

Charles Ebert Orr



Odors from Golden Vials

*"Thy prayers...are come up for a memorial
before God." Acts 10:4*

ODORS FROM GOLDEN VIALS

By
Charles E. Orr

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Preface

A man of great learning gave a lengthy discourse once upon the subject, "There is no such thing as heartfelt religion." In concluding, feeling sure he had silenced any who might have held contrary views, he said, "If there are any present who desire to make any remarks, they are at liberty to do so." An old colored man arose and said, "This great and learned man has said there is no such thing as heartfelt religion. He should have said there is no such thing as heartfelt religion as he knows of."

It may be that some reader of this little book may question and even deny that man may have such a sweet and intimate communion with God as herein described. If so, I would ask him not to deny, but merely to say that he is not acquainted with such a life. There are those who thus walk with God. This little treatise does not lift up an ideal life of prayer too high to be attained, but describes real facts as far as it lies in the ability of the author's pen to describe them.

I would ask the reader to read slowly and thoughtfully. Especially would I have him meditate upon the quotations on the closing pages.

It was not at all my intention to make this a thorough work on prayer. It is intended to be a book that you may pick up and peruse now and then, when you become dull and do not have as much appetite for prayer as you desire. My hope is that this little volume

will prove an encouragement to all its readers and a stimulus to increase their relish for communion with God.

Yours in sincere prayer,

—C. E. Orr.

Introduction

“And another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.” Rev. 8:3, 4. This incense is evidently the unction of the Holy Spirit that makes prayer fragrant and acceptable to God. In the Jewish tabernacle Aaron, in his priestly service, burned incense upon a golden altar every morning and every evening. This burning of incense is typical of the prayers of saints. Prayer arising in the Spirit from Christian hearts is a fragrant and pleasant odor to God. The fragrance from some sweet-smelling flower is very agreeable and solacing to us. Divine truth assures us that the prayer of the upright delights the heavenly Father.

That beloved disciple who had the privilege of resting on the bosom of Jesus saw in a vision, a door opening into heaven, and looking through this door, he beheld worshipers before the Lamb of God. These had harps, and golden vials full of odors, which John says, were the prayers of saints (Rev. 5:8). Prayer from Spirit-filled hearts arises to God and delights him with its balmy odor. This is not mere sentimentalism but Scriptural verity.

In ancient times it was a custom with some Oriental people to preserve the tears of mourners in vials as a memorial. True prayer ascends to the throne of God and is placed in golden vials, and by its fragrance is a memorial of us before God. This also is a truth taught in Scripture and not a mere fancy.

The centurion of the Italian band in Caesarea was a devout man, a man that feared God and prayed always. His prayers reached the throne, and God sent an angel to say to the praying man, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:1-4). That our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving come up before God as a sweet odor and are kept in golden vials as a memorial of us is not a mere fanciful conception, but a blessed reality, clearly seen by the eye of faith.

Israel’s psalm-singer said once when in earnest, tearful prayer, “Put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?” Psa. 56:8. Tears add much to the fragrance of prayer. There is a prayer of tears. What speaks more loudly to our hearts than tears? The tears that are set flowing by the emotions of the heart are bottled in heaven and written in God’s book. O dear praying saint, pray on. Never will one tear be lost. It is too precious. Diamonds and pearls are mere trifles compared with thy tears. Never a word of thy prayer, however feeble it may seem to be, will fail to reach the ear of God. Amid the many prayers that are ascending to the throne from this lower world and amid the noise of angels’ shouts and songs, he will catch the sweet strain of thy feeble heart-cry and record it in heaven. The perfume of a prayer is never lost.

“I have a precious telephone
The line is long and clear;
It reaches to the heavenly throne,
Unto my home so dear.

“And when I call by day or night
And ask the Lord to hear,
There comes a sweet ‘Hello! Hello!
For thee the line is clear.’ ”

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Prayer the Want of the Soul

The soul is in want. Man is conscious of a lack, of a “missing link,” of something outside of himself and higher than himself. He is internally conscious of having sunk below his level and of being unable of himself to rise. He looks and longs and prays for help.

Music awakens feelings in the mind of an idiot and a moanful cry from his heart as though he longed for something higher. The inspiring voice of nature pours into the soul of man a melody which awakens in him a consciousness that beyond him is a nobler, higher plane of life. Within man there lies a self-slumbering instinct of a lost union with a purer, holier realm; and the falling of a leaf, it may be, or the whispering of the breeze, the beauty and fragrance of a flower, the song of a bird or the music of the rippling brook, the broad plain or the lofty mountain, the expanse of ocean or the azure vault of heaven decked with glittering stars, awakens that instinct and declares to him that he was born for something higher—and he prays.

Could you ascend to some height and observe the behavior of man, what would you see? You would see him praying. You would see the African bowing down before his fetish. You would hear the muezzin notifying the Mohammedans of the hour of prayer. You would see the Parsi endeavoring to satisfy his soul’s want in the Zend Avesta. You would see the Tartar prostrating himself before

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the Grand Lama. You would see the countless number paying their devotion to the bird, the cow, the crocodile, the sun, Jupiter, and to the many wooden gods and gods of stone. You would see the Arabian before the Black Stone of Mecca, which, says a legend, was white when the angel gave it to Abraham, but was turned black by the sins of man. You would see the Indian with his Manitou, the devotee of the Romish church counting her rosary. You would see a Nathaniel under his fig-tree or a woman pleading for a crumb. Among all these gods, including the true God, some men fear they have not found the god that can meet the soul's demand, so they worship the Unknown God.

Thus men pray. Everywhere man seeks for something to meet the want of the soul. The Christian has found the God—and the only one—that can satisfy the heart. He has found the one true God—he who through his Son restores the missing link, and brings man again into blissful union with himself. This union which man finds with God meets all the wants of the soul, satisfies all its longings. When God is found, the soul sinks into perfect rest. There is no want to those who fear the one true God. He supplies all man's need. He leads him into green pastures and into quiet resting places. He restores his soul. Amid the gods many to whom men pray, the Christian has found the true God—the one, and the only one, that actually hears and answers prayer, lifts man to his proper plane and sphere, and gives him rest, joy, and peace. He is all in all to the Christian.

In this little book we deal only with the Christian's prayer—the prayer that avails and brings the blessings of the skies to the heart of man.

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“Oh! this is blessing, this is rest.
 Into thine arms, O God, I flee;
I hide me in thy faithful breast,
 And pour out all my soul to thee.
 There is a host dissuading me,
But all their voices far above
 I hear thy words, ‘Oh, taste and see
The comforts of a Savior’s love’;
And hushing every adverse sound,
Songs of defense my soul surround,
As if all saints encamped about
One trusting heart pursued by doubt.
 O tenderness! O truth divine!
 Lord, I am altogether thine.
I have bowed down; I need not flee.
Peace, peace is mine in trusting thee.”

The Soul's Hidden Life Sustained by Prayer

The soul that has found Jesus has found life. “And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” 1 John 5:11. This life is a heavenly life, because it comes from God. It is heavenly not only in its purity but also in its peacefulness.

This life of the soul is a hidden life. “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” Christianity is not an exterior, visible something. As the fruit of a tree is not the life of the tree so holy action is not the life of the soul but is the fruit of that life; and as the bearing of fruit does not sustain the life of the tree, so the doing of good deeds does not keep the soul alive. Its life is sustained from an unseen hidden source. If a man's religion consists in his doing and his talking, he has not the true Christian religion. If he loves to talk about the things of God more than he loves to talk with God; if he has more animation in public prayer than in secret prayer, it is to be feared that his religion is only an external thing and not that true religion which has its source in God. If a person can talk out more than he experiences in his heart; if he has more outward thought than inward feeling, his religion is gleaned from an outside source, and not breathed into his soul by the Spirit of God. If he has a religion that is fed through the intellect, a religion that is borrowed or learned from others, and not that which comes along as a hidden stream from

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God, his religion is vain. True spiritual life comes from God to man's soul and then flows out in holy living. This life is both gained and sustained through believing prayer. The reading of the Scriptures is listening to the voice of God and is the listening side of prayer.

All true spiritual life and holy living comes by the soul's life being hid with Christ in God. "In him is life, and this life is the light of men." The good deed, in order to be of full value, needs to have the stamp of the divine life; a coin must bear the government stamp in order to pass current. Our acts of kindness should have their origin farther back than in us. If they proceed from us they will leave our imprint on others; if they have their rise in God they will engrave His image on the character of others. "All my springs are in thee," said one who had all his expectations from God. "There is a river [or spring] whose stream makes glad the city of God." Our stream of life should have its spring in God.

Achshah was leaving her father's home to go and dwell with her husband. Taking advantage of a father's feeling, she asked him for a blessing. He had given her a south land, and now she desired a spring of water. He gave her the upper and the nether springs. Too many, we fear, have only the upper, or surface springs, whose waters fail in a dry time, and dry times will come. We should have the nether (underneath) springs, whose waters never fail. If our outward life has its rise in our own human sympathy, compassion, and kindness, it will be feeble in a dry time. Oh! let your life be hid with Christ in God, that the spring of every act, word, and thought may be in him. If man's life has its rise in himself, it may bind man to him; but if it has its rise in God, it will bind men to God. The cultivation of gentleness, kindness, and love is excellent; but let it be the cultivation of that gentleness, kindness, and love that comes

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from God, and not the cultivation of merely our own qualities. If you desire to be kind, go into the presence of Jesus. Draw near that He may breathe His Spirit upon you. A kind, tender feeling will begin to thrill your heart, and then as you go out among men, the vibration of that thrill will strike upon the hearts of men and win them to Jesus. If you would have more love look with steadfast eye to Calvary. See the pierced hands and side, the thorn-crowned brow, and hear the "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani," and there will begin to kindle in your soul a love that will make men feel the warmth of its flame.

It is by prayer that the soul's life is sustained. The intellect may feed upon the external perceptions of God, but the soul feeds and lives upon God himself. Live each moment under the cover of His feathers. Hide beneath the shadow of His wing. When the angry storm-clouds of life are gathering, oh, how blessed to feel the soft down of God's feathers covering us and when the heat of trial is kindling upon us, to feel the cooling shadow of His wing! Let thy spirit, O pilgrim saint, closely entwine with the Spirit of thy God. Let thy life be hid in the secret of His pavilion, and there in the closest intimacy commune with Him. Thus shalt thy daily life be like the peaceful flowing of the river whose banks are ever verdant as the springtime.

"I dwell beneath his shadows
Tis sweet to shelter there,
Secured within his loving arms
From all distracting care;
To nestle 'neath the feathers
Of his protecting wings,
Defying there hell's fiery darts
And all beside that stings.

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“I dwell beneath his shadow
And gladly linger there,
While on his love I feed my soul
And his own peace I share.
Oh! precious are these tastes of bliss;
The fullness is to come,
But these refresh us on our way
To fuller joys at home.”

What is Prayer?

Prayer is a coming to God. Some Bible expressions are: “He that cometh to God;” “Whosoever will, let him come;” “He that cometh unto me;” “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden;” “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him;” “Come ye to the waters;” “Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk;” “Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

God is the Christian’s Father. In prayer we should come to him as a child to its father. God loves this familiarity. This is not irreverence. We can come to him familiarly and yet reverently. We can conceive of God both as the Supreme Ruler of the universe on his throne and as our Father by our side. We should be so conscious of his being with us that when we go into our closets we shall almost feel like holding the door ajar to admit him. Then a little closer still, we can conceive of him as being in our own hearts. To turn our voice inward and speak to him in our own heart brings him nearer. We see him then, not as a ruler in heaven only, but as a ruler in our own hearts. When we come to God, we can have this view of him.

We should come to God in prayer and speak to him, thanking him or making a request of him, as familiarly as with the closest friend. In true prayer, we talk personally with God; we embrace him as a bosom companion; we see him and hear him and speak to him

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and feel his presence as we do that of a friend. This seeing and hearing and making him a person with us is in the province of faith. In prayer we close our eyes to things that are seen and open them to things unseen. Prayer is a coming to God and embracing him, a drinking in of his life and spirit, a leaning on his bosom, and feeling the beating of his heart warm with love.

“Prayer is the Christian pilgrim’s staff
To walk with God all day.”

Enoch walked with God three hundred years. That long walk we do not suppose was a walk in silence, but a walk in converse. We do not know what was said, and it is not God’s purpose that we should know; but we can come to Him, and He will teach us what to say.

Prayer is more than bending the knee and saying some words. It is the shutting of the closet door and being alone with God. It is the coming of the soul, tremulous with love and holy awe before His sacred presence and at the same time, as said before,—a talking to Him in childlike innocence and confidence. It is Father and child in the most intimate converse and sweetest companionship. The little child climbs upon its father’s knee and, leaning upon his bosom, delights itself in his companionship. There in the sacred silence the heart seems to talk with heart, and the spirit of the child is fashioned into the likeness of the parent. Such is the companionship that the trusting child of God has with his Father. There he finds rest.

Wrapped in the bosom of his God,
His head upon his breast,
Forgetful of the cares of life,
He finds the perfect rest.

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Prayer is adoration. By adoration we mean worship; reverence and esteem; respect and love. The soul adores God as it beholds his greatness and his goodness. When a person beholds the beauty of God's perfections, the glory of His majesty, and the wonders of His works, he experiences a feeling of awe and of filial fear and dread. When he gives utterance to his feelings, he cries with the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is filled with his glory." We have cause to fear there is great deficiency of adoration in prayer, especially in private prayer. Perhaps in silent meditation there is not enough admiration of God's exalted nature and marvelous works. There is not a due ascription to him of glory and honor. Jesus said, "When you pray say, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." As we bow down before Jehovah, oh, may there be not only the word "hallowed" on our lips, but a hallowed feeling in our soul.

We hear the Psalmist in his meditation exclaiming: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain; who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the cloud his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind." Psa. 104:1-3. Much adoring prayer is recorded in the Scriptures. Listen to the devotional song of Moses after the deliverance at the Red Sea. "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. 15:6, 11.

The angels are engaged in the prayer of adoration. They are shouting, "Blessing and glory and wisdom and honor and thanksgiving and power and might be unto our God forever and

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ever.” They are singing the song of Moses and the Lamb before the throne of God, saying, “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall fear not thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy.” May the spirit of Moses and the Lamb and the angels fall upon our souls as we approach the mercy-seat in prayer.

Breathe on me, O thou Most High,
The spirit angels have,
Till I adore thy matchless name
And am thy willing slave.

Prayer is confession. Adoration is only a part of prayer. There is much that such dependent creatures as we need to confess. We need not, since Jesus washes our sins away and enables us by His grace to serve Him in the beauty of holiness and walk in His ways—we need not make a confession of sin, but we need to confess our dependence and our weakness. To confess our dependence does not make us independent, to confess our weakness does not make us strong, and to confess our faults does not make us faultless; but to do these things manifests a proper attitude of the heart. God can make us strong if we but feel our weakness. It is for this reason that the weak can say that they are strong. But God cannot make us strong until we feel our weakness, any more than he can save a sinner that does not realize his sinfulness. We should feel our unprofitableness, our weakness, our need of help. We can draw so much closer to God in prayer if we feel the great need of His help. It is really precious to become terrified at the hideousness of sin and the devil and the world, and to flee to our refuge under the shadow of God’s wing. The blessedness is not found in the terror, but in the feeling of security we experience when hiding in the secret of the Lord’s pavilion.

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Prayer is petition. God delights in having us ask Him for the things we need. He gives many encouraging promises. One is this: “Ask, and ye shall receive.” We are told to be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to let our requests be made known unto God. To have a kind heavenly Father to whom we can come for everything we need is a blessing too great to conceive. He is faithful to fulfill all He has promised. May the Lord increase the faith of His children. The “if” is not on the Lord’s side, but on man’s side. A father brought his son that had a dumb spirit to Jesus and said, “If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.” Christ, in His reply, gave the man to know that the “if” was on the latter’s part. “IF thou canst believe,” said Jesus, “all things are possible to him that believeth.” The question is not whether Jesus can; it is whether we will ask and believe.

Some persons object to the petitioning side of prayer. They say that the Fatherhood of God is in opposition to all reasonableness in petitioning prayer. Since He knows our every need and is disposed to give us all we need, there is, they say, no necessity to ask Him. Being a God of infinite goodness and love He is disposed to grant all our needs without our asking, the same as He gave His Son to die for us. They go further and illustrate by referring to the readiness of earthly parents to supply the needs of their children without their asking. But the illustration is not perfectly analogous to God’s manner of dealing with His children. Though parents provide everything good for their children, it is certainly respectful on the part of the children to ask for things they need. The prayer of petition may not change God’s disposition and influence Him to a willingness to grant us our needs, but it prepares our heart for the receiving of them in thankfulness. Prayer does not change God so much as it changes us. God is always willing to save sinners. Prayer

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does not persuade Him to save, but it does bring the sinner to a right attitude before the Lord, so that God can save him. I am indeed glad that God has obligated us to ask. It brings us in such close personal contact with Him. We would not be likely to come feelingly near to Him in thanksgiving if we did not come feelingly near to Him in petition. But of this we shall have more to say in another chapter.

Prayer is supplication. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus we find these words: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." And again, in his letter to the saints at Philippi, he says, "But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." He does not mean that prayer is one thing and supplication something else. Supplication is prayer. Petition is for the obtaining of some special object for which there is to be the definite act of faith. Supplication is not so much a desire for the obtaining of any special object as a more general longing and intense love for God and His glory and the good of all men. There is not such a definite act of faith, but an earnest pleading with a submission to the will of God. Supplication is more earnest and intense than petition and rises above it into a longing, yearning, pleading in love with a resignation to the divine will. Many people pray the prayer of petition, but fewer pray the prayer of supplication.

Prayer is a pouring out of the soul. I do not attempt to discriminate between "supplication" and "pouring out the soul," for my mind is scarcely capable of conceiving any difference. The latter term seems to me to be but another form of expression, which may enable us to grasp more clearly the full meaning of the other. By the expression "pouring out of the soul" we can see more distinctly the labor and intensity of supplication. Hannah, in her prayer, did not speak audibly. She spoke only in her heart. Her lips moved as in the

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formation of words, but there was no voice. In reply to the high priest's accusation, she said, "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." As David's soul was panting after God and tears were his meat day and night, he exclaims, "I pour out my soul in me." And again, when beholding God as his strength and refuge, he said, "Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Pouring out the soul is deep, close communion with God. It is the losing of consciousness of earth and earthly things and the bringing of the soul up into the presence of God. It is leaving the body behind, so to speak, and talking to God in the spirit. Everyone should occasionally have such communion with the Lord.

Prayer is a supping with Jesus. The voice that was heard by one in the spirit said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Rev. 3:20. Elsewhere we said something about conceiving of God both as being on his throne and as being a companion by our side, and again as an abiding guest in our heart. The text just quoted pictures Him to us as abiding in our hearts. There we can commune with Him. We sup with Him, and He sups with us. The heart is the communion chamber.

In the Canticles we read, "While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." Jesus brings his viands of grace and places them on the table, and we bring our viands of joy, praise, and thanksgiving and place them on the table, and then we sup—Jesus and we. We sup of His grace to the full need and satisfaction of our souls, and He sups of the joy and the praise we bring and delights himself in their sweetness and fragrance. And should we have burdens or sorrows, we may bring them, too, and he will share them with us. Bless his name! This is prayer.

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Prayer is thanksgiving. “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” “In everything give thanks.” “Giving thanks always for all things.” Thanksgiving is the aroma of prayer. Every prayer should be perfumed with it. Unless we live in faith and in the Spirit, our thanksgiving will be an empty form of words. It is good often and in some quiet place to recount the goodness and mercy of God. Let faith be very active and see the Lord as the Giver of every blessing. Surely a sense of thankfulness will become more perceptible in your heart. It were good if you should be so thankful that oftentimes tears of gratitude would fill your eyes at the remembrance of His mercies. O Lord, help our poor hearts to praise thee!

Prayer is the heart talking to God. It is a devout movement of the soul Godward. It is a quiet sitting by the Saviour’s side, leaning the head on his bosom, and feeling the beating of his heart. It is the opening of the soul to heaven to be fed and renewed by the inflowing life of God. We become like that which we feed upon. Prayer makes us like God.

“Man, earthly, of the earth, an hungered feeds
Of earth’s dark poison-tree,
Wild gourds, and deadly roots, and bitter weeds;
And as his food is he.
And hungry souls there are that find and eat
God’s manna day by day;
And glad they are, their life is fresh and sweet,
For as their food are they.”

Praying in Jesus' Name

“Sing, oh, sing the name of Jesus
All along the way of life.”

There is but one name in which we can come to God. That name is Jesus. If we come and knock in our name, the door will not be opened unto us; but if we knock in Jesus' name, **it will be opened.** At the name of Jesus the angels bow. “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” The Father has promised to give us all things with Jesus. Thus in Christ we have every temporal and spiritual need supplied. The Father was well pleased with the Son and heard him in all things. It is only in him that God is well pleased with us and will hear us. Jesus offered himself to God as a sacrifice for us. This sacrifice is a sweet-smelling savor unto God. Only when we come to God in the name of Jesus and in acknowledgement of the sacrifice he made for us will our prayers be fragrant. There is no fragrance in man.

What is meant by praying in Jesus' name we can understand by one text of scripture: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:1. God never gives anything to man except through Christ. It is Jesus that holds the bank account. He has deposited riches of every kind with the Father. He has placed in the bank of heaven a generous deposit of grace, which contains all the needs of every creature. In that grace

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there is remission of sins, sanctifying power, healing virtue; there is our daily bread, raiment, and every temporal need; there is comfort and consolation, joy and peace, love, meekness, and wisdom. Take a look at that store of grace, or call it the bank of heaven if you choose. Everything that man has need of for soul or body, for time or eternity, is deposited in that bank.

It was Jesus who made the deposit, and it is he who holds the account. Man has never placed one single thing there to his credit. In fact, there was a great debt there against him; but Jesus has paid that and has placed there a great storehouse of riches. But it is all in his name. Now if I should give you a check on a bank in which I have made no deposit, would you get any money when you presented the check? Certainly not, because I should have nothing there to my credit. But if a man that has placed money in the bank should give you a check, the cashier, on seeing the signature, would pay you what the check calls for. So if you go to the bank of heaven in Jesus' name, you will certainly get what you ask for. But be sure you get the name of Jesus on your check. If you need food or clothing or healing for your body, or wisdom and grace to help you bear your trial, or comfort to soothe the pain of sorrow, he will certainly give you a check, because he has promised to do so. When you get his name on the check, then go to God and present it. He will look at it and, seeing the name of Jesus, will be pleased.

But God must also know the petitioner. Faith is the act by which God recognizes the one presenting the check. So when you desire anything from God, get the signature of Jesus, exercise faith, and you will certainly receive all for which the check calls.

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“Be not faithless, but believing,
 Though the shadows deepen fast.
'Tis the darkest ere the dawning;
 Morning light will break at last.

“Be not faithless, but believing;
 Oh! 'tis Jesus breathes the word.
Yes, he hears thy heart's quick beating,
 And will help and strength afford.”

“Fear not though he seem to tarry;
 Calmly on his promise wait.
Jesus knows the fitting moment,
 And he never comes too late.”

“Every grain of faith, to Jesus
 Is more precious far than gold.
'Tis to test thy faith's true metal
 That he doth the gift withhold.”

“Blest are they who wait for Jesus;
 Is more precious far than gold.
'Tis to test thy faith's true metal
 That he doth the gift withhold.”

“Blest are they who wait for Jesus;
 They shall never wait in vain.
Hope may lie a while in grave-clothes;
 Faith shall bid her rise again.”

“Be not faithless, but believing,
 Though the shadows deepen fast.
'Tis the darkest ere the dawning;
 Morning light will break at last.”

Success in Prayer

We call prayer a success when we get audience with God and receive the things we desire of him. This is a wonderful privilege. When we go to God in the right manner, he will extend the scepter. In order to get an answer to our prayers, we must have desire. This arises from a sense of want. The desire will be to the extent of our sense of want. If we have but a slight sense of want, we have but little desire. “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Mark 11:24. “There is no want to them that fear him.” God supplies every want of man. Desire, as we have said, arises from a sense of want, and God will supply our wants; therefore what we desire we shall receive. Again, we read in the Word of Truth “that the desire of the righteous shall be granted.” Thus we understand that in order to pray successfully we must experience a sense of want. Do you want more love for God? Do you feel in your soul a deep sense of such want? Then you have great desire for it and “the desire of the righteous shall be granted.” God will not hear cold, dead, formal prayers; he will not give us that for which we feel no need.

In order to be successful in prayer we must come to God humbly. It is the cry of the humble that God hears. He heard the prayer of the publican because he came feeling a sense of want and also came in a humble, dependent spirit. He did not hear the proud

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Pharisee. God heard the prayer of Abraham when this patriarch came to him asking him to spare Sodom if a certain number of righteous persons could be found there. God heard this prayer because of the manner in which the suppliant came. Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." If we come to the Lord feeling that he is under some obligation to us because of something we have done or because of what we are, he will not hear us. O Lord, help us to be humble, to feel our dependence.

In order for prayer to prevail with God it must come from a submissive and obedient heart. "Submit yourselves therefore to God," is the exhortation of the Bible; and "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." When we keep the commandments of God and love his will, he will hear our prayers.

The Lord would have us come to him with reverence. We should come into the presence of God with a holy awe resting upon our souls. If we were to step into the presence of an earthly monarch, we would have a profound feeling of awe and reverence; then how much more on coming into the majestic presence of God. Oh! do not dishonor him by bowing down so unfeelingly as if God were no more than an ordinary man. We should address him with reverence. It is better not to say "you" and "your," but to say "thou" and "thy." The English language recognizes a solemn form of the pronoun. Do not rush hurriedly and unceremoniously into his presence, but come before him as Moses did at the burning bush. Prayer should be sacred and hallowed. We feel constrained to bow our heads when devout men pray. When we come upon any one in secret communion with God, we feel impelled to withdraw in silence. In your worship around your family altar, let there be reverence. Teach

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your little ones to revere the name of Jesus. Let everything else be laid aside and come before him with profoundness of thought and feeling.

We should come before the Lord in childlikeness. Being reverential does not necessitate being in slavish bondage. We can come to the Lord with reverence and also in childlike confidence and cheerfulness. We should come with a filial spirit filling our hearts. When we come in this manner, the Lord will hear us, and prayer will be availing.

“Father, let me speak to thee,
While thou art near, so very, very near;
My soul would breathe her wishes and desires
Into thy listening ear.”

“It is the midnight hour,
And, Father, I would have with thee a word.
The world in slumber lies; my heart awakes.
Hast thou its beat not heard?”

“Father, I would be pure;
For thou hast said the pure shall see thy face,
Shall see thee here, in all thy glorious works
Of providence and grace.”

“And I would useful be.
Do thou arrange and order out my way
Just as shall bring most glory unto thee
And best thy pains repay.”

“Oh! keep me in thy love;
Help me in all I do or think or say,
To do out of purest love for thee.
For this, dear Lord, I pray.”

Praying in the Spirit

That our prayers may be odorous they must have the sweet incense of the Spirit breathed into them. It is the prayer that the Spirit inspires that reaches the ear of God. Alas! the many formal prayers. They have their bounds, and when the person has gone his round he closes. He has gone over the same ground so often he wearies of it. Every prayer would be a new prayer if we prayed in the Spirit. This is the prayer that God answers. We are as ignorant of true prayer as the disciple who said, "Lord, teach us to pray." We know not how to pray, but the Spirit will teach us and help us. When the Spirit in our heart talks to God, the answer is certain to follow. We build ourselves up on our most holy faith by "praying in the Holy Spirit." We can have faith when the Spirit prays. It may be there is not enough acknowledgement of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit and waiting for him. We have prayed so many times we know just how to pray, we may conclude; and so we go ahead, but the answer does not come. The language of Eph. 6:18 teaches us that effectual prayer is made only in the Spirit. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Formal prayers are not heard by the Lord.

It is only when the Spirit comes into our hearts that we can cry, "Abba, Father." We can call God Father only by the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that draws us to God in prayer. He fills the heart

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with longing for God. Those who live in the Spirit find no difficulty in prayer. The Holy Spirit gives us power in prayer. It is the Spirit that keeps us in such a frame of mind as makes prayer delightful. He gives us a keen appetite for converse with God and makes prayer enjoyable. To those who are filled with the Spirit no hour is so hallowed and so heavenly sweet as the hour of prayer.

It is by the Holy Spirit that we have power over the enemy of our souls. The devil fears a prayer in the Spirit. Cold, lifeless, Spiritless prayers do not alarm him. But

“Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

He will do all he can to hinder the children of God in their prayers. He will tell them that they have no time for prayer. But the Christian must take time to pray. No other religious exercise is so important as prayer; so the Christian must pray, if he does nothing besides. This temptation to leave off prayer because of not having time is a cunning device of the enemy of prayer. Satan endeavors to get us hurried in our prayers. But when praying in the Spirit, we shall not be hurried, but shall pray in calmness and deliberation. Those who are acquainted with the laws pertaining to physical health know that we should eat slowly, and that unless we do, we fail to get the full benefit of our food. This same law exists relative to spiritual health. Take time to pray and take time in prayer. The Spirit of God will not lead us hurriedly, and if we get in a hurry, we shall get ahead of the Spirit.

The whole of the Christian experience is to be filled with the Spirit. We are to worship God in the Spirit and in truth. Our bodies are to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is he who is to teach us and to guide us. It is he who anoints us that we may know God and the things of God. We get no true conception of God except by the Holy

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Spirit. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." 1 Cor. 2:9. Oh, how dependent we are on him! We cannot pray aright without him; we cannot understand the truth of God without him; we cannot know God without him; we cannot love God without him; we cannot have peace in the soul without him; we can never get to heaven without him. Then, let us be careful never to grieve him nor quench him; let us do nothing that he would not have us do and let us do promptly all that he would have us do; let us honor him; let us look to him for guidance and for help; let us acknowledge our dependence on him and seek his aid in prayer; let us have our whole life under his influence. A true, sincere Christian is one whose life is powerfully under the Holy Spirit's influence.

The Fervency of Prayer

Fervency in prayer is warmth of devotion, the ardor of a loving heart. To avail with God, prayer must be fervent. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” It is said that when Elijah prayed for rain, he prayed fervently (R. V.). The apostle Paul exhorts Christians to be “fervent in Spirit.” By Conybeare and Howson this passage is rendered, “Let your Spirit glow with zeal.” The same translation renders Eph. 6:18 in these impressive words: “Continue to pray at every season with all earnestness of supplication in the Spirit.”

I greatly fear that with many dear saints a serious lack is fervency in prayer. It is in the sweat of our face that we are to earn bread for the body, and it is in labor that we are to gather manna for the soul. Epaphras labored fervently in his prayer. His was no easy, sleepy praying; it was labor. The literal rendering would be “striving as in the agony of a conflict.” Jacob wrestled with the Lord, yes, wrestled all night. He desired a blessing, for he was going to meet an offended brother. He laid hold upon the Lord, saying, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Though the odds were against him, his thigh being out of place, yet he wrestled on even in this agony. He was decided to prevail, however great the cost. He did prevail at the ascending of the morning and stood a crowned prince on the field of prayer. God will not give where there is no desire.

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Where there is a great desire, there will be great earnestness. I would that every reader fully comprehend the importance of earnestness in prayer and had the indefatigable industry to work it out. Alas, those indolent prayers! There is not enough earnestness in them either to please the Lord or to alarm the devil.

Some have become listless in prayer because they fear an over anxiety. But we should not fear. We should pray in confidence, not in fear and anxiety. Truly, the more confidence we have in God the more earnest we are in prayer. He who desires to accomplish a certain feat will labor hard if he is confident he can eventually succeed. Many a prayer goes unanswered because it is not fervent enough. Wrestle until you get the answer. Too many come away from the place of prayer not knowing anything. They do not know whether God answers or not. It is our privilege to know something, and we can if we wrestle long enough. Be an Israel. Stay on the field until God tells you something. If your child comes to you in very great earnestness, you will tell him that you will grant him his petition or you will not or that you will give him an answer at a later time. You will give him an answer of some kind if he is really in earnest and presses the question eagerly. But alas! too many come to God in a half-hearted way and make their request, but never hear from that prayer again. They go to the telephone and call, but they never so much as place the receiver to their ear. I read once in a book of a Daniel Quorm, who went to visit a friend. At the family altar Daniel heard his friend pray that the Lord would that day give him a Christlike Spirit, meek and quiet; but soon the visitor heard his host speak words most unchristlike. Thereupon Daniel said: "You are expecting a present today?"

"A present? Why, no."

"I heard you say so this morning."

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“You must be crazy, Daniel.”

“I was hoping it might come while I was here.”

“Whatever do you mean, Daniel?”

“Why, friend, did you not pray that you might have a meek and Christlike spirit today?”

“Oh, is that all you meant?”

This illustrates how little earnestness and expectation some people have when they pray. It is the Christian's privilege to get an answer to his prayers. He need never go away unanswered. He may have to pray fervently at times, sometimes wrestle unto the breaking of the day; but if he is earnest enough, God will tell him something. God will grant him the petition or tell him he will not grant it or tell him to wait and he will answer later. To go to God with a petition and come away and know nothing is to show indolence. Prayer is a mental effort. We are to pray in the Spirit, certainly, but we cannot pray without taking thought. We can pray with the mind and not pray from the heart; but it is certain we cannot pray from the heart without praying with the mind. The schoolboy sometimes meets with a puzzling problem in his mathematics, one that requires him to put forth great mental effort. This mental exertion strengthens his mind and enables him to grasp other and more difficult problems. God sometimes brings us face to face with difficult problems, problems that can be solved only by earnest effort. This must needs be, in order that we may be able to grasp the deeper things of God. It is true we can become habituated to prayer, as the pianist to playing, so that but little mental effort will be required. But we must be very constant in prayer and keep a truly devotional spirit, or the mind will wander and we shall have to pay the penalty of mental toil to get our thoughts back in the right channel again.

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There are times when the Christian finds it easy to pray. The Spirit seems to have touched the mind and unsealed the fountain of thought, so that the thoughts flow out so spontaneously that the mind is not conscious of any effort. Then how blessed it is to pray! But is it always so? It is well for us that it is not. It is not usually the learner that makes the mistakes or meets with the accident, but the adept. It is when but little mental effort is required that the performer becomes careless and neglectful.

But however skilled we may become in the art of prayer, God will bring us face to face betimes, so that he might save us from neglect with difficulties and will hide his face from us resulting from a lack of anything upon which to exercise the mind and heart. If we become indolent and will not strive in prayer, then we shall become very feeble in prayer. This will be especially in secret prayer.

The apostle says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Romans 15:30. "Agonize together with me." —Rotherham. This earnestness, this agonizing was for Jesus' sake and the love of the Spirit. We are not on unscriptural grounds when we exhort to fervency and labor in prayer. Listen to the prophet's lament: "There is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold on thee." It is by faith that we behold God, yet the clearer the intellect, the more vivid will be our conceptions of him. There can be no profound feeling in our soul without vividness of thought in beholding the beauty of the Lord.

The apostle to the Gentiles, after recounting a number of the hardships of his Christian warfare, said, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." From the language used and the order it is in, we

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naturally conclude that the care of the churches, concerned him more than all his perils, persecutions, and hardships. If he had such care for the churches, what must have been his prayers for them? In his Colossian letter he tells us something of his conflict and agony in prayer. “Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” I wish you would read the above quotations over again carefully, and from them picture to your mind something of the earnestness of his prayer. It was no drowsy, droning prayer. In the Greek the labor and striving here is the same as in chap. 4:12, where Epaphras is spoken of as “laboring fervently.” It is the same also in Luke 22:44—“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” We have the same in Greek again in Luke 13:24: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” The thought here is a “struggle for the mastery—forcing one’s way in.” “Many will seek” in their half-hearted, slothful way and “not be able,” for none but “this violence” will ever take the kingdom of God.

Fervency in prayer is a good preventive of thought wandering. Many persons are seriously troubled by the wandering of their thoughts. This very often is because of mental indolence and lack of earnest mental discipline. Be earnest and fervent in your prayers. Gird up the loins of your mind and center your thoughts on God.

Importunity is not only reiteration of the petition but also earnestness in the petition. In importuning the throne of grace each coming should be more pressing and earnest.

Fervency and perseverance make us conquerors over that which is otherwise unconquerable. In the parable of the widow and unjust

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judge. Jesus teaches us the value and the necessity of importunity. Do we get the full import of his teaching in this parable? The widow kept coming. She would not be denied. Wearied by her continual coming, the judge granted her request. If an unrighteous judge can be wearied into granting the request of a widow who was an object of contempt, cannot the righteous Lord, whose name is Love, be persuaded to hear the prayers of those who cry unto him day and night? He can. See to it that you cry—"strong crying and tears" and not sigh, a mere wish—and let the crying unto God be day and night. Though your prayer be seemingly rejected, do not cease your crying. Pray on until you get a definite answer. Jesus did not give the Syrophenician woman a positive refusal. He only said, "Let the children first be filled for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." Mark 7:27. There was yet some hope for her. "There may be," she thought, "a crumb left after the children have been filled." She was not denied this. Be willing to take the answer in the most humiliating way. Your unwillingness to do so may be why he is seemingly deaf to your cry. Perhaps he wants you to become more humble and earnest.

Be willing for him to answer in his way. But pray on. The very fact that he has not positively denied you is some hope that he will hear you. Only get more earnest and humble. The apostle Paul prayed three times before he received a definite answer. I think that he would have prayed many times more if it had been necessary.

The Spirit gives us heavenly visions. The vision may be the meekness, patience, tenderness, sympathy, or love of Jesus. Desire springs up in our hearts to possess that meekness or whatever it may be. Give vent to that desire; ask, seek, knock, strive, and wrestle for that excellence, and he will surely give it. But he will not bestow his graces where they are not longed for and eagerly sought.

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“Longing is God’s fresh, heavenward will
With our poor earthward striving;
We quench it that we may be still
Content with merely living.
But would we learn that heart’s full scope
Which we are hourly wronging,
Our lives must climb from hope to hope
And realize our longing.”

In closing this chapter I will relate a story I read about an ant. A warrior was once forced to take shelter from his enemies in a ruined building, where he sat alone for many hours. To divert his mind from his hopeless condition, he fixed his observation upon an ant that was carrying a grain of corn larger than itself up a wall. He numbered the efforts it made to accomplish this object. The grain fell sixty-nine times to the ground, but the insect persevered and the seventieth time it reached the top of the wall. May the Lord help his saints to be fervent and persevering in prayer. Pray until you get an answer.

Constancy in Prayer

Constancy in prayer implies a fixed principle of prayer in the life, an habitually devout spirit. It does not mean paroxysms of prayer or prayer at stated times, but it means to “pray without ceasing.”

There is a difference between constancy and fervency. By fervency we mean that earnest taking hold upon God for any specific object; by constancy we mean that habitual prayerful frame of spirit. Devoted men have said that “prayer is the breath of the soul.” Then let the soul never cease its breathing. Those who live in an atmosphere of prayer will love the place of secret prayer and the hour of public prayer. They will be glad when it comes time to go up to the house of prayer. To them it is a dear and sacred place. And oh, how they love the hour of private communion with God! He is the fairest and dearest of ten thousand to their souls. There is no companionship like his. No voice is so musical as his, no voice so tender and sweet.

Again we hear that excuse, “I have no time to pray.” You had as well say you do not love prayer. Somehow we will take time to do that which we love to do. Those who love the amusements of the world take time for them. You do not know how much you are saying when you say you have no time for prayer. No time to do that which we have such a relish for and find such enjoyment in!

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David said, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." There should be a constant reaching forth of the soul after God. Life should be one long, undivided prayer. There has been much comment on the apostle's words, "Pray without ceasing." I believe them to mean that we should live in the spirit or temper of reverence and devoutness. We should have a continual spirit of prayer in our souls. This gives power to the life.

One who lives in a spirit of prayer is always ready to pray. I do not mean that he will always feel like praying, so far as emotions are concerned; but he feels like it, so far as a sense of duty and his will are concerned. One who lives a life of prayer is one who has stated times for prayer and observes them as strictly as propriety will admit. Besides this, he is often lifting his heart to God in petition or praise. When he sees a man doing evil, his first thought is to pray the Lord to have mercy upon him. When he sees a man prosper, he thanks God for His goodness to that person. He prays for those who spitefully use him. He gives thanks in everything; and as the giving of thanks is praying, he who lives a life of thanksgiving lives a life of prayer.

We are to rejoice in the Lord always. A spirit of rejoicing in God is a spirit of prayer. A life of worry, anxiety, and care is not a life of believing prayer. God would have his children to be ever free and happy, and to be so they must live in intimate communion with him.

Dear restless heart, be still! don't fret and worry so.
God hath a thousand ways his love and help to show.
Just trust and trust and trust until his will you know.

Dear restless heart, be still; for peace is God's own smile.
His love can ever wrong and sorrow reconcile;
Just love and love and love, and wait a while.

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Dear restless heart, be brave; don't moan and sorrow so.
He hath a meaning kind in chilly winds that blow;
Just hope and hope and hope until you braver grow.

Dear restless heart, repose upon his heart an hour.
His heart is strength and life, his heart is bloom and flower;
Just rest and rest and rest within his tender power.

Dear restless heart, be still; don't toil and hurry so.
God is the silent One, forever calm and slow;
Just wait and wait and wait, and work with him below.

Dear restless heart, be still; don't struggle to be free.
God's life is in your life; to him you may now flee;
Just pray and pray and pray till you have faith to see.

The Closet Prayer

Many beautiful things have been said about the closet hour, and many of them set our souls longing for deeper communion with God. Some have spoken of it in one way and some in another. In the chapter on Mental Prayer it is spoken of as the seclusion we may have with God in our hearts while in the crowded thoroughfare or anywhere else. This may be termed secret prayer, but here we desire to speak of it in the sense of being in a secluded place in converse with God.

Those who have loved prayer most and who have been most imbued with a spirit of prayer have been those who have resorted at stated times, circumstances permitting, to a quiet, secluded place. It is told of a certain devout man who had his stated time for retirement with God that while he was once entertaining some friends the hour came for his closet communion with God, and that not wishing to appear Pharisaical, he excused himself for a few moments, saying he had an important engagement with a very dear friend. We are not under bondage. We are free. We are just as free with our praying as we are with our eating. Just as we do not have to eat against our wishes, so we are not compelled to pray. But unless we do eat, we shall die physically, and unless we pray, we shall die spiritually.

We have our stated times for eating; why not for praying? People are not so neglectful and irregular in their eating. They make

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some effort to get to the table at meal-time. Why not be as prompt and regular and diligent in praying? Regularity in eating is good for the body, and, will you believe me? regularity in praying is good for the soul. "No," says one, "I do not believe." And what if some do not believe? Unbelief cannot alter a fact. Jesus was in the habit of departing into a "solitary" place to pray. He would sometimes go out a great while before day. He spent whole nights in prayer. If we look into his prayer-life, we conclude that he was a man of prayer. If he needed to pray long and often, how much more do we!

We repeat that those who have been most spiritual and eminently pious have been those who have had a private place for prayer. It may have been by a river-side, under a spreading tree in the leafy grove, in the garden, on the mountain, or in a private chamber of the home. They were so accustomed to visit those retired places that the other members of their families knew where these devout persons were when missing, but did not care to disturb them.

We should pray even when laboring with our hands or on the crowded street, as we shall learn from the following chapter; but we should by all means have a certain place to which we resort and there on our knees pour out our hearts to God.

Talking with my Savior

In some quiet place,

Telling every secret,

Looking in his face.

What on earth is sweeter?

What more dear can be

Than to talk to Jesus,

Have him talk to me?

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When the morn is blushing,
 In the secret place,
Talking there with Jesus,
 Gath'ring stores of grace.

For the fiery trial,
 Heated like the sun,
That may come upon me
 Ere the day is done.

When the sun is setting
 In the golden west,
A little talk with Jesus,
 Leaning on his breast,

Rests the weary spirit,
 Calms the heart within.
Oh, what joy and comfort,
 Nestling close to him!

In the secret closet
 Hearing his sweet voice
Makes my life an Eden
 Bids my heart rejoice.

In the secret closet
 Talking there with him
Drives away the shadow,
 Lets the sunshine in.

Mental Prayer

(Written by Mrs. Florence Roberts.)

When our thoughts as well as our words and deeds continuously incline toward our heavenly Father and his Son, our blessed Redeemer, we shall comprehend as never before the interpretation of Paul's counseling us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). Perhaps many of God's children conceive the idea that we can pray only when on our knees. Were that the case, the heavenly Father would, I fear, receive very little of our time and attention. It is blessed to kneel often and pray audibly, but often this is not practicable.

Shortly after my conversion more than fifteen years ago, when I began to delight in God's Word, the Holy Spirit deeply impressed me with the advice found in Matt. 6:6-8. I began to inquire as to the meaning of the "prayer-closet." At first I supposed this scripture to have only a literal meaning—to retire to a room set apart for this one purpose and to lock one's self in. This was seldom convenient for me. Whilst I was yearning for a private place for this purpose, the blessed Lord illuminated my mind by definitely revealing this: "The closet means the innermost recesses of the soul. Even when thou art in a crowded assembly, thou mayest enjoy secret communion with me." "And it shall come to pass, that before thou callest, I will answer, and whilst thou art yet speaking, I will hear."

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Blessed assurance! blessed knowledge to the child of God that is surrounded in his home by mockers of prayer! We can be constantly in the spirit of prayer, holding, unknown to others, silent converse with the King of kings. Oft times the most effective prayers we can offer are the silent prayers known to none but the heavenly Father.

Time and again have I personally realized this. Our Father, who seeth in secret, has rewarded and will reward openly.

Dear reader, I beseech you in the name of Jesus to constantly hold mental conversation with God, the Giver of all good. He is very liberal, never giving with stinted hand. He yearns to bestow upon his waiting child his very best. Carelessness in prayer grieves him. Alas! that guilt lies at the door of many. They request favor from God, but almost as soon as they cease praying they forget what they asked for; therefore they are greatly surprised if God answers.

Our heavenly Father knows and he cares. He yearns for us to be deeply, intensely, in earnest concerning our souls' desires. "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Nothing less will satisfy him; nothing less will bring answers to our prayers.

Reader, do you love him? Do you really, truly love him? If so, there is nothing that you will not do in order that you may have his perpetual smile upon your soul. As the bride centers her thoughts on her adored husband, so will your spiritual mind be focalized upon this wonderful Bridegroom of your soul, who delights in anticipating your requirements and not alone in granting your heart's desires, but in lavishing upon you abundantly more than you could even ask or think.

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Have you observed how much the thoughts are prone to wander while you are engaged in prayer? Of course you have, and so have I. We must watch and bring in our wandering thoughts and center our mind on God. This will require mental effort. Unless we use our will-power in the control of our thoughts, we shall drift on the dangerous shoals of vagrancy, coldness, and carelessness. It will then become most difficult to centralize our mind on God.

How blessed that we have a Father who never tires of our appealing to him! How very precious to know that he knows our yearnings, our desires whether uttered or unuttered! “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” God knows your thoughts and hears your prayers. Keep your thoughts on God. The Psalmist prayed, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight.” We pray with the heart and with the understanding also. Such prayers are answered.

On one occasion when testimony to answered prayer was being given, a brother related that once when he needed a pair of shoes, he made his need known to God. He said, “The Lord gave me the shoes the moment I asked him, although I did not get them in possession for more than two weeks. They were mine from the moment I prayed, though they were on the shoemaker’s last or the merchant’s counter.” “Whatsoever things ye desire when you pray believe that ye do receive them, and ye shall have them.” “Lord, increase our faith.” Amen.

“When thou dost talk with God—by prayer I mean—

Lift up pure hands, lay down all lust’s desires,

Fix thoughts on heaven, present a conscience clean,

Since holy flame to mercy’s throne aspires.”

The Secret Prayer

The disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray." It was not that they had never prayed; but when they heard Jesus pray, they felt their need of knowing better how to pray. Those who have been praying for years and have the closest intimacy with God have a desire to know still more about prayer. How little we yet know of God! It is true that he has taught us many glorious things of himself, and that we are learning more each day, but there is much more to learn.

"I am learning of my Savior
Precious lessons every hour,
How the soul which he has ransomed
May be kept by mighty power."

"Learning more and more to love him,
Yielding all into his will;
While a joy beyond all utterance
Thro' and thro' my soul doth thrill."

"I am learning how to trust him
With my life and for all things;
And my spirit, filled with glory,
In exceeding gladness sings."

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“I am learning, I am learning,
Precious truths in Jesus’ Word;
I am learning, I am learning,
Of the lowly Lamb of God.”

“Go forward,” was the command of God to Israel, and that should be our Christian ensign. The apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do . . . I reach forth to those things which are before.” Growing in grace and in the knowledge of God is the exhortation of the aggressive Saint Peter. We learn of God by associating with him in the spirit through prayer and by reading his Word. Devotionally reading the Bible is communing with God and is therefore prayer in its broader meaning. As two persons between whom there is affinity associate, they get deeper into the heart of each other and know better how to commune with each other. The more we pray, the better we know how to pray. Do not understand me to mean in form of words, but the inward prayer of the heart.

There is a secret prayer, and there is a secret in prayer. If you are a fervent whole-hearted Christian, you know more of prayer and can talk with God more intimately now than a few years ago, and you will know more of the secrets of prayer a few years hence if you “continue in prayer and watch in the same.” There are lessons for us to learn, relating to the Christian life. One way to learn them is through prayer. There is a secret pavilion, a secret place of the Most High, and “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” The Lord has many secrets in prayer that he is eager to teach our hearts. The longer we live a life of sincere, fervent prayer, the better we shall know how to pray and the sweeter prayer will be to us.

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In the secret of his presence,
 Oh! such beauties there I see:
In the holy of the holies
 There I learn still more of thee.

Brighter than the rosy morning
 Or the ev'ning's tint of gold,
In the inner court with Jesus
 Wondrous things my eyes behold.

It hath never, never entered
 Into heart of erring man,
The pure grandeur of his temple,
 The perfection of his plan.

But to those who love sincerely
 He will graciously unseal
Deepest mysteries of his kingdom,
 Hidden things to them reveal.

Oh! the blessedness of living
 In the sacred, holy place,
In the shadow of his presence,
 Talking with him face to face.

The Supreme Motive in Prayer

We are not our own; we are the Lord's. He has bought us, and the price that he paid is an evidence that he greatly desired us. Sometimes while traveling we see by the wayside a poster in large letters, "WANTED." In fancy we can see in large letters across the vault of heaven this word—"WANTED." God wants souls. He considers. He looks at the soul; he sees its capability of bearing his image and reciprocating his love; he sees its eternity; he looks at the price necessary to ransom it. Oh! will he pay, or will he refuse? Listen while we softly and feelingly read—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But why does he love us so? Because we are his. "Thou art mine," he says: "I will redeem thee." And why does he want us? He wants us to bear his image and to glorify him in our body and spirit. Whatsoever we do in word or deed we are to do to his glory. Life should be spent exclusively to the glory of God. All self should be left out. Self should be crucified and must be if we are to live for God. Not a breathing, not a pulse-beat, of a selfish life; not one word, one act, one thought, for the glory and praise of the creature—all, all for God. Man is unseen, but we see Him. Man is unknown—"we know no man." What we do for our fellow men, we do it as unto Jesus; we give the cup of cold water out of love for Christ. Oh! it means much, but it is blessed.

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Prayer, that it may make fragrant the atmosphere around the throne of God, must be unselfish. “Ye ask amiss” when ye ask from any selfish interest. The spirit of “thy will be done” must permeate every word of our prayers. Many prayers go unanswered because there is a slight selfish interest—just a little glory for the creature, a little self-gratification, a little ease, a little blessing for one’s own enjoyment, a little having of one’s way. Let us not be so selfish as the man who prayed:

“Lord, wilt thou be pleased to preserve me in health today. It is miserable to be sick; besides, I have so much to do. Keep all my family in health, for I need their help. Be pleased also, Lord, to protect my buildings from fire and storm; also, protect my stock from disease, and especially my horses, for I greatly need their service today. Wilt thou forbid that the bank fail and I suffer any loss thereby, and I pray that thou wilt put it into the heart of neighbor Jones to pay me what he owes me. And wilt thou withhold the rain for a few days until I get my hay all in, and then thou mayest send a shower, as my corn will need it by that time. Now, Lord, do these things for me and all else that might be to my interest. Amen.”

We need to examine closely, lest we pray more for ourselves than for others and have too great an interest in self. Jesus prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me,” but immediately added, “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done,” and then gave himself up to death on the cross. Oh! why should man draw one selfish breath? Why should he have one thought of self and the flesh? Why should he ponder over earthly things and spend unnecessary thought upon the temporal side of life? Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and these temporal things shall be added unto you. We should, of course, pray for temporal blessings for ourselves, but only to glorify God with them. It is good

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to pray for a closer walk with God if we desire it only for God's praise. If we desire it merely that we may enjoy it or that others may think us spiritual, our motive is not pure. Do not seek deliverance from trials so earnestly, but seek the good that God sends to you by them, so that he may be glorified. When trials discourage you, you do not yet know the Lord and his ways as you should, and it may be you are a little selfish. Trials are as good for you as showers are for the flowers—provided you make the proper use of your trials.

“It is raining, little flower!
Be glad of the rain;
Too much sun would wither thee.
Twill shine again.
The sky is very black, 'tis true,
But just behind it shines the blue.”

“Art thou weary, tender heart?
Be glad of pain;
In sorrow sweetest things will grow
As flowers in rain.
God watches; and thou wilt have the sun
When clouds their perfect work have done.”

Pure love to God should permeate every prayer. God's glory and pleasure should be kept uppermost in our mind. We should seek him, not so much because we want him, as because he wants us. A young man leaves the parental roof to go out into the world, and the parents' hearts are saddened. They mourn for him and long for his return. After a time he decides to come back to his home. But why does he come? Does he desire the purple robe and the gold ring and the fatted calf? Or is he coming to comfort and gladden the hearts of his parents? We should go to God, not so much for the good things

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he has to give and the enjoyment of companionship with him, as for the pleasure and delight it gives him to have us come.

Our prayer-life might take on a different phase if we better understand the nature of God. The more we study the Bible and the more we pray, the better we know him. "The prayer of the upright is his delight." Do not pass too hurriedly by these words. If we comprehend the love that God has for communion with his saints, if we conceived the intense desire that he has for us to come to him, we should not be so neglectful of prayer. Surely, too, our hearts would thrill with joy if we, by an eye of faith, could see with what eagerness and delight he receives us when we come to him in prayer. It is the Bridegroom going out to meet his bride. Love is beating in his heart. In his love he gave his life for thee, and now thou hast stepped aside from the world for a time, purposely to be alone with him in some secluded place, and there talk with him and pillow thy head upon his bosom. It is his joy. His yearning heart awaiteth thee. Wilt thou go? Alas that traffic with the world engageth thee and giveth thee no time to be alone with God!

But how can our feeble prayers add anything to the happiness of the Lord? I can see why it is, and I pray the Lord to help me tell it so you also can perceive it. God created man for his glory and his pleasure. That God might delight himself with man, he created him in affinity with himself, so that he might have the most intimate communion with him. Now, God delights in us the moment we are redeemed, but prayer lifts us higher and higher into that life of close affinity with him for which we were created; consequently God rejoices to have us seek him alone in the closet, by the riverside, or in the solitary place, that the soul may be freed from the entanglements of material things and be enabled to soar aloft on the wings of holy prayer into the embrace of its Beloved.

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The young wife may be weary and indisposed; but, knowing that her husband delights to have her meet him at the gate, she, for his sake, meets him there. The highest, purest motive in prayer is that God may be glorified and our hearts may be so surrendered that he can work in us to will and do of his own good pleasure.

“Lord, I would live so very near to thee
As to be guided hourly by thine eye,
Nor miss one tender glance or warning look,
But follow closely as the days flit by.”

“Lord, I would have my inward ear alert
To catch the softest whispers of thy love,
And quick to note the changing in its tone
When thou for some omission wouldst reprove.”

“Lord, I would have my body, spirit, soul,
Attuned always to each soft touch of thine;
Now set each cord vibrating with thy breath
And fill my life with harmony divine.”

The Prayer of Meditation

Meditation is dwelling on a subject in thought, revolving any subject over and over in the mind. We shall here speak of meditation as used in the contemplation of God and the truths of the Christian religion. Meditating on God and his law is of great importance; it is really the foundation of the whole prayer life.

The devout Psalmist understood something of the importance and benefits of right meditation when he prayed, "Let the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord." Speaking of the bodily man, he says, "His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." This is the ground and secret of godliness and godly living. With respect to his own meditation he said: "Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day;" "Thy testimonies are my meditation;" "I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands;" "While I was musing, the fire burned." "Musing" on the things of God is a private devotion that usually results in the love of God being enkindled in our hearts. Again, he says, "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips when I meditate on thee in the night watches"; "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."

Meditation is prayer. It is sometimes called mental prayer to distinguish it from the prayer of petition. Meditating prayer is not

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asking God for anything, but it almost always ends in such a prayer. Suppose you open your Bible to Isa. 6:3 and read—“And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” You begin to meditate upon the holiness of God. You view his holy acts in creation and in redemption. You see his holiness as revealed in his law. The Spirit aids you, and you get a clearer conception of God and his holiness; you see its beauty more clearly; and you throw yourself lovingly, confidingly into his bosom and cry from an intense inward desire, “O God, let thy holiness be upon me.” Thus the prayer of meditation ends in the prayer of petition.

Meditation is not study. The study of God’s law is good, in that it produces intellectual results, but meditation on God’s law increases the love and devotion of our hearts. Nevertheless, meditation is carried on by the action of the mental faculties. You can see that the mind is more actively employed while you are contemplating the character of God as revealed in his Word and his works than it is when you are merely asking him for what you need. Very little mental effort is required to ask the Lord for that which we may need. This is why meditative prayer is denominated mental prayer.

We should study the Bible that we may from an intellectual standpoint rightly divide the Word of truth; but we should have a higher aim than merely gaining an intellectual knowledge of divine things. The different tissues of our bodies need food. The mouth and the stomach prepare the food and supply the different constituents of the body. Should the stomach retain all the nutrition of the foods, it would have a supply of foods, but their strength and life-giving force would never be felt in the other parts of the body. Our souls need food. It is the mind that is to supply the soul with the food it

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needs. If the mind retains all the nutrition of truth, we may have much intellectual knowledge even of divine truth, but the soul is not built up. In the spiritual being there is a process whereby the truth prepared by the mind can be conveyed to the soul, imparting life-giving force and increasing the soul's warmth and strength of devotion.

Meditation is an aid to the will; and all our progress in spiritual life is made through the choice and the power of the will. It is only those who will that can drink of the water of life. That a sinner may be able to come to God, he must be moved upon by something that acts as a stimulus to his will. Many sinners have a will to come to God, but sin has such a power over them as prevents them from acting. The apostle Paul at one time willed to do good; but, evil being present with him, he could not do the good that he willed to do. The sinner hears of the love of God, and this love, reaching his heart, arouses latent forces of his will and enables him to come to the fountain of life.

It is the love of God all the way through that is constraining power in the Christian's life. A person may do a great many things to be seen of men, have much enthusiasm in service, study hard that he may excel in intellectual strength; but if he have not the fullness of the love of God, he will not be able to live in heart-to-heart communion with God. It is through meditation that love is increased, and the ardor of love serves as a tonic to man's will and enables him to pray. Many would love to pray more and often resolve to do so, but they are hindered. They cannot overcome indifferent feelings and a disposition to neglect and postpone. They are always going to do, but never doing. They need their hearts touched by the constraining power of love. It is by meditating on the goodness of God, on his love to us, on his dying to save, that warms our hearts

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with love. This will enable us to suffer for his sake. It gives power to the will, so that man can pray in secret. Love energizes the will and enables man to do and to endure for God. A soldier's will was feeble before the conflict; it almost failed. He thought of a loved wife and children at home. Then love burned in his heart; it aroused and stimulated his will; and the soldier went bravely into the battle. The Christian has many conflicts. Sometimes he finds it a conflict to pray; he feels dull and indifferent. He then thinks of the love and goodness of God. As he meditates, his heart warms with love, his will is revived as with a tonic, and he hastens with delight to the secret closet for prayer.

Meditation is needful, but meditation alone will not suffice. It should end in prayer. Beholding the love of God in silent thought should move us to pray for that love in our own hearts. The Holy Scriptures furnish subjects for meditation on every page. Take, for example, the Sermon on the Mount. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" On reading this you will think of God's being your Father, a real Father, one who is living and ever present with you. You will see the care he has for all his creatures. You will see his sympathy, his love, and his pity. It is your Father that never forgets nor neglects the "fowls of the air." If he will do so much for them, will he not be mindful of his child? What if some have ceased to love you? What if friends have forsaken you? What if loved ones have misrepresented you? Your Father loves and cares for you. You see him very near to you, attending to your slightest need.

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Now you cannot be troubled about anything tomorrow, because you see the care that your kind heavenly Father has for you. A depressing feeling may be over you, a cloud may be eclipsing the sun; but this cannot disturb you, for you realize your Father's care. When you see him thus in his Fatherly love and care for you, then have childlike boldness to come to him and ask him for all you need.

Never leave the place of meditation without firmly resolving to practice what you have learned. Decide never to take any thought for the morrow. Ask God to help you to live just such a free and happy life, and then believe that he will do it.

Such meditation will loosen any and every dependence you may have had upon any earthly thing. It will cause the affections to let go of every earthly thing and become centered upon God. Oh, how your heart will burn within you as you think of your Father's kind care. In your meditation you will catch glimpses of his holiness in his care for all his creatures, and you will feel constrained to walk softly before him. Take time for meditation and prayer in some quiet place.

Aridity in Prayer

There are times when the heart seems dull, cold, and indifferent. Though there is joy and sweetness and effulgent emotion in prayer as a rule, yet doubtless to every one there comes times when God seems far away and the heart to have no depth. Prayer seems to be from the lips only. The heart is an arid desert where never a flower bloomed nor refreshing spring babbled forth. There are no sweet odors nor voices of melody. All is empty, cold, and still. But why such dryness?

Maybe there is some slight contact or secret affinity with the world. Maybe a tiny rootlet of the heart has taken hold of some earthly thing. Maybe a little train of thought has departed from the heavenly way and has been straying about aimlessly, vagrantly through the earth. Maybe we have done something we cannot call sin, but only the gratification of a human desire beyond the line of temperance. Maybe there is an affinity with something that breaks affinity with God; a will of sense that hides the soul from a perfect knowledge of the will of God. It is well to search the heart at such a time in order to discover whether some little parasite has crept in and is doing a deadly work. If after diligent search we discover nothing, we may conclude that Jesus has withdrawn from us that we may surrender ourselves more to him for his own sake. He would have you long for him, because longing strengthens the affections

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of the heart. He wants you to taste a little of what life would be without him, so that you may the more appreciate him. He would not have you be in communion with him simply for the pleasure of communion, but to be with him even though you experience no inward joy. At such a time do not cease to pray. Do not think that God does not hear because he does not bless you. Wrestle with him; tell him of your love more earnestly. That is what he loves to hear. Tell him you cannot let him go without at least one smile upon you or a thrilling touch of his gentle Spirit upon your heart. But if you then receive no returns of his love, leave the matter with him. Let not your faith falter, but remember that he is nigh even though you cannot perceive him. When the heart seems dull and the spirit low and Jesus far away, it is the time to pray, and not to faint.

The Fertility of the Soul

The soul of man is fertile. When touched by the Spirit of God, it is brought into life and also made pregnant with the souls of men. Almost the first yearnings of the new-born soul is for the salvation of others. The burden of the prayer of the newly converted soul is for the rescuing of the lost in sin. The writer of the Revelation when in the spirit, saw a woman in heaven “clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she being with child cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered.” This woman was the church of God. She was pregnant with the souls of men. There is pain and labor in the soul that has union with God. The Holy Spirit burdens our heart for the work of God and prays in us. There is a wondrous beauty here, and a depth that we cannot fathom at the first effort.

God wants souls into which the Holy Spirit may come and burden them for all that God would have them pray for. It is the Holy Spirit in them that prays. The Holy Spirit must have souls through which to pray. Just as Christ became man and as both God and man fought the battle against sin and Satan and winning, saved a world; so now he comes in the person of the Holy Spirit and dwells in man, burdens his heart for the conflict, and there in fervent prayer wrestles for the souls of men. May we live where we can be burdened for any work for which God would have us pray. May the door of our hearts

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open so easily that the Holy Spirit may come into his sanctuary at his pleasure and use our spirits to make groanings that cannot be uttered.

The apostle Paul said that he became all things to all men that he might save some. Again, he said that he had great heaviness in his heart and continual sorrow, so that he could even wish himself to be accursed from Christ for his kinsmen. This was soul-travail. This was the pain and labor of the soul that was burdened for those who were yet in spiritual death. Jesus was in an agony in the garden. If we live in close union with him through prayer, we, too, shall agonize from a soul that is in travail for a lost and sinning world. The soul that reposes in the bosom of Jesus will have its seasons of agony and will cry to God for deliverance. When a soul is born into the kingdom of God, there will be joy in every heart that has been burdened for souls. Our joy will be in about the same proportions as the pain of travail. If we have not much burden for souls, we shall not have much joy.

Let me set a picture before you. See eternal life as a golden thread extending from Christ to every redeemed soul and to all the angels. When a soul is converted and becomes connected with the golden thread, a thrill of joy goes as an electric current through the network, causing Christ and angels and saints to rejoice.

Salvation Worked Out in Prayer

Salvation is not by works, and yet we must work as if our very hope of heaven depended on our work. Jesus is our hope. We do not merit heaven by our good works; nevertheless, we must work. The apostle said, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Great responsibility rests on the Christian. He has a priceless immortal soul. That soul is washed in the blood of Jesus and made of a like nature with God and thus fitted for the pure glory-world. But oh! there are so many pitfalls of Satan along the way to ensnare that soul while it is yet tabernacling in its house of clay. There are temptations upon every hand. Sin and the world are calling to allure that soul away from its God. Therefore “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is not a slavish fear, nor a fear and trembling that arises from doubts; but it is a godly fear and a trembling born of self-distrust lest you should fail.

There is so much at stake—heaven in all its transcendent beauty and glory, in its everlasting and supreme peace, joy, and happiness; God in his holiness and power; Jesus in the excellent glory of the Father; the holy angels with their harps of gold and songs and shouts of praise. In the midst of all this we can dwell in the very highest degree of delights while eternity rolls on and on forever. But all this is lost if we fail of the grace of God, if we fail in running the race. Look for a moment. Upon one hand there is a dark abyss of woe,

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misery, and death; on the other hand a mountain of light, peace, and happiness. As we journey through life, there is hope of the one and danger of the other. We are given power to shun the one and gain the other; but there are temptations on every hand, and we must watch and pray, lest we enter into them.

We can fear and tremble and yet feel safe. A child may be walking with its little hand in its father's in the darkness of the night and amid some danger. Though the little one fears the darkness, yet it feels a blessed safety. May God's dear children never lose their fear and trembling. As long as the child fears the darkness of the night and the danger of the way, it presses close to the father and is safe; but when it loses that fear and thinks there is not much danger, it is inclined to leave its father's side, and then it is no longer safe.

Servants are to obey their masters "with fear and trembling" (see Eph. 6:5)—not that fear that enslaves, but a dutiful fear. In their eagerness to please they fear and tremble lest they displease. The apostle Paul said to the saints at Corinth, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." His was not slavish fear and despair, but fear and trembling before the greatness of responsibility. This is not fear that makes wretched. On the contrary, it is really blessed to have this fear and trembling on the soul. We cannot have a consciousness of safety unless we have a consciousness of fear. It is only when we are conscious of the very greatest danger that we can enjoy and appreciate our perfect safety. In God we are safe, blessedly safe; but we must not lose our consciousness of the awful danger outside. Looking out, we fear and tremble, but we hide in God and are safe. Bless his name!

There are many problems in the Christian life that are to be worked out. The schoolmaster gives the child the first book in mathematics. It contains many problems for the little one to work

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out, but the easiest ones are on the first page. As they are just difficult enough to task the little mind to its utmost, the solving of them increases the child's power of mind and prepares him for the more difficult problems on the next page. Thus it goes on through the book. Though the problems constantly grow more difficult, yet the mind, ever increasing in strength, solves the harder ones even more easily than it did the simpler. When the child comes to a trying problem, what should he do? Should he shrink before the task and give it over? If so, he will never win; but if he sets to work energetically he will ere long solve the problem. The labor expended will prepare him for problems that are harder. So it is with us spiritually. We have many problems to be worked out. We are to work them out with fear and trembling. God, too, uses wisdom in the education of his children. He gives the easiest problems first. The solving of all the problems may rightly be termed prayer. Many of them are to be worked out upon the knees. As we progress, the problems become more difficult, but there is strength of soul to work them out.

After the apostle says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," he adds, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2:12, 13. This simply means that God gives power to will and to do his pleasure. So you can solve every problem in life if you will use that power. You can will to do God's will if you make use of the power God gives you. You can do his will by the same power. It is God that gives us power to will and to do the work belonging to the Christian life. This power is obtained through prayer. Dost thou lack power, go to thy God in prayer.

Through Prayer We Control Our Human Passions

There are desires, passions, and appetites belonging in the sanctified nature of man. These are to be kept under the control of the higher power and passion of love and grace in the soul. "I keep my body under," said one who was dead to the world and alive in God. The due control and regulation of all the qualities in the human nature is triumph; it is victory. God will cause us to triumph always. The fiercest battles that the Christian has to fight on the battlefield of life are those with his own human nature. Consequently, the greatest victories lie in conquest of this nature. Thank God! there is victory for every soul. God places in the hand of every saint most powerful weapons wherewith he can stand a conqueror in the arena of life. The place to win these victories is on the knees. There the victories are really won before the battle is fought. Jacob won the victory over his brother that night he (Jacob) wrestled with the angel. He who goes forth to the contests of life without first meeting them in his closet goes forth unprepared and is likely to suffer defeat. May the Lord by his Spirit give the Christian reader understanding here and help him to know the importance of fervent, wrestling, agonizing prayer with God in the closet.

By living with God in heart-to-heart prayer the soul will take on an instinctiveness that will cause it to flee to God, its strength, at the

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approach of every danger. When danger approaches the little chick, there is a shudder in its little form, a shrink, and an instinct that teaches it to fly at once for safety beneath the mother's wing. Satan brings many temptations to God's children. Sometimes these come with the rapidity of the lightning's flash and strike terror to the soul. Sometimes they are most ridiculous. There are presentations to the mind of things which you never thought of and which you abhor.

Please allow me to relate an experience I had along this line only a few evenings ago. Satan instantly presented a temptation that seemed to touch a sensibility in my nature. My soul trembled, gave a little cry, and then, like the chick, instinctively fled for refuge beneath the wing of God. My soul felt the soft down of his feathers, and oh, how safe and secure! The sweetness of such an experience can be felt, but cannot be told.

Because of the sensibilities in the human nature, Satan gives some people a kind of moving picture entertainment. He will present many scenes—a loss of money, the home on fire, a child dying, a friend proving untrue, a disaster here and a failure there, unchaste acts, etc. Living with God in prayer habituates the soul to hide in the secret of God's pavilion, to take refuge beneath the shadow of his wing, and there to close the eye to all the scenes that may be presented through the sensibilities. Let the wing of God serve, like the shutter of the camera, to prevent the light from shining into the mind from an object Satan may present. The mind, like the camera, has a sensitive plate within, upon which impressions are made by light from objects without. If this light be permitted to shine in for any great length of time, the impressions will be so deepened as to become difficult to obliterate. The more the mind is turned toward God with the shutter open, the more will heavenly images be pictured upon the retina of the mind's eye. Peace and rest of the soul

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will be the result. On the other hand, if we remove the shutter and view the pictures that Satan places before the soul, we shall become troubled and divine images will fade away. If, however, we will but “hide under the shadow of His wing,” it will put all Satanic images in an eclipse. The wing of God is something like the pillar of cloud that stood between Pharaoh’s army and the children of Israel, and was light on the one side and dark on the other. To those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High, the shadow of the Almighty is opaque when between them and Satan’s images, but beautifully transparent when the soul lifts its eyes toward heaven.

The apostle Peter said, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” 1 Pet. 2:11. It is through the human nature of man that the lusts of the flesh assail the soul, but there is a sweet and safe refuge in God. There we are safe from all the attacks of sin, the world, and Satan. It is through prayer that the desires and the appetites of our human self can be duly regulated. This is freedom in Christ; the triumph that he has purchased for us; the abounding grace. The human nature has its limitations, and by grace through prayer it can be kept within its proper bounds.

The will of man has already been spoken of in two or three chapters, but it has so many connections that it may be appropriately spoken of under different headings. In order for us to have control of ourselves, we must yield our wills to God for the infusion of his power. We must love the will of God above all else. The prayer of our hearts must be, “Thy will be done.” Our meat and drink must be to do the will of God. Our wills must flow out into the current of God’s will and there intermingling with it, flow on as one stream. Our wills must be lost in God’s will. We must will to do the will of God.

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Sometimes our wills may seem very weak. The claims of the human nature make such a demand and appeal so strongly to the will that it seems scarcely able to withstand. That is the time to pray. This is a fierce battle that many have to face at different times as they press their way through to glory. It may be a dear wife is scarcely able to say, "Thy will not mine be done," as the fond husband implants a kiss upon her lips and says, "Goodbye;" but, believing that God has called him to publish the glad tidings of "peace on earth, good will toward men," she struggles hard to bow in submission. Her own human self clings to him, but her heart wants to say, "Go." The battle is on. What shall she do? She must pray; she must flee to God and give up that will, so that he may strengthen it by his own power. She triumphs through the grace of prayer. She stands a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror.

Kindly indulge me again while I relate an experience that I met with but recently. For several days, when my mind was not actively engaged in prayer or in literary work, I would meditate upon a theme that was enjoyable and restful to my mind and apparently perfectly innocent. After a few days, however, I discovered that my meditations were not good for my soul. They seemed to place God at a little distance from me. I felt that I must give them up; but as they had become very fascinating, I seemed loath to part with them. My will seemed to be very weak. Prayer was my only way to victory. I yielded my will to God and implored his aid. A look at the love of God inspired me and strengthened me to sacrifice this little pleasurable thing and to have only such meditations as are acceptable to him. To a degree, those innocent recreations of mine came between me and God. I could serve him and yet walk at a little distance from him and continue in my pleasant pastime; but if I walked close to him I knew I must give them up. Dear reader, there may be in your life some things which, while not sinful in

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themselves, are nevertheless some hindrance to you spiritually—maybe a lack of consecration, a holding a little to your own way in some matter, a little love for something not altogether pleasing to God, or an indulgence in something to a degree not pleasing to God. These must be given up if God is to be a power in your soul to enable you to triumph and keep your human self under the control of the higher power of constraining love.

It is earnest, wrestling prayer that keeps the fire of holy love burning on the altar of our hearts, and it is love to God that conquers all the lower passions in the self-life.

When we love God, we will sacrifice for him; we will forsake our own way; we will give up the dearest object of human affection; we flee from anything and everything that separates us in the least degree from God; we renounce anything that would hide his smile from our soul; we never consult the passions of the human nature nor regard their voice, but we seek to know the will of God.

A father comes home from his day's labor fatigued and hungry. His nature is desiring and demanding food; but as he steps across the threshold of his home, his wife tells him of the sudden illness of their baby. He hastens to the little crib, where he finds the darling of his heart suffering in the grasp of a raging fever. He strokes the tresses of hair; he cools the parched lips; he smooths the pillow; he watches and waits altogether forgetful of hunger. He really has ceased to be hungry. The passion of his lower nature has been supplanted by a passion of the higher. Through prayer our hearts can be kept in the fullness of love, which will enable us to triumph and to live alone for the glory of God. But intense, passionate love must fill our souls, so that we may be able to pluck out an eye or sever a hand if we cannot control it and use it to the praise of our Beloved. Rather than have an eye look on anything that displeases the Lord,

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we would pluck it out. The soul that is filled with such love stands a conqueror over all the sin of the world and the desires and appetites of the lower nature, and bends all to the services of its God. Temptations may come with all their power, the human nature may raise its voice, but the prayer of faith binds that soul to the everlasting throne and gives him precious victory.

It is the prayer of faith out of a heart passionate with love to God that takes hold upon the throne of grace and enables the fond mother to say, "Goodbye and God be with you," to the son or the daughter that is ready to cross the ocean-wave to tell the sweet story of the cross. When the human nature is touched with sorrow, only prayer can console. Kind friends offer their sympathy, which gives a bit of comfort, but cannot heal the wounded heart. Some would tell us to travel, to go abroad; but the grandeur of cascades, of canyons, and of snow-capped mountain peaks can never comfort a life out of which some loved one has gone. We must look higher. "My help cometh from the Lord."

Alas! too many, we fear, are being influenced by human desires. Their desires hide from them the knowledge of the will of God. It seemed most reasonable to Martha that she should prepare a meal for Jesus, and to her it seemed that Mary was acting most unreasonably. It seems most reasonable to the youth and the maiden that they should unite their lives, whereas it may be only their own human desires that is prompting. Through earnest, believing prayer we can keep the voice of our human nature in harmony with the voice of God, and can use the world and all earthly things to our highest good and not abuse them.

The Veil of Sense Made Transparent

By Prayer

It is prayer that brings us face to face with God. It is by the prayer of faith that we close our eyes on things that are seen and look away to things unseen. The veil of sense, like a veil, hangs over us, dimming our vision to eternal things; but prayer causes the mist to become transparent, so that the eyes of faith can pierce through and see many beauties in the perfections of God. The Apostle John, being in the Spirit, saw many things that the veil of sense hides from the eyes of those who are not in the Spirit. If we ever understand fully the mysteries of the book of Revelation, we must, I suppose, get into the spirit their author was in and to the same degree. The book of Revelation can never be fully understood by reading what others have said, but by prayer in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus when he prayed. His praying at the time of his baptism is mentioned by only one of the Gospel writers, Luke, who says, “It came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descending in a bodily shape like a dove upon him.” If you would have the heavens open, you must pray. If you would have the Holy Spirit rest upon you, live much in prayer. Again, Luke is the only New Testament writer that speaks of Jesus praying at the time of his transfiguration. Perhaps Luke saw more clearly the virtue and

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power of prayer. He says, “He took Peter and John and James up into a mountain to pray.” Matthew and Mark, who tell of Jesus’ going up with these three disciples into the mountain, say nothing of his going there to pray. But it was to pray, “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.” There is a changing, transforming power in prayer.

O Christ, so lovely, pure, and fair,
So beautiful in holiness,
If we but live with thee in prayer,
Thy beauty will be seen on us,
Thy beauty like the rosy morn,
Purity like the crystal sea.
O God, if we but live in prayer,
We come to be as pure as thee.

When Moses went up into the mountain, a cloud covered it, hiding the glory of the Lord for six days; but on the seventh the cloud became transparent, and then Moses talked to God for thirty-three days. It is in prayer that we get visions of God.

Trials are good in that they drive us to the Lord in earnest prayer. In Isa. 28:29 the last clause reads thus in the German: “For trials and temptations alone teach to give heed to the word.” It is trials that cause us to cling to the promises. Trials serve a very important part in keeping the sanctified nature clearly refined. The veil of sense is inclined to thicken, and were it not for the trials God in his tender love permits to come upon us, we should soon not be able to see beyond our own selves. Oft times God would have us see more of his love, tenderness, and beauty, and come nearer him. The only way whereby he can get us to do these things is to let some trial come upon us.

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When Absalom was conspiring to dethrone his father (David), the ambitious son asked Joab, captain of the king's army, to come and confer. At first Joab refused, but Absalom devised a plan whereby he could get the old warrior to meet him. Joab's barley-field being near Absalom's, the conspirator sent his servants to set fire to Joab's barley and thus drew Joab out to him. In like manner, the Lord must sometimes do something in order to get us to come nearer him. He must set our barley-field on fire, so to speak. Our affections may be taking hold on some earthly thing, so that for our safety God must set this on fire. We may be growing a little ambitious along some line and building hopes on a foundation other than God himself. He must in some way rid us of those hopes and ambitions, and oftentimes there is no better way than a conflagration. The eye may become attracted by something of the world. That object grows as a thick mist between us and God, so that we can no longer see him. Seeing our danger, the Lord in his faithfulness to us sets fire to that object, and by the light of that fire we can see our way back to God.

Strive to avoid the thickening of the veil of sense around you. When the mist has cleared away, climb up aloft and you can see the smiling face of Jesus. Today this veil of sense may be very thin to you, almost as thin as it was to Stephen when he was being stoned to death; but this transparency of our individual self has been brought about through much suffering and prayer. It has cost you something, but it is all the dearer because it has. Many a night your heart has wept before the Lord. Sometimes you have wrestled till the dawning of the day. There may be a vacant chair at your fireside. She who so long shared your joys and sorrows, who by her gentle words and cheering smile helped you over many a rough and trying place in life, has gone away never to return. Maybe with bleeding heart you sit beside an empty crib. These things help to part the veil

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of the temple of human self, and you, looking through, see that little cherub of yours and your loving, faithful wife walking the gold-paved streets of the celestial city, strolling amid the blooming flowers of an eternal Eden, or sitting peacefully in the shadow of the Tree of Life.

God designs every earthly loss to prove a heavenly gain to you. If you will draw near to him in prayer, he will tell you why those things are or bid you wait a little longer with the promise that you shall know some day and understand why. Not a single spot in our life is so barren but that if it be watered by prayer, it will produce some tender blade or blooming flower. Pray on and let thy vision pass beyond the things which are seen and temporal to those which are unseen and eternal.

“Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving! lighter none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears! What are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps; and before the oracle
Of high-fanned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs, look up; those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.”

The Mind of Christ Retained Through Prayer

The Christian has the mind of Christ. The Scripture says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus;” “But we have the mind of Christ.” These words contain a very deep thought. It is too deep for our finite mind to fathom. We can readily see, however, that it means to be humble-minded, meek, lowly, patient, long-suffering, and loving, like Jesus. Yes, it means to have a disposition like his, but it means more. A deeper thought is that we have such a union with Jesus that we can think his thoughts. We are one body with Christ. “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” This is mysterious, but it is true. Jesus being the head of this body, his will is to be done throughout the whole. Our minds are to be in harmony with the great mind of God. Between our mind and the mind of the Lord there is a connection something like the nervous connections in the human body. Through this union God conveys his thoughts to our minds.

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.” In the spirit and eternal world many beauties and glories are awaiting our vision. We here see through a glass darkly, but even so we can see some heavenly glories. The glass is not so dark that we can see nothing of

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God. The Spirit of God reveals to us something of the scenes we shall see hereafter. We catch faraway glimpses of them, so to speak. The closer we live to God in this life, the farther we can see into the life beyond. By his Spirit, God shines into our hearts and gives us some knowledge of heavenly things.

In speaking of the great celestial city, the Revelator says, "It had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." That light which shines in the eternal city of God has been seen here upon earth. It was the light which shone around the Judean shepherds on the night of the nativity. It was that light which shone around Saul on the road to Damascus. It was so bright that it blinded Saul. Some years after, when relating this circumstance to a heathen king, the apostle said, "At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun." I, too, can testify to the brightness of this heavenly light, for I have seen it. One morning as my heart was in communion with God, a light, more mellow, more radiant, than sunlight, shone round about me. Also, one night, the night when my little child was instantly healed of a broken bone, a light very much unlike that of the lamp filled the room for half an hour. It was the glory of the Lord. Many others have seen this light. In this life we can see and know something of God and of the world beyond.

The mind of the Christian is in touch with the mind of the Lord. The minister who preaches under the anointing of the Holy Spirit is but expressing the mind of God.

The thoughts of the Lord become his thoughts and he expresses them. Prayer is the most essential means of keeping the mind of Christ. If the preacher would have the mind of the Lord while he is

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preaching, if he would minister grace to others in conversation, he must live much in prayer. God is able to direct in conversation so that it will be the most helpful to those engaged. The same is true in testimony and in preaching. Thus the mind of God controls the mind of his servant. That our minds may be most perfectly imbued with the mind of God, our life needs to be one of unceasing prayer. The mind needs to be stayed on God. Our life can never be successful unless we have the mind of Christ in the sense in which I have been speaking. The work of our life can be carried on under the direction of the Holy Spirit. No other life is successful.

There is a sense in which God rules the minds of men. He puts it in the mind of the unregenerate to befriend his praying children. In such an act, sinners are performing what God has in mind. We who live and walk in the Spirit can so have the mind of Christ that we can always be acting out what is in the mind of God. The church of God is to execute the design of God. When the church is turning her attention, strengthening her forces, and redoubling her efforts in a certain direction, we know the mind of God is turning that way. Sometimes God's children all over the world are moved to pray for a certain line of work or a certain cause. This is the mind of God flowing into the minds of his children. Prayer keeps the channel open; it keeps the line of communication continuous so that we can always be in the will of God.

Encouragements to Pray

“God answers prayer; the feeble and the weak
He gives the very gifts believers seek.

But often faith must learn a deeper rest
And trust God’s silence when he does not speak;
For he whose name is Love will send the best.
Stars may burn out, nor mountain walls endure,
But God is true; his promises are sure
To those who seek.”

There can be no greater encouragement to pray than to know God answers prayer. “Ask, and ye shall receive.” This is as true as the throne of God. “Seek, and ye shall find.” This is the road that leads to all we need. “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The great storehouse of blessings and every good will open to your knock.

“I will be thy God.” Think of this promise for a moment. The God of heaven, Creator of all, is your God. He will hear you when you pray. He will give you all things and give them to you freely. He loves his children with an enduring love. He is a Father to them. He cares for them. “I have heard this so many times,” you say. It is none the less true. Wonderful things have been wrought through prayer, and wonderful things will continue to be wrought through prayer. Faith will move God on his throne today as ever.

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The Bible abounds in promises that are encouragements to prayer. “Whatsoever we ask we receive of him.” 1 John 3:22. These words stand true forever. They are true now as you read them. This promise, like all the rest of God’s exceeding great and precious promises, is conditional. We receive what we ask for if we keep God’s commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight. All must be submitted to the will of God. Again, we read, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do.” John 14:13. These are very plain words. Every little child knows the meaning of every one of them. “Whatsoever,” that means anything and everything. “Ye,” that means you. It does not mean only those who seem very strong in faith, but it means you. “Shall ask in my name.” In the name of Jesus. We have given a chapter on “Praying in Jesus’ Name,” but might here say that the name of Jesus is accepted always. It is **never** turned down. If you can get the name of Jesus on the petition that you are presenting at the throne of grace, you will get what you are asking for. A few days ago there came to some of God’s people a request to pray for a sick child. Two or three days later came these words: “The Lord has healed the baby.” This morning a sister received in answer to her prayer the very thing for which she had been praying.

You are to ask, and God is to DO. It is a most wonderful thing. It seems almost too wonderful that our asking will cause God to do something, perhaps something that he would never have done if we had not asked him. Some get the idea that all things work according to established laws in nature and that, consequently, what is to be, will be—as if God had made this world, set it in order, and then gone into faraway depths creating and peopling other worlds, and never once thinking of this one. I am very happy to know that God is still mindful of this little world of ours. He DOES hear the prayers of his children, and he WILL do what we ask him to do. A woman who

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had been afflicted for more than ten years, came to Jesus and in faith asked for the healing of her body. She was made whole the moment her faith touched him. If she had never prayed that prayer of faith, she would never have received the healing. The Bible speaks of Asa's trusting in the physicians and dying. If he had prayed to God, he would probably have been healed. Here was something that the Lord did not do because he was not asked to do it. Do not understand us to say that the Lord never does anything for his children without their asking. He is daily doing many things for them for which they never ask. He is able and willing to do and also does do for them above what they think or ask. So he does many things for his children without their asking, but some things only when they ask. When you kneel down to pray, think for a moment, "Now God is going to do for me that which he would never do if I did not ask him." This will surely be an encouragement to you to ask him for all you need.

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." John 15:7. This promise has never failed. You may think you have asked and have not received; yet you have never asked according to this promise but you have been answered according to it. Our abiding in him and his words abiding in us implies a harmony of our mind with the divine mind.

God says, "If ye ask, I will do." This is positive. Elias asked that it might not rain, and it rained not for three years and six months. Then he prayed that it might rain, and it rained. Elias was asking; God was doing. That is what the Lord says to you—"If ye ask, I will do."

He does not say, however, that he will act the first time you ask. He did not give Elias rain the first time he asked. It was when the

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prophet prayed the seventh time that the cloud appeared. A certain disciple prayed that the snow might cease to fall. The seventh time he prayed the clouds passed away and the sun shone. It is not always, however, just on the seventh time of asking that the Lord responds nor on any other stated number; but the fact is, Jesus says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." He does not say that he will give it the first time you ask nor the seventh, but he does say that he will give it if you ask. You are to ask, and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." If you do not receive the first time, ask again, for the promise is sure. If you ask only a few times and then cease asking because you have not received, your failure to importune is proof that you did not have faith to begin with. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Now, if we believe this promise, we shall ask until we do receive. If we are asking for something not according to the will of God, he will soon inform us.

God is a Father to all who love him, and as certainly as the sun rises he hears them when they pray. Do believe him. Never regard the feeling, the emotions; stagger not at the promise of God through unbelief. You can be strong; you can triumph; you can rise and live above the clouds on the wings of believing prayer. Your prayer has gone up to the throne of God, where it is kept in memorial, and some time, somewhere, it will be answered. Be encouraged and pray on, believing. You will find an answer. Be childlike, and God will lead you safely. Do not fear to trust him. Look above the circumstances surrounding and see the promise and believe it. It will never, **never**, **NEVER** fail.

"Unanswered yet, the prayer your lips have pleaded
In agony of heart these many years.
Does faith begin to fail? is hope declining?
And think you all in vain these falling tears?"

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Say not the Father has not heard your prayer;
You shall have your desire some time, somewhere.”

“Unanswered yet? Though when you first presented
This one petition at the Father’s throne,
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking,
So anxious was your heart to have it done.
If years have passed since then, do not despair;
For God will answer you some time, somewhere.”

“Unanswered yet? But you are not unheeded;
The promises of God forever stand;
To him our days and years alike are equal.
‘Have faith in God’; it is your Lord’s command.
Hold on to Jacob’s angel and your prayer
Shall bring a blessing down some time, somewhere.”

“Unanswered yet. Nay, do not say unanswered;
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done.
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
And God shall finish what he first begun.
Keep incense burning at the shrine of prayer,
And glory shall descend some time, somewhere.”

“Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered.
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock;
Amid the wildest storm she stands undaunted
Nor quails before the loudest thunder-shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, ‘It shall be done, some time, somewhere.’ ”

The Blessedness of Prayer

Why are there so few who are often and long in secret prayer? It seems there can be but one answer. It is because so few have a relish for such prayer and find enjoyment in it. Men usually engage in that which they enjoy. When Christians get into the secrets of private prayer, they find in it the highest joy of which the human soul is capable. Then no other place is so dear to them as their place of retirement, and no other comfort is so sweet as that which they there receive. Alas! secret prayer is a dull irksome duty to more than a few. It need not be so. Out of the fullness of our heart we can sing that old familiar hymn:

“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer,
That calls me from a world of care
And bids me at my Father’s throne
Make all my wants and wishes known.
In seasons of distress and grief
My soul has often found relief
And oft escaped the tempter’s snare
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer.”

God designed the place of secret communion with him to be the nearest approach that a mortal could make to heaven. It is the place where souls take on the image of God; the place where the smile of the Lord leaves its imprint on the heart. It is the place where shadows

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pass away and beams of light from the glory-world peacefully steal over the soul. A few moments spent in prayer makes us more like God. The peace, the bliss, that fill the whole expanse of heaven is borne down to our souls by the angels as we are bowed in prayer, and on their return they convey the fragrance of praise from our hearts to the land beyond the sky. The angels that Jacob saw going up and down from earth to heaven on a great stairway were doubtless busily engaged in carrying blessings down to man and carrying praise and thanksgiving back to God.

Is it not true that too few of God's children find sensible enjoyment in the hour of prayer? The world can sit for hours and tell of their pleasures and enjoyments, but how much have Christians to tell of the pleasures they find in a life of prayer? They can say that they find happiness in God, but can they tell the time when and the place where they found such blessedness in prayer? Can they talk of it, relating incident after incident of pleasurable communion with the Lord? Alas! too few can talk about the joy they find in their private devotions. They have but little to tell of their friendship with Jesus and very little in their life to indicate that they find delights in companionship with God. Many hearts find more struggle, more dullness, more weariness, more difficulties, and less enjoyment in secret prayer than in all their religious life beside. It should be the place of freedom, of rest, of repose, of joy.

That disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast says, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus. And these things write we unto you, that your joy might be full." Fellowship is companionship, such as the loving heart of the little child and the loving heart of the father have as the little one lies upon his parent's breast. Fellowship is familiar intercourse, such as congenial friends may enjoy. Fellowship is communion. When we have fellowship with God, then

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it is that we have fullness of joy. It is not animation or personal enthusiasm or human sensibility but a thrill of heavenly joy as the living soul comes in touch with the living God. The soul is as capable of experiencing delight as the human nature. The inexpressible happiness that the young wife feels in the husband's embrace is analogous to that bliss which thrills the soul in the embrace of its Beloved. Joy belongs to the Christian life; joy is a fruit of the Spirit. There cannot be Christian life without joy. It is one of the constituents of heavenly life. In secret prayer this joy reaches its floodtide. The act of faith that makes Jesus our personal Saviour, our close friend, our bosom companion, causes us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The blessedness of prayer cannot be told in words. When the soul is up borne on the wings of prayer, it has a sweet abstraction from the concerns of the world and is filled with a sense of being at home with God. Satan will try to keep us back from a full abandonment to the will of God and an entrance into a close and deep intimacy with him, the enemy suggesting that at some future time we may have a wish that God will not be willing to grant, or that we may want to follow some pleasing way, but shall be forbidden. But if we would have the fullness of joy and the deepest union with God, there must be a blindfolding to all the future and a perfect yielding of all into his hands for all time to come with a passionate desire for his will to be done. Do not fear; do not shrink; his way is best. But the will may sometimes seem very weak. One brother fought a prolonged battle before he gained the victory. There was something that he thought he might desire at some future time. At the time of his struggle he did not desire it and did not know that he ever would, but he shrank from yielding all into the Lord's hands for fear that he might sometime desire it and it be denied him. We

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need to become reckless, so to speak, and cast ourselves adrift on the will of God.

In speaking of those who had joined themselves to the Lord to serve him and love his name, the prophet says, “Even them will I [the Lord] bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer.” It is one thing to talk about the blessedness of prayer, but quite another to experience that blessedness. With too many secret prayer is a dull irksome duty. Such persons find it difficult to engage the heart in fervent, earnest communion with God. Doubtless seasons of dullness come to all; but these seasons should not, and need not, be of long continuance. There should often be seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Keep all the tithes in, and God will open the windows and pour the blessings down. Keep your will in harmony with the divine will, walk with God in all his ways, and you will receive copious refreshing showers—showers that will make your heart like a watered garden.

What benefit did you receive from your secret prayer this morning? Did you talk with Jesus face to face and feel his love warming your heart? Did you hear his voice and have a vision of his loveliness? Too many get no more from their prayers than the satisfying of the convictions of conscience. They think that they must pray, but, oh, how dull, irksome, and uninviting! I do not mean to chide you, but I long to help you.

Prayer has many sides. It has a side of privilege, a side of duty, a side of necessity. You should understand fully that prayer is an absolute necessity. You should pray because it is necessary, not simply because you enjoy prayer. You cannot live a Christian life without praying; therefore it is a duty to pray, but it is such a duty as can be of fullest, purest joy. God has so designed. The prayer of the upright is God’s delight, and it is also the Christian’s delight.

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When you find no enjoyment in eating, you know that something is wrong. Should this continue but a few meals, you become concerned and search for the cause and the remedy. There is a cause for lack of enjoyment in prayer. One cause, and I believe the principal one, is because there is so little praying. To enjoy prayer, one must pray much. A person can neglect prayer until he gets into a low spiritual state, and then he will have no appetite for it and will find no enjoyment in it. What shall such a one do? Go to praying regularly and taking time for prayer. He will find his appetite for prayer and enjoyment in it increasing each day.

But when he decides to do more praying, he will find all manner of difficulties in the way. The devil will try in every way to hinder. We should not find it nearly so difficult to pray if there were no devil. He does not want God and his children to find enjoyment in association; for he knows that in enjoyment there is power. The joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength. When God's children begin to find a blessedness in prayer, Satan knows that his kingdom is in danger. He will cast a feeling of indifference over you; he will call your attention to the many duties of life; and tell you that amid these duties you have no time for prayer; he will make it appear most reasonable and make you feel that way; he will present subjects of thought, very pleasant subjects, and so innocent, so attractive, so fascinating. It is very hard to dismiss them, but very agreeable to entertain them. You find, however, that they savor a little of the flesh, of the world, and wean the affections from God.

To overcome this obstacle, faith in God is needed. This is the victory that overcometh the world, and also the devil, even our faith. A bold, undaunted and yet childlike faith in God will bring a hope to the soul, and that hope will give to the duty of prayer a vital principle that will make it a power and a joy.

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What is to be gained by prayer? “Ask, and ye shall receive.” “Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.” We can have all we need through prayer. We can have eternal life. We can have heaven. Since so much can be gained by prayer, surely if we have faith, prayer will be an important factor in life and will be a joy. A man who has his heart set upon gaining a home for himself and family will toil and endure hardships and difficulties, and do so hopefully and joyfully. His desire for the object to be gained and his love for his family make a duty a privilege. Likewise our hope of gaining heaven and the love we have for Jesus will surely give joy to the duty of prayer.

Prayer becomes an instinct of the soul at conversion; but as we grow in spiritual knowledge, we may in a measure lose that instinct (the more intelligent creatures are, the less instinct they have) and come to regard prayer as a duty—such an important one, however, that it becomes a business full of activity, power, and enjoyment. Have faith in God when you pray. Make him real to you. Know when you kneel to pray that your feeble voice is going to be heard in heaven, and is going to have power with God and bring you that for which you ask. Two weeks ago a brother prayed for a certain need to be supplied. This very day a letter from over the sea brought him an answer. Faith will make prayer hopeful and joyful. As we bow upon our knees and by faith see God in his great love and care for us and readiness to hear our supplication, the affections of our heart are aroused, causing us to love him with an intensity that makes the hour of communion with him sacred and delightful.

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“My God, is any hour so sweet,
From blush of morn to evening star,
As that which calls me to thy feet—
The hour of prayer?”

“Bless'd is the tranquil hour of morn
And bless'd that hour of solemn eve
When on the wings of prayer upborne,
The world I leave.”

“Then is my strength, by thee renewed,
Buoyancy to my hopes is given;
Then dost thou cheer my solitude
With light from heaven.”

“No words can tell what sweet relief
There for my every want I find,
What strength for warfare, balm for grief,
What peace of mind.”

“Hushed is each doubt, gone every fear;
My spirit seems in heaven to stay.
It is the hour when every tear
Is wiped away.”

“Lord, till I reach that blissful shore,
No privilege so dear shall be
As thus my inmost soul to pour
In prayer to thee.”

What Others Have Said About Prayer

Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. —J. A. Wallace

True prayer is an earnest soul's direct converse with its God.

—T. L. Cuyler

Prayer in its simplest definition is merely a wish turned Godward.
—Phillips Brooks

The life of prayer is a life whose litanies are ever fresh acts of self-devoting love.
—F. W. Robertson

Prayer is the pulse of the renewed soul; and the constancy of its beat is the test and measure of the spiritual life.

—Octavius Winslow

The best and sweetest flowers of paradise God gives to his people when they are upon their knees. Prayer is the gate of heaven.

—Thomas Brooks

Expect an answer. If no answer is expected, why pray? True prayer has in it a strong element of expectancy.
—R. M. Afford

The reason why we obtain no more in prayer is because we expect no more. God usually answers us according to our own hearts.
—Richard Alleine

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Trouble and perplexity drive one to prayer, and prayer drives away perplexity and trouble. —Melanchthon

There is no such thing in the long history of God's kingdom as an unanswered prayer. Every true desire from a child's heart finds some true answer in the heart of God. —Norman Macleod

When we pray for any virtue, we should cultivate the virtue as well as pray for it. The form of your prayers should be the rule of your life; every petition to God is a precept to man. —Jeremy Taylor

I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day. —Abraham Lincoln

Whatever we are directed to pray for we are also exhorted to work for. We are not permitted to mock Jehovah, asking that of him which we deem not worth our pains to acquire. —E. L. Magoon

Prayer is the instrument for obtaining all the graces which stream down upon us from that divine fount of goodness and love. By prayer thou wilt put a sword into the hand of God, that he might fight and conquer for thee. —Lorenzo Scupoli

Without a strong desire arising out of a conscious necessity there can be nothing more than the form of prayer which differs from real prayer as a lifeless body does from a real man. —C. A. Van Anda

Who is there that does not feel that he needs more grace? Then ask for it. Be constant and persistent in your asking. Be importunate and untiring in your asking. God delights to have us shameless beggars in this direction. —R. A. Torrey

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Whoever knew an eminently holy man, who did not spend much of his time in prayer? Did ever a man exhibit much of the spirit of prayer who did not devote much of his time to his closet? No great degree of holiness was ever gained by one who did not take time to be often and long alone with God. —Austin Phelps

Cease not to pray;
On Jesus as your all rely.
Would you live happy, happy die,
Take time to pray.

—Joanna Bailie

The holiest people of the earth today are the people who pray. I do not mean the people who talk about prayer, nor those who say they believe in prayer, nor yet those who can explain about prayer; but I mean those people who take time and pray. —Gordon

Prayer is not eloquence, but earnestness; not the definition of helplessness, but the feeling of it; not figures of speech, but compunction of soul. —Hannah Moore

There is nothing about which a young Christian should be more anxious than maintaining the spirit, the love, and the practice of private prayer; and nothing which should more seriously alarm him than any disposition to neglect it. —John Angel James

Not every hour, nor every day perhaps, can generous wishes ripen into kind action; but there is not a moment that cannot be freighted with prayer. —Wm. Mountford

How can we expect to enjoy a sense of the friendship of a present Savior, if we never linger in the twilight to freshen and intensify our thoughts of him? —Austin Phelps

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The day we do not seek and obtain God's leading will be a day of failure to us. The day we go forth without prayer for divine blessing, when we do not lay our hand in Christ's as we go out into the great world, is a day of uncertainty to us. —J. R. Miller

I find in my own case the principal cause of my leanness and unfruitfulness is owing to an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can write or read or converse or hear with a ready will; but prayer is more spiritual and inward than any of these, and the more spiritual any duty is, the greater the cost and labor to perform it.

—John Newton

Religiously a man is what his heart is before the mercy-seat. If love to God and faith in Christ draw him there, and hold him there, he is a child of the Highest, an heir of heaven. If seldom or never there, or if, when he is there his heart is somewhere else, has he a right to regard himself as anything but an alien? Piety without prayer is a paradox; prayer without faith is impious. —A. C. Thompson

Be of good cheer;
The Lord is near,
And thou art dear.

He dwells on high
And yet so nigh;
On him rely.

Never any more wonder that men pray so seldom. For there are very few that feel the relish, and are enticed with the deliciousness, and refreshed with the comforts, and acquainted with the secrets of a holy prayer. —The Still Hour

The Christian on the whole will do more praying in private than in public. If it be not more secret than public, more hidden than open, he ought to doubt whether he does not pray to be seen of men rather

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than heard of God. Secret prayer is the fountain of all other prayer. Where there is no habit of private communion with God, there will be no earnestness and power in public prayer. There may be noise, but noise is not power. —Clarke

Prayer should be just what one feels, just what one thinks, just what one needs; and it should stop the moment it ceases to be the real expression of the need, the thought, and the feeling.

—Beecher

To lift our hearts to God in prayer
Promotes an inward work of grace;
It sets us free from earthly care
And brings us to behold his face.

Unceasing prayer brings us so near
To God in sweetest love,
Transfers our minds from things of earth
To brighter things above.

And he who would advance in grace,
Who would Christ's image wear,
Must oft behold his smiling face
In humble, pleading prayer.

He who is in the state of continual prayer continually lives and acts for God. The state of continual prayer is a fixed state, a disposition. It is the affections going out to God and attached to him, in consequence of faith being at the bottom of it, by a permanent law; it is the heart which is man's moral center, praying wholly and praying always. Such a prayer therefore necessarily commands the outward life. It is impossible to separate them. With a heart that is continually praying there is and must be a life continually acting; the one corresponding to the other. —Upham

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Prayer opens to us, as it were, the portals of the spirit-world, in which we also have some right of citizenship. We draw nearer to Deity and feel that we belong to him. We rise on the wings of prayer, above all that is worthless and perishable, and become greater, yea, more divine as we do so. The conviction becomes ever mightier within us, that we can never cease to exist. We distinguish more clearly between what is everlasting and what is perishable; between what is real and what is mere appearance. We see the whole universe in a new light. And happy presentments thrill through us. Heavenly joy pervades all nature. This is the power, this is the effect, of drawing nigh unto God. —Zschokke

The oldest and wisest of us may be as little children in our communion with a prayer-hearing God. No errand to that mercy-seat is too trivial to lead our footsteps thither. We may connect all the issues of life with the control of that overruling will. We may put our hand in that paternal Hand, no matter how narrow the chasm, how gentle the activity, and look truthfully and hopefully for that availing guidance. Ah! if we could learn this lesson of filial trust at every step of our way along our earthly pilgrimage, no matter how steep or rough or obscure the path, it would guide us safely and surely home to our Father's house. —A. L. Stone

God liveth still!
Trust, my soul, and fear no ill;
 God is good; from his compassion
Earthly help and comfort flow;
 Strong in his right hand to fashion
All things well for men below.
 Trials oft the most distressing
 In the end has proved a blessing;

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Wherefore then, my soul, despair?
God lives who heareth prayer.

—German of Zihn

Prayer is so mighty an instrument that no one ever thoroughly mastered all its keys. They sweep along the infinite scale of man's wants and God's goodness.

—Hugh Miller

He that loveth little prayeth little, but he that loveth much prayeth much.

—Augustine

The definitions of prayer which follow are by Christian brethren and sisters with whom the author is acquainted.

Prayer is the breath of the soul.

—J. W. Phelps

Prayer brings together God and man. It is the means through which the soul has recourse to, and communion with, its Creator.

—Elsie E. Egermeier

There is in a prayer a power that reaches the very heart of God and causes the gentle showers of his rich grace to fall upon the waiting soul.

—E. Faith Stewart

Prayer is the wings of the soul with which it takes its flight to the throne of grace. It is the sweet incense that ascends to the God of all creation.

—D. Meyer

Prayer mingled with faith brings salvation to the sinner, healing to the sick, joy to the sorrowful, and hope to the discouraged. It causes the enemy to flee, unlocks the great treasure-house of the Lord, opens the windows of heaven, and brings down showers of blessings upon the humble Christian.

—E. E. Byrum

Pluck a lily, and because of its no longer receiving nourishment from the plant, it loses its fragrance and soon withers and dies. Prayer is the means by which we receive nourishment to our souls.

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Cease praying, and the result will be a loss of spiritual fragrance, decay, and death. —Blanche Millhorn

Prayer is, in general, an address to the Deity; but specifically, practically, and essentially it is that communion of the soul with God in which the former is confident of the divine love. —A. L. Byers.

Prayer has been likened to a key. Such, indeed, it is —a key to God's great storehouse; a key to the unsearchable riches of Christ. With it we can obtain all that we need for soul or body. Let us freely use this wonderful key. —J. W. Lowder

Prayer is face to face communion with God; the outpouring of the sincere desire of the heart. It is also one of the channels through which God makes known his will to us and through which we express our gratitude to him. —Eva Johnson

“My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of this world in his hands;
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full; he has riches untold.”

Prayer is the key that unlocks God's “coffers” and gives us access to his “riches untold.” —Nellie R. Robinson

Prayer is the substance of spiritual life; the breathing of the immortal soul. It is a child's sweet, simple, trustful conversation with its heavenly Father. It sweetens the most bitter cup of human life, and causes the light of heaven to burst through the darkest cloud. —Nellie R. Robinson

Prayer is a devotional expression of the heart, and, like the rising of incense, ascends to the throne of grace, imploring mercy, seeking help, or giving vent to the soul in praise and thanksgiving.

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It may be spoken in audible tones, or it may be a whisper, a gentle breathing of the desire of the heart, or a fervent thought sending a petition to him that is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think.”
—E. E. Byrum

A prayer from a humble, earnest, believing, obedient soul is never unavailing. It reaches God. Just as sure as God exists, so sure will he respect such a prayer. His word says so, and it can never fail.
—J. W. Lowder

Through the avenue of prayer God and man communicate with each other. This communication is not one-sided; man speaks to God, and God speaks to man.
—Hazel D. Soules

Prayer is the path that leads us home to God. It develops the immortal part of our being. Through it we can know God better and can grow to be more like him. By it we are better fitted for his presence and for enjoyment with him eternally. Prayer expands the inner spirit being of man and brings him into contact with the widest possible range of heavenly things. O child of God, push forth to the utmost every tentacle of thy heart to embrace the things of God, so that you may be wiser, stronger, and deeper experienced in the kingdom of grace, and thus bear in your life more of the power and beauty and fragrance of the glory-world. Through prayer the vision of the soul becomes clearer and keener, and beholds new scenes, new glories, and new perfections in heaven. As it beholds these it receives the radiance of these heavenly glories and is transformed more into the image of things in the world of light. Thus prayer leads us Godward and prepares us for the eternal home.

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“The day dies slowly in the western sky;
The sunset splendor fades, and wan and cold
The far peaks wait the sunrise; cheerily
The goatherd calls his wanderers to their fold.
My weary soul, that fain would cease to roam,
Take comfort; prayer will lead thee safely home.”

“Homeward the swift-winged sea-gull takes its flight;
The ebbing tide breaks softly on the sand;
The sunlight boats draw shoreward for the night;
The shadows deepen over sea and land.
Be still, my soul; thine hour shall also come,
When along the path of prayer thou wilt reach thy home.”

