

SOME THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

Second Edition. Revised and Enlarged.

By RUSSELL ELLIOTT.

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Of the Author, 34, CLIFF ROAD, LEEDS; or
ALFRED HOLNESS,
13 & 14, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.

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Introductory Remarks.

The Importance of Prayer.

A Call to Prayer.

Answered Prayers.

Unanswered Prayers.

“ Arise, cry out in the night.”

The Prayer of Solomon.

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“ Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower !
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear ;
We kneel, how weak, we rise, how full of power.
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves the wrong—
Or others—that we are not always strong.
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee ? ”*

R. C. TRENCH.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE following articles (except the last) all appeared at different times in the same publication, and extend over a period of nine years. It will be seen, therefore, that the writer's attention has been frequently called to the same subject, while during this period the importance of prayer has, in his estimation, greatly increased. And it is simply and solely the importance of the topic itself, and not any other consideration, that leads him now to republish these papers in a rather more permanent form. If any learn from these pages to value prayer, his object will be gained.

That the Spirit of God during the past few years has been awakening souls everywhere to pray with more importunity and more expectancy than ever, surely cannot be denied. To some of us, perhaps, prayer is a daily increasing wonder and necessity. It is felt that more depends upon it than upon anything else. What department of christian life and service does it not

affect? The whole circle must be under its influence if things are to prosper. This the word of God insists upon again and again.

Is it a question of the ordinary course of our lives? We are to "pray without ceasing." And again, "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Is it a more public matter, namely that of preaching or teaching? The apostles could say, "We will give ourselves *continually* to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Is it the blessing of our own souls? "Ask, and ye shall receive." Is it the blessing of others? Prayer is to be "made for all men." Is it the household of faith? There is to be supplication for all saints. Or a matter of more labourers for the harvest field? "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest." Is any sick? "Let him pray." Is it any of the trials of life? "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Indeed, under every circumstance and in every relation of life, whether manward or Godward, we shall find prayer insisted upon. Nay, we may even take a wider sweep still, and say that the very glory of God and accomplishment of His purposes are bound up with prayer.

Another point we would bring before the reader—*the value of prayer in itself*. Apart

from all that flows from it, the very fact of continuing instant in prayer brings its own reward. It calls into play the highest qualities of our being ; and in this way mind and heart become developed. For instance, *perseverance* is necessary. It is not always easy to pray. Who has not felt at times the wheels drag heavily, and their soul anything but like the chariots of Ammi-nadib ? We are inclined to give it up, to rise from our knees with scarcely a prayer uttered. There is the need, too, of praying again and again about the same thing. What perseverance is required here ! The apostle may well exhort us not only to pray always, but “watching thereunto,” he says, “with all perseverance.” Now to learn to persevere, especially in waiting upon God, is a great gain.

Much *patience* is also required. We have to wait upon the Holy Spirit. For as well as learning to pray, we have to learn that we cannot pray. But to know what it is to pray in the Holy Ghost is worth waiting for, and worth exercising patience about. Who has not known times of dulness and depression, when there has been an almost complete absence of thought and desire, turned at last, by waiting, to just the opposite ; the heavenly fire has descended, thought has been quickened into activity, and the whole renewed man become ablaze with

fervent and deep desire, so that it has become an easy matter to pour out the heart in an unbroken stream of petition, supplication and intercession ?

The value of prayer, too, is that it enlarges the heart's affections and the scope of its interests. In true prayer we are invariably carried beyond ourselves. The interests of Christ occupy us ; the needs of mankind, with their almost infinite variety ; the sick, the afflicted, all claim our attention and enlist our sympathy. In fact, prayer is far more a question of the heart than of the head, and the reflex action for good upon the heart of the one who truly prays is incalculable. It teaches us dependence ; reminds us of our own nothingness ; and at the same time brings the soul very near to God.

For does not prayer afford opportunity for the highest intercourse with God ? Can the soul breathe a purer atmosphere than when consciously before His face in prayer ? And consequently the very occasion itself becomes a great gain.

If prayer were not of the most vital importance, it would not fill the place in the christian life assigned to it in scripture. All the apostles who were allowed to give us inspired communications accord it a large place. Again and again do they insist upon our being much in

prayer. Paul tells us to “pray without ceasing,” to pray “always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;” Peter, that we are to “watch unto prayer;” James, in his short epistle, alludes to it more than once, and brings forward Elias as an example. And if it fills a large place in their writings, it does not fill a less place in their lives. The apostles were all found together praying, before the descent of the Holy Ghost. When their very existence was threatened by the opposition and enmity of the council, they betook themselves to prayer. Instances of prayer occur all through the Acts. If we come to Paul, we find the very first thing that marked his christian course was “he prayeth.” In almost every epistle he tells those to whom he writes how much he prays for them, and in the one to the Ephesians two of his prayers are recorded.

But there is something to be added to this which, above and beyond it all, invests prayer with an importance nothing else could. *The Lord Jesus Christ prayed, and He prayed much.* When we consider the place prayer had in His life, it makes it impossible for any spiritually minded person to overestimate its value. In this connection we may well say, “Behold the Man.” At the very opening of His public life we behold Him praying. (Luke iii. 21.) At the height of His fame, too, we find “He withdrew himself into the wilderness and

prayed." (Luke v. 15, 16.) Here is a lesson for us. It is not sufficient to commence with prayer, but in the height of success, if anything, we need it more. When opposition arose we find Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray, and *continued all night in prayer to God.*" (Luke vi. 11, 12.) This was in connection with the choice of His apostles. From Luke ix. 18 it would seem as if prayer was His constant practice. At the moment when His power and coming was about to pass before the eyes of His disciples, and He was to receive from God the Father honour and glory, one might have thought prayer unnecessary, but it is just then He prays; as He does also on a very different occasion, in the garden, when "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." And who can forget the prayer for His own before leaving this world, the only one of any length of which we have any record? If prayer had such a place in the Lord's life, can we do better than mould our lives after this pattern?

It is well perhaps to be reminded that prayer is successful where every other means fail. On one occasion when the disciples failed to cast out the dumb spirit, they were told, "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

Will it surprise anyone to be reminded that *we need to be taught to pray.* Prayer, in one sense, is so easy that we all more or less fall into

the error of supposing that we know all about prayer. We think our mothers taught us to pray. We may have to find out it is just what they did not teach us. They taught us a prayer, perhaps, but this is not the same thing. The disciples did not say to the Lord, "Teach us a prayer," but, "Lord, teach us to *pray*." And He did this by teaching them a prayer which was not intended to chain us to a form, but to become the model of all our prayers. He also gives them the principle that underlies all prayer. It is this—Another has got what *I* want. The man in the parable (Luke xi.) has nothing to set before his visitor and so he goes to one who can give him all he requires. "Friend," he says, "lend me three loaves." He knows the one he appeals to. There is a sense of need and the knowledge of One who can meet it. So, what underlies true prayer is, I know God as my Friend, and that He can give me all I require.

It has been said that "we need to be taught to pray." It is because true prayer is in the Spirit. Jude tells us to pray in the Holy Ghost; and another apostle exhorts us to "pray always with all prayer and supplication *in the Spirit*." Now this is just what we are in danger of not doing. We can no more do it than a sailor can fill his sails with wind when there is not a breath making a ripple upon the ocean. Any man

of average ability can fall upon his knees and give utterance to thoughts that come into his mind, but this is not necessarily praying in the Holy Ghost. For this there must be great dependence and looking up to God.

In public prayer this is particularly necessary. And because we are not in the Spirit, and are not sufficiently dependent, our public meetings for prayer are often not what they should be. It is manifest that a distinction exists between public and private prayer. In the latter only oneself is immediately concerned, while in the former we are leading others. None but the Holy Ghost therefore can teach us how to pray under such circumstances, in order that there may be that "agreement" and "one accord," spoken of in Matthew xviii. and Acts iv.

From Acts xii. 5, with reference to the imprisonment of Peter, we learn that "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Here, then, we have a case of agreement as to a definite matter to be prayed about. Is there anything to-day about which Christians ought to be agreed to pray? Can the Scriptures help us here? We think they can. We believe they indicate four main lines along which our prayers may move, and which no one need fear to follow.

I. For all men generally. (1 Tim. ii. 1.)

II. For all saints. (Eph. vi. 18 ; i. 16 ; Phil. i. 4 ; John xvii. ; Col. iv. 12.)

III. For the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Luke xi. 2 ; Rev. xxii. 16-20.)

IV. For individuals, whether in regard to service for the Lord or the various needs of the path. (Acts xii. 5 ; Eph. vi. 19 ; James v. 16.)

If these matters are thought over in private, and we become deeply concerned about them as we ought to be, there surely would be abundance to pray about when we come together. God's house is pre-eminently a house of prayer. We learn this both from Mark xi. 17 and 1 Timothy ii. May we all value more the opportunities afforded of coming together for this purpose, and realise the dignity conferred upon us of being priests to God.

What a place prayer has ! The only danger is of thinking we shall be heard for our much speaking. It is not the "much speaking" that is wrong (except out of communion with God and His people) but the thinking that we are *heard* because of it. When we have prayed at our best we have to remember that this in itself is no ground for receiving an answer.

It is the asking according to God's will and in Christ's Name, which assures an answer.

Just one reference before closing to the piece, entitled "Arise, cry out in the night." Where are those ready to do this? We know a lawyer who rises at night to read his briefs and prepare himself for the next day. If he will do this to plead before man on behalf of one or two in connection with temporal affairs, shall not Christians arise to plead with their God on behalf of all men, in regard to eternal affairs? Would you not like God to look down upon you and see you in the silent watches of the night bending before Him, exercised about the needs of the church and the rights of His beloved Son, as well as the salvation of men? All this claims our attention and demands our intercession. Shall we not pray, too, for those "beloved for the fathers' sakes," that they may be brought back to their own land in preparation for their Messiah? Is it not written, "I the Lord will hasten it in his time?" May we not ask—in accordance with Isaiah lxii. 6, 7—that it may be His time now? And when we think of all that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ means of blessing to this world—though judgment must introduce it—as well as honour and glory to Himself, and rest to God, can we be silent? Have we not the solution of every difficulty almost in our own hands when we are privileged to invite the Lord Jesus to return? A world full of unrest

and disaffection, of war and tumult, in blindness groping its way it knows not where ; a church little able to help it, because of its own state, saturated with superstition and infidelity—and the promise of the coming of One who can, and will, set everything right, are surely enough to banish even sleep sometimes from our eyes and cause us to “ arise, cry out in the night.”

“ The prayers of David the son of Jesse,” we are told, “ are ended ; ” but they are not yet answered. Surely, however, the answer must be near. But great as these prayers are, as recorded in Psalm lxxii., they do not go beyond the whole earth being filled with God’s glory. In connection with the church and the Christian’s prayers a wider glory is in view. “ *Now unto him that is able,*” says the apostle, “ *to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*”

In David’s case it was not beyond what he could ask or think, in our case it is. So that our prayers are like a continuation of David’s, beginning where he left off, only on a higher plane, and we cannot see where that plane either begins or ends. How great then is prayer. We can neither pray too much nor ask too much, for

all is connected with God's glory, and consequently beyond our asking or thinking.

There is one prayer that yet remains to be prayed by the Lord Himself. "Ask of me," says Jehovah to His Anointed, "and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." The kingdoms of this world are to become His, in answer to prayer. What a place this gives to prayer. And it can be said with equal truth, what a place prayer gives us. It puts us in company with David, and in company with one still greater, even David's Lord.

May none of us miss our opportunity, and may these few words on prayer be used to stir up many to take hold of God. (Isa. lxiv. 7.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER.

IF it were asked, What is the great need of the present hour? several answers might be given, but foremost among them would be, "*a need of more prayer*"—that the people of God should, in the words of scripture, continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication." The necessity for this is so obvious that it might seem unnecessary to say much about it, but in a day like the present there is special need that the importance of prayer should be insisted upon.

Prayer affects the individual, the church at large, and every kind of service for the Lord. The subject might be treated in its relation to all of these; but it is of the deepest moment that each individual Christian should be impressed with the need of much prayer; and then, through the individual, every other circle will be influenced.

How often it has been noticed in the history of the church that prayer and the manifestation of divine blessing accompany each other. There is repeated and striking testimony to this in the Acts of the Apostles. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost we find that the disciples continued

in prayer. Again, in chapter iv. we read, "When they had *prayed*, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." In chapter x. we find, at the very time God was going to bring the Gentile publicly into blessing, and while men were on their way to fetch Peter, who was to be the chosen instrument for its accomplishment, that "Peter went up upon the housetop to pray." In chapter xii. it is recorded, "Many were gathered together praying," the night Peter was liberated from prison. And in chapter xvi., it is seen that the conversion of both Lydia and the jailor was preceded by prayer. Other scriptures afford instances of the same thing; all testifying to the supreme importance of waiting upon God. It may be asked, Does God respond in the same way to-day? We believe He does. Of one thing we may always be assured, He will never fail to answer faith. He loves to be counted on.

Let us first consider

HOW WE ARE TO PRAY.

1. In Jude 20 we are exhorted to *pray in the Holy Ghost*. How often in scripture prayer and the Holy Spirit are connected. (See Rom. viii. 26, 27; Eph. vi. 18; Jude 20.) We need to realise our entire dependence upon Him if we are

to pray aright. A man of prayer will generally be a man filled with the Spirit, and certainly one filled with the Spirit will be a man of prayer. Praying in the Holy Ghost guards us against vain repetitions. Our prayers would often be shorter if they were more "in the Holy Ghost." How frequently we begin in the Spirit and pray ourselves out of it. We must be very dependent and self-emptied to pray in the Holy Ghost. And He would lead us to think not merely of our personal needs, but of Christ's interests and what concerns the glory of God. He would also keep us in the conscious sense of being in the presence of God and of addressing Him. How important that our prayers should be simple talk with God, and not the mere outpouring of words. There is both individual and collective prayer. We have liberty to tell God everything according to Philippians iv., and so have the peace of God which passeth all understanding ; but this should precede assembly prayer, and is not so strikingly connected with the Holy Ghost. Should we not think more of the prayer meeting if we went there to pray "in the Holy Ghost" ? He would lead us into the whole range of Christ's interests, and all connected with God's glory. Nothing can surpass the sweetness of Philippians iv., telling everything out to God, and exchanging our care for His peace. Still, our personal needs are not

the highest subjects of prayer ; but, as we have said, they precede the other.

2. If our prayers are to be of much avail we must

PRAY EARNESTLY.

Earnestness is almost the life of prayer. We are commonly in earnest when we have a great matter in hand, and is not prayer the greatest of all? We can be earnest about everything else—earnest in our business, in our studies, in our various pursuits—then let us be downright in earnest when we pray. What is there that earnest prayer cannot accomplish? It can bring about a settlement of every difficulty, obtain relief in every trial, and cause the heaviest burden to become light, not because prayer is anything in itself, but because it moves the Arm that moves the world.

Turn to James v. 17 and see what it says on this point: “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed *earnestly* that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.” It does not say only that he prayed, but that he prayed *earnestly*; or, as the margin gives it, he prayed “in his prayer.” The very idea of prayer without earnestness is an anomaly. And now read the last clause of the preceding verse,

“The effectual *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” May such fervour ever characterise our prayer! In a time of great trouble in Scotland, when Popery seemed to be gaining the ascendancy, one of the Reformers was overheard to pray, “O Lord, give me Scotland *or I die*,” and this was repeated thrice with great fervour. This was a large request, but the prayer was answered. It was effectual because it was fervent.

3. This leads us to a third consideration, namely, that we should

PRAY ALWAYS.

This does not mean we are always to be on our knees, or even always speaking audibly to God. We can breathe without ourselves or any one else being conscious of it. May our praying become almost as natural and continuous. (Eph. vi. 18.)

Elsewhere the Apostle Paul insists that we are to pray without ceasing. (1 Thess. v. 17.) The apostles said, “We will give ourselves *continually* to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts vi.) How essential that these two things should go together! Much speaking and little supplication leave both preacher and hearer in a barren condition. The servant of Christ especially needs to remember this. Some one has well said,

“ We are often for preaching to awaken others, but we should be more upon praying for it. Prayer is more powerful than preaching. It is prayer that gives preaching all its power.” The story is related of one very much used in the salvation of souls, that it was discovered to him that the large number of conversions was due, not so much to his preaching as to the prayers of an illiterate brother who always sat near to him and prayed during the meeting. Would that this man might have many imitators ! If the children of God only realised that perhaps more depends upon their prayers than upon the preacher’s efforts, results would be greater and more manifest than they are.

Let us remember then this double exhortation, “ Praying always ” and “ without ceasing.” And while it is most important this should characterise us, might we not with advantage increase our *regular* times for secret prayer ? Perhaps we are inclined to pity the poor Mohammedan who five times a day is called to his devotions, and obeys the summons whatever his engagement. But does it not read us a lesson ? especially those words the crier utters in the early morning—

“ PRAYERS ARE BETTER THAN SLEEP.”

Depend upon it our days would be happier and more useful did we pray more, and we should be

less affected by the influence of things around us were we oftener upon our knees. Habitual prayerfulness infallibly tells its tale. Daniel prayed at least three times a day, and the Apostle Paul *seems* as though he was doing hardly anything else. Let us seek to imitate them. It may not be an easy matter to closet ourselves alone with God in the middle of the day, but where there is a sense of its importance, the occasion can often be made, if only it be for five minutes. And it will well repay the effort. A business man might make it a rule always to seek God's face the first thing on reaching home after the day's work. Satan will suggest all kinds of difficulties, and put obstacles in the way; and what is far more of a hindrance, there may be disinclination on our own part. But all this can be overcome by the grace of God. Let us pray that we may pray. And not only should we be always in the spirit of prayer, and have our regular times for secret devotion, but *special seasons* of waiting upon God will yield to us the greatest blessing. In reading the gospels it would appear that even our blessed Lord sought such occasions. One instance is recorded in Luke vi. 12, "It came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued *all night* in prayer to God"; and in Mark i. 35 we read, "And in the morning, rising

up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." If he chose to do this, how much more necessary for us! What a savour there would be about everything we said and did, if we knew such occasions more frequently.

Let us then pray *in the Holy Ghost*, let us pray *earnestly*, let us *pray always*, and in addition let us pray *everywhere*. (1 Tim. ii. 8.) Do not let us suppose the bedside to be the only place. We have seen that our Lord used a *mountain*, and in another place we are told He withdrew Himself into the *wilderness*; and in Acts we learn that the place where prayer was wont to be made was the *housetop*, the *riverside*, and even the *prison*. Indeed, where is

PRAYER OUT OF PLACE ?

If anywhere, then there the Christian ought not to be. A valued and highly gifted servant of God in his country rambles with a friend was often known to say, as they came to some secluded spot, "Here is a delightful place for prayer"; and he would speak to God as naturally as just before he had done to his companion. It is not only then that men everywhere are to pray, but men may also pray everywhere, and with how much blessing to themselves and others who can tell?

Having considered how, when and where we are to pray, it may not be out of place to mention

a few leading topics for prayer. Scripture will easily furnish us with some.

1. We are told in Ephesians vi. 18 to make prayer and supplication *for all saints*. It is most desirable that every child of God should bear this in mind. Again and again reference is made to it in the word. (See 2 Thess. i. 11 ; Col. iv. 12 ; Eph. i. 16, iii. 14.) And we find the great apostle not only ministering to the saints, but continually praying for them ; nay, even the Lord Himself did so. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." (John xvii. 20.)

Alas ! how frequently we neglect this holy and priceless privilege, if we do not forget it altogether. No doubt we sometimes remember the saints as a fitting conclusion to our prayers ; but is it a practice with us to make special prayer and supplication on their behalf ? So important is this that we may well ask the reader not to allow even a day to pass without praying for all saints in general, and for some in particular. We press this earnestly and affectionately upon the attention of all God's people. Reader, are you obeying this plain direction given in God's word ? If not, we entreat you for your own sake, for the sake of others, and above all, for the Lord's sake, to begin at once. Reasons will occur to every spiritually-minded person why it is our high

privilege as well as our absolute duty to intercede for others. Do not let us forget either to embrace "all saints" in our supplication. There is a tendency sometimes to limit our prayers to those with whom we are intimate or with whom we may be specially associated. Let not our interests be narrower than the whole church of God.

2. It is needful, too, that we should pray regularly for the *Lord's servants*. While they occupy a post of honour, it is also one of danger and difficulty. Exposed more than ordinary Christians to the attacks of Satan, and to be led astray by their own hearts, they sorely need the prayers of others. What a blessing they may be made if used of God. We need to pray for them then in a twofold way, that they may be preserved, and that utterance may be given unto them. (See Heb. xiii. 18; 2 Thess. iii. 1; Col. iv. 3; Eph. vi. 19.) A careful comparison of these scriptures will show us how varied are the needs of the Lord's servants, and that praying for the workmen is one of the most effectual means of aiding in the work.

3. We are exhorted in 1 Timothy ii. 1-8 to

PRAY FOR ALL MEN,

for kings, and for all that are in authority (or eminent place). And the reason is given—"that

we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Thus prayer of this sort will bring down the greatest blessing on ourselves as well as on others, and it is "good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." May we *not* forget to do this. While we pray for saints and for servants let us pray for all men, even for kings. Better to pray for a king than to be one ; "for this is good and acceptable." If we were kings we should do many things that were not so, perhaps. Abraham was privileged to pray for Sodom, and to know God's mind about it. This was infinitely preferable to "a seat in the gate." The Christian is in a similar position with regard to this world. He is apart from it and in relationship with the Ruler of the universe, and, if a praying Christian, he wields a mightier weapon than earth's greatest potentate. Depend upon it, the more we are morally outside of everything *with God* the more effective will our prayers be. The prayers of Abraham outside Sodom did more to save it than Lot's influence within.

We see then we have plenty to pray about ; and while we pray for others do not let us forget to pray for ourselves, our families, our relatives ; for "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

Having treated the subject of prayer in these various ways, we close with a few practical reflections.

If prayer is of such importance as we have tried to shew from actual experience and from scripture, the neglect of it must be of serious consequence. How

MANY A WRONG STEP

would never have been taken if there had been more prayer about it in secret, and with others. And, on the other hand, how many a good intention has never ripened into action, and many a first effort in the right direction has in the end borne no fruit, for want of prayer. Many a downward course would have been prevented if there had been more frequent access to a throne of grace. A man who neglects prayer is like an army without ammunition. How much ill we are preserved from, let alone how much good we obtain, through continual waiting upon God, none of us will ever fully know in this world. This at least may be said—and said especially to those who are entering upon life—that *no* step should be taken, of whatever kind, without first asking in the light of God's word, "Can He bless me in this?" and if not, let the enterprise be abandoned at any cost. And if we find ourselves settling down into a cold, formal state, is not the grand

remedy *prayer*? We believe it is. It was very likely the neglect of it that led to such a sad condition. May not prayer indeed be said to be the thermometer which tests our spiritual temperature?

All this has more or less to do with the individual in secret. But would there not also be immense benefit derived from praying more with one another? If it be only a call at another christian home, before leaving, could not the opportunity be found for a little prayer? Might we not invite others to pray with us in our houses more frequently than we do? If we think of leaving a neighbourhood, or a situation, or some new project is before us, might it not prove of great advantage to ask one or two brethren in the Lord to pray with us about it? We may often conclude that a thing is wrong in itself, or that it is the wrong time for doing it, if we do not like to consult other Christians. How much better it would doubtless be for all of us, for teachers and taught, for high and low, if it were only more of a habit to meet together in twos and threes for prayer "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 19.) Never, as Christians—except at the Lord's table—are we drawn closer to one another than in this meeting together before a throne of

grace. Such a practice would not only foster the truest communion, but there would be far less likelihood of any "falling out by the way."

It is of the utmost importance to remember that the true preparation for prayer is *sincerity*. The psalmist says, "If I regard *iniquity* in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." How can any one consistently ask God for blessing, or conscientiously expect an answer, if not walking in His ways? James says in his epistle (chap. iv. 2, 3), "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Do we not here see the reasons our petitions are so often unanswered? We either regard "*iniquity*," or else we do not ask simply and solely for God's glory. It is the effectual fervent prayer of a **RIGHTEOUS** man that availeth *much*. (James v. 16.) That is, one who renders what is due to God and to his neighbour.

HOW PRAYER TESTS US !

It is not necessary to perform the evil. "If I regard *iniquity* in my *heart*, the Lord will not hear me." And in all we ask, are we willing that *only God* should be glorified?

Some perhaps think that to pray often or for long is very difficult. It is unless we practise. Prayer is

like running. The more a person practises the longer he can keep up. But one who seldom runs is soon out of breath. The more you pray, the more you will desire to pray, and the easier you will find it. There have been men of God who have given three or four hours each day to prayer, and said they could not do with less. Once, perhaps, they found it as difficult to pray for ten minutes as you do.

Finally, when we pray let us ever remember that we are speaking to God. And though He is our Father, and we speak to Him as children, may it ever be with a profound sense of our own nothingness. To address

THE KING ETERNAL,

immortal, invisible, as though we were on terms of equality with Him, or had a right to demand from Him, is altogether out of place. Such prayers will certainly not be heard. Confessing fully what we are, we should at the same time bless God for what He is. Some one has said that true prayer is composed of *confession, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and adoration*.

Let us never forget to plead the name of Christ. Alas! do we not often bring it in at the end as a matter of form sometimes, without realising what it is to ask in His name? The Lord said,

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in *my name*, he will give it you.” (John xvi. 23.) It implies communion and the knowledge of His will. If we abide in Him and His words in us we shall have a mind in conformity with His, and so ask what we will and it shall be done unto us.

The first chapter of Luke presents us with a striking picture of true prayer. The whole multitude is seen praying without, and Zacharias is burning incense within. The two ascended together, and thus the prayers became acceptable, for the incense is a type of the personal perfection of Christ. If we truly ask all in Christ’s name, then our prayers will come before God as incense, and the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Oh for a deeper, more abiding sense that we receive every answer, not on the ground of what we are, but through the merits of Christ.

On the other hand what encouragement God gives us to pray! In John xiv. to xvi, seven times over the Lord tells His disciples to “*ask*.” Was it not because He was leading them into the knowledge of the blessed relationship that was theirs through redemption and the gift of eternal life?

In conclusion, may reader and writer ever remember, as one has said, "God giveth *all* to prayer"; and while this is our blessed experience in a world of need and sorrow, we can also look forward to the fulfilment of the sublime prediction of the psalmist, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." (Psalm lxxv. 2.)

A CALL TO PRAYER.

FEW but will feel the present moment to be one of peculiar solemnity. Events everywhere testify that the "end of all things is at hand," and call upon us with ever-increasing earnestness to "watch unto prayer."

That there are urgent reasons for special prayer is evident, and many are feeling it. Gatherings of Christians for this purpose have been times of special power, and believers may find in this an encouragement to "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

There is a divine principle in regard to prayer which runs all through scripture. It is that God is pleased to unite His people with Himself in whatever He is about to do. *He first of all leads them to pray, and then does what He intends in answer to their prayers.* Let us see how this principle is exemplified in scripture, in order that we may set a higher value upon prayer.

The first instance occurs in the history of Abraham. With reference to the destruction of Sodom, we hear God saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" God

does not hide it, and, as a consequence, there follows one of the most touching appeals that ever fell from human lips that the city might be spared. How wonderful that God should disclose His intentions, so that His servant might plead for that guilty city! This is the first prayer, of any length, recorded in the Bible, and it is well to notice that it is *a prayer for the salvation of men.*

Elijah furnishes another example. Because of the wickedness of Israel, God had determined to withhold rain. But it is not done apart from the prayers of His servant. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and *he prayed earnestly* that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." (James v. 17.) And when God would send rain again, it was not sent apart from prayer. "Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." In answer to his prayer the rain came.

These instances relate to the past. Let us see whether the same principle does not apply to the future. Every one knows that one day the now dispersed and downtrodden sons of Jacob will be gathered back to their own land. This will be accomplished as a direct answer to prayer. We

have only to turn to Isaiah lxii. to find this confirmed. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that are the Lord's remembrancers [see margin], keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Could there be a more striking confirmation of the principle that God gives effect to His purpose in answer to prayer? In Revelation viii. we find a further example of the same kind. God is about to judge the earth, but His judgments descend in answer to His people's prayers.

Having thus seen how God delights to stir up His people to prayer, in order that He may accomplish His purpose, let us now see how this principle applies in the present day.

What is God's present purpose? In other words, what is He doing at the moment in which we find ourselves? Speaking broadly, He is saving men through the gospel from the guilt and power of sin and from the wrath to come. We do not enter here upon what His purpose is after He has saved them; we only affirm that His purpose is to save. Judging from what we have already seen, are we not prepared to expect that **He will do so in answer to His people's prayers?** Nor are we disappointed. In 1 Timothy ii. the

Apostle Paul exhorts "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made *for all men*." And why? Because "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; *who will have all men to be saved*." Here again we find prayer and purpose go together. His present attitude toward all is that of a Saviour-God. Consequently He enjoins His people to pray for all.

Dear reader, have we risen to this privilege, the privilege of having communion with the blessed God about the salvation of immortal souls? For eighteen hundred years, as far as this world is concerned, God has been occupied with little else. How much has it occupied us? How much *does* it occupy us each day we live? Do we think God will save them whether we pray or not? Perhaps our thoughts sometimes shape themselves thus: "God has His elect; I cannot add to the number. He will take care that they are saved, and as to the rest, well, what difference can my prayers make to them?" We cannot tell you what difference your prayers may make; we can only repeat what God enjoins, "that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, be made for all men," and the reason He gives, because He will have all men to be saved, and we cannot disregard His voice without loss to ourselves at least, and it may be—who knows?

—loss to others. This at least we know, as a matter of fact and common experience, that God does save men in answer to prayer. An instance of this occurred some time ago. At a certain prayer meeting the usual attendants got cold and worldly and stayed away, until at last the only one left was the woman whose duty it was to light the lamps and prepare the room for the others. She valued prayer, however, too much to desist because others did, and so, every week, regularly, the lamps were lighted as usual, and she spent the hour alone wrestling with God. As a result a revival broke out in the place, and many were saved. Another Christian, who could not get to the Sunday evening service because of the distance, always spent the time in prayer. The burden of it invariably was that her children and children's children to the fourth generation might be saved. And God gave her her request. She actually lived to see her descendants to the *third* generation brought to the Lord.

But not only should we pray for all men because it is a day of salvation, but also because we are living in *immediate prospect of the Lord's return*. This is the next great event in the ways of God—an event big with the most tremendous results both to the church and the world. Can our prayers affect this at all. Why not? If in answer to Daniel's prayers Jerusalem was

re-built ; and if in answer to prayer Israel, now dispersed, are to be regathered, why should not our prayers hasten the coming of the Lord ? What are almost the closing words of inspiration ? These, " The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." This is the burden of the last prayer in the Bible. The first was for the salvation of men ; the last is, " Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Thus we have seen the way in which God connects His people with Himself, and executes His purpose in answer to their prayer. Whether in the past, the present, or the future, there is no difference ; it is an unvarying principle. Who that considers it can help being profoundly affected ? As to the present moment we find ourselves face to face with these two facts—the salvation of men, and the coming of the Lord ; and about these we are to pray.

Are we saying, " Come " to the Lord Jesus ? The Spirit says, " Come," and has been saying it for eighteen centuries. The bride, as the bride, is in unison with that cry. But here it is important to notice the individual is to take it up. Oh to take up again what the Spirit says, and then, surely, the answer will be given ! Seventy years ago, the hope of the Lord's coming was revived by the cry, " Behold the Bridegroom." What is the suited response on our side but to

say, "Come"? Are we saying it? Have we ever thought that by our prayers we could help to bring about a result so desirable as the return of our Lord Jesus Christ? The testimony of Scripture again and again, as we have been seeing, and the very invitation put into our lips, warrant the assumption. Did not He come the first time in answer to prayer? What is the opening scene in Luke's gospel but a prayer meeting? As the people prayed without, Gabriel was announcing to Zacharias within the birth of Christ's forerunner. Did not the Holy Ghost, too, come in answer to prayer? Jesus said, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter"; and of the disciples we read, just before the descent of the Holy Ghost, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication."

One other consideration, before bringing these remarks to a conclusion. Whether it is a question of men being saved, or the Lord coming back again, we cannot pray for either unless we are in a right state ourselves. If we would entreat God on behalf of others like Abraham, like him it must be said of us, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." If we are to get answers to prayer like Elijah, we too, as he was, must be apart with God; or if, like Daniel, we

are to have the mind of the Lord, and be able to intercede for others, we must remain, as he did, undefiled by the pollution of the world, remembering always it is the effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man that *availeth much*.

We are told that "a growing impression exists among evangelists and aggressive christian workers, that there are indications of a widespread revival at hand."* May God grant it ; but sure we are that if anything of the kind is to take place, the revival must begin with the people of God, and in the way of real confession and self-judgment. Then indeed we may expect that He who has promised the "early and the *latter* rain" will not forget us, but that He will fulfil His word—"I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and dry land springs of water."

Some may think that the corruption and worldliness in the church forbid such a thought as a revival. It may, as far as the church as a whole is concerned, but surely not as regards individuals. God has often listened to individuals when He could not to the mass. And the closing word of Revelation is hopeful on this point—"Let *him* that heareth say, Come." And then, "Let *him* that is athirst come. And *whosoever* will, let him take the water of life freely."

* Written some years ago.

In these closing hours of the church's sojourn on earth, may some be found whose chief concern it is to wait upon God, with hearts so delivered from this present evil world, that they desire nothing so much as their Lord's return. And, while with ever growing longing they say, "Come" to Him, may they in the meantime declare with equal earnestness and emphasis, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

ANSWERED PRAYERS.

IF we could look at it aright, we should perhaps be impressed with the fact that there are few things connected with our life more wonderful than prayer. It is the breathing of the hidden life—the expression of the soul's intercourse with God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the *sound* thereof," said Christ, when speaking of new birth; so prayer is the *sound* that often indicates that this mysterious operation in the soul has taken place—as was said of the newly converted Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer is one of two tangible links with the unseen. The other is the Bible. In one God speaks to us; in the other we speak to Him.

It is also the expression of conscious weakness and dependence; the acknowledgment that man is insufficient of himself, and must look outside himself—the standing rebuke of atheism and every form of unbelief. Indirectly, it is one of the strongest evidences that there is a supreme Being.

Men have in all ages felt the necessity of prayer and found in it the greatest relief. One of the

world's greatest poets expresses himself thus :

“ Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint. . . .
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.”

And not long since no less a person than the German Emperor gave an address on prayer, in which he made use of the following striking illustration.

“ Far away in the Taunus mountains some remarkable bells are hung on the summit of the peaks. No hand ever rings them. Silent, dumb, they hang there in the sunshine. But when the storm wind comes they begin to swing, and then to peal, and then their chimes are heard far below in the valley. God, the Lord, has hung in every heart a praying bell. Yet how often in the sunshine it is silent and dumb. But when the storm wind of trouble comes it begins to ring. Necessity teaches prayer.”

This is evidently the experience of all classes, from the humblest peasant to the monarch on his throne.

But if prayer is so remarkable, what shall be said of *answers* to prayer? It is a great marvel to see a man of intelligence kneeling and addressing some One unseen, and who never has been seen ; it is but a greater marvel still, when from that unseen Person, thus addressed, there comes

a distinct and an unmistakable response. Thousands of Christians can bear testimony to the fact that prayer is answered. The wonder is that more notice is not taken of it. Perhaps it is partly accounted for by the naturalness with which answers to prayer often come ; so naturally that we are less impressed than otherwise we should be. God uses means, and it frequently happens that we lose sight of the answer to prayer just because means were used.

If we are to note all the answers to prayer we get we must be on the look-out, for they often come without announcing themselves. They come

“ Noiselessly as the daylight
Comes back when night is done,
And the crimson streak on ocean’s cheek
Grows into the great sun ;
Noiselessly as the springtime
Her crown of verdure weaves,
And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves.”

They seem part of the natural course of things ; and we often allow the circumstance to pass, heedless of the stupendous fact that God has granted our request.

Should we not have more frequent answers to our prayers if we were simple enough to make every need an occasion for asking, and were on the look-out for the answer ? Not only praying always, but “ *watching thereunto.*” We are apt

to think we can manage some things ourselves, and this is where we often stumble and stray. How apt we are to forget the exhortation, "Be careful for *nothing* ; but in *everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Nothing is too small for God's notice, or too trivial to be a subject of prayer, as the following illustration will show. A Christian was once the bearer of a parcel which contained some useful articles for a poor person. On arriving at the city terminus he alighted, but forgot all about the parcel until he was some distance from the station. He hurried back, but found the train had left, and evidently the parcel with it, for it was not at the lost property office. In simple faith he lifted up his heart in prayer to God that the package, which he knew contained something that would be valued by the intended recipient, might be recovered. The train sped on its way, and after stopping at some dozen or more stations reached the suburban terminus again. The package was still on the rack where it had been left. There it remained unobserved by any one, or, at least, untouched, until the return journey, and the train arrived at the very station where its owner had joined it earlier in the morning. *At that station* some one must have entered the carriage, and seeing it, handed it to a porter, for at the

close of the day, when the owner returned home, he found the lost parcel waiting for him in the booking-office, and nothing had been touched. God had so graciously ordered everything in answer to prayer, that not only had the parcel been preserved, but it had been put out at the very station to which the owner was to return in the evening.

Shall we not find subject-matter for prayer in the very details of everyday life? Our families, our business, our service for the Lord will severally contribute, and if we watch unto prayer, and are ourselves in a right state, we shall be favoured by receiving answers. Only let us be simple. It is not the long, flowery, eloquent prayers that necessarily are answered; but the direct, believing prayers, that go from the heart; these reach the ear of God. We may not be able to express ourselves very well, but if the heart is pure, and the intention right, God can interpret it. God can often pick a prayer from our hearts when sorrow or heaviness have made our lips dumb. For prayer, and sometimes the most real prayer, is but "the upward glancing of an eye, when none but God is near."

"Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high."

Let us cultivate more of the "upward glancing of an eye," for God does not always need words. "Before they call," He says, "I will answer and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

Prayer will often accomplish more than anything else. King Jehoshaphat discovered this. When a great multitude of the children of Moab and Ammon came against him he "set himself to seek the Lord." And this is his confession: "We have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: *but our eyes are upon thee.*" And what was the result? God fought for them. He set the enemy against one another. "And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they were dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped." All Judah did towards it was to appoint singers to go before the army to "praise the beauty of holiness," and to say, "Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth for ever." Surely, if our eyes were more upon the Lord, our lips would more often praise Him!

Do we not learn from such incidents as this how much can be accomplished by prayer? We may not be great preachers, or have much gift, or be able to fill any conspicuous place; but we can pray, we can speak to the One without whose blessing preaching and gift and place are

of no account. And perhaps we may some day discover that a result which we thought was due to some prominent brother was really brought about by the prayers of some humble believing saint, and God simply used the other in answer to those prayers. In this way how much the work of the Lord depends upon the prayers of those who may never take any active part in it. The instrument is seen, and very often down here gets all the honour, but in a future day that honour may have to be shared by another perhaps now unknown.

There is a story told that on one occasion when a great musician was performing in public, and had received the continued plaudits of the audience, the boy who furnished wind for the instrument (as in old-fashioned organs) was extremely indignant because his services were unrecognised. The performer had bowed his acknowledgments to the people and had commenced another piece, when the lad turned to him and said, "I will stop blowing, unless next time you say "*we* did it.' " It meant a breakdown if the lad stopped, so the great performer was obliged to give in. And at the close of the piece he was compelled to couple the unknown lad with himself. Let those who pray, but cannot preach, not threaten to stop because no one recognises them, for it may be one day the great Master of the

ceremonies will couple their names with those who got most of the credit down here. A servant of the Lord was once led to visit a certain village for the purpose of speaking to the people and distributing tracts. He called at one house, and found the inmate a bedridden child of God. When he told her his mission to the place, he noticed her face light up with a sudden glow. On inquiry he found that for ten or fifteen years she had prayed that God would send some one on the very errand on which he had come. Her prayers were answered. She could not do the work herself, but she could ask God to send another to do it. Will they not both have their reward in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ?

In the light of this circumstance we shall do well always to remember our Lord's words, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.) "What things soever ye *desire*," that is the point. God gives the desire, in order that we may pray and He may answer. Mother, do you *desire* the conversion of your children ? Then pray and believe. Has any one reading these lines a longing *desire* for the blessing of some one else ? Pray and believe. Is there one with any desire whatever ? Pray and believe that you have what you ask for, and you shall

have it. For to believe is really to expect, and to expect from God is never to be disappointed. God may promise a thing, but this promise does not exclude prayer, or render it unnecessary. Just the opposite, as one instance will prove. God promises in the most distinct way to bless Israel, and yet He says, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, *to do it for them.*" (Ezek. xxxvi. 37.) God delights to hear prayer, and He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him.

UNANSWERED PRAYERS.

IN the previous chapter the subject of *answered* prayers was under consideration ; in this we desire to say a little about *unanswered* prayers. It is a subject of no less interest than the other, though to some, perhaps, more perplexing. Not a few could say, if they were asked, " I have prayed for years about a certain thing, and the answer has not come yet." And they want to know why. That question we will endeavour to answer.

In the first place, some requests never will be granted. There is the well-known case of Paul. He besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, and yet the request was not allowed. It was better for him that it should not be granted ; and so it may be in your case. David's history affords another instance. He greatly desired to build a house for the Lord. It was a right thought, and he would only have been too glad to obtain permission ; but it could not be. And yet both Paul and David did receive answers—Paul received grace so that he could glory in his infirmities, and David had the satisfaction of knowing that

Solomon would build the Lord a house—only the answers came in unexpected ways. John Newton describes an experience akin to this. He says :

“ I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

“ 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I know, has answered prayer ;
But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair.”

Your prayers, too, may have been answered, though differently from what you anticipated. But there are cases where no distinct answer in any shape has come. We may have asked for a thing that would not be good for us, or that is unreasonable, or altogether beyond us. Of this class is the prayer of the mother of Zebedee's children. She made request that her two sons might sit on the right and left hand of Christ in His Kingdom. The Lord has to say to her, “ Ye know not what ye ask.” Doubtless she thought how fine it would be for her two sons to occupy such an exalted position, where they would be ministered to. The Lord shews her that a greater thing than being ministered unto is to minister.

But perhaps we have prayed for right things, such as the conversion of our children or relatives,

and many other matters, and still no answer seems vouchsafed. This leads us to mention another reason why our prayers are unanswered. *There may be some fault in ourselves.* There was a christian lady whose husband very much tried her in one particular. Instead of conducting family worship, as she considered he ought, he was in the habit of taking exercise on horseback every morning. This went on for a long time, and had been the subject of many prayers. At length a servant of the Lord had occasion to stay in the house. The wife complained to him, told him how often she had made it a subject of prayer, and said she could not understand why God did not answer her prayers and put her husband right. To her intense surprise she was told that it was she who needed putting right, for doubtless God would have answered her prayers long ago but for something in herself. Accepting the rebuke, she earnestly set about to discover what it was needed correction, and as the result she soon had the joy of seeing the desire of her heart fulfilled. Often it is something in ourselves hinders our petitions being granted. And if answers are withheld, it is a loud call to us to first of all "search and try our ways," and then "turn again to the Lord." Unanswered prayers are often but a reflection of our own state.

The Apostle James gives us another reason why we do not get what we ask for; he says, "Ye ask amiss." "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (pleasures). How searching this is! With all our asking and all our seeming devotedness, we are after all seeking only our own pleasure! If God were to answer our prayers we should only use the answer to plume ourselves with. Is it any wonder we know so much about *unanswered* prayer? It may be the answers will not be long delayed if we are willing for God to have *all the glory*.

Another reason is that we may be withholding from God, or even from others, what is their due. This undoubtedly is a very frequent cause of our prayers meeting with no response. For example, in Mark xi. 24-26 we find the Lord, in speaking about answers to prayer, connects the thought of forgiveness with it. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, *forgive*." Are any of us cherishing an unforgiving spirit? It will prove a great hindrance to our prayers being answered.

And the same thing will probably happen *if we keep for ourselves what should be given to God*. Is it not well to remember the words of the wise king, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ;

and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty"? And while it is always true that God, in His grace, deals with us far above what we deserve, yet in *government* He deals with us very much as we deal with Him and with one another. "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward." (Psa. xviii. 25, 26.) And God says to us as to His people of old, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. iii. 10.)

Our prayers sometimes remain unanswered because we ask *unintelligently*. This is particularly the case in regard to spiritual matters. In the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, there are certain laws and processes, and if we run counter to these we cannot reach the end we desire. For want of knowing this, or remembering it, many have been seeking for years what they seem as far away from as ever. They have prayed for a certain blessing many times, and yet their request has not been granted. If the truth were known, it is probable, this matter which is

now so great a mystery could easily be explained. They have put their prayers in the wrong form, or they are looking entirely in the wrong direction. The case of the Syrophenician woman illustrates this very thing. She comes to the Lord in her deep need about her daughter, and says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. *But he answered her not a word.*" Now this was not coldness on the part of the Lord towards her, any more than it is toward you because He has not answered your prayer. This woman had preferred her request on entirely wrong grounds. The Lord did not send her away, as He does not send you away; but He has something to teach you, perhaps, before He can grant your request, as He had her. She addressed Him as Son of David, a title which gave a Gentile no claim whatever. The Lord could not consistently respond when thus addressed; to have done so would have ignored the distinction God Himself had made. But when she addressed Him simply as Lord, He could listen to her. He is Lord of all. And when, further, she casts herself entirely upon His goodness and mercy, asserting no claim, He cannot refuse her. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

May not we, in regard to other matters, be making the same mistake, in principle, as this woman?

Perhaps we have prayed for more faith. This is a common delusion. As if some day we should become suddenly conscious of a great increase of that commodity. It cannot be too clearly stated that God does not work in this way. He does not deal out faith to us in bulk. It would be harmful, rather than helpful, if He did. Faith, like money, is increased by circulation; or, like seed, it grows; or, as our physical frame does, it gathers strength by exercise. When the disciples on one occasion said, "Lord, increase our faith," the Lord Jesus in His reply laid down a fundamental principle which holds good for all time, and which we do well to ponder. He shows it is not the quantity of faith, but just exercising what we have; and He mentions one of the smallest things, and tells them what they could accomplish with just so much faith. "If ye had faith," He says, "as a grain of mustard seed." And for two reasons. A grain of mustard seed is very small in itself, but under certain conditions of soil and atmosphere and sun there is within it possibilities of development. So with faith. And, then, the least faith brings in all the resources of God. It is not by asking for more faith that it increases, but, given certain conditions, it will grow as surely as a grain of mustard seed. In Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "Your faith groweth

exceedingly." How is this accounted for? By what he is able to say about them in his first epistle. He speaks of their "*work of faith.*" Faith was in exercise, and consequently it grew exceedingly. (Comp. 1 Thess. i. 3 and 2 Thess. i. 3.) Had they been blindly asking for more faith instead of seeing the divine principle that governs the whole matter, their faith would rather have diminished than increased.

In the same way, how often have we prayed to God for more patience. But God does not deal out patience, any more than faith, in lumps. And the sooner we learn that patience can only become ours by a certain process, the better. It is an immense gain when we see that faith and patience and such-like qualities are not given at random or arbitrarily, but stand in the relation of cause and effect. They do not become ours by asking, but by a principle as unerring as the law of gravitation. How, then, do we become patient? There is one simple answer. By the knowledge of God. In support of this assertion we can only just refer the reader to Colossians i. 10, 11. By increasing in the knowledge of God we are strengthened with all might, according "to the power of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Do we underrate prayer in this way? No; but we learn to pray for the right thing, and also

seek it in the right way. We learn that the real thing we need is the knowledge of God. We are impatient because we know Him so little ; and if we only seek to deal with the impatience we are not going to the root of the disease, but dealing only with a symptom. No medical man would act in this way with regard to the diseases of the body, nor must we with that which is infinitely higher and more complicated, the diseases of the soul. Let us pray that God would make Himself known, and seek to know Him by studying His word, and patience will come.

It is not otherwise with regard to *rest*. How often we are weary and heavy laden ! Perhaps we have often sought rest by simply praying for it. There is one who offers it to us, and tells us how we may find it. We can only have it on the same principle on which He had it, that is, entire submission to the will of God. What God has ordered He knew was best for Him, and He rested there. And so when He offers rest to us He says, "Take *my yoke* upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Meek and lowly in heart"—here is the secret of all rest.

If the reader will carefully weigh what has been said, he may discover the reason of many

an unanswered prayer. While we are privileged at all times to make our requests known to God, yet the one condition of our prayers being answered is, asking "according to his will." (1 John v. 14, 15.) Of course we may have asked according to His will, and the time may not have come for the answer. God often delays the answer. Prayer was made continually by the church for Peter, but it was only a few hours before the execution was to take place that he was liberated. But while this is true, yet our prayers are often unanswered, for the reasons already given. We have been asking for something that would not be good for us, or we have asked amiss, or at random, and overlooked the real thing to be asked for—not patience, but the knowledge of God; not rest, but to be meek and lowly in heart. If we grasp these principles, many of our prayers may yet be answered.

“ARISE, CRY OUT IN THE NIGHT.”

THERE is a verse of scripture which has been much before me of late, and to which I would like to call attention. It deals with the subject of prayer—a subject which, as many know, has become very prominent amongst all earnest Christians. It is found in Lamentations ii., and runs as follows :

“ Arise, cry out in the night : in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord : lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.”

When this was written, things were at a very low ebb in Israel, as they are in the church to-day. Living in similar times of departure from God, and consequent barrenness, may we not do well to take heed to this striking exhortation, given expressly to meet the condition of things then existing ? It is, I believe, the only thing that can meet the condition we are in to-day.

The verse, alluded to, contains three points which I should like to emphasise. *First*, when we are to pray. *Secondly*, how we are to pray. *Thirdly*, for what we are to pray.

First, when we are to pray. “Arise, cry out in the *night : in the beginning of the watches.*” Does not this shew the urgency of the matter? A man does not arise in the night except on urgent business. This leads me to put the question, Are we sufficiently impressed with the urgency of the moment—with the deplorable state of the church where God is so greatly dishonoured, His truth neglected, and His people starved? Are we alive to the terrible danger in which multitudes of our fellow-creatures stand, living in sin and alienation from God, indifferent to the glorious gospel, and hurrying headlong to an eternity of despair,

“Where hope never comes that comes to all,” the blackness of darkness for ever? We use these words, but can we weigh their fearful meaning? Do we see that the matter is of such urgency as to demand that we should “arise”—yes, even from a warm and comfortable bed—and “cry out in the night”? If the coming of a traveller after dark was of sufficient importance to urge a man to go to his friend at midnight in order that the needs of the body might be met,* what shall be said about the needs of the soul? Shall we not arise in the night to plead with our Friend on behalf of those whose needs are so great, and yet who will not plead for themselves?

* Luke xi.

Years ago, there was a servant of God, much used in winning souls, who always slept with a rug at the foot of his bed to throw over him when in prayer, for his invariable practice was never to sleep through the night without rising to pray. Any who have tried the same thing will be able to speak of its sweetness, and the sense of solemnity and nearness to God that it brings. The dead of night, or very early morning, when all is silent and hushed, is a time when the spirit is least disturbed, and approach to God the most easy. It is said of a saintly Covenanter and preacher that "the night his wife died he spent the whole ensuing night in prayer and meditation in his garden." The next morning a visitor came to see him, and lamenting his great loss and want of rest, he replied, "I declare I have not all this night had one thought of the death of my wife. I have been so taken up in meditating upon heavenly things. I have been this night on the banks of Ulai plucking an apple here and there." (Dan. viii.) Does not all this impress us with the gain of arising in the night to cry to God? It also says, "in the beginning of the watches." Let us also begin the day as early as we can with prayer.

In the case of Paul and Silas we see what midnight prayer can do. "At midnight," it says, "they prayed and sang praises, and suddenly

there was a great earthquake.” If we are to have spiritual earthquakes, must we not have midnight prayers?

Secondly. This verse not only suggests a particular time of prayer, but next, *how we are to pray*. Three things are stated as to this: first, “cry out”; next, “pour out thine heart like water”; lastly, “lift up thy hands.” The cry, first of all, to attract attention. Having done that, there is the pouring out the heart like water in making known the request; and then the lifting up the hands for the answer.

We must cry out. There must be real importunity. This is the lesson, as we very well know, of Luke xi. It may be asked, “But does God’s attention need to be attracted?” The answer to that is “Yes,” and “No.” He neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor is His ear heavy that He cannot hear; and yet it is He Himself who tells us to cry out. There is no need in doing this to rouse the household. It is not lung-power, but heart-power that is needed—a cry from the very depths of our being. While everything really depends upon God, He makes as though everything depended upon us. Therefore, let us arise and cry out. And when we feel that we are really speaking to God, as a man speaks face to face with his friend, then, as it says, “pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord.” Surely, what

we need above all things to-day is to get face to face with God, and then pour out our hearts before Him. How water flows out when a vessel filled with it is being emptied ! And when prayer comes from the heart like that, depend upon it such praying breath will not be spent in vain..

Our prayer also must be one of entreaty as well as of hope and expectation. "Lift up thy hands toward him." Is not this an intensified form of prayer ? When the heart has emptied itself and the lips are dumb, do not the outstretched hands seem to implore an answer ? God says of Israel, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." As though when God Himself had exhausted every entreaty by word, He would still as a last resort stretch out His hands. Man may refuse God's stretched-out hands. He will not refuse ours.

And we are to stretch out our hands for the answer, as well as by way of entreaty, and God will not only fill our hands, but our mouths and our hearts. This then, is how we are to pray : "Cry out," "pour out," "lift up." "Cry out" with the voice ; "pour out" with the heart ; "lift up" the hands. And when voice and heart and hands are thus united an answer will surely come.

One word more on the last point in the verse. *What are we to pray for ?* "For the life of thy

young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.” We know, of course, the special condition of things this referred to, but has it not a spiritual analogy to-day? Everything in that day depended upon the preservation of the lives of young children. If the rising generation perished, what would be the future of the nation? Is it otherwise to-day? Do not the young need special attention? And, thank God, if there is work going on to-day at all, it seems more amongst the young than anywhere. But more—a great deal—remains to be done. The Church of Rome puts forth her best energies and employs every conceivable tactic to gain possession of the young. Shall we not do well to take a leaf out of her book, though we cannot adopt her methods?

But our prayers, of course, are not to be limited to the young. How many there are of older people—both converted and unconverted—who faint for hunger in the streets through which we daily pass! Think of the hurrying throng, to be counted by millions, whose whole life is spent in pursuing that which can never satisfy. Some are consciously fainting, life is so hard for them. Others are as truly fainting, though they scarcely know it. People who live simply for this world must faint sooner or later. Those who live on husks can have no stamina. Death will overtake them some day, depriving them of everything

they trust in, and leaving them without a vestige of anything worth having.

May we not think, too, of multitudes of those dear to Christ who are in a state of spiritual starvation? What can be done for them? Their souls are not nourished by what they try to live upon. That which is set before them week after week contains little spiritual nutriment. What are we doing to break to them the bread of life? Have we anything to set before them? The man in Luke xi. went to his friend on behalf of another with the complaint, "I have nothing to set before him." But he knew where to obtain something, and so ought we. What should we think of the man, however, if, having received the loaves, he kept them entirely for his own use and gave not a particle to his guest? Are we doing this with what God has committed to us? Is it not given us that we may impart to others?

As we contemplate the vast need on every hand, whether in the so-called christian world or the heathen world—and wherever we look it assumes appalling dimensions—shall we not be constrained to arise, cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches pour out our hearts like water before the face of the Lord? Shall we not lift up our hands toward Him for the life of those who faint for hunger in the top of every street?

THE PRAYER OF SOLOMON.

II. CHRON. VI.

It is impossible to read the supplications of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple without being convinced of the unique place prayer occupies. The house built by Solomon was to be distinguished from all other edifices by two things : It was God's dwelling place ; and it was a house of prayer. Centuries after, and when successive buildings had been reared in the place of the one first erected, our Lord Himself could speak of the Temple as " My Father's house," and also describe it as, " A House of Prayer for all nations." When we reflect that a place specially set apart for God was also specially set apart for prayer, and to which all prayer might be directed, we see that there is nothing wanting to raise prayer to the highest level. These two stupendous facts are inseparably linked together : a place where God would dwell ; and where He would have men turn to Him about all their needs.

As we meditate upon this momentous fact, a difficulty at once confronts us. Seeing that the Temple no longer exists at Jerusalem, and that God's earthly people are scattered ; and bearing in mind that Solomon's prayer related solely and

exclusively to one particular spot and habitation, the question arises, Are we entitled to believe that the children of God to-day have anything like the same resources and the same privileges? It is easy to imagine all that it meant to a godly Jew to be able to turn to a recognised spot and make known all his requests; and to be assured by God Himself that, if he did so in truth and uprightness, seeking forgiveness and desiring to walk in the good way, he would be heard and answered. But what about ourselves?

There are certain good people who would like to make the Cathedrals and Churches of our land substitutes for the Temple at Jerusalem. They think that if they pray in a building of this kind there is something meritorious about it; and they are almost ready to believe such petitions are more likely to be answered. But what warrant have we for thinking so? In saying this, it is not prayer we are objecting to, wherever it may be offered, but the thought of any *place* on earth, to-day, giving special efficacy or sanctity to those prayers.

Nor are we objecting to public prayer. There is, of course, both public and private prayer. But it cannot be too clearly stated in this age of ritualism and formality that it is not the building—not the bricks and mortar—whether consecrated or unconsecrated, but the *people* who are present and the manner in which they pray that make

public prayer effectual. Praying in concert with others is undoubtedly both a privilege and an inspiration, and our Lord in contemplating it said, "*If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.*" From this we learn it is the persons and not the place. Two or three, and Christ Himself there ! Is not this equal to anything ever realised by a Jew ?

Then, too, besides Christ's presence with two or three we have a throne in heaven—a throne of grace, to which we are invited to come boldly, and we have a great High Priest ; and we come unto God by Him (see Heb. iv. 15-16). Just as a Jew, far out of range of the earthly sanctuary, could look toward it—even from a foreign country—so we have a point to which we can turn our eye, on whatever spot of earth our feet may be resting, and we can "draw near." In spirit we can be transferred to the presence of God, at any moment from any quarter and any distance. Moreover, let us remember the prominence the Apostle Paul gives to prayer in his first epistle to Timothy ; an epistle, be it remembered, in which he speaks much of the house of God as it is now—a house composed of living stones. God has a house of prayer still. It is wherever His people come together for that

purpose. So we find the Apostle saying, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men . . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."

Thus it will be seen we are not at any disadvantage. A heavenly sanctuary cannot be inferior to an earthly one. And, in addition, we draw near to God through a Person—and that Person, His own Son. Moreover, God is revealed more fully to us than He was to the Jews; and the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities. The Christian, then, has many advantages. A throne of grace in heaven instead of on earth: God revealed as Father; Christ the One by Whom we draw near. Whose Name we can use, Who is also present with us; and the Holy Spirit our teacher and helper, so that we are enabled to "pray in the Holy Ghost."

Notwithstanding the superiority of the present position, prayer remains substantially what it always was—the expression of need and dependence and the seeking of forgiveness and help. Consequently, there are some valuable lessons to be learned from this prayer of Solomon. And to this we now turn. For one great lesson runs through all prayer, and continues from one generation to another—the needs of men are always the same, and those of the twentieth century after Christ are not very different (as we shall see) from those

of the centuries that preceded Him ; and the principles on which God can hear and answer prayer are also similar.

SACRIFICE THE BASIS OF PRAYER.

One very important matter demands our first consideration. It has reference to Solomon's position on the occasion. We read, " And he stood before the *altar*." We learn from chap. vii. 1 that upon the altar were the burnt offering and sacrifices. All this is of immense significance. *We cannot approach God apart from sacrifice.* Ever since sin entered, this principle has been of universal application. It was in coats of skins, the Lord God clothed Adam and Eve. This involved the death of a victim. It represents being clothed in the righteousness of another. Abel was accepted on the ground of sacrifice. Abraham had his altar. So we read of " the blood of the everlasting covenant." It was always and the only ground of blessing. " GATHER MY SAINTS TOGETHER UNTO ME ; THOSE THAT HAVE MADE A COVENANT WITH ME BY SACRIFICE " (Ps. 1. 5). To approach God on any other basis is to court refusal. How significant, then, is Solomon's attitude, "*He stood before the altar of the Lord.*"

Let us imitate him. Let us realise that God is offering us a basis for our prayers. The sacrifice we need, He supplies. He is offering us Christ

as our righteousness and all that Christ has done. Apart from this we are under judgment, having no claim, and without any ground of approach. Sin has broken every link with God. But that link may be established in a higher and better way through the provision God Himself has made. We are not discouraging anyone from prayer. God bears with ignorance, and listens to the cry of even unconverted people. We are only insisting upon a broad and vital principle which needs to be recognised, viz., that sin has put us at a distance ; by nature we are guilty and subject to God's judgment ; and God is asking *us* to accept His way of reconciliation ; so that we may have good ground for asking and receiving. It is quite right for us to stretch out our hands to God, but we miss our own blessing if we fail to realise that *God is stretching out His hands to us* and offering us pardon and peace on the ground of the sacrifice of Calvary, and through faith in Him Who died there on our behalf. It is necessary to insist upon this, however elementary it may seem, because doubting souls are often asking of God, when, all the time, their first need is to receive something *from* God. In other words, God speaks to us before we can rightly speak to Him. Let us never forget to plead the blood of Christ as the reason why God should answer our prayers. We have no other ground of approach to God whatever. We have not to

bring sacrifices now, but to take our stand upon the sacrifice **once** offered by Christ.

The next point to notice is the manner in which Solomon begins his prayer. He extols and magnifies the One to Whom he prays. "*O Lord God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in the heaven, nor in the earth.*" When we approach God in prayer let us never forget to contemplate His majesty. The attitude of the king, too, is worthy of notice. He "*kneeled down upon his knees . . . and spread forth his hands toward heaven.*"

Solomon also bases his prayer upon the promises of God. He remembers how God has fulfilled His word, and asks Him to verify His promise in the future. Then he becomes lost in the sense of God's greatness and at His condescension in deigning to dwell in a house built by human hands. All this is surely most appropriate, and indicates a fine intelligence, as well as a happy state of soul.

THE CRY AND THE PRAYER.

There is another utterance in this prayer which should not escape us. Solomon asks God "to hearken unto the *cry* and the *prayer* which Thy servant prayeth before Thee." There is not only a general petition, but there is the "*cry*." This seems to imply urgency and definiteness. Let there be the "*cry*" as well as the prayer when we approach God. We all know how our children

may ask for a thing, and sometimes but little attention be paid to their request, but only let us hear their "cry," and we run to their aid at once. So, "This poor man *cried*, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

FORGIVENESS.

The first thing Solomon asks God to do is to *forgive* ; and it would be well if we often followed his example. Do not let us be misunderstood. There is a forgiveness which every child of God ought to be assured of (see Acts x. 43 ; xiii. 38-9 ; xxvi. 18 ; Eph. i. 7 ; 1 John ii. 12). But we also read that "in many things we all offend" (James iii. 2). And this very prayer we are considering reminds us, "there is no man that sinneth not." There are sins of *omission* as well as *commission*, and how often we need to seek forgiveness for these, that thus our communion with God may not be hindered. And then, having received forgiveness ourselves, we have to extend the same forgiveness to any who may have trespassed against us, or our prayers will not be answered (Mark xi. 25-6).

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE PRAYER.

This prayer takes account of every variety of need. Every conceivable circumstance—difficulty, danger, loss, sickness—is included. Calamities of every kind are mentioned. Whatever the position of an Israelite ; whether at home or in a foreign

land ; whether prosperous or the reverse ; he might look toward God's earthly dwelling place and pray, with the conviction that he was being heard.

The righteous man might look to God to justify him. Or, if the whole nation sinned, and, as a consequence, were put to the worse before the enemy, when they asked forgiveness, Solomon entreats God to "bring them again unto the land which Thou gavest to their fathers." The judgment might be of a different kind, and the heaven be shut up ; or there might be dearth, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts or caterpillars ; *"Whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness there be ; then what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all Thy people Israel, WHEN EVERYONE SHALL KNOW HIS OWN SORE AND HIS OWN GRIEF, and shall spread forth his hands towards this house : then hear Thou from Heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest."* Thus we see that whether the need were national or individual the provision was the same. Not only the great matters of state, but the personal needs could be told to Jehovah : "When everyone shall know his own sore and his own grief." The common causes of sorrow are thought of, and also the peculiar and particular causes, for the heart knoweth its own bitterness. What a tale of sorrow might be poured into the ear of Jehovah. Day by

day he listened to a recital which no other ear but His was permitted to hear. All over the land there were voices raised and hands stretched out toward His temple, and He was willing to hear and meet it all.

And has God changed? Is He less sympathetic or less approachable to-day? Nay, He is more accessible. Jesus, when He was on earth, stood still at the cry of a blind beggar; and He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Our Saviour is now our Intercessor, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and by Him we draw near to God.

Does it not strike us, as we read Solomon's prayer, what a wonderful provision the God of Israel was making for His people? All *state* matters, all *private* matters—the needs manifest to all, and those known only to the heart in secret, could be brought to the One all powerful to help. God would have His people speak to Him and tell Him their griefs and their fears. And God has not been less thoughtful as to us. We are exhorted to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It is always a time of need—there is not a day that does not bring some fresh experience of it—and there is always help ready at hand if we come for it. Whether the matter is of public

importance or of private interest ; whether calamity threatens the nation or it is a question of each man's own sore and own grief ; we may come boldly to a throne of grace and meet with One Who sympathises and succours.

To us it is said, "*Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*"

THE CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING AN ANSWER.

It is important to observe the conditions which are invariably attached to prayer. This is so in every dispensation. As to this, the prayer under consideration is full of instruction.

1. The prayer had to be directed towards God's house. An Israelite thus recognised, in a very definite way, the existence of God. He did not pray aimlessly or into the air. So we read in the New Testament : "*He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*" How often the soul needs to fall back upon that simple fact : *God is* ; and knowing that He is, come to Him.

2. More than once Solomon mentions the confession of God's Name. "Pray . . . and confess Thy Name." Everything, in reality,

depended upon this. We are answered, not because of anything in us or in our prayers, but because of what God is. All that God is, is now set forth in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are told to ask in His name. Let us always in every prayer attach the greatest importance to this and give the utmost place to it. Making a confession before God of the worthiness of Christ in whose Name we come.

3. Another condition of prayer being heard is, that we turn from our sin and seek God with our whole heart. It is imperative that we forsake every evil way, if God is to grant our requests. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, says the Psalmist ; how much less will He hear if it is allowed in the life. So we find Solomon saying, "If they turn from their sin." And if they pray, saying, "We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly." To obtain God's ear there must be the fullest confession and forsaking of evil ; for God will not be an abettor of sin. He demands that we should return to Him with all our heart and with all our soul, and learn the good way wherein He would have us to walk. It is essential we should conform to these conditions if our prayers are to be heard.

With such privileges, is it any wonder we find Daniel, when in Babylon, opening his window towards Jerusalem three times a day. Even when

he knew his life was at stake he could not and would not desist.

Let us remember, then, that while such ample provision was made for Israel, a throne of grace is ever open to us. A "throne," the symbol of power, stability and resource ; and one of "grace"; the pledge and guarantee that all that power is exercised on our behalf. Thither we can bring all our cares, our troubles and our needs, and leaving them there, carry away the help which divine power is able and ready to bestow, which will sustain and keep us until the need and the occasion of it have passed away for ever, and the vicissitudes of our earthly pilgrimage given place to the rest and satisfaction of heaven.