

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.

14
15 NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

16
17 Fleming H. Revell Company

18
19 Publishers of Evangelical Literature.

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22 PREFACE.

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

30
31 And of all the traits of a life LIKE CHRIST there is none higher and more glorious than
32 conformity to Him in the work that now engages Him without ceasing in the Father's
33 presence—His all-prevailing intercession. The more we abide in Him, and grow unto His
34 likeness, will His priestly life work in us mightily, and our life become what His is, a life that
35 ever pleads and prevails for men.

36
37 Thou hast made us kings and priests unto God.' Both in the king and the priest the chief thing is
38 power, influence, blessing. In the king it is the power coming downward; in the priest, the power
39 rising upward, prevailing with God. In our blessed Priest-King, Jesus Christ, the kingly power is
40 founded on the priestly He is able to save to the uttermost, because He ever liveth to make
41 intercession.' In us, His priests and kings, it is no otherwise: it is in intercession that the Church
42 is to find and wield its highest power, that each member of the Church is to prove his descent
43 from Israel, who as a prince had power with God and with men, and prevailed.

44
45 It is under a deep impression that the place and power of prayer in the Christian life is too little
46 understood, that this book has been written. I feel sure that as long as we look on prayer chiefly
47 as the means of maintaining our own Christian life, we shall not know fully what it is meant to
48 be. But when we learn to regard it as the highest part of the work entrusted to us, the root and
49 strength of all other work, we shall see that there is nothing that we so need to study and practise
50 as the art of praying aright. If I have at all succeeded in pointing out the progressive teaching of
51 our Lord in regard to prayer, and the distinct reference the wonderful promises of the last night
52 (John xiv. 16) have to the works we are to do in His Name, to the greater works, and to the

53 bearing much fruit, we shall all admit that it is only when the Church gives herself up to this
54 holy work of intercession that we can expect the power of Christ to manifest itself in her behalf.
55 It is my prayer that God may use this little book to make clearer to some of His children the
56 wonderful place of power and influence which He is waiting for them to occupy, and for which
57 a weary world is waiting too.

58
59 In connection with this there is another truth that has come to me with wonderful clearness as I
60 studied the teaching of Jesus on prayer. It is this: that the Father waits to hear every prayer of
61 faith, to give us whatsoever we will, and whatsoever we ask in Jesus' name. We have become so
62 accustomed to limit the wonderful love and the large promises of our God, that we cannot read
63 the simplest and clearest statements of our Lord without the qualifying clauses by which we
64 guard and expound them. If there is one thing I think the Church needs to learn, it is that God
65 means prayer to have an answer, and that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive
66 what God will do for His child who gives himself to believe that his prayer will be heard. God
67 hears prayer; this is a truth universally admitted, but of which very few understand the meaning,
68 or experience the power. If what I have written stir my reader to go to the Master's words, and
69 take His wondrous promises simply and literally as they stand, my object has been attained.

70
71 And then just one thing more. Thousands have in these last years found an unspeakable blessing
72 in learning how completely Christ is our life, and how He undertakes to be and to do all in us
73 that we need. I know not if we have yet learned to apply this truth to our prayer-life. Many
74 complain that they have not the power to pray in faith, to pray the effectual prayer that availeth
75 much. The message I would fain bring them is that the blessed Jesus is waiting, is longing, to
76 teach them this. Christ is our life: in heaven He ever liveth to pray; His life in us is an ever-
77 praying life, if we will but trust Him for it. Christ teaches us to pray not only by example, by
78 instruction, by command, by promises, but by showing us HIMSELF, the ever-living
79 Intercessor, as our Life. It is when we believe this, and go and abide in Him for our prayer-life
80 too, that our fears of not being able to pray aright will vanish, and we shall joyfully and
81 triumphantly trust our Lord to teach us to pray, to be Himself the life and the power of our
82 prayer.

83
84 May God open our eyes to see what the holy ministry of intercession is to which, as His royal
85 priesthood, we have been set apart. May He give us a large and strong heart to believe what
86 mighty influence our prayers can exert. And may all fear as to our being able to fulfil our
87 vocation vanish as we see Jesus, living ever to pray, living in us to pray, and standing surety for
88 our prayer-life.

89
90 ANDREW MURRAY

91
92 WELLINGTON, 28th October 1895

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95

96

97 FIRST LESSON.

98

99 Lord, teach us to pray;'

100

101 Or, The Only Teacher .

102

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

105
106 THE disciples had been with Christ, and seen Him pray. They had learnt to understand
107 something of the connection between His wondrous life in public, and His secret life of prayer.
108 They had learnt to believe in Him as a Master in the art of prayer—none could pray like Him.
109 And so they came to Him with the request, Lord, teach us to pray.’ And in after years they
110 would have told us that there were few things more wonderful or blessed that He taught them
111 than His lessons on prayer.
112

113 And now still it comes to pass, as He is praying in a certain place, that disciples who see Him
114 thus engaged feel the need of repeating the same request, Lord, teach us to pray.’ As we grow in
115 the Christian life, the thought and the faith of the Beloved Master in His never-failing
116 intercession becomes ever more precious, and the hope of being Like Christ in His intercession
117 gains an attractiveness before unknown. And as we see Him pray, and remember that there is
118 none who can pray like Him, and none who can teach like Him, we feel the petition of the
119 disciples, Lord, teach us to pray,’ is just what we need. And as we think how all He is and has,
120 how He Himself is our very own, how He is Himself our life, we feel assured that we have but
121 to ask, and He will be delighted to take us up into closer fellowship with Himself, and teach us
122 to pray even as He prays.
123

124 Come, my brothers! Shall we not go to the Blessed Master and ask Him to enrol our names too
125 anew in that school which He always keeps open for those who long to continue their studies in
126 the Divine art of prayer and intercession? Yes, let us this very day say to the Master, as they did
127 of old, Lord, teach us to pray.’ As we meditate, we shall find each word of the petition we bring
128 to be full of meaning.
129

130 Lord, teach us to pray.’ Yes, to pray. This is what we need to be taught. Though in its
131 beginnings prayer is so simple that the feeblest child can pray, yet it is at the same time the
132 highest and holiest work to which man can rise. It is fellowship with the Unseen and Most Holy
133 One. The powers of the eternal world have been placed at its disposal. It is the very essence of
134 true religion, the channel of all blessings, the secret of power and life. Not only for ourselves,
135 but for others, for the Church, for the world, it is to prayer that God has given the right to take
136 hold of Him and His strength. It is on prayer that the promises wait for their fulfilment, the
137 kingdom for its coming, the glory of God for its full revelation. And for this blessed work, how
138 slothful and unfit we are. It is only the Spirit of God can enable us to do it aright. How speedily
139 we are deceived into a resting in the form, while the power is wanting. Our early training, the
140 teaching of the Church, the influence of habit, the stirring of the emotions—how easily these
141 lead to prayer which has no spiritual power, and avails but little. True prayer, that takes hold of
142 God’s strength, that availeth much, to which the gates of heaven are really opened wide—who
143 would not cry, Oh for some one to teach me thus to pray?
144

145 Jesus has opened a school, in which He trains His redeemed ones, who specially desire it, to
146 have power in prayer. Shall we not enter it with the petition, Lord! it is just this we need to be
147 taught! O teach us to pray.
148

149 Lord, teach us to pray.’ Yes, us, Lord. We have read in Thy Word with what power Thy
150 believing people of old used to pray, and what mighty wonders were done in answer to their
151 prayers. And if this took place under the Old Covenant, in the time of preparation, how much
152 more wilt Thou not now, in these days of fulfilment, give Thy people this sure sign of Thy
153 presence in their midst. We have heard the promises given to Thine apostles of the power of
154 prayer in Thy name, and have seen how gloriously they experienced their truth: we know for
155 certain, they can become true to us too. We hear continually even in these days what glorious
156 tokens of Thy power Thou dost still give to those who trust Thee fully. Lord! these all are men

157 of like passions with ourselves; teach us to pray so too. The promises are for us, the powers and
158 gifts of the heavenly world are for us. O teach us to pray so that we may receive abundantly. To
159 us too Thou hast entrusted Thy work, on our prayer too the coming of Thy kingdom depends, in
160 our prayer too Thou canst glorify Thy name; Lord teach us to pray.' Yes, us, Lord; we offer
161 ourselves as learners; we would indeed be taught of Thee. Lord, teach us to pray.'

162
163 Lord, teach us to pray.' Yes, we feel the need now of being taught to pray. At first there is no
164 work appears so simple; later on, none that is more difficult; and the confession is forced from
165 us: We know not how to pray as we ought. It is true we have God's Word, with its clear and sure
166 promises; but sin has so darkened our mind, that we know not always how to apply the word. In
167 spiritual things we do not always seek the most needful things, or fail in praying according to the
168 law of the sanctuary. In temporal things we are still less able to avail ourselves of the wonderful
169 liberty our Father has given us to ask what we need. And even when we know what to ask, how
170 much there is still needed to make prayer acceptable. It must be to the glory of God, in full
171 surrender to His will, in full assurance of faith, in the name of Jesus, and with a perseverance
172 that, if need be, refuses to be denied. All this must be learned. It can only be learned in the
173 school of much prayer, for practice makes perfect. Amid the painful consciousness of ignorance
174 and unworthiness, in the struggle between believing and doubting, the heavenly art of effectual
175 prayer is learnt. Because, even when we do not remember it, there is One, the Beginner and
176 Finisher of faith and prayer, who watches over our praying, and sees to it that in all who trust
177 Him for it their education in the school of prayer shall be carried on to perfection. Let but the
178 deep undertone of all our prayer be the teachableness that comes from a sense of ignorance, and
179 from faith in Him as a perfect teacher, and we may be sure we shall be taught, we shall learn to
180 pray in power. Yes, we may depend upon it, He teaches to pray.

181
182 Lord, teach us to pray.' None can teach like Jesus, none but Jesus; therefore we call on Him,
183 LORD, teach us to pray.' A pupil needs a teacher, who knows his work, who has the gift of
184 teaching, who in patience and love will descend to the pupil's needs. Blessed be God! Jesus is
185 all this and much more. He knows what prayer is. It is Jesus, praying Himself, who teaches to
186 pray. He knows what prayer is. He learned it amid the trials and tears of His earthly life. In
187 heaven it is still His beloved work: His life there is prayer. Nothing delights Him more than to
188 find those whom He can take with Him into the Father's presence, whom He can clothe with
189 power to pray down God's blessing on those around them, whom He can train to be His fellow-
190 workers in the intercession by which the kingdom is to be revealed on earth. He knows how to
191 teach. Now by the urgency of felt need, then by the confidence with which joy inspires. Here by
192 the teaching of the Word, there by the testimony of another believer who knows what it is to
193 have prayer heard. By His Holy Spirit, He has access to our heart, and teaches us to pray by
194 showing us the sin that hinders the prayer, or giving us the assurance that we please God. He
195 teaches, by giving not only thoughts of what to ask or how to ask, but by breathing within us the
196 very spirit of prayer, by living within us as the Great Intercessor. We may indeed and most
197 joyfully say, Who teacheth like Him?' Jesus never taught His disciples how to preach, only how
198 to pray. He did not speak much of what was needed to preach well, but much of praying well.
199 To know how to speak to God is more than knowing how to speak to man. Not power with men,
200 but power with God is the first thing. Jesus loves to teach us how to pray.

201
202 What think you, my beloved fellow-disciples! would it not be just what we need, to ask the
203 Master for a month to give us a course of special lessons on the art of prayer? As we meditate on
204 the words He spake on earth, let us yield ourselves to His teaching in the fullest confidence that,
205 with such a teacher, we shall make progress. Let us take time not only to meditate, but to pray,
206 to tarry at the foot of the throne, and be trained to the work of intercession. Let us do so in the
207 assurance that amidst our stammerings and fears He is carrying on His work most beautifully.
208 He will breathe His own life, which is all prayer, into us. As He makes us partakers of His

209 righteousness and His life, He will of His intercession too. As the members of His body, as a
210 holy priesthood, we shall take part in His priestly work of pleading and prevailing with God for
211 men. Yes, let us most joyfully say, ignorant and feeble though we be, Lord, teach us to pray.’

212
213 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

214
215
216

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

220
221 Lord Jesus! I ask Thee this day to enrol my name among those who confess that they know not
222 how to pray as they ought, and specially ask Thee for a course of teaching in prayer. Lord! teach
223 me to tarry with Thee in the school, and give Thee time to train me. May a deep sense of my
224 ignorance, of the wonderful privilege and power of prayer, of the need of the Holy Spirit as the
225 Spirit of prayer, lead me to cast away my thoughts of what I think I know, and make me kneel
226 before Thee in true teachableness and poverty of spirit.

227
228 And fill me, Lord, with the confidence that with such a teacher as Thou art I shall learn to pray.
229 In the assurance that I have as my teacher, Jesus who is ever praying to the Father, and by His
230 prayer rules the destinies of His Church and the world, I will not be afraid. As much as I need to
231 know of the mysteries of the prayer-world, Thou wilt unfold for me. And when I may not know,
232 Thou wilt teach me to be strong in faith, giving glory to God.

233
234 Blessed Lord! Thou wilt not put to shame Thy scholar who trusts Thee, nor, by Thy grace,
235 would he Thee either. Amen.

236
237
238

239 SECOND LESSON.

240
241 In spirit and truth.’

242
243 Or, The True Worshippers.

244
245

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

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

256
257

258 To the woman of Samaria our Lord spoke of a threefold worship. There is first, the ignorant
259 worship of the Samaritans: Ye worship that which ye know not.’ The second, the intelligent
260 worship of the Jew, having the true knowledge of God: We worship that which we know; for
salvation is of the Jews.’ And then the new, the spiritual worship which He Himself has come to

261 introduce: The hour is coming, and is now, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father
262 in spirit and truth.' From the connection it is evident that the words in spirit and truth' do not
263 mean, as is often thought, earnestly, from the heart, in sincerity. The Samaritans had the five
264 books of Moses and some knowledge of God; there was doubtless more than one among them
265 who honestly and earnestly sought God in prayer. The Jews had the true full revelation of God
266 in His word, as thus far given; there were among them godly men, who called upon God with
267 their whole heart. And yet not in spirit and truth,' in the full meaning of the words. Jesus says,
268 The hour is coming, and now is;' it is only in and through Him that the worship of God will be
269 in spirit and truth.

270
271 Among Christians one still finds the three classes of worshippers. Some who in their ignorance
272 hardly know what they ask: they pray earnestly, and yet receive but little. Others there are, who
273 have more correct knowledge, who try to pray with all their mind and heart, and often pray most
274 earnestly, and yet do not attain to the full blessedness of worship in spirit and truth. It is into this
275 third class we must ask our Lord Jesus to take us; we must be taught of Him how to worship in
276 spirit and truth. This alone is spiritual worship; this makes us worshippers such as the Father
277 seeks. In prayer everything will depend on our understanding well and practising the worship in
278 spirit and truth.

279
280 God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and truth.' The first
281 thought suggested here by the Master is that there must be harmony between God and His
282 worshippers; such as God is, must His worship be. This is according to a principle which
283 prevails throughout the universe: we look for correspondence between an object and the organ to
284 which it reveals or yields itself. The eye has an inner fitness for the light, the ear for sound. The
285 man who would truly worship God, would find and know and possess and enjoy God, must be in
286 harmony with Him, must have the capacity for receiving Him. Because God is Spirit, we must
287 worship in spirit. As God is, so His worshipper.

288
289 And what does this mean? The woman had asked our Lord whether Samaria or Jerusalem was
290 the true place of worship. He answers that henceforth worship is no longer to be limited to a
291 certain place: Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in
292 Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.' As God is Spirit, not bound by space or time, but in His
293 infinite perfection always and everywhere the same, so His worship would henceforth no longer
294 be confined by place or form, but spiritual as God Himself is spiritual. A lesson of deep
295 importance. How much our Christianity suffers from this, that it is confined to certain times and
296 places. A man, who seeks to pray earnestly in the church or in the closet, spends the greater part
297 of the week or the day in a spirit entirely at variance with that in which he prayed. His worship
298 was the work of a fixed place or hour, not of his whole being. God is a Spirit: He is the
299 Everlasting and Unchangeable One; what He is, He is always and in truth. Our worship must
300 even so be in spirit and truth: His worship must be the spirit of our life; our life must be worship
301 in spirit as God is Spirit.

302
303 God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth.' The second
304 thought that comes to us is that the worship in the spirit must come from God Himself. God is
305 Spirit: He alone has Spirit to give. It was for this He sent His Son, to fit us for such spiritual
306 worship, by giving us the Holy Spirit. It is of His own work that Jesus speaks when He says
307 twice, The hour cometh,' and then adds, and is now.' He came to baptize with the Holy Spirit;
308 the Spirit could not stream forth till He was glorified (John i. 33, vii. 37, 38, xvi. 7). It was when
309 He had made an end of sin, and entering into the Holiest of all with His blood, had there on our
310 behalf received the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. 33), that He could send Him down to us as the Spirit of
311 the Father. It was when Christ had redeemed us, and we in Him had received the position of

312 children, that the Father sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to cry, Abba, Father.' The
313 worship in spirit is the worship of the Father in the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Sonship.

314
315 This is the reason why Jesus here uses the name of Father. We never find one of the Old
316 Testament saints personally appropriate the name of child or call God his Father. The worship of
317 the Father is only possible to those to whom the Spirit of the Son has been given. The worship in
318 spirit is only possible to those to whom the Son has revealed the Father, and who have received
319 the spirit of Sonship. It is only Christ who opens the way and teaches the worship in spirit.

320
321 And in truth. That does not only mean, in sincerity. Nor does it only signify, in accordance with
322 the truth of God's Word. The expression is one of deep and Divine meaning. Jesus is the only-
323 begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.' The law was given by Moses; grace and truth
324 came by Jesus Christ.' Jesus says, I am the truth and the life.' In the Old Testament all was
325 shadow and promise; Jesus brought and gives the reality, the substance, of things hoped for. In
326 Him the blessings and powers of the eternal life are our actual possession and experience. Jesus
327 is full of grace and truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; through Him the grace that is in
328 Jesus is ours in deed and truth, a positive communication out of the Divine life. And so worship
329 in spirit is worship in truth; actual living fellowship with God, a real correspondence and
330 harmony between the Father, who is a Spirit, and the child praying in the spirit.

331
332 What Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, she could not at once understand. Pentecost was
333 needed to reveal its full meaning. We are hardly prepared at our first entrance into the school of
334 prayer to grasp such teaching. We shall understand it better later on. Let us only begin and take
335 the lesson as He gives it. We are carnal and cannot bring God the worship He seeks. But Jesus
336 came to give the Spirit: He has given Him to us. Let the disposition in which we set ourselves to
337 pray be what Christ's words have taught us. Let there be the deep confession of our inability to
338 bring God the worship that is pleasing to Him; the childlike teachableness that waits on Him to
339 instruct us; the simple faith that yields itself to the breathing of the Spirit. Above all, let us hold
340 fast the blessed truth—we shall find that the Lord has more to say to us about it—that the
341 knowledge of the Fatherhood of God, the revelation of His infinite Fatherliness in our hearts, the
342 faith in the infinite love that gives us His Son and His Spirit to make us children, is indeed the
343 secret of prayer in spirit and truth. This is the new and living way Christ opened up for us. To
344 have Christ the Son, and the Spirit of the Son, dwelling within us, and revealing the Father, this
345 makes us true, spiritual worshippers.

346
347 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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350
351 Blessed Lord! I adore the love with which Thou didst teach a woman, who had refused Thee a
352 cup of water, what the worship of God must be. I rejoice in the assurance that Thou wilt no less
353 now instruct Thy disciple, who comes to Thee with a heart that longs to pray in spirit and in
354 truth. O my Holy Master! do teach me this blessed secret.

355
356 Teach me that the worship in spirit and truth is not of man, but only comes from Thee; that it is
357 not only a thing of times and seasons, but the outflowing of a life in Thee. Teach me to draw
358 near to God in prayer under the deep impression of my ignorance and my having nothing in
359 myself to offer Him, and at the same time of the provision Thou, my Saviour, makest for the
360 Spirit's breathing in my childlike stammerings. I do bless Thee that in Thee I am a child, and
361 have a child's liberty of access; that in Thee I have the spirit of Sonship and of worship in truth.
362 Teach me, above all, Blessed Son of the Father, how it is the revelation of the Father that gives

363 confidence in prayer; and let the infinite Fatherliness of God's Heart be my joy and strength for
364 a life of prayer and of worship. Amen.

365
366

367
368 THIRD LESSON.

369 Pray to thy Father, which is in secret;'
370

371
372 Or, Alone with God.

373
374 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to
375 thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee'—Matt.
376 vi. 6.

377
378 AFTER Jesus had called His first disciples, He gave them their first public teaching in the
379 Sermon on the Mount. He there expounded to them the kingdom of God, its laws and its life. In
380 that kingdom God is not only King, but Father, He not only gives all, but is Himself all. In the
381 knowledge and fellowship of Him alone is its blessedness. Hence it came as a matter of course
382 that the revelation of prayer and the prayer-life was a part of His teaching concerning the New
383 Kingdom He came to set up. Moses gave neither command nor regulation with regard to prayer:
384 even the prophets say little directly of the duty of prayer; it is Christ who teaches to pray.

385
386 And the first thing the Lord teaches His disciples is that they must have a secret place for prayer;
387 every one must have some solitary spot where he can be alone with his God. Every teacher must
388 have a schoolroom. We have learnt to know and accept Jesus as our only teacher in the school of
389 prayer. He has already taught us at Samaria that worship is no longer confined to times and
390 places; that worship, spiritual true worship, is a thing of the spirit and the life; the whole man
391 must in his whole life be worship in spirit and truth. And yet He wants each one to choose for
392 himself the fixed spot where He can daily meet him. That inner chamber, that solitary place, is
393 Jesus' schoolroom. That spot may be anywhere; that spot may change from day to day if we
394 have to change our abode; but that secret place there must be, with the quiet time in which the
395 pupil places himself in the Master's presence, to be by Him prepared to worship the Father.
396 There alone, but there most surely, Jesus comes to us to teach us to pray.

397
398 A teacher is always anxious that his schoolroom should be bright and attractive, filled with the
399 light and air of heaven, a place where pupils long to come, and love to stay. In His first words on
400 prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus seeks to set the inner chamber before us in its most
401 attractive light. If we listen carefully, we soon notice what the chief thing is He has to tell us of
402 our tarrying there. Three times He uses the name of Father: Pray to thy Father; Thy Father shall
403 recompense thee; Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of.' The first thing in closet-
404 prayer is: I must meet my Father. The light that shines in the closet must be: the light of the
405 Father's countenance. The fresh air from heaven with which Jesus would have it filled, the
406 atmosphere in which I am to breathe and pray, is: God's Father-love, God's infinite Fatherliness.
407 Thus each thought or petition we breathe out will be simple, hearty, childlike trust in the Father.
408 This is how the Master teaches us to pray: He brings us into the Father's living presence. What
409 we pray there must avail. Let us listen carefully to hear what the Lord has to say to us.

410

411 First, Pray to thy Father which is in secret.' God is a God who hides Himself to the carnal eye.
412 As long as in our worship of God we are chiefly occupied with our own thoughts and exercises,
413 we shall not meet Him who is a Spirit, the unseen One. But to the man who withdraws himself
414 from all that is of the world and man, and prepares to wait upon God alone, the Father will

415 reveal Himself. As he forsakes and gives up and shuts out the world, and the life of the world,
416 and surrenders himself to be led of Christ into the secret of God's presence, the light of the
417 Father's love will rise upon him. The secrecy of the inner chamber and the closed door, the
418 entire separation from all around us, is an image of, and so a help to that inner spiritual
419 sanctuary, the secret of God's tabernacle, within the veil, where our spirit truly comes into
420 contact with the Invisible One. And so we are taught, at the very outset of our search after the
421 secret of effectual prayer, to remember that it is in the inner chamber, where we are alone with
422 the Father, that we shall learn to pray aright. The Father is in secret: in these words Jesus teaches
423 us where He is waiting us, where He is always to be found. Christians often complain that
424 private prayer is not what it should be. They feel weak and sinful, the heart is cold and dark; it is
425 as if they have so little to pray, and in that little no faith or joy. They are discouraged and kept
426 from prayer by the thought that they cannot come to the Father as they ought or as they wish.
427 Child of God! listen to your Teacher. He tells you that when you go to private prayer your first
428 thought must be: The Father is in secret, the Father waits me there. Just because your heart is
429 cold and prayerless, get you into the presence of the loving Father. As a father pitieth his
430 children, so the Lord pitieth you. Do not be thinking of how little you have to bring God, but of
431 how much He wants to give you. Just place yourself before, and look up into, His face; think of
432 His love, His wonderful, tender, pitying love. Just tell Him how sinful and cold and dark all is: it
433 is the Father's loving heart will give light and warmth to yours. O do what Jesus says: Just shut
434 the door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret. Is it not wonderful? to be able to go alone
435 with God, the infinite God. And then to look up and say: My Father!

436
437 And thy Father, which seeth in secret, will recompense thee.' Here Jesus assures us that secret
438 prayer cannot be fruitless: its blessing will show itself in our life. We have but in secret, alone
439 with God, to entrust our life before men to Him; He will reward us openly; He will see to it that
440 the answer to prayer be made manifest in His blessing upon us. Our Lord would thus teach us
441 that as infinite Fatherliness and Faithfulness is that with which God meets us in secret, so on our
442 part there should be the childlike simplicity of faith, the confidence that our prayer does bring
443 down a blessing. He that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that seek
444 Him.' Not on the strong or the fervent feeling with which I pray does the blessing of the closet
445 depend, but upon the love and the power of the Father to whom I there entrust my needs. And
446 therefore the Master has but one desire: Remember your Father is, and sees and hears in secret;
447 go there and stay there, and go again from there in the confidence: He will recompense. Trust
448 Him for it; depend upon Him: prayer to the Father cannot be vain; He will reward you openly.

449
450 Still further to confirm this faith in the Father-love of God, Christ speaks a third word: Your
451 Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.' At first sight it might appear as
452 if this thought made prayer less needful: God knows far better than we what we need. But as we
453 get a deeper insight into what prayer really is, this truth will help much to strengthen our faith. It
454 will teach us that we do not need, as the heathen, with the multitude and urgency of our words,
455 to compel an unwilling God to listen to us. It will lead to a holy thoughtfulness and silence in
456 prayer as it suggests the question: Does my Father really know that I need this? It will, when
457 once we have been led by the Spirit to the certainty that our request is indeed something that,
458 according to the Word, we do need for God's glory, give us wonderful confidence to say, My
459 Father knows I need it and must have it. And if there be any delay in the answer, it will teach us
460 in quiet perseverance to hold on: FATHER! THOU KNOWEST I need it. O the blessed liberty
461 and simplicity of a child that Christ our Teacher would fain cultivate in us, as we draw near to
462 God: let us look up to the Father until His Spirit works it in us. Let us sometimes in our prayers,
463 when we are in danger of being so occupied with our fervent, urgent petitions, as to forget that
464 the Father knows and hears, let us hold still and just quietly say: My Father sees, my Father
465 hears, my Father knows; it will help our faith to take the answer, and to say: We know that we
466 have the petitions we have asked of Him.

467
468 And now, all ye who have anew entered the school of Christ to be taught to pray, take these
469 lessons, practise them, and trust Him to perfect you in them. Dwell much in the inner chamber,
470 with the door shut—shut in from men, shut up with God; it is there the Father waits you, it is
471 there Jesus will teach you to pray. To be alone in secret with THE FATHER: this be your
472 highest joy. To be assured that THE FATHER will openly reward the secret prayer, so that it
473 cannot remain unblest: this be your strength day by day. And to know that THE FATHER
474 knows that you need what you ask; this be your liberty to bring every need, in the assurance that
475 your God will supply it according to His riches in Glory in Christ Jesus.

476
477 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

478
479
480
481 Blessed Saviour! with my whole heart I do bless Thee for the appointment of the inner chamber,
482 as the school where Thou meetest each of Thy pupils alone, and revealest to him the Father. O
483 my Lord! strengthen my faith so in the Father’s tender love and kindness, that as often as I feel
484 sinful or troubled, the first instinctive thought may be to go where I know the Father waits me,
485 and where prayer never can go unblest. Let the thought that He knows my need before I ask,
486 bring me, in great restfulness of faith, to trust that He will give what His child requires. O let the
487 place of secret prayer become to me the most beloved spot of earth.

488
489 And, Lord! hear me as I pray that Thou wouldest everywhere bless the closets of Thy believing
490 people. Let Thy wonderful revelation of a Father’s tenderness free all young Christians from
491 every thought of secret prayer as a duty or a burden, and lead them to regard it as the highest
492 privilege of their life, a joy and a blessing. Bring back all who are discouraged, because they
493 cannot find ought to bring Thee in prayer. O give them to understand that they have only to
494 come with their emptiness to Him who has all to give, and delights to do it. Not, what they have
495 to bring the Father, but what the Father waits to give them, be their one thought.

496
497 And bless especially the inner chamber of all Thy servants who are working for Thee, as the
498 place where God’s truth and God’s grace is revealed to them, where they are daily anointed with
499 fresh oil, where their strength is renewed, and the blessings are received in faith, with which
500 they are to bless their fellow-men. Lord, draw us all in the closet nearer to Thyself and the
501 Father. Amen.

502
503
504
505 FOURTH LESSON

506
507 After this manner pray;’

508
509 Or, The Model Prayer.

510
511 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.’—Matt. vi. 9.

512
513 EVERY teacher knows the power of example. He not only tells the child what to do and how to
514 do it, but shows him how it really can be done. In condescension to our weakness, our heavenly
515 Teacher has given us the very words we are to take with us as we draw near to our Father. We
516 have in them a form of prayer in which there breathe the freshness and fulness of the Eternal
517 Life. So simple that the child can lisp it, so divinely rich that it comprehends all that God can

518 give. A form of prayer that becomes the model and inspiration for all other prayer, and yet
519 always draws us back to itself as the deepest utterance of our souls before our God.

520

521 Our Father which art in heaven!’ To appreciate this word of adoration aright, I must remember
522 that none of the saints had in Scripture ever ventured to address God as their Father. The
523 invocation places us at once in the centre of the wonderful revelation the Son came to make of
524 His Father as our Father too. It comprehends the mystery of redemption—Christ delivering us
525 from the curse that we might become the children of God. The mystery of regeneration—the
526 Spirit in the new birth giving us the new life. And the mystery of faith—ere yet the redemption
527 is accomplished or understood, the word is given on the lips of the disciples to prepare them for
528 the blessed experience still to come. The words are the key to the whole prayer, to all prayer. It
529 takes time, it takes life to study them; it will take eternity to understand them fully. The
530 knowledge of God’s Father-love is the first and simplest, but also the last and highest lesson in
531 the school of prayer. It is in the personal relation to the living God, and the personal conscious
532 fellowship of love with Himself, that prayer begins. It is in the knowledge of God’s Fatherliness,
533 revealed by the Holy Spirit, that the power of prayer will be found to root and grow. In the
534 infinite tenderness and pity and patience of the infinite Father, in His loving readiness to hear
535 and to help, the life of prayer has its joy. O let us take time, until the Spirit has made these words
536 to us spirit and truth, filling heart and life: Our Father which art in heaven.’ Then we are indeed
537 within the veil, in the secret place of power where prayer always prevails.

538

539 Hallowed be Thy name.’ There is something here that strikes us at once. While we ordinarily
540 first bring our own needs to God in prayer, and then think of what belongs to God and His
541 interests, the Master reverses the order. First, Thy name, Thy kingdom, Thy will; then, give us,
542 forgive us, lead us, deliver us. The lesson is of more importance than we think. In true worship
543 the Father must be first, must be all. The sooner I learn to forget myself in the desire that HE
544 may be glorified, the richer will the blessing be that prayer will bring to myself. No one ever
545 loses by what he sacrifices for the Father.

546

547 This must influence all our prayer. There are two sorts of prayer: personal and intercessory. The
548 latter ordinarily occupies the lesser part of our time and energy. This may not be. Christ has
549 opened the school of prayer specially to train intercessors for the great work of bringing down,
550 by their faith and prayer, the blessings of His work and love on the world around. There can be
551 no deep growth in prayer unless this be made our aim. The little child may ask of the father only
552 what it needs for itself; and yet it soon learns to say, Give some for sister too. But the grown-up
553 son, who only lives for the father’s interest and takes charge of the father’s business, asks more
554 largely, and gets all that is asked. And Jesus would train us to the blessed life of consecration
555 and service, in which our interests are all subordinate to the Name, and the Kingdom, and the
556 Will of the Father. O let us live for this, and let, on each act of adoration, Our Father! there
557 follow in the same breath Thy Name, Thy Kingdom, Thy Will;—for this we look up and long.

558

559 Hallowed be Thy name.’ What name? This new name of Father. The word Holy is the central
560 word of the Old Testament; the name Father of the New. In this name of Love all the holiness
561 and glory of God are now to be revealed. And how is the name to be hallowed? By God
562 Himself: I will hallow My great name which ye have profaned.’ Our prayer must be that in
563 ourselves, in all God’s children, in presence of the world, God Himself would reveal the
564 holiness, the Divine power, the hidden glory of the name of Father. The Spirit of the Father is
565 the Holy Spirit: it is only when we yield ourselves to be led of Him, that the name will be
566 hallowed in our prayers and our lives. Let us learn the prayer: Our Father, hallowed be Thy
567 name.’

568

569 Thy kingdom come.’ The Father is a King and has a kingdom. The son and heir of a king has no
570 higher ambition than the glory of his father’s kingdom. In time of war or danger this becomes
571 his passion; he can think of nothing else. The children of the Father are here in the enemy’s
572 territory, where the kingdom, which is in heaven, is not yet fully manifested. What more natural
573 than that, when they learn to hallow the Father-name, they should long and cry with deep
574 enthusiasm: Thy kingdom come.’ The coming of the kingdom is the one great event on which
575 the revelation of the Father’s glory, the blessedness of His children, the salvation of the world
576 depends. On our prayers too the coming of the kingdom waits. Shall we not join in the deep
577 longing cry of the redeemed: Thy kingdom come?’ Let us learn it in the school of Jesus.

578
579 Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.’ This petition is too frequently applied alone to the
580 suffering of the will of God. In heaven God’s will is done, and the Master teaches the child to
581 ask that the will may be done on earth just as in heaven: in the spirit of adoring submission and
582 ready obedience. Because the will of God is the glory of heaven, the doing of it is the
583 blessedness of heaven. As the will is done, the kingdom of heaven comes into the heart. And
584 wherever faith has accepted the Father’s love, obedience accepts the Father’s will. The surrender
585 to, and the prayer for a life of heaven-like obedience, is the spirit of childlike prayer.

586
587 Give us this day our daily bread.’ When first the child has yielded himself to the Father in the
588 care for His Name, His Kingdom, and His Will, he has full liberty to ask for his daily bread. A
589 master cares for the food of his servant, a general of his soldiers, a father of his child. And will
590 not the Father in heaven care for the child who has in prayer given himself up to His interests?
591 We may indeed in full confidence say: Father, I live for Thy honour and Thy work; I know Thou
592 carest for me. Consecration to God and His will gives wonderful liberty in prayer for temporal
593 things: the whole earthly life is given to the Father’s loving care.

594
595 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.’ As bread is the first need of the
596 body, so forgiveness for the soul. And the provision for the one is as sure as for the other. We
597 are children but sinners too; our right of access to the Father’s presence we owe to the precious
598 blood and the forgiveness it has won for us. Let us beware of the prayer for forgiveness
599 becoming a formality: only what is really confessed is really forgiven. Let us in faith accept the
600 forgiveness as promised: as a spiritual reality, an actual transaction between God and us, it is the
601 entrance into all the Father’s love and all the privileges of children. Such forgiveness, as a living
602 experience, is impossible without a forgiving spirit to others: as forgiven expresses the
603 heavenward, so forgiving the earthward, relation of God’s child. In each prayer to the Father I
604 must be able to say that I know of no one whom I do not heartily love.

605
606 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’ Our daily bread, the pardon of
607 our sins, and then our being kept from all sin and the power of the evil one, in these three
608 petitions all our personal need is comprehended. The prayer for bread and pardon must be
609 accompanied by the surrender to live in all things in holy obedience to the Father’s will, and the
610 believing prayer in everything to be kept by the power of the indwelling Spirit from the power
611 of the evil one.

612
613 Children of God! it is thus Jesus would have us to pray to the Father in heaven. O let His Name,
614 and Kingdom, and Will, have the first place in our love; His providing, and pardoning, and
615 keeping love will be our sure portion. So the prayer will lead us up to the true child-life: the
616 Father all to the child, the Father all for the child. We shall understand how Father and child, the
617 Thine and the Our, are all one, and how the heart that begins its prayer with the God-devoted
618 THINE, will have the power in faith to speak out the OUR too. Such prayer will, indeed, be the
619 fellowship and interchange of love, always bringing us back in trust and worship to Him who is

620 not only the Beginning but the End: FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER,
621 AND THE GLORY, FOR EVER, AMEN.' Son of the Father, teach us to pray, OUR FATHER.'
622
623 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

624
625
626
627 O Thou who art the only-begotten Son, teach us, we beseech Thee, to pray, OUR FATHER.'
628 We thank Thee, Lord, for these Living Blessed Words which Thou has given us. We thank Thee
629 for the millions who in them have learnt to know and worship the Father, and for what they have
630 been to us. Lord! it is as if we needed days and weeks in Thy school with each separate petition;
631 so deep and full are they. But we look to Thee to lead us deeper into their meaning: do it, we
632 pray Thee, for Thy Name's sake; Thy name is Son of the Father.

633
634 Lord! Thou didst once say: No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son
635 willeth to reveal Him.' And again: I made known unto them Thy name, and will make it known,
636 that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them.' Lord Jesus! reveal to us the
637 Father. Let His name, His infinite Father-love, the love with which He loved Thee, according to
638 Thy prayer, BE IN US. Then shall we say aright, OUR FATHER!' Then shall we apprehend
639 Thy teaching, and the first spontaneous breathing of our heart will be: Our Father, Thy Name,
640 Thy Kingdom, Thy Will.' And we shall bring our needs and our sins and our temptations to Him
641 in the confidence that the love of such a Father care for all.

642
643 Blessed Lord! we are Thy scholars, we trust Thee; do teach us to pray, OUR FATHER.' Amen.

644
645
646
647

648 FIFTH LESSON.

649
650

Ask, and it shall be given you;

651
652
653

Or, The Certainty of the Answer to Prayer.

654
655
656

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

657
658
659

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

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OUR Lord returns here in the Sermon on the Mount a second time to speak of prayer. The first
time He had spoken of the Father who is to be found in secret, and rewards openly, and had
given us the pattern prayer (Matt. vi. 5-15). Here He wants to teach us what in all Scripture is
considered the chief thing in prayer: the assurance that prayer will be heard and answered.
Observe how He uses words which mean almost the same thing, and each time repeats the
promise so distinctly: Ye shall receive, ye shall find, it shall be opened unto you;' and then gives
as ground for such assurance the law of the kingdom: He that asketh, receiveth; he that seeketh,
findeth; to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.' We cannot but feel how in this sixfold
repetition He wants to impress deep on our minds this one truth, that we may and must most
confidently expect an answer to our prayer. Next to the revelation of the Father's love, there is,
in the whole course of the school of prayer, not a more important lesson than this: Every one
that asketh, receiveth.

672

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

683

684 That the Lord should have thought it needful in so many forms to repeat the truth, is a lesson of
685 deep import. It proves that He knows our heart, how doubt and distrust toward God are natural
686 to us, and how easily we are inclined to rest in prayer as a religious work without an answer. He
687 knows too how, even when we believe that God is the Hearer of prayer, believing prayer that
688 lays hold of the promise, is something spiritual, too high and difficult for the half-hearted
689 disciple. He therefore at the very outset of His instruction to those who would learn to pray,
690 seeks to lodge this truth deep into their hearts: prayer does avail much; ask and ye shall receive;
691 every one that asketh, receiveth. This is the fixed eternal law of the kingdom: if you ask and
692 receive not, it must be because there is something amiss or wanting in the prayer. Hold on; let
693 the Word and the Spirit teach you to pray aright, but do not let go the confidence He seeks to
694 waken: Every one that asketh, receiveth.

695

696 Ask, and it shall be given you.' Christ has no mightier stimulus to persevering prayer in His
697 school than this. As a child has to prove a sum to be correct, so the proof that we have prayed
698 aright is, the answer. If we ask and receive not, it is because we have not learned to pray aright.
699 Let every learner in the school of Christ therefore take the Master's word in all simplicity: Every
700 one that asketh, receiveth. He had good reasons for speaking so unconditionally. Let us beware
701 of weakening the Word with our human wisdom. When He tells us heavenly things, let us
702 believe Him: His Word will explain itself to him who believes it fully. If questions and
703 difficulties arise, let us not seek to have them settled before we accept the Word. No; let us
704 entrust them all to Him: it is His to solve them: our work is first and fully to accept and hold fast
705 His promise. Let in our inner chamber, in the inner chamber of our heart too, the Word be
706 inscribed in letters of light: Every one that asketh, receiveth.

707

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

718

719 It is one of the terrible marks of the diseased state of Christian life in these days, that there are so
720 many who rest content without the distinct experience of answer to prayer. They pray daily, they
721 ask many things, and trust that some of them will be heard, but know little of direct definite
722 answer to prayer as the rule of daily life. And it is this the Father wills: He seeks daily
723 intercourse with His children in listening to and granting their petitions. he wills that I should

724 come to Him day by day with distinct requests; He wills day by day to do for me what I ask. It
725 was in His answer to prayer that the saints of old learned to know God as the Living One, and
726 were stirred to praise and love (Ps. xxxiv., lxvi. 19, cxvi. 1). Our Teacher waits to imprint this
727 upon our minds: prayer and its answer, the child asking and the father giving, belong to each
728 other.

729
730 There may be cases in which the answer is a refusal, because the request is not according to
731 God's Word, as when Moses asked to enter Canaan. But still, there was an answer: God did not
732 leave His servant in uncertainty as to His will. The gods of the heathen are dumb and cannot
733 speak. Our Father lets His child know when He cannot give him what he asks, and he withdraws
734 his petition, even as the Son did in Gethsemane. Both Moses the servant and Christ the Son
735 knew that what they asked was not according to what the Lord had spoken: their prayer was the
736 humble supplication whether it was not possible for the decision to be changed. God will teach
737 those who are teachable and give Him time, by His Word and Spirit, whether their request be
738 according to His will or not. Let us withdraw the request, if it be not according to God's mind,
739 or persevere till the answer come. Prayer is appointed to obtain the answer. It is in prayer and its
740 answer that the interchange of love between the Father and His child takes place.

741
742 How deep the estrangement of our heart from God must be, that we find it so difficult to grasp
743 such promises. Even while we accept the words and believe their truth, the faith of the heart, that
744 fully has them and rejoices in them, comes so slowly. It is because our spiritual life is still so
745 weak, and the capacity for taking God's thoughts is so feeble. But let us look to Jesus to teach us
746 as none but He can teach. If we take His words in simplicity, and trust Him by His Spirit to
747 make them within us life and power, they will so enter into our inner being, that the spiritual
748 Divine reality of the truth they contain will indeed take possession of us, and we shall not rest
749 content until every petition we offer is borne heavenward on Jesus' own words: Ask, and it shall
750 be given you.'

751
752 Beloved fellow-disciples in the school of Jesus! let us set ourselves to learn this lesson well. Let
753 us take these words just as they were spoken. Let us not suffer human reason to weaken their
754 force. Let us take them as Jesus gives them, and believe them. He will teach us in due time how
755 to understand them fully: let us begin by implicitly believing them. Let us take time, as often as
756 we pray, to listen to His voice: Every one that asketh, receiveth. Let us not make the feeble
757 experiences of our unbelief the measure of what our faith may expect. Let us seek, not only just
758 in our seasons of prayer, but at all times, to hold fast the joyful assurance: man's prayer on earth
759 and God's answer in heaven are meant for each other. Let us trust Jesus to teach us so to pray
760 that the answer can come. He will do it, if we hold fast the word He gives today: Ask, and ye
761 shall receive.'

762
763 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

764
765
766
767 O Lord Jesus! teach me to understand and believe what Thou hast now promised me. It is not
768 hid from Thee, O my Lord, with what reasonings my heart seeks to satisfy itself, when no
769 answer comes. There is the thought that my prayer is not in harmony with the Father's secret
770 counsel; that there is perhaps something better Thou wouldest give me; or that prayer as
771 fellowship with God is blessing enough without an answer. And yet, my blessed Lord, I find in
772 Thy teaching on prayer that Thou didst not speak of these things, but didst say so plainly, that
773 prayer may and must expect an answer. Thou dost assure us that this is the fellowship of a child
774 with the Father: the child asks and the Father gives.

775

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

779
780 Lord! teach me to pray. Lord Jesus! I trust Thee for it; teach me to pray in faith. Lord! teach me
781 this lesson of today: Every one that asketh receiveth. Amen.

782
783

784

785

786 SIXTH LESSON.

787

788 How much more?'

789

790 Or, The Infinite Fatherliness of God.

791

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

796

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

808

809 As simple and intelligible as this parable is, so deep and spiritual is the teaching it contains. The
810 Lord would remind us that the prayer of a child owes its influence entirely to the relation in
811 which he stands to the parent. The prayer can exert that influence only when the child is really
812 living in that relationship, in the home, in the love, in the service of the Father. The power of the
813 promise, Ask, and it shall be given you,' lies in the loving relationship between us as children
814 and the Father in heaven; when we live and walk in that relationship, the prayer of faith and its
815 answer will be the natural result. And so the lesson we have today in the school of prayer is this:
816 Live as a child of God, then you will be able to pray as a child, and as a child you will most
817 assuredly be heard.

818

819 And what is the true child-life? The answer can be found in any home. The child that by
820 preference forsakes the father's house, that finds no pleasure in the presence and love and
821 obedience of the father, and still thinks to ask and obtain what he will, will surely be
822 disappointed. On the contrary, he to whom the intercourse and will and honour and love of the
823 father are the joy of his life, will find that it is the father's joy to grant his requests. Scripture
824 says, As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God:' the childlike
825 privilege of asking all is inseparable from the childlike life under the leading of the Spirit. He
826 that gives himself to be led by the Spirit in his life, will be led by Him in his prayers too. And he
827 will find that Fatherlike giving is the Divine response to childlike living.

828
829 To see what this childlike living is, in which childlike asking and believing have their ground,
830 we have only to notice what our Lord teaches in the Sermon on the Mount of the Father and His
831 children. In it the prayer-promises are imbedded in the life-precepts; the two are inseparable.
832 They form one whole; and He alone can count on the fulfilment of the promise, who accepts too
833 all that the Lord has connected with it. It is as if in speaking the word, Ask, and ye shall
834 receive,' He says: I give these promises to those whom in the beatitudes I have pictured in their
835 childlike poverty and purity, and of whom I have said, They shall be called the children of God'
836 (Matt. v. 3-9): to children, who let your light shine before men, so that they may glorify your
837 Father in heaven:' to those who walk in love, that ye may be children of your Father which is in
838 heaven,' and who seek to be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect' (v. 45): to those
839 whose fasting and praying and almsgiving (vi. 1-18) is not before men, but before your Father
840 which seeth in secret;' who forgive even as your Father forgiveth you' (vi. 15); who trust the
841 heavenly Father in all earthly need, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (vi.
842 26-32); who not only say, Lord, Lord, but do the will of my Father which is in heaven (vii. 21).
843 Such are the children of the Father, and such is the life in the Father's love and service; in such a
844 child-life answered prayers are certain and abundant.

845
846 But will not such teaching discourage the feeble one? If we are first to answer to this portrait of
847 a child, must not many give up all hope of answers to prayer? The difficulty is removed if we
848 think again of the blessed name of father and child. A child is weak; there is a great difference
849 among children in age and gift. The Lord does not demand of us a perfect fulfilment of the law;
850 no, but only the childlike and whole-hearted surrender to live as a child with Him in obedience
851 and truth. Nothing more. But also, nothing less. The Father must have the whole heart. When
852 this is given, and He sees the child with honest purpose and steady will seeking in everything to
853 be and live as a child, then our prayer will count with Him as the prayer of a child. Let any one
854 simply and honestly begin to study the Sermon on the Mount and take it as his guide in life, and
855 he will find, notwithstanding weakness and failure, an ever-growing liberty to claim the
856 fulfilment of its promises in regard to prayer. In the names of father and child he has the pledge
857 that his petitions will be granted.

858
859 This is the one chief thought on which Jesus dwells here, and which He would have all His
860 scholars take in. He would have us see that the secret of effectual prayer is: to have the heart
861 filled with the Father-love of God. It is not enough for us to know that God is a Father: He
862 would have us take time to come under the full impression of what that name implies. We must
863 take the best earthly father we know; we must think of the tenderness and love with which he
864 regards the request of his child, the love and joy with which he grants every reasonable desire;
865 we must then, as we think in adoring worship of the infinite Love and Fatherliness of God,
866 consider with how much more tenderness and joy He sees us come to Him, and gives us what
867 we ask aright. And then, when we see how much this Divine arithmetic is beyond our
868 comprehension, and feel how impossible it is for us to apprehend God's readiness to hear us,
869 then He would have us come and open our heart for the Holy Spirit to shed abroad God's
870 Father-love there. Let us do this not only when we want to pray, but let us yield heart and life to
871 dwell in that love. The child who only wants to know the love of the father when he has
872 something to ask, will be disappointed. But he who lets God be Father always and in everything,
873 who would fain live his whole life in the Father's presence and love, who allows God in all the
874 greatness of His love to be a Father to him, oh! he will experience most gloriously that a life in
875 God's infinite Fatherliness and continual answers to prayer are inseparable.

876
877 Beloved fellow-disciple! we begin to see what the reason is that we know so little of daily
878 answers to prayer, and what the chief lesson is which the Lord has for us in His school. It is all
879 in the name of Father. We thought of new and deeper insight into some of the mysteries of the

880 prayer-world as what we should get in Christ's school; He tells us the first is the highest lesson;
881 we must learn to say well, Abba, Father!' Our Father which art in heaven.' He that can say this,
882 has the key to all prayer. In all the compassion with which a father listens to his weak or sickly
883 child, in all the joy with which he hears his stammering child, in all the gentle patience with
884 which he bears with a thoughtless child, we must, as in so many mirrors, study the heart of our
885 Father, until every prayer be borne upward on the faith of this Divine word: How much more
886 shall your heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask Him.'

887

888 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

889

890

891

892 Blessed Lord! Thou knowest that this, though it be one of the first and simplest and most
893 glorious lessons in Thy school, is to our hearts one of the hardest to learn: we know so little of
894 the love of the Father. Lord! teach us so to live with the Father that His love may be to us nearer,
895 clearer, dearer, than the love of any earthly father. And let the assurance of His hearing our
896 prayer be as much greater than the confidence in an earthly parent, as the heavens are higher
897 than earth, as God is infinitely greater than man. Lord! show us that it is only our unchildlike
898 distance from the Father that hinders the answer to prayer, and lead us on to the true life of
899 God's children. Lord Jesus! it is fatherlike love that wakens childlike trust. O reveal to us the
900 Father, and His tender, pitying love, that we may become childlike, and experience how in the
901 child-life lies the power of prayer.

902

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

909

910 NOTE.^1

911

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

918

919 Now open the ears of the heart, timid child of God; let it go sinking right down into the inner
920 most depths of the soul. Here is the starting-point of holiness, in the love and patience and pity
921 of our heavenly Father. We have not to learn to be holy as a hard lesson at school, that we may
922 make God think well of us; we are to learn it at home with the Father to help us. God loves you
923 not because you are clever not because you are good, but because He is your Father. The Cross
924 of Christ does not make God love us; it is the outcome and measure of His love to us. He loves
925 all His children, the clumsiest, the dullest, the worst of His children. His love lies at the back of
926 everything, and we must get upon that as the solid foundation of our religious life, not growing
927 up into that, but growing up out of it. We must begin there or our beginning will come to
928 nothing. Do take hold of this mightily. We must go out of ourselves for any hope, or any
929 strength, or any confidence. And what hope, what strength, what confidence may be ours now
930 that we begin here, your Father which is in heaven!

931

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

939
940 Here we are to begin, in the patient love of our Father. Think how He knows us apart and by
941 ourselves, in all our peculiarities, and in all our weaknesses and difficulties. The master judges
942 by the result, but our Father judges by the effort. Failure does not always mean fault. He knows
943 how much things cost, and weighs them where others only measure. YOUR FATHER. Think
944 how great store His love sets by the poor beginnings of the little ones, clumsy and unmeaning as
945 they may be to others. All this lies in this blessed relationship and infinitely more. Do not fear to
946 take it all as your own.

947
948 ^1From Thoughts on Holiness, by Mark Guy Pearse. What is so beautifully said of the
949 knowledge of God's Fatherliness as the starting-point of holiness is no less true of prayer.

950
951

952

953 SEVENTH LESSON.

954

955 How much more the Holy Spirit;

956

957 Or, The All-Comprehensive Gift.

958

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

961

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

969

970 The unspeakable worth of this gift we can easily understand. Jesus spoke of the Spirit as the
971 promise of the Father;' the one promise in which God's Fatherhood revealed itself. The best gift
972 a good and wise father can bestow on a child on earth is his own spirit. This is the great object of
973 a father in education—to reproduce in his child his own disposition and character. If the child is
974 to know and understand his father; if, as he grows up, he is to enter into all his will and plans; if
975 he is to have his highest joy in the father, and the father in him,—he must be of one mind and
976 spirit with him. And so it is impossible to conceive of God bestowing any higher gift on His
977 child than this, His own Spirit. God is what He is through His Spirit; the Spirit is the very life of
978 God. Just think what it means—God giving His own Spirit to His child on earth.

979

980 Or was not this the glory of Jesus as a Son upon earth, that the Spirit of the Father was in Him?
981 At His baptism in Jordan the two things were united,—the voice, proclaiming Him the Beloved
982 Son, and the Spirit, descending upon Him. And so the apostle says of us, Because ye are sons,
983 God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' A king seeks in the

984 whole education of his son to call forth in him a kingly spirit. Our Father in heaven desires to
985 educate us as His children for the holy, heavenly life in which He dwells, and for this gives us,
986 from the depths of His heart, His own Spirit. It was this which was the whole aim of Jesus when,
987 after having made atonement with His own blood, He entered for us into God's presence, that
988 He might obtain for us, and send down to dwell in us, the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of the
989 Father, and of the Son, the whole life and love of the Father and the Son are in Him; and,
990 coming down into us, He lifts us up into their fellowship. As Spirit of the Father, He sheds
991 abroad the Father's love, with which He loved the Son, in our hearts, and teaches us to live in it.
992 As Spirit of the Son, He breathes in us the childlike liberty, and devotion, and obedience in
993 which the Son lived upon earth. The Father can bestow no higher or more wonderful gift than
994 this: His own Holy Spirit, the Spirit of sonship.

995
996 This truth naturally suggests the thought that this first and chief gift of God must be the first and
997 chief object of all prayer. For every need of the spiritual life this is the one thing needful, the
998 Holy Spirit. All the fulness is in Jesus; the fulness of grace and truth, out of which we receive
999 grace for grace. The Holy Spirit is the appointed conveyancer, whose special work it is to make
1000 Jesus and all there is in Him for us ours in personal appropriation, in blessed experience. He is
1001 the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; as wonderful as the life is, so wonderful is the provision by
1002 which such an agent is provided to communicate it to us. If we but yield ourselves entirely to the
1003 disposal of the Spirit, and let Him have His way with us, He will manifest the life of Christ
1004 within us. He will do this with a Divine power, maintaining the life of Christ in us in
1005 uninterrupted continuity. Surely, if there is one prayer that should draw us to the Father's throne
1006 and keep us there, it is this: for the Holy Spirit, whom we as children have received, to stream
1007 into us and out from us in greater fulness.

1008
1009 In the variety of the gifts which the Spirit has to dispense, He meets the believer's every need.
1010 Just think of the names He bears. The Spirit of grace, to reveal and impart all of grace there is in
1011 Jesus. The Spirit of faith, teaching us to begin and go on and increase in ever believing. The
1012 Spirit of adoption and assurance, who witnesses that we are God's children, and inspires the
1013 confiding and confident Abba, Father! The Spirit of truth, to lead into all truth, to make each
1014 word of God ours in deed and in truth. The Spirit of prayer, through whom we speak with the
1015 Father; prayer that must be heard. The Spirit of judgment and burning, to search the heart, and
1016 convince of sin. The Spirit of holiness, manifesting and communicating the Father's holy
1017 presence within us. The Spirit of power, through whom we are strong to testify boldly and work
1018 effectually in the Father's service. The Spirit of glory, the pledge of our inheritance, the
1019 preparation and the foretaste of the glory to come. Surely the child of God needs but one thing to
1020 be able really to live as a child: it is, to be filled with this Spirit.

1021
1022 And now, the lesson Jesus teaches us today in His school is this: That the Father is just longing
1023 to give Him to us if we will but ask in the childlike dependence on what He says: 'If ye know to
1024 give good gifts unto your children, HOW MUCH MORE shall your heavenly Father give the
1025 Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.' In the words of God's promise, 'I will pour out my Spirit
1026 abundantly;' and of His command, 'Be ye filled with the Spirit' we have the measure of what
1027 God is ready to give, and what we may obtain. As God's children, we have already received the
1028 Spirit. But we still need to ask and pray for His special gifts and operations as we require them.
1029 And not only this, but for Himself to take complete and entire possession; for His unceasing
1030 momentary guidance. Just as the branch, already filled with the sap of the vine, is ever crying for
1031 the continued and increasing flow of that sap, that it may bring its fruit to perfection, so the
1032 believer, rejoicing in the possession of the Spirit, ever thirsts and cries for more. And what the
1033 great Teacher would have us learn is, that nothing less than God's promise and God's command
1034 may be the measure of our expectation and our prayer; we must be filled abundantly. He would

1035 have us ask this in the assurance that the wonderful HOW MUCH MORE of God's Father-love
1036 is the pledge that, when we ask, we do most certainly receive.

1037
1038 Let us now believe this. As we pray to be filled with the Spirit, let us not seek for the answer in
1039 our feelings. All spiritual blessings must be received, that is, accepted or taken in faith.^1 Let
1040 me believe, the Father gives the Holy Spirit to His praying child. Even now, while I pray, I must
1041 say in faith: I have what I ask, the fulness of the Spirit is mine. Let us continue steadfast in this
1042 faith. On the strength of God's Word we know that we have what we ask. Let us, with
1043 thanksgiving that we have been heard, with thanksgiving for what we have received and taken
1044 and now hold as ours, continue steadfast in believing prayer that the blessing, which has already
1045 been given us, and which we hold in faith, may break through and fill our whole being. It is in
1046 such believing thanksgiving and prayer, that our soul opens up for the Spirit to take entire and
1047 undisturbed possession. It is such prayer that not only asks and hopes, but takes and holds, that
1048 inherits the full blessing. In all our prayer let us remember the lesson the Saviour would teach us
1049 this day, that, if there is one thing on earth we can be sure of, it is this, that the Father desires to
1050 have us filled with His Spirit, that He delights to give us His Spirit.

1051
1052 And when once we have learned thus to believe for ourselves, and each day to take out of the
1053 treasure we hold in heaven, what liberty and power to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit on
1054 the Church of God, on all flesh, on individuals, or on special efforts! He that has once learned to
1055 know the Father in prayer for himself, learns to pray most confidently for others too. The Father
1056 gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him, not least, but most, when they ask for others.

1057
1058 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1059
1060
1061
1062 Father in heaven! Thou didst send Thy Son to reveal Thyself to us, Thy Father-love, and all that
1063 that love has for us. And He has taught us, that the gift above all gifts which Thou wouldst
1064 bestow in answer to prayer is, the Holy Spirit.

1065
1066 O my Father! I come to Thee with this prayer; there is nothing I would—may I not say, I do—
1067 desire so much as to be filled with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. The blessings He brings are so
1068 unspeakable, and just what I need. He sheds abroad Thy love in the heart, and fills it with Thy
1069 self. I long for this. He breathes the mind and life of Christ in me, so that I live as He did, in and
1070 for the Father's love. I long for this. He endues with power from on high for all my walk and
1071 work. I long for this. O Father! I beseech Thee, give me this day the fulness of Thy Spirit.

1072
1073 Father! I ask this, resting on the words of my Lord: HOW MUCH MORE THE HOLY SPIRIT.'
1074 I do believe that Thou hearest my prayer; I receive now what I ask; Father! I claim and I take it:
1075 the fulness of Thy Spirit is mine. I receive the gift this day again as a faith gift; in faith I reckon
1076 my Father works through the Spirit all He has promised. The Father delights to breathe His
1077 Spirit into His waiting child as He tarries in fellowship with Himself. Amen.

1078
1079 ^1The Greek word for receiving and taking is the same. When Jesus said, Everyone that asketh
1080 receiveth,' He used the same verb as at the Supper, Take, eat,' or on the resurrection morning,
1081 Receive,' accept, take, the Holy Spirit.' Receiving not only implies God's bestowment, but our
1082 acceptance.

1083
1084
1085
1086

1087 EIGHTH LESSON.

1088

1089 Because of his importunity;’

1090

1091 Or, The Boldness of God’s Friends.

1092

1093 And He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and
1094 say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and
1095 I have nothing to set before him’ and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the
1096 door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto
1097 you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity
1098 he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.’—Luke xi. 5-8.

1099

1100 THE first teaching to His disciples was given by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. It was
1101 near a year later that the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. In answer He gave them a
1102 second time the Lord’s Prayer, so teaching them what to pray. He then speaks of how they ought
1103 to pray, and repeats what he formerly said of God’s Fatherliness and the certainty of an answer.
1104 But in between He adds the beautiful parable of the friend at midnight, to teach them the two
1105 fold lesson, that God does not only want us to pray for ourselves, but for the perishing around
1106 us, and that in such intercession great boldness of entreaty is often needful, and always lawful,
1107 yea, pleasing to God.

1108

1109 The parable is a perfect storehouse of instruction in regard to true intercession. There is, first, the
1110 love which seeks to help the needy around us: my friend is come to me.’ Then the need which
1111 urges to the cry I have nothing to set before him.’ Then follows the confidence that help is to be
1112 had: which of you shall have a friend, and say, Friend, lend me three loaves.’ Then comes the
1113 unexpected refusal: I cannot rise and give thee.’ Then again the perseverance that takes no
1114 refusal: because of his importunity.’ And lastly, the reward of such prayer: he will give him as
1115 many as he needeth.’ A wonderful setting forth of the way of prayer and faith in which the
1116 blessing of God has so often been sought and found.

1117

1118 Let us confine ourselves to the chief thought: prayer as an appeal to the friendship of God; and
1119 we shall find that two lessons are specially suggested. The one, that if we are God’s friends, and
1120 come as such to Him, we must prove ourselves the friends of the needy; God’s friendship to us
1121 and ours to others go hand in hand. The other, that when we come thus we may use the utmost
1122 liberty in claiming an answer.

1123

1124 There is a twofold use of prayer: the one, to obtain strength and blessing for our own life; the
1125 other, the higher, the true glory of prayer, for which Christ has taken us into His fellowship and
1126 teaching, is intercession, where prayer is the royal power a child of God exercises in heaven on
1127 behalf of others and even of the kingdom. We see it in Scripture, how it was in intercession for
1128 others that Abraham and Moses, Samuel and Elijah, with all the holy men of old, proved that
1129 they had power with God and prevailed. It is when we give ourselves to be a blessing that we
1130 can specially count on the blessing of God. It is when we draw near to God as the friend of the
1131 poor and the perishing that we may count on His friendliness; the righteous man who is the
1132 friend of the poor is very specially the friend of God. This gives wonderful liberty in prayer.
1133 Lord! I have a needy friend whom I must help. As a friend I have undertaken to help him. In
1134 Thee I have a Friend, whose kindness and riches I know to be infinite: I am sure Thou wilt give
1135 me what I ask. If I, being evil, am ready to do for my friend what I can, how much more wilt
1136 Thou, O my heavenly Friend, now do for Thy friend what he asks?

1137

1138 The question might suggest itself, whether the Fatherhood of God does not give such confidence
1139 in prayer, that the thought of His Friendship can hardly teach us anything more: a father is more
1140 than a friend. And yet, if we consider it, this pleading the friendship of God opens new wonders
1141 to us. That a child obtains what he asks of his father looks so perfectly natural, we almost count
1142 it the father's duty to give. But with a friend it is as if the kindness is more free, dependent, not
1143 on nature, but on sympathy and character. And then the relation of a child is more that of perfect
1144 dependence; two friends are more nearly on a level. And so our Lord, in seeking to unfold to us
1145 the spiritual mystery of prayer, would fain have us approach God in this relation too, as those
1146 whom He has acknowledged as His friends, whose mind and life are in sympathy with His.

1147
1148 But then we must be living as His friends. I am still a child even when a wanderer; but
1149 friendship depends upon the conduct. Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.'
1150 Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the
1151 scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and he was called the friend of
1152 God.' It is the Spirit, the same Spirit,' that leads us that also bears witness to our acceptance
1153 with God; likewise, also,' the same Spirit helpeth us in prayer. It is a life as the friend of God
1154 that gives the wonderful liberty to say: I have a friend to whom I can go even at midnight. And
1155 how much more when I go in the very spirit of that friendliness, manifesting myself the very
1156 kindness I look for in God, seeking to help my friend as I want God to help me. When I come to
1157 God in prayer, He always looks to what the aim is of my petition. If it be merely for my own
1158 comfort or joy I seek His grace, I do not receive. But if I can say that it is that He may be
1159 glorified in my dispensing His blessings to others, I shall not ask in vain. Or if I ask for others,
1160 but want to wait until God has made me so rich, that it is no sacrifice or act of faith to aid them, I
1161 shall not obtain. But if I can say that I have already undertaken for my needy friend, that in my
1162 poverty I have already begun the work of love, because I know I had a friend Who would help
1163 me, my prayer will be heard. Oh, we know not how much the plea avails: the friendship of earth
1164 looking in its need to the friendship of heaven: He will give him as much as he needeth.'

1165
1166 But not always at once. The one thing by which man can honour and enjoy his God is faith.
1167 Intercession is part of faith's training-school. There our friendship with men and with God is
1168 tested. There it is seen whether my friendship with the needy is so real, that I will take time and
1169 sacrifice my rest, will go even at midnight and not cease until I have obtained for them what I
1170 need. There it is seen whether my friendship with God is so clear, that I can depend on Him not
1171 to turn me away and therefore pray on until He gives.

1172
1173 O what a deep heavenly mystery this is of persevering prayer. The God who has promised, who
1174 longs, whose fixed purpose it is to give the blessing, holds it back. It is to Him a matter of such
1175 deep importance that His friends on earth should know and fully trust their rich Friend in
1176 heaven, that He trains them, in the school of answer delayed, to find out how their perseverance
1177 really does prevail, and what the mighty power is they can wield in heaven, if they do but set
1178 themselves to it. There is a faith that sees the promise, and embraces it, and yet does not receive
1179 it (Heb. xi. 13, 39). It is when the answer to prayer does not come, and the promise we are most
1180 firmly trusting appears to be of none effect, that the trial of faith, more precious than of gold,
1181 takes place. It is in this trial that the faith that has embraced the promise is purified and
1182 strengthened and prepared in personal, holy fellowship with the living God, to see the glory of
1183 God. It takes and holds the promise until it has received the fulfilment of what it had claimed in
1184 a living truth in the unseen but living God.

1185
1186 Let each child of God who is seeking to work the work of love in his Father's service take
1187 courage. The parent with his child, the teacher with his class, the visitor with his district, the
1188 Bible reader with his circle, the preacher with his hearers, each one who, in his little circle, has
1189 accepted and is bearing the burden of hungry, perishing souls,—let them all take courage.

1190 Nothing is at first so strange to us as that God should really require persevering prayer, that there
1191 should be a real spiritual needs-be for importunity. To teach it us, the Master uses this almost
1192 strange parable. If the unfriendliness of a selfish earthly friend can be conquered by importunity,
1193 how much more will it avail with the heavenly Friend, who does so love to give, but is held back
1194 by our spiritual unfitness, our incapacity to possess what He has to give. O let us thank Him that
1195 in delaying His answer He is educating us up to our true position and the exercise of all our
1196 power with Him, training us to live with Him in the fellowship of undoubting faith and trust, to
1197 be indeed the friends of God. And let us hold fast the threefold cord that cannot be broken: the
1198 hungry friend needing the help, and the praying friend seeking the help, and the Mighty Friend,
1199 loving to give as much as he needeth.

1200
1201 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

1202
1203
1204

1205 O my Blessed Lord and Teacher! I must come to Thee in prayer. Thy teaching is so glorious,
1206 and yet too high for me to grasp. I must confess that my heart is too little to take in these
1207 thoughts of the wonderful boldness I may use with Thy Father as my Friend. Lord Jesus! I trust
1208 Thee to give me Thy Spirit with Thy Word, and to make the Word quick and powerful in my
1209 heart. I desire to keep Thy Word of this day: Because of his importunity he will give him as
1210 many as he needeth.’

1211

1212 Lord! teach me more to know the power of persevering prayer. I know that in it the Father suits
1213 Himself to our need of time for the inner life to attain its growth and ripeness, so that His grace
1214 may indeed be assimilated and made our very own. I know that He would fain thus train us to
1215 the exercise of that strong faith that does not let Him go even in the face of seeming
1216 disappointment. I know He wants to lift us to that wonderful liberty, in which we understand
1217 how really He has made the dispensing of His gift dependent on our prayer. Lord! I know this:
1218 O teach me to see it in spirit and truth.

1219

1220 And may it now be the joy of my life to become the almoner of my Rich Friend in heaven, to
1221 care for all the hungry and perishing, even at midnight, because I know MY FRIEND, who
1222 always gives to him who perseveres, because of his importunity, as many as he needeth. Amen.

1223

1224

1225

1226 NINTH LESSON.

1227

1228 Pray the Lord of the harvest;’

1229

1230 Or, Prayer provides Labourers.

1231

1232 Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray
1233 ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.’—Matt.
1234 ix. 37-38.

1235

1236 THE Lord frequently taught His disciples that they must pray, and how; but seldom what to
1237 pray. This he left to their sense of need, and the leading of the Spirit. But here we have one thing
1238 He expressly enjoins them to remember: in view of the plenteous harvest, and the need of
1239 reapers, they must cry to the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers. Just as in the parable of
1240 the friend at midnight, He would have them understand that prayer is not to be selfish; so here it
1241 is the power through which blessing can come to others. The Father is Lord of the harvest; when

1242 we pray for the Holy Spirit, we must pray for Him to prepare and send forth labourers for the
1243 work.

1244

1245 Strange, is it not, that He should ask His disciples to pray for this? And could He not pray
1246 Himself? And would not one prayer of His avail more than a thousand of theirs? And God, the
1247 Lord of the harvest, did He not see the need? And would not He, in His own good time, send
1248 forth labourers without their prayer? Such questions lead us up to the deepest mysteries of
1249 prayer, and its power in the Kingdom of God. The answer to such questions will convince us
1250 that prayer is indeed a power, on which the ingathering of the harvest and the coming of the
1251 Kingdom do in very truth depend.

1252

1253 Prayer is no form or show. The Lord Jesus was Himself the truth; everything He spake was the
1254 deepest truth. It was when (see ver. 36) He saw the multitude, and was moved with compassion
1255 on them, because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd,' that He called on
1256 the disciples to pray for labourers to be sent among them. He did so because He really believed
1257 that their prayer was needed, and would help. The veil which so hides the invisible world from
1258 us was wonderfully transparent to the holy human soul of Jesus. He had looked long and deep
1259 and far into the hidden connection of cause and effect in the spirit world. He had marked in
1260 God's Word how, when God called men like Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Samuel and
1261 Daniel, and given them authority over men in His name, He had at the same time given them
1262 authority and right to call in the powers of heaven to their aid as they needed them. He knew that
1263 as to these men of old, and to Himself for a time, here upon earth, the work of God had been
1264 entrusted, so it was now about to pass over into the hands of His disciples. He knew that when
1265 this work should be given in charge to them, it would not be a mere matter of form or show, but
1266 that on them, and their being faithful or unfaithful, the success of the work would actually
1267 depend. As a single individual, within the limitations of a human body and a human life, Jesus
1268 feels how little a short visit can accomplish among these wandering sheep He sees around Him,
1269 and He longs for help to have them properly cared for. And so He tells His disciples now to
1270 begin and pray, and, when they have taken over the work from Him on earth, to make this one of
1271 the chief petitions in their prayer: That the Lord of the harvest Himself would send forth
1272 labourers into His harvest. The God who entrusted them with the work, and made it to so large
1273 extent dependent on them, gives them authority to apply to Him for labourers to help, and makes
1274 the supply dependent on their prayer.

1275

1276 How little Christians really feel and mourn the need of labourers in the fields of the world so
1277 white to the harvest. And how little they believe that our labour-supply depends on prayer, that
1278 prayer will really provide as many as he needeth.' Not that the dearth of labour is not known or
1279 discussed. Not that efforts are not sometimes put forth to supply the want. But how little the
1280 burden of the sheep wandering without a Shepherd is really borne in the faith that the Lord of
1281 the harvest will, in answer to prayer, send forth the labourers, and in the solemn conviction that
1282 without this prayer fields ready for reaping will be left to perish. And yet it is so. So wonderful
1283 is the surrender of His work into the hands of His Church, so dependent has the Lord made
1284 Himself on them as His body, through whom alone His work can be done, so real is the power
1285 which the Lord gives His people to exercise in heaven and earth, that the number of the
1286 labourers and the measure of the harvest does actually depend upon their prayer.

1287

1288 Solemn thought! O why is it that we do not obey the injunction of the Master more heartily, and
1289 cry more earnestly for labourers? There are two reasons for this. The one is: We miss the
1290 compassion of Jesus, which gave rise to this request for prayer. When believers learn that to love
1291 their neighbours as themselves, that to live entirely for God's glory in their fellow-men, is the
1292 Father's first commandment to His redeemed ones, they will accept of the perishing ones as the
1293 charge entrusted to them by their Lord. And, accepting them not only as a field of labour, but as

1294 the objects of loving care and interest, it will not be long before compassion towards the
1295 hopelessly perishing will touch their heart, and the cry ascend with an earnestness till then
1296 unknown: Lord! send labourers. The other reason for the neglect of the command, the want of
1297 faith, will then make itself felt, but will be overcome as our pity pleads for help. We believe too
1298 little in the power of prayer to bring about definite results. We do not live close enough to God,
1299 and are not enough entirely given up to His service and Kingdom, to be capable of the
1300 confidence that He will give it in answer to our prayer. O let us pray for a life so one with Christ,
1301 that His compassion may stream into us, and His Spirit be able to assure us that our prayer
1302 avails.

1303
1304 Such prayer will ask and obtain a twofold blessing. There will first be the desire for the increase
1305 of men entirely given up to the service of God. It is a terrible blot upon the Church of Christ that
1306 there are times when actually men cannot be found for the service of the Master as ministers,
1307 missionaries, or teachers of God's Word. As God's children make this a matter of supplication
1308 for their own circle or Church, it will be given. The Lord Jesus is now Lord of the harvest. He
1309 has been exalted to bestow gifts—the gifts of the Spirit. His chief gifts are men filled with the
1310 Spirit. But the supply and distribution of the gifts depend on the co-operation of Head and
1311 members. It is just prayer will lead to such co-operation; the believing suppliants will be stirred
1312 to find the men and the means for the work.

1313
1314 The other blessing to be asked will not be less. Every believer is a labourer; not one of God's
1315 children who has not been redeemed for service, and has not his work waiting. It must be our
1316 prayer that the Lord would so fill all His people with the spirit of devotion, that not one may be
1317 found standing idle in the vineyard. Wherever there is a complaint of the want of helpers, or of
1318 fit helpers in God's work, prayer has the promise of a supply. There is no Sunday school or
1319 district visiting, no Bible reading or rescue work, where God is not ready and able to provide. It
1320 may take time and importunity, but the command of Christ to ask the Lord of the harvest is the
1321 pledge that the prayer will be heard: I say unto you, he will arise and give him as many as he
1322 needeth.'

1323
1324 Solemn, blessed thought! this power has been given us in prayer to provide in the need of the
1325 world, to secure the servants for God's work. The Lord of the harvest will hear. Christ, who
1326 called us so specially to pray thus, will support our prayers offered in His name and interest. Let
1327 us set apart time and give ourselves to this part of our intercessory work. It will lead us into the
1328 fellowship of that compassionate heart of His that led Him to call for our prayers. It will elevate
1329 us to the insight of our regal position, as those whose will counts for something with the great
1330 God in the advancement of His Kingdom. It will make us feel how really we are God's fellow-
1331 workers on earth, to whom a share in His work has in downright earnest been entrusted. It will
1332 make us partakers in the soul travail, but also in the soul satisfaction of Jesus, as we know how,
1333 in answer to our prayer, blessing has been given that otherwise would not have come.

1334
1335 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1336
1337
1338
1339 Blessed Lord! Thou hast this day again given us another of Thy wondrous lessons to learn. We
1340 humbly ask Thee, O give us to see aright the spiritual realities of which Thou hast been
1341 speaking. There is the harvest which is so large, and perishing, as it waits for sleepy disciples to
1342 give the signal for labourers to come. Lord, teach us to look out upon it with a heart moved with
1343 compassion and pity. There are the labourers, so few. Lord, show us how terrible the sin of the
1344 want of prayer and faith, of which this is the token. And there is the Lord of the harvest, so able
1345 and ready to send them forth. Lord, show us how He does indeed wait for the prayer to which

1346 He has bound His answer. And there are the disciples, to whom the commission to pray has been
1347 given: Lord, show us how Thou canst pour down Thy Spirit and breathe upon them, so that Thy
1348 compassion and the faith in Thy promise shall rouse them to unceasing, prevailing prayer.

1349
1350 O our Lord! we cannot understand how Thou canst entrust such work and give such power to
1351 men so slothful and unfaithful. We thank Thee for all whom Thou art teaching to cry day and
1352 night for labourers to be sent forth. Lord, breathe Thine own Spirit on all Thy children, that they
1353 may learn to live for this one thing alone—the Kingdom and glory of their Lord—and become
1354 fully awake to the faith of what their prayer can accomplish. And let all our hearts in this, as in
1355 every petition, be filled with the assurance that prayer, offered in loving faith in the living God,
1356 will bring certain and abundant answer. Amen.

1357

1358

1359

1360 TENTH LESSON.

1361

1362 What wilt thou?’

1363

1364 Or, Prayer must be Definite.

1365

1366 And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’—Mark x. 51;
1367 Luke xviii. 41.

1368

1369 THE blind man had been crying out aloud, and that a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy
1370 on me.’ The cry had reached the ear of the Lord; He knew what he wanted, and was ready to
1371 grant it him. But ere He does it, He asks him: What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?’ He
1372 wants to hear from his own lips, not only the general petition for mercy, but the distinct
1373 expression of what his desire was. Until he speaks it out, he is not healed.

1374

1375 There is now still many a suppliant to whom the Lord puts the same question, and who cannot,
1376 until it has been answered, get the aid he ask. Our prayers must not be a vague appeal to His
1377 mercy, an indefinite cry for blessing, but the distinct expression of definite need. Not that His
1378 loving heart does not understand our cry, or is not ready to hear. But He desires it for our own
1379 sakes. Such definite prayer teaches us to know our own needs better. It demands time, and
1380 thought, and self-scrutiny to find out what really is our greatest need. It searches us and puts us
1381 to the test as to whether our desires are honest and real, such as we are ready to persevere in. It
1382 leads us to judge whether our desires are according to God’s Word, and whether we really
1383 believe that we shall receive the things we ask. It helps us to wait for the special answer, and to
1384 mark it when it comes.

1385

1386 And yet how much of our prayer is vague and pointless. Some cry for mercy, but take not the
1387 trouble to know what mercy must do for them. Others ask, perhaps, to be delivered from sin, but
1388 do not begin by bringing any sin by name from which the deliverance may be claimed. Still
1389 others pray for God’s blessing on those around them, for the outpouring of God’s Spirit on their
1390 land or the world, and yet have no special field where they wait and expect to see the answer. To
1391 all the Lord says: And what is it now you really want and expect Me to do? Every Christian has
1392 but limited powers, and as he must have his own special field of labour in which he works, so
1393 with his prayers too. Each believer has his own circle, his family, his friends, his neighbours. If
1394 he were to take one or more of these by name, he would find that this really brings him into the
1395 training-school of faith, and leads to personal and pointed dealing with his God. It is when in
1396 such distinct matters we have in faith claimed and received answers, that our more general
1397 prayers will be believing and effectual.

1398
1399 We all know with what surprise the whole civilised world heard of the way in which trained
1400 troops were repulsed by the Transvaal Boers at Majuba. And to what did they owe their success?
1401 In the armies of Europe the soldier fires upon the enemy standing in large masses, and never
1402 thinks of seeking an aim for every bullet. In hunting game the Boer had learnt a different lesson:
1403 his practised eye knew to send every bullet on its special message, to seek and find its man. Such
1404 aiming must gain the day in the spiritual world too. As long as in prayer we just pour out our
1405 hearts in a multitude of petitions, without taking time to see whether every petition is sent with
1406 the purpose and expectation of getting an answer, not many will reach the mark. But if, as in
1407 silence of soul we bow before the Lord, we were to ask such questions as these: What is now
1408 really my desire? do I desire it in faith, expecting to receive? am I now ready to place and leave
1409 it in the Father's bosom? is it a settled thing between God and me that I am to have the answer?
1410 we should learn so to pray that God would see and we would know what we really expect.
1411

1412 It is for this, among other reasons, that the Lord warns us against the vain repetitions of the
1413 Gentiles, who think to be heard for their much praying. We often hear prayers of great
1414 earnestness and fervour, in which a multitude of petitions are poured forth, but to which the
1415 Saviour would undoubtedly answer 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' If I am in a
1416 strange land, in the interests of the business which my father owns, I would certainly write two
1417 different sorts of letters. There will be family letters giving expression to all the intercourse to
1418 which affection prompts; and there will be business letters, containing orders for what I need.
1419 And there may be letters in which both are found. The answers will correspond to the letters. To
1420 each sentence of the letters containing the family news I do not expect a special answer. But for
1421 each order I send I am confident of an answer whether the desired article has been forwarded. In
1422 our dealings with God the business element must not be wanting. With our expression of need
1423 and sin, of love and faith and consecration, there must be the pointed statement of what we ask
1424 and expect to receive; it is in the answer that the Father loves to give us the token of His
1425 approval and acceptance.
1426

1427 But the word of the Master teaches us more. He does not say, 'What dost thou wish?' but, 'What
1428 does thou will?' One often wishes for a thing without willing it. I wish to have a certain article,
1429 but I find the price too high; I resolve not to take it; I wish, but do not will to have it. The
1430 sluggard wishes to be rich, but does not will it. Many a one wishes to be saved, but perishes
1431 because he does not will it. The will rules the whole heart and life; if I really will to have
1432 anything that is within my reach, I do not rest till I have it. And so, when Jesus says to us, 'What
1433 wilt thou?' He asks whether it is indeed our purpose to have what we ask at any price, however
1434 great the sacrifice. Dost thou indeed so will to have it that, though He delay it long, thou dost not
1435 hold thy peace till He hear thee? Alas! how many prayers are wishes, sent up for a short time
1436 and then forgotten, or sent up year after year as matter of duty, while we rest content with the
1437 prayer without the answer.
1438

1439 But, it may be asked, is it not best to make our wishes known to God, and then to leave it to Him
1440 to decide what is best, without seeking to assert our will? By no means. This is the very essence
1441 of the prayer of faith, to which Jesus sought to train His disciples, that it does not only make
1442 known its desire and then leave the decision to God. That would be the prayer of submission, for
1443 cases in which we cannot know God's will. But the prayer of faith, finding God's will in some
1444 promise of the Word, pleads for that till it come. In Matthew (ix. 28) we read Jesus said to the
1445 blind man: 'Believe ye that I can do this?' Here, in Mark, He says: 'What wilt thou that I should
1446 do?' In both cases He said that faith had saved them. And so He said to the Syrophenician
1447 woman, too: 'Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Faith is nothing but the
1448 purpose of the will resting on God's word, and saying: 'I must have it. To believe truly is to will
1449 firmly.

1450
1451 But is not such a will at variance with our dependence on God and our submission to Him? By
1452 no means; it is much rather the true submission that honours God. It is only when the child has
1453 yielded his own will in entire surrender to the Father, that he receives from the Father liberty and
1454 power to will what he would have. But, when once the believer has accepted the will of God, as
1455 revealed through the Word and Spirit, as his will, too, then it is the will of God that His child
1456 should use this renewed will in His service. The will is the highest power in the soul; grace
1457 wants above everything to sanctify and restore this will, one of the chief traits of God's image,
1458 to full and free exercise. As a son, who only lives for his father's interests, who seeks not his
1459 own but his father's will is trusted by the father with his business, so God speaks to His child in
1460 all truth, What wilt thou?' It is often spiritual sloth that, under the appearance of humility,
1461 professes to have no will, because it fears the trouble of searching out the will of God, or, when
1462 found, the struggle of claiming it in faith. True humility is ever in company with strong faith,
1463 which only seeks to know what is according to the will of God, and then boldly claims the
1464 fulfilment of the promise: Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

1465
1466 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1467
1468
1469
1470 Lord Jesus! teach me to pray with all my heart and strength, that there may be no doubt with
1471 Thee or with me as to what I have asked. May I so know what I desire that, even as my petitions
1472 are recorded in heaven, I can record them on earth too, and note each answer as it comes. And
1473 may my faith in what Thy Word has promised be so clear that the Spirit may indeed work in me
1474 the liberty to will that it shall come. Lord! renew, strengthen, sanctify wholly my will for the
1475 work of effectual prayer.

1476
1477 Blessed Saviour! I do beseech Thee to reveal to me the wonderful condescension Thou showest
1478 us, thus asking us to say what we will that Thou shouldest do, and promising to do whatever we
1479 will. Son of God! I cannot understand it; I can only believe that Thou hast indeed redeemed us
1480 wholly for Thyself, and dost seek to make the will, as our noblest part, Thy most efficient
1481 servant. Lord! I do most unreservedly yield my will to Thee, as the power through which Thy
1482 Spirit is to rule my whole being. Let Him take possession of it, lead it into the truth of Thy
1483 promises, and make it so strong in prayer that I may ever hear Thy voice saying: Great is thy
1484 faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Amen.

1485
1486
1487
1488
1489 ELEVENTH LESSON.

1490
1491 Believe that ye have received;'

1492
1493 Or, The Faith that Takes.

1494
1495 Therefore I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have
1496 received them, and ye shall have them.'—Mark xi. 24

1497
1498 WHAT a promise! so large, so Divine, that our little hearts cannot take it in, and in every
1499 possible way seek to limit it to what we think safe or probable; instead of allowing it, in its
1500 quickening power and energy, just as He gave it, to enter in, and to enlarge our hearts to the
1501 measure of what His love and power are really ready to do for us. Faith is very far from being a

1502 mere conviction of the truth of God's word, or a conclusion drawn from certain premises. It is
1503 the ear which has heard God say what He will do, the eye which has seen Him doing it, and,
1504 therefore, where there is true faith, it is impossible but the answer must come. If we only see to
1505 it that we do the one thing that He asks of us as we pray: BELIEVE that ye have received; He
1506 will see to it that He does the thing He has promised: Ye shall have them.' The key-note of
1507 Solomon's prayer (2 Chron. vi. 4), Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath with His hands
1508 fulfilled that which He spake with His mouth to my father David,' is the key-note of all true
1509 prayer: the joyful adoration of a God whose hand always secures the fulfilment of what His
1510 mouth hath spoken. Let us in this spirit listen to the promise Jesus gives; each part of it has its
1511 Divine message.

1512
1513 All things whatsoever.' At this first word our human wisdom at once begins to doubt and ask:
1514 This surely cannot be literally true? But if it be not, why did the Master speak it, using the very
1515 strongest expression He could find: All things whatsoever.' And it is not as if this were the only
1516 time He spoke thus; is it not He who also said, If thou canst believe, ALL THINGS are possible
1517 to him that believeth;' If ye have faith, NOTHING shall be impossible to you.' Faith is so
1518 wholly the work of God's Spirit through His word in the prepared heart of the believing disciple,
1519 that it is impossible that the fulfilment should not come; faith is the pledge and forerunner of the
1520 coming answer. Yes, ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER ye shall ask in prayer believing, ye
1521 receive.' The tendency of human reason is to interpose here, and with certain qualifying clauses,
1522 if expedient,' if according to God's will,' to break the force of a statement which appears
1523 dangerous. O let us beware of dealing thus with the Master's words. His promise is most
1524 literally true. He wants His oft repeated ALL THINGS' to enter into our hearts, and reveal to us
1525 how mighty the power of faith is, how truly the Head calls the members to share with Him in
1526 His power, how wholly our Father places His power at the disposal of the child that wholly
1527 trusts Him. In this all things' faith is to have its food and strength: as we weaken it we weaken
1528 faith. The WHATSOEVER is unconditional: the only condition is what is implied in the
1529 believing. Ere we can believe we must find out and know what God's will is' believing is the
1530 exercise of a soul surrendered and given up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit; but when
1531 once we do believe nothing shall be impossible. God forbid that we should try and bring down
1532 His ALL THINGS to the level of what we think possible. Let us now simply take Christ's
1533 WHATSOEVER' as the measure and the hope of our faith: it is a seed-word which, if taken just
1534 as He gives it, and kept in the heart, will unfold itself and strike root, fill our life with its fulness,
1535 and bring forth fruit abundantly.

1536
1537 All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for.' It is in prayer that these all things' are to be brought
1538 to God, to be asked and received of Him. The faith that receives them is the fruit of the prayer.
1539 In one aspect there must be faith before there can be prayer; in another the faith is the outcome
1540 and the growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the Saviour, in intercourse with Him,
1541 that faith rises to grasp what at first appeared too high. It is in prayer that we hold up our desire
1542 to the light of God's Holy Will, that our motives are tested, and proof given whether we ask
1543 indeed in the name of Jesus, and only for the glory of God. It is in prayer that we wait for the
1544 leading of the Spirit to show us whether we are asking the right thing and in the right spirit. It is
1545 in prayer that we become conscious of our want of faith, that we are led on to say to the Father
1546 that we do believe, and that we prove the reality of our faith by the confidence with which we
1547 persevere. It is in prayer that Jesus teaches and inspires faith. He that waits to pray, or loses
1548 heart in prayer, because he does not yet feel the faith needed to get the answer, will never learn
1549 to believe. He who begins to pray and ask will find the Spirit of faith is given nowhere so surely
1550 as at the foot of the Throne.

1551
1552 Believe that ye have received.' It is clear that what we are to believe is, that we receive the very
1553 things we ask. The Saviour does not hint that because the Father knows what is best He may

1554 give us something else. The very mountain faith bids depart is cast into the sea. There is a prayer
1555 in which, in everything, we make known our requests with prayer and supplication, and the
1556 reward is the sweet peace of God keeping heart and mind. This is the prayer of trust. It has
1557 reference to things of which we cannot find out if God is going to give them. As children we
1558 make known our desires in the countless things of daily life, and leave it to the Father to give or
1559 not as He thinks best. But the prayer of faith of which Jesus speaks is something different,
1560 something higher. When, whether in the greater interests of the Master's work, or in the lesser
1561 concerns of our daily life, the soul is led to see how there is nothing that so honours the Father
1562 as the faith that is assured that He will do what He has said in giving us whatsoever we ask for,
1563 and takes its stand on the promise as brought home by the Spirit, it may know most certainly
1564 that it does receive exactly what it asks. Just see how clearly the Lord sets this before us in verse
1565 23: Whosoever shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass,
1566 he shall have it.' This is the blessing of the prayer of faith of which Jesus speaks.

1567
1568 Believe that ye have received.' This is the word of central importance, of which the meaning is
1569 too often misunderstood. Believe that you have received! now, while praying, the thing you ask
1570 for. It may only be later that you shall have it in personal experience, that you shall see what you
1571 believe; but now, without seeing, you are to believe that it has been given you of the Father in
1572 heaven. The receiving or accepting of an answer to prayer is just like the receiving or accepting
1573 of Jesus or of pardon, a spiritual thing, an act of faith apart from all feeling. When I come as a
1574 supplicant for pardon, I believe that Jesus in heaven is for me, and so I receive or take Him.
1575 When I come as a supplicant for any special gift, which is according to God's word, I believe
1576 that what I ask is given me: I believe that I have it, I hold it in faith; I thank God that it is mine.
1577 If we know that He heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which
1578 we have asked of Him.'

1579
1580 And ye shall have them.' That is, the gift which we first hold in faith as bestowed upon us in
1581 heaven will also become ours in personal experience. But will it be needful to pray longer if
1582 once we know we have been heard and have received what we asked? There are cases in which
1583 such prayer will not be needful, in which the blessing is ready to break through at once, if we
1584 but hold fast our confidence, and prove our faith by praising for what we have received, in the
1585 face of our not yet having it in experience. There are other cases in which the faith that has
1586 received needs to be still further tried and strengthened in persevering prayer. God only knows
1587 when everything in and around us is fully ripe for the manifestation of the blessing that has been
1588 given to faith. Elijah knew for certain that rain would come; God had promised it; and yet he
1589 had to pray the seven times. And that prayer was no show or play; an intense spiritual reality in
1590 the heart of him who lay pleading there, and in the heaven above where it had its effectual work
1591 to do. It is through faith and patience we inherit the promises.' Faith says most confidently, I
1592 have received it. Patience perseveres in prayer until the gift bestowed in heaven is seen on earth.
1593 Believe that ye have received, and ye shall have.' Between the have received in heaven, and the
1594 shall have of earth, believe: believing praise and prayer is the link.

1595
1596 And now, remember one thing more: It is Jesus who said this. As we see heaven thus opened to
1597 us, and the Father on the Throne offering to give us whatsoever we ask in faith, our hearts feel
1598 full of shame that we have so little availed ourselves of our privilege, and full of fear lest our
1599 feeble faith still fail to grasp what is so clearly placed within our reach. There is one thing must
1600 make us strong and full of hope: it is Jesus who has brought us this message from the Father. He
1601 Himself, when He was on earth, lived the life of faith and prayer. It was when the disciples
1602 expressed their surprise at what He had done to the fig-tree, that He told them that the very same
1603 life He led could be theirs; that they could not only command the fig-tree, but the very mountain,
1604 and it must obey. And He is our life: all He was on earth He is in us now; all He teaches He
1605 really gives. He is Himself the Author and the Perfecter of our faith: He gives the spirit of faith;

1606 let us not be afraid that such faith is not meant for us. It is meant for every child of the Father; it
1607 is within reach of each one who will but be childlike, yielding himself to the Father's Will and
1608 Love, trusting the Father's Word and Power. Dear fellow-Christian! let the thought that this
1609 word comes through Jesus, the Son, our Brother, give us courage, and let our answer be: Yea,
1610 Blessed Lord, we do believe Thy Word, we do believe that we receive.

1611
1612 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1613
1614
1615

1616 Blessed Lord! Thou didst come from the Father to show us all His love, and all the treasures of
1617 blessing that love is waiting to bestow. Lord! Thou hast this day again flung the gates so wide
1618 open, and given us such promises as to our liberty in prayer, that we must blush that our poor
1619 hearts have so little taken it in. It has been too large for us to believe.

1620

1621 Lord! we now look up to Thee to teach us to take and keep and use this precious word of Thine:
1622 All things whatsoever ye ask, believe that ye have received.' Blessed Jesus! it is Thy self in
1623 whom our faith must be rooted if it is to grow strong. Thy work has freed us wholly from the
1624 power of sin, and opened the way to the Father; Thy Love is ever longing to bring us into the
1625 full fellowship of Thy glory and power; Thy Spirit is ever drawing us upward into a life of
1626 perfect faith and confidence; we are assured that in Thy teaching we shall learn to pray the
1627 prayer of faith. Thou wilt train us to pray so that we believe that we receive, to believe that we
1628 really have what we ask. Lord! teach me so to know and trust and love Thee, so to live and abide
1629 in Thee, that all my prayers rise up and come before God in Thee, and that my soul may have in
1630 Thee the assurance that I am heard. Amen.

1631
1632
1633

1634 TWELFTH LESSON.

1635

1636 Have faith in God;'

1637

1638 Or, The Secret of Believing Prayer.

1639

1640 Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not
1641 doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what He saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore
1642 I say unto you, All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them,
1643 and ye shall have them.'—Mark xi. 22-24.

1644

1645 THE promise of answer to prayer which formed our yesterday's lesson is one of the most
1646 wonderful in all Scripture. In how many hearts it has raised the question: How ever can I attain
1647 the faith that knows that it receives all it asks?

1648

1649 It is this question our Lord would answer today. Ere He gave that wonderful promise to His
1650 disciples, He spoke another word, in which He points out where the faith in the answer to prayer
1651 takes its rise, and ever finds its strength. HAVE FAITH IN GOD: this word precedes the other,
1652 Have faith in the promise of an answer to prayer. The power to believe a promise depends
1653 entirely, but only, on faith in the promiser. Trust in the person begets trust in his word. It is only
1654 where we live and associate with God in personal, loving intercourse, where GOD HIMSELF is
1655 all to us, where our whole being is continually opened up and exposed to the mighty influences
1656 that are at work where His Holy Presence is revealed, that the capacity will be developed for
1657 believing that He gives whatsoever we ask.

1658
1659 This connection between faith in God and faith in His promise will become clear to us if we
1660 think what faith really is. It is often compared to the hand or the mouth, by which we take and
1661 appropriate what is offered to us. But it is of importance that we should understand that faith is
1662 also the ear by which I hear what is promised, the eye by which I see what is offered me. On this
1663 the power to take depends. I must hear the person who gives me the promise: the very tone of
1664 his voice gives me courage to believe. I must see him: in the light of his eye and countenance all
1665 fear as to my right to take passes away. The value of the promise depends on the promiser: it is
1666 on my knowledge of what the promiser is that faith in the promise depends.

1667
1668 It is for this reason that Jesus, ere He gives that wonderful prayer-promise, first says, HAVE
1669 FAITH IN GOD.' That is, let thine eye be open to the Living God, and gaze on Him, seeing
1670 Him who is Invisible. It is through the eye that I yield myself to the influence of what is before
1671 me; I just allow it to enter, to exert its influence, to leave its impression upon my mind. So
1672 believing God is just looking to God and what He is, allowing Him to reveal His presence,
1673 giving Him time and yielding the whole being to take in the full impression of what He is as
1674 God, the soul opened up to receive and rejoice in the overshadowing of His love. Yes, faith is
1675 the eye to which God shows what He is and does: through faith the light of His presence and the
1676 workings of His mighty power stream into the soul. As that which I see lives in me, so by faith
1677 God lives in me too.

1678
1679 And even so faith is also the ear through which the voice of God is always heard and intercourse
1680 with Him kept up. It is through the Holy Spirit the Father speaks to us; the Son is the Word, the
1681 substance of what God says; the Spirit is the living voice. This the child of God needs to lead
1682 and guide him; the secret voice from heaven must teach him, as it taught Jesus, what to say and
1683 what to do. An ear opened towards God, that is, a believing heart waiting on Him, to hear what
1684 He says, will hear Him speak. The words of God will not only be the words of a Book, but,
1685 proceeding from the mouth of God, they will be spirit and truth, life and power. They will bring
1686 in deed and living experience what are otherwise only thoughts. Through this opened ear the
1687 soul tarries under the influence of the life and power of God Himself. As the words I hear enter
1688 the mind and dwell and work there, so through faith God enters the heart, and dwells and works
1689 there.

1690
1691 When faith now is in full exercise as eye and ear, as the faculty of the soul by which we see and
1692 hear God, then it will be able to exercise its full power as hand and mouth, by which we
1693 appropriate God and His blessing. The power of reception will depend entirely on the power of
1694 spiritual perception. For this reason Jesus said, ere He gave the promise that God would answer
1695 believing prayer: HAVE FAITH IN GOD.' Faith is simply surrender: I yield myself to the
1696 impression the tidings I hear make on me. By faith I yield myself to the living God. His glory
1697 and love fill my heart, and have the mastery over my life. Faith is fellowship; I give myself up to
1698 the influence of the friend who makes me a promise, and become linked to him by it. And it is
1699 when we enter into this living fellowship with God Himself, in a faith that always sees and hears
1700 Him, that it becomes easy and natural to believe His promise as to prayer. Faith in the promise is
1701 the fruit of faith in the promiser: the prayer of faith is rooted in the life of faith. And in this way
1702 the faith that prays effectually is indeed a gift of God. Not as something that He bestows or
1703 infuses at once, but in a far deeper and truer sense, as the blessed disposition or habit of soul
1704 which is wrought and grows up in us in a life of intercourse with Him. Surely for one who
1705 knows his Father well, and lives in constant close intercourse with Him, it is a simple thing to
1706 believe the promise that He will do the will of His child who lives in union with Himself.

1707
1708 It is because very many of God's children do not understand this connection between the life of
1709 faith and the prayer of faith that their experience of the power of prayer is so limited. When they

1710 desire earnestly to obtain an answer from God, they fix their whole heart upon the promise, and
1711 try their utmost to grasp that promise in faith. When they do not succeed, they are ready to give
1712 up hope; the promise is true, but it is beyond their power to take hold of it in faith. Listen to the
1713 lesson Jesus teaches us this day: HAVE FAITH IN GOD, the Living God: let faith look to God
1714 more than the thing promised: it is His love, His power, His living presence will waken and
1715 work the faith. A physician would say to one asking for some means to get more strength in his
1716 arms and hands to seize and hold, that his whole constitution must be built up and strengthened.
1717 So the cure of a feeble faith is alone to be found in the invigoration of our whole spiritual life by
1718 intercourse with God. Learn to believe in God, to take hold of God, to let God take possession of
1719 thy life, and it will be easy to take hold of the promise. He that knows and trusts God finds it
1720 easy to trust the promise too.

1721
1722 Just note how distinctly this comes out in the saints of old. Every special exhibition of the power
1723 of faith was the fruit of a special revelation of God. See it in Abraham: And the word of the
1724 Lord came unto Abram, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield. And He brought him forth
1725 abroad, and said . . . AND HE BELIEVED THE LORD.’ And later again: The Lord appeared
1726 unto him, and said unto him, I am God Almighty. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked
1727 with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with thee.’ It was the revelation of God
1728 Himself that gave the promise its living power to enter the heart and work the faith. Because
1729 they knew God, these men of faith could not do anything but trust His promise. God’s promise
1730 will be to us what God Himself is. It is the man who walks before the Lord, and falls upon his
1731 face to listen while the living God speaks to him, who will really receive the promise. Though
1732 we have God’s promises in the Bible, with full liberty to take them, the spiritual power is
1733 wanting, except as God Himself speaks them to us. And He speaks to those who walk and live
1734 with Him. Therefore, HAVE FAITH IN GOD: let faith be all eye and ear, the surrender to let
1735 God make His full impression, and reveal Himself fully in the soul. Count it one of the chief
1736 blessings of prayer to exercise faith in God, as the Living Mighty God who waits to fulfil in us
1737 all the good pleasure of His will, and the work of faith with power. See in Him the God of Love,
1738 whose delight it is to bless and impart Himself. In such worship of faith in God the power will
1739 speedily come to believe the promise too: ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE ASK, BELIEVE
1740 THAT YE RECEIVE.’ Yes, see that thou dost in faith make God thine own; the promise will be
1741 thine too.

1742
1743 Precious lessons that Jesus has to teach us this day. We seek God’s gifts: God wants to give us
1744 HIMSELF first. We think of prayer as the power to draw down good gifts from heaven; Jesus as
1745 the means to draw ourselves up to God. We want to stand at the door and cry; Jesus would have
1746 us first enter in and realize that we are friends and children. Let us accept the teaching. Let every
1747 experience of the littleness of our faith in prayer urge us first to have and exercise more faith in
1748 the living God, and in such faith to yield ourselves to Him. A heart full of God has power for the
1749 prayer of faith. Faith in God begets faith in the promise, in the promise too of an answer to
1750 prayer.

1751
1752 Therefore, child of God, take time, take time, to bow before Him, to wait on Him to reveal
1753 Himself. Take time, and let thy soul in holy awe and worship exercise and express its faith in the
1754 Infinite One, and as He imparts Himself and takes possession of thee, the prayer of faith will
1755 crown thy faith in God.

1756
1757 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

1758
1759
1760

1761 O my God! I do believe in Thee. I believe in Thee as the Father, Infinite in Thy Love and Power.
1762 And as the Son, my Redeemer and my Life. And as the Holy Spirit, Comforter and Guide and
1763 Strength. Three-One God, I have faith in Thee. I know and am sure that all that Thou art Thou
1764 art to me, that all Thou hast promised Thou wilt perform.

1765
1766 Lord Jesus! increase this faith. Teach me to take time, and wait and worship in the Holy
1767 Presence until my faith takes in all there is in my God for me. Let it see Him as the Fountain of
1768 all Life, working with Almighty Strength to accomplish His will on the world and in me. Let it
1769 see Him in His love longing to meet and fulfil my desires. Let it so take possession of my heart
1770 and life that through faith God alone may dwell there. Lord Jesus, help me! with my whole heart
1771 would I believe in God. Let faith in God each moment fill me.

1772
1773 O my Blessed Saviour! how can Thy Church glorify Thee, how can it fulfil that work of
1774 intercession through which Thy kingdom must come, unless our whole life be FAITH IN GOD.
1775 Blessed Lord! speak Thy Word, HAVE FAITH IN GOD,' unto the depths of our souls.

1776

1777

1778

1779 THIRTEENTH LESSON.

1780

1781 Prayer and fasting;'

1782

1783 Or, The Cure of Unbelief.

1784

1785 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said
1786 unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of
1787 mustard seed, nothing shall be impossible to you. Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer
1788 and fasting'—Matt. xvii. 19-21.

1789

1790 WHEN the disciples saw Jesus cast the evil spirit out of the epileptic whom they could not cure,'
1791 they asked the Master for the cause of their failure. He had given them power and authority over
1792 all devils, and to cure all diseases.' They had often exercised that power, and joyfully told how
1793 the devils were subject to them. And yet now, while He was on the Mount, they had utterly
1794 failed. That there had been nothing in the will of God or in the nature of the case to render
1795 deliverance impossible, had been proved: at Christ's bidding the evil spirit had gone out. From
1796 their expression, Why could we not?' it is evident that they had wished and sought to do so; they
1797 had probably used the Master's name, and called upon the evil spirit to go out. Their efforts had
1798 been vain, and in presence of the multitude, they had been put to shame. Why could we not?'

1799

1800 Christ's answer was direct and plain: Because of your unbelief.' The cause of His success and
1801 their failure, was not owing to His having a special power to which they had no access. No; the
1802 reason was not far to seek. He had so often taught them that there is one power, that of faith, to
1803 which, in the kingdom of darkness, as in the kingdom of God, everything must bow; in the
1804 spiritual world failure has but one cause, the want of faith. Faith is the one condition on which
1805 all Divine power can enter into man and work through him. It is the susceptibility of the unseen:
1806 man's will yielded up to, and moulded by, the will of God. The power they had received to cast
1807 out devils, they did not hold in themselves as a permanent gift or possession; the power was in
1808 Christ, to be received, and held, and used by faith alone, living faith in Himself. Had they been
1809 full of faith in Him as Lord and Conqueror in the spirit-world, had they been full of faith in Him
1810 as having given them authority to cast out in His name, this faith would have given them the
1811 victory. Because of your unbelief' was, for all time, the Master's explanation and reproof of
1812 impotence and failure in His Church.

1813
1814 But such want of faith must have a cause too. Well might the disciples have asked: And why
1815 could we not believe? Our faith has cast out devils before this: why have we now failed in
1816 believing? The Master proceeds to tell them ere they ask: This kind goeth not out but by fasting
1817 and prayer.’ As faith is the simplest, so it is the highest exercise of the spiritual life, where our
1818 spirit yields itself in perfect receptivity to God’s Spirit and so is strengthened to its highest
1819 activity. This faith depends entirely upon the state of the spiritual life; only when this is strong
1820 and in full health, when the Spirit of God has full sway in our life, is there the power of faith to
1821 do its mighty deeds. And therefore Jesus adds: Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by fasting
1822 and prayer.’ The faith that can overcome such stubborn resistance as you have just seen in this
1823 evil spirit, Jesus tells them, is not possible except to men living in very close fellowship with
1824 God, and in very special separation from the world—in prayer and fasting. And so He teaches us
1825 two lessons in regard to prayer of deep importance. The one, that faith needs a life of prayer in
1826 which to grow and keep strong. The other, that prayer needs fasting for its full and perfect
1827 development.

1828
1829 Faith needs a life of prayer for its full growth. In all the different parts of the spiritual life, there
1830 is such close union, such unceasing action and re-action, that each may be both cause and effect.
1831 Thus it is with faith. There can be no true prayer without faith; some measure of faith must
1832 precede prayer. And yet prayer is also the way to more faith; there can be no higher degrees of
1833 faith except through much prayer. This is the lesson Jesus teaches here. There is nothing needs
1834 so much to grow as our faith. Your faith groweth exceedingly,’ is said of one Church. When
1835 Jesus spoke the words, According to your faith be it unto you,’ He announced the law of the
1836 kingdom, which tells us that all have not equal degrees of faith, that the same person has not
1837 always the same degree, and that the measure of faith must always determine the measure of
1838 power and of blessing. If we want to know where and how our faith is to grow, the Master
1839 points us to the throne of God. It is in prayer, in the exercise of the faith I have, in fellowship
1840 with the living God, that faith can increase. Faith can only live by feeding on what is Divine, on
1841 God Himself.

1842
1843 It is in the adoring worship of God, the waiting on Him and for Him, the deep silence of soul
1844 that yields itself for God to reveal Himself, that the capacity for knowing and trusting God will
1845 be developed. It is as we take His word from the Blessed Book, and bring it to Himself, asking
1846 him to speak it to us with His living loving voice, that the power will come fully to believe and
1847 receive the word as God’s own word to us. It is in prayer, in living contact with God in living
1848 faith, that faith, the power to trust God, and in that trust, to accept everything He says, to accept
1849 every possibility He has offered to our faith will become strong in us. Many Christians cannot
1850 understand what is meant by the much prayer they sometimes hear spoken of: they can form no
1851 conception, nor do they feel the need, of spending hours with God. But what the Master says,
1852 the experience of His people has confirmed: men of strong faith are men of much prayer.

1853
1854 This just brings us back again to the lesson we learned when Jesus, before telling us to believe
1855 that we receive what we ask, first said, Have faith in God.’ It is God, the living God, into whom
1856 our faith must strike its roots deep and broad; then it will be strong to remove mountains and
1857 cast out devils. If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you.’ Oh! if we do but give
1858 ourselves up to the work God has for us in the world, coming into contact with the mountains
1859 and the devils there are to be cast away and cast out, we should soon comprehend the need there
1860 is of much faith, and of much prayer, as the soil in which alone faith can be cultivated. Christ
1861 Jesus is our life, the life of our faith too. It is His life in us that makes us strong, and makes us
1862 simple to believe. It is in the dying to self which much prayer implies, in closer union to Jesus,
1863 that the spirit of faith will come in power. Faith needs prayer for its full growth.

1864

1865 And prayer needs fasting for its full growth: this is the second lesson. Prayer is the one hand
1866 with which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the other, with which we let loose and cast away the
1867 visible. In nothing is man more closely connected with the world of sense than in his need of
1868 food, and his enjoyment of it. It was the fruit, good for food, with which man was tempted and
1869 fell in Paradise. It was with bread to be made of stones that Jesus, when an hungered, was
1870 tempted in the wilderness, and in fasting that He triumphed. The body has been redeemed to be
1871 a temple of the Holy Spirit; it is in body as well as spirit, it is very specially, Scripture says, in
1872 eating and drinking, we are to glorify God. It is to be feared that there are many Christians to
1873 whom this eating to the glory of God has not yet become a spiritual reality. And the first thought
1874 suggested by Jesus' words in regard to fasting and prayer, is, that it is only in a life of
1875 moderation and temperance and self-denial that there will be the heart or the strength to pray
1876 much.

1877
1878 But then there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its
1879 feasts with eating and drinking. There may come times of intense desire, when it is strongly felt
1880 how the body, with its appetites, lawful though they be, still hinder the spirit in its battle with the
1881 powers of darkness, and the need is felt of keeping it under. We are creatures of the senses: our
1882 mind is helped by what comes to us embodied in concrete form; fasting helps to express, to
1883 deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice
1884 ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. And He who accepted the fasting and
1885 sacrifice of the Son, knows to value and accept and reward with spiritual power the soul that is
1886 thus ready to give up all for Christ and His kingdom.

1887
1888 And then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the reaching out after God and the unseen;
1889 fasting, the letting go of all that is of the seen and temporal. While ordinary Christians imagine
1890 that all that is not positively forbidden and sinful is lawful to them, and seek to retain as much as
1891 possible of this world, with its property, its literature, its enjoyments, the truly consecrated soul
1892 is as the soldier who carries only what he needs for the warfare. Laying aside every weight, as
1893 well as the easily besetting sin, afraid of entangling himself with the affairs of this life, he seeks
1894 to lead a Nazarite life, as one specially set apart for the Lord and His service. Without such
1895 voluntary separation, even from what is lawful, no one will attain power in prayer: this kind
1896 goeth not out but by fasting and prayer.

1897
1898 Disciples of Jesus! who have asked the Master to teach you to pray, come now and accept His
1899 lessons. He tells you that prayer is the path to faith, strong faith, that can cast out devils. He tells
1900 you: 'If ye have faith, nothing shall be impossible to you;' let this glorious promise encourage
1901 you to pray much. Is the prize not worth the price? Shall we not give up all to follow Jesus in the
1902 path He opens to us here; shall we not, if need be, fast? Shall we not do anything that neither the
1903 body nor the world around hinder us in our great life-work,—having intercourse with our God in
1904 prayer, that we may become men of faith, whom He can use in His work of saving the world.

1905
1906 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

1907

1908

1909

1910 O Lord Jesus! how continually Thou hast to reprove us for our unbelief! How strange it must
1911 appear to Thee, this terrible incapacity of trusting our Father and His promises. Lord! let Thy
1912 reproof, with its searching, 'Because of your unbelief,' sink into the very depths of our hearts,
1913 and reveal to us how much of the sin and suffering around us is our blame. And then teach us,
1914 Blessed Lord, that there is a place where faith can be learned and gained,—even in the prayer
1915 and fasting that brings into living and abiding fellowship with Thyself and the Father.

1916

1917 O Saviour! Thou Thyself art the Author and the Perfecter of our faith; teach us what it is to let
1918 Thee live in us by Thy Holy Spirit. Lord! our efforts and prayers for grace to believe have been
1919 so unavailing. We know why it was: we sought for strength in ourselves to be given from Thee.
1920 Holy Jesus! do at length teach us the mystery of Thy life in us, and how Thou, by Thy Spirit,
1921 dost undertake to live in us the life of faith, to see to it that our faith shall not fail. O let us see
1922 that our faith will just be a part of that wonderful prayer-life which Thou givest in them who
1923 expect their training for the ministry of intercession, not in word and thought only, but in the
1924 Holy Unction Thou givest, the inflowing of the Spirit of Thine own life. And teach us how, in
1925 fasting and prayer, we may grow up to the faith to which nothing shall be impossible. Amen.

1926

1927 NOTE

1928

1929 At the time when Blumhardt was passing through his terrible conflict with the evil spirits in
1930 those who were possessed, and seeking to cast them out by prayer, he often wondered what it
1931 was that hindered the answer. One day a friend, to whom he had spoken of his trouble, directed
1932 his attention to our Lord's words about fasting. Blumhardt resolved to give himself to fasting,
1933 sometimes for more than thirty hours. From reflection and experience he gained the conviction
1934 that it is of more importance than is generally thought. He says, Inasmuch as the fasting is
1935 before God, a practical proof that the thing we ask is to us a matter of true and pressing interest,
1936 and inasmuch as in a high degree it strengthens the intensity and power of the prayer, and
1937 becomes the unceasing practical expression of a prayer without words, I could believe that it
1938 would not be without efficacy, especially as the Master's words had reference to a case like the
1939 present. I tried it, without telling any one, and in truth the later conflict was extraordinarily
1940 lightened by it. I could speak with much greater restfulness and decision. I did not require to be
1941 so long present with the sick one; and I felt that I could influence without being present.'

1942

1943

1944

1945 FOURTEENTH LESSON.

1946

1947 When ye stand praying, forgive;'

1948

1949 Or, Prayer and Love.

1950

1951 And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father
1952 also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.'—Mark xi. 25.

1953

1954 THESE words follow immediately on the great prayer-promise, All things whatsoever ye pray,
1955 believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.' We have already seen how the
1956 words that preceded that promise, Have faith in God,' taught us that in prayer all depends upon
1957 our relation to God being clear; these words that follow on it remind us that our relation with
1958 fellow-men must be clear too. Love to God and love to our neighbour are inseparable: the prayer
1959 from a heart, that is either not right with God on the one side, or with men on the other, cannot
1960 prevail. Faith and love are essential to each other.

1961

1962 We find that this is a thought to which our Lord frequently gave expression. In the Sermon on
1963 the Mount (Matt. v. 23, 24), when speaking of the sixth commandment, He taught His disciples
1964 how impossible acceptable worship to the Father was if everything were not right with the
1965 brother: If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath
1966 aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy
1967 brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' And so later, when speaking of prayer to God, after
1968 having taught us to pray, Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors,' He added

1969 at the close of the prayer: If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father
1970 forgive your trespasses.’ At the close of the parable of the unmerciful servant He applies His
1971 teaching in the words: So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one
1972 his brother from your hearts.’ And so here, beside the dried-up fig-tree, where He speaks of the
1973 wonderful power of faith and the prayer of faith, He all at once, apparently without connection,
1974 introduces the thought, Whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one;
1975 that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.’ It is as if the Lord
1976 had learned during His life at Nazareth and afterwards that disobedience to the law of love to
1977 men was the great sin even of praying people, and the great cause of the feebleness of their
1978 prayer. And it is as if He wanted to lead us into His own blessed experience that nothing gives
1979 such liberty of access and such power in believing as the consciousness that we have given
1980 ourselves in love and compassion, for those whom God loves.

1981
1982 The first lesson taught here is that of a forgiving disposition. We pray, Forgive, even as we have
1983 forgiven.’ Scripture says, Forgive one another, even as God also in Christ forgave you.’ God’s
1984 full and free forgiveness is to be the rule of ours with men. Otherwise our reluctant, half-hearted
1985 forgiveness, which is not forgiveness at all, will be God’s rule with us. Every prayer rests upon
1986 our faith in God’s pardoning grace. If God dealt with us after our sins, not one prayer could be
1987 heard. Pardon opens the door to all God’s love and blessing: because God has pardoned all our
1988 sin, our prayer can prevail to obtain all we need. The deep sure ground of answer to prayer is
1989 God’s forgiving love. When it has taken possession of the heart, we pray in faith. But also, when
1990 it has taken possession of the heart, we live in love. God’s forgiving disposition, revealed in His
1991 love to us, becomes a disposition in us; as the power of His forgiving love shed abroad and
1992 dwelling within us, we forgive even as He forgives. If there be great and grievous injury or
1993 injustice done us, we seek first of all to possess a Godlike disposition; to be kept from a sense of
1994 wounded honour, from a desire to maintain our rights, or from rewarding the offender as he has
1995 deserved. In the little annoyances of daily life, we are watchful not to excuse the hasty temper,
1996 the sharp word, the quick judgment, with the thought that we mean no harm, that we do not keep
1997 the anger long, or that it would be too much to expect from feeble human nature, that we should
1998 really forgive the way God and Christ do. No, we take the command literally, Even as Christ
1999 forgave, so also do ye.’ The blood that cleanses the conscience from dead works, cleanses from
2000 selfishness too; the love it reveals is pardoning love, that takes possession of us and flows
2001 through us to others. Our forgiving love to men is the evidence of the reality of God’s forgiving
2002 love in us, and so the condition of the prayer of faith.

2003
2004 There is a second, more general lesson: our daily life in the world is made the test of our
2005 intercourse with God in prayer. How often the Christian, when he comes to pray, does his
2006 utmost to cultivate certain frames of mind which he thinks will be pleasing. He does not
2007 understand, or forgets, that life does not consist of so many loose pieces, of which now the one,
2008 then the other, can be taken up. Life is a whole, and the pious frame of the hour of prayer is
2009 judged of by God from the ordinary frame of the daily life of which the hour of prayer is but a
2010 small part. Not the feeling I call up, but the tone of my life during the day, is God’s criterion of
2011 what I really am and desire. My drawing nigh to God is of one piece with my intercourse with
2012 men and earth: failure here will cause failure there. And that not only when there is the distinct
2013 consciousness of anything wrong between my neighbour and myself; but the ordinary current of
2014 my thinking and judging, the unloving thoughts and words I allow to pass unnoticed, can hinder
2015 my prayer. The effectual prayer of faith comes out from a life given up to the will and the love
2016 of God. Not according to what I try to be when praying, but what I am when not praying, is my
2017 prayer dealt with by God.

2018
2019 We may gather these thoughts into a third lesson: In our life with men the one thing on which
2020 everything depends is love. The spirit of forgiveness is the spirit of love. Because God is love,

2021 He forgives: it is only when we are dwelling in love that we can forgive as God forgives. In love
2022 to the brethren we have the evidence of love to the Father, the ground of confidence before God,
2023 and the assurance that our prayer will be heard, (1 John iv. 20, iii. 18-21, 23.). Let us love in
2024 deed and truth; hereby shall we assure our heart before Him. If our heart condemn us not, we
2025 have boldness toward God, and whatever we ask, we receive of Him.' Neither faith nor work
2026 will profit if we have not love; it is love that unites with God, it is love that proves the reality of
2027 faith. As essential as in the word that precedes the great prayer-promise in Mark xi. 24, Have
2028 faith in God,' is this one that follows it, Have love to men.' The right relations to the living God
2029 above me, and the living men around me, are the conditions of effectual prayer.

2030
2031 This love is of special consequence when we labour for such and pray for them. We sometimes
2032 give ourselves to work for Christ, from zeal for His cause, as we call it, or for our own spiritual
2033 health, without giving ourselves in personal self-sacrificing love for those whose souls we seek.
2034 No wonder that our faith is feeble and does not conquer. To look on each wretched one,
2035 however unloveable he be, in the light of the tender love of Jesus the Shepherd seeking the lost;
2036 to see Jesus Christ in him, and to take him up, for Jesus' sake, in a heart that really loves, —this,
2037 this is the secret of believing prayer and successful effort. Jesus, in speaking of forgiveness,
2038 speaks of love as its root. Just as in the Sermon on the Mount He connected His teaching and
2039 promises about prayer with the call to be merciful, as the Father in heaven is merciful (Matt. v.
2040 7, 9, 22, 38-48), so we see it here: a loving life is the condition of believing prayer.

2041
2042 It has been said: There is nothing so heart-searching as believing prayer, or even the honest
2043 effort to pray in faith. O let us not turn the edge of that self-examination by the thought that God
2044 does not hear our prayer for reasons known to Himself alone. By no means. Ye ask and receive
2045 not, because ye ask amiss.' Let that word of God search us. Let us ask whether our prayer be
2046 indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of man. Love is
2047 the only soil in which faith can strike its roots and thrive. As it throws its arms up, and opens its
2048 heart heavenward, the Father always looks to see if it has them opened towards the evil and the
2049 unworthy too. In that love, not indeed the love of perfect attainment, but the love of fixed
2050 purpose and sincere obedience, faith can alone obtain the blessing. It is he who gives himself to
2051 let the love of God dwell in him, and in the practice of daily life to love as God loves, who will
2052 have the power to believe in the Love that hears his every prayer. It is the Lamb, who is in the
2053 midst of the throne: it is suffering and forbearing love that prevails with God in prayer. The
2054 merciful shall obtain mercy; the meek shall inherit the earth.

2055
2056 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

2057
2058
2059
2060 Blessed Father! Thou art Love, and only he that abideth in love abideth in Thee and in
2061 fellowship with Thee. The Blessed Son hath this day again taught me how deeply true this is of
2062 my fellowship with Thee in prayer. O my God! let Thy love, shed abroad in my heart by the
2063 Holy Spirit, be in me a fountain of love to all around me, that out of a life in love may spring the
2064 power of believing prayer. O my Father! grant by the Holy Spirit that this may be my
2065 experience, that a life in love to all around me is the gate to a life in the love of my God. And
2066 give me especially to find in the joy with which I forgive day by day whoever might offend me,
2067 the proof that Thy forgiveness to me is a power and a life.

2068
2069 Lord Jesus! my Blessed Teacher! teach Thou me to forgive and to love. Let the power of Thy
2070 blood make the pardon of my sins such a reality, that forgiveness, as shown by Thee to me, and
2071 by me to others, may be the very joy of heaven. Show me whatever in my intercourse with
2072 fellowmen might hinder my fellowship with God, so that my daily life in my own home and in

2073 society may be the school in which strength and confidence are gathered for the prayer of faith.
2074 Amen.

2075
2076
2077

2078 FIFTEENTH LESSON.

2079

2080 If two agree;’

2081

2082 Or, The Power of United Prayer

2083

2084 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall
2085 ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are
2086 gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.—Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

2087

2088 ONE of the first lessons of our Lord in His school of prayer was: Not to be seen of men. Enter
2089 thy inner chamber; be alone with the Father. When He has thus taught us that the meaning of
2090 prayer is personal individual contact with God, He comes with a second lesson: You have need
2091 not only of secret solitary, but also of public united prayer. And He gives us a very special
2092 promise for the united prayer of two or three who agree in what they ask. As a tree has its root
2093 hidden in the ground and its stem growing up into the sunlight, so prayer needs equally for its
2094 full development the hidden secrecy in which the soul meets God alone, and the public
2095 fellowship with those who find in the name of Jesus their common meeting-place.

2096

2097 The reason why this must be so is plain. The bond that unites a man to his fellow-men is no less
2098 real and close than that which unites him to God: he is one with them. Grace renews not alone
2099 our relation to God but to man too. We not only learn to say My Father,’ but Our Father.’
2100 Nothing would be more unnatural than that the children of a family should always meet their
2101 father separately, but never in the united expression of their desires or their love. Believers are
2102 not only members of one family, but even of one body. Just as each member of the body
2103 depends on the other, and the full action of the spirit dwelling in the body depends on the union
2104 and co-operation of all, so Christians cannot reach the full blessing God is ready to bestow
2105 through His Spirit, but as they seek and receive it in fellowship with each other. It is in the union
2106 and fellowship of believers that the Spirit can manifest His full power. It was to the hundred and
2107 twenty continuing in one place together, and praying with one accord, that the Spirit came from
2108 the throne of the glorified Lord.

2109

2110 The marks of true united prayer are given us in these words of our Lord. The first is agreement
2111 as to the thing asked. There must not only be generally the consent to agree with anything
2112 another may ask: there must be some special thing, matter of distinct united desire; the
2113 agreement must be, as all prayer, in spirit and in truth. In such agreement it will become very
2114 clear to us what exactly we are asking, whether we may confidently ask according to God’s will,
2115 and whether we are ready to believe that we have received what we ask.

2116

2117 The second mark is the gathering in, or into, the Name of Jesus. We shall afterwards have much
2118 more to learn of the need and the power of the Name of Jesus in prayer; here our Lord teaches us
2119 that the Name must be the centre of union to which believers gather, the bond of union that
2120 makes them one, just as a home contains and unites all who are in it. The Name of the Lord is a
2121 strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and escape.’ That Name is such a reality to those who
2122 understand and believe it, that to meet within it is to have Himself present. The love and unity of
2123 His disciples have to Jesus infinite attraction: Where two or three are gathered in my Name,

2124 there am I in the midst of them.’ It is the living presence of Jesus, in the fellowship of His loving
2125 praying disciples, that gives united prayer its power.

2126
2127 The third mark is, the sure answer: It shall be done for them of my Father.’ A prayer-meeting for
2128 maintaining religious fellowship, or seeking our own edification, may have its use; this was not
2129 the Saviour’s view in its appointment. He meant it as a means of securing special answer to
2130 prayer. A prayer meeting without recognised answer to prayer ought to be an anomaly. When
2131 any of us have distinct desires in regard to which we feel too weak to exercise the needful faith,
2132 we ought to seek strength in the help of other. In the unity of faith and of love and of the Spirit,
2133 the power of the Name and the Presence of Jesus acts more freely and the answer comes more
2134 surely. The mark that there has been true united prayer is the fruit, the answer, the receiving of
2135 the thing we have asked: I say unto you, It shall be done for them of my Father which is in
2136 heaven.’

2137
2138 What an unspeakable privilege this of united prayer is, and what a power it might be. If the
2139 believing husband and wife knew that they were joined together in the Name of Jesus to
2140 experience His presence and power in united prayer (1 Peter); if friends believed what mighty
2141 help two or three praying in concert could give each other; if in every prayer meeting the
2142 coming together in the Name, the faith in the Presence, and the expectation of the answer, stood
2143 in the foreground; if in every Church united effectual prayer were regarded as one of the chief
2144 purposes for which they are banded together, the highest exercise of their power as a Church; if
2145 in the Church universal the coming of the kingdom, the coming of the King Himself, first in the
2146 mighty outpouring of His Holy Spirit, then in His own glorious person, were really matter of
2147 unceasing united crying to God;—O who can say what blessing might come to, and through,
2148 those who thus agreed to prove God in the fulfilment of His promise.

2149
2150 In the Apostle Paul we see very distinctly what a reality his faith in the power of united prayer
2151 was. To the Romans he writes (xv. 30): I beseech you, brethren, by the love of the Spirit, that ye
2152 strive together with me in your prayer to God for me.’ He expects in answer to be delivered
2153 from his enemies, and to be prospered in his work. To the Corinthians (2 Cor. i. 11), God will
2154 still deliver us, ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplications;’ their prayer is to
2155 have a real share in his deliverance. To the Ephesians he writes: With all prayer and supplication
2156 praying at all seasons in the Spirit for all the saints and on my behalf, that utterance may be
2157 given unto me.’ His power and success in his ministry he makes to depend on their prayers.
2158 With the Philippians (i. 19) he expects that his trials will turn to his salvation and the progress of
2159 the gospel through your supplications and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.; To the
2160 Colossians (iv. 3) he adds to the injunction to continue stedfast in prayer: Withal praying for us
2161 too, that God may open unto us a door for the word.’ And to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. iii. 1)
2162 he writes: Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, and
2163 that we may be delivered from unreasonable men.’ It is everywhere evident that Paul felt
2164 himself the member of a body, on the sympathy and co-operation of which he was dependent,
2165 and that he counted on the prayers of these Churches to gain for him, what otherwise might not
2166 be given. The prayers of the Church were to him as real a factor in the work of the kingdom, as
2167 the power of God.

2168
2169 Who can say what power a Church could develop and exercise, if it gave itself to the work of
2170 prayer day and night for the coming of the kingdom, for God’s power on His servants and His
2171 word, for the glorifying of God in the salvation of souls? Most Churches think their members
2172 are gathered into one simply to take care of and build up each other. They know not that God
2173 rules the world by the prayers of His saints; that prayer is the power by which Satan is
2174 conquered; that by prayer the Church on earth has disposal of the powers of the heavenly world.
2175 They do not remember that Jesus has, by His promise, consecrated every assembly in His Name

2176 to be a gate of heaven, where His Presence is to be felt, and His Power experienced in the Father
2177 fulfilling their desires.

2178
2179 We cannot sufficiently thank God for the blessed week of united prayer, with which
2180 Christendom in our days opens every year. As proof of our unity and our faith in the power of
2181 united prayer, as a training-school for the enlargement of our hearts to take in all the needs of
2182 the Church universal, as a help to united persevering prayer, it is of unspeakable value. But very
2183 specially as a stimulus to continued union in prayer in the smaller circles, its blessing has been
2184 great. And it will become even greater, as God's people recognise what it is, all to meet as one
2185 in the Name of Jesus to have His presence in the midst of a body all united in the Holy Spirit,
2186 and boldly to claim the promise that it shall be done of the Father what they agree to ask.

2187
2188 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY'

2189
2190
2191
2192 Blessed Lord! who didst in Thy high-priestly prayer ask so earnestly for the unity of Thy people,
2193 teach us how Thou dost invite and urge us to this unity by Thy precious promise given to united
2194 prayer. It is when we are one in love and desire that our faith has Thy presence and the Father's
2195 answer.

2196
2197 O Father! we pray for Thy people, and for every smaller circle of those who meet together, that
2198 they may be one. Remove, we pray, all selfishness and self-interest, all narrowness of heart and
2199 estrangement, by which that unity is hindered. Cast out the spirit of the world and the flesh,
2200 through which Thy promise loses all its power. O let the thought of Thy presence and the
2201 Father's favour draw us all nearer to each other.

2202
2203 Grant especially Blessed Lord, that Thy Church may believe that it is by the power of united
2204 prayer that she can bind and loose in heaven; that Satan can be cast out; that souls can be saved;
2205 that mountains can be removed; that the kingdom can be hastened. And grant, good Lord! that in
2206 the circle with which I pray, the prayer of the Church may indeed be the power through which
2207 Thy Name and Word are glorified. Amen.

2208
2209
2210
2211
2212 SIXTEENTH LESSON.

2213
2214 Speedily, though bearing long;'

2215
2216 Or, The Power of Persevering Prayer.

2217
2218 And He spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint. . . .
2219 And the Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own
2220 elect, which cry to Him day and night, and He is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that
2221 He will avenge them speedily.'—Luke xviii. 108.

2222
2223 OF all the mysteries of the prayer world, the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest.
2224 That the Lord, who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be supplicated time after
2225 time, sometimes year after year, before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is also
2226 one of the greatest practical difficulties in the exercise of believing prayer. When, after
2227 persevering supplication, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our slothful

2228 flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious submission, to think that we must now cease
2229 praying, because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request.

2230
2231 It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When once faith has taken its stand upon
2232 God's word, and the Name of Jesus, and has yielded itself to the leading of the Spirit to seek
2233 God's will and honour alone in its prayer, it need not be discouraged by delay. It knows from
2234 Scripture that the power of believing prayer is simply irresistible; real faith can never be
2235 disappointed. It knows how, just as water, to exercise the irresistible power it can have, must be
2236 gathered up and accumulated, until the stream can come down in full force, there must often be
2237 a heaping up of prayer, until God sees that the measure is full, and the answer comes. It knows
2238 how, just as the ploughman has to take his ten thousand steps, and sow his ten thousand seeds,
2239 each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so there is a need-be for oft-repeated
2240 persevering prayer, all working out some desired blessing. It knows for certain that not a single
2241 believing prayer can fail of its effect in heaven, but has its influence, and is treasured up to work
2242 out an answer in due time to him who persevereth to the end. It knows that it has to do not with
2243 human thoughts or possibilities, but with the word of the living God. And so even as Abraham
2244 through so many years in hope believed against hope,' and then through faith and patience
2245 inherited the promise,' it counts that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, waiting and
2246 hastening unto the coming of its Lord to fulfil His promise.

2247
2248 To enable us, when the answer to our prayer does not come at once, to combine quiet patience
2249 and joyful confidence in our persevering prayer, we must specially try to understand the two
2250 words in which our Lord sets forth the character and conduct, not of the unjust judge, but of our
2251 God and Father towards those whom He allows to cry day and night to Him: He is long-
2252 suffering over them; He will avenge them speedily.'

2253
2254 He will avenge them speedily, the Master says. The blessing is all prepared; He is not only
2255 willing but most anxious to give them what they ask; everlasting love burns with the longing
2256 desire to reveal itself fully to its beloved, and to satisfy their needs. God will not delay one
2257 moment longer than is absolutely necessary; He will do all in His power to hasten and speed the
2258 answer.

2259
2260 But why, if this be true and His power be infinite, does it often last so long with the answer to
2261 prayer? And why must God's own elect so often, in the midst of suffering and conflict, cry day
2262 and night? He is long-suffering over them.' Behold! the husbandman waiteth for the precious
2263 fruit of the earth, being long-suffering over it, till it receive the early and the latter rain.' The
2264 husbandman does indeed long for his harvest, but knows that it must have its full time of
2265 sunshine and rain, and has long patience. A child so often wants to pick the half-ripe fruit; the
2266 husbandman knows to wait till the proper time. Man, in his spiritual nature too, is under the law
2267 of gradual growth that reigns in all created life. It is only in the path of development that he can
2268 reach his divine destiny. And it is the Father, in whose hands are the times and seasons, who
2269 alone knows the moment when the soul or the Church is ripened to that fulness of faith in which
2270 it can really take and keep the blessing. As a father who longs to have his only child home from
2271 school, and yet waits patiently till the time of training is completed, so it is with God and His
2272 children: He is the long-suffering One, and answers speedily.

2273
2274 The insight into this truth leads the believer to cultivate the corresponding dispositions: patience
2275 and faith, waiting and hastening, are the secret of his perseverance. By faith in the promise of God,
2276 we know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him. Faith takes and holds the answer in
2277 the promise, as an unseen spiritual possession, rejoices in it, and praises for it. But there is a
2278 difference between the faith that thus holds the word and knows that it has the answer, and the
2279 clearer, fuller, riper faith that obtains the promise as a present experience. It is in persevering,

2280 not unbelieving, but confident and praising prayer, that the soul grows up into that full union
2281 with its Lord in which it can enter upon the possession of the blessing in Him. There may be in
2282 these around us, there may be in that great system of being of which we are part, there may be in
2283 God's government, things that have to be put right through our prayer, ere the answer can fully
2284 come: the faith that has, according to the command, believed that it has received, can allow God
2285 to take His time: it knows it has prevailed and must prevail. In quiet, persistent, and determined
2286 perseverance it continues in prayer and thanksgiving until the blessing come. And so we see
2287 combined what at first sight appears so contradictory; the faith that rejoices in the answer of the
2288 unseen God as a present possession, with the patience that cries day and night until it be
2289 revealed. The speedily of God's long-suffering is met by the triumphant but patient faith of His
2290 waiting child.

2291
2292 Our great danger in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it
2293 may not be God's will to give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's word, and
2294 under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time.
2295 God needs time with us. If we only give Him time, that is, time in the daily fellowship with
2296 Himself, for Him to exercise the full influence of His presence on us, and time, day by day, in
2297 the course of our being kept waiting, for faith to prove its reality and to fill our whole being, He
2298 Himself will lead us from faith to vision; we shall see the glory of God. Let no delay shake our
2299 faith. Of faith it holds good: first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Each
2300 believing prayer brings a step nearer the final victory. Each believing prayer helps to ripen the
2301 fruit and bring us nearer to it; it fills up the measure of prayer and faith known to God alone; it
2302 conquers the hindrances in the unseen world; it hastens the end. Child of God! give the Father
2303 time. He is long-suffering over you. He wants the blessing to be rich, and full, and sure; give
2304 Him time, while you cry day and night. Only remember the word: I say unto you, He will
2305 avenge them speedily.'

2306
2307 The blessing of such persevering prayer is unspeakable. There is nothing so heart-searching as
2308 the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess, and give up everything that hinders
2309 the coming of the blessing; everything there may be not in accordance with the Father's will. It
2310 leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach to pray, to a more entire surrender to
2311 draw nigh under no covering but that of the blood, and the Spirit. It calls to a closer and more
2312 simple abiding in Christ alone. Christian! give God time. He will perfect that which concerneth
2313 you. Long-suffering—speedily,' this is God's watchword as you enter the gates of prayer: be it
2314 yours too.

2315
2316 Let it be thus whether you pray for yourself, or for others. All labour, bodily or mental, needs
2317 time and effort: we must give up ourselves to it. Nature discovers her secrets and yields her
2318 treasures only to diligent and thoughtful labour. However little we can understand it, in the
2319 spiritual husbandry it is the same: the seed we sow in the soil of heaven, the efforts we put forth,
2320 and the influence we seek to exert in the world above, need our whole being: we must give
2321 ourselves to prayer. But let us hold fast the great confidence, that in due season we shall reap, if
2322 we faint not.

2323
2324 And let us specially learn the lesson as we pray for the Church of Christ. She is indeed as the
2325 poor widow, in the absence of her Lord, apparently at the mercy of her adversary, helpless to
2326 obtain redress. Let us, when we pray for His Church or any portion of it, under the power of the
2327 world, asking Him to visit her with the mighty workings of His Spirit and to prepare her for His
2328 coming, let us pray in the assured faith: prayer does help, praying always and not fainting will
2329 bring the answer. Only give God time. And then keep crying day and night. Hear what the
2330 unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and
2331 night, and He is long-suffering over them. I say unto you, He will avenge them speedily.'

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LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

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

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

NOTE

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

In a remarkable way the need of persevering prayer, and the gradual rising into greater ease in obtaining answer, is illustrated in the life of Blumhardt. Complaints had been lodged against him of neglecting his work as a minister of the gospel, and devoting himself to the healing of the sick; and especially his unauthorized healing of the sick belonging to other congregations. In his defense he writes: I simply ventured to do what becomes one who has the charge of souls, and to pray according to the command of the Lord in James i. 6, 7. In no way did I trust to my own power, or imagine that I had any gift that others had not. But this is true, I set myself to the work as a minister of the gospel, who has a right to pray. But I speedily discovered that the gates of heaven were not fully opened to me. Often I was inclined to retire in despair. But the sight of the sick ones, who could find help nowhere, gave me no rest. I thought of the word of the Lord: “Ask, and it shall be given you” (Luke xi. 9, 10). And farther, I thought that if the Church and her ministers had, through unbelief, sloth, and disobedience lost what was needed for overcoming of the power of Satan, it was just for such times of leanness and famine that the Lord had spoken the parable of the friend at midnight and his three loaves. I felt that I was not worthy thus at midnight, in a time of great darkness, to appear before God as His friend and ask for a member of my congregation what he needed. And yet, to leave him uncared for, I could not

2384 either. And so I kept knocking, as the parable directs, or, as some have said, with great
2385 presumption and tempting God. Be this as it may, I could not leave my guest unprovided. At this
2386 time the parable of the widow became very precious to me. I saw that the Church was the
2387 widow, and I was a minister of the Church. I had the right to be her mouthpiece against the
2388 adversary; but for a long time the Lord would not. I asked nothing more than the three loaves;
2389 what I needed for my guest. At last the Lord listened to the importunate beggar, and helped me.
2390 Was it wrong of me to pray thus? The two parables must surely be applicable somewhere, and
2391 where was greater need to be conceived?

2392
2393 And what was the fruit of my prayer? The friend who was at first unwilling, did not say, Go
2394 now; I will myself give to your friend what he needs; I do not require you; but gave it to me as
2395 His friend, to give to my guest. And so I used the three loaves, and had to spare. But the supply
2396 was small, and new guests came; because they saw I had a heart to help them, and that I would
2397 take the trouble even at midnight to go to my friend. When I asked for them, too, I got the
2398 needful again, and there was again to spare. How could I help that the needy continually came to
2399 my house? Was I to harden myself, and say, Why do you come to me? there are large and better
2400 homes in the city, go there. Their answer was, Dear sir, we cannot go there. We have been there:
2401 they were very sorry to send us away so hungry, but they could not undertake to go and ask a
2402 friend for what we wanted. Do go, and get us bread for we suffer great pain. What could I do?
2403 They spoke the truth, and their suffering touched my heart. However much labour it cost me, I
2404 went each time again, and got the three loaves. Often I got what I asked much quicker than at
2405 first, and also much more abundantly. But all did not care for this bread, so some left my home
2406 hungry. ^1

2407
2408 In his first struggles with the evil spirits, it took him more than eighteen months of prayer and
2409 labour before the final victory was gained. Afterwards he had such ease of access to the throne,
2410 and stood in such close communication with the unseen world, that often, with letters came
2411 asking prayer for sick people, he could, after just looking upward for a single moment, obtain
2412 the answer as to whether they would be healed.

2413
2414 ^1From Johann Christophe Blumhardt, Ein Lebenabild von F. Etindel.

2415
2416
2417
2418 SEVENTEENTH LESSON.

2419
2420 I know that Thou hearest me always;'

2421
2422 Or Prayer in Harmony with the Being of God.

2423
2424 Father, I thank Thee that Thou heardest me. And I knew that Thou hearest me always.'—John
2425 xi. 41, 42.

2426
2427 Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me, and I shall give Thee.'—Ps. ii. 7, 8.

2428
2429 IN the New Testament we find a distinction made between faith and knowledge. To one is
2430 given, through the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge, according to
2431 the same Spirit; to another faith, in the same Spirit.' In a child or a simple-minded Christian
2432 there may be much faith with little knowledge. Childlike simplicity accepts the truth without
2433 difficulty, and often cares little to give itself or others any reason for its faith but this: God has
2434 said. But it is the will of God that we should love and serve Him, not only with all the heart but
2435 also with all the mind; that we should grow up into an insight into the Divine wisdom and

2436 beauty of all His ways and words and works. It is only thus that the believer will be able fully to
2437 approach and rightly to adore the glory of God's grace; and only thus that our heart can
2438 intelligently apprehend the treasures of wisdom and knowledge there are in redemption, and be
2439 prepared to enter fully into the highest note of the song that rises before the throne: O the depth
2440 of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

2441
2442 In our prayer life this truth has its full application. While prayer and faith are so simple that the
2443 new-born convert can pray with power, true Christian science finds in the doctrine of prayer
2444 some of its deepest problems. In how far is the power of prayer a reality? If so, how God can
2445 grant to prayer such mighty power? How can the action of prayer be harmonized with the will
2446 and the decrees of God? How can God's sovereignty and our will, God's liberty and ours, be
2447 reconciled?—these and other like questions are fit subjects for Christian meditation and inquiry.
2448 The more earnestly and reverently we approach such mysteries, the more shall we in adoring
2449 wonder fall down to praise Him who hath in prayer given such power to man.

2450
2451 One of the secret difficulties with regard to prayer,—one which, though not expressed, does
2452 often really hinder prayer,—is derived from the perfection of God, in His absolute independence
2453 of all that is outside of Himself. Is He not the Infinite Being, who owes what He is to Himself
2454 alone, who determines Himself, and whose wise and holy will has determined all that is to be?
2455 How can prayer influence Him, or He be moved by prayer to do what otherwise would not be
2456 done? Is not the promise of an answer to prayer simply a condescension to our weakness? Is
2457 what is said of the power—the much-availing power—of prayer anything more than an
2458 accommodation to our mode of thought, because the Deity never can be dependent on any action
2459 from without for its doings? And is not the blessing of prayer simply the influence it exercises
2460 upon ourselves?

2461
2462 In seeking an answer to such questions, we find the key in the very being of God, in the mystery
2463 of the Holy Trinity. If God was only one Person, shut up within Himself, there could be no
2464 thought of nearness to Him or influence on Him. But in God there are three Persons. In God we
2465 have Father and Son, who have in the Holy Spirit their living bond of unity and fellowship.
2466 When eternal Love begat the Son, and the Father gave the Son as the Second Person a place next
2467 Himself as His Equal and His Counsellor, there was a way opened for prayer and its influence in
2468 the very inmost life of Deity itself. Just as on earth, so in heaven the whole relation between
2469 Father and Son is that of giving and taking. And if that taking is to be as voluntary and self-
2470 determined as the giving, there must be on the part of the Son an asking and receiving. In the
2471 holy fellowship of the Divine Persons, this asking of the Son was one of the great operations of
2472 the Thrice Blessed Life of God. Hence we have it in Psalm ii.: This day I have begotten Thee:
2473 ask of me and I will give Thee.' The Father gave the Son the place and the power to act upon
2474 Him. The asking of the Son was no mere show or shadow, but one of those life-movements in
2475 which the love of the Father and the Son met and completed each other. The Father had
2476 determined that He should not be alone in His counsels: there was a Son on whose asking and
2477 accepting their fulfilment should depend. And so there was in the very Being and Life of God an
2478 asking of which prayer on earth was to be the reflection and the outflow. It was not without
2479 including this that Jesus said, "I knew that Thou always hearest me.' Just as the Sonship of Jesus
2480 on earth may not be separated from His Sonship in heaven, even so with His prayer on earth, it
2481 is the continuation and the counterpart of His asking in heaven. The prayer of the man Christ
2482 Jesus is the link between the eternal asking of the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father
2483 and the prayer of men upon earth. Prayer has its rise and its deepest source in the very Being of
2484 God. In the bosom of Deity nothing is ever done without prayer—the asking of the Son and the
2485 giving of the Father.^1

2486

2487 This may help us somewhat to understand how the prayer of man, coming through the Son, can
2488 have effect upon God. The decrees of God are not decisions made by Him without reference to
2489 the Son, or His petition, or the petition to be sent up through Him. By no means. The Lord Jesus
2490 is the first-begotten, the Head and Heir of all things: all things were created through Him and
2491 unto Him, and all things consist in Him. In the counsels of the Father, the Son, as Representative
2492 of all creation, had always a voice; in the decrees of the eternal purpose there was always room
2493 left for the liberty of the Son as Mediator and Intercessor, and so for the petitions of all who
2494 draw nigh to the Father in the Son.

2495
2496 And if the thought come that this liberty and power of the Son to act upon the Father is at
2497 variance with the immutability of the Divine decrees, let us not forget that there is not with God
2498 as with man, a past by which He is irrevocably bound. God does not live in time with its past
2499 and future; the distinctions of time have no reference to Him who inhabits Eternity. And Eternity
2500 is an ever-present Now, in which the past is never past, and the future always present. To meet
2501 our human weakness, Scripture must speak of past decrees, and a coming future. In reality, the
2502 immutability of God's counsel is ever still in perfect harmony with His liberty to do whatsoever
2503 He will. Not so were the prayers of the Son and His people taken up into the eternal decrees that
2504 their effect should only be an apparent one; but so, that the Father-heart holds itself open and
2505 free to listen to every prayer that rises through the Son, and that God does indeed allow Himself
2506 to be decided by prayer to do what He otherwise would not have done.

2507
2508 This perfect harmony and union of Divine Sovereignty and human liberty is to us an
2509 unfathomable mystery, because God as THE ETERNAL ONE transcends all our thoughts. But
2510 let it be our comfort and strength to be assured that in the eternal fellowship of the Father and
2511 the Son, the power of prayer has its origin and certainty, and that through our union with the
2512 Son, our prayer is taken up and can have its influence in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity.
2513 God's decrees are no iron framework against which man's liberty would vainly seek to struggle.
2514 No. God Himself is the Living Love, who in His Son as man has entered into the tenderest
2515 relation with all that is human, who through the Holy Spirit takes up all that is human into the
2516 Divine life of love, and keeps Himself free to give every human prayer its place in His
2517 government of the world.

2518
2519 It is in the daybreak light of such thoughts that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity no longer is an
2520 abstract speculation, but the living manifestation of the way in which it were possible for man to
2521 be taken up into the fellowship of God, and his prayer to become a real factor in God's rule of
2522 this earth. And we can, as in the distance, catch glimpses of the light that from the eternal world
2523 shines out on words such as these: THROUGH HIM we have access BY ONE SPIRIT unto
2524 THE FATHER.'

2525
2526 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

2527
2528
2529
2530 Everlasting God! the Three-One and Thrice Holy! in deep reverence would I with veiled face
2531 worship before the holy mystery of Thy Divine Being. And if it please Thee, O most glorious
2532 God, to unveil aught of that mystery, I would bow with fear and trembling, lest I sin against
2533 Thee, as I meditate on Thy glory.

2534
2535 Father! I thank Thee that Thou bearest this name not only as the Father of Thy children here on
2536 earth, but as having from eternity subsisted as the Father with Thine only-begotten Son. I thank
2537 Thee that as Father Thou canst hear our prayer, because Thou hast from eternity given a place in
2538 Thy counsels to the asking of Thy Son. I thank Thee that we have seen in Him on earth, what the

2539 blessed intercourse was He had with Thee in heaven; and how from eternity in all Thy counsels
2540 and decrees there had been room left for His prayer and their answers. And I thank Thee above
2541 all that through His true human nature on Thy throne above, and through Thy Holy Spirit in our
2542 human nature here below, a way has been opened up by which every human cry of need can be
2543 taken up into and touch the Life and the Love of God, and receive in answer whatsoever it shall
2544 ask.

2545
2546 Blessed Jesus! in whom as the Son the path of prayer has been opened up, and who givest us
2547 assurance of the answer, we beseech Thee, teach Thy people to pray. O let this each day be the
2548 sign of our sonship, that, like Thee, we know that the Father heareth us always. Amen.

2549
2550 NOTE.

2551
2552 “God hears prayer.” This simplest view of prayer is taken throughout Scripture. It dwells not on
2553 the reflex influence of prayer on our heart and life, although it abundantly shows the connection
2554 between prayer as an act, and prayer as a state. It rather fixes with great definiteness the
2555 objective or real purposes of prayer, to obtain blessing, gifts, deliverances from God. Ask and it
2556 shall be given,” Jesus says.

2557
2558 However true and valuable the reflection may be, that God, foreseeing and foreordaining all
2559 things, has also foreseen and foreordained our prayers as links in the chain of events, of cause
2560 and effect, as a real power, yet we feel convinced that this is not the light in which the mind can
2561 find peace in this great subject, nor do we think that here is the attractive power to draw us in
2562 prayer. We feel rather that such a reflection diverts the attention from the Object whence comes
2563 the impulse, life, and strength of prayer. The living God, cotemporary and not merely eternal,^{^1}
2564 the living, merciful, holy One, God manifesting Himself to the soul, God saying, “Seek my
2565 face;” this is the magnet that draws us, this alone can open heart and lips. . .

2566
2567 In Jesus Christ the Son of God we have the full solution of the difficulty. He prayed on earth,
2568 and that not merely as man, but as the Son of God incarnate. His prayer on earth is only the
2569 manifestation of His prayer from all eternity, when in the Divine counsel He was set up as the
2570 Christ. . . . The Son was appointed to be heir of all things. From all eternity the Son of God was
2571 the Way, the Mediator. He was, to use our imperfect language, from eternity speaking unto the
2572 Father on behalf of the world.’—SAPHIR, *The Hidden Life*, chap. vi. See also *The Lord’s*
2573 *Prayer*, p. 12.

2574
2575 ^{^1}Should it not rather be cotemporary, because eternal, in the proper meaning of this latter
2576 word?

2577
2578
2579

2580
2581 EIGHTEENTH LESSON

2582
2583 Whose is this image?’

2584
2585 Or, Prayer in Harmony with the Destiny of Man.

2586
2587 He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?—Matt. xxi. 20.

2588
2589 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’—Gen. i. 26.

2590

2591 WHOSE is this image?’ It was by this question that Jesus foiled His enemies, when they thought
2592 to take Him, and settled the matter of duty in regard to the tribute. The question and the principle
2593 it involves are of universal application. Nowhere more truly than in man himself. The image he
2594 bears decides his destiny. Bearing God’s image, he belongs to God: prayer to God is what he
2595 was created for. Prayer is part of the wondrous likeness he bears to His Divine original; of the
2596 deep mystery of the fellowship of love in which the Three-One has His blessedness, prayer is
2597 the earthly image and likeness.

2598
2599 The more we meditate on what prayer is, and the wonderful power with God which it has, the
2600 more we feel constrained to ask who and what man is, that such a place in God’s counsels
2601 should have been allotted to him. Sin has so degraded him, that from what he is now we can
2602 form no conception of what he was meant to be. We must turn back to God’s own record of
2603 man’s creation to discover there what God’s purpose was, and what the capacities with which
2604 man was endowed for the fulfilment of that purpose.

2605
2606 Man’s destiny appears clearly from God’s language at creation. It was to fill, to subdue, to have
2607 dominion over the earth and all in it. All the three expressions show us that man was meant, as
2608 God’s representative, to hold rule here on earth. As God’s viceroy he was to fill God’s place:
2609 himself subject to God, he was to keep all else in subjection to Him. It was the will of God that
2610 all that was to be done on earth should be done through him: the history of the earth was to be
2611 entirely in his hands.

2612
2613 In accordance with such a destiny was the position he was to occupy, and the power at his
2614 disposal. When an earthly sovereign sends a viceroy to a distant province, it is understood that
2615 he advises as to the policy to be adopted, and that that advice is acted on: that he is at liberty to
2616 apply for troops and the other means needed for carrying out the policy or maintaining the
2617 dignity of the empire. If his policy be not approved of, he is recalled to make way for some one
2618 who better understands his sovereign’s desires’ as long as he is trusted, his advice is carried out.
2619 As God’s representative man was to have ruled; all was to have been done under his will and
2620 rule; on his advice and at his request heaven was to have bestowed its blessing on earth. His
2621 prayer was to have been the wonderful, though simple and most natural channel, in which the
2622 intercourse between the King in heaven and His faithful servant man, as lord of this world, was
2623 to have been maintained. The destinies of the world were given into the power of the wishes, the
2624 will, the prayer of man.

2625
2626 With sin all this underwent a terrible change—man’s fall brought all creation under the curse.
2627 With redemption the beginning was seen of a glorious restoration. No sooner had God begun in
2628 Abraham to form for Himself a people from whom kings, yea the Great King, should come
2629 forth, than we see what power the prayer of God’s faithful servant has to decide the destinies of
2630 those who come into contact with him. In Abraham we see how prayer is not only, or even
2631 chiefly, the means of obtaining blessing for ourselves, but is the exercise of his royal prerogative
2632 to influence the destinies of men, and the will of God which rules them. We do not once find
2633 Abraham praying for himself. His prayer for Sodom and Lot, for Abimelech, for Ishmael, prove
2634 what power a man, who is God’s friend, has to make the history of those around him.

2635
2636 This had been man’s destiny from the first. Scripture not only tells us this, but also teaches us
2637 how it was that God could entrust man with such a high calling. It was because He had created
2638 him in His own image and likeness. The external rule was not committed to him without the
2639 inner fitness: the bearing God’s image in having dominion, in being lord of all, had its root in the
2640 inner likeness, in his nature. There was an inner agreement and harmony between God and man,
2641 and incipient Godlikeness, which gave man a real fitness for being the mediator between God
2642 and His world, for he was to be prophet, priest, and king, to interpret God’s will, to represent

2643 nature's needs, to receive and dispense God's bounty. It was in bearing God's image that he
2644 could bear God's rule; he was indeed so like God, so capable of entering into God's purposes,
2645 and carrying out His plans, that God could trust him with the wonderful privilege of asking and
2646 obtaining what the world might need. And although sin has for a time frustrated God's plans,
2647 prayer still remains what it would have been if man had never fallen: the proof of man's
2648 Godlikeness, the vehicle of his intercourse with the Infinite Unseen One, the power that is
2649 allowed to hold the hand that holds the destinies of the universe. Prayer is not merely the cry of
2650 the suppliant for mercy; it is the highest forth-putting of his will by man, knowing himself to be
2651 of Divine origin, created for and capable of being, in king-like liberty, the executor of the
2652 counsels of the Eternal.

2653
2654 What sin destroyed, grace has restored. What the first Adam lost, the second has won back. In
2655 Christ man regains his original position, and the Church, abiding in Christ, inherits the promise:
2656 Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' Such a promise does by no means, in the first
2657 place, refer to the grace or blessing we need for ourselves. It has reference to our position as the
2658 fruit-bearing branches of the Heavenly Vine, who, like Him, only live for the work and glory of
2659 the Father. It is for those who abide in Him, who have forsaken self to take up their abode in
2660 Him with His life of obedience and self-sacrifice, who have lost their life and found it in Him,
2661 who are now entirely given up to the interests of the Father and His kingdom. These are they
2662 who understand how their new creation has brought them back to their original destiny, has
2663 restored God's image and likeness, and with it the power to have dominion. Such have indeed
2664 the power, each in their own circle, to obtain and dispense the powers of heaven here on earth.
2665 With holy boldness they may make known what they will: they live as priests in God's presence;
2666 as kings the powers of the world to come begin to be at their disposal. [1] They enter upon the
2667 fulfilment of the promise: Ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.'

2668
2669 Church of the living God! thy calling is higher and holier than thou knowest. Through thy
2670 members, as kings, and priests unto God, would God rule the world; their prayers bestow and
2671 withhold the blessing of heaven. In His elect who are not just content to be themselves saved,
2672 but yield themselves wholly, that through them, even as through the Son, the Father may fulfil
2673 all His glorious counsel, in these His elect, who cry day and night unto Him, God would prove
2674 how wonderful man's original destiny was. As the image-bearer of God on earth, the earth was
2675 indeed given into his hand. When he fell, all fell with him: the whole creation groaneth and
2676 travaileth in pain together. But now he is redeemed; the restoration of the original dignity has
2677 begun. It is in very deed God's purpose that the fulfilment of His eternal purpose, and the
2678 coming of His kingdom, should depend on those of His people who, abiding in Christ, are ready
2679 to take up their position in Him their Head, the great Priest-King, and in their prayers are bold
2680 enough to say what they will that their God should do. As image-bearer and representative of
2681 God on earth, redeemed man has by his prayers to determine the history of this earth. Man was
2682 created, and has now again been redeemed, to pray, and by his prayer to have dominion.

2683
2684 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

2685
2686
2687
2688 Lord! what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? for
2689 Thou has made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
2690 Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things under
2691 his feet. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!

2692
2693 Lord God! how low has sin made man to sink. And how terribly has it darkened his mind, that
2694 he does not even know his Divine destiny, to be Thy servant and representative. Alas! that even

2695 Thy people, when their eyes are opened, are so little ready to accept their calling and to seek to
2696 have power with God, that they may have power with men too to bless them.

2697
2698 Lord Jesus! it is in Thee the Father hath again crowned man with glory and honour, and opened
2699 the way for us to be what He would have us. O Lord, have mercy on Thy people, and visit Thine
2700 heritage! Work mightily in Thy Church, and teach Thy believing disciples to go forth in their
2701 royal priesthood, and in the power of prayer, to which Thou hast given such wonderful
2702 promises, to serve Thy kingdom, to have rule over the nations, and make the name of God
2703 glorious in the earth. Amen.

2704
2705 [1] God is seeking priests among the sons of men. A human priesthood is one of the essential
2706 parts of His eternal plan. To rule creation by man is His design; to carry on the worship of
2707 creation by man is no less part of His design. Priesthood is the appointed link between heaven
2708 and earth, the channel of intercourse between the sinner and God. Such a priesthood, in so far as
2709 expiation is concerned, is in the hands of the Son of God alone; in so far as it is to be the
2710 medium of communication between Creator and creature, is also in the hands of redeemed
2711 men—of the Church of God. God is seeking kings. Not out of the ranks of angels. Fallen man
2712 must furnish Him with the rulers of His universe. Human hands must wield the sceptre, human
2713 heads must wear the crown.—The Rent Veil, by Dr. H. Bonar.

2714
2715
2716

2717 NINETEENTH LESSON.

2718
2719 I go unto the Father!'

2720
2721 Or, Power for Praying and Working.

2722
2723 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and
2724 greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask
2725 in my Name, that will I do.'—John xiv. 12, 13.

2726
2727 AS the Saviour opened His public ministry with His disciples by the Sermon on the Mount, so
2728 He closes it by the Parting Address preserved to us by John. In both He speaks more than once
2729 of prayer. But with a difference. In the Sermon on the Mount it is as to disciples who have only
2730 just entered His school, who scarcely know that God is their Father, and whose prayer chiefly
2731 has reference to their personal needs. In His closing address He speaks to disciples whose
2732 training time is now come to an end, and who are ready as His messengers to take His place and
2733 His work. In the former the chief lesson is: Be childlike, pray believingly, and trust the Father
2734 that He will give you all good gifts. Here He points to something higher: They are now His
2735 friends to whom He has made known all that He has heard of the Father; His messengers, who
2736 have entered into His plans, and into whose hands the care of His work and kingdom on earth is
2737 to be entrusted. They are now to go out and do His works, and in the power of His approaching
2738 exaltation, even greater works: prayer is now to be the channel through which that power is to be
2739 received for their work. With Christ's ascension to the Father a new epoch commences for their
2740 working and praying both.

2741
2742 See how clearly this connection comes out in our text. As His body here on earth, as those who
2743 are one with Him in heaven, they are now to do greater works than He had done; their success
2744 and their victories are to be greater than His. He mentions two reasons for this. The one, because
2745 He was to go to the Father, to receive all power; the other, because they might now ask and
2746 expect all in His Name. Because I go to the Father, and—notice this and—and, whatsoever ye

2747 shall ask, I will do.' His going to the Father would thus bring the double blessing: they would
2748 ask and receive all in His Name, and as a consequence, would do the greater works. This first
2749 mention of prayer in our Saviour's parting words thus teaches us two most important lessons. He
2750 that would do the works of Jesus must pray in His Name. He that would pray in His Name must
2751 work in His Name.

2752
2753 He who would work must pray: it is in prayer that the power for work is obtained. He that in
2754 faith would do the works that Jesus did, must pray in His Name. As long as Jesus was here on
2755 earth, He Himself did the greatest works: devils the disciples could not cast out, fled at His
2756 word. When He went to the Father, He was no longer here in the body to work directly. The
2757 disciples were now His body: all His work from the throne in heaven here on earth must and
2758 could be done through them. One might have thought that now He was leaving the scene
2759 Himself, and could only work through commissioners, the works might be fewer and weaker.
2760 He assures us of the contrary: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works
2761 that I do shall he do also, and he shall do greater works.' His approaching death was to be such a
2762 real breaking down and making an end of the power of sin; with the resurrection the powers of
2763 the Eternal Life were so truly to take possession of the human body and to obtain supremacy
2764 over human life; with His ascension He was to receive the power to communicate the Holy
2765 Spirit so fully to His own; the union, the oneness between Himself on the throne and them on
2766 earth, was to be so intensely and divinely perfect, that He meant it as the literal truth: Greater
2767 works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father.' And the issue proved how true it was.
2768 While Jesus, during three years of personal labour on earth, gathered little more than five
2769 hundred disciples, and the most of them so feeble that they were but little credit to His cause, it
2770 was given to men like Peter and Paul manifestly to do greater things than He had done. From the
2771 throne He could do through them what He Himself in His humiliation could not yet do.

2772
2773 But there is one condition: He that believeth on me, he shall do greater works, because I go to
2774 the Father; and whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.' His going to the Father
2775 would give Him a new power to hear prayer. For the doing of the greater works, two things were
2776 needed: His going to the Father to receive all power, our prayer in His Name to receive all
2777 power from Him again. As He asks the Father, He receives and bestows on us the power of the
2778 new dispensation for the greater works; as we believe, and ask in His Name, the power comes
2779 and takes possession of us to do the greater works.

2780
2781 Alas! how much working there is in the work of God, in which there is little or nothing to be
2782 seen of the power to do anything like Christ's works, not to speak of greater works. There can be
2783 but one reason: the believing on Him, the believing prayer in His Name, this is so much
2784 wanting. O that every labourer and leader in church, or school, in the work of home
2785 philanthropy or foreign missions might learn the lesson: Prayer in the Name of Jesus is the way
2786 to share in the mighty power which Jesus has received of the Father for His people, and it is in
2787 this power alone that he that believeth can do the greater works. To every complaint as to
2788 weakness or unfitness, as to difficulties or want of success, Jesus gives this one answer: He that
2789 believeth on me shall do greater works, because I go to the Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask
2790 in my Name, that will I do.' We must understand that the first and chief thing for everyone who
2791 would do the work of Jesus, is to believe, and so to get linked to Him, the Almighty One, and
2792 then to pray the prayer of faith in His Name. Without this our work is but human and carnal; it
2793 may have some use in restraining sin, or preparing the way for blessing, but the real power is
2794 wanting. Effectual working needs first effectual prayer.

2795
2796 And now the second lesson: He who would pray must work. It is for power to work that prayer
2797 has such great promises: it is in working that the power for the effectual prayer of faith will be
2798 gained. In these parting words of our blessed Lord we find that He no less than six times (John

2799 xiv. 13, 14, xv. 7, 16, xvi. 23, 24) repeats those unlimited prayer-promises which have so often
2800 awakened our anxious questionings as to their real meaning: whatsoever, ' anything, ' what ye
2801 will, ' ask and ye shall receive. ' How many a believer has read these over with joy and hope, and
2802 in deep earnestness of soul has sought to plead them for his own need. And he has come out
2803 disappointed. The simple reason was this: he had rent away the promise from its surrounding.
2804 The Lord gave the wonderful promise of the free use of His Name with the Father in connection
2805 with the doing of His works. It is the disciple who gives himself wholly to live for Jesus' work
2806 and kingdom, for His will and honour, to whom the power will come to appropriate the promise.
2807 He that would fain grasp the promise when he wants something very special for himself, will be
2808 disappointed, because he would make Jesus the servant of his own comfort. But to him who
2809 seeks to pray the effectual prayer of faith, because he needs it for the work of the Master, to him
2810 it will be given to learn it; because he has made himself the servant of his Lord's interests.
2811 Prayer not only teaches and strengthens to work: work teaches and strengthens to pray.

2812
2813 This is in perfect harmony with what holds good both in the natural and the spiritual world.
2814 Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; or, He that is faithful in a little, is faithful also in much.
2815 Let us with the small measure of grace already received, give ourselves to the Master for His
2816 work: work will be to us a real school of prayer. It was when Moses had to take full charge of a
2817 rebellious people that he felt the need, but also the courage, to speak boldly to God and to ask
2818 great things of Him (Ex. xxxiii. 12, 15, 18). As you give yourself entirely to God for His work,
2819 you will feel that nothing less than these great promises are what you need, that nothing less is
2820 what you may most confidently expect.

2821
2822 Believer in Jesus! You are called, you are appointed, to do the works of Jesus, and even greater
2823 works, because He has gone to the Father to receive the power to do them in and through you.

2824
2825 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. Give yourself, and live, to do the works of
2826 Christ and you will learn to pray so as to obtain wonderful answers to prayer. Give yourself, and
2827 live, to pray and you will learn to do the works He did, and greater works. With disciples full of
2828 faith in Himself, and bold in prayer to ask great things, Christ can conquer the world.

2829
2830 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY. '

2831
2832
2833
2834 O my Lord! I have this day again heard words from Thee which pass my comprehension. And
2835 yet I cannot do aught but in simple childlike faith take and keep them as Thy gift to me too.
2836 Thou hast said that in virtue of Thy going to the Father, he that believeth on Thee will do the
2837 works which Thou hast done, and greater works. Lord! I worship Thee as the Glorified One, and
2838 look for the fulfilment of Thy promise. May my whole life just be one of continued believing in
2839 Thee. So purify and sanctify my heart, make it so tenderly susceptible of Thyself and Thy love,
2840 that believing on Thee may be the very life it breathes.

2841
2842 And Thou hast said that in virtue of Thy going to the Father, whatsoever we ask, Thou wilt do.
2843 From Thy throne of power Thou wouldest make Thy people share the power given Thee, and
2844 work through them as the members of Thy body, in response to their believing prayers in Thy
2845 Name. Power in prayer with Thee, and power in work with men, is what Thou has promised Thy
2846 people and me too.

2847
2848 Blessed Lord! Forgive us all that we have so little believed Thee and Thy promise, and so little
2849 proved Thy faithfulness in fulfilling it. O forgive us that we have so little honoured Thy all-
2850 prevailing Name in heaven or upon earth.

2851
2852 Lord! Teach me to pray so that I may prove that Thy Name is indeed all-prevailing with God
2853 and men and devils. Yea, teach me so to work and so to pray that Thou canst glorify Thyself in
2854 me as the Omnipotent One, and do Thy great work through me too. Amen.

2855
2856
2857
2858 TWENTIETH LESSON.

2859
2860 That the Father may be glorified;’

2861
2862 Or, The Chief End of Prayer.

2863
2864 I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father
2865 may be glorified in the Son.’—John xiv. 13.

2866
2867 THAT the Father may be glorified in the Son: it is to this end that Jesus on His throne in glory
2868 will do all we ask in His Name. Every answer to prayer He gives will have this as its object:
2869 when there is no prospect of this object being obtained, He will not answer. It follows as a
2870 matter of course that this must be with us, as with Jesus, the essential element in our petitions:
2871 the glory of the Father must be the aim and end, the very soul and life of our prayer.

2872
2873 It was so with Jesus when He was on earth. I seek not mine own honour: I seek the honour of
2874 Him that sent me;’ in such words we have the keynote of His life. In the first words of the high-
2875 priestly prayer He gives utterance to it: Father! Glorify Thy son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee.
2876 I have glorified Thee on earth; glorify me with Thyself.’ The ground on which He asks to be
2877 taken up into the glory He had with the Father, is the twofold one: He has glorified Him on
2878 earth; He will still glorify Him in heaven. What He asks is only to enable Him to glorify the
2879 Father more. It is as we enter into sympathy with Jesus on this point, and gratify Him by making
2880 the Father’s glory our chief object in prayer too, that our prayer cannot fail of an answer. There
2881 is nothing of which the Beloved Son has said more distinctly that it will glorify the Father than
2882 this, His doing what we ask; He will not, therefore, let any opportunity slip of securing this
2883 object. Let us make His aim ours: let the glory of the Father be the link between our asking and
2884 His doing: such prayer must prevail.^1

2885
2886 This word of Jesus comes indeed as a sharp two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of
2887 soul and spirit, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus in His prayers on
2888 earth, in His intercession in heaven, in His promise of an answer to our prayers from there,
2889 makes this His first object—the glory of His Father. Is it so with us too? Or are not, in large
2890 measure, self-interest and self-will the strongest motives urging us to pray? Or, if we cannot see
2891 that this is the case, have we not to acknowledge that the distinct, conscious longing for the
2892 glory of the Father is not what animates our prayers? And yet it must be so.

2893
2894 Not as if the believer does not at times desire it. But he has to mourn that he has so little
2895 attained. And he knows the reason of his failure too. It was, because the separation between the
2896 spirit of daily life and the spirit of the hour of prayer was too wide. We begin to see that the
2897 desire for the glory of the Father is not something that we can awake and present to our Lord
2898 when we prepare ourselves to pray. No! it is only when the whole life, in all its parts, is given up
2899 to God’s glory, that we can really pray to His glory too. Do all to the glory of God,’ and, Ask all
2900 to the glory of God,’—these twin commands are inseparable: obedience to the former is the
2901 secret of grace for the latter. A life to the glory of God is the condition of the prayers that Jesus
2902 can answer, that the Father may be glorified.’

2903
2904 This demand in connection with prevailing prayer—that it should be to the glory of God—is no
2905 more than right and natural. There is none glorious but the Lord: there is no glory but His, and
2906 what He layeth on His creatures. Creation exists to show forth His glory; all that is not for His
2907 glory is sin, and darkness, and death: it is only in the glorifying of God that the creatures can
2908 find glory. What the Son of Man did, to give Himself wholly, His whole life, to glorify the
2909 Father, is nothing but the simple duty of every redeemed one. And Christ's reward will be his
2910 too. Because He gave Himself so entirely to the glory of the Father, the Father crowned Him
2911 with glory and honour, giving the kingdom into His hands, with the power to ask what He will,
2912 and, as Intercessor, to answer our prayers. And just as we become one with Christ in this, and as
2913 our prayer is part of a life utterly surrendered to God's glory, will the Saviour be able to glorify
2914 the Father to us by the fulfilment of the promise: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask, I will do it.'

2915
2916 To such a life, with God's glory our only aim, we cannot attain by any effort of our own. It is
2917 only in the man Christ Jesus that such a life is to be seen: in Him it is to be found for us. Yes
2918 blessed be God! His life is our life; He gave Himself for us; He Himself is now our life. The
2919 discovery, and the confession, and the denial, of self, as usurping the place of God, of self-
2920 seeking and self-trusting, is essential, and yet is what we cannot accomplish in our own strength.
2921 It is the incoming and indwelling, the Presence and the Rule in the heart, of our Lord Jesus who
2922 glorified the Father on earth, and is now glorified with Him, that thence He might glorify Him in
2923 us;—it is Jesus Himself coming in, who can cast out all self-glorifying, and give us instead His
2924 own God-glorifying life and Spirit. It is Jesus, who longs to glorify the Father in hearing our
2925 prayers, who will teach us to live and to pray to the glory of God.

2926
2927 And what motive, what power is there that can urge our slothful hearts to yield themselves to
2928 our Lord to work this in us? Surely nothing more is needed than a sight of how glorious, how
2929 alone worthy of glory the Father is. Let our faith learn in adoring worship to bow before Him, to
2930 ascribe to Him alone the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, to yield ourselves to dwell in
2931 His light as the ever-blessed, ever-loving One. Surely we shall be stirred to say, 'To Him alone
2932 be glory.' And we shall look to our Lord Jesus with new intensity of desire for a life that refuses
2933 to see or seek ought but the glory of God. When there is but little prayer that can be answered,
2934 the Father is not glorified. It is a duty, for the glory of God, to live and pray so that our prayer
2935 can be answered. For the sake of God's glory, let us learn to pray well.

2936
2937 What a humbling thought that so often there is earnest prayer for a child or a friend, for a work
2938 or a circle, in which the thought of our joy or our pleasure was far stronger than any yearnings
2939 for God's glory. No wonder that there are so many unanswered prayers: here we have the secret.
2940 God would not be glorified when that glory was not our object. He that would pray the prayer of
2941 faith, will have to give himself to live literally so that the Father in all things may be glorified in
2942 him. This must be his aim: without this there cannot be the prayer of faith. How can ye believe,'
2943 said Jesus, which receive glory of one another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye
2944 seek not?' All seeking of our own glory with men makes faith impossible: it is the deep, intense
2945 self-sacrifice that gives up its own glory, and seeks the glory of God alone, that wakens in the
2946 soul that spiritual susceptibility of the Divine, which is faith. The surrender to God to seek His
2947 glory, and the expectation that He will show His glory in hearing us, are one at root: He that
2948 seeks God's glory will see it in the answer to his prayer, and he alone.

2949
2950 And how, we ask again, shall we attain to it? Let us begin with confession. How little has the
2951 glory of God been an all-absorbing passion; how little our lives and our prayers have been full
2952 of it. How little have we lived in the likeness of the Son, and in sympathy with Him—for God
2953 and His glory alone. Let us take time, until the Holy Spirit discover it to us, and we see how

2954 wanting we have been in this. True knowledge and confession of sin are the sure path to
2955 deliverance.

2956
2957 And then let us look to Jesus. In Him we can see by what death we can glorify God. In death He
2958 glorified Him; through death He was glorified with Him. It is by dying, being dead to self and
2959 living to God, that we can glorify Him. And this—this death to self, this life to the glory of
2960 God—is what Jesus gives and lives in each one who can trust Him for it. Let nothing less than
2961 these—the desire, the decision to live only for the glory of the Father, even as Christ did; the
2962 acceptance of Him with His life and strength working it in us; the joyful assurance that we can
2963 live to the glory of God, because Christ lives in us;—let this be the spirit of our daily life. Jesus
2964 stands surety for our living thus; the Holy Spirit is given, and waiting to make it our experience,
2965 if we will only trust and let Him; O let us not hold back through unbelief, but confidently take as
2966 our watchword—All to the glory of God! The Father accepts the will, the sacrifice is well-
2967 pleasing; the Holy Spirit will seal us within with the consciousness, we are living for God and
2968 His glory.

2969
2970 And then what quiet peace and power there will be in our prayers, as we know ourselves through
2971 His grace, in perfect harmony with Him who says to us, when He promises to do what we ask:
2972 That the Father may be glorified in the Son.’ With our whole being consciously yielded to the
2973 inspiration of the Word and Spirit, our desires will be no longer ours but His; their chief end the
2974 glory of God. With increasing liberty we shall be able in prayer to say: Father! Thou knowest,
2975 we ask it only for Thy glory. And the condition of prayer-answers, instead of being as a
2976 mountain we cannot climb, will only give us the greater confidence that we shall be heard,
2977 because we have seen that prayer has no higher beauty or blessedness than this, that it glorifies
2978 the Father. And the precious privilege of prayer will become doubly precious because it brings
2979 us into perfect unison with the Beloved Son in the wonderful partnership He proposes: You ask,
2980 and I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.’

2981
2982 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

2983
2984
2985
2986 Blessed Lord Jesus! I come again to Thee. Every lesson Thou givest me convinces me more
2987 deeply how little I know to pray aright. But every lesson also inspires me with hope that Thou
2988 art going to teach me, that Thou art teaching me not only to know what prayer should be, but
2989 actually to pray as I ought. O my Lord! I look with courage to Thee, the Great Intercessor, who
2990 didst pray and dost hear prayer, only that the Father may be glorified, to teach me too to live and
2991 to pray to the glory of God.

2992
2993 Saviour! To this end I yield myself to Thee again. I would be nothing. I have given self, as
2994 already crucified with Thee, to the death. Through the Spirit its workings are mortified and made
2995 dead; Thy life and Thy love of the Father are taking possession of me. A new longing begins to
2996 fill my soul, that every day, every hour, that in every prayer the glory of the Father may be
2997 everything to me. O my Lord! I am in Thy school to learn this: teach Thou it me.

2998
2999 And do Thou, the God of glory, the Father of glory, my God and my Father, accept the desire of
3000 a child who has seen that Thy glory is indeed alone worth living for. O Lord! Show me Thy
3001 glory. Let it overshadow me. Let it fill the temple of my heart. Let me dwell in it as revealed in
3002 Christ. And do Thou Thyself fulfil in me Thine own good pleasure, that Thy child should find
3003 his glory in seeking the glory of his Father. Amen.

3004

3005 ^1See in the note on George Muller, at the close of this volume, how he was led to make God's
3006 glory his first object.

3007
3008
3009

3010 TWENTY-FIRST LESSON.

3011
3012 If ye abide in me;'

3013
3014 Or The All-Inclusive Condition.

3015
3016 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto
3017 you.'—John xv. 7.

3018
3019 IN all God's intercourse with us, the promise and its conditions are inseparable. If we fulfil the
3020 conditions, He fulfils the promise. What He is to be to us depends upon what we are willing to
3021 be to Him. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.' And so in prayer the unlimited
3022 promise, Ask whatsoever ye will, has its one simple and natural condition, if ye abide in me. It is
3023 Christ whom the Father always hears; God is in Christ, and can only be reached by being in
3024 Him; to be IN HIM is the way to have our prayer heard; fully and wholly ABIDING IN HIM,
3025 we have the right to ask whatsoever we will, and the promise that it shall be done unto us.

3026
3027 When we compare this promise with the experiences of most believers, we are startled by a
3028 terrible discrepancy. Who can number up the countless prayers that rise and bring no answer?
3029 The cause must be either that we do not fulfil the condition, or God does not fulfil the promise.
3030 Believers are not willing to admit either, and therefore have devised a way of escape from the
3031 dilemma. They put into the promise the qualifying clause our Saviour did not put there—if it be
3032 God's will; and so maintain both God's integrity and their own. O if they did but accept it and
3033 hold it fast as it stands, trusting to Christ to vindicate His truth, how God's Spirit would lead
3034 them to see the Divine propriety of such a promise to those who really abide in Christ in the
3035 sense in which He means it, and to confess that the failure in the fulfilling the condition is the
3036 one sufficient explanation of unanswered prayer. And how the Holy Spirit would then make our
3037 feebleness in prayer one of the mightiest motives to urge us on to discover the secret, and obtain
3038 the blessing, of full abiding in Christ.

3039
3040 If ye abide in me.' As a Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus, he is
3041 often surprised to find how the words of God grow too, in the new and deeper meaning with
3042 which they come to him. He can look back to the day when some word of God was opened up to
3043 him and he rejoiced in the blessing he had found in it. After a time some deeper experience gave
3044 it a new meaning, and it was as if he never had seen what it contained. And yet once again, as he
3045 advanced in the Christian life, the same word stood before him again as a great mystery, until
3046 anew the Holy Spirit led him still deeper into its Divine fulness. One of these ever-growing,
3047 never-exhausted words, opening up to us step by step the fulness of the Divine life, is the
3048 Master's precious Abide in me.' As the union of the branch with the vine is one of growth,
3049 never-ceasing growth and increase, so our abiding in Christ is a life process in which the Divine
3050 life takes ever fuller and more complete possession of us. The young and feeble believer may be
3051 really abiding in Christ up to the measure of his light; it is he who reaches onward to the full
3052 abiding in the sense in which the Master understood the words, who inherits all the promises
3053 connected with it.

3054
3055 In the growing life of abiding in Christ, the first stage is that of faith. As the believer sees that,
3056 with all his feebleness, the command is really meant for him, his great aim is simply to believe

3057 that, as he knows he is in Christ, so now, notwithstanding unfaithfulness and failure, abiding in
3058 Christ is his immediate duty, and a blessing within his reach. He is specially occupied with the
3059 love, and power, and faithfulness of the Saviour: he feels his one need to be believing.

3060
3061 It is not long before he sees something more is needed. Obedience and faith must go together.
3062 Not as if to the faith he has the obedience must be added, but faith must be made manifest in
3063 obedience. Faith is obedience at home and looking to the Master: obedience is faith going out to
3064 do His will. He sees how he has been more occupied with the privilege and the blessings of this
3065 abiding than with its duties and its fruit. There has been much of self and of self-will that has
3066 been unnoticed or tolerated: the peace which, as a young and feeble disciple, he could enjoy in
3067 believing goes from him; it is in practical obedience that the abiding must be maintained: If ye
3068 keep my commands, ye shall abide in my love.' As before his great aim was through the mind,
3069 and the truth it took hold of, to let the heart rest on Christ and His promises; so now, in this
3070 stage, he chief effort is to get his will united with the will of his Lord, and the heart and the life
3071 brought entirely under His rule.

3072
3073 And yet it is as if there is something wanting. The will and the heart are on Christ's side; he
3074 obeys and he loves his Lord. But still, why is it that the fleshly nature has yet so much power,
3075 that the spontaneous motions and emotions of the inmost being are not what they should be? The
3076 will does not approve or allow, but here is a region beyond control of the will. And why also,
3077 even when there is not so much of positive commission to condemn, why so much of omission,
3078 the deficiency of that beauty of holiness, that zeal of love, that conformity to Jesus and His
3079 death, in which the life of self is lost, and which is surely implied in the abiding, as the Master
3080 meant it? There must surely be something in our abiding in Christ and Christ in us, which he has
3081 not yet experienced.

3082
3083 It is so. Faith and obedience are but the pathway of blessing. Before giving us the parable of the
3084 vine and the branches, Jesus had very distinctly told what the full blessing is to which faith and
3085 obedience are to lead. Three times over He had said, If ye love me, keep my commandments,'
3086 and spoken of the threefold blessing with which He would crown such obedient love. The Holy
3087 Spirit would come from the Father; the Son would manifest Himself; the Father and the Son
3088 would come and make their abode. It is as our faith grows into obedience, and in obedience and
3089 love our whole being goes out and clings itself to Christ, that our inner life becomes opened up,
3090 and the capacity is formed within of receiving the life, the spirit, of the glorified Jesus, as a
3091 distinct and conscious union with Christ and with the Father. The word is fulfilled in us: In that
3092 day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you.' We understand how, just
3093 as Christ is in God, and God in Christ, one together not only in will and in love, but in identity
3094 of nature and life, because they exist in each other, so we are in Christ and Christ in us, in union
3095 not only of will and love, but of life and nature too.

3096
3097 It was after Jesus had spoken of our thus through the Holy Spirit knowing that He is in the
3098 Father, and even so we in Him and He in us, that He said, Abide in me, and I in you. Accept,
3099 consent to receive that Divine life of union with myself, in virtue of which, as you abide in me, I
3100 also abide in you, even as I abide in the Father. So that your life is mine and mine is yours.' This
3101 is the true abiding, the occupying of the position in which Christ can come and abide; so abiding
3102 in Him that the soul has come away from self to find that He has taken the place and become our
3103 life. It is the becoming as little children who have no care, and find their happiness in trusting
3104 and obeying the love that has done all for them.

3105
3106 To those who thus abide, the promise comes as their rightful heritage: Ask whatsoever ye will. It
3107 cannot be otherwise. Christ has got full possession of them. Christ dwells in their love, their
3108 will, their life. Not only has their will been given up; Christ has entered it, and dwells and

3109 breathes in it by His Spirit. He whom the Father always hears, prays in them; they pray in Him:
3110 what they ask shall be done unto them.

3111
3112 Beloved fellow-believer! let us confess that it is because we do not abide in Christ as He would
3113 have us, that the Church is so impotent in presence of the infidelity and worldliness and
3114 heathendom, in the midst of which the Lord is able to make her more than conqueror. Let us
3115 believe that He means what He promises, and accept the condemnation the confession implies.

3116
3117 But let us not be discouraged. The abiding of the branch in the Vine is a life of never-ceasing
3118 growth. The abiding, as the Master meant it, is within our reach, for He lives to give it us. Let us
3119 but be ready to count all things loss, and to say, Not as though I had already attained; I follow
3120 after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' Let us not
3121 be so much occupied with the abiding, as with Him to whom the abiding links us, and His
3122 fulness. Let it be Him, the whole Christ, in His obedience and humiliation, in His exaltation and
3123 power, in whom our soul moves and acts; He Himself will fulfil His promise in us.

3124
3125 And then as we abide, and grow evermore into the full abiding, let us exercise our right, the will
3126 to enter into all God's will. Obeying what that will commands, let us claim what it promises. Let
3127 us yield to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to show each of us, according to his growth and
3128 measure, what the will of God is which we may claim in prayer. And let us rest content with
3129 nothing less than the personal experience of what Jesus gave when He said, If ye abide in me,
3130 ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.'

3131
3132 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!'

3133
3134
3135
3136 Beloved Lord! do teach me to take this promise anew in all its simplicity, and to be sure that the
3137 only measure of Thy holy giving is our holy willing. Lord! Let each word of this Thy promise
3138 be anew made quick and powerful in my soul.

3139
3140 Thou sayest: Abide in me! O my Master, my Life, my All, I do abide in Thee. Give Thou me to
3141 grow up into all Thy fulness. It is not the effort of faith, seeking to cling to Thee, nor even the
3142 rest of faith, trusting Thee to keep me; it is not the obedience of the will, nor the keeping the
3143 commandments; but it is Thyself living in me and in the Father, that alone can satisfy me. It is
3144 Thy self, my Lord, no longer before me and above me, but one with me, and abiding in me; it is
3145 this I need, it is this I seek. It is this I trust Thee for.

3146
3147 Thou sayest: Ask whatsoever ye will! Lord! I know that the life of full, deep abiding will so
3148 renew and sanctify and strengthen the will that I shall have the light and the liberty to ask great
3149 things. Lord! let my will, dead in Thy death, living in Thy life, be bold and large in its petitions.

3150
3151 Thou sayest: It shall be done. O Thou who art the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, give me
3152 in Thyself the joyous confidence that Thou wilt make this word yet more wonderfully true to me
3153 than ever, because it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared
3154 for them that love Him. Amen.

3155
3156 NOTE

3157
3158 On a thoughtful comparison of what we mostly find in books or sermons on prayer, and the
3159 teaching of the Master, we shall find one great difference: the importance assigned to the answer
3160 to prayer is by no means the same. In the former we find a great deal on the blessing of prayer as

3161 a spiritual exercise even if there be no answer, and on the reasons why we should be content
3162 without it. God's fellowship ought to be more to us than the gift we ask; God's wisdom only
3163 knows what is best; God may bestow something better than what He withholds. Though this
3164 teaching looks very high and spiritual, it is remarkable that we find nothing of it with our Lord.
3165 The more carefully we gather together all He spoke on prayer, the clearer it becomes that He
3166 wished us to think of prayer simply as the means to an end, and that the answer was to be the
3167 proof that we and our prayer are acceptable to the Father in heaven. It is not that Christ would
3168 have us count the gifts of higher value than the fellowship and favour of the Father. By no
3169 means. But the Father means the answer to be the token of His favour and of the reality of our
3170 fellowship with Him. To-day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord,
3171 O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.'

3172
3173 A life marked by daily answer to prayer is the proof of our spiritual maturity; that we have
3174 indeed attained to the true abiding in Christ; that our will is truly at one with God's will; that our
3175 faith has grown strong to see and take what God has prepared for us; that the Name of Christ
3176 and His nature have taken full possession of us; and that we have been found fit to take a place
3177 among those whom God admits to His counsels, and according to whose prayer He rules the
3178 world. These are they in whom something of man's original dignity hath been restored, in
3179 whom, as they abide in Christ, His power as the all-prevailing Intercessor can manifest itself, in
3180 whom the glory of His Name is shown forth. Prayer is very blessed; the answer is more blessed
3181 still, as the response from the Father that our prayer, our faith, our will are indeed as He would
3182 wish them to be.

3183
3184 I make these remarks with the one desire of leading my readers themselves to put together all
3185 that Christ has said on prayer, and to yield themselves to the full impression of the truth that
3186 when prayer is what it should be, or rather when we are what we should be, abiding in Christ,
3187 the answer must be expected. It will bring us out from those refuges where we have comforted
3188 ourselves with unanswered prayer. It will discover to us the place of power to which Christ has
3189 appointed His Church, and which it so little occupies. It will reveal the terrible feebleness of our
3190 spiritual life as the cause of our not knowing to pray boldly in Christ's Name. It will urge us
3191 mightily to rise to a life in the full union with Christ, and in the fulness of the Spirit, as the secret
3192 of effectual prayer. And it will so lead us on to realize our destiny: At that day: Verily, verily, I
3193 say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my Name: ask, and ye
3194 shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled.' Prayer that is really, spiritually, in union with
3195 Jesus, is always answered.

3196
3197
3198

3199 TWENTY-SECOND LESSON.

3200
3201 My words in you.'

3202

3203 Or, The Word and Prayer.

3204

3205 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto
3206 you.'—John xv. 7.

3207

3208 THE vital connection between the word and prayer is one of the simplest and earliest lessons of
3209 the Christian life. As that newly-converted heathen put it: I pray—I speak to my father; I read—
3210 my Father speaks to me. Before prayer, it is God's word that prepares me for it by revealing
3211 what the Father has bid me ask. In prayer, it is God's word strengthens me by giving my faith its
3212 warrant and its plea. And after prayer, it is God's word that brings me the answer when I have

3213 prayed, for in it the Spirit gives me to hear the Father's voice. Prayer is not monologue but
3214 dialogue; God's voice in response to mine in its most essential part. Listening to God's voice is
3215 the secret of the assurance that He will listen to mine. Incline thine ear, and hear;' Give ear to
3216 me;' Harken to my voice;' are words which God speaks to man as well as man to God. His
3217 hearkening will depend on ours; the entrance His words find with me, will be the measure of the
3218 power of my words with Him. What God's words are to me, is the test of what He Himself is to
3219 me, and so of the uprightness of my desire after Him in prayer.

3220

3221 It is this connection between His word and our prayer that Jesus points to when He says, If ye
3222 abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'
3223 The deep importance of this truth becomes clear if we notice the other expression of which this
3224 one has taken the place. More than once Jesus had said, "Abide in me and I in you.' His abiding
3225 in us was the complement and the crown of our abiding in Him. But here, instead of Ye in me
3226 and I in you,' He says, Ye in me and my words in you.' His words abiding are the equivalent of
3227 Himself abiding.

3228

3229 What a view is here opened up to us of the place the words of God in Christ are to have in our
3230 spiritual life, and especially in our prayer. In a man's words he reveals himself. In his promises
3231 he gives himself away, he binds himself to the one who receives his promise. In his commands
3232 he sets forth his will, seeks to make himself master of him whose obedience he claims, to guide
3233 and use him as if he were part of himself. It is through our words that spirit holds fellowship
3234 with spirit, that the spirit of one man passes over and transfers itself into another. It is through
3235 the words of a man, heard and accepted, and held fast and obeyed, that he can impart himself to
3236 another. But all this in a very relative and limited sense.

3237

3238 But when God, the infinite Being, in whom everything is life and power, spirit and truth, in the
3239 very deepest meaning of the words,—when God speaks forth Himself in His words, He does
3240 indeed give HIMSELF, His Love and His Life, His Will and His Power, to those who receive
3241 these words, in a reality passing comprehension. In every promise He puts Himself in our power
3242 to lay hold of and possess; in every command He puts Himself in our power for us to share with
3243 Him His Will, His Holiness, His Perfection. In God's Word God gives us HIMSELF; His Word
3244 is nothing less than the Eternal Son, Christ Jesus. And so all Christ's words are God's words,
3245 full of a Divine quickening life and power. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and
3246 they are life.'

3247

3248 Those who have made the deaf and dumb their study, tell us how much the power of speaking
3249 depends on that of hearing, and how the loss of hearing in children is followed by that of
3250 speaking too. This is true in a wider sense: as we hear, so we speak. This is true in the highest
3251 sense of our intercourse with God. To offer a prayer—to give utterance to certain wishes and to
3252 appeal to certain promises—is an easy thing, and can be learned of man by human wisdom. But
3253 to pray in the Spirit, to speak words that reach and touch God, that affect and influence the
3254 powers of the unseen world,—such praying, such speaking, depends entirely upon our hearing
3255 God's voice. Just as far as we listen to the voice and language that God speaks, and in the words
3256 of God receive His thoughts, His mind, His life, into our heart, we shall learn to speak in the
3257 voice and the language that God hears. It is the ear of the learner, wakened morning by morning,
3258 that prepares for the tongue of the learned, to speak to God as well as men, as should be (Isa. 1.
3259 4).

3260

3261 This hearing the voice of God is something more than the thoughtful study of the Word. There
3262 may be a study and knowledge of the Word, in which there is but little real fellowship with the
3263 living God. But there is also a reading of the Word, in the very presence of the Father, and under
3264 the leading of the Spirit, in which the Word comes to us in living power from God Himself; it is

3265 to us the very voice of the Father, a real personal fellowship with Himself. It is the living voice
3266 of God that enters the heart, that brings blessing and strength, and awakens the response of a
3267 living faith that reaches the heart of God again.

3268
3269 It is on this hearing the voice, that the power both to obey and believe depends. The chief thing
3270 is, not to know what God has said we must do, but that God Himself says it to us. It is not the
3271 law, and not the book, not the knowledge of what is right, that works obedience, but the personal
3272 influence of God and His living fellowship. And even so it is not the knowledge of what God
3273 has promised, but the presence of God Himself as the Promiser, that awakens faith and trust in
3274 prayer. It is only in the full presence of God that disobedience and unbelief become impossible.

3275
3276 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.’
3277 We see what this means. In the words the Saviour gives Himself. We must have the words in us,
3278 taken up into our will and life, reproduced in our disposition and conduct. We must have them
3279 abiding in us: our whole life one continued exposition of the words that are within, and filling
3280 us; the words revealing Christ within, and our life revealing Him without. It is as the words of
3281 Christ enter our very heart, become our life and influence it, that our words will enter His heart
3282 and influence Him. My prayer will depend on my life; what God’s words are to me and in me,
3283 my words will be to God and in God. If I do what God says, God will do what I say.

3284
3285 How well the Old Testament saints understood this connection between God’s words and ours,
3286 and how really prayer with them was the loving response to what they had heard God speak! If
3287 the word were a promise, they counted on God to do as He had spoken. Do as Thou hast said;’
3288 For Thou, Lord, hast spoken it;’ According to Thy promise;’ According to Thy word;’ in such
3289 expressions they showed that what God spake in promise was the root and the life of what they
3290 spake in prayer. If the word was a command, they simply did as the Lord had spoken: So Abram
3291 departed as the Lord had spoken.’ Their life was fellowship with God, the interchange of word
3292 and thought. What God spoke they heard and did; what they spoke God heard and did. In each
3293 word He speaks to us, the whole Christ gives Himself to fulfil it for us. For each word He asks
3294 no less that we give the whole man to keep that word, and to receive its fulfilment.

3295
3296 If my words abide in you;’ the condition is simple and clear. In His words His will is revealed.
3297 As the words abide in me, His will rules me; my will becomes the empty vessel which His will
3298 fills, the willing instrument which His will wields; He fills my inner being. In the exercise of
3299 obedience and faith my will becomes ever stronger, and is brought into deeper inner harmony
3300 with Him. He can fully trust it to will nothing but what He wills; He is not afraid to give the
3301 promise, If my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, it shall be done unto you.’ To all
3302 who believe it, and act upon it, He will make it literally true.

3303
3304 Disciples of Christ! is it not becoming more and more clear to us that while we have been
3305 excusing our unanswered prayers, our impotence in prayer, with a fancied submission to God’s
3306 wisdom and will, the real reason has been that our own feeble life has been the cause of our
3307 feeble prayers. Nothing can make strong men but the word coming to us from God’s mouth: by
3308 that we must live. It is the word of Christ, loved, lived in, abiding in us, becoming through
3309 obedience and action part of our being, that makes us one with Christ, that fits us spiritually for
3310 touching, for taking hold of God. All that is of the world passeth away; he that doeth the will of
3311 God abideth for ever. O let us yield heart and life to the words of Christ, the words in which He
3312 ever gives HIMSELF, the personal living Saviour, and His promise will be our rich experience:
3313 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto
3314 you.’

3315
3316

3317 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY!’

3318

3319

3320

3321 Blessed Lord! Thy lesson this day has again discovered to me my folly. I see how it is that my
3322 prayer has not been more believing and prevailing. I was more occupied with my speaking to
3323 Thee than Thy speaking to me. I did not understand that the secret of faith is this: there can be
3324 only so much faith as there is of the Living Word dwelling in the soul.

3325

3326 And Thy word had taught me so clearly: Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak; let not
3327 thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. Lord, teach me that it is only with Thy word
3328 taken up into my life that my words can be taken into Thy heart; that Thy word, if it be a living
3329 power within me, will be a living power with Thee; what Thy mouth hath spoken Thy hand will
3330 perform.

3331

3332 Lord! deliver me from the uncircumcised ear. Give me the opened ear of the learner, wakened
3333 morning by morning to hear the Father’s voice. Even as Thou didst only speak what Thou didst
3334 hear, may my speaking be the echo of Thy speaking to me. When Moses went into the
3335 tabernacle to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking unto him from off the mercy-
3336 seat.’ Lord, may it be so with me too. Let a life and character bearing the one mark, that Thy
3337 words abide and are seen in it, be the preparation for the full blessing: Ask whatsoever ye will,
3338 and it shall be done unto you.’ Amen.

3339

3340

3341

3342

3343 TWENTY-THIRD LESSON

3344

3345 Bear fruit, that the Father may give what ye ask;’

3346

3347 Or, Obedience the Path to Power in Prayer.

3348

3349 Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and
3350 that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He may give it
3351 you.’—John xv. 16.

3352

3353 The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.’—James. v. 16.

3354

3355 THE promise of the Father’s giving whatsoever we ask is here once again renewed, in such a
3356 connection as to show us to whom it is that such wonderful influence in the council chamber of
3357 the Most High is to be granted. I chose you,’ the Master says, and appointed you that ye should
3358 go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide;’ and then He adds, to the end that whatsoever
3359 ye,’ the fruit-bearing ones, shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you.’ This is
3360 nothing but the fuller expression of what He had spoken in the words, If ye abide in me.’ He had
3361 spoken of the object of this abiding as the bearing fruit,’ more fruit,’ much fruit;’ in this was
3362 God to be glorified, and the mark of discipleship seen. No wonder that He now adds, that where
3363 the reality of the abiding is seen in fruit abounding and abiding, this would be the qualification
3364 for praying so as to obtain what we ask. Entire consecration to the fulfilment of our calling is the
3365 condition of effectual prayer, is the key to the unlimited blessings of Christ’s wonderful prayer-
3366 promises.

3367

3368 There are Christians who fear that such a statement is at variance with the doctrine of free grace.
3369 But surely not of free grace rightly understood, nor with so many express statements of God's
3370 blessed word. Take the words of St. John (1 John iii. 22): Let us love in deed and truth; hereby
3371 shall we assure our heart before Him. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we
3372 keep His commandments, and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.' Or take the oft-
3373 quoted words of James: The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much;' that is,
3374 of a man of whom, according to the definition of the Holy Spirit, it can be said, He that doeth
3375 righteousness, is righteous even as He is righteous.' Mark the spirit of so many of the Psalms,
3376 with their confident appeal to the integrity and righteousness of the supplicant. In Ps. xviii,
3377 David says: The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of
3378 my hands hath He recompensed me. . . . I was upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine
3379 iniquity: therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness.' (Ps. xviii. 20-
3380 26. See also Ps. vii. 3-5, xv. 1, 2, xviii. 3, 6, xxvi. 1-6, cxix. 121, 153.) If we carefully consider
3381 such utterances in the light of the New Testament, we shall find them in perfect harmony with
3382 the explicit teaching of the Saviour's parting words: If ye keep my commandments, ye shall
3383 abide in my love;' Ye are my friends if ye do what I command you.' The word is indeed meant
3384 literally: I appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit, that,' then, whatsoever ye shall ask of
3385 the Father in my name, He may give it you.'

3386
3387 Let us seek to enter into the spirit of what the Saviour here teaches us. There is a danger in our
3388 evangelical religion of looking too much at what it offers from one side, as a certain experience
3389 to be obtained in prayer and faith. There is another side which God's word puts very strongly,
3390 that of obedience as the only path to blessing. What we need is to realize that in our relationship
3391 to the Infinite Being whom we call God who has created and redeemed us, the first sentiment
3392 that ought to animate us is that of subjection: the surrender to His supremacy, His glory, His
3393 will, His pleasure, ought to be the first and uppermost thought of our life. The question is not,
3394 how we are to obtain and enjoy His favour, for in this the main thing may still be self. But what
3395 this Being in the very nature of things rightfully claims, and is infinitely and unspeakably worthy
3396 of, is that His glory and pleasure should be my one object. Surrender to His perfect and blessed
3397 will, a life of service and obedience, is the beauty and the charm of heaven. Service and
3398 obedience, these were the thoughts that were uppermost in the mind of the Son, when He dwelt
3399 upon earth. Service and obedience, these must become with us the chief objects of desire and
3400 aim, more so than rest or light, or joy or strength: in them we shall find the path to all the higher
3401 blessedness that awaits us.

3402
3403 Just note what a prominent place the Master gives it, not only in the 15th chapter, in connection
3404 with the abiding, but in the 14th, where He speaks of the indwelling of the Three-One God. In
3405 verse 15 we have it: If ye love me, keep my commandments, and the Spirit will be given you of
3406 the Father. Then verse 21: He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth
3407 me;' and he shall have the special love of my Father resting on him and the special
3408 manifestation of myself. And then again, verse 23, one of the highest of all the exceeding great
3409 and precious promises: If a man love me he will keep my words, and the Father and I will come
3410 and take up our abode with him.' Could words put it more clearly that obedience is the way to
3411 the indwelling of the Spirit, to His revealing the Son within us, and to His again preparing us to
3412 be the abode, the home of the Father? The indwelling of the Three-One God is the heritage of
3413 them that obey. Obedience and faith are but two aspects of one act,—surrender to God and His
3414 will. As faith strengthens for obedience, it is in turn strengthened by it: faith is made perfect by
3415 works. It is to be feared that often our efforts to believe have been unavailing because we have
3416 not taken up the only position in which a large faith is legitimate or possible,—that of entire
3417 surrender to the honour and the will of God. It is the man who is entirely consecrated to God and
3418 His will who will find the power come to claim everything that His God has promised to be for
3419 him.

3420
3421 The application of this in the school of prayer is very simple, but very solemn. I chose you,' the
3422 Master says, and appointed you that ye should go and bear fruit,' much fruit (verses 5, 8), and
3423 that your fruit should abide,' that your life might be one of abiding fruit and abiding fruitfulness,
3424 that' thus, as fruitful branches abiding in me, whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name,
3425 He may give it you.' O how often we have sought to be able to pray the effectual prayer for
3426 much grace to bear fruit, and have wondered that the answer came not. It was because we were
3427 reversing the Master's order. We wanted to have the comfort and the joy and the strength first,
3428 that we might do the work easily and without any feeling of difficulty or self-sacrifice. And He
3429 wanted us in faith, without asking whether we felt weak or strong, whether the work was hard or
3430 easy, in the obedience of faith to do what He said: the path of fruit-bearing would have led us to
3431 the place and the power of prevailing prayer. Obedience is the only path that leads to the glory
3432 of God. Not obedience instead of faith, nor obedience to supply the shortcomings of faith; no,
3433 but faith's obedience gives access to all the blessings our God has for us. The baptism of the
3434 Spirit (xiv. 16), the manifestation of the Son (xiv. 21), the indwelling of the Father (xiv. 23), the
3435 abiding in Christ's love (xv. 10), the privilege of His holy friendship (xv. 14), and the power of
3436 all-prevailing prayer (xv. 16),—all wait for the obedient.

3437
3438 Let us take home the lessons. Now we know the great reason why we have not had power in
3439 faith to pray prevailingly. Our life was not as it should have been: simple downright obedience,
3440 abiding fruitfulness, was not its chief mark. And with our whole heart we approve of the Divine
3441 appointment: men to whom God is to give such influence in the rule of the world, as at their
3442 request to do what otherwise would not have taken place, men whose will is to guide the path in
3443 which God's will is to work, must be men who have themselves learned obedience, whose
3444 loyalty and submission to authority must be above all suspicion. Our whole soul approves the
3445 law: obedience and fruit-bearing, the path to prevailing prayer. And with shame we
3446 acknowledge how little our lives have yet borne this stamp.

3447
3448 Let us yield ourselves to take up the appointment the Saviour gives us. Let us study His relation
3449 to us as Master. Let us seek no more with each new day to think in the first place of comfort, or
3450 joy, or blessing. Let the first thought be: I belong to the Master. Every moment and every
3451 movement I must act as His property, as a part of Himself, as one who only seeks to know and
3452 do His will. A servant, a slave of Jesus Christ,—let this be the spirit that animates me. If He
3453 says, No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends,' let us accept the place of
3454 friends: Ye are my friends if ye do the things which I command you.'

3455
3456 The one thing He commands us as His branches is to bear fruit. Let us live to bless others, to
3457 testify of the life and the love there is in Jesus. Let us in faith and obedience give our whole life
3458 to that which Jesus chose us for and appointed us to—fruit-bearing. As we think of His electing
3459 us to this, and take up our appointment as coming from Him who always gives all He demands,
3460 we shall grow strong in the confidence that a life of fruit-bearing, abounding and abiding, is
3461 within our reach. And we shall understand why this fruit-bearing alone can be the path to the
3462 place of all prevailing prayer. It is the man who, in obedience to the Christ of God, is proving
3463 that he is doing what his Lord wills, for whom the Father will do whatsoever he will:
3464 Whatsoever we ask we receive, because we keep His commandments, and do the things that are
3465 pleasing in His sight.'

3466
3467 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

3468
3469
3470

3471 Blessed Master! teach me to apprehend fully what I only partly realize, that it is only through the
3472 will of God, accepted and acted out in obedience to His commands, that we obtain the power to
3473 grasp His will in His promises and fully to appropriate them in our prayers. And teach me that it
3474 is in the path of fruit-bearing that the deeper growth of the branch into the Vine can be
3475 perfected, and we attain to the perfect oneness with Thyself in which we ask whatsoever we
3476 will.

3477
3478 O Lord! Reveal to us, we pray Thee, how with all the hosts of heaven, and with Thyself the Son
3479 on earth, and with all the men of faith who have glorified Thee on earth, obedience to God is our
3480 highest privilege, because it gives access to oneness with Himself in that which is His highest
3481 glory—His all perfect will. And reveal to us, we pray Thee, how in keeping Thy commandments
3482 and bearing fruit according to Thy will, our spiritual nature will grow up to the full stature of the
3483 perfect man, with power to ask and to receive whatsoever we will.

3484
3485 O Lord Jesus! Reveal Thyself to us, and the reality of Thy purpose and Thy power to make these
3486 Thy wonderful promises the daily experience of all who utterly yield themselves to Thee and
3487 Thy words. Amen.

3488

3489

3490

3491 TWENTY-FOURTH LESSON.

3492

3493 In my Name;'

3494

3495 Or, The All-prevailing Plea.

3496

3497 Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. If ye shall ask me anything in my Name,
3498 that will I do. That whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, He may give it you. Verily,
3499 verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my Name.
3500 Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive. In that day ye shall ask in
3501 my Name.'—John xiv. 13, 14, xv. 16, xvi. 23, 24, 26.

3502

3503 HITHERTO the disciples had not asked in the Name of Christ, nor had He Himself ever used
3504 the expression. The nearest approach is, met together in my Name.' Here in His parting words,
3505 He repeats the word unceasingly in connection with those promises of unlimited meaning,
3506 Whatsoever,' Anything,' What ye will,' to teach them and us that His Name is our only, but also
3507 our all-sufficient plea. The power of prayer and the answer depend on the right use of the Name.

3508

3509 What is a person's name? That word or expression in which the person is called up or
3510 represented to us. When I mention or hear a name, it calls up before me the whole man, what I
3511 know of him, and also the impression he has made on me. The name of a king includes his
3512 honour, his power, his kingdom. His name is the symbol of his power. And so each name of God
3513 embodies and represents some part of the glory of the Unseen One. And the Name of Christ is
3514 the expression of all He has done and all He is and lives to do as our Mediator.

3515

3516 And what is it to do a thing in the name of another? It is to come with the power and authority of
3517 that other, as his representative and substitute. We know how such a use of another's name
3518 always supposes a community of interest. No one would give another the free use of his name
3519 without first being assured that his honour and interest were as safe with that other as with
3520 himself.

3521

3522 And what is it when Jesus gives us power over His Name, the free use of it, with the assurance
3523 that whatever we ask in it will be given to us? The ordinary comparison of one person giving
3524 another, on some special occasion, the liberty to ask something in his name, comes altogether
3525 short here,—Jesus solemnly gives to all His disciples a general and unlimited power of the free
3526 use of His Name at all times for all they desire. He could not do this if He did not know that He
3527 could trust us with His interests, that His honour would be safe in our hands. The free use of the
3528 name of another is always the token of great confidence, of close union. He who gives his name
3529 to another stands aside, to let that other act for him; he who takes the name of another, gives up
3530 his own as of no value. When I go in the name of another, I deny myself, I take not only his
3531 name, but himself and what he is, instead of myself and what I am.

3532
3533 Such a use of the name of a person may be in virtue of a legal union. A merchant leaving his
3534 home and business, gives his chief clerk a general power, by which he can draw thousands of
3535 pounds in the merchant's name. The clerk does this, not for himself, but only in the interests of
3536 the business. It is because the merchant knows and trusts him as wholly devoted to his interests
3537 and business, that he dares put his name and property at his command. When the Lord Jesus
3538 went to heaven, He left His work, the management of His kingdom on earth, in the hands of His
3539 servants. He could not do otherwise than also give them His Name to draw all the supplies they
3540 needed for the due conduct of His business. And they have the spiritual power to avail
3541 themselves of the Name of Jesus just to the extent to which they yield themselves to live only
3542 for the interests and the work of the Master. The use of the Name always supposes the surrender
3543 of our interests to Him whom we represent.

3544
3545 Or such a use of the name may be in virtue of a life union. In the case of the merchant and his
3546 clerk, the union is temporary. But we know how oneness of life on earth gives oneness of name:
3547 a child has the father's name because he has his life. And often the child of a good father has
3548 been honoured or helped by others for the sake of the name he bore. But this would not last long
3549 if it were found that it was only a name, and that the father's character was wanting. The name
3550 and the character or spirit must be in harmony. When such is the case, the child will have a
3551 double claim on the father's friends: the character secures and increases the love and esteem
3552 rendered first for the name's sake. So it is with Jesus and the believer: we are one, we have one
3553 life, one Spirit with Him; for this reason we may come in His Name. Our power in using that
3554 Name, whether with God, or men, or devils depends on the measure of our spiritual life-union.
3555 The use of the name rests on the unity of life; the Name and the Spirit of Jesus are one. [2]

3556
3557 Or the union that empowers to the use of the Name may be the union of love. When a bride
3558 whose life has been one of poverty, becomes united to the bridegroom, she gives up her own
3559 name, to be called by his, and has now the full right to use it. She purchases in his name, and
3560 that name is not refused. And this is done because the bridegroom has chosen her for himself,
3561 counting on her to care for his interests: they are now one. And so the Heavenly Bridegroom
3562 could do nothing less; having loved us and made us one with Himself, what could He do but
3563 give those who bear His Name the right to present it before the Father, or to come with it to
3564 Himself for all they need. And there is no one who gives himself really to live in the Name of
3565 Jesus, who does not receive in ever-increasing measure the spiritual capacity to ask and receive
3566 in that Name what he will. The bearing of the name of another supposes my having given up my
3567 own, and with it my own independent life; but then, as surely, my possession of all there is in
3568 the name I have taken instead of my own.

3569
3570 Such illustrations show us how defective the common view is of a messenger sent to ask in the
3571 name of another, or a guilty one appealing to the name of a surety. No Jesus Himself is with the
3572 Father; it is not an absent one in whose name we come. Even when we pray to Jesus Himself, it
3573 must be in His Name. The name represents the person; to ask in the Name is to ask in full union

3574 of interest and life and love with Himself, as one who lives in and for Him. Let the Name of
3575 Jesus only have undivided supremacy in my heart and life, my faith will grow to the assurance
3576 that what I ask in that Name cannot be refused. The name and the power of asking go together:
3577 when the Name of Jesus has become the power that rules my life, its power in prayer with God
3578 will be seen too.

3579
3580 We see thus that everything depends on our own relation to the Name: the power it has on my
3581 life is the power it will have in my prayers. There is more than one expression in Scripture
3582 which can make this clear to us. When it says, 'Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus,' we see
3583 how this is the counterpart of the other, 'Ask all.' To do all and to ask all in His Name, these go
3584 together. When we read, 'We shall walk in the Name of our God,' we see how the power of the
3585 Name must rule in the whole life; only then will it have power in prayer. It is not to the lips but
3586 to the life God looks to see what the Name is to us. When Scripture speaks of men who have
3587 given their lives for the Name of the Lord Jesus,' or of one ready to die for the Name of the Lord
3588 Jesus,' we see what our relation to the Name must be: when it is everything to me, it will obtain
3589 everything for me. If I let it have all I have, it will let me have all it has.

3590
3591 **WHATSOEVER** ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do.' Jesus means the promise literally.
3592 Christians have sought to limit it: it looked too free; it was hardly safe to trust man so
3593 unconditionally. We did not understand that the word in my Name' is its own safeguard. It is a
3594 spiritual power which no one can use further than he obtains the capacity for, by his living and
3595 acting in that Name. As we bear that Name before men, we have power to use it before God. O
3596 let us plead for God's Holy Spirit to show us what the Name means, and what the right use of it
3597 is. It is through the Spirit that the Name, which is above every name in heaven, will take the
3598 place of supremacy in our heart and life too.

3599
3600 Disciples of Jesus! Let the lessons of this day enter deep into your hearts. The Master says: Only
3601 pray in my Name; whatsoever ye ask will be given. Heaven is set open to you; the treasures and
3602 powers of the world of spirit are placed at your disposal on behalf of men around you. O come,
3603 and let us learn to pray in the Name of Jesus. As to the disciples, He says to us, 'Hitherto ye have
3604 not asked in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive.' Let each disciple of Jesus seek to avail
3605 himself of the rights of his royal priesthood, and use the power placed at his disposal for his
3606 circle and his work. Let Christians awake and hear the message: your prayer can obtain what
3607 otherwise will be withheld, can accomplish what otherwise remains undone. O awake, and use
3608 the name of Jesus to open the treasures of heaven for this perishing world. Learn as the servants
3609 of the King to use His Name: **WHATSOEVER** ye shall ask in my Name, **THAT WILL I DO.'**

3610
3611 **LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'**

3612
3613
3614
3615 Blessed Lord! It is as if each lesson Thou givest me has such fulness and depths of meaning, that
3616 if I can only learn that one, I shall know how to pray aright. This day I feel again as if I needed
3617 but one prayer every day: Lord! Teach me what it is to pray in Thy Name. Teach me so to live
3618 and act, to walk and speak, so to do all in the Name of Jesus, that my prayer cannot be anything
3619 else but in that blessed Name too.

3620
3621 And teach me, Lord! to hold fast the precious promise that **WHATSOEVER** we ask in Thy
3622 Name, Thou wilt do, the Father will give. Though I do not yet fully understand, and still less
3623 have fully attained, the wondrous union Thou meanest when Thou sayest, **IN MY NAME**, I
3624 would yet hold fast the promise until it fills my heart with the undoubting assurance: Anything
3625 in the Name of Jesus.

3626
3627 O my Lord! let Thy Holy Spirit teach me this. Thou didst say of Him, The Comforter, whom the
3628 Father shall send IN MY NAME.' He knows what it is to be sent from heaven in Thy Name, to
3629 reveal and to honour the power of that Name in Thy servants, to use that Name alone, and so to
3630 glorify Thee. Lord Jesus! let Thy Spirit dwell in me, and fill me. I would, I do yield my whole
3631 being to His rule and leading. Thy Name and Thy Spirit are one; through Him Thy Name will be
3632 the strength of my life and my prayer. Then I shall be able for Thy Name's sake to forsake all, in
3633 Thy Name to speak to men and to God, and to prove that this is indeed the Name above every
3634 name.

3635
3636 Lord Jesus! O teach me by Thy Holy Spirit to pray in Thy Name. Amen.

3637
3638 NOTE.

3639
3640 What is meant by praying in Christ's name? It cannot mean simply appearing before God with
3641 faith in the mediation of the Saviour. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He
3642 supplied them with petitions. And afterwards Jesus said to them, "Hitherto have ye asked
3643 nothing in my Name." Until the Spirit came, the seven petitions of the Lord's prayer lay as it
3644 were dormant within them. When by the Holy Ghost Christ descended into their hearts, they
3645 desired the very blessings which Christ as our High Priest obtains for us by His prayer from the
3646 Father. And such petitions are always answered. The Father is always willing to give what
3647 Christ asks. The Spirit of Christ always teaches and influences us to offer the petitions which
3648 Christ ratifies and presents to the Father. To pray in Christ's name is therefore to be identified
3649 with Christ as to our righteousness, and to be identified with Christ in our desires by the
3650 indwelling of the Holy Ghost. To pray in the Spirit, to pray according to the will of the Father, to
3651 pray in Christ's name, are identical expressions. The Father Himself loveth us, and is willing to
3652 hear us: two intercessors, Christ the Advocate above, and the Holy Ghost, the Advocate within,
3653 are the gifts of His love.

3654
3655 This view may appear at first less consoling than a more prevalent one, which refers prayer in
3656 Christ's name chiefly to our trust in Christ's merit. The defect of this opinion is, that it does not
3657 combine the intercession of the Saviour with the will of the Father, and the indwelling Spirit's
3658 aid in prayer. Nor does it fully realize the mediation of Christ; for the mediation consists not
3659 merely in that for Christ's sake the Holy Father is able to regard me and my prayer; but also, in
3660 that Christ Himself presents my petitions as His petitions, desired by Him for me, even as all
3661 blessings are purchased for me by His precious blood.

3662
3663 In all prayer, the one essential condition is that we are able to offer it in the name of Jesus, as
3664 according to His desire for us, according to the Father's will, according to the Spirit's teaching.
3665 And thus praying in Christ's name is impossible without self-examination, without reflection,
3666 without self-denial; in short, without the aid of the Spirit.'—Saphiv [Adolph Saphir], *The Lord's*
3667 *Prayer*, pp. 411, 142.

3668
3669
3670 [2] ^Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name,' that is, in my nature; for things with God are called
3671 according to their nature. We ask in Christ's Name, not when at the end of some request we say,
3672 This I ask in the Name of Jesus Christ,' but when we pray according to His nature, which is
3673 love, which seeketh not its own but only the will of God and the good of all creatures. Such
3674 asking is the cry of His own Spirit in our hearts.—Jukes. *The New Man*.

3675
3676
3677

3678
3679 TWENTY-FIFTH LESSON.

3680
3681 At that day;’

3682
3683 Or, The Holy Spirit and Prayer.

3684
3685 In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the
3686 Father in my Name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name: ask, and
3687 ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that day ye shall ask in my Name: and I say not,
3688 that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you.’—John xvi. 23-26.

3689
3690 Praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God.’—JUDE 20, 21.

3691
3692 THE words of John (I John ii. 12-14) to little children, to young men, and to fathers suggest the
3693 thought that there often are in the Christian life three great stages of experience. The first, that of
3694 the new-born child, with the assurance and the joy of forgiveness. The second, the transition
3695 stage of struggle and growth in knowledge and strength: young men growing strong, God’s
3696 word doing its work in them and giving them victory over the Evil One. And then the final stage
3697 of maturity and ripeness: the Fathers, who have entered deeply into the knowledge and
3698 fellowship of the Eternal One.

3699
3700 In Christ’s teaching on prayer there appear to be three stages in the prayer-life, somewhat
3701 analogous. In the Sermon on the Mount we have the initial stage: His teaching is all comprised
3702 in one word, Father. Pray to your Father, your Father sees, hears, knows, and will reward: how
3703 much more than any earthly father! Only be childlike and trustful. Then comes later on
3704 something like the transition stage of conflict and conquest, in words like these: This sort goeth
3705 not out but by fasting and prayer;’ Shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night
3706 unto Him?’ And then we have in the parting words, a higher stage. The children have become
3707 men: they are now the Master’s friends, from whom He has no secrets, to whom He says, All
3708 things that I heard from my Father I made known unto you;’ and to whom, in the oft-repeated
3709 whatsoever ye will,’ He hands over the keys of the kingdom. Now the time has come for the
3710 power of prayer in His Name to be proved.

3711
3712 The contrast between this final stage and the previous preparatory ones our Saviour marks most
3713 distinctly in the words we are to meditate on: Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name;’ At
3714 that day ye shall ask in my Name. We know what at that day’ means. It is the day of the
3715 outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The great work Christ was to do on the cross, the mighty power
3716 and the complete victory to be manifested in His resurrection and ascension, were to issue in the
3717 coming down from heaven, as never before, of the glory of God to dwell in men. The Spirit of
3718 the glorified Jesus was to come and be the life of His disciples. And one of the marks of that
3719 wonderful spirit-dispensation was to be a power in prayer hitherto unknown—prayer in the
3720 Name of Jesus, asking and obtaining whatsoever they would, is to be the manifestation of the
3721 reality of the Spirit’s indwelling.

3722
3723 To understand how the coming of the Holy Spirit was indeed to commence a new epoch in the
3724 prayer-world, we must remember who He is, what His work, and what the significance of His
3725 not being given until Jesus was glorified. It is in the Spirit that God exists, for He is Spirit. It is
3726 in the Spirit that the Son was begotten of the Father: it is in the fellowship of the Spirit that the
3727 Father and the Son are one. The eternal never-ceasing giving to the Son which is the Father’s
3728 prerogative and the eternal asking and receiving which is the Son’s right and blessedness—it is
3729 through the Spirit that this communion of life and love is maintained. It has been so from all

3730 eternity. It is so specially now, when the Son as Mediator ever liveth to pray. The great work
3731 which Jesus began on earth of reconciling in His own body God and man, He carries on in
3732 heaven. To accomplish this He took up into His own person the conflict between God's
3733 righteousness and our sin. On the cross He once for all ended the struggle in His own body. And
3734 then He ascended to heaven, that thence He might in each member of His body carry out the
3735 deliverance and manifest the victory He had obtained. It is to do this that He ever liveth to pray;
3736 in His unceasing intercession He places Himself in living fellowship with the unceasing prayer
3737 of His redeemed ones. Or rather, it is His unceasing intercession which shows itself in their
3738 prayers, and gives them a power they never had before.

3739
3740 And He does this through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, was
3741 not (John vii. 39), could not be, until He had been glorified. This gift of the Father was
3742 something distinctively new, entirely different from what Old Testament saints had known. The
3743 work that the blood effected in heaven when Christ entered within the veil, was something so
3744 true and new, the redemption of our human nature into fellowship with His resurrection-power
3745 and His exaltation-glory was so intensely real, the taking up of our humanity in Christ into the
3746 life of the Three-One God was an event of such inconceivable significance, that the Holy Spirit,
3747 who had to come from Christ's exalted humanity to testify in our hearts of what Christ had
3748 accomplished, was indeed no longer only what He had been in the Old Testament. It was
3749 literally true the Holy Spirit was not yet, for Christ was not yet glorified.' He came now first as
3750 the Spirit of the glorified Jesus. Even as the Son, who was from eternity God, had entered upon a
3751 new existence as man, and returned to heaven with what He had not before, so the Blessed
3752 Spirit, whom the Son, on His ascension, received from the Father (Acts ii. 33) into His glorified
3753 humanity, came to us with a new life, which He had not previously to communicate. Under the
3754 Old Testament He was invoked as the Spirit of God: at Pentecost He descended as the Spirit of
3755 the glorified Jesus, bringing down and communicating to us the full fruit and power of the
3756 accomplished redemption.

3757
3758 It is in the intercession of Christ that the continued efficacy and application of His redemption is
3759 maintained. And it is through the Holy Spirit descending from Christ to us that we are drawn up
3760 into the great stream of His ever-ascending prayers. The Spirit prays for us without words: in the
3761 depths of a heart where even thoughts are at times formless, the Spirit takes us up into the
3762 wonderful flow of the life of the Three-One God. Through the Spirit, Christ's prayers become
3763 ours, and ours are made His: we ask what we will, and it is given to us. We then understand
3764 from experience, Hitherto ye have not asked in my Name. At that day ye shall ask in my Name.'

3765
3766 Brother! what we need to pray in the Name of Christ, to ask that we may receive that our joy
3767 may be full, is the baptism of this Holy Ghost. This is more than the Spirit of God under the Old
3768 Testament. This is more than the Spirit of conversion and regeneration the disciples had before
3769 Pentecost. This is more than the Spirit with a measure of His influence and working. This is the
3770 Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the glorified Jesus in His exaltation-power, coming on us as the Spirit
3771 of the indwelling Jesus, revealing the Son and the Father within. (John xiv. 16-23.) It is when
3772 this Spirit is the Spirit not of our hours of prayer, but of our whole life and walk, when this Spirit
3773 glorifies Jesus in us by revealing the completeness of His work, and making us wholly one with
3774 Him and like Him, that we can pray in His Name, because we are in very deed one with Him.
3775 Then it is that we have that immediateness of access to the Father of which Jesus says, I say not
3776 that I will pray the Father for you.' Oh! we need to understand and believe that to be filled with
3777 this, the Spirit of the glorified One, is the one need of God's believing people. Then shall we
3778 realize what it is, with all prayer and supplication to be praying at all seasons in the Spirit,' and
3779 what it is, praying in the Holy Ghost, to keep ourselves in the love of God.' At that day ye shall
3780 ask in my Name.'

3781

3782 And so once again the lesson comes: What our prayer avails, depends upon what we are and
3783 what our life is. It is living in the Name of Christ that is the secret of praying in the Name of
3784 Christ; living in the Spirit that fits for praying in the Spirit. It is abiding in Christ that gives the
3785 right and power to ask what we will: the extent of the abiding is the exact measure of the power
3786 in prayer. It is the Spirit dwelling within us that prays, not in words and thoughts always, but in
3787 a breathing and a being deeper than utterance. Just so much as there is of Christ's Spirit in us, is
3788 there real prayer. Our lives, our lives, O let our lives be full of Christ, and full of His Spirit, and
3789 the wonderfully unlimited promises to our prayer will no longer appear strange. Hitherto ye
3790 have asked nothing in my Name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. At that
3791 day ye shall ask in my Name. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the father
3792 in my Name, He will give it you.'

3793
3794 LORD , TEACH US TO PRAY.'

3795
3796
3797

3798 O my God! in holy awe I bow before Thee, the Three in One. Again I have seen how the
3799 mystery of prayer is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. I adore the Father who ever hears, and the
3800 Son who ever lives to pray, and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, to lift
3801 us up into the fellowship of that ever-blessed, never-ceasing asking and receiving. I bow, my
3802 God, in adoring worship, before the infinite condescension that thus, through the Holy Spirit,
3803 takes us and our prayers into the Divine Life, and its fellowship of love.

3804
3805 O my Blessed Lord Jesus! Teach me to understand Thy lesson, that it is the indwelling Spirit,
3806 streaming from Thee, uniting to Thee, who is the Spirit of prayer. Teach me what it is as an
3807 empty, wholly consecrated vessel, to yield myself to His being my life. Teach me to honour and
3808 trust Him, as a living Person, to lead my life and my prayer. Teach me specially in prayer to wait
3809 in holy silence, and give Him place to breathe within me His unutterable intercession. And teach
3810 me that through Him it is possible to pray without ceasing, and to pray without failing, because
3811 He makes me partaker of the never-ceasing and never-failing intercession in which Thou, the
3812 Son, dost appear before the Father. Yea, Lord, fulfil in me Thy promise, At that day ye shall ask
3813 in my Name. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, that
3814 will He give.' Amen.

3815
3816
3817

3818 NOTE.

3819
3820 Prayer has often been compared to breathing: we have only to carry out the comparison fully to
3821 see how wonderful the place is which the Holy Spirit occupies. With every breath we expel the
3822 impure air which would soon cause our death, and inhale again the fresh air to which we owe
3823 our life. So we give out from us, in confession the sins, in prayer the needs and the desires of our
3824 heart. And in drawing in our breath again, we inhale the fresh air of the promises, and the love,
3825 and the life of God in Christ. We do this through the Holy Spirit, who is the breath of our life.

3826
3827 And this He is because He is the breath of God. The Father breathes Him into us, to unite
3828 Himself with our life. And then just as on every expiration there follows again the inhaling or
3829 drawing in of the breath, so God draws in again His breath, and the Spirit returns to Him laden
3830 with the desires and needs of our hearts. And thus the Holy Spirit is the breath of the life of God,
3831 and the breath of the new life in us. As God breathes Him out, we receive Him in answer to
3832 prayer; as we breathe Him back again, He rises to God laden with our supplications. As the
3833 Spirit of God, in whom the Father and the Son are one, and the intercession of the Son reaches

3834 the Father, He is to us the Spirit of prayer. True prayer is the living experience of the truth of the
3835 Holy Trinity. The Spirit's breathing, the Son's intercession, the Father's will, these three
3836 become one in us.

3837

3838

3839

3840 TWENTY-SIXTH LESSON.

3841

3842 I have prayed for thee;'

3843

3844 Or, Christ the Intercessor.

3845

3846 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.'—Luke xxii. 32.

3847

3848 I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.'—John xvi. 26.

3849

3850 He ever liveth to make intercession.'—Heb. vii. 25.

3851

3852 ALL growth in the spiritual life is connected with the clearer insight into what Jesus is to us.
3853 The more I realize that Christ must be all to me and in me, that all in Christ is indeed for me, the
3854 more I learn to live the real life of faith, which, dying to self, lives wholly in Christ. The
3855 Christian life is no longer the vain struggle to live right, but the resting in Christ and finding
3856 strength in Him as our life, to fight the fight and gain the victory of faith. This is specially true of
3857 the life of prayer. As it too comes under the law of faith alone, and is seen in the light of the
3858 fulness and completeness there is in Jesus, the believer understands that it need no longer be a
3859 matter of strain or anxious care, but an experience of what Christ will do for him and in him—a
3860 participation in that life of Christ which, as on earth, so in heaven, ever ascends to the Father as
3861 prayer. And he begins to pray, not only trusting in the merits of Jesus, or in the intercession by
3862 which our unworthy prayers are made acceptable, but in that near and close union in virtue of
3863 which He prays in us and we in Him. [3] ^ The whole of salvation is Christ Himself: He has
3864 given HIMSELF to us; He Himself lives in us. Because He prays, we pray too. As the disciples,
3865 when they saw Jesus pray, asked Him to make them partakers of what He knew of prayer, so
3866 we, now we see Him as intercessor on the throne, know that He makes us participate with
3867 Himself in the life of prayer.

3868

3869 How clearly this comes out in the last night of His life. In His high-priestly prayer (John xvii.),
3870 He shows us how and what He has to pray to the Father, and will pray when once ascended to
3871 heaven. And yet He had in His parting address so repeatedly also connected His going to the
3872 Father with their new life of prayer. The two would be ultimately connected: His entrance on the
3873 work of His eternal intercession would be the commencement and the power of their new
3874 prayer-life in His Name. It is the sight of Jesus in His intercession that gives us power to pray in
3875 His Name: all right and power of prayer is Christ's; He makes us share in His intercession.

3876

3877 To understand this, think first of His intercession: He ever liveth to make intercession. The work
3878 of Christ on earth as Priest was but a beginning. It was as Aaron He shed His blood; it is as
3879 Melchizedek that He now lives within the veil to continue His work, after the power of the
3880 eternal life. As Melchizedek is more glorious than Aaron, so it is in the work of intercession that
3881 the atonement has its true power and glory. It is Christ that died: yea more, who is even at the
3882 right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us.' That intercession is an intense reality, a
3883 work that is absolutely necessary, and without which the continued application of redemption
3884 cannot take place. In the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus the wondrous reconciliation took
3885 place, by which man became partaker of the Divine life and blessedness. But the real personal

3886 appropriation of this reconciliation in each of His members here below cannot take place
3887 without the unceasing exercise of His Divine power by the head in heaven. In all conversion and
3888 sanctification, in every victory over sin and the world, there is a real forth-putting of the power
3889 of Him who is mighty to save. And this exercise of His power only takes place through His
3890 prayer: He asks of the Father, and receives from the Father. He is able to save to the uttermost,
3891 because He ever liveth to make intercession.' There is not a need of His people but He receives
3892 in intercession what the Godhead has to give: His mediation on the throne is as real and
3893 indispensable as on the cross. Nothing takes place without His intercession: it engages all His
3894 time and powers, is His unceasing occupation at the right hand of the Father.

3895
3896 And we participate not only in the benefits of this His work, but in the work itself. This because
3897 we are His body. Body and members are one: The head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of
3898 thee.' We share with Jesus in all He is and has: The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given
3899 them.' We are partakers of His life, His righteousness, His work: we share with Him in His
3900 intercession too; it is not a work He does without us.

3901
3902 We do this because we are partakers of His life: Christ is our life;' No longer I, but Christ liveth
3903 in me.' The life in Him and in us is identical, one and the same. His life in us is an ever-praying
3904 life. When it descends and takes possession of us, it does not lose its character; in us too it is the
3905 every-praying life—a life that without ceasing asks and receives from God. And this not as if
3906 there were two separate currents of prayer rising upwards, one from Him, and one from His
3907 people. No, but the substantial life-union is also prayer-union: what He prays passes through us,
3908 what we pray passes through Him. He is the angel with the golden censer: UNTO HIM there
3909 was given much incense,' the secret of acceptable prayer, that He should add it unto the prayers
3910 of all the saints upon the golden altar.' We live, we abide in Him, the Interceding One.

3911
3912 The Only-begotten is the only one who has the right to pray: to Him alone it was said, Ask, and
3913 it shall be given Thee.' As in all other things the fulness dwells in Him, so the true prayer-
3914 fulness too; He alone has the power of prayer. And just as the growth of the spiritual life
3915 consists in the clearer insight that all the treasures are in Him, and that we too are in Him, to
3916 receive each moment what we possess in Him, grace for grace, so with the prayer-life too. Our
3917 faith in the intercession of Jesus must not only be that He prays in our stead, when we do not or
3918 cannot pray, but that, as the Author of our life and our faith, He draws us on to pray in unison
3919 with Himself. Our prayer must be a work of faith in this sense too, that as we know that Jesus
3920 communicates His whole life in us, He also out of that prayerfulness which is His alone breathes
3921 into us our praying.

3922
3923 To many a believer it was a new epoch in his spiritual life when it was revealed to him how truly
3924 and entirely Christ was his life, standing good as surety for his remaining faithful and obedient.
3925 It was then first that he really began to live a faith-life. No less blessed will be the discovery that
3926 Christ is surety for our prayer-life too, the centre and embodiment of all prayer, to be
3927 communicated by Him through the Holy Spirit to His people. He ever liveth to make
3928 intercession' as the Head of the body, as the Leader in that new and living way which He hath
3929 opened up, as the Author and the Perfecter of our faith. He provides in everything for the life of
3930 His redeemed ones by giving His own life in them: He cares for their life of prayer, by taking
3931 them up into His heavenly prayer-life, by giving and maintaining His prayer-life within them. I
3932 have prayed for thee,' not to render thy faith needless, but that thy faith fail not.' our faith and
3933 prayer of faith is rooted in His. It is, if ye abide in me,' the ever-living Intercessor, and pray with
3934 me and in me: ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

3935
3936 The thought of our fellowship in the intercession of Jesus reminds us of what He has taught us
3937 more than once before, how all these wonderful prayer-promises have as their aim and their

3938 justification, the glory of God in the manifestation of His kingdom and the salvation of sinners.
3939 As long as we only or chiefly pray for ourselves, the promises of the last night must remain a
3940 sealed book to us. It is to the fruit-bearing branches of the Vine; it is to disciples sent into the
3941 world as the Father sent Him, to live for perishing men; it is to His faithful servants and intimate
3942 friends who take up the work He leaves behind, who have like their Lord become as the seed-
3943 corn, losing its life to multiply it manifold;—it is to such that the promises are given. Let us each
3944 find out what the work is, and who the souls are entrusted to our special prayers; let us make our
3945 intercession for them our life of fellowship with God, and we shall not only find the promises of
3946 power in prayer made true to us, but we shall then first begin to realize how our abiding in Christ
3947 and His abiding in us makes us share in His own joy of blessing and saving men.

3948
3949 O most wonderful intercession of our Blessed Lord Jesus, to which we not only owe everything,
3950 but in which we are taken up as active partners and fellow-workers! Now we understand what it
3951 is to pray in the Name of Jesus, and why it has such power. In His Name, in His Spirit, in
3952 Himself, in perfect union with Him. O wondrous, ever active, and most efficacious intercession
3953 of the man Christ Jesus! When shall we be wholly taken up into it and always pray in it?

3954
3955 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

3956
3957
3958

3959 Blessed Lord! In lowly adoration I would again bow before Thee. Thy whole redemption work
3960 has now passed into prayer; all that now occupies Thee in maintaining and dispensing what
3961 Thou didst purchase with Thy blood is only prayer. Thou ever livest to pray. And because we
3962 are and abide in Thee, the direct access to the Father is always open, our life can be one of
3963 unceasing prayer, and the answer to our prayer is sure.

3964
3965 Blessed Lord! Thou hast invited Thy people to be Thy fellow-workers in a life of prayer. Thou
3966 hast united Thyself with Thy people and makest them as Thy body share with Thee in that
3967 ministry of intercession through which alone the world can be filled with the fruit of Thy
3968 redemption and the glory of the Father. With more liberty than ever I come to Thee, my Lord,
3969 and beseech Thee: Teach me to pray. Thy life is prayer, Thy life is mine. Lord! teach me to
3970 pray, in Thee, like Thee.

3971
3972 And, O my Lord! Give me specially to know, as Thou didst promise Thy disciples, that Thou art
3973 in the Father, and I in Thee, and Thou in me. Let the uniting power of the Holy Spirit make my
3974 whole life an abiding in Thee and Thy intercession, so that my prayer may be its echo, and the
3975 Father hear me in Thee and Thee in me. Lord Jesus! let Thy mind in everything be in me, and
3976 my life in everything by in Thee. So shall I be prepared to be the channel through which Thy
3977 intercession pours its blessing on the world. Amen.

3978
3979 NOTE.

3980
3981 The new epoch of prayer in the Name of Jesus is pointed out by Christ as the time of the
3982 outpouring of the Spirit, in which the disciples enter upon a more enlightened apprehension of
3983 the economy of redemption, and become as clearly conscious of their oneness with Jesus as of
3984 His oneness with the Father. Their prayer in the Name of Jesus is now directly to the Father
3985 Himself. “I say not that I will pray for you, for the Father Himself loveth you,” Jesus says; while
3986 He had previously spoken of the time before the Spirit’s coming: “I will pray the Father, and He
3987 will give you the Comforter.” This prayer thus has as its central thought the insight into our
3988 being united to God in Christ as on both sides the living bond of union between God and us
3989 (John xvii. 23: “I in them and Thou in me”), so that in Jesus we behold the Father as united to

3990 us, and ourselves as united to the Father. Jesus Christ must have been revealed to us, not only
3991 through the truth in the mind, but in our inmost personal consciousness as the living personal
3992 reconciliation, as He in whom God's Fatherhood and Father-love have been perfectly united
3993 with human nature and it with God. Not that with the immediate prayer to the Father, the
3994 mediatorship of Christ is set aside; but it is no longer looked at as something external, existing
3995 outside of us, but as a real living spiritual existence within us, so that the Christ for us, the
3996 Mediator, has really become Christ in us.

3997
3998 When the consciousness of this oneness between God in Christ and us in Christ still is wanting,
3999 or has been darkened by the sense of guilt, then the prayer of faith looks to our Lord as the
4000 Advocate, who pays the Father for us. (Compare John xvi. 26 with John xiv. 16, 17; ix. 20; Luke
4001 xxi. 32; I John ii. 1.) To take Christ thus in prayer as Advocate, is according to John xvi. 26 not
4002 perfectly the same as the prayer in His Name. Christ's advocacy is meant to lead us on to that
4003 inner self-standing life-union with Him, and with the Father in Him, in virtue of which Christ is
4004 He in whom God enters into immediate relation and unites Himself with us, and in whom we in
4005 all circumstances enter into immediate relation with God. Even so the prayer in the Name of
4006 Jesus does not consist in our prayer at His command: the disciples had prayed thus ever since
4007 the Lord had given them His "Our Father," and yet He says, "Hitherto ye have not prayed in my
4008 Name." Only when the mediation of Christ has become, through the indwelling of the Holy
4009 Spirit, life and power within us, and so His mind, as it found expression in His word and work,
4010 has taken possession of and filled our personal consciousness and will, so that in faith and love
4011 we have Jesus in us as the Reconciler who has actually made us one with God: only then His
4012 Name, which included His nature and His work, is become truth and power in us (not only for
4013 us), and we have in the Name of Jesus the free, direct access to the Father which is sure of being
4014 heard. Prayer in the Name of Jesus is the liberty of a son with the Father, just as Jesus had this as
4015 the First-begotten. We pray in the place of Jesus, not as if we could put ourselves in His place,
4016 but in as far as we are in Him and He in us. We go direct to the Father, but only as the Father is
4017 in Christ, not as if He were separate from Christ. Wherever thus the inner man does not live in
4018 Christ and has Him not present as the Living One, where His word is not ruling in the heart in its
4019 Spirit-power, where His truth and life have not become the life of our soul, it is vain to think that
4020 a formula like "for the sake of Thy dear Son" will avail.'—Christliche Ethik, von Dr. I. T. Beck,
4021 Tübingen, iii. 39.

4022
4023
4024 [3] See on the difference between having Christ as an Advocate or Intercessor who stands
4025 outside of us, and the having Him within us, we abiding in Him and He in us through the Holy
4026 Spirit perfecting our union with Him, so that we ourselves can come directly to the Father in His
4027 Name,—the note above from Beck of Tübingen.

4028
4029
4030
4031 TWENTY-SEVENTH LESSON.
4032
4033 Father, I will;'
4034
4035 Or, Christ the High Priest
4036
4037 Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am.'—John xvii.
4038 24.

4039
4040 IN His parting address, Jesus gives His disciples the full revelation of what the New Life was to
4041 be, when once the kingdom of God had come in power. In the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in

4042 union with Him the heavenly Vine, in their going forth to witness and to suffer for Him, they
4043 were to find their calling and their blessedness. In between His setting forth of their future new
4044 life, the Lord had repeatedly given the most unlimited promises as to the power their prayers
4045 might have. And now in closing, He Himself proceeds to pray. To let His disciples have the joy
4046 of knowing what His intercession for them in heaven as their High Priest will be, He gives this
4047 precious legacy of His prayer to the Father. He does this at the same time because they as priests
4048 are to share in His work of intercession, that they and we might know how to perform this holy
4049 work. In the teaching of our Lord on this last night, we have learned to understand that these
4050 astonishing prayer-promises have not been given in our own behalf, but in the interest of the
4051 Lord and His kingdom: it is from the Lord Himself alone that we can learn what the prayer in
4052 His Name is to be and to obtain. We have understood that to pray in His Name is to pray in
4053 perfect unity with Himself: the high-priestly prayer will teach all that the prayer in the Name of
4054 Jesus may ask and expect.

4055
4056 This prayer is ordinarily divided into three parts. Our Lord first prays for Himself (v. 1-5), then
4057 for His disciples (6-19), and last for all the believing people through all ages (20-26). The
4058 follower of Jesus, who gives himself to the work of intercession, and would fain try how much
4059 of blessing he can pray down upon his circle in the Name of Jesus, will in all humility let
4060 himself be led of the Spirit to study this wonderful prayer as one of the most important lessons
4061 of the school of prayer.

4062
4063 First of all, Jesus prays for Himself, for His being glorified, that so He may glorify the Father.
4064 Father! Glorify Thy Son. And now, Father, glorify me.' And He brings forward the grounds on
4065 which He thus prays. A holy covenant had been concluded between the Father and the Son in
4066 heaven. The Father had promised Him power over all flesh as the reward of His work: He had
4067 done the work, He had glorified the Father, and His one purpose is now still further to glorify
4068 Him. With the utmost boldness He asks that the Father may glorify Him, that He may now be
4069 and do for His people all He has undertaken.

4070
4071 Disciple of Jesus! here you have the first lesson in your work of priestly intercession, to be
4072 learned from the example of your great High Priest. To pray in the Name of Jesus is to pray in
4073 unity, in sympathy with Him. As the Son began His prayer by making clear His relation to the
4074 Father, pleading His work and obedience and His desire to see the Father glorified, do so too.
4075 Draw near and appear before the Father in Christ. Plead His finished work. Say that you are one
4076 with it, that you trust on it, live in it. Say that you too have given yourself to finish the work the
4077 Father has given you to do, and to live alone for His glory. And ask then confidently that the Son
4078 may be glorified in you. This is praying in the Name, in the very words, in the Spirit of Jesus, in
4079 union with Jesus Himself. Such prayer has power. If with Jesus you glorify the Father, the
4080 Father will glorify Jesus by doing what you ask in His Name. It is only when your own personal
4081 relation on this point, like Christ's, is clear with God, when you are glorifying Him, and seeking
4082 all for His glory, that like Christ, you will have power to intercede for those around you.

4083
4084 Our Lord next prays for the circle of His disciples. He speaks of them as those whom the Father
4085 has given Him. Their chief mark is that they have received Christ's word. He says of them that
4086 He now sends them into the world in His place, just as the Father had sent Himself. And He asks
4087 two things for them: that the Father keep them from the evil one, and sanctify them through His
4088 Word, because He sanctifies Himself for them.

4089
4090 Just like the Lord, each believing intercessor has his own immediate circle for whom he first
4091 prays. Parents have their children, teachers their pupils, pastors their flocks, all workers their
4092 special charge, all believers those whose care lies upon their hearts. It is of great consequence
4093 that intercession should be personal, pointed, and definite. And then our first prayer must always

4094 be that they may receive the word. But this prayer will not avail unless with our Lord we say, I
4095 have given them Thy word:’ it is this gives us liberty and power in intercession for souls. Not
4096 only pray for them, but speak to them. And when they have received the word, let us pray much
4097 for their being kept from the evil one, for their being sanctified through that word. Instead of
4098 being hopeless or judging or giving up those who fall, let us pray for our circle, Father! Keep
4099 them in Thy Name;’ Sanctify them through Thy truth.’ Prayer in the Name of Jesus availeth
4100 much: What ye will shall be done unto you.’

4101
4102 And then follows our Lord’s prayer for a still wider circle. I pray not only for these, but for them
4103 who through their word shall believe.’ His priestly heart enlarges itself to embrace all places and
4104 all time, and He prays that all who belong to Him may everywhere be one, as God’s proof to the
4105 world of the divinity of His mission, and then that they may ever be with Him in His glory. Until
4106 then that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.’

4107
4108 The disciple of Jesus, who has first in his own circle proved the power of prayer, cannot confine
4109 himself within its limits: he prays for the Church universal and its different branches. He prays
4110 specially for the unity of the Spirit and of love. He prays for its being one in Christ, as a witness
4111 to the world that Christ, who hath wrought such a wonder as to make love triumph over
4112 selfishness and separation, is indeed the Son of God sent from heaven. Every believer ought to
4113 pray much that the unity of the Church, not in external organizations, but in spirit and in truth,
4114 may be made manifest.

4115
4116 So much for the matter of the prayer. Now for its mode. Jesus says, FATHER! I WILL.’ On the
4117 ground of His right as Son, and the Father’s promise to Him, and His finished work, He might
4118 do so. The Father had said to Him, Ask of me, and I will give Thee.’ He simply availed Himself
4119 of the Father’s promise. Jesus has given us a like promise: Whatsoever ye will shall be done
4120 unto you.’ He asks me in His Name to say what I will. Abiding in Him, in a living union with
4121 Him in which man is nothing and Christ all, the believer has the liberty to take up that word of
4122 His High Priest and, in answer to the question What wilt thou?’ to say, FATHER! I WILL all
4123 that Thou hast promised.’ This is nothing but true faith; this is honouring God: to be assured that
4124 such confidence in saying what I will is indeed acceptable to Him. At first sight, our heart
4125 shrinks from the expression; we feel neither the liberty nor the power to speak thus. It is a word
4126 for which alone in the most entire abnegation of our will grace will be given, but for which
4127 grace will most assuredly be given to each one who loses his will in his Lord’s. He that loseth
4128 his will shall find it; he that gives up his will entirely shall find it again renewed and
4129 strengthened with a Divine Strength. FATHER! I WILL:’ this is the keynote of the everlasting,
4130 ever-active, all-prevailing intercession of our Lord in heaven. It is only in union with Him that
4131 our prayer avails; in union with Him it avails much. If we but abide in Him, living, and walking,
4132 and doing all things in His Name; if we but come and bring each separate petition, tested and
4133 touched by His Word and Spirit, and cast it into the mighty stream of intercession that goes up
4134 from Him, to be borne upward and presented before the Father;—we shall have the full
4135 confidence that we receive the petitions we ask: the Father! I will’ will be breathed into us by the
4136 Spirit Himself. We shall lose ourselves in Him, and become nothing, to find that in our
4137 impotence we have power and prevail.

4138
4139 Disciples of Jesus! Called to be like your Lord in His priestly intercession, when, O when! Shall
4140 we awaken to the glory, passing all conception, of this our destiny to plead and prevail with God
4141 for perishing men? O when shall we shake off the sloth that clothes itself with the pretence of
4142 humility, and yield ourselves wholly to God’s Spirit, that He may fill our wills with light and
4143 with power, to know, and to take, and to possess all that our God is waiting to give to a will that
4144 lays hold on Him.

4145

4146 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

4147

4148

4149

4150 O my Blessed High Priest! who am I that Thou shouldest thus invite me to share with Thee in
4151 Thy power of prevailing intercession! And why, O my Lord! am I so slow of heart to understand
4152 and believe and exercise this wonderful privilege to which Thou hast redeemed Thy people. O
4153 Lord! give Thy grace that this may increasingly be my unceasing life-work—in praying without
4154 ceasing to draw down the blessing of heaven on all my surroundings on earth.

4155

4156 Blessed Lord! I come now to accept this my calling. For this I would forsake all and follow
4157 Thee. Into Thy hands I would believingly yield my whole being: form, train, inspire me to be
4158 one of Thy prayer-legion, wrestlers who watch and strive in prayer, Israels, God’s princes, who
4159 have power and prevail. Take possession of my heart, and fill it with the one desire for the glory
4160 of God in the ingathering, and sanctification, and union of those whom the Father hath given
4161 Thee. Take my mind and let this be my study and my wisdom, to know when prayer can bring a
4162 blessing. Take me wholly and fit me as a priest ever to stand before God and to bless in His
4163 Name.

4164

4165 Blessed Lord! Be it here, as through all the spiritual life: Thou all, I nothing. And be it here my
4166 experience too that he that has and seeks nothing for himself, receives all, even to the wonderful
4167 grace of sharing with Thee in Thine everlasting ministry of intercession. Amen.

4168

4169

4170

4171 TWENTY-EIGHTH LESSON.

4172

4173 Father! Not what I will;’

4174

4175 Or, Christ the Sacrifice.

4176

4177 And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit
4178 not what I will, but what Thou wilt.’—Mark xiv. 36.

4179

4180 WHAT a contrast within the space of a few hours! What a transition from the quiet elevation of
4181 that, He lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, FATHER I WILL,’ to that falling on the ground
4182 and crying in agony. My Father! Not what I will.’ In the one we see the High Priest within the
4183 veil in His all-prevailing intercession; in the other, the sacrifice on the altar opening the way
4184 through the rent veil. The high-priestly Father! I will,’ in order of time precedes the sacrificial
4185 Father! Not what I will;’ but this was only by anticipation, to show what the intercession would
4186 be when once the sacrifice was brought. In reality it was that prayer at the altar, Father! Not
4187 what I will,’ in which the prayer before the throne, Father! I will,’ had its origin and its power. It
4188 is from the entire surrender of His will in Gethsemane that the High Priest on the throne has the
4189 power to ask what He will, has the right to make His people share in that power too, and ask
4190 what they will.

4191

4192 For all who would learn to pray in the school of Jesus, this Gethsemane lesson is one of the most
4193 sacred and precious. To a superficial scholar it may appear to take away the courage to pray in
4194 faith. If even the earnest supplication of the Son was not heard, if even the Beloved had to say,
4195 NOT WHAT I WILL!’ how much more do we need to speak so. And thus it appears impossible
4196 that the promises which the Lord had given only a few hours previously, WHATSOEVER YE
4197 SHALL ASK,’ WHATSOEVER YE WILL,’ could have been meant literally. A deeper insight

4198 into the meaning of Gethsemane would teach us that we have just here the sure ground and the
4199 open way to the assurance of an answer to our prayer. Let us draw nigh in reverent and adoring
4200 wonder, to gaze on this great sight—God’s Son thus offering up prayer and supplications with
4201 strong crying and tears, and not obtaining what He asks. He Himself is our Teacher, and will
4202 open up to us the mystery of His holy sacrifice, as revealed in this wondrous prayer.
4203

4204 To understand the prayer, let us note the infinite difference between what our Lord prayed a
4205 little ago as a Royal High Priest, and what He here supplicates in His weakness. There it was for
4206 the glorifying of the Father He prayed, and the glorifying of Himself and His people as the
4207 fulfilment of distinct promises that had been given Him. He asked what He knew to be
4208 according to the word and the will of the Father; He might boldly say, FATHER! I WILL.’ Here
4209 He prays for something in regard to which the Father’s will is not yet clear to Him. As far as He
4210 knows, it is the Father’s will that He should drink the cup. He had told His disciples of the cup
4211 He must drink: a little later He would again say, The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I
4212 not drink it?’ It was for this He had come to this earth. But when, in the unutterable agony of
4213 soul that burst upon him as the power of darkness came upon Him, and He began to taste the
4214 first drops of death as the wrath of God against sin, His human nature, as it shuddered in
4215 presence of the awful reality of being made a curse, gave utterance in this cry of anguish, to its
4216 desire that, if God’s purpose could be accomplished without it, He might be spared the awful
4217 cup: Let this cup pass from me.’ That desire was the evidence of the intense reality of His
4218 humanity. The Not as I will’ kept that desire from being sinful: as He pleadingly cries, All
4219 things are possible with Thee,’ and returns again to still more earnest prayer that the cup may be
4220 removed, it is His thrice-repeated NOT WHAT I WILL’ that constitutes the very essence and
4221 worth of His sacrifice. He had asked for something of which He could not say: I know it is Thy
4222 will. He had pleaded God’s power and love, and had then withdrawn it in His final, THY WILL
4223 BE DONE.’ The prayer that the cup should pass away could not be answered; the prayer of
4224 submission that God’s will be done was heard, and gloriously answered in His victory first over
4225 the fear, and then over the power of death.
4226

4227 It is in this denial of His will, this complete surrender of His will to the will of the Father, that
4228 Christ’s obedience reached its highest perfection. It is from the sacrifice of the will in
4229 Gethsemane that the sacrifice of the life on Calvary derives its value. It is here, as Scripture
4230 saith, that He learned obedience, and became the author of everlasting salvation to all that obey
4231 Him. It was because He there, in that prayer, became obedient unto death, even the death of the
4232 cross, that God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him the power to ask what He will. It was in
4233 that Father! Not what I will,’ that He obtained the power for that other FATHER! I will.’ It was
4234 by Christ’s submittal in Gethsemane to have not His will done, that He secured for His people
4235 the right to say to them, Ask whatsoever ye will.’
4236

4237 Let me look at them again, the deep mysteries that Gethsemane offers to my view. There is the
4238 first: the Father offers His Well-beloved the cup, the cup of wrath. The second: the Son, always
4239 so obedient, shrinks back, and implores that He may not have to drink it. The third: the Father
4240 does not grant the Son His request, but still gives the cup. And then the last: the Son yields His
4241 will, is content that His will be not done, and goes out to Calvary to drink the cup. O
4242 Gethsemane! in thee I see how my Lord could give me such unlimited assurance of an answer to
4243 my prayers. As my surety He won it for me, by His consent to have His petition unanswered.
4244

4245 This is in harmony with the whole scheme of redemption. Our Lord always wins for us the
4246 opposite of what He suffered. He was bound that we might go free. He was made sin that we
4247 might become the righteousness of God. He died that we might live. He bore God’s curse that
4248 God’s blessing might be ours. He endured the not answering of His prayer, that our prayers

4249 might find an answer. Yea, He spake, Not as I will,' that He might say to us, If ye abide in me,
4250 ask what ye will; it shall be done unto you.'

4251
4252 Yes, If ye abide in me;' here in Gethsemane the word acquires new force and depth. Christ is
4253 our Head, who as surety stands in our place, and bears what we must for ever have borne. We
4254 had deserved that God should turn a deaf ear to us, and never listen to our cry. Christ comes, and
4255 suffers this too for us: He suffers what we had merited; for our sins He suffers beneath the
4256 burden of that unanswered prayer. But now His suffering this avails for me: what He has borne
4257 is taken away for me; His merit has won for me the answer to every prayer, if I abide in Him.

4258
4259 Yes, in Him, as He bows there in Gethsemane, I must abide. As my Head, He not only once
4260 suffered for me, but ever lives in me, breathing and working His own disposition in me too. The
4261 Eternal Spirit, through which He offered Himself unto God, is the Spirit that dwells in me too,
4262 and makes me partaker of the very same obedience, and the sacrifice of the will unto God. That
4263 Spirit teaches me to yield my will entirely to the will of the Father, to give it up even unto the
4264 death, in Christ to be dead to it. Whatever is my own mind and thought and will, even though it
4265 be not directly sinful, He teaches me to fear and flee. He opens my ear to wait in great
4266 gentleness and teachableness of soul for what the Father has day by day to speak and to teach.
4267 He discovers to me how union with God's will in the love of it is union with God Himself; how
4268 entire surrender to God's will is the Father's claim, the Son's example, and the true blessedness
4269 of the soul. He leads my will into the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection, my will dies
4270 in Him, in Him to be made alive again. He breathes into it, as a renewed and quickened will, a
4271 holy insight into God's perfect will, a holy joy in yielding itself to be an instrument of that will,
4272 a holy liberty and power to lay hold of God's will to answer prayer. With my whole will I learn
4273 to live for the interests of God and His kingdom, to exercise the power of that will—crucified
4274 but risen again—in nature and in prayer, on earth and in heaven, with men and with God. The
4275 more deeply I enter into the FATHER! NOT WHAT I WILL' of Gethsemane, and into Him
4276 who spake it, to abide in Him, the fuller is my spiritual access into the power of His FATHER! I
4277 WILL. And the soul experiences that it is the will, which has become nothing that God's will
4278 may be all, which now becomes inspired with a Divine strength to really will what God wills,
4279 and to claim what has been promised it in the name of Christ.

4280
4281 O let us listen to Christ in Gethsemane, as He calls, If ye abide in me, ask whatsoever ye will,
4282 and it shall be done unto you.' Being of one mind and spirit with Him in His giving up
4283 everything to God's will, living like Him in obedience and surrender to the Father; this is
4284 abiding in Him; this is the secret of power in prayer.

4285
4286 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

4287
4288
4289
4290 Blessed Lord Jesus! Gethsemane was Thy school, where Thou didst learn to pray and to obey. It
4291 is still Thy school, where Thou ledest all Thy disciples who would fain learn to obey and to
4292 pray even as Thou. Lord! teach me there to pray, in the faith that Thou has atoned for and
4293 conquered our self-will, and canst indeed give us grace to pray like Thee.

4294
4295 O Lamb of God! I would follow Thee to Gethsemane, there to become one with Thee, and to
4296 abide in Thee as Thou dost unto the very death yield Thy will unto the Father. With Thee,
4297 through Thee, in Thee, I do yield my will in absolute and entire surrender to the will of the
4298 Father. Conscious of my own weakness, and the secret power with which self-will would assert
4299 itself and again take its place on the throne, I claim in faith the power of Thy victory. Thou didst
4300 triumph over it and deliver me from it. In Thy death I would daily live; in Thy life I would daily

4301 die. Abiding in Thee, let my will, through the power of Thine eternal Spirit, only be the tuned
4302 instrument which yields to every touch of the will of my God. With my whole soul do I say with
4303 Thee and in Thee, Father! Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.’

4304
4305 And then, Blessed Lord! Open my heart and that of all Thy people, to take in fully the glory of
4306 the truth, that a will given up to God is a will accepted of God to be used in his service, to
4307 desire, and purpose, and determine, and will what is according to God’s will. A will which, in
4308 the power of the Holy Spirit the indwelling God, is to exercise its royal prerogative in prayer, to
4309 loose and to bind in heaven and upon earth, to ask whatsoever it will, and to say it shall be done.

4310
4311 O Lord Jesus! teach me to pray. Amen.

4312
4313
4314
4315

4316 TWENTY-NINTH LESSON.

4317

4318 According to His will;

4319

4320 Or, Our Boldness in Prayer.

4321

4322 And this is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His
4323 will, He heareth us. And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have
4324 the petitions which we have asked of Him.’—I John v. 14, 15.

4325

4326 ONE of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is with many undoubtedly this: they know
4327 not if what they ask is according to the will of God. As long as they are in doubt on this point,
4328 they cannot have the boldness to ask in the assurance that they certainly shall receive. And they
4329 soon begin to think that, if once they have made known their requests, and receive no answer, it
4330 is best to leave it to God to do according to His good pleasure. The words of John, If we ask
4331 anything according to His will, He heareth us,’ as they understand them, make certainty as to
4332 answer to prayer impossible, because they cannot be sure of what really may be the will of God.
4333 They think of God’s will as His hidden counsel—how should man be able to fathom what really
4334 may be the purpose of the all-wise God.

4335

4336 This is the very opposite of what John aimed at in writing thus. He wished to rouse us to
4337 boldness, to confidence, to full assurance of faith in prayer. He says, This is the boldness which
4338 we have toward Him,’ that we can say: Father! Thou knowest and I know that I ask according to
4339 Thy will: I know Thou hearest me. This is the boldness, that if we ask anything according to His
4340 will, He heareth us.’ On this account He adds at once: If we know that He heareth us whatsoever
4341 we ask, we know,’ through this faith, that we have,’ that we now while we pray receive the
4342 petition,’ the special things, we have asked of Him.’ John supposes that when we pray, we first
4343 find out if our prayers are according to the will of God. They may be according to God’s will,
4344 and yet not come at once, or without the persevering prayer of faith. It is to give us courage thus
4345 to persevere and to be strong in faith, that He tells us: This gives us boldness or confidence in
4346 prayer, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. It is evident that if it be a matter
4347 of uncertainty to us whether our petitions be according to His will, we cannot have the comfort
4348 of what he says, We know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.’

4349

4350 But just this is the difficulty. More than one believer says: I do not know if what I desire be
4351 according to the will of God. God’s will is the purpose of His infinite wisdom: it is impossible
4352 for me to know whether He may not count something else better for me than what I desire, or

4353 may not have some reasons for withholding what I ask.’ Every one feels how with such thoughts
4354 the prayer of faith, of which Jesus said, Whosoever shall believe that these things which he saith
4355 shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith,’ becomes an impossibility. There may be
4356 the prayer of submission, and of trust in God’s wisdom; there cannot be the prayer of faith. The
4357 great mistake here is that God’s children do not really believe that it is possible to know God’s
4358 will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time and trouble to find it out. What we need is
4359 to see clearly in what way it is that the Father leads His waiting, teachable child to know that his
4360 petition is according to His will.¹ It is through God’s holy word, taken up and kept in the heart,
4361 the life, the will; and through God’s Holy Spirit, accepted in His indwelling and leading, that we
4362 shall learn to know that our petitions are according to His will.

4363
4364 Through the word. There is a secret will of God, with which we often fear that our prayers may
4365 be at variance. It is not with this will of God, but His will as revealed in His word, that we have
4366 to do in prayer. Our notions of what the secret will may have decreed, and of how it might
4367 render the answers to our prayers impossible, are mostly very erroneous. Childlike faith as to
4368 what He is willing to do for His children, simply keeps to the Father’s assurance, that it is His
4369 will to hear prayer and to do what faith in His word desires and accepts. In the word the Father
4370 has revealed in general promises the great principles of His will with His people. The child has
4371 to take the promise and apply it to the special circumstances in His life to which it has reference.
4372 Whatever he asks within the limits of that revealed will, he can know to be according to the will
4373 of God, and he may confidently expect. In His word, God has given us the revelation of His will
4374 and plans with us, with His people, and with the world, with the most precious promises of the
4375 grace and power with which through His people He will carry out His plans and do His work.
4376 As faith becomes strong and bold enough to claim the fulfilment of the general promise in the
4377 special case, we may have the assurance that our prayers are heard: they are according to God’s
4378 will. Take the words of John in the verse following our text as an illustration: If any man see his
4379 brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask and God will give him life.’ Such is the general
4380 promise; and the believer who pleads on the ground of this promise, prays according to the will
4381 of God, and John would give him boldness to know that he has the petition which he asks.

4382
4383 But this apprehension of God’s will is something spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned. It
4384 is not as a matter of logic that we can argue it out: God has said it; I must have it. Nor has every
4385 Christian the same gift or calling. While the general will revealed in the promise is the same for
4386 all, there is for each one a special different will according to God’s purpose. And herein is the
4387 wisdom of the saints, to know this special will of God for each of us, according to the measure
4388 of grace given us, and so to ask in prayer just what God has prepared and made possible for
4389 each. It is to communicate this wisdom that the Holy Ghost dwells in us. The personal
4390 application of the general promises of the word to our special personal needs—it is for this that
4391 the leading of the Holy Spirit is given us.

4392
4393 It is this union of the teaching of the word and Spirit that many do not understand, and so there
4394 is a twofold difficulty in knowing what God’s will may be. Some seek the will of God in an
4395 inner feeling or conviction, and would have the Spirit lead them without the word. Others seek it
4396 in the word, without the living leading of the Holy Spirit. The two must be united: only in the
4397 word, only in the Spirit, but in these most surely, can we know the will of God, and learn to pray
4398 according to it. In the heart the word and the Spirit must meet: it is only by indwelling that we
4399 can experience their teaching. The word must dwell, must abide in us: heart and life must day by
4400 day be under its influence. Not from without, but from within, comes the quickening of the word
4401 by the Spirit. It is only he who yields himself entirely in his whole life to the supremacy of the
4402 word and the will of God, who can expect in special cases to discern what that word and will
4403 permit him boldly to ask. And even as with the word, just so with the Spirit: if I would have the
4404 leading of the Spirit in prayer to assure me what God’s will is, my whole life must be yielded to

4405 that leading; so only can mind and heart become spiritual and capable of knowing God's holy
4406 will. It is he who, through word and Spirit, lives in the will of God by doing it, who will know to
4407 pray according to that will in the confidence that He hears us.
4408

4409 Would that Christians might see what incalculable harm they do themselves by the thought that
4410 because possibly their prayer is not according to God's will, they must be content without an
4411 answer. God's word tells us that the great reason of unanswered prayer is that we do not pray
4412 aright: 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' In not granting an answer, the Father tells
4413 us that there is something wrong in our praying. He wants to teach us to find it out and confess
4414 it, and so to educate us to true believing and prevailing prayer. He can only attain His object
4415 when He brings us to see that we are to blame for the withholding of the answer; our aim, or our
4416 faith, or our life is not what it should be. But this purpose of God is frustrated as long as we are
4417 content to say: It is perhaps because my prayer is not according to His will that He does not hear
4418 me. O let us no longer throw the blame of our unanswered prayers on the secret will of God, but
4419 on our praying amiss. Let that word, 'Ye receive not because ye ask amiss,' be as the lantern of
4420 the Lord, searching heart and life to prove that we are indeed such as those to whom Christ gave
4421 His promises of certain answers. Let us believe that we can know if our prayer be according to
4422 God's will. Let us yield our heart to have the word of the Father dwell richly there, to have
4423 Christ's word abiding in us. Let us live day by day with the anointing which teacheth us all
4424 things. Let us yield ourselves unreservedly to the Holy Spirit as He teaches us to abide in Christ,
4425 to dwell in the Father's presence, and we shall soon understand how the Father's love longs that
4426 the child should know His will, and should, in the confidence that that will includes all that His
4427 power and love have promised to do, know too that He hears the petitions which we ask of Him.
4428 This is the boldness which we have, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth
4429 us.'

4430
4431 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

4432
4433 ———0———
4434

4435 Blessed Master! With my whole heart I thank Thee for this blessed lesson, that the path to a life
4436 full of answers to prayer is through the will of God. Lord! Teach me to know this blessed will by
4437 living it, loving it, and always doing it. So shall I learn to offer prayers according to that will,
4438 and to find in their harmony with God's blessed will, my boldness in prayer and my confidence
4439 in accepting the answer.
4440

4441 Father! it is Thy will that Thy child should enjoy Thy presence and blessing. It is Thy will that
4442 everything in the life of Thy child should be in accordance with Thy will, and that the Holy
4443 Spirit should work this in Him. It is Thy will that Thy child should live in the daily experience
4444 of distinct answers to prayer, so as to enjoy living and direct fellowship with Thyself. It is Thy
4445 will that Thy Name should be glorified in and through Thy children, and that it will be in those
4446 who trust Thee. O my Father! let this Thy will be my confidence in all I ask.
4447

4448 Blessed Saviour! Teach me to believe in the glory of this will. That will is the eternal love,
4449 which with Divine power works out its purpose in each human will that yields itself to it. Lord!
4450 Teach me this. Thou canst make me see how every promise and every command of the word is
4451 indeed the will of God, and that its fulfilment is secured to me by God Himself. Let thus the will
4452 of God become to me the sure rock on which my prayer and my assurance of an answer ever
4453 rest. Amen.
4454

4455 NOTE.
4456

4457 There is often great confusion as to the will of God. People think that what God wills must
4458 inevitably take place. This is by no means the case. God wills a great deal of blessing to His
4459 people, which never comes to them. He wills it most earnestly, but they do not will it, and it
4460 cannot come to them. This is the great mystery of man's creation with a free will, and also of the
4461 renewal of his will in redemption, that God has made the execution of His will, in many things,
4462 dependent on the will of man. Of God's will revealed in His promises, so much will be fulfilled
4463 as our faith accepts. Prayer is the power by which that comes to pass which otherwise would not
4464 take place. And faith, the power by which it is decided how much of God's will shall be done in
4465 us. When once God reveals to a soul what He is willing to do for it, the responsibility for the
4466 execution of that will rests with us.

4467
4468 Some are afraid that this is putting too much power into the hands of man. But all power is put
4469 into the hands of man in Christ Jesus. The key of all prayer and all power is His, and when we
4470 learn to understand that He is just as much with us as with the Father, and that we are also just as
4471 much one with Him as He with the Father, we shall see how natural and right and safe it is that
4472 to those who abide in Him as He in the Father, such power should be given. It is Christ the Son
4473 who has the right to ask what He will: it is through the abiding in Him and His abiding in us (in
4474 a Divine reality of which we have too little apprehension) that His Spirit breathes in us what He
4475 wants to ask and obtain through us. We pray in His Name: the prayers are really ours and as
4476 really His.

4477
4478 Others again fear that to believe that prayer has such power is limiting the liberty and the love of
4479 God. O if we only knew how we are limiting His liberty and His love by not allowing Him to act
4480 in the only way in which He chooses to act, now that He has taken us up into fellowship with
4481 himself—through our prayers and our faith. A brother in the ministry once asked, as we were
4482 speaking on this subject, whether there was not a danger of our thinking that our love to souls
4483 and our willingness to see them blessed were to move God's love and God's willingness to bless
4484 them. We were just passing some large water-pipes, by which water was being carried over hill
4485 and dale from a large mountain stream to a town at some distance. Just look at these pipes, was
4486 the answer; they did not make the water willing to flow downwards from the hills, nor did they
4487 give it its power of blessing and refreshment: this is its very nature. All that they could do is to
4488 decide its direction: by it the inhabitants of the town said they want the blessing there. And just
4489 so, it is the very nature of God to love and to bless. Downward and ever downward His love
4490 longs to come with its quickening and refreshing streams. But He has left it to prayer to say
4491 where the blessing is to come. He has committed it to His believing people to bring the living
4492 water to the desert places: the will of God to bless is dependent upon the will of man to say
4493 where the blessing must descend. Such honour have His saints.' And this is the boldness which
4494 we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we
4495 know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have
4496 asked of Him.'

4497
4498 1See this illustrated in the extracts from George Muller at the end of this volume.

4499
4500

4501
4502

4503 THIRTIETH LESSON.

4504

4505 An holy priesthood;'

4506

4507 Or, The Ministry of Intercession.

4508

4509 An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.’—I Peter
4510 ii. 5.

4511
4512 Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord.’—Isaiah lxi. 6.

4513
4514 THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me.’ These are the
4515 words of Jesus in Isaiah. As the fruit of His work all redeemed ones are priests, fellow-partakers
4516 with Him of His anointing with the Spirit as High Priest. Like the precious ointment upon the
4517 beard of Aaron, that went down to the skirts of his garments.’ As every son of Aaron, so every
4518 member of Jesus’ body has a right to the priesthood. But not every one exercises it: many are
4519 still entirely ignorant of it. And yet it is the highest privilege of a child of God, the mark of
4520 greatest nearness and likeness to Him, who ever liveth to pray.’ Do you doubt if this really be
4521 so? Think of what constitutes priesthood. There is, first, the work of the priesthood. This has two
4522 sides, one Godward, the other manward. Every priest is ordained for men in things pertaining to
4523 God’ (Heb. v. 1); or, as it is said by Moses (Deut. x. 8, see also xxi. 5, xxxiii. 10; Mal. ii. 6): The
4524 Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him, and to bless His
4525 Name.’ On the one hand, the priest had the power to draw nigh to God, to dwell with Him in His
4526 house, and to present before Him the blood of the sacrifice or the burning incense. This work he
4527 did not do, however, on his own behalf, but for the sake of the people whose representative he
4528 was. This is the other side of his work. He received from the people their sacrifices, presented
4529 them before God, and then came out to bless in His Name, to give the assurance of His favour
4530 and to teach them His law.

4531
4532 A priest is thus a man who does not at all live for himself. He lives with God and for God. His
4533 work is as God’s servant to care for His house, His honour, and His worship, to make known to
4534 men His love and His will. He lives with men and for men (Heb. v. 2). His work is to find out
4535 their sin and need, and to bring it before God, to offer sacrifice and incense in their name, to
4536 obtain forgiveness and blessing for them, and then to come out and bless them in His Name.
4537 This is the high calling of every believer. Such honour have all His saints.’ They have been
4538 redeemed with the one purpose to be in the midst of the perishing millions around them, God’s
4539 priests, who in conformity to Jesus, the Great High Priest, are to be the ministers and stewards of
4540 the grace of God to all around them.

4541
4542 And then there is the walk of the priesthood, in harmony with its work. As God is holy, so the
4543 priest was to be especially holy. This means not only separated from everything unclean, but
4544 holy unto God, being set apart and given up to God for His disposal. The separation from the
4545 world and setting apart unto God was indicated in many ways.

4546
4547 It was seen in the clothing: the holy garments, made after God’s own order, marked them as His
4548 (Ex. xxviii.). It was seen in the command as to their special purity and freedom from all contact
4549 from death and defilement (Lev. xi. 22). Much that was allowed to an ordinary Israelite was
4550 forbidden to them. It was seen in the injunction that the priest must have no bodily defect or
4551 blemish; bodily perfection was to be the type of wholeness and holiness in God’s service. And it
4552 was seen in the arrangement by which the priestly tribes were to have no inheritance with the
4553 other tribes; God was to be their inheritance. Their life was to be one of faith: set apart unto
4554 God, they were to live on Him as well as for Him.

4555
4556 All this is the emblem of what the character of the New Testament priest is to be. Our priestly
4557 power with God depends on our personal life and walk. We must be of them of whose walk on
4558 earth Jesus says, They have not defiled their garments.’

4559

4560 In the surrender of what may appear lawful to others in our separation from the world, we must
4561 prove that our consecration to be holy to the Lord is whole-hearted and entire. The bodily
4562 perfection of the priest must have its counterpart in our too being without spot or blemish;’ the
4563 man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works,’ perfect and entire, wanting
4564 nothing’ (Lev. xxi. 17-21; Eph. v. 27; 2 Tim. ii. 7; Jas. i. 4). And above all, we consent to give
4565 up all inheritance on earth; to forsake all, and like Christ to have only God as our portion: to
4566 possess as not possessing, and hold all for God alone: it is this marks the true priest, the man
4567 who only lives for God and his fellow-men.

4568
4569 And now the way to the priesthood. In Aaron God had chosen all his sons to be priests: each of
4570 them was a priest by birth. And yet he could not enter upon his work without a special act of
4571 ordinance—his consecration. Every child of God is priest in light of his birth, his blood
4572 relationship to the Great High Priest; but this is not enough: he will exercise his power only as
4573 he accepts and realizes his consecration.

4574
4575 With Aaron and his sons it took place thus (Ex. xxix.): After being washed and clothed, they
4576 were anointed with the holy oil. Sacrifices were then offered, and with the blood the right ear,
4577 the right hand, and the right foot were touched. And then they and their garments were once
4578 again sprinkled with the blood and the oil together. And so it is as the child of God enters more
4579 fully into what THE BLOOD and THE SPIRIT of which he already is partaker, are to him, that
4580 the power of the Holy Priesthood will work in him. The blood will take away all sense of
4581 unworthiness; the Spirit, all sense of unfitness.

4582
4583 Let us notice what there was new in the application of the blood to the priest. If ever he had as a
4584 penitent brought a sacrifice for his sin, seeking forgiveness, the blood was sprinkled on the altar,
4585 but not on his person. But now, for priestly consecration, there was to be closer contact with the
4586 blood; ear and hand and foot were by a special act brought under its power, and the whole being
4587 taken possession of and sanctified for God. And so, when the believer, who had been content to
4588 think chiefly of the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat as what he needs for pardon, is led to seek
4589 full priestly access to God, he feels the need of a fuller and more abiding experience of the
4590 power of the blood, as really sprinkling and cleansing the heart from an evil conscience, so that
4591 he has no more conscience of sin’ (Heb. x. 2) as cleansing from all sin. And it is as he gets to
4592 enjoy this, that the consciousness is awakened of his wonderful right of most intimate access to
4593 God, and of the full assurance that his intercessions are acceptable.

4594
4595 And as the blood gives the right, the Spirit gives the power, and fits for believing intercession.
4596 He breathes into us the priestly spirit—burning love for God’s honour and the saving of souls.
4597 He makes us so one with Jesus that prayer in His Name is a reality. He strengthens us to
4598 believing, importunate prayer. The more the Christian is truly filled with the Spirit of Christ, the
4599 more spontaneous will be his giving himself up to the life of priestly intercession. Beloved
4600 fellow-Christians! God needs, greatly needs, priests who can draw near to Him, who live in His
4601 presence, and by their intercession draw down the blessings of His grace on others. And the
4602 world needs, greatly needs, priests who will bear the burden of the perishing ones, and intercede
4603 on their behalf.

4604
4605 Are you willing to offer yourself for this holy work? You know the surrender it demands—
4606 nothing less than the Christ-like giving up of all, that the saving purposes of God’s love may be
4607 accomplished among men. Oh, be no longer of those who are content if they have salvation, and
4608 just do work enough to keep themselves warm and lively. O let nothing keep you back from
4609 giving yourselves to be wholly and only priests—nothing else, nothing less than the priests of
4610 the Most High God. The thought of unworthiness, of unfitness, need not keep you back. In the
4611 Blood, the objective power of the perfect redemption works in you: in the Spirit its full

4612 subjective personal experience as a divine life is secured. The Blood provides an infinite
4613 worthiness to make your prayers most acceptable: The Spirit provides a Divine fitness, teaching
4614 you to pray just according to the will of God. Every priest knew that when he presented a
4615 sacrifice according to the law of the sanctuary, it was accepted: under the covering of the Blood
4616 and Spirit you have the assurance that all the wonderful promises to prayer in the Name of Jesus
4617 will be fulfilled in you. Abiding in union with the Great High Priest, you shall ask what you will,
4618 and it shall be done unto you.’ You will have power to pray the effectual prayer of the righteous
4619 man that availeth much. You will not only join in the general prayer of the Church for the world,
4620 but be able in your own sphere to take up your special work in prayer—as priests, to transact it
4621 with God, to receive and know the answer, and so to bless in His Name. Come, brother, come,
4622 and be a priest, only priest, all priest. Seek now to walk before the Lord in the full consciousness
4623 that you have been set apart for the holy Ministry of Intercession. This is the true blessedness of
4624 conformity to the image of God’s Son.

4625
4626 LORD TEACH US TO PRAY.’

4627
4628
4629
4630 O Thou my blessed High Priest, accept the consecration in which my soul now would respond to
4631 Thy message.

4632
4633 I believe in the HOLY PRIESTHOOD OF THY SAINTS, and that I too am a priest, with power
4634 to appear before the Father, and in the prayer that avails much bring down blessing on the
4635 perishing around me.

4636
4637 I believe in the POWER OF THY PRECIOUS BLOOD to cleanse from all sin, to give me
4638 perfect confidence toward God, and bring me near in the full assurance of faith that my
4639 intercession will be heard.

4640
4641 I believe in the ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT, coming down daily from Thee, my Great High
4642 Priest, to sanctify me, to fill me with the consciousness of my priestly calling, and with love to
4643 souls, to teach me what is according to God’s will, and how to pray the prayer of faith.

4644
4645 I believe that, as Thou my Lord Jesus art Thyself in all things my life, so Thou, too, art THE
4646 SURETY FOR MY PRAYER-LIFE, and wilt Thyself draw me up into the fellowship of Thy
4647 wondrous work of intercession.

4648
4649 In this faith I yield myself this day to my God, as one of His anointed priests, to stand before His
4650 face to intercede in behalf of sinners, and to come out and bless in His Name.

4651
4652 Holy Lord Jesus! accept and seal my consecration. Yea, Lord, do Thou lay Thy hands on me,
4653 and Thyself consecrate me to this Thy holy work. And let me walk among men with the
4654 consciousness and the character of a priest of the Most High God.

4655
4656 Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins IN HIS OWN BLOOD, AND HATH
4657 MADE US kings and priests unto God and His Father; TO HIM be glory and dominion forever
4658 and ever. Amen

4659
4660
4661
4662 THIRTY-FIRST LESSON.
4663

4664 Pray without ceasing;'

4665

4666 Or, A Life of Prayer.

4667

4668 Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.—I Thess. v. 16, 17, 18.

4669

4670 OUR Lord spake the parable of the widow and the unjust judge to teach us that men ought to
4671 pray always and not faint. As the widow persevered in seeking one definite thing, the parable
4672 appears to have reference to persevering prayer for some one blessing, when God delays or
4673 appears to refuse. The words in the Epistles, which speak of continuing instant in prayer,
4674 continuing in prayer and watching in the same, of praying always in the Spirit, appear more to
4675 refer to the whole life being one of prayer. As the soul is filling with the longing for the
4676 manifestation of God's glory to us and in us, through us and around us, and with the confidence
4677 that He hears the prayers of His children; the inmost life of the soul is continually rising upward
4678 in dependence and faith, in longing desire and trustful expectation.

4679

4680 At the close of our meditations it will not be difficult to say what is needed to live such a life of
4681 prayer. The first thing is undoubtedly the entire sacrifice of the life to God's kingdom and glory.
4682 He who seeks to pray without ceasing because he wants to be very pious and good, will never
4683 attain to it. It is the forgetting of self and yielding ourselves to live for God and His honour that
4684 enlarges the heart, that teaches us to regard everything in the light of God and His will, and that
4685 instinctively recognises in everything around us the need of God's help and blessing, an
4686 opportunity for His being glorified. Because everything is weighed and tested by the one thing
4687 that fills the heart—the glory of God, and because the soul has learnt that only what is of God
4688 can really be to Him and His glory, the whole life becomes a looking up, a crying from the
4689 inmost heart, for God to prove His power and love and so show forth His glory. The believer
4690 awakes to the consciousness that he is one of the watchmen on Zion's walls, one of the Lord's
4691 remembrancers, whose call does really touch and move the King in heaven to do what would
4692 otherwise not be done. He understands how real Paul's exhortation was, praying always with all
4693 prayer and supplication in the Spirit for all the saints and for me,' and continue in prayer, withal
4694 praying also for us.' To forget oneself, to live for God and His kingdom among men, is the way
4695 to learn to pray without ceasing.

4696

4697 This life devoted to God must be accompanied by the deep confidence that our prayer is
4698 effectual. We have seen how our Blessed Lord insisted upon nothing so much in His prayer-
4699 lessons as faith in the Father as a God who most certainly does what we ask. Ask and ye shall
4700 receive;' count confidently on an answer, is with Him the beginning and the end of His teaching
4701 (compare Matt. vii. 8 and John xvi. 24). In proportion as this assurance masters us, and it
4702 becomes a settled thing that our prayers do tell and that God does what we ask, we dare not
4703 neglect the use of this wonderful power: the soul turns wholly to God, and our life becomes
4704 prayer. We see that the Lord needs and takes time, because we and all around us are the
4705 creatures of time, under the law of growth; but knowing that not one single prayer of faith can
4706 possibly be lost that there is sometimes a needs-be for the storing up and accumulating of
4707 prayer, that persevering pray is irresistible, prayer becomes the quiet, persistent living of our life
4708 of desire and faith in the presence of our God. O do not let us any longer by our reasonings limit
4709 and enfeeble such free and sure promises of the living God, robbing them of their power, and
4710 ourselves of the wonderful confidence they are meant to inspire. Not in God, not in His secret
4711 will, not in the limitations of His promises, but in us, in ourselves is the hindrance; we are not
4712 what we should be to obtain the promise. Let us open our whole heart to God's words of
4713 promise in all their simplicity and truth: they will search us and humble us; they will lift us up
4714 and make us glad and strong. And to the faith that knows it gets what it asks, prayer is not a
4715 work or a burden, but a joy and a triumph; it becomes a necessity and a second nature.

4716
4717 This union of strong desire and firm confidence again is nothing but the life of the Holy Spirit
4718 within us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us, hides Himself in the depths of our being, and stirs the
4719 desire after the Unseen and the Divine, after God Himself. Now in groanings that cannot be
4720 uttered, then in clear and conscious assurance; now in special distinct petitions for the deeper
4721 revelation of Christ to ourselves, then in pleadings for a soul, a work, the Church or the world, it
4722 is always and alone the Holy Spirit who draws out the heart to thirst for God, to long for His
4723 being made known and glorified. Where the child of God really lives and walks in the Spirit,
4724 where he is not content to remain carnal, but seeks to be spiritual, in everything a fit organ for
4725 the Divine Spirit to reveal the life of Christ and Christ Himself, there the never-ceasing
4726 intercession-life of the Blessed Son cannot but reveal and repeat itself in our experience.
4727 Because it is the Spirit of Christ who prays in us, our prayer must be heard; because it is we who
4728 pray in the Spirit, there is need of time, and patience, and continual renewing of the prayer, until
4729 every obstacle be conquered, and the harmony between God's Spirit and ours is perfect.

4730
4731 But the chief thing we need for such a life of unceasing prayer is, to know that Jesus teaches us
4732 to pray. We have begun to understand a little what His teaching is. Not the communication of
4733 new thoughts or views, not the discovery of failure or error, not the stirring up of desire and
4734 faith, of however much importance all this be, but the taking us up into the fellowship of His
4735 own prayer-life before the Father—this it is by which Jesus really teaches. It was the sight of the
4736 praying Jesus that made the disciples long and ask to be taught to pray. It is the faith of the ever-
4737 praying Jesus, whose alone is the power to pray, that teaches us truly to pray. We know why: He
4738 who prays is our Head and our Life. All He has is ours and is given to us when we give
4739 ourselves all to Him. By His blood He leads us into the immediate presence of God. The inner
4740 sanctuary is our home, we dwell there. And He that lives so near God, and knows that He has
4741 been brought near to bless those who are far, cannot but pray. Christ makes us partakers with
4742 Himself of His prayer-power and prayer-life. We understand then that our true aim must not be
4743 to work much and have prayer enough to keep the work right, but to pray much and then to work
4744 enough for the power and blessing obtained in prayer to find its way through us to men. It is
4745 Christ who ever lives to pray, who saves and reigns. He communicates His prayer-life to us: He
4746 maintains it in us if we trust Him. He is surety for our praying without ceasing. Yes, Christ
4747 teaches to pray by showing how He does it, by doing it in us, by leading us to do it in Him and
4748 like Him. Christ is all, the life and the strength too for a never-ceasing prayer-life.

4749
4750 It is the sight of this, the sight of the ever-praying Christ as our life, that enables us to pray
4751 without ceasing. Because His priesthood is the power of an endless life, that resurrection-life
4752 that never fades and never fails, and because His life is our life, praying without ceasing can
4753 become to us nothing less than the life-joy of heaven. So the Apostle says: Rejoice evermore;
4754 pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks.' Borne up between the never-ceasing joy and
4755 the never-ceasing praise, never-ceasing prayer is the manifestation of the power of the eternal
4756 life, where Jesus always prays. The union between the Vine and the branch is in very deed a
4757 prayer-union. The highest conformity to Christ, the most blessed participation in the glory of His
4758 heavenly life, is that we take part in His work of intercession: He and we live ever to pray. In the
4759 experience of our union with Him, praying without ceasing becomes a possibility, a reality, the
4760 holiest and most blessed part of our holy and blessed fellowship with God. We have our abode
4761 within the veil, in the presence of the Father. What the Father says, we do; what the Son says,
4762 the Father does. Praying without ceasing is the earthly manifestation of heaven come down to
4763 us, the foretaste of the life where they rest not day or night in the song of worship and adoration.

4764
4765 LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

4766
4767

4768
4769 O my Father, with my whole heart do I praise Thee for this wondrous life of never-ceasing
4770 prayer, never-ceasing fellowship, never-ceasing answers, and never-ceasing experience of my
4771 oneness with Him who ever lives to pray. O my God! keep me ever so dwelling and walking in
4772 the presence of Thy glory, that prayer may be the spontaneous expression of my life with Thee.
4773

4774 Blessed Saviour! with my whole heart I praise Thee that Thou didst come from heaven to share
4775 with me in my needs and cries, that I might share with Thee in Thy all-prevailing intercession.
4776 And I thank Thee that Thou hast taken me into the school of prayer, to teach the blessedness and
4777 the power of a life that is all prayer. And most of all, that Thou hast taken me up into the
4778 fellowship of Thy life of intercession, that through me too Thy blessings may be dispensed to
4779 those around me.

4780
4781 Holy Spirit! with deep reverence I thank Thee for Thy work in me. It is through Thee I am lifted
4782 up into a share in the intercourse between the Son and the Father, and enter so into the
4783 fellowship of the life and love of the Holy Trinity Spirit of God! perfect Thy work in me; bring
4784 me into perfect union with Christ my Intercessor. Let Thine unceasing indwelling make my life
4785 one of unceasing intercession. And let so my life become one that is unceasingly to the glory of
4786 the Father and to the blessing of those around me. Amen.
4787

4788
4789

4790 GEORGE MULLER, AND THE SECRET OF HIS

4791 4792 POWER IN PRAYER

4793
4794 WHEN God wishes anew to teach His Church a truth that is not being understood or practised,
4795 He mostly does so by raising some man to be in word and deed a living witness to its
4796 blessedness. And so God has raised up in this nineteenth century, among others, George Muller
4797 to be His witness that He is indeed the Hearer of prayer. I know of no way in which the principal
4798 truths of God's word in regard to prayer can be more effectually illustrated and established than
4799 a short review of his life and of what he tells of his prayer-experiences.

4800
4801 He was born in Prussia on 25th September 1805, and is thus now eighty years of age. His early
4802 life, even after having entered the University of Halle as a theological student, was wicked in the
4803 extreme. Led by a friend one evening, when just twenty years of age, to a prayer meeting, he
4804 was deeply impressed, and soon after brought to know the Saviour. Not long after he began
4805 reading missionary papers, and in course of time offered himself to the London Society for
4806 promoting Christianity to the Jews. He was accepted as a student, but soon found that he could
4807 not in all things submit to the rules of the Society, as leaving too little liberty for the leading of
4808 the Holy Spirit. The connection was dissolved in 1830 by mutual consent, and he became the
4809 pastor of a small congregation at Teignmouth. In 1832 he was led to Bristol, and it was as pastor
4810 of Bethesda Chapel that he was led to the Orphan Home and other work, in connection with
4811 which God has so remarkably led him to trust His word and to experience how God fulfils that
4812 word.

4813
4814 A few extracts in regard to his spiritual life will prepare the way for what we specially wish to
4815 quote of his experiences in reference to prayer.

4816
4817 In connection with this I would mention, that the Lord very graciously gave me, from the very
4818 commencement of my divine life, a measure of simplicity and of childlike disposition in
4819 spiritual things, so that whilst I was exceedingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and was still from

4820 time to time overcome even by outward sins, yet I was enabled to carry most minute matters to
4821 the Lord in prayer. And I have found “godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the
4822 life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Though very weak and ignorant, yet I had now,
4823 by the grace of God, some desire to benefit others, and he who so faithfully had once served
4824 Satan, sought now to win souls for Christ.’

4825
4826 It was at Teignmouth that he was led to know how to use God’s word , and to trust the Holy
4827 Spirit as the Teacher given by God to make that word clear. He writes:—

4828
4829 God then began to show me that the word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual
4830 things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former
4831 times. He is the Teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally
4832 understood before that time.

4833
4834 It was my beginning to understand this latter point in particular, which had a great effect on me;
4835 for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and
4836 almost every other book and simply reading the word of God and studying it.

4837
4838 The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to
4839 prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during
4840 a period of several months previously.

4841
4842 But the particular difference was that I received real strength for my soul in so doing. I now
4843 began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that
4844 only those principles which stood the test were of real value.’

4845
4846 Of obedience to the word of God, he writes as follows, in connection with his being baptized:—

4847
4848 It had pleased God, in His abundant mercy, to bring my mind into such a state, that I was willing
4849 to carry out into my life whatever I should find in the Scriptures. I could say, “I will do His
4850 will,” and it was on that account, I believe, that I saw which “doctrine is of God.”—And I would
4851 observe here, by the way, that the passage to which I have just alluded (John vii. 17) has been a
4852 most remarkable comment to me on many doctrines and precepts of our most holy faith. For
4853 instance: “Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the
4854 other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy
4855 cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that
4856 asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Love your enemies,
4857 bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully
4858 use you, and persecute you” (Matt. v. 39-44). “Sell that ye have, and give alms”(Luke xii. 33).
4859 “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”(Rom. xii. 8). It may be said, “Surely these
4860 passages cannot be taken literally, for how then would the people of God be able to pass through
4861 the world?” The state of mind enjoined in John vii. 17 will cause such objections to vanish.
4862 WHOSOEVER IS WILLING TO ACT OUT these commandments of the Lord LITERALLY,
4863 will, I believe, be led with me to see that to take them LITERALLY is the will of God.—Those
4864 who do so take them will doubtless often be brought into difficulties, hard to the flesh to bear,
4865 but these will have a tendency to make them constantly feel that they are strangers and pilgrims
4866 here, that this world is not their home, and thus to throw them more upon God, who will
4867 assuredly help us through any difficulty into which we may be brought by seeking to act in
4868 obedience to His word.’

4869
4870 This implicit surrender to God’s word led him to certain views and conduct in regard to money,
4871 which mightily influenced his future life. They had their root in the conviction that money was a

4872 Divine stewardship, and that all money had therefore to be received and dispensed in direct
4873 fellowship with God Himself. This led him to the adoption of the following four great rules: 1.
4874 Not to receive any fixed salary, both because in the collecting of it there was often much that
4875 was at variance with the freewill offering with which God's service is to be maintained, and in
4876 the receiving of it a danger of placing more dependence on human sources of income than in the
4877 living God Himself. 2. Never to ask any human being for help, however great the need might be,
4878 but to make his wants known to the God who has promised to care for His servants and to hear
4879 their prayer. 3. To take this command (Luke xii. 33) literally, 'Sell that thou hast and give alms,'
4880 and never to save up money, but to spend all God entrusted to him on God's poor, on the work
4881 of His kingdom. 4. Also to take Rom. xiii. 8, 'Owe no man anything,' literally, and never to buy
4882 on credit, or be in debt for anything, but to trust God to provide.

4883
4884 This mode of living was not easy at first. But Muller testifies it was most blessed in bringing the
4885 soul to rest in God, and drawing it into closer union with Himself when inclined to backslide.
4886 For it will not do, it is not possible, to live in sin, and at the same time, by communion with God,
4887 to draw down from heaven everything one needs for the life that now is.'

4888
4889 Not long after his settlement at Bristol, THE SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTION
4890 FOR HOME AND ABROAD' was established for aiding in Day, Sunday School, Mission and
4891 Bible work. Of this Institution the Orphan Home work, by which Mr. Muller is best known,
4892 became a branch. It was in 1834 that his heart was touched by the case of an orphan brought to
4893 Christ in one of the schools, but who had to go to a poorhouse where its spiritual wants would
4894 not be cared for. Meeting shortly after with a life of Franke, he writes (Nov, 20, 1835): Today I
4895 have had it very much laid on my heart no longer merely to think about the establishment of an
4896 Orphan Home, but actually to set about it, and I have been very much in prayer respecting it, in
4897 order to ascertain the Lord's mind. May God make it plain.' And again, Nov. 25: I have been
4898 again much in prayer yesterday and today about the Orphan Home, and am more and more
4899 convinced that it is of God. May He in mercy guide me. The three chief reasons are—1. That
4900 God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that
4901 it is not a vain thing to trust Him; and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened. 2.
4902 The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children. 3. Their temporal welfare.'

4903
4904 After some months of prayer and waiting on God, a house was rented, with room for thirty
4905 children, and in course of time three more, containing in all 120 children. The work was carried
4906 on it this way for ten years, the supplies for the needs of the orphans being asked and received of
4907 God alone. It was often a time of sore need and much prayer, but a trial of faith more precious
4908 than of gold was found unto praise and honour and glory of God. The Lord was preparing His
4909 servant for greater things. By His providence and His Holy Spirit, Mr. Muller was led to desire,
4910 and to wait upon God till he received from Him, the sure promise of 15,000 for a Home to
4911 contain 300 children. This first Home was opened in 1849. In 1858, a second and third Home,
4912 for 950 more orphans, was opened, costing 35,000. And in 1869 and 1870, a fourth and a fifth
4913 Home, for 850 more, at an expense of 50,000, making the total number of the orphans 2100.

4914
4915 In addition to this work, God has given him almost as much as for the building of the Orphan
4916 Homes, and the maintenance of the orphans, for other work, the support of schools and
4917 missions, Bible and tract circulation. In all he has received from God, to be spent in His work,
4918 during these fifty years, more than one million pounds sterling. How little he knew, let us
4919 carefully notice, that when he gave up his little salary of 35 a year in obedience to the leading of
4920 God's word and the Holy Spirit, what God was preparing to give him as the reward of obedience
4921 and faith; and how wonderfully the word was to be fulfilled to him: 'Thou hast been faithful over
4922 few things; I will set thee over many things.'

4923

4924 And these things have happened for an ensample to us. God calls us to be followers of George
4925 Muller, even as he is of Christ. His God is our God; the same promises are for us; the same
4926 service of love and faith in which he laboured is calling for us on every side. Let us in
4927 connection with our lessons in the school of prayer study the way in which God gave George
4928 Muller such power as a man of prayer: we shall find in it the most remarkable illustration of
4929 some of the lessons which we have been studying with the blessed Master in the word. We shall
4930 specially have impressed upon us His first great lesson, that if we will come to Him in the way
4931 He has pointed out, with definite petitions, made known to us by the Spirit through the word as
4932 being according to the will of God, we may most confidently believe that whatsoever we ask it
4933 shall be done.

4934
4935 PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD.

4936
4937 We have more than once seen that God's listening to our voice depends upon our listening to
4938 His voice. (See Lessons 22 and 23.) We must not only have a special promise to plead, when we
4939 make a special request, but our whole life must be under the supremacy of the word: the word
4940 must be dwelling in us. The testimony of George Muller on this point is most instructive. He
4941 tells us how the discovery of the true place of the word of God, and the teaching of the Spirit
4942 with it, was the commencement of a new era in his spiritual life. Of it he writes:—

4943
4944 Now the scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God Himself has condescended to
4945 become an author, and I am ignorant about that precious book which His Holy Spirit has caused
4946 to be written through the instrumentality of His servants, and it contains that which I ought to
4947 know, and the knowledge of which will lead me to true happiness; therefore I ought to read
4948 again and again this most precious book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully,
4949 and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life. For I
4950 was aware, though I read it but little, that I knew scarcely anything of it. But instead of acting
4951 thus and being led by my ignorance of the word of God to study it more, my difficulty in
4952 understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it (for much
4953 prayerful reading of the word gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the delight we
4954 have in reading it); and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years
4955 of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God. The consequence
4956 was that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge, I say; for all true
4957 knowledge must be derived, by the Spirit, from the word. And as I neglected the word, I was for
4958 nearly four years so ignorant, that I did not clearly know even the fundamental points of our
4959 holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the
4960 ways of God. For when it pleased the Lord in August 1829 to bring me really to the Scriptures,
4961 my life and walk became very different. And though ever since that I have very much fallen
4962 short of what I might and ought to be, yet by the grace of God I have been enabled to live much
4963 nearer to Him than before. If any believers read this who practically prefer other books to the
4964 Holy Scriptures, and who enjoy the writings of men much more than the word of God, may they
4965 be warned by my loss. I shall consider this book to have been the means of doing much good,
4966 should it please the Lord, through its instrumentality, to lead some of His people no longer to
4967 neglect the Holy Scriptures, but to give them that preference which they have hitherto bestowed
4968 on the writings of men.

4969
4970 Before I leave this subject, I would only add: If the reader understands very little of the word of
4971 God, he ought to read it very much; for the Spirit explains the word by the word. And if he
4972 enjoys the reading of the word little, that is just the reason why he should read it much; for the
4973 frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them, so that the more we read them, the
4974 more we desire to do so.

4975

4976 Above all, he should seek to have it settled in his own mind that God alone by His Spirit can
4977 teach him, and that therefore, as God will be inquired of for blessings, it becomes him to seek
4978 God's blessing previous to reading, and also whilst reading.

4979
4980 He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind that although the Holy Spirit is the best and
4981 sufficient Teacher, yet that this Teacher does not always teach immediately when we desire it,
4982 and that therefore we may have to entreat Him again and again for the explanation of certain
4983 passages; but that He will surely teach us at last, if indeed we are seeking for light prayerfully,
4984 patiently, and with a view to the glory of God.' [4]

4985
4986 We find in his journal frequent mention made of his spending two and three hours in prayer over
4987 the word for the feeding of his spiritual life. As the fruit of this, when he had need of strength
4988 and encouragement in prayer, the individual promises were not to him so many arguments from
4989 a book to be used with God, but living words which he had heard the Father's living voice speak
4990 to him, and which he could now bring to the Father in living faith.

4991
4992 PRAYER AND THE WILL OF GOD.

4993
4994 One of the greatest difficulties with young believers is to know how they can find out whether
4995 what they desire is according to God's will. I count it one of the most precious lessons God
4996 wants to teach through the experience of George Muller, that He is willing to make known, of
4997 things of which His word says nothing directly, that they are His will for us, and that we may
4998 ask them. The teaching of the Spirit, not without or against the word, but as something above
4999 and beyond it, in addition to it, without which we cannot see God's will, is the heritage of every
5000 believer. It is through THE WORD, AND THE WORD ALONE, that the Spirit teaches,
5001 applying the general principles or promises to our special need. And it is THE SPIRIT, AND
5002 THE SPIRIT ALONE, who can really make the word a light on our path, whether the path of
5003 duty in our daily walk, or the path of faith in our approach to God. Let us try and notice in what
5004 childlike simplicity and teachableness it was that the discovery of God's will was so surely and
5005 so clearly made known to His servant.

5006
5007 With regard to the building of the first Home and the assurance he had of its being God's will,
5008 he writes in May 1850, just after it had been opened, speaking of the great difficulties there
5009 were, and how little likely it appeared to nature that they would be removed: But while the
5010 prospect before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it naturally, I was never
5011 even for once permitted to question how it would end. For as from the beginning I was sure it
5012 was the will of God that I should go to the work of building for Him this large Orphan Home, so
5013 also from the beginning I was as certain that the whole would be finished as if the Home had
5014 been already filled.'

5015
5016 The way in which he found out what was God's will, comes out with special clearness in his
5017 account of the building of the second Home; and I ask the reader to study with care the lesson
5018 the narrative conveys:—

5019
5020 Dec. 5, 1850.—Under these circumstances I can only pray that the Lord in His tender mercy
5021 would not allow Satan to gain an advantage over me. By the grace of God my heart says: Lord,
5022 if I could be sure that it is Thy will that I should go forward in this matter, I would do so
5023 cheerfully; and, on the other hand, if I could be sure that these are vain, foolish, proud thoughts,
5024 that they are not from Thee, I would, by Thy grace, hate them, and entirely put them aside.
5025

5026 My hope is in God: He will help and teach me. Judging, however, from His former dealings with
5027 me, it would not be a strange thing to me, nor surprising, if He called me to labour yet still more
5028 largely in this way.

5029
5030 The thoughts about enlarging the Orphan work have not yet arisen on account of an abundance
5031 of money having lately come in; for I have had of late to wait for about seven weeks upon God,
5032 whilst little, very little comparatively, came in, i.e. about four times as much was going out as
5033 came in; and, had not the Lord previously sent me large sums, we should have been distressed
5034 indeed.

5035
5036 Lord! how can Thy servant know Thy will in this matter? Wilt Thou be pleased to teach him!

5037
5038 December 11.—During the last six days, since writing the above, I have been, day after day,
5039 waiting upon God concerning this matter. It has generally been more or less all the day on my
5040 heart. When I have been awake at night, it has not been far from my thoughts. Yet all this
5041 without the least excitement. I am perfectly calm and quiet respecting it. My soul would be
5042 rejoiced to go forward in this service, could I be sure that the Lord would have me to do so; for
5043 then, notwithstanding the numberless difficulties, all would be well; and His Name would be
5044 magnified.

5045
5046 On the other hand, were I assured that the Lord would have me to be satisfied with my present
5047 sphere of service, and that I should not pray about enlarging the work, by His grace I could,
5048 without an effort, cheerfully yield to it; for He has brought me into such a state of heart, that I
5049 only desire to please Him in this matter. Moreover, hitherto I have not spoken about this thing
5050 even to my beloved wife, the sharer of my joys, sorrows, and labours for more than twenty
5051 years; nor is it likely that I shall do so for some time to come: for I prefer quietly to wait on the
5052 Lord, without conversing on this subject, in order that thus I may be kept the more easily, by His
5053 blessing, from being influenced by things from without. The burden of my prayer concerning
5054 this matter is, that the Lord would not allow me to make a mistake, and that He would teach me
5055 to do His will.

5056
5057 December 26.—Fifteen days have elapsed since I wrote the preceding paragraph. Every day
5058 since then I have continued to pray about this matter, and that with a goodly measure of
5059 earnestness, by the help of God. There has passed scarcely an hour during these days, in which,
5060 whilst awake, this matter has not been more or less before me. But all without even a shadow of
5061 excitement. I converse with no one about it. Hitherto have I not even done so with my dear wife.
5062 For this I refrain still, and deal with God alone about the matter, in order that no outward
5063 influence and no outward excitement may keep me from attaining unto a clear discovery of His
5064 will. I have the fullest and most peaceful assurance that He will clearly show me His will. This
5065 evening I have had again an especial solemn season for prayer, to seek to know the will of God.
5066 But whilst I continue to entreat and beseech the Lord, that He would not allow me to be deluded
5067 in this business, I may say I have scarcely any doubt remaining on my mind as to what will be
5068 the issue, even that I should go forward in this matter. As this, however, is one of the most
5069 momentous steps that I have ever taken, I judge that I cannot go about this matter with too much
5070 caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation. I am in no hurry about it. I could wait for years, by
5071 God's grace, were this His will, before even taking one single step toward this thing, or even
5072 speaking to anyone about it; and, on the other hand, I would set to work tomorrow, were the
5073 Lord to bid me do so. This calmness of mind, this having no will of my own in the matter, this
5074 only wishing to please my Heavenly Father in it, this only seeking His and not my honour in it;
5075 this state of heart, I say, is the fullest assurance to me that my heart is not under a fleshly
5076 excitement, and that, if I am helped thus to go on, I shall know the will of God to the full. But,

5077 while I write this, I cannot but add at the same time, that I do crave the honour and the glorious
5078 privilege to be more and more used by the Lord.

5079
5080 I desire to be allowed to provide scriptural instruction for a thousand orphans, instead of doing
5081 so for 300. I desire to expound the Holy Scriptures regularly to a thousand orphans, instead of
5082 doing so to 300. I desire that it may be yet more abundantly manifest that God is still the Hearer
5083 and Answerer of prayer, and that He is the living God now as He ever was and ever will be,
5084 when He shall simply, in answer to prayer, have condescended to provide me with a house for
5085 700 orphans and with means to support them. This last consideration is the most important point
5086 in my mind. The Lord's honour is the principal point with me in this whole matter; and just
5087 because this is the case, if He would be more glorified by not going forward in this business, I
5088 should by His grace be perfectly content to give up all thoughts about another Orphan House.
5089 Surely in such a state of mind, obtained by the Holy Spirit, Thou, O my Heavenly Father, wilt
5090 not suffer Thy child to be mistaken, much less deluded. By the help of God I shall continue
5091 further day by day to wait upon Him in prayer, concerning this thing, till He shall bid me act.

5092
5093 Jan. 2, 1851.—A week ago I wrote the preceding paragraph. During this week I have still been
5094 helped day by day, and more than once every day, to seek the guidance of the Lord about
5095 another Orphan House. The burden of my prayer has still been, that He in His great mercy
5096 would keep me from making a mistake. During the last week the book of Proverbs has come in
5097 the course of my Scripture reading, and my heart has been refreshed in reference to this subject
5098 by the following passages: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own
5099 understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 5, 6).
5100 By the grace of God I do acknowledge the Lord in all my ways, and in this thing in particular; I
5101 have therefore the comfortable assurance that He will direct my paths concerning this part of my
5102 service, as to whether I shall be occupied in it or not. Further: "The integrity of the upright
5103 shall preserve them" (Prov. xi. 3). By the grace of God I am upright in this business. My honest
5104 purpose is to get glory to God. Therefore I expect to be guided aright. Further: "Commit thy
5105 works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established" (Prov. xvi. 3). I do commit my
5106 works unto the Lord, and therefore expect that my thoughts will be established. My heart is
5107 more and more coming to a calm, quiet, and settled assurance, that the Lord will condescend to
5108 use me still further in the orphan work. Here Lord is Thy servant.'

5109
5110 When later he decided to build two additional houses, Nos. 4 and 5, he writes thus again:—

5111
5112 Twelve days have passed away since I wrote the last paragraph. I have still day by day been
5113 enabled to wait upon the Lord with reference to enlarging the Orphan work, and have been
5114 during the whole of this period also in perfect peace, which is the result of seeking in this thing
5115 only the Lord's honour and the temporal and spiritual benefit of my fellow-men. Without an
5116 effort could I by His grace put aside all thoughts about this whole affair, if only assured that it is
5117 the will of God that I should do so; and, on the other hand, would at once go forward, if He
5118 would have it be so. I have still kept this matter entirely to myself. Though it be now about
5119 seven weeks, since day by day, more or less, my mind has been exercised about it, and since I
5120 have been daily praying about it, yet not one human being knows of it. As yet I have not even
5121 mentioned it to my dear wife in order that thus, by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be
5122 influenced by what might be said to me on the subject. This evening has been particularly set
5123 apart for prayer, beseeching the Lord once more not to allow me to be mistaken in this thing,
5124 and much less to be deluded by the devil. I have also sought to let all the reasons against
5125 building another Orphan House, and all the reasons for doing so pass before my mind: and now
5126 for the clearness and definiteness, write them down. . . .

5127

5128 Much, however, as the nine previous reasons weigh with me, yet they would not decide me were
5129 there not one more. It is this. After having for months pondered the matter, and having looked at
5130 it in all its bearings and with all its difficulties, and then having been finally led, after much
5131 prayer, to decide on this enlargement, my mind is at peace. The child who has again and again
5132 besought His Heavenly Father not to allow him to be deluded, nor even to make a mistake, is at
5133 peace, perfectly at peace concerning this decision; and has thus the assurance that the decision
5134 come to, after much prayer during weeks and months, is the leading of the Holy Spirit; and
5135 therefore purposes to go forward, assuredly believing that he will not be confounded, for he
5136 trusts in God. Many and great may be his difficulties; thousands and ten thousands of prayers
5137 may have ascended to God, before the full answer may be obtained; much exercise of faith and
5138 patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen, that His servant, who trusts in
5139 Him, has not been confounded.’

5140

5141 PRAYER AND THE GLORY OF GOD.

5142

5143 We have sought more than once to enforce the truth, that while we ordinarily seek the reasons of
5144 our prayers not being heard in the thing we ask not being according to the will of God, Scripture
5145 warns us to find the cause in ourselves, in our not being in the right state or not asking in the
5146 right spirit. The thing may be in full accordance with His will, but the asking, the spirit of the
5147 supplicant, not; then we are not heard. As the great root of all sin is self and self-seeking, so
5148 there is nothing that even in our more spiritual desires so effectually hinders God in answering
5149 as this: we pray for our own pleasure or glory. Prayer to have power and prevail must ask for the
5150 glory of God; and he can only do this as he is living for God’s glory.

5151

5152 In George Muller we have one of the most remarkable instances on record of God’s Holy Spirit
5153 leading a man deliberately and systematically, at the outset of a course of prayer, to make the
5154 glorifying of God his first and only object. Let us ponder well what he says, and learn the lesson
5155 God would teach us through him:—

5156

5157 I had constantly cases brought before me, which proved that one of the especial things which the
5158 children of God needed in our day, was to have their faith strengthened.

5159

5160 I longed, therefore, to have something to point my brethren to, as a visible proof that our God
5161 and Father is the same faithful God as ever He was; as willing as ever to PROVE Himself to be
5162 the LIVING GOD in our day as formerly, to all who put their trust in Him.

5163

5164 My spirit longed to be instrumental in strengthening their faith, by giving them not only
5165 instances from the word of God, of His willingness and ability to help all who rely upon Him,
5166 but to show them by proofs that He is the same in our day. I knew that the word of God ought to
5167 be enough, and it was by grace enough for me; but still I considered I ought to lend a helping
5168 hand to my brethren.

5169

5170 I therefore judged myself bound to be the servant of the Church of Christ, in the particular point
5171 in which I had obtained mercy; namely, in being able to take God at His word and rely upon it.
5172 The first object of the work was, and is still: that God might be magnified by the fact that the
5173 orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only by prayer and faith, without any
5174 one being asked; thereby it may be seen that God is FAITHFUL STILL, AND HEARS
5175 PRAYER STILL.

5176

5177 I have again these last days prayed much about the Orphan House, and have frequently
5178 examined my heart; that if it were at all my desire to establish it for the sake of gratifying

5179 myself, I might find it out. For as I desire only the Lord's glory, I shall be glad to be instructed
5180 by the instrumentality of my brother, if the matter be not of Him.

5181
5182 When I began the Orphan work in 1835, my chief object was the glory of God, by giving a
5183 practical demonstration as to what could be accomplished simply through the instrumentality of
5184 prayer and faith, in order thus to benefit the Church at large, and to lead a careless world to see
5185 the reality of the things of God, by showing them in this work, that the living God is still, as
5186 4000 years ago, the living God. This my aim has been abundantly honoured. Multitudes of
5187 sinners have been thus converted, multitudes of the children of God in all parts of the world
5188 have been benefited by this work, even as I had anticipated. But the larger the work as grown,
5189 the greater has been the blessing, bestowed in the very way in which I looked for blessing: for
5190 the attention of hundreds of thousands has been drawn to the work; and many tens of thousands
5191 have come to see it. All this leads me to desire further and further to labour on in this way, in
5192 order to bring yet greater glory to the Name of the Lord. That He may be looked at, magnified,
5193 admired, trusted in, relied on at all times, is my aim in this service; and so particularly in this
5194 intended enlargement. That it may be seen how much one poor man, simply by trusting in God,
5195 can bring about by prayer; and that thus other children of God may be led to carry on the work
5196 of God in dependence upon Him; and that children of God may be led increasingly to trust in
5197 Him in their individual positions and circumstances, therefore I am led to this further
5198 enlargement.'

5199

5200 PRAYER AND TRUST IN GOD.

5201

5202 There are other points on which I would be glad to point out what is to be found in Mr. Muller's
5203 narrative, but one more must suffice. It is the lesson of firm and unwavering trust in God's
5204 promise as the secret of persevering prayer. If once we have, in submission to the teaching of the
5205 Spirit in the word, taken hold of God's promise, and believed that the Father has heard us, we
5206 must not allow ourselves by any delay or unfavourable appearances be shaken in our faith.

5207

5208 The full answer to my daily prayers was far from being realized; yet there was abundant
5209 encouragement granted by the Lord, to continue in prayer. But suppose, even, that far less had
5210 come in than was received, still, after having come to the conclusion, upon scriptural grounds,
5211 after much prayer and self-examination, I ought to have gone on without wavering, in the
5212 exercise of faith and patience concerning this object; and thus all the children of God, when
5213 once satisfied that anything which they bring before God in prayer, is according to His will,
5214 ought to continue in believing, expecting, persevering prayer until the blessing is granted. Thus
5215 am I myself now waiting upon God for certain blessings, for which I have daily besought Him
5216 for ten years and six months without one day's intermission. Still the full answer is not yet given
5217 concerning the conversion of certain individuals, though in the meantime I have received many
5218 thousands of answers to prayer. I have also prayed daily without intermission for the conversion
5219 of other individuals about ten years, for others six or seven years, for others from three or two
5220 years; and still the answer is not yet granted concerning those persons, while in the meantime
5221 many thousands of my prayers have been answered, and also souls converted, for whom I had
5222 been praying. I lay particular stress on this for the benefit of those who may suppose that I need
5223 only to ask of God, and receive at once; or that I might pray concerning anything, and the
5224 answer would surely come. One can only expect to obtain answers to prayers which are
5225 according to the mind of God; and even then, patience and faith may be exercised for many
5226 years, even as mine are exercised, in the matter to which I have referred; and yet am I daily
5227 continuing in prayer, and expecting the answer, and so surely expecting the answer, that I have
5228 often thanked God that He will surely give it, though now for nineteen years faith and patience
5229 have thus been exercised. Be encouraged, dear Christians, with fresh earnestness to give
5230 yourselves to prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask things which are for the glory of God.

5231
5232 But the most remarkable point is this, that 6, 6s. 6d. from Scotland supplied me, as far as can be
5233 known now, with all the means necessary for fitting up and promoting the New Orphan Houses.
5234 Six years and eight months I have been day by day, and generally several times daily, asking the
5235 Lord to give me the needed means for this enlargement of the Orphan work, which, according to
5236 calculations made in the spring of 1861, appeared to be about fifty thousand pounds: the total of
5237 this amount I had now received. I praise and magnify the Lord for putting this enlargement of
5238 the work into my heart, and for giving me courage and faith for it; and above all, for sustaining
5239 my faith day by day without wavering. When the last portion of the money was received, I was
5240 no more assured concerning the whole, that I was at the time I had not received one single
5241 donation towards this large sum. I was at the beginning, after once having ascertained His mind,
5242 through most patient and heart-searching waiting upon God, as fully assured that He would
5243 bring it about, as if the two houses, with their hundreds of orphans occupying them, had been
5244 already before me. I make a few remarks here for the sake of young believers in connection with
5245 this subject: 1. Be slow to take new steps in the Lord's service, or in your business, or in your
5246 families: weigh everything well; weigh all in the light of the Holy Scriptures and in the fear of
5247 God. 2. Seek to have no will of your own, in order to ascertain the mind of God, regarding any
5248 steps you propose taking, so that you can honestly say you are willing to do the will of God, if
5249 He will only please to instruct you. 3. But when you have found out what the will of God is,
5250 seek for His help, and seek it earnestly, perseveringly, patiently, believingly, expectantly; and
5251 you will surely in His own time and way obtain it.

5252
5253 To suppose that we have difficulty about money only would be a mistake: there occur hundreds
5254 of other wants and of other difficulties. It is a rare thing that a day occurs without some difficulty
5255 or some want; but often there are many difficulties and many wants to be met and overcome the
5256 same day. All these are met by prayer and faith, our universal remedy; and we have never been
5257 confounded. Patient, persevering, believing prayer, offered up to God, in the Name of the Lord
5258 Jesus, has always, sooner or later, brought the blessing. I do not despair, by God's grace, of
5259 obtaining any blessing, provided I can be sure it would be for any real good, and for the glory of
5260 God.

5261
5262 [4] The extracts are from a work in four volumes, The Lord's Dealings with George Muller. J.
5263 Nisbet & Co., London.