4908 gives HIMSELF, the personal living Saviour, and His  
4909 promise will be our rich experience: If ye abide in me, and  
4910 my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall  
4911 be done unto you.’

4912

4913

4914 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!’

4915

4916 ———0—————

4917

4918 Blessed Lord! Thy lesson this day has again discovered to  
4919 me my folly. I see how it is that my prayer has not been  
4920 more believing and prevailing. I was more occupied with  
4921 my speaking to Thee than Thy speaking to me. I did not  
4922 understand that the secret of faith is this: there can be only  
4923 so much faith as there is of the Living Word dwelling in the  
4924 soul.

4925

4926 And Thy word had taught me so clearly: Let every man be  
4927 swift to hear, slow to speak; let not thine heart be hasty to  
4928 utter anything before God. Lord, teach me that it is only  
4929 with Thy word taken up into my life that my words can be  
4930 taken into Thy heart; that Thy word, if it be a living power  
4931 within me, will be a living power with Thee; what Thy  
4932 mouth hath spoken Thy hand will perform.

4933

4934 Lord! deliver me from the uncircumcised ear. Give me the  
4935 opened ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning to  
4936 hear the Father’s voice. Even as Thou didst only speak what  
4937 Thou didst hear, may my speaking be the echo of Thy  
4938 speaking to me. When Moses went into the tabernacle to  
4939 speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking unto  
4940 him from off the mercy-seat.’ Lord, may it be so with me  
4941 too. Let a life and character bearing the one mark, that Thy  
4942 words abide and are seen in it, be the preparation for the full  
4943 blessing: Ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto  
4944 you.’ Amen.

4945

4946

4947

---

4948 TWENTY-THIRD LESSON

4949

4950 Bear fruit, that the Father may give what ye ask;'

4951

4952 Or, Obedience the Path to Power in Prayer.

4953

4954 Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you,

4955 that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should

4956 abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name,

4957 He may give it you.'—John xv. 16.

4958

4959 The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth

4960 much.'—James. v. 16.

4961

4962 THE promise of the Father's giving whatsoever we ask is

4963 here once again renewed, in such a connection as to show

4964 us to whom it is that such wonderful influence in the

4965 council chamber of the Most High is to be granted. I chose

4966 you,' the Master says, and appointed you that ye should go

4967 and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide;'

4968 adds, to the end that whatsoever ye,' the fruit-bearing ones,

4969 shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.'

4970 This is nothing but the fuller expression of what He had

4971 spoken in the words, If ye abide in me.'

4972 He had spoken of the object of this abiding as the bearing fruit,' more fruit,'

4973 much fruit;'

4974 in this was God to be glorified, and the mark of

4975 discipleship seen. No wonder that He now adds, that where

4976 the reality of the abiding is seen in fruit abounding and

4977 abiding, this would be the qualification for praying so as to

4978 obtain what we ask. Entire consecration to the fulfilment of

our calling is the condition of effectual prayer, is the key to

4979 the unlimited blessings of Christ's wonderful prayer-  
4980 promises.  
4981  
4982 There are Christians who fear that such a statement is at  
4983 variance with the doctrine of free grace. But surely not of  
4984 free grace rightly understood, nor with so many express  
4985 statements of God's blessed word. Take the words of St.  
4986 John (1 John iii. 22): Let us love in deed and truth; hereby  
4987 shall we assure our heart before Him. And whatsoever we  
4988 ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His  
4989 commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His  
4990 sight.' Or take the oft-quoted words of James: The fervent  
4991 effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' that is,  
4992 of a man of whom, according to the definition of the Holy  
4993 Spirit, it can be said, He that doeth righteousness, is  
4994 righteous even as He is righteous.' Mark the spirit of so  
4995 many of the Psalms, with their confident appeal to the  
4996 integrity and righteousness of the supplicant. In Ps. xviii,  
4997 David says: The Lord rewarded me according to my  
4998 righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath  
4999 He recompensed me. . . . I was upright before Him, and I  
5000 kept myself from mine iniquity: therefore hath the Lord  
5001 recompensed me according to my righteousness.' (Ps. xviii.  
5002 20-26. See also Ps. vii. 3-5, xv. 1, 2, xviii. 3, 6, xxvi. 1-6,  
5003 cxix. 121, 153.) If we carefully consider such utterances in  
5004 the light of the New Testament, we shall find them in  
5005 perfect harmony with the explicit teaching of the Saviour's  
5006 parting words: If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide  
5007 in my love;' Ye are my friends if ye do what I command  
5008 you.' The word is indeed meant literally: I appointed you  
5009 that ye should go and bear fruit, that,' then, whatsoever ye  
5010 shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.'  
5011

5012 Let us seek to enter into the spirit of what the Saviour here  
5013 teaches us. There is a danger in our evangelical religion of  
5014 looking too much at what it offers from one side, as a  
5015 certain experience to be obtained in prayer and faith. There  
5016 is another side which God's word puts very strongly, that of  
5017 obedience as the only path to blessing. What we need is to  
5018 realize that in our relationship to the Infinite Being whom  
5019 we call God who has created and redeemed us, the first  
5020 sentiment that ought to animate us is that of subjection: the  
5021 surrender to His supremacy, His glory, His will, His  
5022 pleasure, ought to be the first and uppermost thought of our  
5023 life. The question is not, how we are to obtain and enjoy His  
5024 favour, for in this the main thing may still be self. But what  
5025 this Being in the very nature of things rightfully claims, and  
5026 is infinitely and unspeakably worthy of, is that His glory  
5027 and pleasure should be my one object. Surrender to His  
5028 perfect and blessed will, a life of service and obedience, is  
5029 the beauty and the charm of heaven. Service and obedience,  
5030 these were the thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of  
5031 the Son, when He dwelt upon earth. Service and obedience,  
5032 these must become with us the chief objects of desire and  
5033 aim, more so than rest or light, or joy or strength: in them  
5034 we shall find the path to all the higher blessedness that  
5035 awaits us.

5036

5037 Just note what a prominent place the Master gives it, not  
5038 only in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter, in connection with the abiding,  
5039 but in the 14<sup>th</sup>, where He speaks of the indwelling of the  
5040 Three-One God. In verse 15 we have it: If ye love me, keep  
5041 my commandments, and the Spirit will be given you of the  
5042 Father. Then verse 21: He that hath my commandments and  
5043 keepeth them, he it is that loveth me;' and he shall have the  
5044 special love of my Father resting on him and the special  
5045 manifestation of myself. And then again, verse 23, one of

5046 the highest of all the exceeding great and precious promises:  
5047 If a man love me he will keep my words, and the Father and  
5048 I will come and take up our abode with him.’ Could words  
5049 put it more clearly that obedience is the way to the  
5050 indwelling of the Spirit, to His revealing the Son within us,  
5051 and to His again preparing us to be the abode, the home of  
5052 the Father? The indwelling of the Three-One God is the  
5053 heritage of them that obey. Obedience and faith are but two  
5054 aspects of one act,—surrender to God and His will. As faith  
5055 strengthens for obedience, it is in turn strengthened by it:  
5056 faith is made perfect by works. It is to be feared that often  
5057 our efforts to believe have been unavailing because we have  
5058 not taken up the only position in which a large faith is  
5059 legitimate or possible,—that of entire surrender to the  
5060 honour and the will of God. It is the man who is entirely  
5061 consecrated to God and His will who will find the power  
5062 come to claim everything that His God has promised to be  
5063 for him.

5064

5065 The application of this in the school of prayer is very  
5066 simple, but very solemn. I chose you,’ the Master says, and  
5067 appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit,’ much fruit  
5068 (verses 5, 8), and that your fruit should abide,’ that your life  
5069 might be one of abiding fruit and abiding fruitfulness, that’  
5070 thus, as fruitful branches abiding in me, whatsoever ye shall  
5071 ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.’ O how  
5072 often we have sought to be able to pray the effectual prayer  
5073 for much grace to bear fruit, and have wondered that the  
5074 answer came not. It was because we were reversing the  
5075 Master’s order. We wanted to have the comfort and the joy  
5076 and the strength first, that we might do the work easily and  
5077 without any feeling of difficulty or self-sacrifice. And He  
5078 wanted us in faith, without asking whether we felt weak or  
5079 strong, whether the work was hard or easy, in the obedience

5080 of faith to do what He said: the path of fruit-bearing would  
5081 have led us to the place and the power of prevailing prayer.  
5082 Obedience is the only path that leads to the glory of God.  
5083 Not obedience instead of faith, nor obedience to supply the  
5084 shortcomings of faith; no, but faith's obedience gives access  
5085 to all the blessings our God has for us. The baptism of the  
5086 Spirit (xiv. 16), the manifestation of the Son (xiv. 21), the  
5087 indwelling of the Father (xiv. 23), the abiding in Christ's  
5088 love (xv. 10), the privilege of His holy friendship (xv. 14),  
5089 and the power of all-prevailing prayer (xv. 16),—all wait  
5090 for the obedient.

5091

5092 Let us take home the lessons. Now we know the great  
5093 reason why we have not had power in faith to pray  
5094 prevailingly. Our life was not as it should have been: simple  
5095 downright obedience, abiding fruitfulness, was not its chief  
5096 mark. And with our whole heart we approve of the Divine  
5097 appointment: men to whom God is to give such influence in  
5098 the rule of the world, as at their request to do what  
5099 otherwise would not have taken place, men whose will is to  
5100 guide the path in which God's will is to work, must be men  
5101 who have themselves learned obedience, whose loyalty and  
5102 submission to authority must be above all suspicion. Our  
5103 whole soul approves the law: obedience and fruit-bearing,  
5104 the path to prevailing prayer. And with shame we  
5105 acknowledge how little our lives have yet borne this stamp.

5106

5107 Let us yield ourselves to take up the appointment the  
5108 Saviour gives us. Let us study His relation to us as Master.  
5109 Let us seek no more with each new day to think in the first  
5110 place of comfort, or joy, or blessing. Let the first thought  
5111 be: I belong to the Master. Every moment and every  
5112 movement I must act as His property, as a part of Himself,  
5113 as one who only seeks to know and do His will. A servant, a

5114 slave of Jesus Christ,—let this be the spirit that animates  
5115 me. If He says, No longer do I call you servants, but I have  
5116 called you friends,’ let us accept the place of friends: Ye are  
5117 my friends if ye do the things which I command you.’  
5118

5119 The one thing He commands us as His branches is to bear  
5120 fruit. Let us live to bless others, to testify of the life and the  
5121 love there is in Jesus. Let us in faith and obedience give our  
5122 whole life to that which Jesus chose us for and appointed us  
5123 to—fruit-bearing. As we think of His electing us to this, and  
5124 take up our appointment as coming from Him who always  
5125 gives all He demands, we shall grow strong in the  
5126 confidence that a life of fruit-bearing, abounding and  
5127 abiding, is within our reach. And we shall understand why  
5128 this fruit-bearing alone can be the path to the place of all  
5129 prevailing prayer. It is the man who, in obedience to the  
5130 Christ of God, is proving that he is doing what his Lord  
5131 wills, for whom the Father will do whatsoever he will:  
5132 Whatsoever we ask we receive, because we keep His  
5133 commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His  
5134 sight.’  
5135

5136 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’  
5137

5138 ———0—————  
5139

5140 Blessed Master! teach me to apprehend fully what I only  
5141 partly realize, that it is only through the will of God,  
5142 accepted and acted out in obedience to His commands, that  
5143 we obtain the power to grasp His will in His promises and  
5144 fully to appropriate them in our prayers. And teach me that  
5145 it is in the path of fruit-bearing that the deeper growth of the  
5146 branch into the Vine can be perfected, and we attain to the



5147 perfect oneness with Thyself in which we ask whatsoever  
5148 we will.

5149

5150 O Lord! Reveal to us, we pray Thee, how with all the hosts  
5151 of heaven, and with Thyself the Son on earth, and with all  
5152 the men of faith who have glorified Thee on earth,  
5153 obedience to God is our highest privilege, because it gives  
5154 access to oneness with Himself in that which is His highest  
5155 glory—His all perfect will. And reveal to us, we pray Thee,  
5156 how in keeping Thy commandments and bearing fruit  
5157 according to Thy will, our spiritual nature will grow up to  
5158 the full stature of the perfect man, with power to ask and to  
5159 receive whatsoever we will.

5160

5161 O Lord Jesus! Reveal Thyself to us, and the reality of Thy  
5162 purpose and Thy power to make these Thy wonderful  
5163 promises the daily experience of all who utterly yield  
5164 themselves to Thee and Thy words. Amen.

5165

5166

5167

5168 TWENTY-FOURTH LESSON.

5169

5170 In my Name;'

5171

5172 Or, The All-prevailing Plea.

5173

5174 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. If ye  
5175 shall ask me anything in my Name, that will I do. That  
5176 whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, He may  
5177 give it you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask  
5178 anything of the Father, He will give it you in my Name.  
5179 Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name: ask, and ye

5180 shall receive. In that day ye shall ask in my Name.’—John  
5181 xiv. 13, 14, xv. 16, xvi. 23, 24, 26.

5182

5183 HITHERTO the disciples had not asked in the Name of  
5184 Christ, nor had He Himself ever used the expression. The  
5185 nearest approach is, met together in my Name.’ Here in His  
5186 parting words, He repeats the word unceasingly in  
5187 connection with those promises of unlimited meaning,  
5188 ‘Whatsoever,’ ‘Anything,’ ‘What ye will,’ to teach them and  
5189 us that His Name is our only, but also our all-sufficient plea.  
5190 The power of prayer and the answer depend on the right use  
5191 of the Name.

5192

5193 What is a person’s name? That word or expression in which  
5194 the person is called up or represented to us. When I mention  
5195 or hear a name, it calls up before me the whole man, what I  
5196 know of him, and also the impression he has made on me.  
5197 The name of a king includes his honour, his power, his  
5198 kingdom. His name is the symbol of his power. And so each  
5199 name of God embodies and represents some part of the  
5200 glory of the Unseen One. And the Name of Christ is the  
5201 expression of all He has done and all He is and lives to do  
5202 as our Mediator.

5203

5204 And what is it to do a thing in the name of another? It is to  
5205 come with the power and authority of that other, as his  
5206 representative and substitute. We know how such a use of  
5207 another’s name always supposes a community of interest.  
5208 No one would give another the free use of his name without  
5209 first being assured that his honour and interest were as safe  
5210 with that other as with himself.

5211

5212 And what is it when Jesus gives us power over His Name,  
5213 the free use of it, with the assurance that whatever we ask in

5214 it will be given to us? The ordinary comparison of one  
5215 person giving another, on some special occasion, the liberty  
5216 to ask something in his name, comes altogether short  
5217 here,—Jesus solemnly gives to all His disciples a general  
5218 and unlimited power of the free use of His Name at all  
5219 times for all they desire. He could not do this if He did not  
5220 know that He could trust us with His interests, that His  
5221 honour would be safe in our hands. The free use of the  
5222 name of another is always the token of great confidence, of  
5223 close union. He who gives his name to another stands aside,  
5224 to let that other act for him; he who takes the name of  
5225 another, gives up his own as of no value. When I go in the  
5226 name of another, I deny myself, I take not only his name,  
5227 but himself and what he is, instead of myself and what I am.

5228

5229 Such a use of the name of a person may be in virtue of a  
5230 legal union. A merchant leaving his home and business,  
5231 gives his chief clerk a general power, by which he can draw  
5232 thousands of pounds in the merchant's name. The clerk  
5233 does this, not for himself, but only in the interests of the  
5234 business. It is because the merchant knows and trusts him as  
5235 wholly devoted to his interests and business, that he dares  
5236 put his name and property at his command. When the Lord  
5237 Jesus went to heaven, He left His work, the management of  
5238 His kingdom on earth, in the hands of His servants. He  
5239 could not do otherwise than also give them His Name to  
5240 draw all the supplies they needed for the due conduct of His  
5241 business. And they have the spiritual power to avail  
5242 themselves of the Name of Jesus just to the extent to which  
5243 they yield themselves to live only for the interests and the  
5244 work of the Master. The use of the Name always supposes  
5245 the surrender of our interests to Him whom we represent.

5246

5247 Or such a use of the name may be in virtue of a life union.  
5248 In the case of the merchant and his clerk, the union is  
5249 temporary. But we know how oneness of life on earth gives  
5250 oneness of name: a child has the father's name because he  
5251 has his life. And often the child of a good father has been  
5252 honoured or helped by others for the sake of the name he  
5253 bore. But this would not last long if it were found that it was  
5254 only a name, and that the father's character was wanting.  
5255 The name and the character or spirit must be in harmony.  
5256 When such is the case, the child will have a double claim on  
5257 the father's friends: the character secures and increases the  
5258 love and esteem rendered first for the name's sake. So it is  
5259 with Jesus and the believer: we are one, we have one life,  
5260 one Spirit with Him; for this reason we may come in His  
5261 Name. Our power in using that Name, whether with God, or  
5262 men, or devils depends on the measure of our spiritual life-  
5263 union. The use of the name rests on the unity of life; the  
5264 Name and the Spirit of Jesus are one. [2]

5265

5266 Or the union that empowers to the use of the Name may be  
5267 the union of love. When a bride whose life has been one of  
5268 poverty, becomes united to the bridegroom, she gives up her  
5269 own name, to be called by his, and has now the full right to  
5270 use it. She purchases in his name, and that name is not  
5271 refused. And this is done because the bridegroom has  
5272 chosen her for himself, counting on her to care for his  
5273 interests: they are now one. And so the Heavenly  
5274 Bridegroom could do nothing less; having loved us and  
5275 made us one with Himself, what could He do but give those  
5276 who bear His Name the right to present it before the Father,  
5277 or to come with it to Himself for all they need. And there is  
5278 no one who gives himself really to live in the Name of  
5279 Jesus, who does not receive in ever-increasing measure the  
5280 spiritual capacity to ask and receive in that Name what he

5281 will. The bearing of the name of another supposes my  
5282 having given up my own, and with it my own independent  
5283 life; but then, as surely, my possession of all there is in the  
5284 name I have taken instead of my own.

5285

5286 Such illustrations show us how defective the common view  
5287 is of a messenger sent to ask in the name of another, or a  
5288 guilty one appealing to the name of a surety. No Jesus  
5289 Himself is with the Father; it is not an absent one in whose  
5290 name we come. Even when we pray to Jesus Himself, it  
5291 must be in His Name. The name represents the person; to  
5292 ask in the Name is to ask in full union of interest and life  
5293 and love with Himself, as one who lives in and for Him. Let  
5294 the Name of Jesus only have undivided supremacy in my  
5295 heart and life, my faith will grow to the assurance that what  
5296 I ask in that Name cannot be refused. The name and the  
5297 power of asking go together: when the Name of Jesus has  
5298 become the power that rules my life, its power in prayer  
5299 with God will be seen too.

5300

5301 We see thus that everything depends on our own relation to  
5302 the Name: the power it has on my life is the power it will  
5303 have in my prayers. There is more than one expression in  
5304 Scripture which can make this clear to us. When it says, 'Do  
5305 all in the Name of the Lord Jesus,' we see how this is the  
5306 counterpart of the other, 'Ask all.' To do all and to ask all in  
5307 His Name, these go together. When we read, 'We shall walk  
5308 in the Name of our God,' we see how the power of the  
5309 Name must rule in the whole life; only then will it have  
5310 power in prayer. It is not to the lips but to the life God looks  
5311 to see what the Name is to us. When Scripture speaks of  
5312 men who have given their lives for the Name of the Lord  
5313 Jesus,' or of one ready to die for the Name of the Lord  
5314 Jesus,' we see what our relation to the Name must be: when

5315 it is everything to me, it will obtain everything for me. If I  
5316 let it have all I have, it will let me have all it has.

5317

5318 **WHATSOEVER** ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.’  
5319 Jesus means the promise literally. Christians have sought to  
5320 limit it: it looked too free; it was hardly safe to trust man so  
5321 unconditionally. We did not understand that the word in my  
5322 Name’ is its own safeguard. It is a spiritual power which no  
5323 one can use further than he obtains the capacity for, by his  
5324 living and acting in that Name. As we bear that Name  
5325 before men, we have power to use it before God. O let us  
5326 plead for God’s Holy Spirit to show us what the Name  
5327 means, and what the right use of it is. It is through the Spirit  
5328 that the Name, which is above every name in heaven, will  
5329 take the place of supremacy in our heart and life too.

5330

5331 Disciples of Jesus! Let the lessons of this day enter deep  
5332 into your hearts. The Master says: Only pray in my Name;  
5333 whatsoever ye ask will be given. Heaven is set open to you;  
5334 the treasures and powers of the world of spirit are placed at  
5335 your disposal on behalf of men around you. O come, and let  
5336 us learn to pray in the Name of Jesus. As to the disciples,  
5337 He says to us, Hitherto ye have not asked in my Name: ask,  
5338 and ye shall receive.’ Let each disciple of Jesus seek to  
5339 avail himself of the rights of his royal priesthood, and use  
5340 the power placed at his disposal for his circle and his work.  
5341 Let Christians awake and hear the message: your prayer can  
5342 obtain what otherwise will be withheld, can accomplish  
5343 what otherwise remains undone. O awake, and use the name  
5344 of Jesus to open the treasures of heaven for this perishing  
5345 world. Learn as the servants of the King to use His Name:  
5346 **WHATSOEVER** ye shall ask in my Name, **THAT WILL I**  
5347 **DO.**’

5348

5349 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

5350

5351 ———0———

5352

5353 Blessed Lord! It is as if each lesson Thou givest me has  
5354 such fulness and depths of meaning, that if I can only learn  
5355 that one, I shall know how to pray aright. This day I feel  
5356 again as if I needed but one prayer every day: Lord! Teach  
5357 me what it is to pray in Thy Name. Teach me so to live and  
5358 act, to walk and speak, so to do all in the Name of Jesus,  
5359 that my prayer cannot be anything else but in that blessed  
5360 Name too.

5361

5362 And teach me, Lord! to hold fast the precious promise that  
5363 WHATSOEVER we ask in Thy Name, Thou wilt do, the  
5364 Father will give. Though I do not yet fully understand, and  
5365 still less have fully attained, the wondrous union Thou  
5366 meanest when Thou sayest, IN MY NAME, I would yet  
5367 hold fast the promise until it fills my heart with the  
5368 undoubting assurance: Anything in the Name of Jesus.

5369

5370 O my Lord! let Thy Holy Spirit teach me this. Thou didst  
5371 say of Him, The Comforter, whom the Father shall send IN  
5372 MY NAME.’ He knows what it is to be sent from heaven in  
5373 Thy Name, to reveal and to honour the power of that Name  
5374 in Thy servants, to use that Name alone, and so to glorify  
5375 Thee. Lord Jesus! let Thy Spirit dwell in me, and fill me. I  
5376 would, I do yield my whole being to His rule and leading.  
5377 Thy Name and Thy Spirit are one; through Him Thy Name  
5378 will be the strength of my life and my prayer. Then I shall  
5379 be able for Thy Name’s sake to forsake all, in Thy Name to  
5380 speak to men and to God, and to prove that this is indeed  
5381 the Name above every name.

5382

5383 Lord Jesus! O teach me by Thy Holy Spirit to pray in Thy  
5384 Name. Amen.

5385

5386 NOTE.

5387

5388 What is meant by praying in Christ's name? It cannot mean  
5389 simply appearing before God with faith in the mediation of  
5390 the Saviour. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them  
5391 to pray, He supplied them with petitions. And afterwards  
5392 Jesus said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my  
5393 Name." Until the Spirit came, the seven petitions of the  
5394 Lord's prayer lay as it were dormant within them. When by  
5395 the Holy Ghost Christ descended into their hearts, they  
5396 desired the very blessings which Christ as our High Priest  
5397 obtains for us by His prayer from the Father. And such  
5398 petitions are always answered. The Father is always willing  
5399 to give what Christ asks. The Spirit of Christ always teaches  
5400 and influences us to offer the petitions which Christ ratifies  
5401 and presents to the Father. To pray in Christ's name is  
5402 therefore to be identified with Christ as to our  
5403 righteousness, and to be identified with Christ in our desires  
5404 by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. To pray in the Spirit,  
5405 to pray according to the will of the Father, to pray in  
5406 Christ's name, are identical expressions. The Father  
5407 Himself loveth us, and is willing to hear us: two  
5408 intercessors, Christ the Advocate above, and the Holy  
5409 Ghost, the Advocate within, are the gifts of His love.

5410

5411 This view may appear at first less consoling than a more  
5412 prevalent one, which refers prayer in Christ's name chiefly  
5413 to our trust in Christ's merit. The defect of this opinion is,  
5414 that it does not combine the intercession of the Saviour with  
5415 the will of the Father, and the indwelling Spirit's aid in  
5416 prayer. Nor does it fully realize the mediation of Christ; for



5417 the mediation consists not merely in that for Christ's sake  
5418 the Holy Father is able to regard me and my prayer; but  
5419 also, in that Christ Himself presents my petitions as His  
5420 petitions, desired by Him for me, even as all blessings are  
5421 purchased for me by His precious blood.

5422

5423 In all prayer, the one essential condition is that we are able  
5424 to offer it in the name of Jesus, as according to His desire  
5425 for us, according to the Father's will, according to the  
5426 Spirit's teaching. And thus praying in Christ's name is  
5427 impossible without self-examination, without reflection,  
5428 without self-denial; in short, without the aid of the Spirit.'—  
5429 Saphiv, The Lord's Prayer, pp. 411, 142.

5430

5431

5432

5433 [2] ^Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name,' that is, in my  
5434 nature; for things with God are called according to their  
5435 nature. We ask in Christ's Name, not when at the end of  
5436 some request we say, This I ask in the Name of Jesus  
5437 Christ,' but when we pray according to His nature, which is  
5438 love, which seeketh not its own but only the will of God and  
5439 the good of all creatures. Such asking is the cry of His own  
5440 Spirit in our hearts.—Jukes. The New Man.

5441

5442

5443

5444 TWENTY-FIFTH LESSON.

5445

5446 At that day;'

5447

5448 Or, The Holy Spirit and Prayer.

5449

5450 In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say  
5451 unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name,  
5452 He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my  
5453 Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.  
5454 At that day ye shall ask in my Name: and I say not, that I  
5455 will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth  
5456 you.’—John xvi. 23-26.

5457

5458 Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of  
5459 God.’—JUDE 20, 21.

5460

5461 THE words of John (I John ii. 12-14) to little children, to  
5462 young men, and to fathers suggest the thought that there  
5463 often are in the Christian life three great stages of  
5464 experience. The first, that of the new-born child, with the  
5465 assurance and the joy of forgiveness. The second, the  
5466 transition stage of struggle and growth in knowledge and  
5467 strength: young men growing strong, God’s word doing its  
5468 work in them and giving them victory over the Evil One.  
5469 And then the final stage of maturity and ripeness: the  
5470 Fathers, who have entered deeply into the knowledge and  
5471 fellowship of the Eternal One.

5472

5473 In Christ’s teaching on prayer there appear to be three  
5474 stages in the prayer-life, somewhat analogous. In the  
5475 Sermon on the Mount we have the initial stage: His  
5476 teaching is all comprised in one word, Father. Pray to your  
5477 Father, your Father sees, hears, knows, and will reward:  
5478 how much more than any earthly father! Only be childlike  
5479 and trustful. Then comes later on something like the  
5480 transition stage of conflict and conquest, in words like  
5481 these: This sort goeth not out but by fasting and prayer;’  
5482 Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night  
5483 unto Him?’ And then we have in the parting words, a higher

5484 stage. The children have become men: they are now the  
5485 Master's friends, from whom He has no secrets, to whom  
5486 He says, All things that I heard from my Father I made  
5487 known unto you;' and to whom, in the oft-repeated  
5488 whatsoever ye will,' He hands over the keys of the  
5489 kingdom. Now the time has come for the power of prayer in  
5490 His Name to be proved.

5491

5492 The contrast between this final stage and the previous  
5493 preparatory ones our Saviour marks most distinctly in the  
5494 words we are to meditate on: Hitherto ye have asked  
5495 nothing in my Name;' At that day ye shall ask in my Name.  
5496 We know what at that day' means. It is the day of the  
5497 outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The great work Christ was to  
5498 do on the cross, the mighty power and the complete victory  
5499 to be manifested in His resurrection and ascension, were to  
5500 issue in the coming down from heaven, as never before, of  
5501 the glory of God to dwell in men. The Spirit of the glorified  
5502 Jesus was to come and be the life of His disciples. And one  
5503 of the marks of that wonderful spirit-dispensation was to be  
5504 a power in prayer hitherto unknown—prayer in the Name of  
5505 Jesus, asking and obtaining whatsoever they would, is to be  
5506 the manifestation of the reality of the Spirit's indwelling.

5507

5508 To understand how the coming of the Holy Spirit was  
5509 indeed to commence a new epoch in the prayer-world, we  
5510 must remember who He is, what His work, and what the  
5511 significance of His not being given until Jesus was glorified.  
5512 It is in the Spirit that God exists, for He is Spirit. It is in the  
5513 Spirit that the Son was begotten of the Father: it is in the  
5514 fellowship of the Spirit that the Father and the Son are one.  
5515 The eternal never-ceasing giving to the Son which is the  
5516 Father's prerogative and the eternal asking and receiving  
5517 which is the Son's right and blessedness—it is through the

5518 Spirit that this communion of life and love is maintained. It  
5519 has been so from all eternity. It is so specially now, when  
5520 the Son as Mediator ever liveth to pray. The great work  
5521 which Jesus began on earth of reconciling in His own body  
5522 God and man, He carries on in heaven. To accomplish this  
5523 He took up into His own person the conflict between God's  
5524 righteousness and our sin. On the cross He once for all  
5525 ended the struggle in His own body. And then He ascended  
5526 to heaven, that thence He might in each member of His  
5527 body carry out the deliverance and manifest the victory He  
5528 had obtained. It is to do this that He ever liveth to pray; in  
5529 His unceasing intercession He places Himself in living  
5530 fellowship with the unceasing prayer of His redeemed ones.  
5531 Or rather, it is His unceasing intercession which shows  
5532 itself in their prayers, and gives them a power they never  
5533 had before.

5534  
5535 And He does this through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit,  
5536 the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, was not (John vii. 39), could  
5537 not be, until He had been glorified. This gift of the Father  
5538 was something distinctively new, entirely different from  
5539 what Old Testament saints had known. The work that the  
5540 blood effected in heaven when Christ entered within the  
5541 veil, was something so true and new, the redemption of our  
5542 human nature into fellowship with His resurrection-power  
5543 and His exaltation-glory was so intensely real, the taking up  
5544 of our humanity in Christ into the life of the Three-One God  
5545 was an event of such inconceivable significance, that the  
5546 Holy Spirit, who had to come from Christ's exalted  
5547 humanity to testify in our hearts of what Christ had  
5548 accomplished, was indeed no longer only what He had been  
5549 in the Old Testament. It was literally true the Holy Spirit  
5550 was not yet, for Christ was not yet glorified.' He came now  
5551 first as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. Even as the Son,

5552 who was from eternity God, had entered upon a new  
5553 existence as man, and returned to heaven with what He had  
5554 not before, so the Blessed Spirit, whom the Son, on His  
5555 ascension, received from the Father (Acts ii. 33) into His  
5556 glorified humanity, came to us with a new life, which He  
5557 had not previously to communicate. Under the Old  
5558 Testament He was invoked as the Spirit of God: at  
5559 Pentecost He descended as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus,  
5560 bringing down and communicating to us the full fruit and  
5561 power of the accomplished redemption.

5562  
5563 It is in the intercession of Christ that the continued efficacy  
5564 and application of His redemption is maintained. And it is  
5565 through the Holy Spirit descending from Christ to us that  
5566 we are drawn up into the great stream of His ever-ascending  
5567 prayers. The Spirit prays for us without words: in the depths  
5568 of a heart where even thoughts are at times formless, the  
5569 Spirit takes us up into the wonderful flow of the life of the  
5570 Three-One God. Through the Spirit, Christ's prayers  
5571 become ours, and ours are made His: we ask what we will,  
5572 and it is given to us. We then understand from experience,  
5573 Hitherto ye have not asked in my Name. At that day ye shall  
5574 ask in my Name.'

5575  
5576 Brother! what we need to pray in the Name of Christ, to ask  
5577 that we may receive that our joy may be full, is the baptism  
5578 of this Holy Ghost. This is more than the Spirit of God  
5579 under the Old Testament. This is more than the Spirit of  
5580 conversion and regeneration the disciples had before  
5581 Pentecost. This is more than the Spirit with a measure of  
5582 His influence and working. This is the Holy Spirit, the  
5583 Spirit of the glorified Jesus in His exaltation-power, coming  
5584 on us as the Spirit of the indwelling Jesus, revealing the Son  
5585 and the Father within. (John xiv. 16-23.) It is when this

5586 Spirit is the Spirit not of our hours of prayer, but of our  
5587 whole life and walk, when this Spirit glorifies Jesus in us by  
5588 revealing the completeness of His work, and making us  
5589 wholly one with Him and like Him, that we can pray in His  
5590 Name, because we are in very deed one with Him. Then it is  
5591 that we have that immediateness of access to the Father of  
5592 which Jesus says, I say not that I will pray the Father for  
5593 you.’ Oh! we need to understand and believe that to be  
5594 filled with this, the Spirit of the glorified One, is the one  
5595 need of God’s believing people. Then shall we realize what  
5596 it is, with all prayer and supplication to be praying at all  
5597 seasons in the Spirit,’ and what it is, praying in the Holy  
5598 Ghost, to keep ourselves in the love of God.’ At that day ye  
5599 shall ask in my Name.’

5600

5601 And so once again the lesson comes: What our prayer  
5602 avails, depends upon what we are and what our life is. It is  
5603 living in the Name of Christ that is the secret of praying in  
5604 the Name of Christ; living in the Spirit that fits for praying  
5605 in the Spirit. It is abiding in Christ that gives the right and  
5606 power to ask what we will: the extent of the abiding is the  
5607 exact measure of the power in prayer. It is the Spirit  
5608 dwelling within us that prays, not in words and thoughts  
5609 always, but in a breathing and a being deeper than  
5610 utterance. Just so much as there is of Christ’s Spirit in us, is  
5611 there real prayer. Our lives, our lives, O let our lives be full  
5612 of Christ, and full of His Spirit, and the wonderfully  
5613 unlimited promises to our prayer will no longer appear  
5614 strange. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name. Ask,  
5615 and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day  
5616 ye shall ask in my Name. Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
5617 Whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my Name, He will  
5618 give it you.’

5619

5620 LORD , TEACH US TO PRAY.’

5621

5622 ———0———

5623

5624 O my God! in holy awe I bow before Thee, the Three in  
5625 One. Again I have seen how the mystery of prayer is the  
5626 mystery of the Holy Trinity. I adore the Father who ever  
5627 hears, and the Son who ever lives to pray, and the Holy  
5628 Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, to lift us up  
5629 into the fellowship of that ever-blessed, never-ceasing  
5630 asking and receiving. I bow, my God, in adoring worship,  
5631 before the infinite condescension that thus, through the Holy  
5632 Spirit, takes us and our prayers into the Divine Life, and its  
5633 fellowship of love.

5634

5635 O my Blessed Lord Jesus! Teach me to understand Thy  
5636 lesson, that it is the indwelling Spirit, streaming from Thee,  
5637 uniting to Thee, who is the Spirit of prayer. Teach me what  
5638 it is as an empty, wholly consecrated vessel, to yield myself  
5639 to His being my life. Teach me to honour and trust Him, as  
5640 a living Person, to lead my life and my prayer. Teach me  
5641 specially in prayer to wait in holy silence, and give Him  
5642 place to breathe within me His unutterable intercession.  
5643 And teach me that through Him it is possible to pray  
5644 without ceasing, and to pray without failing, because He  
5645 makes me partaker of the never-ceasing and never-failing  
5646 intercession in which Thou, the Son, dost appear before the  
5647 Father. Yea, Lord, fulfil in me Thy promise, At that day ye  
5648 shall ask in my Name. Verily, verily, I say unto you,  
5649 Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, that will  
5650 He give.’ Amen.

5651

5652 ———0———

5653

5654 NOTE.

5655

5656 Prayer has often been compared to breathing: we have only  
5657 to carry out the comparison fully to see how wonderful the  
5658 place is which the Holy Spirit occupies. With every breath  
5659 we expel the impure air which would soon cause our death,  
5660 and inhale again the fresh air to which we owe our life. So  
5661 we give out from us, in confession the sins, in prayer the  
5662 needs and the desires of our heart. And in drawing in our  
5663 breath again, we inhale the fresh air of the promises, and the  
5664 love, and the life of God in Christ. We do this through the  
5665 Holy Spirit, who is the breath of our life.

5666

5667 And this He is because He is the breath of God. The Father  
5668 breathes Him into us, to unite Himself with our life. And  
5669 then just as on every expiration there follows again the  
5670 inhaling or drawing in of the breath, so God draws in again  
5671 His breath, and the Spirit returns to Him laden with the  
5672 desires and needs of our hearts. And thus the Holy Spirit is  
5673 the breath of the life of God, and the breath of the new life  
5674 in us. As God breathes Him out, we receive Him in answer  
5675 to prayer; as we breathe Him back again, He rises to God  
5676 laden with our supplications. As the Spirit of God, in whom  
5677 the Father and the Son are one, and the intercession of the  
5678 Son reaches the Father, He is to us the Spirit of prayer. True  
5679 prayer is the living experience of the truth of the Holy  
5680 Trinity. The Spirit's breathing, the Son's intercession, the  
5681 Father's will, these three become one in us.

5682

5683

5684

5685 TWENTY-SIXTH LESSON.

5686

5687 I have prayed for thee;'



5688

5689 Or, Christ the Intercessor.

5690

5691 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'—Luke  
5692 xxii. 32.

5693

5694 I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.'—  
5695 John xvi. 26.

5696

5697 He ever liveth to make intercession.'—Heb. vii. 25.

5698

5699 ALL growth in the spiritual life is connected with the  
5700 clearer insight into what Jesus is to us. The more I realize  
5701 that Christ must be all to me and in me, that all in Christ is  
5702 indeed for me, the more I learn to live the real life of faith,  
5703 which, dying to self, lives wholly in Christ. The Christian  
5704 life is no longer the vain struggle to live right, but the  
5705 resting in Christ and finding strength in Him as our life, to  
5706 fight the fight and gain the victory of faith. This is specially  
5707 true of the life of prayer. As it too comes under the law of  
5708 faith alone, and is seen in the light of the fulness and  
5709 completeness there is in Jesus, the believer understands that  
5710 it need no longer be a matter of strain or anxious care, but  
5711 an experience of what Christ will do for him and in him—a  
5712 participation in that life of Christ which, as on earth, so in  
5713 heaven, ever ascends to the Father as prayer. And he begins  
5714 to pray, not only trusting in the merits of Jesus, or in the  
5715 intercession by which our unworthy prayers are made  
5716 acceptable, but in that near and close union in virtue of  
5717 which He prays in us and we in Him. [3] ^ The whole of  
5718 salvation is Christ Himself: He has given HIMSELF to us;  
5719 He Himself lives in us. Because He prays, we pray too. As  
5720 the disciples, when they saw Jesus pray, asked Him to make  
5721 them partakers of what He knew of prayer, so we, now we

5722 see Him as intercessor on the throne, know that He makes  
5723 us participate with Himself in the life of prayer.

5724

5725 How clearly this comes out in the last night of His life. In  
5726 His high-priestly prayer (John xvii.), He shows us how and  
5727 what He has to pray to the Father, and will pray when once  
5728 ascended to heaven. And yet He had in His parting address  
5729 so repeatedly also connected His going to the Father with  
5730 their new life of prayer. The two would be ultimately  
5731 connected: His entrance on the work of His eternal  
5732 intercession would be the commencement and the power of  
5733 their new prayer-life in His Name. It is the sight of Jesus in  
5734 His intercession that gives us power to pray in His Name:  
5735 all right and power of prayer is Christ's; He makes us share  
5736 in His intercession.

5737

5738 To understand this, think first of His intercession: He ever  
5739 liveth to make intercession. The work of Christ on earth as  
5740 Priest was but a beginning. It was as Aaron He shed His  
5741 blood; it is as Melchizedek that He now lives within the veil  
5742 to continue His work, after the power of the eternal life. As  
5743 Melchizedek is more glorious than Aaron, so it is in the  
5744 work of intercession that the atonement has its true power  
5745 and glory. It is Christ that died: yea more, who is even at the  
5746 right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.' That  
5747 intercession is an intense reality, a work that is absolutely  
5748 necessary, and without which the continued application of  
5749 redemption cannot take place. In the incarnation and  
5750 resurrection of Jesus the wondrous reconciliation took  
5751 place, by which man became partaker of the Divine life and  
5752 blessedness. But the real personal appropriation of this  
5753 reconciliation in each of His members here below cannot  
5754 take place without the unceasing exercise of His Divine  
5755 power by the head in heaven. In all conversion and

5756 sanctification, in every victory over sin and the world, there  
5757 is a real forth-putting of the power of Him who is mighty to  
5758 save. And this exercise of His power only takes place  
5759 through His prayer: He asks of the Father, and receives  
5760 from the Father. He is able to save to the uttermost, because  
5761 He ever liveth to make intercession.’ There is not a need of  
5762 His people but He receives in intercession what the  
5763 Godhead has to give: His mediation on the throne is as real  
5764 and indispensable as on the cross. Nothing takes place  
5765 without His intercession: it engages all His time and  
5766 powers, is His unceasing occupation at the right hand of the  
5767 Father.

5768

5769 And we participate not only in the benefits of this His work,  
5770 but in the work itself. This because we are His body. Body  
5771 and members are one: The head cannot say to the feet, I  
5772 have no need of thee.’ We share with Jesus in all He is and  
5773 has: The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them.’  
5774 We are partakers of His life, His righteousness, His work:  
5775 we share with Him in His intercession too; it is not a work  
5776 He does without us.

5777

5778 We do this because we are partakers of His life: Christ is  
5779 our life;’ No longer I, but Christ liveth in me.’ The life in  
5780 Him and in us is identical, one and the same. His life in us  
5781 is an ever-praying life. When it descends and takes  
5782 possession of us, it does not lose its character; in us too it is  
5783 the every-praying life—a life that without ceasing asks and  
5784 receives from God. And this not as if there were two  
5785 separate currents of prayer rising upwards, one from Him,  
5786 and one from His people. No, but the substantial life-union  
5787 is also prayer-union: what He prays passes through us, what  
5788 we pray passes through Him. He is the angel with the  
5789 golden censer: UNTO HIM there was given much incense,’

5790 the secret of acceptable prayer, that He should add it unto  
5791 the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar.' We live,  
5792 we abide in Him, the Interceding One.

5793

5794 The Only-begotten is the only one who has the right to pray:  
5795 to Him alone it was said, Ask, and it shall be given Thee.'

5796 As in all other things the fulness dwells in Him, so the true  
5797 prayer-fulness too; He alone has the power of prayer. And  
5798 just as the growth of the spiritual life consists in the clearer  
5799 insight that all the treasures are in Him, and that we too are  
5800 in Him, to receive each moment what we possess in Him,  
5801 grace for grace, so with the prayer-life too. Our faith in the  
5802 intercession of Jesus must not only be that He prays in our  
5803 stead, when we do not or cannot pray, but that, as the  
5804 Author of our life and our faith, He draws us on to pray in  
5805 unison with Himself. Our prayer must be a work of faith in  
5806 this sense too, that as we know that Jesus communicates His  
5807 whole life in us, He also out of that prayerfulness which is  
5808 His alone breathes into us our praying.

5809

5810 To many a believer it was a new epoch in his spiritual life  
5811 when it was revealed to him how truly and entirely Christ  
5812 was his life, standing good as surety for his remaining  
5813 faithful and obedient. It was then first that he really began to  
5814 live a faith-life. No less blessed will be the discovery that  
5815 Christ is surety for our prayer-life too, the centre and  
5816 embodiment of all prayer, to be communicated by Him  
5817 through the Holy Spirit to His people. He ever liveth to  
5818 make intercession' as the Head of the body, as the Leader in  
5819 that new and living way which He hath opened up, as the  
5820 Author and the Perfecter of our faith. He provides in  
5821 everything for the life of His redeemed ones by giving His  
5822 own life in them: He cares for their life of prayer, by taking  
5823 them up into His heavenly prayer-life, by giving and

5824 maintaining His prayer-life within them. I have prayed for  
5825 thee,' not to render thy faith needless, but that thy faith fail  
5826 not:' our faith and prayer of faith is rooted in His. It is, if ye  
5827 abide in me,' the ever-living Intercessor, and pray with me  
5828 and in me: ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto  
5829 you.'

5830

5831 The thought of our fellowship in the intercession of Jesus  
5832 reminds us of what He has taught us more than once before,  
5833 how all these wonderful prayer-promises have as their aim  
5834 and their justification, the glory of God in the manifestation  
5835 of His kingdom and the salvation of sinners. As long as we  
5836 only or chiefly pray for ourselves, the promises of the last  
5837 night must remain a sealed book to us. It is to the fruit-  
5838 bearing branches of the Vine; it is to disciples sent into the  
5839 world as the Father sent Him, to live for perishing men; it is  
5840 to His faithful servants and intimate friends who take up the  
5841 work He leaves behind, who have like their Lord become as  
5842 the seed-corn, losing its life to multiply it manifold;—it is to  
5843 such that the promises are given. Let us each find out what  
5844 the work is, and who the souls are entrusted to our special  
5845 prayers; let us make our intercession for them our life of  
5846 fellowship with God, and we shall not only find the  
5847 promises of power in prayer made true to us, but we shall  
5848 then first begin to realize how our abiding in Christ and His  
5849 abiding in us makes us share in His own joy of blessing and  
5850 saving men.

5851

5852 O most wonderful intercession of our Blessed Lord Jesus, to  
5853 which we not only owe everything, but in which we are  
5854 taken up as active partners and fellow-workers! Now we  
5855 understand what it is to pray in the Name of Jesus, and why  
5856 it has such power. In His Name, in His Spirit, in Himself, in  
5857 perfect union with Him. O wondrous, ever active, and most

5858 efficacious intercession of the man Christ Jesus! When shall  
5859 we be wholly taken up into it and always pray in it?

5860

5861 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. ’

5862

5863 ———0————

5864

5865 Blessed Lord! In lowly adoration I would again bow before  
5866 Thee. Thy whole redemption work has now passed into  
5867 prayer; all that now occupiess Thee in maintaining and  
5868 dispensing what Thou didst purchase with Thy blood is only  
5869 prayer. Thou ever livest to pray. And because we are and  
5870 abide in Thee, the direct access to the Father is always open,  
5871 our life can be one of unceasing prayer, and the answer to  
5872 our prayer is sure.

5873

5874 Blessed Lord! Thou hast invited Thy people to be Thy  
5875 fellow-workers in a life of prayer. Thou hast united Thyself  
5876 with Thy people and makest them as Thy body share with  
5877 Thee in that ministry of intercession through which alone  
5878 the world can be filled with the fruit of Thy redemption and  
5879 the glory of the Father. With more liberty than ever I come  
5880 to Thee, my Lord, and beseech Thee: Teach me to pray.  
5881 Thy life is prayer, Thy life is mine. Lord! teach me to pray,  
5882 in Thee, like Thee.

5883

5884 And, O my Lord! Give me specially to know, as Thou didst  
5885 promise Thy disciples, that Thou art in the Father, and I in  
5886 Thee, and Thou in me. Let the uniting power of the Holy  
5887 Spirit make my whole life an abiding in Thee and Thy  
5888 intercession, so that my prayer may be its echo, and the  
5889 Father hear me in Thee and Thee in me. Lord Jesus! let Thy  
5890 mind in everything be in me, and my life in everything by in  
5891 Thee. So shall I be prepared to be the channel through

5892 which Thy intercession pours its blessing on the world.  
5893 Amen.

5894

5895 NOTE.

5896

5897 The new epoch of prayer in the Name of Jesus is pointed  
5898 out by Christ as the time of the outpouring of the Spirit, in  
5899 which the disciples enter upon a more enlightened  
5900 apprehension of the economy of redemption, and become as  
5901 clearly conscious of their oneness with Jesus as of His  
5902 oneness with the Father. Their prayer in the Name of Jesus  
5903 is now directly to the Father Himself. "I say not that I will  
5904 pray for you, for the Father Himself loveth you," Jesus says;  
5905 while He had previously spoken of the time before the  
5906 Spirit's coming: "I will pray the Father, and He will give  
5907 you the Comforter." This prayer thus has as its central  
5908 thought the insight into our being united to God in Christ as  
5909 on both sides the living bond of union between God and us  
5910 (John xvii. 23: "I in them and Thou in me"), so that in Jesus  
5911 we behold the Father as united to us, and ourselves as  
5912 united to the Father. Jesus Christ must have been revealed  
5913 to us, not only through the truth in the mind, but in our  
5914 inmost personal consciousness as the living personal  
5915 reconciliation, as He in whom God's Fatherhood and  
5916 Father-love have been perfectly united with human nature  
5917 and it with God. Not that with the immediate prayer to the  
5918 Father, the mediatorship of Christ is set aside; but it is no  
5919 longer looked at as something external, existing outside of  
5920 us, but as a real living spiritual existence within us, so that  
5921 the Christ for us, the Mediator, has really become Christ in  
5922 us.

5923

5924 When the consciousness of this oneness between God in  
5925 Christ and us in Christ still is wanting, or has been darkened

5926 by the sense of guilt, then the prayer of faith looks to our  
5927 Lord as the Advocate, who pays the Father for us.  
5928 (Compare John xvi. 26 with John xiv. 16, 17; ix. 20; Luke  
5929 xxi. 32; I John ii. 1.) To take Christ thus in prayer as  
5930 Advocate, is according to John xvi. 26 not perfectly the  
5931 same as the prayer in His Name. Christ's advocacy is meant  
5932 to lead us on to that inner self-standing life-union with Him,  
5933 and with the Father in Him, in virtue of which Christ is He  
5934 in whom God enters into immediate relation and unites  
5935 Himself with us, and in whom we in all circumstances enter  
5936 into immediate relation with God. Even so the prayer in the  
5937 Name of Jesus does not consist in our prayer at His  
5938 command: the disciples had prayed thus ever since the Lord  
5939 had given them His "Our Father," and yet He says,  
5940 "Hitherto ye have not prayed in my Name." Only when the  
5941 mediation of Christ has become, through the indwelling of  
5942 the Holy Spirit, life and power within us, and so His mind,  
5943 as it found expression in His word and work, has taken  
5944 possession of and filled our personal consciousness and  
5945 will, so that in faith and love we have Jesus in us as the  
5946 Reconciler who has actually made us one with God: only  
5947 then His Name, which included His nature and His work, is  
5948 become truth and power in us (not only for us), and we have  
5949 in the Name of Jesus the free, direct access to the Father  
5950 which is sure of being heard. Prayer in the Name of Jesus is  
5951 the liberty of a son with the Father, just as Jesus had this as  
5952 the First-begotten. We pray in the place of Jesus, not as if  
5953 we could put ourselves in His place, but in as far as we are  
5954 in Him and He in us. We go direct to the Father, but only as  
5955 the Father is in Christ, not as if He were separate from  
5956 Christ. Wherever thus the inner man does not live in Christ  
5957 and has Him not present as the Living One, where His word  
5958 is not ruling in the heart in its Spirit-power, where His truth  
5959 and life have not become the life of our soul, it is vain to



5960 think that a formula like “for the sake of Thy dear Son” will  
5961 avail.’—Christliche Ethik, von Dr. I. T. Beck, Tübingen, iii.  
5962 39.

5963

5964

5965

5966 [3] See on the difference between having Christ as an  
5967 Advocate or Intercessor who stands outside of us, and the  
5968 having Him within us, we abiding in Him and He in us  
5969 through the Holy Spirit perfecting our union with Him, so  
5970 that we ourselves can come directly to the Father in His  
5971 Name,—the note above from Beck of Tübingen.

5972

5973

5974

5975 TWENTY-SEVENTH LESSON.

5976

5977 Father, I will;’

5978

5979 Or, Christ the High Priest

5980

5981 Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me may  
5982 be with me where I am.’—John xvii. 24.

5983

5984 IN His parting address, Jesus gives His disciples the full  
5985 revelation of what the New Life was to be, when once the  
5986 kingdom of God had come in power. In the indwelling of  
5987 the Holy Spirit, in union with Him the heavenly Vine, in  
5988 their going forth to witness and to suffer for Him, they were  
5989 to find their calling and their blessedness. In between His  
5990 setting forth of their future new life, the Lord had repeatedly  
5991 given the most unlimited promises as to the power their  
5992 prayers might have. And now in closing, He Himself  
5993 proceeds to pray. To let His disciples have the joy of

5994 knowing what His intercession for them in heaven as their  
5995 High Priest will be, He gives this precious legacy of His  
5996 prayer to the Father. He does this at the same time because  
5997 they as priests are to share in His work of intercession, that  
5998 they and we might know how to perform this holy work. In  
5999 the teaching of our Lord on this last night, we have learned  
6000 to understand that these astonishing prayer-promises have  
6001 not been given in our own behalf, but in the interest of the  
6002 Lord and His kingdom: it is from the Lord Himself alone  
6003 that we can learn what the prayer in His Name is to be and  
6004 to obtain. We have understood that to pray in His Name is  
6005 to pray in perfect unity with Himself: the high-priestly  
6006 prayer will teach all that the prayer in the Name of Jesus  
6007 may ask and expect.

6008

6009 This prayer is ordinarily divided into three parts. Our Lord  
6010 first prays for Himself (v. 1-5), then for His disciples (6-19),  
6011 and last for all the believing people through all ages (20-  
6012 26). The follower of Jesus, who gives himself to the work of  
6013 intercession, and would fain try how much of blessing he  
6014 can pray down upon his circle in the Name of Jesus, will in  
6015 all humility let himself be led of the Spirit to study this  
6016 wonderful prayer as one of the most important lessons of  
6017 the school of prayer.

6018

6019 First of all, Jesus prays for Himself, for His being glorified,  
6020 that so He may glorify the Father. Father! Glorify Thy Son.  
6021 And now, Father, glorify me.’ And He brings forward the  
6022 grounds on which He thus prays. A holy covenant had been  
6023 concluded between the Father and the Son in heaven. The  
6024 Father had promised Him power over all flesh as the reward  
6025 of His work: He had done the work, He had glorified the  
6026 Father, and His one purpose is now still further to glorify  
6027 Him. With the utmost boldness He asks that the Father may

6028 glorify Him, that He may now be and do for His people all  
6029 He has undertaken.

6030

6031 Disciple of Jesus! here you have the first lesson in your  
6032 work of priestly intercession, to be learned from the  
6033 example of your great High Priest. To pray in the Name of  
6034 Jesus is to pray in unity, in sympathy with Him. As the Son  
6035 began His prayer by making clear His relation to the Father,  
6036 pleading His work and obedience and His desire to see the  
6037 Father glorified, do so too. Draw near and appear before the  
6038 Father in Christ. Plead His finished work. Say that you are  
6039 one with it, that you trust on it, live in it. Say that you too  
6040 have given yourself to finish the work the Father has given  
6041 you to do, and to live alone for His glory. And ask then  
6042 confidently that the Son may be glorified in you. This is  
6043 praying in the Name, in the very words, in the Spirit of  
6044 Jesus, in union with Jesus Himself. Such prayer has power.  
6045 If with Jesus you glorify the Father, the Father will glorify  
6046 Jesus by doing what you ask in His Name. It is only when  
6047 your own personal relation on this point, like Christ's, is  
6048 clear with God, when you are glorifying Him, and seeking  
6049 all for His glory, that like Christ, you will have power to  
6050 intercede for those around you.

6051

6052 Our Lord next prays for the circle of His disciples. He  
6053 speaks of them as those whom the Father has given Him.  
6054 Their chief mark is that they have received Christ's word.  
6055 He says of them that He now sends them into the world in  
6056 His place, just as the Father had sent Himself. And He asks  
6057 two things for them: that the Father keep them from the evil  
6058 one, and sanctify them through His Word, because He  
6059 sanctifies Himself for them.

6060

6061 Just like the Lord, each believing intercessor has his own  
6062 immediate circle for whom he first prays. Parents have their  
6063 children, teachers their pupils, pastors their flocks, all  
6064 workers their special charge, all believers those whose care  
6065 lies upon their hearts. It is of great consequence that  
6066 intercession should be personal, pointed, and definite. And  
6067 then our first prayer must always be that they may receive  
6068 the word. But this prayer will not avail unless with our Lord  
6069 we say, I have given them Thy word:’ it is this gives us  
6070 liberty and power in intercession for souls. Not only pray  
6071 for them, but speak to them. And when they have received  
6072 the word, let us pray much for their being kept from the evil  
6073 one, for their being sanctified through that word. Instead of  
6074 being hopeless or judging or giving up those who fall, let us  
6075 pray for our circle, Father! Keep them in Thy Name;’  
6076 Sanctify them through Thy truth.’ Prayer in the Name of  
6077 Jesus availeth much: What ye will shall be done unto you.’  
6078

6079 And then follows our Lord’s prayer for a still wider circle. I  
6080 pray not only for these, but for them who through their  
6081 word shall believe.’ His priestly heart enlarges itself to  
6082 embrace all places and all time, and He prays that all who  
6083 belong to Him may everywhere be one, as God’s proof to  
6084 the world of the divinity of His mission, and then that they  
6085 may ever be with Him in His glory. Until then that the love  
6086 wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in  
6087 them.’  
6088

6089 The disciple of Jesus, who has first in his own circle proved  
6090 the power of prayer, cannot confine himself within its  
6091 limits: he prays for the Church universal and its different  
6092 branches. He prays specially for the unity of the Spirit and  
6093 of love. He prays for its being one in Christ, as a witness to  
6094 the world that Christ, who hath wrought such a wonder as to

6095 make love triumph over selfishness and separation, is  
6096 indeed the Son of God sent from heaven. Every believer  
6097 ought to pray much that the unity of the Church, not in  
6098 external organizations, but in spirit and in truth, may be  
6099 made manifest.

6100

6101 So much for the matter of the prayer. Now for its mode.  
6102 Jesus says, FATHER! I WILL.' On the ground of His right  
6103 as Son, and the Father's promise to Him, and His finished  
6104 work, He might do so. The Father had said to Him, Ask of  
6105 me, and I will give Thee.' He simply availed Himself of the  
6106 Father's promise. Jesus has given us a like promise:  
6107 Whatsoever ye will shall be done unto you.' He asks me in  
6108 His Name to say what I will. Abiding in Him, in a living  
6109 union with Him in which man is nothing and Christ all, the  
6110 believer has the liberty to take up that word of His High  
6111 Priest and, in answer to the question What wilt thou?' to  
6112 say, FATHER! I WILL all that Thou hast promised.' This is  
6113 nothing but true faith; this is honouring God: to be assured  
6114 that such confidence in saying what I will is indeed  
6115 acceptable to Him. At first sight, our heart shrinks from the  
6116 expression; we feel neither the liberty nor the power to  
6117 speak thus. It is a word for which alone in the most entire  
6118 abnegation of our will grace will be given, but for which  
6119 grace will most assuredly be given to each one who loses  
6120 his will in his Lord's. He that loseth his will shall find it; he  
6121 that gives up his will entirely shall find it again renewed and  
6122 strengthened with a Divine Strength. FATHER! I WILL.'  
6123 this is the keynote of the everlasting, ever-active, all-  
6124 prevailing intercession of our Lord in heaven. It is only in  
6125 union with Him that our prayer avails; in union with Him it  
6126 avails much. If we but abide in Him, living, and walking,  
6127 and doing all things in His Name; if we but come and bring  
6128 each separate petition, tested and touched by His Word and

6129 Spirit, and cast it into the mighty stream of intercession that  
6130 goes up from Him, to be borne upward and presented before  
6131 the Father;—we shall have the full confidence that we  
6132 receive the petitions we ask: the Father! I will' will be  
6133 breathed into us by the Spirit Himself. We shall lose  
6134 ourselves in Him, and become nothing, to find that in our  
6135 impotence we have power and prevail.

6136

6137 Disciples of Jesus! Called to be like your Lord in His  
6138 priestly intercession, when, O when! Shall we awaken to the  
6139 glory, passing all conception, of this our destiny to plead  
6140 and prevail with God for perishing men? O when shall we  
6141 shake off the sloth that clothes itself with the pretence of  
6142 humility, and yield ourselves wholly to God's Spirit, that  
6143 He may fill our wills with light and with power, to know,  
6144 and to take, and to possess all that our God is waiting to  
6145 give to a will that lays hold on Him.

6146

6147 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

6148

6149 ———0———

6150

6151 O my Blessed High Priest! who am I that Thou shouldst  
6152 thus invite me to share with Thee in Thy power of  
6153 prevailing intercession! And why, O my Lord! am I so slow  
6154 of heart to understand and believe and exercise this  
6155 wonderful privilege to which Thou hast redeemed Thy  
6156 people. O Lord! give Thy grace that this may increasingly  
6157 be my unceasing life-work—in praying without ceasing to  
6158 draw down the blessing of heaven on all my surroundings  
6159 on earth.

6160

6161 Blessed Lord! I come now to accept this my calling. For  
6162 this I would forsake all and follow Thee. Into Thy hands I

6163 would believingly yield my whole being: form, train,  
6164 inspire me to be one of Thy prayer-legion, wrestlers who  
6165 watch and strive in prayer, Israels, God's princes, who have  
6166 power and prevail. Take possession of my heart, and fill it  
6167 with the one desire for the glory of God in the ingathering,  
6168 and sanctification, and union of those whom the Father hath  
6169 given Thee. Take my mind and let this be my study and my  
6170 wisdom, to know when prayer can bring a blessing. Take  
6171 me wholly and fit me as a priest ever to stand before God  
6172 and to bless in His Name.

6173  
6174 Blessed Lord! Be it here, as through all the spiritual life:  
6175 Thou all, I nothing. And be it here my experience too that  
6176 he that has and seeks nothing for himself, receives all, even  
6177 to the wonderful grace of sharing with Thee in Thine  
6178 everlasting ministry of intercession. Amen.

6179  
6180

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6181

6182 TWENTY-EIGHTH LESSON.

6183

6184 Father! Not what I will;'

6185

6186 Or, Christ the Sacrifice.

6187

6188 And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto  
6189 Thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will,  
6190 but what Thou wilt.'—Mark xiv. 36.

6191

6192 WHAT a contrast within the space of a few hours! What a  
6193 transition from the quiet elevation of that, He lifted up His  
6194 eyes to heaven, and said, FATHER I WILL,' to that falling  
6195 on the ground and crying in agony. My Father! Not what I  
6196 will.' In the one we see the High Priest within the veil in

6197 His all-prevailing intercession; in the other, the sacrifice on  
6198 the altar opening the way through the rent veil. The high-  
6199 priestly Father! I will,' in order of time precedes the  
6200 sacrificial Father! Not what I will,' but this was only by  
6201 anticipation, to show what the intercession would be when  
6202 once the sacrifice was brought. In reality it was that prayer  
6203 at the altar, Father! Not what I will,' in which the prayer  
6204 before the throne, Father! I will,' had its origin and its  
6205 power. It is from the entire surrender of His will in  
6206 Gethsemane that the High Priest on the throne has the  
6207 power to ask what He will, has the right to make His people  
6208 share in that power too, and ask what they will.

6209

6210 For all who would learn to pray in the school of Jesus, this  
6211 Gethsemane lesson is one of the most sacred and precious.  
6212 To a superficial scholar it may appear to take away the  
6213 courage to pray in faith. If even the earnest supplication of  
6214 the Son was not heard, if even the Beloved had to say, NOT  
6215 WHAT I WILL!' how much more do we need to speak so.  
6216 And thus it appears impossible that the promises which the  
6217 Lord had given only a few hours previously,  
6218 WHATSOEVER YE SHALL ASK,' WHATSOEVER YE  
6219 WILL,' could have been meant literally. A deeper insight  
6220 into the meaning of Gethsemane would teach us that we  
6221 have just here the sure ground and the open way to the  
6222 assurance of an answer to our prayer. Let us draw nigh in  
6223 reverent and adoring wonder, to gaze on this great sight—  
6224 God's Son thus offering up prayer and supplications with  
6225 strong crying and tears, and not obtaining what He asks. He  
6226 Himself is our Teacher, and will open up to us the mystery  
6227 of His holy sacrifice, as revealed in this wondrous prayer.

6228

6229 To understand the prayer, let us note the infinite difference  
6230 between what our Lord prayed a little ago as a Royal High



6231 Priest, and what He here supplicates in His weakness. There  
6232 it was for the glorifying of the Father He prayed, and the  
6233 glorifying of Himself and His people as the fulfilment of  
6234 distinct promises that had been given Him. He asked what  
6235 He knew to be according to the word and the will of the  
6236 Father; He might boldly say, FATHER! I WILL.' Here He  
6237 prays for something in regard to which the Father's will is  
6238 not yet clear to Him. As far as He knows, it is the Father's  
6239 will that He should drink the cup. He had told His disciples  
6240 of the cup He must drink: a little later He would again say,  
6241 The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink  
6242 it?' It was for this He had come to this earth. But when, in  
6243 the unutterable agony of soul that burst upon him as the  
6244 power of darkness came upon Him, and He began to taste  
6245 the first drops of death as the wrath of God against sin, His  
6246 human nature, as it shuddered in presence of the awful  
6247 reality of being made a curse, gave utterance in this cry of  
6248 anguish, to its desire that, if God's purpose could be  
6249 accomplished without it, He might be spared the awful cup:  
6250 Let this cup pass from me.' That desire was the evidence of  
6251 the intense reality of His humanity. The Not as I will' kept  
6252 that desire from being sinful: as He pleadingly cries, All  
6253 things are possible with Thee,' and returns again to still  
6254 more earnest prayer that the cup may be removed, it is His  
6255 thrice-repeated NOT WHAT I WILL' that constitutes the  
6256 very essence and worth of His sacrifice. He had asked for  
6257 something of which He could not say: I know it is Thy will.  
6258 He had pleaded God's power and love, and had then  
6259 withdrawn it in His final, THY WILL BE DONE.' The  
6260 prayer that the cup should pass away could not be  
6261 answered; the prayer of submission that God's will be done  
6262 was heard, and gloriously answered in His victory first over  
6263 the fear, and then over the power of death.  
6264

6265 It is in this denial of His will, this complete surrender of His  
6266 will to the will of the Father, that Christ's obedience  
6267 reached its highest perfection. It is from the sacrifice of the  
6268 will in Gethsemane that the sacrifice of the life on Calvary  
6269 derives its value. It is here, as Scripture saith, that He  
6270 learned obedience, and became the author of everlasting  
6271 salvation to all that obey Him. It was because He there, in  
6272 that prayer, became obedient unto death, even the death of  
6273 the cross, that God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him  
6274 the power to ask what He will. It was in that Father! Not  
6275 what I will,' that He obtained the power for that other  
6276 FATHER! I will.' It was by Christ's submittal in  
6277 Gethsemane to have not His will done, that He secured for  
6278 His people the right to say to them, Ask whatsoever ye  
6279 will.'

6280  
6281 Let me look at them again, the deep mysteries that  
6282 Gethsemane offers to my view. There is the first: the Father  
6283 offers His Well-beloved the cup, the cup of wrath. The  
6284 second: the Son, always so obedient, shrinks back, and  
6285 implores that He may not have to drink it. The third: the  
6286 Father does not grant the Son His request, but still gives the  
6287 cup. And then the last: the Son yields His will, is content  
6288 that His will be not done, and goes out to Calvary to drink  
6289 the cup. O Gethsemane! in thee I see how my Lord could  
6290 give me such unlimited assurance of an answer to my  
6291 prayers. As my surety He won it for me, by His consent to  
6292 have His petition unanswered.

6293  
6294 This is in harmony with the whole scheme of redemption.  
6295 Our Lord always wins for us the opposite of what He  
6296 suffered. He was bound that we might go free. He was made  
6297 sin that we might become the righteousness of God. He died  
6298 that we might live. He bore God's curse that God's blessing

6299 might be ours. He endured the not answering of His prayer,  
6300 that our prayers might find an answer. Yea, He spake, Not  
6301 as I will,' that He might say to us, If ye abide in me, ask  
6302 what ye will; it shall be done unto you.'

6303

6304 Yes, If ye abide in me;' here in Gethsemane the word  
6305 acquires new force and depth. Christ is our Head, who as  
6306 surety stands in our place, and bears what we must for ever  
6307 have borne. We had deserved that God should turn a deaf  
6308 ear to us, and never listen to our cry. Christ comes, and  
6309 suffers this too for us: He suffers what we had merited; for  
6310 our sins He suffers beneath the burden of that unanswered  
6311 prayer. But now His suffering this avails for me: what He  
6312 has borne is taken away for me; His merit has won for me  
6313 the answer to every prayer, if I abide in Him.

6314

6315 Yes, in Him, as He bows there in Gethsemane, I must abide.  
6316 As my Head, He not only once suffered for me, but ever  
6317 lives in me, breathing and working His own disposition in  
6318 me too. The Eternal Spirit, through which He offered  
6319 Himself unto God, is the Spirit that dwells in me too, and  
6320 makes me partaker of the very same obedience, and the  
6321 sacrifice of the will unto God. That Spirit teaches me to  
6322 yield my will entirely to the will of the Father, to give it up  
6323 even unto the death, in Christ to be dead to it. Whatever is  
6324 my own mind and thought and will, even though it be not  
6325 directly sinful, He teaches me to fear and flee. He opens my  
6326 ear to wait in great gentleness and teachableness of soul for  
6327 what the Father has day by day to speak and to teach. He  
6328 discovers to me how union with God's will in the love of it  
6329 is union with God Himself; how entire surrender to God's  
6330 will is the Father's claim, the Son's example, and the true  
6331 blessedness of the soul. He leads my will into the fellowship  
6332 of Christ's death and resurrection, my will dies in Him, in

6333 Him to be made alive again. He breathes into it, as a  
6334 renewed and quickened will, a holy insight into God's  
6335 perfect will, a holy joy in yielding itself to be an instrument  
6336 of that will, a holy liberty and power to lay hold of God's  
6337 will to answer prayer. With my whole will I learn to live for  
6338 the interests of God and His kingdom, to exercise the power  
6339 of that will—crucified but risen again—in nature and in  
6340 prayer, on earth and in heaven, with men and with God. The  
6341 more deeply I enter into the FATHER! NOT WHAT I  
6342 WILL' of Gethsemane, and into Him who spake it, to abide  
6343 in Him, the fuller is my spiritual access into the power of  
6344 His FATHER! I WILL. And the soul experiences that it is  
6345 the will, which has become nothing that God's will may be  
6346 all, which now becomes inspired with a Divine strength to  
6347 really will what God wills, and to claim what has been  
6348 promised it in the name of Christ.

6349  
6350 O let us listen to Christ in Gethsemane, as He calls, If ye  
6351 abide in me, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done  
6352 unto you.' Being of one mind and spirit with Him in His  
6353 giving up everything to God's will, living like Him in  
6354 obedience and surrender to the Father; this is abiding in  
6355 Him; this is the secret of power in prayer.

6356  
6357 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

6358

6359 ———0———

6360

6361 Blessed Lord Jesus! Gethsemane was Thy school, where  
6362 Thou didst learn to pray and to obey. It is still Thy school,  
6363 where Thou ledest all Thy disciples who would fain learn  
6364 to obey and to pray even as Thou. Lord! teach me there to  
6365 pray, in the faith that Thou has atoned for and conquered

6366 our self-will, and canst indeed give us grace to pray like  
6367 Thee.

6368

6369 O Lamb of God! I would follow Thee to Gethsemane, there  
6370 to become one with Thee, and to abide in Thee as Thou dost  
6371 unto the very death yield Thy will unto the Father. With  
6372 Thee, through Thee, in Thee, I do yield my will in absolute  
6373 and entire surrender to the will of the Father. Conscious of  
6374 my own weakness, and the secret power with which self-  
6375 will would assert itself and again take its place on the  
6376 throne, I claim in faith the power of Thy victory. Thou didst  
6377 triumph over it and deliver me from it. In Thy death I would  
6378 daily live; in Thy life I would daily die. Abiding in Thee, let  
6379 my will, through the power of Thine eternal Spirit, only be  
6380 the tuned instrument which yields to every touch of the will  
6381 of my God. With my whole soul do I say with Thee and in  
6382 Thee, Father! Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.'

6383

6384 And then, Blessed Lord! Open my heart and that of all Thy  
6385 people, to take in fully the glory of the truth, that a will  
6386 given up to God is a will accepted of God to be used in his  
6387 service, to desire, and purpose, and determine, and will  
6388 what is according to God's will. A will which, in the power  
6389 of the Holy Spirit the indwelling God, is to exercise its  
6390 royal prerogative in prayer, to loose and to bind in heaven  
6391 and upon earth, to ask whatsoever it will, and to say it shall  
6392 be done.

6393

6394 O Lord Jesus! teach me to pray. Amen.

6395

6396

6397

6398 TWENTY-NINTH LESSON.

6399

6400 According to His will;

6401

6402 Or, Our Boldness in Prayer.

6403

6404 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if  
6405 we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And  
6406 if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know  
6407 that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.’—I  
6408 John v. 14, 15.

6409

6410 ONE of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is with  
6411 many undoubtedly this: they know not if what they ask is  
6412 according to the will of God. As long as they are in doubt  
6413 on this point, they cannot have the boldness to ask in the  
6414 assurance that they certainly shall receive. And they soon  
6415 begin to think that, if once they have made known their  
6416 requests, and receive no answer, it is best to leave it to God  
6417 to do according to His good pleasure. The words of John, If  
6418 we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us,’ as  
6419 they understand them, make certainty as to answer to prayer  
6420 impossible, because they cannot be sure of what really may  
6421 be the will of God. They think of God’s will as His hidden  
6422 counsel—how should man be able to fathom what really  
6423 may be the purpose of the all-wise God.

6424

6425 This is the very opposite of what John aimed at in writing  
6426 thus. He wished to rouse us to boldness, to confidence, to  
6427 full assurance of faith in prayer. He says, This is the  
6428 boldness which we have toward Him,’ that we can say:  
6429 Father! Thou knowest and I know that I ask according to  
6430 Thy will: I know Thou hearest me. This is the boldness, that  
6431 if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.’ On  
6432 this account He adds at once: If we know that He heareth us  
6433 whatsoever we ask, we know,’ through this faith, that we

6434 have,' that we now while we pray receive the petition,' the  
6435 special things, we have asked of Him.' John supposes that  
6436 when we pray, we first find out if our prayers are according  
6437 to the will of God. They may be according to God's will,  
6438 and yet not come at once, or without the persevering prayer  
6439 of faith. It is to give us courage thus to persevere and to be  
6440 strong in faith, that He tells us: This gives us boldness or  
6441 confidence in prayer, if we ask anything according to His  
6442 will, He heareth us. It is evident that if it be a matter of  
6443 uncertainty to us whether our petitions be according to His  
6444 will, we cannot have the comfort of what he says, We know  
6445 that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.'

6446

6447 But just this is the difficulty. More than one believer says: I  
6448 do not know if what I desire be according to the will of  
6449 God. God's will is the purpose of His infinite wisdom: it is  
6450 impossible for me to know whether He may not count  
6451 something else better for me than what I desire, or may not  
6452 have some reasons for withholding what I ask.' Every one  
6453 feels how with such thoughts the prayer of faith, of which  
6454 Jesus said, Whosoever shall believe that these things which  
6455 he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he  
6456 saith,' becomes an impossibility. There may be the prayer  
6457 of submission, and of trust in God's wisdom; there cannot  
6458 be the prayer of faith. The great mistake here is that God's  
6459 children do not really believe that it is possible to know  
6460 God's will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time  
6461 and trouble to find it out. What we need is to see clearly in  
6462 what way it is that the Father leads His waiting, teachable  
6463 child to know that his petition is according to His will.^1 It  
6464 is through God's holy word, taken up and kept in the heart,  
6465 the life, the will; and through God's Holy Spirit, accepted in  
6466 His indwelling and leading, that we shall learn to know that  
6467 our petitions are according to His will.

6468

6469 Through the word. There is a secret will of God, with which  
6470 we often fear that our prayers may be at variance. It is not  
6471 with this will of God, but His will as revealed in His word,  
6472 that we have to do in prayer. Our notions of what the secret  
6473 will may have decreed, and of how it might render the  
6474 answers to our prayers impossible, are mostly very  
6475 erroneous. Childlike faith as to what He is willing to do for  
6476 His children, simply keeps to the Father's assurance, that it  
6477 is His will to hear prayer and to do what faith in His word  
6478 desires and accepts. In the word the Father has revealed in  
6479 general promises the great principles of His will with His  
6480 people. The child has to take the promise and apply it to the  
6481 special circumstances in His life to which it has reference.  
6482 Whatever he asks within the limits of that revealed will, he  
6483 can know to be according to the will of God, and he may  
6484 confidently expect. In His word, God has given us the  
6485 revelation of His will and plans with us, with His people,  
6486 and with the world, with the most precious promises of the  
6487 grace and power with which through His people He will  
6488 carry out His plans and do His work. As faith becomes  
6489 strong and bold enough to claim the fulfilment of the  
6490 general promise in the special case, we may have the  
6491 assurance that our prayers are heard: they are according to  
6492 God's will. Take the words of John in the verse following  
6493 our text as an illustration: If any man see his brother sinning  
6494 a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him  
6495 life.' Such is the general promise; and the believer who  
6496 pleads on the ground of this promise, prays according to the  
6497 will of God, and John would give him boldness to know  
6498 that he has the petition which he asks.

6499

6500 But this apprehension of God's will is something spiritual,  
6501 and must be spiritually discerned. It is not as a matter of



6502 logic that we can argue it out: God has said it; I must have  
6503 it. Nor has every Christian the same gift or calling. While  
6504 the general will revealed in the promise is the same for all,  
6505 there is for each one a special different will according to  
6506 God's purpose. And herein is the wisdom of the saints, to  
6507 know this special will of God for each of us, according to  
6508 the measure of grace given us, and so to ask in prayer just  
6509 what God has prepared and made possible for each. It is to  
6510 communicate this wisdom that the Holy Ghost dwells in us.  
6511 The personal application of the general promises of the  
6512 word to our special personal needs—it is for this that the  
6513 leading of the Holy Spirit is given us.

6514

6515 It is this union of the teaching of the word and Spirit that  
6516 many do not understand, and so there is a twofold difficulty  
6517 in knowing what God's will may be. Some seek the will of  
6518 God in an inner feeling or conviction, and would have the  
6519 Spirit lead them without the word. Others seek it in the  
6520 word, without the living leading of the Holy Spirit. The two  
6521 must be united: only in the word, only in the Spirit, but in  
6522 these most surely, can we know the will of God, and learn  
6523 to pray according to it. In the heart the word and the Spirit  
6524 must meet: it is only by indwelling that we can experience  
6525 their teaching. The word must dwell, must abide in us: heart  
6526 and life must day by day be under its influence. Not from  
6527 without, but from within, comes the quickening of the word  
6528 by the Spirit. It is only he who yields himself entirely in his  
6529 whole life to the supremacy of the word and the will of  
6530 God, who can expect in special cases to discern what that  
6531 word and will permit him boldly to ask. And even as with  
6532 the word, just so with the Spirit: if I would have the leading  
6533 of the Spirit in prayer to assure me what God's will is, my  
6534 whole life must be yielded to that leading; so only can mind  
6535 and heart become spiritual and capable of knowing God's

6536 holy will. It is he who, through word and Spirit, lives in the  
6537 will of God by doing it, who will know to pray according to  
6538 that will in the confidence that He hears us.

6539

6540 Would that Christians might see what incalculable harm  
6541 they do themselves by the thought that because possibly  
6542 their prayer is not according to God's will, they must be  
6543 content without an answer. God's word tells us that the  
6544 great reason of unanswered prayer is that we do not pray  
6545 aright: 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' In not  
6546 granting an answer, the Father tells us that there is  
6547 something wrong in our praying. He wants to teach us to  
6548 find it out and confess it, and so to educate us to true  
6549 believing and prevailing prayer. He can only attain His  
6550 object when He brings us to see that we are to blame for the  
6551 withholding of the answer; our aim, or our faith, or our life  
6552 is not what it should be. But this purpose of God is  
6553 frustrated as long as we are content to say: It is perhaps  
6554 because my prayer is not according to His will that He does  
6555 not hear me. O let us no longer throw the blame of our  
6556 unanswered prayers on the secret will of God, but on our  
6557 praying amiss. Let that word, 'Ye receive not because ye ask  
6558 amiss,' be as the lantern of the Lord, searching heart and  
6559 life to prove that we are indeed such as those to whom  
6560 Christ gave His promises of certain answers. Let us believe  
6561 that we can know if our prayer be according to God's will.  
6562 Let us yield our heart to have the word of the Father dwell  
6563 richly there, to have Christ's word abiding in us. Let us live  
6564 day by day with the anointing which teacheth us all things.  
6565 Let us yield ourselves unreservedly to the Holy Spirit as He  
6566 teaches us to abide in Christ, to dwell in the Father's  
6567 presence, and we shall soon understand how the Father's  
6568 love longs that the child should know His will, and should,  
6569 in the confidence that that will includes all that His power

6570 and love have promised to do, know too that He hears the  
6571 petitions which we ask of Him. This is the boldness which  
6572 we have, that if we ask anything according to His will, He  
6573 heareth us.’

6574

6575 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

6576

6577 ———0————

6578

6579 Blessed Master! With my whole heart I thank Thee for this  
6580 blessed lesson, that the path to a life full of answers to  
6581 prayer is through the will of God. Lord! Teach me to know  
6582 this blessed will by living it, loving it, and always doing it.  
6583 So shall I learn to offer prayers according to that will, and to  
6584 find in their harmony with God’s blessed will, my boldness  
6585 in prayer and my confidence in accepting the answer.

6586

6587 Father! it is Thy will that Thy child should enjoy Thy  
6588 presence and blessing. It is Thy will that everything in the  
6589 life of Thy child should be in accordance with Thy will, and  
6590 that the Holy Spirit should work this in Him. It is Thy will  
6591 that Thy child should live in the daily experience of distinct  
6592 answers to prayer, so as to enjoy living and direct  
6593 fellowship with Thyself. It is Thy will that Thy Name  
6594 should be glorified in and through Thy children, and that it  
6595 will be in those who trust Thee. O my Father! let this Thy  
6596 will be my confidence in all I ask.

6597

6598 Blessed Saviour! Teach me to believe in the glory of this  
6599 will. That will is the eternal love, which with Divine power  
6600 works out its purpose in each human will that yields itself to  
6601 it. Lord! Teach me this. Thou canst make me see how every  
6602 promise and every command of the word is indeed the will  
6603 of God, and that its fulfilment is secured to me by God

6604 Himself. Let thus the will of God become to me the sure  
6605 rock on which my prayer and my assurance of an answer  
6606 ever rest. Amen.

6607

6608 NOTE.

6609

6610 There is often great confusion as to the will of God. People  
6611 think that what God wills must inevitably take place. This is  
6612 by no means the case. God wills a great deal of blessing to  
6613 His people, which never comes to them. He wills it most  
6614 earnestly, but they do not will it, and it cannot come to  
6615 them. This is the great mystery of man's creation with a free  
6616 will, and also of the renewal of his will in redemption, that  
6617 God has made the execution of His will, in many things,  
6618 dependent on the will of man. Of God's will revealed in His  
6619 promises, so much will be fulfilled as our faith accepts.  
6620 Prayer is the power by which that comes to pass which  
6621 otherwise would not take place. And faith, the power by  
6622 which it is decided how much of God's will shall be done in  
6623 us. When once God reveals to a soul what He is willing to  
6624 do for it, the responsibility for the execution of that will  
6625 rests with us.

6626

6627 Some are afraid that this is putting too much power into the  
6628 hands of man. But all power is put into the hands of man in  
6629 Christ Jesus. The key of all prayer and all power is His, and  
6630 when we learn to understand that He is just as much with us  
6631 as with the Father, and that we are also just as much one  
6632 with Him as He with the Father, we shall see how natural  
6633 and right and safe it is that to those who abide in Him as He  
6634 in the Father, such power should be given. It is Christ the  
6635 Son who has the right to ask what He will: it is through the  
6636 abiding in Him and His abiding in us (in a Divine reality of  
6637 which we have too little apprehension) that His Spirit

6638 breathes in us what He wants to ask and obtain through us.  
6639 We pray in His Name: the prayers are really ours and as  
6640 really His.

6641

6642 Others again fear that to believe that prayer has such power  
6643 is limiting the liberty and the love of God. O if we only  
6644 knew how we are limiting His liberty and His love by not  
6645 allowing Him to act in the only way in which He chooses to  
6646 act, now that He has taken us up into fellowship with  
6647 himself—through our prayers and our faith. A brother in the  
6648 ministry once asked, as we were speaking on this subject,  
6649 whether there was not a danger of our thinking that our love  
6650 to souls and our willingness to see them blessed were to  
6651 move God's love and God's willingness to bless them. We  
6652 were just passing some large water-pipes, by which water  
6653 was being carried over hill and dale from a large mountain  
6654 stream to a town at some distance. Just look at these pipes,  
6655 was the answer; they did not make the water willing to flow  
6656 downwards from the hills, nor did they give it its power of  
6657 blessing and refreshment: this is its very nature. All that  
6658 they could do is to decide its direction: by it the inhabitants  
6659 of the town said they want the blessing there. And just so, it  
6660 is the very nature of God to love and to bless. Downward  
6661 and ever downward His love longs to come with its  
6662 quickening and refreshing streams. But He has left it to  
6663 prayer to say where the blessing is to come. He has  
6664 committed it to His believing people to bring the living  
6665 water to the desert places: the will of God to bless is  
6666 dependent upon the will of man to say where the blessing  
6667 must descend. Such honour have His saints.' And this is the  
6668 boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything  
6669 according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that  
6670 He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the  
6671 petitions which we have asked of Him.'

6672

6673 I see this illustrated in the extracts from George Muller at  
6674 the end of this volume.

6675

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6676

6677

6678 THIRTIETH LESSON.

6679

6680 An holy priesthood;'

6681

6682 Or, The Ministry of Intercession.

6683

6684 An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices  
6685 acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.'—I Peter ii. 5.

6686

6687 Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord.'—Isaiah lxi. 6.

6688

6689 THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord  
6690 hath anointed me.' These are the words of Jesus in Isaiah.  
6691 As the fruit of His work all redeemed ones are priests,  
6692 fellow-partakers with Him of His anointing with the Spirit  
6693 as High Priest. Like the precious ointment upon the beard of  
6694 Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garments.' As  
6695 every son of Aaron, so every member of Jesus' body has a  
6696 right to the priesthood. But not every one exercises it: many  
6697 are still entirely ignorant of it. And yet it is the highest  
6698 privilege of a child of God, the mark of greatest nearness  
6699 and likeness to Him, who ever liveth to pray.' Do you doubt  
6700 if this really be so? Think of what constitutes priesthood.  
6701 There is, first, the work of the priesthood. This has two  
6702 sides, one Godward, the other manward. Every priest is  
6703 ordained for men in things pertaining to God' (Heb. v. 1);  
6704 or, as it is said by Moses (Deut. x. 8, see also xxi. 5, xxxiii.  
6705 10; Mal. ii. 6): The Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to stand

6706 before the Lord to minister unto Him, and to bless His  
6707 Name.’ On the one hand, the priest had the power to draw  
6708 nigh to God, to dwell with Him in His house, and to present  
6709 before Him the blood of the sacrifice or the burning incense.  
6710 This work he did not do, however, on his own behalf, but  
6711 for the sake of the people whose representative he was. This  
6712 is the other side of his work. He received from the people  
6713 their sacrifices, presented them before God, and then came  
6714 out to bless in His Name, to give the assurance of His  
6715 favour and to teach them His law.

6716  
6717 A priest is thus a man who does not at all live for himself.  
6718 He lives with God and for God. His work is as God’s  
6719 servant to care for His house, His honour, and His worship,  
6720 to make known to men His love and His will. He lives with  
6721 men and for men (Heb. v. 2). His work is to find out their  
6722 sin and need, and to bring it before God, to offer sacrifice  
6723 and incense in their name, to obtain forgiveness and  
6724 blessing for them, and then to come out and bless them in  
6725 His Name. This is the high calling of every believer. Such  
6726 honour have all His saints.’ They have been redeemed with  
6727 the one purpose to be in the midst of the perishing millions  
6728 around them, God’s priests, who in conformity to Jesus, the  
6729 Great High Priest, are to be the ministers and stewards of  
6730 the grace of God to all around them.

6731  
6732 And then there is the walk of the priesthood, in harmony  
6733 with its work. As God is holy, so the priest was to be  
6734 especially holy. This means not only separated from  
6735 everything unclean, but holy unto God, being set apart and  
6736 given up to God for His disposal. The separation from the  
6737 world and setting apart unto God was indicated in many  
6738 ways.  
6739

6740 It was seen in the clothing: the holy garments, made after  
6741 God's own order, marked them as His (Ex. xxviii.). It was  
6742 seen in the command as to their special purity and freedom  
6743 from all contact from death and defilement (Lev. xi. 22).  
6744 Much that was allowed to an ordinary Israelite was  
6745 forbidden to them. It was seen in the injunction that the  
6746 priest must have no bodily defect or blemish; bodily  
6747 perfection was to be the type of wholeness and holiness in  
6748 God's service. And it was seen in the arrangement by which  
6749 the priestly tribes were to have no inheritance with the other  
6750 tribes; God was to be their inheritance. Their life was to be  
6751 one of faith: set apart unto God, they were to live on Him as  
6752 well as for Him.

6753

6754 All this is the emblem of what the character of the New  
6755 Testament priest is to be. Our priestly power with God  
6756 depends on our personal life and walk. We must be of them  
6757 of whose walk on earth Jesus says, 'They have not defiled  
6758 their garments.'

6759

6760 In the surrender of what may appear lawful to others in our  
6761 separation from the world, we must prove that our  
6762 consecration to be holy to the Lord is whole-hearted and  
6763 entire. The bodily perfection of the priest must have its  
6764 counterpart in our too being without spot or blemish; 'the  
6765 man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good  
6766 works,' perfect and entire, wanting nothing' (Lev. xxi. 17-  
6767 21; Eph. v. 27; 2 Tim. ii. 7; Jas. i. 4). And above all, we  
6768 consent to give up all inheritance on earth; to forsake all,  
6769 and like Christ to have only God as our portion: to possess  
6770 as not possessing, and hold all for God alone: it is this  
6771 marks the true priest, the man who only lives for God and  
6772 his fellow-men.

6773



6774 And now the way to the priesthood. In Aaron God had  
6775 chosen all his sons to be priests: each of them was a priest  
6776 by birth. And yet he could not enter upon his work without  
6777 a special act of ordinance—his consecration. Every child of  
6778 God is priest in light of his birth, his blood relationship to  
6779 the Great High Priest; but this is not enough: he will  
6780 exercise his power only as he accepts and realizes his  
6781 consecration.

6782

6783 With Aaron and his sons it took place thus (Ex. xxix.): After  
6784 being washed and clothed, they were anointed with the holy  
6785 oil. Sacrifices were then offered, and with the blood the  
6786 right ear, the right hand, and the right foot were touched.  
6787 And then they and their garments were once again sprinkled  
6788 with the blood and the oil together. And so it is as the child  
6789 of God enters more fully into what THE BLOOD and THE  
6790 SPIRIT of which he already is partaker, are to him, that the  
6791 power of the Holy Priesthood will work in him. The blood  
6792 will take away all sense of unworthiness; the Spirit, all  
6793 sense of unfitness.

6794

6795 Let us notice what there was new in the application of the  
6796 blood to the priest. If ever he had as a penitent brought a  
6797 sacrifice for his sin, seeking forgiveness, the blood was  
6798 sprinkled on the altar, but not on his person. But now, for  
6799 priestly consecration, there was to be closer contact with the  
6800 blood; ear and hand and foot were by a special act brought  
6801 under its power, and the whole being taken possession of  
6802 and sanctified for God. And so, when the believer, who had  
6803 been content to think chiefly of the blood sprinkled on the  
6804 mercy-seat as what he needs for pardon, is led to seek full  
6805 priestly access to God, he feels the need of a fuller and more  
6806 abiding experience of the power of the blood, as really  
6807 sprinkling and cleansing the heart from an evil conscience,

6808 so that he has no more conscience of sin' (Heb. x. 2) as  
6809 cleansing from all sin. And it is as he gets to enjoy this, that  
6810 the consciousness is awakened of his wonderful right of  
6811 most intimate access to God, and of the full assurance that  
6812 his intercessions are acceptable.

6813

6814 And as the blood gives the right, the Spirit gives the power,  
6815 and fits for believing intercession. He breathes into us the  
6816 priestly spirit—burning love for God's honour and the  
6817 saving of souls. He makes us so one with Jesus that prayer  
6818 in His Name is a reality. He strengthens us to believing,  
6819 importunate prayer. The more the Christian is truly filled  
6820 with the Spirit of Christ, the more spontaneous will be his  
6821 giving himself up to the life of priestly intercession.  
6822 Beloved fellow-Christians! God needs, greatly needs,  
6823 priests who can draw near to Him, who live in His presence,  
6824 and by their intercession draw down the blessings of His  
6825 grace on others. And the world needs, greatly needs, priests  
6826 who will bear the burden of the perishing ones, and  
6827 intercede on their behalf.

6828

6829 Are you willing to offer yourself for this holy work? You  
6830 know the surrender it demands—nothing less than the  
6831 Christ-like giving up of all, that the saving purposes of  
6832 God's love may be accomplished among men. Oh, be no  
6833 longer of those who are content if they have salvation, and  
6834 just do work enough to keep themselves warm and lively. O  
6835 let nothing keep you back from giving yourselves to be  
6836 wholly and only priests—nothing else, nothing less than the  
6837 priests of the Most High God. The thought of unworthiness,  
6838 of unfitness, need not keep you back. In the Blood, the  
6839 objective power of the perfect redemption works in you: in  
6840 the Spirit its full subjective personal experience as a divine  
6841 life is secured. The Blood provides an infinite worthiness to

6842 make your prayers most acceptable: The Spirit provides a  
6843 Divine fitness, teaching you to pray just according to the  
6844 will of God. Every priest knew that when he presented a  
6845 sacrifice according to the law of the sanctuary, it was  
6846 accepted: under the covering of the Blood and Spirit you  
6847 have the assurance that all the wonderful promises to prayer  
6848 in the Name of Jesus will be fulfilled in you. Abiding in  
6849 union with the Great High Priest, you shall ask what you  
6850 will, and it shall be done unto you.’ You will have power to  
6851 pray the effectual prayer of the righteous man that availeth  
6852 much. You will not only join in the general prayer of the  
6853 Church for the world, but be able in your own sphere to take  
6854 up your special work in prayer—as priests, to transact it  
6855 with God, to receive and know the answer, and so to bless  
6856 in His Name. Come, brother, come, and be a priest, only  
6857 priest, all priest. Seek now to walk before the Lord in the  
6858 full consciousness that you have been set apart for the holy  
6859 Ministry of Intercession. This is the true blessedness of  
6860 conformity to the image of God’s Son.

6861

6862 LORD TEACH US TO PRAY.’

6863

6864 ———0———

6865

6866 O Thou my blessed High Priest, accept the consecration in  
6867 which my soul now would respond to Thy message.

6868

6869 I believe in the HOLY PRIESTHOOD OF THY SAINTS,  
6870 and that I too am a priest, with power to appear before the  
6871 Father, and in the prayer that avails much bring down  
6872 blessing on the perishing around me.

6873

6874 I believe in the POWER OF THY PRECIOUS BLOOD to  
6875 cleanse from all sin, to give me perfect confidence toward

6876 God, and bring me near in the full assurance of faith that my  
6877 intercession will be heard.

6878

6879 I believe in the ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT, coming  
6880 down daily from Thee, my Great High Priest, to sanctify  
6881 me, to fill me with the consciousness of my priestly calling,  
6882 and with love to souls, to teach me what is according to  
6883 God's will, and how to pray the prayer of faith.

6884

6885 I believe that, as Thou my Lord Jesus art Thyself in all  
6886 things my life, so Thou, too, art THE SURETY FOR MY  
6887 PRAYER-LIFE, and wilt Thyself draw me up into the  
6888 fellowship of Thy wondrous work of intercession.

6889

6890 In this faith I yield myself this day to my God, as one of His  
6891 anointed priests, to stand before His face to intercede in  
6892 behalf of sinners, and to come out and bless in His Name.

6893

6894 Holy Lord Jesus! accept and seal my consecration. Yea,  
6895 Lord, do Thou lay Thy hands on me, and Thyself consecrate  
6896 me to this Thy holy work. And let me walk among men  
6897 with the consciousness and the character of a priest of the  
6898 Most High God.

6899

6900 Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins IN  
6901 HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH MADE US kings and  
6902 priests unto God and His Father; TO HIM be glory and  
6903 dominion forever and ever. Amen

6904

6905

6906

6907 THIRTY-FIRST LESSON.

6908

6909 Pray without ceasing;'

6910

6911 Or, A Life of Prayer.

6912

6913 Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give  
6914 thanks.—I Thess. v. 16, 17, 18.

6915

6916 OUR Lord spake the parable of the widow and the unjust  
6917 judge to teach us that men ought to pray always and not  
6918 faint. As the widow persevered in seeking one definite  
6919 thing, the parable appears to have reference to persevering  
6920 prayer for some one blessing, when God delays or appears  
6921 to refuse. The words in the Epistles, which speak of  
6922 continuing instant in prayer, continuing in prayer and  
6923 watching in the same, of praying always in the Spirit,  
6924 appear more to refer to the whole life being one of prayer.  
6925 As the soul is filling with the longing for the manifestation  
6926 of God's glory to us and in us, through us and around us,  
6927 and with the confidence that He hears the prayers of His  
6928 children; the inmost life of the soul is continually rising  
6929 upward in dependence and faith, in longing desire and  
6930 trustful expectation.

6931

6932 At the close of our meditations it will not be difficult to say  
6933 what is needed to live such a life of prayer. The first thing is  
6934 undoubtedly the entire sacrifice of the life to God's  
6935 kingdom and glory. He who seeks to pray without ceasing  
6936 because he wants to be very pious and good, will never  
6937 attain to it. It is the forgetting of self and yielding ourselves  
6938 to live for God and His honour that enlarges the heart, that  
6939 teaches us to regard everything in the light of God and His  
6940 will, and that instinctively recognises in everything around  
6941 us the need of God's help and blessing, an opportunity for  
6942 His being glorified. Because everything is weighed and  
6943 tested by the one thing that fills the heart—the glory of God,

6944 and because the soul has learnt that only what is of God can  
6945 really be to Him and His glory, the whole life becomes a  
6946 looking up, a crying from the inmost heart, for God to prove  
6947 His power and love and so show forth His glory. The  
6948 believer awakes to the consciousness that he is one of the  
6949 watchmen on Zion's walls, one of the Lord's  
6950 remembrancers, whose call does really touch and move the  
6951 King in heaven to do what would otherwise not be done. He  
6952 understands how real Paul's exhortation was, praying  
6953 always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit for all  
6954 the saints and for me,' and continue in prayer, withal  
6955 praying also for us.' To forget oneself, to live for God and  
6956 His kingdom among men, is the way to learn to pray  
6957 without ceasing.

6958

6959 This life devoted to God must be accompanied by the deep  
6960 confidence that our prayer is effectual. We have seen how  
6961 our Blessed Lord insisted upon nothing so much in His  
6962 prayer-lessons as faith in the Father as a God who most  
6963 certainly does what we ask. Ask and ye shall receive;' count  
6964 confidently on an answer, is with Him the beginning and the  
6965 end of His teaching (compare Matt. vii. 8 and John xvi. 24).  
6966 In proportion as this assurance masters us, and it becomes a  
6967 settled thing that our prayers do tell and that God does what  
6968 we ask, we dare not neglect the use of this wonderful  
6969 power: the soul turns wholly to God, and our life becomes  
6970 prayer. We see that the Lord needs and takes time, because  
6971 we and all around us are the creatures of time, under the law  
6972 of growth; but knowing that not one single prayer of faith  
6973 can possibly be lost that there is sometimes a needs-be for  
6974 the storing up and accumulating of prayer, that persevering  
6975 pray is irresistible, prayer becomes the quiet, persistent  
6976 living of our life of desire and faith in the presence of our  
6977 God. O do not let us any longer by our reasonings limit and

6978 enfeeble such free and sure promises of the living God,  
6979 robbing them of their power, and ourselves of the wonderful  
6980 confidence they are meant to inspire. Not in God, not in His  
6981 secret will, not in the limitations of His promises, but in us,  
6982 in ourselves is the hindrance; we are not what we should be  
6983 to obtain the promise. Let us open our whole heart to God's  
6984 words of promise in all their simplicity and truth: they will  
6985 search us and humble us; they will lift us up and make us  
6986 glad and strong. And to the faith that knows it gets what it  
6987 asks, prayer is not a work or a burden, but a joy and a  
6988 triumph; it becomes a necessity and a second nature.

6989  
6990 This union of strong desire and firm confidence again is  
6991 nothing but the life of the Holy Spirit within us. The Holy  
6992 Spirit dwells in us, hides Himself in the depths of our being,  
6993 and stirs the desire after the Unseen and the Divine, after  
6994 God Himself. Now in groanings that cannot be uttered, then  
6995 in clear and conscious assurance; now in special distinct  
6996 petitions for the deeper revelation of Christ to ourselves,  
6997 then in pleadings for a soul, a work, the Church or the  
6998 world, it is always and alone the Holy Spirit who draws out  
6999 the heart to thirst for God, to long for His being made  
7000 known and glorified. Where the child of God really lives  
7001 and walks in the Spirit, where he is not content to remain  
7002 carnal, but seeks to be spiritual, in everything a fit organ for  
7003 the Divine Spirit to reveal the life of Christ and Christ  
7004 Himself, there the never-ceasing intercession-life of the  
7005 Blessed Son cannot but reveal and repeat itself in our  
7006 experience. Because it is the Spirit of Christ who prays in  
7007 us, our prayer must be heard; because it is we who pray in  
7008 the Spirit, there is need of time, and patience, and continual  
7009 renewing of the prayer, until every obstacle be conquered,  
7010 and the harmony between God's Spirit and ours is perfect.

7011

7012 But the chief thing we need for such a life of unceasing  
7013 prayer is, to know that Jesus teaches us to pray. We have  
7014 begun to understand a little what His teaching is. Not the  
7015 communication of new thoughts or views, not the discovery  
7016 of failure or error, not the stirring up of desire and faith, of  
7017 however much importance all this be, but the taking us up  
7018 into the fellowship of His own prayer-life before the  
7019 Father—this it is by which Jesus really teaches. It was the  
7020 sight of the praying Jesus that made the disciples long and  
7021 ask to be taught to pray. It is the faith of the ever-praying  
7022 Jesus, whose alone is the power to pray, that teaches us  
7023 truly to pray. We know why: He who prays is our Head and  
7024 our Life. All He has is ours and is given to us when we give  
7025 ourselves all to Him. By His blood He leads us into the  
7026 immediate presence of God. The inner sanctuary is our  
7027 home, we dwell there. And He that lives so near God, and  
7028 knows that He has been brought near to bless those who are  
7029 far, cannot but pray. Christ makes us partakers with Himself  
7030 of His prayer-power and prayer-life. We understand then  
7031 that our true aim must not be to work much and have prayer  
7032 enough to keep the work right, but to pray much and then to  
7033 work enough for the power and blessing obtained in prayer  
7034 to find its way through us to men. It is Christ who ever lives  
7035 to pray, who saves and reigns. He communicates His  
7036 prayer-life to us: He maintains it in us if we trust Him. He is  
7037 surety for our praying without ceasing. Yes, Christ teaches  
7038 to pray by showing how He does it, by doing it in us, by  
7039 leading us to do it in Him and like Him. Christ is all, the life  
7040 and the strength too for a never-ceasing prayer-life.

7041  
7042 It is the sight of this, the sight of the ever-praying Christ as  
7043 our life, that enables us to pray without ceasing. Because  
7044 His priesthood is the power of an endless life, that  
7045 resurrection-life that never fades and never fails, and



7046 because His life is our life, praying without ceasing can  
7047 become to us nothing less than the life-joy of heaven. So the  
7048 Apostle says: Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing; in  
7049 everything give thanks.' Borne up between the never-  
7050 ceasing joy and the never-ceasing praise, never-ceasing  
7051 prayer is the manifestation of the power of the eternal life,  
7052 where Jesus always prays. The union between the Vine and  
7053 the branch is in very deed a prayer-union. The highest  
7054 conformity to Christ, the most blessed participation in the  
7055 glory of His heavenly life, is that we take part in His work  
7056 of intercession: He and we live ever to pray. In the  
7057 experience of our union with Him, praying without ceasing  
7058 becomes a possibility, a reality, the holiest and most blessed  
7059 part of our holy and blessed fellowship with God. We have  
7060 our abode within the veil, in the presence of the Father.  
7061 What the Father says, we do; what the Son says, the Father  
7062 does. Praying without ceasing is the earthly manifestation of  
7063 heaven come down to us, the foretaste of the life where they  
7064 rest not day or night in the song of worship and adoration.

7065

7066 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

7067

7068 ———0———

7069

7070 O my Father, with my whole heart do I praise Thee for this  
7071 wondrous life of never-ceasing prayer, never-ceasing  
7072 fellowship, never-ceasing answers, and never-ceasing  
7073 experience of my oneness with Him who ever lives to pray.  
7074 O my God! keep me ever so dwelling and walking in the  
7075 presence of Thy glory, that prayer may be the spontaneous  
7076 expression of my life with Thee.

7077

7078 Blessed Saviour! with my whole heart I praise Thee that  
7079 Thou didst come from heaven to share with me in my needs

7080 and cries, that I might share with Thee in Thy all-prevailing  
7081 intercession. And I thank Thee that Thou hast taken me into  
7082 the school of prayer, to teach the blessedness and the power  
7083 of a life that is all prayer. And most of all, that Thou hast  
7084 taken me up into the fellowship of Thy life of intercession,  
7085 that through me too Thy blessings may be dispensed to  
7086 those around me.

7087

7088 Holy Spirit! with deep reverence I thank Thee for Thy work  
7089 in me. It is through Thee I am lifted up into a share in the  
7090 intercourse between the Son and the Father, and enter so  
7091 into the fellowship of the life and love of the Holy Trinity  
7092 Spirit of God! perfect Thy work in me; bring me into  
7093 perfect union with Christ my Intercessor. Let Thine  
7094 unceasing indwelling make my life one of unceasing  
7095 intercession. And let so my life become one that is  
7096 unceasingly to the glory of the Father and to the blessing of  
7097 those around me. Amen.

7098

7099

7100

7101 GEORGE MULLER, AND THE SECRET OF HIS

7102

7103 POWER IN PRAYER

7104

7105 WHEN God wishes anew to teach His Church a truth that is  
7106 not being understood or practised, He mostly does so by  
7107 raising some man to be in word and deed a living witness to  
7108 its blessedness. And so God has raised up in this nineteenth  
7109 century, among others, George Muller to be His witness that  
7110 He is indeed the Hearer of prayer. I know of no way in  
7111 which the principal truths of God's word in regard to prayer  
7112 can be more effectually illustrated and established than a

7113 short review of his life and of what he tells of his prayer-  
7114 experiences.

7115

7116 He was born in Prussia on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1805, and is  
7117 thus now eighty years of age. His early life, even after  
7118 having entered the University of Halle as a theological  
7119 student, was wicked in the extreme. Led by a friend one  
7120 evening, when just twenty years of age, to a prayer meeting,  
7121 he was deeply impressed, and soon after brought to know  
7122 the Saviour. Not long after he began reading missionary  
7123 papers, and in course of time offered himself to the London  
7124 Society for promoting Christianity to the Jews. He was  
7125 accepted as a student, but soon found that he could not in all  
7126 things submit to the rules of the Society, as leaving too little  
7127 liberty for the leading of the Holy Spirit. The connection  
7128 was dissolved in 1830 by mutual consent, and he became  
7129 the pastor of a small congregation at Teignmouth. In 1832  
7130 he was led to Bristol, and it was as pastor of Bethesda  
7131 Chapel that he was led to the Orphan Home and other work,  
7132 in connection with which God has so remarkably led him to  
7133 trust His word and to experience how God fulfils that word.

7134

7135 A few extracts in regard to his spiritual life will prepare the  
7136 way for what we specially wish to quote of his experiences  
7137 in reference to prayer.

7138

7139 In connection with this I would mention, that the Lord very  
7140 graciously gave me, from the very commencement of my  
7141 divine life, a measure of simplicity and of childlike  
7142 disposition in spiritual things, so that whilst I was  
7143 exceedingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and was still from  
7144 time to time overcome even by outward sins, yet I was  
7145 enabled to carry most minute matters to the Lord in prayer.  
7146 And I have found "godliness profitable unto all things,

7147 having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is  
7148 to come.” Though very weak and ignorant, yet I had now,  
7149 by the grace of God, some desire to benefit others, and he  
7150 who so faithfully had once served Satan, sought now to win  
7151 souls for Christ.’

7152

7153 It was at Teignmouth that he was led to know how to use  
7154 God’s word , and to trust the Holy Spirit as the Teacher  
7155 given by God to make that word clear. He writes:—

7156

7157 God then began to show me that the word of God alone is  
7158 our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be  
7159 explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as  
7160 well as in former times. He is the Teacher of His people.  
7161 The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally  
7162 understood before that time.

7163

7164 It was my beginning to understand this latter point in  
7165 particular, which had a great effect on me; for the Lord  
7166 enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying  
7167 aside commentaries, and almost every other book and  
7168 simply reading the word of God and studying it.

7169

7170 The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut  
7171 myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and  
7172 meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few  
7173 hours than I had done during a period of several months  
7174 previously.

7175

7176 But the particular difference was that I received real  
7177 strength for my soul in so doing. I now began to try by the  
7178 test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and  
7179 seen, and found that only those principles which stood the  
7180 test were of real value.’

7181

7182 Of obedience to the word of God, he writes as follows, in  
7183 connection with his being baptized:—

7184

7185 It had pleased God, in His abundant mercy, to bring my  
7186 mind into such a state, that I was willing to carry out into  
7187 my life whatever I should find in the Scriptures. I could say,  
7188 “I will do His will,” and it was on that account, I believe,  
7189 that I saw which “doctrine is of God.”—And I would  
7190 observe here, by the way, that the passage to which I have  
7191 just alluded (John vii. 17) has been a most remarkable  
7192 comment to me on many doctrines and precepts of our most  
7193 holy faith. For instance: “Resist not evil; but whosoever  
7194 shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other  
7195 also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away  
7196 thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall  
7197 compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him  
7198 that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee,  
7199 turn not thou away. Love your enemies, bless them that  
7200 curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them  
7201 which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. v.  
7202 39-44). “Sell that ye have, and give alms”(Luke xii. 33).  
7203 “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”(Rom. xii.  
7204 8). It may be said, “Surely these passages cannot be taken  
7205 literally, for how then would the people of God be able to  
7206 pass through the world?” The state of mind enjoined in John  
7207 vii. 17 will cause such objections to vanish. **WHOSOEVER**  
7208 **IS WILLING TO ACT OUT** these commandments of the  
7209 Lord **LITERALLY**, will, I believe, be led with me to see  
7210 that to take them **LITERALLY** is the will of God.—Those  
7211 who do so take them will doubtless often be brought into  
7212 difficulties, hard to the flesh to bear, but these will have a  
7213 tendency to make them constantly feel that they are  
7214 strangers and pilgrims here, that this world is not their

7215 home, and thus to throw them more upon God, who will  
7216 assuredly help us through any difficulty into which we may  
7217 be brought by seeking to act in obedience to His word.’  
7218

7219 This implicit surrender to God’s word led him to certain  
7220 views and conduct in regard to money, which mightily  
7221 influenced his future life. They had their root in the  
7222 conviction that money was a Divine stewardship, and that  
7223 all money had therefore to be received and dispensed in  
7224 direct fellowship with God Himself. This led him to the  
7225 adoption of the following four great rules: 1. Not to receive  
7226 any fixed salary, both because in the collecting of it there  
7227 was often much that was at variance with the freewill  
7228 offering with which God’s service is to be maintained, and  
7229 in the receiving of it a danger of placing more dependence  
7230 on human sources of income than in the living God  
7231 Himself. 2. Never to ask any human being for help,  
7232 however great the need might be, but to make his wants  
7233 known to the God who has promised to care for His  
7234 servants and to hear their prayer. 3. To take this command  
7235 (Luke xii. 33) literally, Sell that thou hast and give alms,’  
7236 and never to save up money, but to spend all God entrusted  
7237 to him on God’s poor, on the work of His kingdom. 4. Also  
7238 to take Rom. xiii. 8, Owe no man anything,’ literally, and  
7239 never to buy on credit, or be in debt for anything, but to  
7240 trust God to provide.

7241  
7242 This mode of living was not easy at first. But Muller  
7243 testifies it was most blessed in bringing the soul to rest in  
7244 God, and drawing it into closer union with Himself when  
7245 inclined to backslide. For it will not do, it is not possible, to  
7246 live in sin, and at the same time, by communion with God,  
7247 to draw down from heaven everything one needs for the life  
7248 that now is.’

7249

7250 Not long after his settlement at Bristol, THE SCRIPTURAL  
7251 KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTION FOR HOME AND  
7252 ABROAD' was established for aiding in Day, Sunday  
7253 School, Mission and Bible work. Of this Institution the  
7254 Orphan Home work, by which Mr. Muller is best known,  
7255 became a branch. It was in 1834 that his heart was touched  
7256 by the case of an orphan brought to Christ in one of the  
7257 schools, but who had to go to a poorhouse where its  
7258 spiritual wants would not be cared for. Meeting shortly after  
7259 with a life of Franke, he writes (Nov, 20, 1835): Today I  
7260 have had it very much laid on my heart no longer merely to  
7261 think about the establishment of an Orphan Home, but  
7262 actually to set about it, and I have been very much in prayer  
7263 respecting it, in order to ascertain the Lord's mind. May  
7264 God make it plain.' And again, Nov. 25: I have been again  
7265 much in prayer yesterday and today about the Orphan  
7266 Home, and am more and more convinced that it is of God.  
7267 May He in mercy guide me. The three chief reasons are—1.  
7268 That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish  
7269 me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain  
7270 thing to trust Him; and that thus the faith of His children  
7271 may be strengthened. 2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless  
7272 and motherless children. 3. Their temporal welfare.'

7273

7274 After some months of prayer and waiting on God, a house  
7275 was rented, with room for thirty children , and in course of  
7276 time three more, containing in all 120 children. The work  
7277 was carried on it this way for ten years, the supplies for the  
7278 needs of the orphans being asked and received of God  
7279 alone. It was often a time of sore need and much prayer, but  
7280 a trial of faith more precious than of gold was found unto  
7281 praise and honour and glory of God. The Lord was  
7282 preparing His servant for greater things. By His providence

7283 and His Holy Spirit, Mr. Muller was led to desire, and to  
7284 wait upon God till he received from Him, the sure promise  
7285 of 15,000 for a Home to contain 300 children. This first  
7286 Home was opened in 1849. In 1858, a second and third  
7287 Home, for 950 more orphans, was opened, costing 35,000.  
7288 And in 1869 and 1870, a fourth and a fifth Home, for 850  
7289 more, at an expense of 50,000, making the total number of  
7290 the orphans 2100.

7291

7292 In addition to this work, God has given him almost as much  
7293 as for the building of the Orphan Homes, and the  
7294 maintenance of the orphans, for other work, the support of  
7295 schools and missions, Bible and tract circulation. In all he  
7296 has received from God, to be spent in His work, during  
7297 these fifty years, more than one million pounds sterling.  
7298 How little he knew, let us carefully notice, that when he  
7299 gave up his little salary of 35 a year in obedience to the  
7300 leading of God's word and the Holy Spirit, what God was  
7301 preparing to give him as the reward of obedience and faith;  
7302 and how wonderfully the word was to be fulfilled to him:  
7303 Thou hast been faithful over few things; I will set thee over  
7304 many things.'

7305

7306 And these things have happened for an ensample to us. God  
7307 calls us to be followers of George Muller, even as he is of  
7308 Christ. His God is our God; the same promises are for us;  
7309 the same service of love and faith in which he laboured is  
7310 calling for us on every side. Let us in connection with our  
7311 lessons in the school of prayer study the way in which God  
7312 gave George Muller such power as a man of prayer: we  
7313 shall find in it the most remarkable illustration of some of  
7314 the lessons which we have been studying with the blessed  
7315 Master in the word. We shall specially have impressed upon  
7316 us His first great lesson, that if we will come to Him in the



7317 way He has pointed out, with definite petitions, made  
7318 known to us by the Spirit through the word as being  
7319 according to the will of God, we may most confidently  
7320 believe that whatsoever we ask it shall be done.

7321

## 7322 PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD.

7323

7324 We have more than once seen that God's listening to our  
7325 voice depends upon our listening to His voice. (See Lessons  
7326 22 and 23.) We must not only have a special promise to  
7327 plead, when we make a special request, but our whole life  
7328 must be under the supremacy of the word: the word must be  
7329 dwelling in us. The testimony of George Muller on this  
7330 point is most instructive. He tells us how the discovery of  
7331 the true place of the word of God, and the teaching of the  
7332 Spirit with it, was the commencement of a new era in his  
7333 spiritual life. Of it he writes:—

7334

7335 Now the scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God  
7336 Himself has condescended to become an author, and I am  
7337 ignorant about that precious book which His Holy Spirit has  
7338 caused to be written through the instrumentality of His  
7339 servants, and it contains that which I ought to know, and the  
7340 knowledge of which will lead me to true happiness;  
7341 therefore I ought to read again and again this most precious  
7342 book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully,  
7343 and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to  
7344 continue all the days of my life. For I was aware, though I  
7345 read it but little, that I knew scarcely anything of it. But  
7346 instead of acting thus and being led by my ignorance of the  
7347 word of God to study it more, my difficulty in  
7348 understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made  
7349 me careless of reading it (for much prayerful reading of the  
7350 word gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the

7351 delight we have in reading it); and thus, like many  
7352 believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of  
7353 my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles  
7354 of the living God. The consequence was that I remained a  
7355 babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge, I say; for  
7356 all true knowledge must be derived, by the Spirit, from the  
7357 word. And as I neglected the word, I was for nearly four  
7358 years so ignorant, that I did not clearly know even the  
7359 fundamental points of our holy faith. And this lack of  
7360 knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily  
7361 in the ways of God. For when it pleased the Lord in August  
7362 1829 to bring me really to the Scriptures, my life and walk  
7363 became very different. And though ever since that I have  
7364 very much fallen short of what I might and ought to be, yet  
7365 by the grace of God I have been enabled to live much nearer  
7366 to Him than before. If any believers read this who  
7367 practically prefer other books to the Holy Scriptures, and  
7368 who enjoy the writings of men much more than the word of  
7369 God, may they be warned by my loss. I shall consider this  
7370 book to have been the means of doing much good, should it  
7371 please the Lord, through its instrumentality, to lead some of  
7372 His people no longer to neglect the Holy Scriptures, but to  
7373 give them that preference which they have hitherto  
7374 bestowed on the writings of men.

7375

7376 Before I leave this subject, I would only add: If the reader  
7377 understands very little of the word of God, he ought to read  
7378 it very much; for the Spirit explains the word by the word.  
7379 And if he enjoys the reading of the word little, that is just  
7380 the reason why he should read it much; for the frequent  
7381 reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them, so that  
7382 the more we read them, the more we desire to do so.

7383

7384 Above all, he should seek to have it settled in his own mind  
7385 that God alone by His Spirit can teach him, and that  
7386 therefore, as God will be inquired of for blessings, it  
7387 becomes him to seek God's blessing previous to reading,  
7388 and also whilst reading.

7389

7390 He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind that  
7391 although the Holy Spirit is the best and sufficient Teacher,  
7392 yet that this Teacher does not always teach immediately  
7393 when we desire it, and that therefore we may have to entreat  
7394 Him again and again for the explanation of certain passages;  
7395 but that He will surely teach us at last, if indeed we are  
7396 seeking for light prayerfully, patiently, and with a view to  
7397 the glory of God.' [4]

7398

7399 We find in his journal frequent mention made of his  
7400 spending two and three hours in prayer over the word for  
7401 the feeding of his spiritual life. As the fruit of this, when he  
7402 had need of strength and encouragement in prayer, the  
7403 individual promises were not to him so many arguments  
7404 from a book to be used with God, but living words which he  
7405 had heard the Father's living voice speak to him, and which  
7406 he could now bring to the Father in living faith.

7407

7408 PRAYER AND THE WILL OF GOD.

7409

7410 One of the greatest difficulties with young believers is to  
7411 know how they can find out whether what they desire is  
7412 according to God's will. I count it one of the most precious  
7413 lessons God wants to teach through the experience of  
7414 George Muller, that He is willing to make known, of things  
7415 of which His word says nothing directly, that they are His  
7416 will for us, and that we may ask them. The teaching of the  
7417 Spirit, not without or against the word, but as something

7418 above and beyond it, in addition to it, without which we  
7419 cannot see God's will, is the heritage of every believer. It is  
7420 through THE WORD, AND THE WORD ALONE, that the  
7421 Spirit teaches, applying the general principles or promises  
7422 to our special need. And it is THE SPIRIT, AND THE  
7423 SPIRIT ALONE, who can really make the word a light on  
7424 our path, whether the path of duty in our daily walk, or the  
7425 path of faith in our approach to God. Let us try and notice in  
7426 what childlike simplicity and teachableness it was that the  
7427 discovery of God's will was so surely and so clearly made  
7428 known to His servant.

7429  
7430 With regard to the building of the first Home and the  
7431 assurance he had of its being God's will, he writes in May  
7432 1850, just after it had been opened, speaking of the great  
7433 difficulties there were, and how little likely it appeared to  
7434 nature that they would be removed: But while the prospect  
7435 before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it  
7436 naturally, I was never even for once permitted to question  
7437 how it would end. For as from the beginning I was sure it  
7438 was the will of God that I should go to the work of building  
7439 for Him this large Orphan Home, so also from the  
7440 beginning I was as certain that the whole would be finished  
7441 as if the Home had been already filled.'

7442  
7443 The way in which he found out what was God's will, comes  
7444 out with special clearness in his account of the building of  
7445 the second Home; and I ask the reader to study with care the  
7446 lesson the narrative conveys:—

7447  
7448 Dec. 5, 1850.—Under these circumstances I can only pray  
7449 that the Lord in His tender mercy would not allow Satan to  
7450 gain an advantage over me. By the grace of God my heart  
7451 says: Lord, if I could be sure that it is Thy will that I should

7452 go forward in this matter, I would do so cheerfully; and, on  
7453 the other hand, if I could be sure that these are vain, foolish,  
7454 proud thoughts, that they are not from Thee, I would, by  
7455 Thy grace, hate them, and entirely put them aside.

7456  
7457 My hope is in God: He will help and teach me. Judging,  
7458 however, from His former dealings with me, it would not be  
7459 a strange thing to me, nor surprising, if He called me to  
7460 labour yet still more largely in this way.

7461  
7462 The thoughts about enlarging the Orphan work have not yet  
7463 arisen on account of an abundance of money having lately  
7464 come in; for I have had of late to wait for about seven  
7465 weeks upon God, whilst little, very little comparatively,  
7466 came in, i.e. about four times as much was going out as  
7467 came in; and, had not the Lord previously sent me large  
7468 sums, we should have been distressed indeed.

7469  
7470 Lord! how can Thy servant know Thy will in this matter?  
7471 Wilt Thou be pleased to teach him!

7472  
7473 December 11.—During the last six days, since writing the  
7474 above, I have been, day after day, waiting upon God  
7475 concerning this matter. It has generally been more or less all  
7476 the day on my heart. When I have been awake at night, it  
7477 has not been far from my thoughts. Yet all this without the  
7478 least excitement. I am perfectly calm and quiet respecting it.  
7479 My soul would be rejoiced to go forward in this service,  
7480 could I be sure that the Lord would have me to do so; for  
7481 then, notwithstanding the numberless difficulties, all would  
7482 be well; and His Name would be magnified.

7483  
7484 On the other hand, were I assured that the Lord would have  
7485 me to be satisfied with my present sphere of service, and

7486 that I should not pray about enlarging the work, by His  
7487 grace I could, without an effort, cheerfully yield to it; for He  
7488 has brought me into such a state of heart, that I only desire  
7489 to please Him in this matter. Moreover, hitherto I have not  
7490 spoken about this thing even to my beloved wife, the sharer  
7491 of my joys, sorrows, and labours for more than twenty  
7492 years; nor is it likely that I shall do so for some time to  
7493 come: for I prefer quietly to wait on the Lord, without  
7494 conversing on this subject, in order that thus I may be kept  
7495 the more easily, by His blessing, from being influenced by  
7496 things from without. The burden of my prayer concerning  
7497 this matter is, that the Lord would not allow me to make a  
7498 mistake, and that He would teach me to do His will.  
7499

7500 December 26.—Fifteen days have elapsed since I wrote the  
7501 preceding paragraph. Every day since then I have continued  
7502 to pray about this matter, and that with a goodly measure of  
7503 earnestness, by the help of God. There has passed scarcely  
7504 an hour during these days, in which, whilst awake, this  
7505 matter has not been more or less before me. But all without  
7506 even a shadow of excitement. I converse with no one about  
7507 it. Hitherto have I not even done so with my dear wife. For  
7508 this I refrain still, and deal with God alone about the matter,  
7509 in order that no outward influence and no outward  
7510 excitement may keep me from attaining unto a clear  
7511 discovery of His will. I have the fullest and most peaceful  
7512 assurance that He will clearly show me His will. This  
7513 evening I have had again an especial solemn season for  
7514 prayer, to seek to know the will of God. But whilst I  
7515 continue to entreat and beseech the Lord, that He would not  
7516 allow me to be deluded in this business, I may say I have  
7517 scarcely any doubt remaining on my mind as to what will be  
7518 the issue, even that I should go forward in this matter. As  
7519 this, however, is one of the most momentous steps that I

7520 have ever taken, I judge that I cannot go about this matter  
7521 with too much caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation. I am  
7522 in no hurry about it. I could wait for years, by God's grace,  
7523 were this His will, before even taking one single step  
7524 toward this thing, or even speaking to anyone about it; and,  
7525 on the other hand, I would set to work tomorrow, were the  
7526 Lord to bid me do so. This calmness of mind, this having no  
7527 will of my own in the matter, this only wishing to please my  
7528 Heavenly Father in it, this only seeking His and not my  
7529 honour in it; this state of heart, I say, is the fullest assurance  
7530 to me that my heart is not under a fleshly excitement, and  
7531 that, if I am helped thus to go on, I shall know the will of  
7532 God to the full. But, while I write this, I cannot but add at  
7533 the same time, that I do crave the honour and the glorious  
7534 privilege to be more and more used by the Lord.

7535  
7536 I desire to be allowed to provide scriptural instruction for a  
7537 thousand orphans, instead of doing so for 300. I desire to  
7538 expound the Holy Scriptures regularly to a thousand  
7539 orphans, instead of doing so to 300. I desire that it may be  
7540 yet more abundantly manifest that God is still the Hearer  
7541 and Answerer of prayer, and that He is the living God now  
7542 as He ever was and ever will be, when He shall simply, in  
7543 answer to prayer, have condescended to provide me with a  
7544 house for 700 orphans and with means to support them.  
7545 This last consideration is the most important point in my  
7546 mind. The Lord's honour is the principal point with me in  
7547 this whole matter; and just because this is the case, if He  
7548 would be more glorified by not going forward in this  
7549 business, I should by His grace be perfectly content to give  
7550 up all thoughts about another Orphan House. Surely in such  
7551 a state of mind, obtained by the Holy Spirit, Thou, O my  
7552 Heavenly Father, wilt not suffer Thy child to be mistaken,  
7553 much less deluded. By the help of God I shall continue

7554 further day by day to wait upon Him in prayer, concerning  
7555 this thing, till He shall bid me act.

7556

7557 Jan. 2, 1851.—A week ago I wrote the preceding paragraph.  
7558 During this week I have still been helped day by day, and  
7559 more than once every day, to seek the guidance of the Lord  
7560 about another Orphan House. The burden of my prayer has  
7561 still been, that He in His great mercy would keep me from  
7562 making a mistake. During the last week the book of  
7563 Proverbs has come in the course of my Scripture reading,  
7564 and my heart has been refreshed in reference to this subject  
7565 by the following passages: “Trust in the Lord with all thine  
7566 heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy  
7567 ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths”  
7568 (Prov. iii. 5, 6). By the grace of God I do acknowledge the  
7569 Lord in all my ways, and in this thing in particular; I have  
7570 therefore the comfortable assurance that He will direct my  
7571 paths concerning this part of my service, as to whether I  
7572 shall be occupied in it or not. Further: “The integrity of the  
7573 upright shall preserve them” (Prov. xi. 3). By the grace of  
7574 God I am upright in this business. My honest purpose is to  
7575 get glory to God. Therefore I expect to be guided aright.  
7576 Further: “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy  
7577 thoughts shall be established” (Prov. xvi. 3). I do commit  
7578 my works unto the Lord, and therefore expect that my  
7579 thoughts will be established. My heart is more and more  
7580 coming to a calm, quiet, and settled assurance, that the Lord  
7581 will condescend to use me still further in the orphan work.  
7582 Here Lord is Thy servant.’

7583

7584 When later he decided to build two additional houses, Nos.  
7585 4 and 5, he writes thus again:—

7586



7587 Twelve days have passed away since I wrote the last  
7588 paragraph. I have still day by day been enabled to wait upon  
7589 the Lord with reference to enlarging the Orphan work, and  
7590 have been during the whole of this period also in perfect  
7591 peace, which is the result of seeking in this thing only the  
7592 Lord's honour and the temporal and spiritual benefit of my  
7593 fellow-men. Without an effort could I by His grace put  
7594 aside all thoughts about this whole affair, if only assured  
7595 that it is the will of God that I should do so; and, on the  
7596 other hand, would at once go forward, if He would have it  
7597 be so. I have still kept this matter entirely to myself. Though  
7598 it be now about seven weeks, since day by day, more or  
7599 less, my mind has been exercised about it, and since I have  
7600 been daily praying about it, yet not one human being knows  
7601 of it. As yet I have not even mentioned it to my dear wife in  
7602 order that thus, by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be  
7603 influenced by what might be said to me on the subject. This  
7604 evening has been particularly set apart for prayer,  
7605 beseeching the Lord once more not to allow me to be  
7606 mistaken in this thing, and much less to be deluded by the  
7607 devil. I have also sought to let all the reasons against  
7608 building another Orphan House, and all the reasons for  
7609 doing so pass before my mind: and now for the clearness  
7610 and definiteness, write them down. . . .

7611  
7612 Much, however, as the nine previous reasons weigh with  
7613 me, yet they would not decide me were there not one more.  
7614 It is this. After having for months pondered the matter, and  
7615 having looked at it in all its bearings and with all its  
7616 difficulties, and then having been finally led, after much  
7617 prayer, to decide on this enlargement, my mind is at peace.  
7618 The child who has again and again besought His Heavenly  
7619 Father not to allow him to be deluded, nor even to make a  
7620 mistake, is at peace, perfectly at peace concerning this

7621 decision; and has thus the assurance that the decision come  
7622 to, after much prayer during weeks and months, is the  
7623 leading of the Holy Spirit; and therefore purposes to go  
7624 forward, assuredly believing that he will not be confounded,  
7625 for he trusts in God. Many and great may be his difficulties;  
7626 thousands and ten thousands of prayers may have ascended  
7627 to God, before the full answer may be obtained; much  
7628 exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the  
7629 end it will again be seen, that His servant, who trusts in  
7630 Him, has not been confounded.’

7631

### 7632 PRAYER AND THE GLORY OF GOD.

7633

7634 We have sought more than once to enforce the truth, that  
7635 while we ordinarily seek the reasons of our prayers not  
7636 being heard in the thing we ask not being according to the  
7637 will of God, Scripture warns us to find the cause in  
7638 ourselves, in our not being in the right state or not asking in  
7639 the right spirit. The thing may be in full accordance with  
7640 His will, but the asking, the spirit of the supplicant, not;  
7641 then we are not heard. As the great root of all sin is self and  
7642 self-seeking, so there is nothing that even in our more  
7643 spiritual desires so effectually hinders God in answering as  
7644 this: we pray for our own pleasure or glory. Prayer to have  
7645 power and prevail must ask for the glory of God; and he can  
7646 only do this as he is living for God’s glory.

7647

7648 In George Muller we have one of the most remarkable  
7649 instances on record of God’s Holy Spirit leading a man  
7650 deliberately and systematically, at the outset of a course of  
7651 prayer, to make the glorifying of God his first and only  
7652 object. Let us ponder well what he says, and learn the lesson  
7653 God would teach us through him:—

7654

7655 I had constantly cases brought before me, which proved that  
7656 one of the especial things which the children of God needed  
7657 in our day, was to have their faith strengthened.

7658  
7659 I longed, therefore, to have something to point my brethren  
7660 to, as a visible proof that our God and Father is the same  
7661 faithful God as ever He was; as willing as ever to PROVE  
7662 Himself to be the LIVING GOD in our day as formerly, to  
7663 all who put their trust in Him.

7664  
7665 My spirit longed to be instrumental in strengthening their  
7666 faith, by giving them not only instances from the word of  
7667 God, of His willingness and ability to help all who rely  
7668 upon Him, but to show them by proofs that He is the same  
7669 in our day. I knew that the word of God ought to be enough,  
7670 and it was by grace enough for me; but still I considered I  
7671 ought to lend a helping hand to my brethren.

7672  
7673 I therefore judged myself bound to be the servant of the  
7674 Church of Christ, in the particular point in which I had  
7675 obtained mercy; namely, in being able to take God at His  
7676 word and rely upon it. The first object of the work was, and  
7677 is still: that God might be magnified by the fact that the  
7678 orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only  
7679 by prayer and faith, without any one being asked; thereby it  
7680 may be seen that God is FAITHFUL STILL, AND HEARS  
7681 PRAYER STILL.

7682  
7683 I have again these last days prayed much about the Orphan  
7684 House, and have frequently examined my heart; that if it  
7685 were at all my desire to establish it for the sake of gratifying  
7686 myself, I might find it out. For as I desire only the Lord's  
7687 glory, I shall be glad to be instructed by the instrumentality  
7688 of my brother, if the matter be not of Him.

7689

7690 When I began the Orphan work in 1835, my chief object  
7691 was the glory of God, by giving a practical demonstration as  
7692 to what could be accomplished simply through the  
7693 instrumentality of prayer and faith, in order thus to benefit  
7694 the Church at large, and to lead a careless world to see the  
7695 reality of the things of God, by showing them in this work,  
7696 that the living God is still, as 4000 years ago, the living  
7697 God. This my aim has been abundantly honoured.

7698 Multitudes of sinners have been thus converted, multitudes  
7699 of the children of God in all parts of the world have been  
7700 benefited by this work, even as I had anticipated. But the  
7701 larger the work as grown, the greater has been the blessing,  
7702 bestowed in the very way in which I looked for blessing: for  
7703 the attention of hundreds of thousands has been drawn to  
7704 the work; and many tens of thousands have come to see it.  
7705 All this leads me to desire further and further to labour on in  
7706 this way, in order to bring yet greater glory to the Name of  
7707 the Lord. That He may be looked at, magnified, admired,  
7708 trusted in, relied on at all times, is my aim in this service;  
7709 and so particularly in this intended enlargement. That it may  
7710 be seen how much one poor man, simply by trusting in God,  
7711 can bring about by prayer; and that thus other children of  
7712 God may be led to carry on the work of God in dependence  
7713 upon Him; and that children of God may be led increasingly  
7714 to trust in Him in their individual positions and  
7715 circumstances, therefore I am led to this further  
7716 enlargement.'

7717

7718 PRAYER AND TRUST IN GOD.

7719

7720 There are other points on which I would be glad to point out  
7721 what is to be found in Mr. Muller's narrative, but one more  
7722 must suffice. It is the lesson of firm and unwavering trust in

7723 God's promise as the secret of persevering prayer. If once  
7724 we have, in submission to the teaching of the Spirit in the  
7725 word, taken hold of God's promise, and believed that the  
7726 Father has heard us, we must not allow ourselves by any  
7727 delay or unfavourable appearances be shaken in our faith.  
7728

7729 The full answer to my daily prayers was far from being  
7730 realized; yet there was abundant encouragement granted by  
7731 the Lord, to continue in prayer. But suppose, even, that far  
7732 less had come in than was received, still, after having come  
7733 to the conclusion, upon scriptural grounds, after much  
7734 prayer and self-examination, I ought to have gone on  
7735 without wavering, in the exercise of faith and patience  
7736 concerning this object; and thus all the children of God,  
7737 when once satisfied that anything which they bring before  
7738 God in prayer, is according to His will, ought to continue in  
7739 believing, expecting, persevering prayer until the blessing is  
7740 granted. Thus am I myself now waiting upon God for  
7741 certain blessings, for which I have daily besought Him for  
7742 ten years and six months without one day's intermission.  
7743 Still the full answer is not yet given concerning the  
7744 conversion of certain individuals, though in the meantime I  
7745 have received many thousands of answers to prayer. I have  
7746 also prayed daily without intermission for the conversion of  
7747 other individuals about ten years, for others six or seven  
7748 years, for others from three or two years; and still the  
7749 answer is not yet granted concerning those persons, while in  
7750 the meantime many thousands of my prayers have been  
7751 answered, and also souls converted, for whom I had been  
7752 praying. I lay particular stress on this for the benefit of those  
7753 who may suppose that I need only to ask of God, and  
7754 receive at once; or that I might pray concerning anything,  
7755 and the answer would surely come. One can only expect to  
7756 obtain answers to prayers which are according to the mind

7757 of God; and even then, patience and faith may be exercised  
7758 for many years, even as mine are exercised, in the matter to  
7759 which I have referred; and yet am I daily continuing in  
7760 prayer, and expecting the answer, and so surely expecting  
7761 the answer, that I have often thanked God that He will  
7762 surely give it, though now for nineteen years faith and  
7763 patience have thus been exercised. Be encouraged, dear  
7764 Christians, with fresh earnestness to give yourselves to  
7765 prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask things which are  
7766 for the glory of God.

7767  
7768 But the most remarkable point is this, that 6, 6s. 6d. from  
7769 Scotland supplied me, as far as can be known now, with all  
7770 the means necessary for fitting up and promoting the New  
7771 Orphan Houses. Six years and eight months I have been day  
7772 by day, and generally several times daily, asking the Lord to  
7773 give me the needed means for this enlargement of the  
7774 Orphan work, which, according to calculations made in the  
7775 spring of 1861, appeared to be about fifty thousand pounds:  
7776 the total of this amount I had now received. I praise and  
7777 magnify the Lord for putting this enlargement of the work  
7778 into my heart, and for giving me courage and faith for it;  
7779 and above all, for sustaining my faith day by day without  
7780 wavering. When the last portion of the money was received,  
7781 I was no more assured concerning the whole, that I was at  
7782 the time I had not received one single donation towards this  
7783 large sum. I was at the beginning, after once having  
7784 ascertained His mind, through most patient and heart-  
7785 searching waiting upon God, as fully assured that He would  
7786 bring it about, as if the two houses, with their hundreds of  
7787 orphans occupying them, had been already before me. I  
7788 make a few remarks here for the sake of young believers in  
7789 connection with this subject: 1. Be slow to take new steps in  
7790 the Lord's service, or in your business, or in your families:

7791 weigh everything well; weigh all in the light of the Holy  
7792 Scriptures and in the fear of God. 2. Seek to have no will of  
7793 your own, in order to ascertain the mind of God, regarding  
7794 any steps you propose taking, so that you can honestly say  
7795 you are willing to do the will of God, if He will only please  
7796 to instruct you. 3. But when you have found out what the  
7797 will of God is, seek for His help, and seek it earnestly,  
7798 perseveringly, patiently, believingly, expectantly; and you  
7799 will surely in His own time and way obtain it.

7800

7801 To suppose that we have difficulty about money only would  
7802 be a mistake: there occur hundreds of other wants and of  
7803 other difficulties. It is a rare thing that a day occurs without  
7804 some difficulty or some want; but often there are many  
7805 difficulties and many wants to be met and overcome the  
7806 same day. All these are met by prayer and faith, our  
7807 universal remedy; and we have never been confounded.  
7808 Patient, persevering, believing prayer, offered up to God, in  
7809 the Name of the Lord Jesus, has always, sooner or later,  
7810 brought the blessing. I do not despair, by God's grace, of  
7811 obtaining any blessing, provided I can be sure it would be  
7812 for any real good, and for the glory of God.

7813

7814

7815

7816 [4] The extracts are from a work in four volumes, The  
7817 Lord's Dealings with George Muller. J. Nisbet & Co.,  
7818 London.