

The Good News about Babylon's Final Fall (Sept 29, 2018 — A. Minagawa)

Story of the Fall of the Berlin Wall

There was a message of a fall that resounded in the world and personally felt by the people of a country not too long ago . . .

The world was taken by surprise when, during the night of November 9, 1989, crowds of Germans began dismantling the Berlin Wall—a barrier that for almost 30 years had symbolized the Cold War division of Europe. By October 1990, Germany was reunified, triggering the swift collapse of the other East European regimes.

The joy of the fall of the Berlin Wall could be felt over the entire world.

I think it is a great day for freedom. I watched the scenes on television last night and again this morning because I felt one ought not only hear about them but see them because you see the joy on people's faces and you see what freedom means to them; it makes you realize that you cannot stifle or suppress people's desire for liberty and so I watched with the same joy as everyone else and I hope that they will be a prelude to the Berlin Wall coming down. Margaret Thatcher

—Prayer

“Babylon is fallen, is fallen . . . Fallen, Fallen is Babylon the Great . . . Come out of her, my people.” (Rev 14:8, 18:2,4) We know this as the 2nd angels message as the “everlasting gospel” message is preached to the whole world. But what does this message mean to us personally? Is that Good News to you personally like it was for the German people and for the world?

This is really in fact Elijah's message for our time: If Baal be god serve him, but if Yahweh be God serve him. Will you serve the one and only True God or will you serve Baal?

Babylon — History repeats itself

We know Babylon was the first global empire that tried to force worship of a false god on all the inhabitants of the then known world. Again history is repeating itself. Once again, there is another global religious power that is making strategic political moves to bring again another worship of a false deity, unifying all the religions under the guise of the to “save mother earth” as the four winds are

being let go, and the intensity of the birth pains are felt on every corner of the earth.

The fall of Babylon was prophesied in Daniel. Babylon was the greek word for “Babel” which means “gateway to God” (Bab + el) referring to the Tower of Babel built after the flood in defiance to the true God and the flood that had destroyed the earth. You know the story — God confused the languages and the building of the tower is forever halted.

God is revealing in His Word that the False Worship that was represented by Babylon will come to an end. It is a form of worship that have made the people “drunk with the wine of fornication”.

4 False “gateways to God”

As we were created for worship, so in the end, we will be either fully possessed by God or fully possessed by Satan.

There are 4 ways we try to reconnect with God but they are 4 false “gateway to God”.

- 1) *Feelings* — We look to our feelings as our guide to see if we have a relationship with God. When we feel good, and everything is going well we think we have a great relationship with him. We continually look for the mountain top experience with the warm fuzzy feeling, the sun shining on our face to know we are right with God but once we are in the valley, under the clouds, or in a turbulent storm, we don’t feel the warmth and we get discouraged and doubt our relationship with God, or perhaps even doubt the very existence of God. Since God is a source of all blessings, we believe that if we are blessed (with material goods and good health) we are right with God. This is called the Feeling-based gospel or [“Prosperity gospel”]. So thus when we go through trials and there is a loss (financial loss, loss of health, loss of a loved one) we feel we don’t have a right relationship with God. *The Story of Job teaches us otherwise.* It is the story of the endtime people, who will lose everything for the sake of Christ. *Jesus in the wilderness after his baptism teaches us otherwise.* Jesus is alone in the desert with wild beasts, without food, without companions, without comfort and Satan insinuates that God never meant His Son to be in such a state. He questions Jesus’ sonship and asks: “If you are the son of God . . .” bringing doubt into the core existence of his being and who he is. Jesus strength came only in remembering the words of God spoken at His baptism, “This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”. He rested in His Father’s love. In every temptation the the weapon

the weapon of His warfare was the word of God. “We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character . . .” (Rom 5:2-3) and Paul continues “We are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together.” So feelings cannot be trusted to know that we have a right relationship with God. Instead, it must be grounded in the word of God.

Story of Missionary and twin girls

- 2) *Knowledge* — We think that if we gain knowledge, study the Bible and understand prophecy that we will have a right relationship with God. It is an “Intellectual gospel”. But there is something lacking. “And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor 13:2) Pharisees studied the scriptures but they missed their Messiah and instead of worshipping him, they crucified him. Christ said: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39,40). Partaking of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil resulted, not in the joy of heaven, but in the curse of sin on earth. Remember Waco — David Koresh, the Branch Davidian leader had extraordinary memory, able to quote long passages of scripture after scripture but was completely misguided, leading his followers to an untimely death.

Feelings cannot be trusted, Knowledge will not get you eternal life.

- 3) *Works* — So we think, If I keep the seventh-day Sabbath, if I eat healthy, if I stop smoking or drinking, teach the Earliteen SS, feed the poor, fast twice a week, etc I will make it to heaven. If I am good and do good things, God will love me more and accept me but if I am bad, he will not love me and I will not make it to heaven. This is a Works-based gospel or [Gospel of the Pharisees]. The scriptures clearly states that “our righteousness are like filthy rags” (Is 64:6). Martin Luther recognized this false “gateway to heaven” and denounced penance (work our way to salvation) and indulgences (buy our way to salvation) taught by the Roman Catholic church.

You know the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:10-14. They both come to the temple for the same purpose — to pray to God. The Pharisee **looks at others** and prays about himself: “God, I thank you that I

am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” If you believe this lie your gaze will shift from Cross, to the faults of others.

Remember WWJD? — What would Jesus do? — we think that somehow if we did what Jesus would do in a given situation, we will have a right relationship with God and will make it to heaven. What is inherently wrong with this notion? It does not address the core problem. It does not address what is going on in the heart. Jesus says “Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘**I never knew you.** Away from me you evildoers!’” (Matt 7:22).

Instead of WWJD, we should be preaching the truth about WDJK — Who did Jesus know? — and apply this to our heart.

Feelings cannot be trusted, Knowledge will not get you eternal life, our Works are like filthy rags.

- 4) *Cheap Grace Gospel* — The final false teaching of Babylon is perhaps the most deceptive. One believes that since “God loves me so much” I can continue living in sin. This is the most deadly deception because it acknowledges God’s love without acknowledging His Holiness or His transforming power. It teaches that we can stand before a Holy God in Sin, without Christ’s robe of righteousness. It totally minimized the deadly impact of Sin on humanity, and negates the transforming power of the love of God on the Cross. This is called “Cheap Grace” by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

This Cheap Grace rewrites the whole story of Moses and the Exodus. Instead of rejoicing in the freedom from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, a deliverance and protection brought forth by the precious blood of the perfect Passover lamb, one believes God wants His people to continue being slaves to Pharaoh and staying in Egypt. The sad reality is that many Christians believe that because “God loves me so much” there is nothing I can or need to do, so they choose to continue being enslaved to Sin. They don’t hearken their hearts to heed to the conviction of sin brought on by the Spirit of God. There is no need or place for repentance with cheap grace. They deny the victory over Sin on the Cross and they do not respond to the Heavenly Father’s beckoning call to “Come out of her my people”.

Instead they believe in the original lies that has been repeatedly echoed from the beginning of the Man's Fall:

"You will be like god" and "you will not surely die" even while they are drinking the deadly wine of Babylon, the poison of Sin.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, *who do not walk according to the flesh*, but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:1)

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." (Rom 8:15)

These 4 "gateways to god" will not lead us to the true God. The false teaching of Babylon is the false worship based on feelings (which can't be trusted), knowledge (that won't get you eternal life), works (that are like filthy rags) and cheap grace (that will not transform our character and will not allow us to stand in the presence of a Holy God).

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." Prov 14:12

Remembering Pompeii

History repeats itself. The 4 false gateways to god results in moral and spiritual decay. Sodom and Gomorrah epitomizes the degradation that mankind would fall to, resulting in the destruction by fire from heaven. Pompeii was another reminder of this. We are told in God's Word that there will be another fiery destruction, this time a final destruction earth by fire.

When the artifacts from Pompeii came through Seattle in 2015 as the last stop of their tour, I was impressed by God to go to it because I would learn something that would open my eyes and prepare us for what is about to happen.

As I went through the displays, I kept on wondering what it was God wanted me to learn. We had actually visited Pompeii years before and had been abhorred by the depth of degradation, vileness, and immorality that was practiced there. When Mt. Vesuvius erupted on August 24, 79AD, the ashes froze the people of Pompeii in time for the rest of the world to view into their world, reminding me of the frailness of life and the solemnness of death.

As I finished the tour, I kept on praying to God, "what is it you want me to learn from this visit"? God led me to the gift store and there I was given a clear

answer. Here in the store, was the colorfully displayed photo book on Pompeii. As I read the book, I knew exactly why God brought me here. In the pages it read: **Then, on Aug. 24—ironically, the day after Vulcanalia, a festival honoring Vulcan, the Roman god of fire—the world ended for Pompeii. About noon that day, as thousands of Pompeians went about their daily activities of farming, fishing, buying, selling, eating and drinking, they were startled and shaken by a deafening roar.**

“Ironically, the day after Vulcanalia” is what it written. Really, ironically? Was it by happen chance that the volcano erupted the day after the city had a festival to the god of fire? or are we peering into the what is going on behind the scenes in the worship of the true God and other false gods?

Was there a battle between the Vulcanus “the god of fire” and Yahweh the one who declares in His word: “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29)?

We can either worship the false god and be destroyed by fire or we can worship the true God and be purified by His fire and be made Holy as He is Holy.

History repeats itself. Fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Fiery destruction of Pompeii. There will be a soon coming fiery destruction of earth.

Remember Lot’s wife:

If Lot himself had manifested no hesitancy to obey the angels' warning . . . the influence of his example would have saved her from the sin that sealed her doom. *But his hesitancy and delay caused her to lightly regard the divine warning.* While her body was upon the plain, ***her heart clung to Sodom, and she perished with it.*** *She rebelled against God because His judgments involved her possessions and her children in the ruin.* Although so greatly favored in being called out from the wicked city, she felt that she was severely dealt with, because the wealth that it had taken years to accumulate must be left to destruction. Instead of thankfully accepting deliverance, she presumptuously *looked back to desire the life of those who had rejected the divine warning.* Her sin showed her to be unworthy of life, for the preservation of which she felt so little gratitude. (PP 161-162)

“Her heart clung to Sodom . . . and she perished with it” — Is your heart clinging onto the temporal things of this world — your possession or even your children? We are living in the final days of earth’s history. There is really only one question

that matters in this life and how you answer this question will determine your eternal destiny. The question is this: How is your walk with God?

Have you struggled with sin and seemed to trip and fall repeatedly? I know I have. Have you discovered that your feelings can't be trusted, that knowledge won't get you eternal life, that our works are like filthy rags, and cheap grace will not transform our character to meet our Creator and our Holy God?

The fall of Babylon is great news as it was the fall of the Berlin Wall for the German people because the painful separation that the wall had caused for German families that were split on either side of the wall, so it is that Sin that had caused separation between God and his people that were created in His image is destroyed. The fall of Babylon is a cry from heaven that there is no more separation from God. His people can be restored as Sons and Daughters in His eternal kingdom. "Come out of her my people" is the cry from the throne room of heaven. There is finally a reunion between the Creator God and his redeemed children. No more confusion for humanity. Eternal Peace reigns. The words, "It is finished" shouted from the Cross of Calvary opened up the true "gateway to God" through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the perfect lamb of God, the one and only true Son of God.

Do you want a vibrant relationship with God? Are you hungering for something more in your relationship with your Savior?.

There is secret to having a vibrant relationship with God.

The answer is found in Matthew 21. There is a message, a personal call, to make an intentional fall: *And whosoever shall fall on this stone (Jesus Christ) shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.* (Matt 21:44)

The secret is this: Jesus is the only "gateway" to the True God of the Universe. Falling on Jesus Christ, SURRENDERING ALL to Jesus is the only way to have a real, vibrant relationship with God.

To fall upon this stone means to fully submit to Him and His love. Then we will even go to the flames for His sake, as if going to a marriage singing, as did so many of the martyrs. And at the resurrection, we will be reunited with Jesus and will follow Him, singing the Song of Moses and the Lamb, as a personal testimony because we have walked with Him even through the flames in this life, and as a Holy people will embrace our Holy God who is a consuming fire.

5) Total Submission — “Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:7,8)

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle: but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness. (Steps to Christ p43)

How will you know that you are submitting fully to God? The things of this world will become strangely dim. You will become free from the temporal things that used to consume your life. You will see yourself in constant need of a Savior and moment by moment surrender to the One who is able to keep you from falling. Your eyes will be fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and not on people. You will see people through the eyes of Christ with unconditional love. The Words of God will be most dear to your heart.

Some of you here will be martyrs for Christ. But just like John Huss, you will be singing a song because your eyes will be fixed on Jesus — and it will be the Song of the Moses and the Lamb.

“When the flames kindled about him, he began to sing, ‘Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me’ and so continued till his voice was silenced forever. Even his enemies were struck with his heroic bearing. A zealous papist, describing the martyrdom of Huss, and of Jerome, who died soon after, said: ‘Both bore themselves with constant mind when their last hour approached. They prepared for the fire as if they were going to a marriage feast. They uttered no cry of pain. When the flames rose, they began to sing hymns; and scarce could the vehemence of the fire stop their singing.’ (GC 109)

Prayer of Relinquishment (by Catherine Marshall)

I was full of questions such as: why are some agonizingly sincere prayers granted, while others are not? Today I still have questions. Mysteries about prayer . . . But one thing I do know; I learned it through hard experience. It’s a way of prayer that has resulted consistently in a glorious answer because each time, power beyond human reckoning has been released. This is the prayer of relinquishment. I got my first glimpse of it in 1943. I had then been ill for six months with a widespread lung infection, and a bevy of specialists seemed unable to help. Persistent prayer, using all the faith I could muster, had resulted in – nothing. One afternoon, a pamphlet was put in my hands. It was the story of a missionary who had been invalid for eight years. Constantly, she had prayed

that God would make her well, so that she might do His work. Finally, worn out with futile petition, she prayed, “All right, I give up. If You want me to be an invalid, that’s Your business. ***I want You even more than I want health.*** You decide.” Within two weeks, the woman was out of bed, completely well. This made no sense to me, yet I could not forget the story. On the morning of September 14 – how can I ever forget the date? I came to the same point of **abject acceptance**. “I’m tired of asking,” was the burden of my prayer. “I’m beaten, finished. God, You decide what You want for me.” Tears flowed. I felt no faith as I understood faith, expected nothing. And the result? It was as if I had touched a button that opened windows in heaven; as if some dynamo of heavenly power began flowing, flowing. Within a few hours, I had experienced the presence of the Living Christ in a way that wiped away all doubt and revolutionized my life. From that moment, my recovery began. Through this incident, God was trying to teach me something important about prayer. Gradually, I saw that a demanding spirit, with self-will as its rudder, blocks prayer. I understood that the reason for this is that God absolutely refuses to violate our free will; unless self-will is voluntarily given up, even God cannot move to answer prayer.

Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is this pattern for us. He never forgot either the presence or the power of God. **There is a crucial difference here between acceptance and resignation. There is no resignation in the prayer of relinquishment.** Resignation says, “This is my situation, and I resign myself and settle down to it.” Resignation lies down in the dust of a godless universe and steels itself for the worst. Acceptance says, “True, this is my situation at the moment. I’ll look unblinkingly at the reality of it. But, I’ll also open up my hands to accept willingly whatever a loving Father sends.” Thus acceptance never slams the door on hope. **Yet, even while it hopes, our relinquishment must be the real thing – and this giving up of self will is the hardest thing we human beings are ever called to do.**

The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought.

The Thief on the Cross

He had followed Barabbas, “the son of the father”, resulting in open shame and guilt, as he hung on the cross, despised and rejected by all of humanity. He looks at the cross where Barabbas should be hanging, and in his place he sees Jesus, another Son of the Father. He is drawn to Jesus, as he sees Him who is Holy. A vile sinner, looking upon the Holy One. Both suffering the agony of the cross. But he notices the agony of Jesus is different. He hears no words of hatred or defiance, but hears only words of compassion flowing from his dying lips. In the heart of this thief, there is a soft ember that starts to burn, drawing

him to the heart of another father. In a matter of a few agonizing hours on the cross, as he gazes upon the dying Saviour, the fire in his heart becomes fully ablaze, consuming his entire being, for he recognizes who his true Father is. His eyes are open to the reality that he is in the presence of the Prince of Heaven, and he shouts out before the entire universe his final dying wish: “Lord, remember me when you comest into thy kingdom.” (Luke 23:42) The thief on the cross, surrenders himself fully to King of the Universe. And his request, the deepest longing of his heart is granted, and the promise is given by God Himself, that he will be restored as a child of God, into Paradise, Eden restored.

God wants this to be our story. Will you fix your gaze upon Jesus on the Cross and surrender yourself completely to Him?

There is a kingdom battle going on in every heart. Who’s kingdom do you belong to? Is Babylon reigning in your heart? Have you tried to reach God through the false “gateway” of feelings, knowledge, works, or cheap grace and found that you are lost, Eternally Lost?

God wants you to have a vibrant spiritual life — Will you give yourself and everything you have and the people you love and place them ALL in God’s hand? Surrender to Him and He will give you abundant joy and eternal peace your heart is desperately longing for.

We think that if we give what we desire or possess to God, that he will take it from us. This is a lie. This was the struggle of Abraham’s life journey of faith. Finally on Mt. Moriah, he gave his ALL, his promised child, back to God. In so doing, God gave back his son, and fulfilled the desire of Abraham’s heart more fully as he understood the love of God for mankind and the promise of a divine child through his descendants.

Personal Story

- 1) Submitting to God in our marriage
- 2) Submitting the life of our child to God
- 3) Submitting my health to God

Give God all you are and all you possess and He will give back to you everything that your heart desires so that you, now as a steward of God’s possession, can be unshakeable and fearless, even in the face of death. When we place who we are and everything we possess including our precious children into the secure hands of God, then and only then will we have true peace, and we can bless

others with the abundant blessings He has placed in our hands. This is the story of Job for this final generation, to trust in God, not in possession, status, or health, to be able to say: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Job 13:15

By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have the strength from above to hold you steadfast and thus through constant surrender to God, you will be enabled to have the new life, even the life of faith. (Steps to Christ 48)

Total Submission — Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Amen

The Good News of Babylon's Final Fall (Sept 29, 2018 - A. Minagawa)

As we were created for worship, so in the end, we will be either fully possessed by God's Spirit or fully possessed by Satan.

4 False "gateways to God" — will not lead us to the true God. The false teaching of Babylon is the false worship based on **feelings** (which can't be trusted), **knowledge** (that won't get eternal life), **works** (that are like filthy rags) and **cheap grace** (that will not transform our character nor prepare us to stand in the presence of our Holy God).

Remember Lot's wife:

If Lot himself had manifested no hesitancy to obey the angels' warning . . . the influence of his example would have saved her from the sin that sealed her doom. *But his hesitancy and delay caused her to lightly regard the divine warning.* While her body was upon the plain, her heart clung to Sodom, and she perished with it. *She rebelled against God because His judgments involved her possessions and her children in the ruin.* Although so greatly favored in being called out from the wicked city, she felt that she was severely dealt with, because the wealth that it had taken years to accumulate must be left to destruction. Instead of thankfully accepting deliverance, she presumptuously *looked back to desire the life of those who had rejected the divine warning.* Her sin showed her to be unworthy of life, for the preservation of which she felt so little gratitude. (Patriarchs and Prophets 161-162)

"Her heart clung to Sodom . . . and she perished with it" — Is your heart clinging onto the temporal things of this world — your possession or even your children? We are living in the final days of earth's history. There is really only one question that matters in this life and how you answer this question will determine your eternal destiny. The question is this: How is your walk with God?

Total Submission — the secret to having a vibrant relationship with God: *And whosoever shall fall on this stone (Jesus Christ) shall be broken* (Matt 21:44) To fall upon this stone means to fully submit to Him and His love. Then we will even go to the flames for His sake, as if going to a marriage singing, as did so many of the martyrs. "Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you." (James 4:7,8)

*The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, **surrendering all to the will of God**, requires a struggle: but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.* (Steps to Christ p43)

Total Surrender of Huss and Jerome

"When the flames kindled about him, he began to sing, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me' and so continued till his voice was silenced forever. Even his enemies were struck with his heroic bearing. A zealous papist, describing the martyrdom of Huss, and of Jerome, who died soon after, said: 'Both bore themselves with constant mind when their last hour approached. They prepared for the fire as if they were going to a marriage feast. They uttered no cry of pain. When the flames rose, they began to sing hymns; and scarce could the vehemence of the fire stop their singing.'" (Great Controversy 109)

How will you know that you are submitting fully to God? The things of this world will become strangely dim. You will become free from the temporal things that used to consume your life. You will see yourself in constant need of a Savior and moment by moment surrender to the One who is able to keep you from falling. Your eyes will be fixed on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and not on people. You will hold the Words of God, dear to your heart. You will see people through the eyes of Christ with unconditional love. The Words of God will be most dear to your heart.

"By yielding up your will to Christ, you ally yourself with the power that is above all principalities and powers. You will have **the strength from above to hold you steadfast** and thus **through constant surrender to God**, you will be enabled to have the **new life, even the life of faith.**" (Steps to Christ 48)

Prayer of Relinquishment (by Catherine Marshall)

I was full of questions such as: why are some agonizingly sincere prayers granted, while others are not? Today I still have questions. Mysteries about prayer . . . But one thing I do know; I learned it through hard experience. It's a way of prayer that has resulted consistently in a glorious answer because each time, power beyond human reckoning has been released. This is the prayer of relinquishment. I got my first glimpse of it in 1943. I had then been ill for six months with a widespread lung infection, and a bevy of specialists seemed unable to help. Persistent prayer, using all the faith I could muster, had resulted in – nothing. One afternoon, a pamphlet was put in my hands. It was the story of a missionary who had been invalid for eight years. Constantly, she had prayed that God would make her well, so that she might do His work. Finally, worn out with futile petition, she prayed, "All right, I give up. If You want me to be an invalid, that's Your business. ***I want You even more than I want health.*** You decide." Within two weeks, the woman was out of bed, completely well. This made no sense to me, yet I could not forget the story. On the morning of September 14 – how can I ever forget the date? I came to the same point of **object acceptance**. "I'm tired of asking," was the burden of my prayer. "I'm beaten, finished. God, You decide what You want for me." Tears flowed. I felt no faith as I understood faith, expected nothing. And the result? It was as if I had touched a button that opened windows in heaven; as if some dynamo of heavenly power began flowing, flowing. Within a few hours, I had experienced the presence of the Living Christ in a way that wiped away all doubt and revolutionized my life. From that moment, my recovery began. Through this incident, God was trying to teach me something important about prayer. Gradually, I saw that a demanding spirit, with self-will as its rudder, blocks prayer. I understood that the reason for this is that God absolutely refuses to violate our free will; unless self-will is voluntarily given up, even God cannot move to answer prayer.

Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is this pattern for us. Christ could have avoided the Cross. He did not have to go up to Jerusalem the last time. Even in the Garden on the night of the betrayal, He had plenty of time and opportunity to flee. Instead, Christ used His free will to turn the decision over to His Father. "Dear Father... all things are possible to You. Let me not have to drink this cup! Yet it is not what I want, but what You want." The prayer was not answered as the human Jesus wished. Yet power has been flowing from His Cross ever since. Even at the moment when Christ was bowing to the possibility of an awful death by crucifixion, He never forgot either the presence or the power of God. **There is a crucial difference here between acceptance and resignation. There is no resignation in the prayer of relinquishment.** Resignation says, "This is my situation, and I resign myself and settle down to it." Resignation lies down in the dust of a godless universe and steals itself for the worst. Acceptance says, "True, this is my situation at the moment. I'll look unblinkingly at the reality of it. But, I'll also open up my hands to accept willingly whatever a loving Father sends." Thus acceptance never slams the door on hope. **Yet, even while it hopes, our relinquishment must be the real thing – and this giving up of self will is the hardest thing we human beings are ever called to do.** It's good to remember that not even the Master Shepherd can lead if the sheep do not follow Him. That's the why of Christ's insistence of a very practical obedience: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Obey... obedience ... trust... is all over the Gospels. The pliability of an obedient heart must be complete from the set of our wills right on through our actions. So we take the first hard steps of obedience. And lo, as we stop hiding our eyes, force ourselves to walk up to the fear and look it full in the face – never forgetting that God and His power are still the supreme reality – the fear evaporates. Drastic? Yes. But it is one sure way of releasing prayer power into human affairs. In the prayer of faith, our hand is still in His. Our heart is still obedient. But now, He has led us out of the frightening darkness, with only the pressure of His hand to reassure us, into the sunlight. We look into the face beside us with a thrill of recognition – the hand of the Father is Jesus' hand! All along, our heart told us it was so.

