

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	2
I. A Prayer-Hearing God.....	3
(1) It is God’s nature to hear and answer prayer. (2) It is impossible to come to God or to please Him without believing that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. (3) Every attribute of God is implied in the fact that He hears and answers prayer. (4) Nature itself points to a benevolent God who hears and answers prayer.	
II. Why Pray?.....	9
(1) Because God insistently commands it in the Bible. (2) Because prayer is God’s appointed way for Christians to get things. (3) Because prayer is God’s way for Christians to have fullness of joy. (4) Because prayer is the way out of all trouble, the cure for all worry and anxious care. (5) Because answered prayer is the only unanswerable argument against skepticism, unbelief, modernism and infidelity. (6) Because prayer is the only way to have the power of the Holy Spirit for God’s work. (7) Because “...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”	
III. Prayer is Asking.....	19
(1) Prayer is not praise, adoration, meditation, humiliation nor confession, but asking. (2) Bible prayers were asking. (3) Hypocrisy in so-called praying that does not ask for something.	
IV. The Answer to Prayer is Receiving.....	25
(1) The Scriptures teach that an answer to prayer is getting what you asked for. (2) How to pray in the will of God for a “yes” answer.	

## PREFACE

Every thoughtful minister must be impressed with the hunger of good Christian people for instruction on prayer. Untaught Christians do not naturally know how to pray though their hearts long after God. John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray; and the twelve came to Jesus saying, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." People need to be taught from the Bible to pray as truly as they need to be taught to preach or win souls. And even in their study of the Bible they need help, as the Ethiopian eunuch who was asked by Philip, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" and replied, "How can I, except some man should guide me?"

The great popularity of books on prayer by Andrew Murray, by Bounds, by Dr. R. A. Torrey, by Dr. Blanchard, by Hallesby, by Mrs. Goforth and even by modernists, shows there is a deep hunger in the hearts of the people to learn to pray and to learn to pray aright and get things from God. To meet in some small measure, if I can, this hunger of the people of God and to help men and women and young people really to pray, to ask and receive, is my purpose in writing this book.

Oh, the dearth of real prayer! We have not because we ask not. The churches are powerless, Christians are neither happy nor prosperous in spiritual matters, our loved ones are unsaved, all because we do not effectually, Scripturally, get hold of God in prayer. Revival, with the enlargement of God's cause, with the widespread blessing of Christians, with the saving of multitudes of precious souls, surely waits on prayer. When we remedy the prayer life of the people of God, we remedy what is wrong with Christians and churches and open the way for every needed blessing. So I have earnestly set out in this book to teach people to pray according to the Scriptures and to stimulate faith in a God Who answers prayer.

Frankly, this book is a book of *Bible teaching* on prayer. It is not a book of philosophy nor reasoning about what is or is not possible or probable about prayer. The book is written on the simple basis that there is a God Who has revealed His will in the Bible, an infallible book. The Bible teaches that God delights to answer prayer. The Bible gives us many great and exceedingly precious promises about what God will do for those who come to Him in prayer, and the Bible clearly gives the conditions for getting things from God. The Saviour said, "Ask and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7: 7), and again, "Ask and ye shall receive" (John 16: 24). So prayer is asking and an answer to prayer is receiving. In answer to prayer, God miraculously intervenes in human affairs and changes things; changes people, changes weather, changes outward circumstances, changes health, even to the working of physical miracles. So the title of this book is **PRAYER—*Asking and Receiving***. To this author prayer is a very simple and blessed matter of going to God daily for what one needs and desires, and getting it, and living in the fullness of joy of answered prayer which Jesus promised in John 16: 24, "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*"

This is no untried theory that I bring. Every promise that I write about, I have tried and proved; so I write this book as a matter of personal testimony. I *know* God answers prayer. He has answered mine in thousands of instances. The answers to prayer have been so definite, so clearly out of the realm of probability that an unbiased investigator must be convinced that these answers to prayer were really the supernatural intervention of a loving God Who works miracles for His children when they trust Him. Others ought to tell what God has done for them, and so I ought to tell what God has done for me.

With a confession of my own weakness, with an earnest exhortation to others that we really come back to the Bible teaching and to Bible examples of prayer, and with a fervent hope that God may use this book to the blessing of thousands, I commit it to God and send it on its way.

As for me, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live." Oh, beloved, we have not because we ask not. Ask and ye shall receive!

## A PRAYER-HEARING GOD

***“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”***—Psalm 65:2

***“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”***—Hebrews 11:6

### I. It Is God’s Nature to Hear and Answer Prayer

Our God is a God Who hears and answers prayer! Prayer-hearing is one of His attributes, a part of His nature. He inspired the Psalmist to call Him, ***“...thou that hearest prayer,...***” (Psalm 65:2). He selected that title for Himself and delights to be called the God Who hears, and the God Who answers prayer.

God’s attributes, His character, are revealed in the titles given Him in the Scripture. An impressive and very helpful book of daily devotions was written by T. C. Horton, *The Wonderful Names of Our Wonderful Lord*. The names and titles and descriptions by which God reveals Himself in the Bible give insight into the character of God. And one of His titles, by His own divine choice, is “Thou that hearest prayer”!

God’s *mercy* never changes. It is a part of His character, unaffected by changing dispensations. God’s *holiness* and His *righteousness* never vary. He is always holy, always righteous. The characteristics and attributes of God are unchanging, and everlasting. He says, ***“For I am the LORD, I change not;...”*** (Malachi 3:6). ***“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”***, says Hebrews 3:8. And even so, God is in all generations, the same God Who delights to hear, and does hear, and answers prayer.

***“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come,”*** said the Psalmist. God hears the prayers of all flesh. He just as willingly hears the prayers of a Gentile as of a Jew. God, Who is the Creator of all alike, is eager to hear the prayer of every living soul. And He is as willing to hear the prayer of one generation as another. He was delighted with the prayers of Enoch, who walked and talked with Him, and took him on to Heaven bodily, translating him that he should not die. He heard the prayer of Abraham, the ***“friend of God,”*** and delivered Lot from Sodom and gave Abraham the longed-for child in his old age. Later it was His delight to answer the prayers of Elijah, raising the dead, sending fire from Heaven, giving drouth and then rain, and then taking him to Heaven. He heard the prayer of Daniel, a captive, in far-off Babylon, and with the nation in disgrace, just as readily, and revealed to him King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and delivered Daniel from the lion’s den, just as He delivered the other three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace. What did it matter to God whether the prayer was before the flood or after with Enoch and Abraham? It did not affect the answer to prayer that Elijah was in the land of Canaan and Daniel a captive in Babylon. So in the New Testament, God heard the prayer of the Canaanitish woman, the prayer of the Italian centurion, Cornelius, as readily as He heard the prayer of Peter, the chief apostle. He heard the prayer of the dying thief, or the publican in the temple, or the fallen woman, as readily as the prayer of the upright and godly. If there are ever conditions that hinder prayer, the conditions are on the part of the one who prays and not on God’s part. God is the unchanging God Who hears prayer, the God Who longs to answer prayer, the God Who in all generations and with all kinds of people eagerly listens to prayer. It is a part of His nature, as are His mercy, His justice, His righteousness, His omnipotence. ***“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.”***

God hears prayer even for the unsaved in many cases. In his helpful little book, *Praying in the Holy Spirit*, Dr. H. A. Ironside says:

“Prayer is almost universal in mankind. ***‘O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.’*** All nations pray. It is the sense of need, of weakness, that leads men to cry out for help to a Higher Power; and it is wrong to say, as some have said, that the prayers of unconverted people are never heard. The man

whom our Lord healed of his blindness said, *'We know that God heareth not sinners.'* This is true, in the sense that he meant it. But the cases of Hagar, in the wilderness, the heathen mariners mentioned in Jonah, and other similar instances must not be overlooked. It is wrong and foolish to try to set bounds to the mercy of God. He who hears the prayer of the young ravens when they cry for food, hears the agonized heart-cries of troubled men who are of *'more value than many sparrows'* in His eyes. Both Scripture and history testify to prayers answered in wondrous grace, even when those who prayed were ignorant of the One to whom their entreaties were directed."

It is in the very nature of God to answer prayer, even for unworthy creatures.

## **II. It Is Impossible to Come to God or to Please Him Without Believing That He Is a Prayer-Hearing and a Prayer-Answering God**

How jealous God is of His reputation for hearing and answering prayer! In Hebrews 11:6, we are told, *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

Here we are told that before anyone can come to God he must believe two things: first he must believe that there is a God, and second, he must believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, that is, that God hears and answers prayer. No one can come to God, no one can be saved, no one can please God, except they believe God answers prayer!

Here we see what faith is. *"Without faith it is impossible to please him."* And this faith simply means that one believes that there is a God and believes that He hears and answers prayer. In faith about a particular matter it means confidence that there is a God Who will hear prayer about this particular matter. But there is no faith that does not involve a real confidence in the prayer-hearing and prayer-answering nature of God. One cannot know God, except as he comes to know this blessed attribute of His; He is a God Who hears prayer!

Is it strange, that the one attribute of God everyone must acknowledge before coming to Him is the attribute of hearing and answering prayer? When one comes to God, he is not required, necessarily, to think of God as the Creator. He is not required, necessarily, to think of God's attributes and qualities. They are all involved enough in this quality of hearing and answering prayer, that when one believes that God *"is a rewarder of them diligently seek Him,"* then they know enough about God to come to Him and please Him and receive His blessing! In other words, this quality of hearing and answering prayer is the one God most wants to be known. This is the very heart of God's nature. This reveals His power, His wisdom, His grace, His holiness. There is a God, and He answers prayer. That sums up all the creed absolutely necessary to please God and come to Him. All the other things are implied and understood if you know that much about our infinite, blessed, merciful, prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God!

It becomes clear, then, that when we limit God's willingness to answer prayer, we are guilty of a horrible sin of unbelief. Those who lay so much stress on natural law and intimate that God Himself is a servant of nature, limited by rules He Himself has laid down, are guilty of minimizing faith, and so are displeasing God and cannot draw as near to Him as they should. To teach, as some do, that in former dispensations God was more ready to answer, more willing to show wonders and signs to His glory in answer to prayer, is striking at the very dignity of God's character, is unbelief in His essential nature as the prayer-hearing God.

Some people believe that God was more willing to send rain or other physical, material, earthly blessings to the Jews in answer to their prayers than He is willing to send the same blessings on Gentile Christians in this age. They speak as if God had limited Himself to earthly blessings to Jews, under the law, and now limits Himself to give only spiritual blessings to Christians under grace. But that would mean that the Jews would have only half a God and we would have the other half of a God! To limit God in His willingness to

hear and to answer prayer for those who diligently seek Him is unbelief in the very nature of God Himself! To believe that in apostolic times God was more willing to work miracles than He is today, again limits God. We ought rather to put the limitation on men and frankly confess that we have not because we ask not, that we ask amiss that we might consume it on our lusts (James 4:2, 3). We ought frankly to confess that our unbelief makes us unfit to receive the blessings which the apostles and New Testament Christians often received. But we ought never to believe nor intimate that God has changed His plan or His willingness to hear and answer the prayers of those who diligently seek Him, those who trust Him.

There are dispensations in some little arbitrary matters of God's dealings with men. Once there were animal sacrifices, as type and symbol of faith in a coming Saviour. Now "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Hebrews 10:26). Once Jews were forbidden to eat certain kinds of meat as ceremonially unclean to them. Now "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Timothy 4:4, 5). Once Jewish boys were to be circumcised, but now "...neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision;..." (Galatians 5:6). Once there was a Jewish sabbath, Saturday, and other ceremonial laws, which Jews were to observe as a shadow of the coming Christ. But Christ has already come and this handwriting of ordinances has been taken out of the way and nailed to the cross of Christ, so that now no Christian is to be judged concerning meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Colossians 2:16).

I say in small and arbitrary matters, God had dispensations in His dealings with men. The Holy Spirit once was *with* Christians and now dwells in Christians (John 14:17). The change came when Jesus was glorified at His resurrection (John 7:37-39; John 20:22). I say there are such dispensational changes, in some matters but in the great fundamentals that are a part of the very nature of God, there are no dispensations. God Himself cannot change. He never did; He never will.

God always saved people by faith in Christ, no other way, in the Old Testament or in the New (Acts 10:43). God has always been holy, always has been almighty, always has been merciful, and so God has always been the God Who hears and answers prayer. This was understood by the Psalmist when he cried, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.*" (Psalm 65:2) This is why "...he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," as stated in Hebrews 11:6. The unchanging, immutable, everlasting God is a God Who always has been anxious to hear, and able and willing and mighty to answer the prayers of those who earnestly seek Him, those who trust Him.

### **III. Every Attribute of God Is Implied in the Fact That He Hears and Answers Prayer**

When one understands that God hears and answers prayer, then he can faintly perceive all the attributes or characteristics of God are implied when we understand that He answers prayer.

First, a prayer-hearing God is a *living* God. He is not an idol of wood, or stone, or paper. When the priests of Baal on mount Carmel cried out to their god, "... *O Baal, hear us...*" (1 Kings 18:26). An idol has eyes, but it sees not. It has ears, but it hears not. It has a mouth, but it speaks not. A God Who hears prayer is a living God.

Second, a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God is an all-knowing God, omniscient. Does God hear the cry of millions of His people in all countries, in all languages, at the same time? Does He even know the hearts of the suppliants? Does He see the faith, does He know the sincerity, or perceive the hypocrisy in the hearts of those who pray? Then He is a limitless God Who knows all things!

Third, if God is able to answer prayer, then He has all power in Heaven and earth. If God answers prayer for rain, He must control the weather. If God answers prayer about crops, He must control the sun, the insects, the moisture, and even the germ of life in the seed itself. Does God answer prayer about health?

Then God must have in His hand every corpuscle in the blood, every nerve, every process of metabolism in the human body! Does God answer prayer about revival, or about the conversion of a sinner? The God must have influence on the very souls and consciences and wills of men! If God answered the prayer of Joshua that the sun might stand still in its relation to the earth for about the space of a day (Joshua 10:12,13), then God controls the whole infinite universe. He answers prayer; He has infinite power, limitless power.

Fourth, if God answers prayer and has such infinite wisdom, such almighty power, then He Himself must be the Creator. There could be none other as powerful, there could be none to dispute His right, there could be none other to limit His work or cross His will. Then the God Who answers prayer, in the very nature of the case, is the Creator of the heavens and earth.

Fifth, the God Who answers prayer, then, is a miracle-working God. To believe that God, is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, means that one has faith in all that is ever claimed for God. If there is a God Who hears and answers prayers, in the sense of the Bible, then of very necessity His work is miraculous, supernatural, not ordinary, but extraordinary; not human, but divine; not limited, but infinite in scope.

“Does God work miracles today?” someone asks. And the answer is, “Yes,” if He is the God Who rewards those that diligently seek him, if He is still the God Who hears and answers prayer, then His ordinary and natural way of working in answering prayer would be by miracles. Every soul saved is a supernatural act, not a natural one. Every time God intervenes and controls nature or changes a plan to make it rain when it otherwise would not have rained, and does it because someone prayed, then that is a miracle. Every time a person gets well in answer to prayer, when otherwise he would not have gotten well, it is a miracle, a divine intervention in natural affairs. As the late Dr. Blanchard, president of Wheaton College, said in one of his books, “If there be a God, He must act like a God.” A God works miracles. A God Who would cease to work miracles would cease to be a God, in the Bible sense, that is, a personal God Who personally hears and answers the prayer of faith.

Sixth, if God answers prayer, then He is a God of infinite love and mercy! God knows none of us deserve to have our prayers answered. We poor sinners deserve only condemnation, and forsaking and punishment of death! But God loves sinners. His mercy is boundless. “...*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*” (Romans 5:20). If there is a God Who rewards those who diligently seek Him, that is, Who hears and answers the cry, the faith, the need of human beings, then God would give His Own Son to atone for sin and make it so He could righteously forgive sin and save sinners and keep them out of Hell, and make them into His own image and have them forever with Him in Heaven! Ah, when one really believes that God is a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, he has the secret to the very heart of God, and he can dimly see and outline all the graces and powers and majesty of the infinite God! A God Who hears and answers prayer is a true God. Any god who does not hear and answer prayer has not the power and the grace to create or support the world, or to love and seek and save lost sinners.

With these things in mind we can understand how God longs to be known by the title, “O thou that hearest prayer!” and how no one can please Him, no one can come to Him without believing that He is a God Who hears and answers the prayer of those who diligently seek Him!

#### **IV. Nature Itself Points to a Benevolent God Who Hears and Answers Prayer**

All nature speaks of a benevolent God, a God Who made man, Who loves him, and Who wants to provide all his needs. In fact, the same Psalm 65 which gives God the title, “*O thou that hearest prayer,*” goes straight from the theme of answered prayer to the theme of the bounty of God in nature, and it ends on that theme. Verses 9 to 13 says: “*Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They*

*drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.”*

The Psalmist speaking by the Holy Spirit seems to say that the God Who loves to answer man’s prayers has anticipated so any of his needs; has watered the ground that was dry and needed water, and has given to the hungry flocks the pasture and has covered the valleys with corn for man and beast, and these pastures and valleys shout and sing of the benevolent, loving mercy of God! The theme of Psalm 104 is God’s care for the cattle of the earth and for mankind through nature.

*“He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart.”* (Psalm 104:14, 15).

*“The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies”* (verse 18).

*“The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God”* (verse 21).

And then of the beasts even of the sea, we are told that: *“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good”* (verses 27, 28).

The God that made the animals makes food for them. The God Who made the plants causes the rain to fall for them and the sun to shine upon them. The God Who made the honeybees, made the flowers for them. For every living thing there is a place, a food, a protection, a provision, from the hand of an infinite God. And do not these things show that where there is a want, a need, a desire, God wants to fill it? Where there is a hunger, God wants to satisfy it.

This benevolent, loving, all-providing care of man begins as soon as a child is born, yea, long before it. Before the baby is born, God has prepared the mother’s breasts, and then a few hours after childbirth, the mother’s breasts begin to prepare milk; and the instinctive seeking of the little puckering lips for food is satisfied in the mother’s arms and over the mother’s heart! And God has provided in nature every kind of food to balance the diet and supply the need of man. Recently scientists were amazed to find there is a thiamine (or a vitamin) to prevent and cure beri-beri, one for scurvy, and one for rickets. God has prepared insulin for the need of the diabetic person. There is no need of the human body but that God has prepared it, and it only awaits the finding and applying of mankind!

Does mankind feel the sex instinct surging within him, the need and cry for a mate? So God has given women to complete man, and marriage as the fulfillment of man’s desire and need.

As soon as there begins some shortage of wood on the earth, man discovers that the bowels of the earth are full of coal which God has laid by for man’s use! By the time man has invented an internal combustion engine (the ordinary gas or gasoline engine), it is discovered that infinite lakes of petroleum have been stored up for man’s need! When man needed iron for tools, he discovered it was already provided, and then learned that God had provided alloys to make the hardest steel. And now that man longs for a lighter metal, rust-proof, it is discovered that there are giant stores of bauxite, the ore from which aluminum is made. The earth proves that God loves man, longs to bless him, longs to provide every need of mankind!

The whole earth shows it was deliberately planned by infinite wisdom, just to fit man’s needs. Suppose that the diameter of the earth had been 10,000 miles instead of 8,000 miles. Then the mass would have been almost doubled and gravity would have been about twice as great. A man who now weighs 170 pounds, of exactly the same size, and with the same muscles, would weigh 332 pounds! His muscles would not be strong enough to lift himself, his stomach would not be big enough to hold enough food to provide strength. Life would be intolerable or impossible. Or if the diameter of the earth were only 6,000 miles instead of 8,000, only 2,000 miles less, the gravity would be so much less that air would be much lighter and rarer. Instead of weighing 14.7 pounds to the square inch, the air pressure (and density) would be only 6.2 pounds.

But men cannot live without an oxygen tank where the air is less than 7.3 pounds to the square inch. Life would be impossible on this earth if it had not been tailored exactly to fit man's needs. God made it just the right size. Or if three-fourths of the earth's surface were covered by land instead of by water as now, then the earth would be simply a giant desert, with fringes of vegetation around the seas; and the variation of temperatures would be so great it would be impossible for mankind to live! Or if God had made the surrounding atmosphere with another element instead of oxygen, neither animal nor man could breathe. And if the water were not made of oxygen and hydrogen, there would be no living thing in seas and lakes and rivers. Do not these things suggest that God is a God Who in His very nature longs to provide what mankind needs?

Nature does not tell of Calvary and redemption, but it does point to an infinitely merciful, benevolent, loving God, Whose heart is open to mankind. He Who clothes the lilies of the field and notes the fall of the sparrow is the God Who hears and answers prayers of those who diligently seek Him and who trust Him. James 1:17 says, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."* God never varies, in any age, nor with any people, from His constant watchfulness to give what men need, what their hearts cry out for, what will make them happy and good. And does not that mean that by very nature God is predisposed to hear the cry of men and is lovingly concerned about whatever want or desire or need is felt by any contrite heart who seeks God's face!

Then if God be a God Who hears and answers prayer, let us pray! Prayer, then, becomes the most compelling Christian duty. God never commanded us to sing without ceasing, nor preach without ceasing, nor give without ceasing, nor work without ceasing; but He did command, *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The apostles after Pentecost demanded the selection of deacons that the apostles might give themselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:4). Not first the preaching, but first that they should give themselves to prayer!

When Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem and dedicated it to God, God did not say He would be listening for the songs of the antiphonal choirs, nor watching for the smoke of the altars where many sacrifices should be offered; but God said, *"Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place"* (2 Chronicles 7:15). Then in Isaiah 56:7 God said, *"... for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."* And Jesus quoted this Scripture as recorded in Matthew and in Mark and in Luke. The temple was primarily a house of prayer for all people. Back of all the preaching, the praying, the prophesying, the singing; back of all religious observances, God intended there should be a living faith in a God Who hears and answers prayer, and thus that men should call upon the name of the Lord! There is no pleasing of God without prayer! God is the God Who hears prayer. *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, AND THAT HE IS A REWARDER OF THEM THAT DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM"* (Hebrews 11:6).

O, Thou God Who hearest prayer, put it in our hearts to believe Thee, and to pray!



## CHAPTER II

### WHY PRAY?

- I. Because God insistently commands it in the Bible.*
- II. Because prayer is God's appointed way for Christians to get things.*
- III. Because prayer is God's way for Christians to have fullness of joy.*
- IV. Because prayer is the way out of all trouble, the cure for all worry and anxious care.*
- V. Because answered prayer is the only unanswerable argument against skepticism, unbelief, modernism and infidelity.*
- VI. Because prayer is the only way to have the power of the Holy Spirit for God's work.*
- VII. Because, "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

There are most compelling reasons why everybody ought to pray; why prayer ought to be the most regular and continual thing in our lives. Jesus said that men ought to pray. Here we will give some of the best reasons why people should pray.

#### **I. Because God Insistently Commands It in the Bible**

The first good reason for doing anything is that God has commanded it. And God has commanded us to pray. Throughout the Bible are Scriptures with the imperative command to pray.

1. *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint"* (Luke 18:1).

This is a statement, not that *some* men should pray, but that men, mankind, everywhere and in all times, should pray. It is an impelling duty which Jesus taught.

2. *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Here is a command without any modification by the context. As long as men in any country, in any language, read the Bible, they will read this plain command to pray without ceasing. Not only ought we to pray; we ought to pray all the time! Prayer should be the continual turning of our hearts to God about everything we need and everything we want until the subconscious mind is continually in touch with God. As a mother in her sleep listens for the cry of her baby, so a Christian's heart can be attuned to God while he is absorbed in daily duties or even when he sleeps!

3. *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God"* (Philippians 4:6).

A Christian is to pray literally about everything.

4. *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men"* (1 Timothy 2:1).

We are commanded to pray not only at all times, but for all men.

5. *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me..."* (Ephesians 6:18, 19a).

This passage closes the familiar description of the armor of a Christian, and the final word about how to be strong in the Lord is this command that we are to pray *always* with *all* prayer, with *all* perseverance for *all* the saints. Notice how many *alls* there are. And as the Christians at Ephesus were commanded to pray for

Paul, so it is implied that we also should pray for all the ministers particularly, as well as “all saints.”

6. *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation...”* (Matthew 26:41).

This command of our Saviour to the apostles is repeated in Mark 14:38; Luke 22:40; and in Luke 22:46. But since we are to “...*observe all things whatsoever...*” Jesus commanded the apostles (Matthew 28:20), then, we, too, are to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation.

Besides the above general commands for Christians to pray all the time, for all people and about everything, there are many other commands to pray for specific matters. Many times Paul, in his epistles, by divine inspiration, commanded the readers to pray for him (Colossians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18 as well as Ephesians 6:19).

Prayer, then, is a duty expressly commanded from every Christian, all the time, and about everybody and everything. Not to pray is a sin, the sin of disobedience to the plain and often repeated command of God! Lack of prayer is a sin. Doubtless all of our sins and mistakes and failures are prayer-sins, prayer-mistakes, and prayer-failures. Samuel said to the people of Israel, “... *God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you...*” (1 Samuel 12:23). Christians ought to pray because it is so strictly commanded in the Bible.

## **II. Because Prayer Is God’s Appointed Way for Christians to Get Things**

The outside, unbelieving world expects to get things by work or by planning or by scheming or by accident; but God’s children are taught that they are to get things by asking and that the reason we do not have is because we do not ask.

James 4:2 says, *“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not”*

*“...ye have not, because ye ask not!”* Fighting, warring, struggling and scheming—these are not God’s ways for a Christian to get things. We are to get by asking. And the reason we have not is not “because ye work not,” nor is it “because ye plan not.” No, it is because *“...ye ask not...”* Asking is God’s way for a Christian to get things!

You may say that the way for a farmer to grow a crop is to break his ground, sow his seed, plow out the weeds; in other words that the way to have a crop would be by diligent and intelligent work. But I have seen farmers who worked hard and intelligently, and then there was no rain and they made no crop! Or storms beat down the wheat before it could be harvested, or boll weevils and pink boll worms ruined the cotton. So human wisdom and human toil cannot be relied upon. No, a Christian is not to depend upon his own toil nor his own planning but to ask of God. To the farmer God’s Word says, *“...ye have not, because ye ask not.”* Asking, or in other words, prayer, is God’s way for a farmer to succeed.

An unemployed man may think the way to get a job is to make the rounds of all the employment agencies, to take special training for his job, or to get recommendations by men in high places in business. But I have known men to tramp the weary rounds day after day, making applications only to hear always the same story, “We have all the men we can use,” or “Too old,” or “We only hire men with special training which you do not have,” or “We will put you on our waiting list.” I say that human efforts to get a job often fail. But, thank God, a Christian has other resources; he can pray and get a job from God! Let us add one explanatory word to the Scripture without changing its meaning at all, and God says, “Ye have not a job because ye ask not for one.” Asking is the way to get a job.

The Saviour taught us to pray, *“Give us this day our daily bread”* (Matthew 6:11). The way to get daily bread is to ask God for it.

This does not mean that God wants a Christian to loaf. In fact, the right kind of praying will make a

Christian willing to work or to do anything God leads him to do. But it certainly does mean that we should not depend upon our work, but rather, we should depend upon God to give us the results in answer to prayer.

We must remember that God can use means. God can use medicines and doctors to heal the sick. Luke was “...*the beloved physician...*” (Colossians 4:14). Timothy was commanded to “...*use a little wine (grape juice) for thy stomach’s sake...*” (1 Timothy 5:23). King Hezekiah was healed when Isaiah commanded to place a lump of figs on the boil, which was about to kill him (Isaiah 38:21). God can use means and He may answer our prayers by using human means. He may use an employment agency to give us a job by our diligent application and seeking. He may use our hard work on the farm to make a crop. Certain it is that when God takes charge, He can bring the results out of our poor labors. But remember this, that God does *not always* use human means. Sometimes through ways utterly unexpected and without human instrumentalities, God chooses to work His will in answer to prayer. God can heal the sick without medicine and sometimes He delights to do it that way in answer to prayer. God can give jobs where you do not have an application in. God can send money that you didn’t earn. How well I know, thank God, from blessed experiences that this is true! But the point is that whether God uses well known means or does it by ways utterly unexpected, or even by ways impossible with men, still it is God Who gives what we need. And the way for us to get what we need is to ask for it. Praying is God’s appointed way for a Christian to have what he needs, and what he wants. Every other way may fail. “*Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not*”

Suppose there are two men in conversation, one a lost man, the other a saved man, a child of God. The unconverted man says, “These are surely hard times. I can’t get a job. I have walked until my feet are sore. I have answered all the advertisements. I just don’t get the breaks.” And suppose the Christian man answered, “Yes, these surely are hard times. I have walked until my feet are sore, too. I have answered all the advertisements in the papers, and yet I can’t find a job. You are right. A poor man just doesn’t have a chance these days.” God forbid! Has the Christian no more resources than a lost man? What good is it to be a Christian if you have no one to answer your prayers, no one to care for your needs, no one to give you what you want! There is no joy, there is no testimony, there is no victory in that kind of Christianity. Thank God a Christian can confidently pray and say, “My Father, You know I need a job. Everything in the world is in Your hands. So I ask You to give me, Your child, a job so I can have daily bread, so I can care for my family, so I can give to others and so others may know that God takes care of His children.” And for millions God has answered such prayers.

The Christian can sing,

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

The God who notes the fall of every sparrow, Who has clothed the lilies of the field in raiment more gorgeous than Solomon’s, Who counts all the hairs in the heads of His beloved children for whom Christ died, that heavenly Father has appointed that His children get things by prayer. “...*Ye have not, because ye ask not.*”

Praying is God’s appointed way for Christians to get things.

### **III. Because Prayer Is God’s Way for Christians to Have Fullness of Joy**

Christians ought to be happy. Christians ought to have their wants satisfied. Christians ought not to live defeated, unhappy lives, tormented by needs which cannot be met. So God has appointed that Christians can have fullness of joy all the time by having their prayers answered.

In John 16:24 Jesus said, *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL.”*

Imagine, if you will, a child whose father loves him so much that he can come day by day and ask his father for anything he needs. If the child in his ignorance asks for something that would cause him trouble and sorrow, the father very carefully explains and teaches the child what would be best, and then teaches him to ask for something far better than that for which he had intended to ask. Thus the child has every desire granted and lives in a blessed state of happiness and joy because his father delights to give him the desires of his heart.

Or imagine a young wife, married to a rich husband who so loves her and delights in her that he gives her everything for which she expresses a desire. Her life is filled with happiness because her husband loves her so much and gives her all the things for which her heart craves.

And that is what God wants to do for His children, only He can do infinitely more. The father cannot change the heart attitude of his child, and so a rich father often finds his son grows indolent and unprincipled, and the father’s wealth proves a curse to his son. But God can teach His children and lead them by the Holy Spirit to pray for the things that will bring fullness of joy and no curse. *“The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it”* (Proverbs 10:22).

And a young husband has many times spent thousands of dollars trying to make his wife happy; but he could not give health, nor could he not give the baby that she desired, nor he could not give contentment of mind in the midst of the giddy round of social affairs. So no father and no husband can give fullness of joy. But thank God, that is just exactly what our heavenly Father says He wants to do for us. He wants to give us all we ask, and even help us ask aright. We are to ask and receive so our joy will be full.

Prayer, then, is the secret of constant joy, the secret really of FULLNESS OF JOY. A rich, full life for a Christian depends on how much and how he prays. If you get on such praying ground that you can get things from God, get all the desires of your heart, get all that you need, then day by day you can live a victorious, happy life. The way to be happy and full of joy is to pray. Prayer is the secret of fullness of joy, and for that reason Christians should pray.

#### **IV. Because Prayer Is the Way out of All Trouble, the Cure for All Worry and Anxious Care**

If prayer is the way to get what you want and to be full of joy, as we showed above, then prayer is also the way to get rid of what you do not want and get out of trouble and away from worry and care.

Philippians 4:6,7 says, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing 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.”*

*“Be careful for nothing,...”* says the Scriptures! Christians should not be full of care or anxious over anything. And the remedy is, *“...In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* A Christian is to *pray through about everything!* and thus day by day he continually has his cares and worries dissolved away and his heart is left in perfect peace all the time! For God promises to those who bring everything to Him in prayer with supplication and thanksgiving that *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

Worry is a blighting sin. It is the very opposite of trust. Yet how many Christians are guilty of this sin! They lose their joy, they dwell in uncertainty, their lives are harried by burdens they ought never to carry and by fears they ought never to entertain. And the secret of ending worry and anxious care is to take things to God every day and pray through with prayer and supplication and thanksgiving.

1 Peter 5:7 has another way of stating the same command, *“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”*

And Psalm 55:22 says, *“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:...”*

Every Christian ought to be marked by a calm, unworried frame of mind, a deep settled peace of heart that the worldling can never attain and that the world itself can never give. Here is one of the marks of a really successful, happy Christian, whose cares are all laid on the Lord Jesus. Every Christian ought to be able to boast in the Lord as did David in Psalm 34:6, *“This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles!”*

Have you been delivered from all your troubles Are you continually, day by day being delivered every time you need deliverance from trouble and worry and care? You CAN have this deliverance, this peace, this quietness, this freedom from worry. And the way to have it is to *pray*, to *pray about everything*, to *pray through* until you get the peace which God has promised, and then, free of all anxious care, daily end in thanksgiving!

Dr. Walter Lewis Wilson, the beloved physician-preacher, said that years ago he had a motto painted and hung by his desk which said, “Why pray when you can worry?” That expresses the attitude of heart of the average Christian. He worries instead of prays. But prayer is the way to end worries. Prayer is the way to constant peace under any circumstances, anywhere.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean that a Christian will never have trouble. But in the trouble he can have the sweetest peace all the time. I do not mean that a Christian will never be sick. But in the sickness he can have the ever-present nearness, consciously, of the Holy Spirit. I do not mean that a Christian will never have any problems. But I mean that he can daily take those problems to God and have them settled, without any fret, without any of the unrest that comes from unbelief. A Christian can take his burdens to the Lord and leave them there day by day and have perfect peace. And the only way he can do this is by prayer, regular prayer with supplication and thanksgiving about every problem.

Are your burdened? Then pray your way out!

“What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry  
*Everything* to God in prayer!

“O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we don not carry,  
*Everything* to God in prayer!”

A Christian can make such a habit of praying about every need, every burden, every fret, every care, every problem until he can obey the command of the Saviour to *“...take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on...”* (Matthew 6:25), and again, *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”* (Matthew 6:31). The heathen people seek after these things, are worried and fretted by these problems, but the Christian has a beloved heavenly Father to whom he can take all his burdens and can seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that all these things shall be added unto him, as promised in Matthew 6:33. And thus by daily praying through problems as they come, one can learn to *“take therefore no thought for the morrow:...”* (Matthew 6:34), but have perfect peace.

Prayer is the way out of trouble, the way to do away with worries and anxious care. Therefore let us pray!

## V. Because Answered Prayer Is the Only Unanswerable Argument Against Skepticism, Unbelief, Modernism and Infidelity

*“Without faith it is impossible to please him:...”* says Hebrews 11:6. And what is faith? *“...For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* Thus Hebrews 11:6 tells us that no one can come to God unless he believes that God answers prayer. And what is the answer, then, to infidelity and atheism and modernism? How can we convince those who do not believe in our God? Why, by having our prayers answered, by having such unmistakable answers to prayer as to prove that there is a prayer-answering and prayer-hearing God! The way to answer infidelity is to let God prove Himself by answering prayer.

Argument is sometimes necessary. The Bible proves itself the Word of God. All nature declares there is a God. *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork,”* says Psalm 19:1. There are many, many evidences that there is a God Who answers prayer. But the only absolutely unanswerable evidence is answered prayer itself. I can know there is a God Who answers prayer if I see the answers to prayer so unmistakably that I cannot doubt.

Thus at mount Carmel, Elijah gathered the people of Israel together to prove to them that the Lord was the true God, and that the idol Baal was no god who could see or hear or help. When the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal cried in vain to their god and he could not answer by fire from Heaven, Elijah built an altar, laid thereon the wood and the bullock, put no fire under, and poured over it twelve barrels of water; and then he prayed that God would send fire from Heaven in the sight of all the people to burn up the sacrifice and prove that He was God. Elijah’s prayer was this: *“...LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.”* (1Kings 18:36,37).

Analyze that prayer carefully and you will see it is a plea that God will prove Himself God by answering prayer. And when the answer should come it would not only prove God is the true God, but it would prove that Elijah was His servant, and that Elijah’s message was from God.

And so the answer came. *“Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench”* (1 Kings 18:38). And what was the result? What did this answer of prayer do to the infidelity of the people? Verse 39 tells us, *“...When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.”*

A visible, definite answer of prayer, in a moment of time, did away with all infidelity of the people and the whole nation fell on their faces, saying, *“...The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God!”* We ought to pray, then, because God’s answer to prayer is proof that can put to rout all the modernism and unbelief.

And until God’s people can have definite, remarkable, provable answers to prayer, then we had as well expect that our young people will grow up doubting that there is a miracle-working, prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. The remedy for unbelief is that God’s people shall pray and have their prayers answered.

All your argument against modernism, against evolution, against atheism, will fall on deaf ears if along with your argument you cannot give some definite proof in answered prayer. If Christianity is the true religion, and if God be a miracle-working, prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God, then the unsaved world has a right to demand that we prove it by having our prayers answered.

How doubts would flee away if we should begin to pray boldly and definitely and expect God to give

concrete and specific answers to our prayers day by day!

Notice the power of the argument of Gideon in Judges 6:12, 13. *“And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”*

With good reason Gideon answered back to the angel of the Lord and said, *“...If the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?...”* Gideon felt with reason that if God was with him, he must have the evidence that God would show Himself and prove Himself by answered, definite, concrete manifestations of His power, in answer to prayer. And God did not scorn the plea of Gideon. God did not say, as so many of our beloved but powerless Bible teachers today say, that miracles are all for the past and not for the present. Rather, God was delighted that Gideon demanded evidence of His power. God showed the miracle of fire to consume the offering Gideon brought, He made the fleece first dry, and then wet, answering Gideon’s prayer. God is perfectly willing to prove that He is the prayer-hearing and the prayer-answering God. And that is the only real remedy for unbelief and atheism.

In Egypt, after God had done for Moses what they could not do with all their enchantment, *“Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God:...”* (Exodus 8:19).

A definite answer to prayer convinced these godless, heathen magicians.

God answered Daniel’s prayer and revealed to him the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, then Nebuchadnezzar was convinced and fell on his face and he said, *“...Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret”* (Daniel 2:47).

Later God revealed to Daniel the other dream of Nebuchadnezzar (chapter 4), foretelling how the king would live as a beast for seven years. And when the king recovered from his insanity and returned to his throne and glory, the Scriptures indicate that he was truly converted to God (Daniel 4:34-37). Answered prayer is a cure for unbelief.

Acts 13:6-12 is the story of how Sergius Paulus, a deputy of the island of Cyprus, was wonderfully converted when he saw the answer to Paul’s prayer (the prayer is implied but not given), for the blinding of Elymas the sorcerer. Verse 12 says, *“Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.”*

We had as well face this question squarely. When the churches of our land again see the startling conversions of drunkards and harlots, which lives transformed, then sinners will come to church and will listen respectfully to the Word of God. And when God’s people pray for and get the healing of the sick, get rain when they need it, get jobs, get daily bread, get revivals, all in answer to prayer, then modernism and atheism will lose their hold on the minds of the mass of people in America and even the unconverted will believe that there is a miracle-working God Who answers prayer.

We ought to pray and have our prayers answered as the definite, powerful antidote for unbelief, the only unanswerable argument against atheism and infidelity.

It is not always God’s will to heal the sick. It was not always His will to heal the sick in Bible times. But He healed the sick often enough to prove that He was the prayer-hearing God. God did not save every sinner under the ministry of Paul, and He will not save every sinner under the ministry of anybody else. But God was willing to save the most outrageous sinners, and in Bible times He did save them by His wonderful stretched-out hand in such fashion as to convince the gainsayers. And God will do the same today and prove His power the same today if we trust Him.

Even in Bible times, miracles were never a common thing, a plaything of the careless and a reward of the curious. No, no! Miracles in physical matters were always rare, and were given only as they could honor the Lord. But God gave faith for them often enough to prove that He is the miracle-working, prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. And He will do the same today for those who diligently seek Him, and give Him a chance to prove Himself.

But this does not apply only to physical miracles. God proves Himself abundantly by saving the souls of those for whom we pray, by giving revivals, by providing for daily needs, by giving peace, by giving wisdom to meet daily problems, by giving fullness of joy and the power of the Holy Spirit. We should pray, then, because answered prayer proves there is a prayer-hearing God. It is the positive antidote for doubts and skepticism, unbelief or even atheism.

## **VI. Because Prayer Is the Only Way to Have the Power of the Holy Spirit for God's Work**

As D. L. Moody well said, it is foolish and wicked to try to do God's work without God's power. But there is no way for Christians to have God's power except by prayer. In Luke 11:13 is this plain promise, *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"*

Here the Lord is not speaking about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes in the human body to dwell at conversion. Ever since Jesus Christ rose from the dead, breathed on the disciples and said, *"...Receive ye the Holy Ghost"* (John 20:22), Christians have the Holy Spirit abiding in them. Every saved person has the Holy Spirit living in his body as a temple (see Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 6:16). But Jesus in Luke 11:13 meant that God will give the Holy Spirit in soul-winning power to those that ask Him. In the same passage He gives a parable of a man who goes to a friend at midnight, saying unto him, *"...Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him."* And Jesus said that this man, longing to have bread for a friend, got it only by importunity. And so Jesus teaches us here, a Christian who longs to have the bread of life for an unsaved friend, may get it by begging God for it. And then Jesus explains the point of the whole parable by this blessed promise, *"...How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"* We may have bread for sinners if we beg God for it, *and in no other way!* "Importunity," Jesus said, was the way a man got bread from a friend for another poor hungry friend (Luke 11:8).

It has always been true that revivals came in answer to prayer. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 God promised a blessed revival *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways;..."* The prophet Habakkuk prayed, *"...O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,..."* (Habakkuk 2:1). He knew that revivals come in answer to prayer. But what is a revival? Is it not simply that God puts His power upon His ministers and upon His people, and the Holy Spirit of God does His work in blessing the saints and in convicting and saving sinners? So the secret of power on preaching is in prayer. The secret of power on personal soul-winning effort is in prayer. The secret of revival is prayer.

If any Christian longs to have personal, definite endowment of power, the power of the Holy Spirit, then this is the way to have it. Let him seek God's face in prayer with whatever confession and self-judgment and heart-surrender is necessary as he waits on God, until the Spirit of God can fill him and use him.

I want you to notice these Bible instances of where people prayed for the power of the Holy Spirit.

1. Before Pentecost the disciples prayed, *"And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all CON-*  
*TINUED WITH ONE ACCORD IN PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION, with the women, and Mary the mother*



of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:13, 14).

Following this season of prayer and supplication the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples at Pentecost and three thousand people were saved and baptized.

2. After Pentecost the disciples needed again to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so they prayed. Acts 4:31 says: “*And 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.*”

Please compare Acts 2:4 and Acts 4:31. You will find that these nine words are in both verses exactly alike, “*And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,...*” They prayed before Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them. They prayed after Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them. Prayer was necessary after Pentecost the same as before, and brought the same results after Pentecost as before.

3. At Samaria Philip preached and there were many truly converted. But the power of the Holy Spirit for witnessing and soul-winning did not come upon the converts until after prayer. Acts 8:14, 15, 16 says: “*Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, PRAYED FOR THEM, THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY GHOST: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)*”

Be sure to note the distinction the Scripture makes between the Holy Spirit being *in* a Christian, and the Holy Spirit being *on* a Christian. *In* refers to the indwelling which these disciples already had, as every Christian has had since the day Jesus rose from the dead. *On* means the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon a Christian for service.

Note that these people received the Holy Spirit, His *power for service, after prayer!*

4. Paul, the apostle, was filled with the Holy Spirit three days after his conversion, and that in answer to prayer. Acts 9:3-6 tells how Saul was converted on the road to Damascus. He called Jesus “*Lord*” and said, “*...What wilt thou have me to do?*” But yet Paul went three days without eating or drinking (vs. 9), in constant prayer (vs. 11). What was Paul praying for? The answer is given in Acts 9:17 which says, “*And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, AND BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY GHOST.*”

Paul was filled with the Holy Ghost *after three days of fasting and prayer*. Then he “*straightway*” began his preaching ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Paul and Barnabas were especially filled with the Holy Spirit for their missionary journey in answer to prayer. In Acts 13:1-4 we have the story of a group who met in fasting and prayer until the Holy Spirit said, “*... Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*” Then we are told, “*AND WHEN THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, BEING SENT FORTH BY THE HOLY GHOST, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.*” And no wonder there were many marvels of souls saved by the working of the Holy Spirit through these people who had been filled with the Holy Spirit after fasting and prayer and waiting on God.

The way for a Christian to have the power of God for His service is to pray.

6. It was Paul’s constant prayer for other Christians that they should be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:15-19 Paul mentions his prayer for the Ephesian saints, that God “*...May give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:...And what is the exceeding greatness of his power...*”

That is a prayer that they might be filled with the Spirit and have His power. Again in Ephesians 3:14-19 the same object of prayer is mentioned again. “*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord*

*Jesus Christ,...he would grant you,...to be strengthened with might by his Spirit...that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."*

Paul was praying for these Christians to be filled with the Holy Spirit. His power comes in answer to prayer.

Prayer, unceasing supplication to God, was the secret of the power that came at Pentecost and resulted in the saving of so many souls. Prayer, heart-broken, sin-confessing, penitent prayer, was the secret of power every time the saints of God had seasons of revivals and every time individuals were filled with the Spirit of God for His blessed service. We ought to pray, then, because prayer is God's appointed way for us to have the power of the Holy Spirit to do His work.

## **VII. Because "Whosoever Shall Call Upon the Name of the Lord Shall Be Saved"**

In Romans 10:13 we are told that, *"...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* A lost sinner, then, may pray to God for salvation. So, in Luke 18, we see the poor publican beating upon his breast and crying out, *"... God be merciful to me a sinner,"* and see him going down to his house justified, saved that very day. Thus we read the sweet story of the dying thief who turned to Jesus, on the cross beside him, and said, *"... Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."* And we hear the sweet promise of the Saviour beside him, *"...To day shalt thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:39-43). So lost sinners have a right to pray, and everyone who genuinely calls on the Lord for salvation will be saved.

Of course, it is made clear in the Bible many, many times that heart faith is the deciding factor in salvation. *"...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,..."* said Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31). Jesus said to Nicodemus *"...whosoever believeth in him (God's only begotten Son) should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Again Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life"* (John 6:47). One who puts his trust in Christ is saved, instantly, has everlasting life. So it is clear that no one has to go through a formal prayer in order to be saved. There need not be words aloud; there need not be any of what people generally call prayer. Faith is a turning in the heart to depend on Christ. And God hears the faintest cry of the heart without a whisper of breath, without a moving of the lips.

But often the trembling steps of faith are taken with more ease when one prays, consciously putting into words his cry for mercy, his dependence. How many sinners have been able to trust the Lord with more assurance when they put into words the plea of the publican's prayer, *"...God be merciful to me a sinner."* So, dear friend, if you who read this are unsaved, feel perfectly free to call on God for mercy and forgiveness, and be assured that God will hear, that He does hear, the He has heard already, when you call on Him for forgiveness and salvation. Anyone who has faith enough to ask God sincerely for mercy and forgiveness has faith enough to be sure God has heard him, for Jesus said, *"...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). And any sinner may claim the sweet promise the *"...whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

And now in conclusion let us remember these seven reasons why we ought to pray. 1. It is commanded plainly of God that Christians ought to pray always about everything and about everybody, with all prayer and supplication. 2. Prayer is God's appointed way for Christians to get things. 3. Prayer is the way for Christians to have fullness of joy. 4. Prayer is God's cure for worry, the way out of trouble and anxious care. 5. Answered prayer is God's way of stopping the mouths of unbelievers, God's unanswerable argument against infidelity. 6. Prayer is the way to have the power of the Holy Spirit for God's blessed work. 7. *"... Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* Therefore, beloved brethren, let us pray! Oh, how many and how weighty are the reasons that Christians should pray!

## CHAPTER III

### PRAYER IS ASKING

*“Ask, and it shall be given you;...”* – Matthew 7:7

*“For every one that asketh receiveth;...”* – Matthew 7:8

*“...Ask, and ye shall receive,...”* – John 16:24

*“...Ye have not, because ye ask not.”* – James 4:2

*“...How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”* – Matthew 7:11

*“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”* – Matthew 21:22

*“...How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”* – Luke 11:13

*“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* – John 14:14

People often “pray.” They “pray” and “pray,” but do not get anything; indeed, they do not expect to get anything. That is not the reason they “pray.” But though they call it praying, really it is not real prayer that does not come with a definite petition, asking something from God.

Notice again the Scriptures at the head of this chapter. Matthew 7:7, 8 says: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”*

Prayer, then, is asking something definite from God. Or, in other words, it is seeking and knocking. One who prays is expecting to receive. One who knocks is expecting something opened. One who seeks is expecting to find something. That is what the Bible says prayer is, really: asking, seeking, knocking. Real prayer is *asking for something*.

In James 4:2, 3, the Scripture says: *“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war; yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”*

Christians have not because they *ask* not, and they have not because they ask *amiss*. That Scripture says that it is not fighting, or warring, or desiring, or worrying; but it is asking that gets things from God. PRAYING IS ASKING.

*Ask* sometimes means to *ask, to inquire*, as in asking a question. However, in these verses it means *to ask, to crave, to desire, to call for*, always meaning *asking for something*.

Modernists do not believe that prayer really changes things. So the modernist does not accept the plain Bible teaching that prayer is asking and the answer is receiving, that prayer is seeking and the answer is finding, that prayer is knocking and the answer is that God opens the door—the Bible doctrine that God is primarily *“...thou that hearest prayer;...”* (Psalm 65:2) that He is *“...a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). And since they do not believe the Bible doctrine that prayer is asking and that God really answers, that prayer really changes things; therefore modernists and unbelievers teach that prayer is largely a meditation and communion. At most the modernist believes only that prayer can do some good inside us, that it is a spiritual enjoyment. And so modernists discourage concrete requests and call such prayer selfish.

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, noted modernist, in his book, *The Meaning of Prayer*, says, “There are some who still think of prayer in terms of childish supplications to a divine Santa Clause” (page 22). And again he says, “Many foolish prayers are offered by the well-meaning but unintelligent with the excuse that

they are childlike in their simple trust...To pray to God as though He were Santa Clause is childish.” “Childishness in prayer is chiefly evidenced in an overweening desire to beg *things* from God,...” (page 23). Then this unbeliever, who denies that Jesus was the Virgin-born One paying for our sins, denies the veracity of the Bible, prates about prayer as ‘friendship with God.’ To the modernist prayer is nice, but does not get things from God. Prayer does not change things.

And many Bible believers fall into this snare, this doctrine that prayer is merely spiritual fellowship, that we do not really get things from God but that after we pray we feel stronger to get them for ourselves, or are perhaps resigned to do without them! How far is this from the Bible teaching on prayer!

Prayer is not meditation, not adoration, not even communion in the ordinary sense. Prayer is *asking God for something*.

### **I. Prayer Is Not Praise, Adoration, Meditation, Humiliation nor Confession, but Asking**

Again let me press upon your heart and mind that prayer is asking, and not anything else.

Prayer is not praise, though praise is blessed. “*Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:...*” says the Lord (Psalm 50:23). “*Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD,*” says Psalm 150:6. David said, “*Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*” (Psalm 103:1). Praise is blessed. It is the duty of every grateful heart. But we must remember that praise is not prayer. And prayer is not praise. Prayer is asking.

Prayer is not adoration. Adoration is good. We ought to adore Him whom the angels adore. But adoration is not prayer, and prayer is not adoration. Prayer is always *asking*. It is not anything else but asking.

Prayer is not meditation. It is proper to meditate day and night in the Word of God (Psalm 1:2). Quiet devotion and meditating upon the Word of God and upon the Lord’s blessings are fine. Every Christian ought to take such times for meditation. But remember that that is not prayer. The Bible never calls it prayer; and we sin against God, and misuse the Scriptures, and pervert the truth, when we call such things prayer. Prayer is not meditation. Prayer is asking.

Humiliation is not prayer, though it is certainly proper for Christians to humble themselves before God. James 4:10 says: “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*” And we are told that “*...he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*” (Luke 18:14). But humiliation is not prayer. The Bible expressly separates them. 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, “*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray,...*” So humiliation is one thing and prayer is another thing. Humiliation is preparation for prayer, perhaps and humiliation is always proper in a Christian. But humility and humiliation are not prayer. Prayer is asking.

Even confession is not strictly prayer. It is proper for Christians to confess their sins, and the Bible many times commands it, but confession is one thing and prayer is another. In Daniel 9:4, Daniel tells us, “*And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said,...*” Daniel both prayed and made confession. If you will read through that long passage which tells us of Daniel’s prayer and confession together, you will find that much of it is confession but that after confession came the broken-hearted requests of Daniel 9:16-19 that God would turn His anger and fury away from Jerusalem and forgive the sins of His people, and restore the nation and the holy city Jerusalem and the temple. Confession is proper, but confession, strictly speaking, is not prayer. Prayer is ASKING. And asking is prayer, and nothing else is really prayer.

In Philippians 4:6 the Lord says: “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*” Note that prayer is one thing and that thanksgiving is a separate thing. With this as a key thought, go through the Scripture and you will find that

often the Scripture speaks of prayer and supplication, prayer and confession, prayer and thanksgiving. Thus the heart of prayer is to ask something from God. Everything else is an incidental which is not essentially a part of prayer. Asking is prayer, and prayer is asking.

So when God invites us to pray He invites us to ask things of Him.

## II. Bible Prayers Were Asking

Consider the Lord's Prayer, the model prayer, which Jesus gave us in Matthew 6:9-13. The Saviour commanded us: "*After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven,...*" And then follows a series of requests as follows:

1. "*...Hallowed be thy name,*" that is: may I and others speak reverently of Thee and not take Thy name in vain. It is a request.

2. "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.*" This is a prayer for the second coming, a request that Jesus may come quickly, and that He soon will reign on the earth and put down all of His enemies. It is the prayer that John the beloved prayed by divine inspiration in Revelation 22:20: "*... Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*"

3. "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

4. "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.*"

5. "*And lead us not into temptation,...*"

6. "*...but deliver us from evil:...*"

And then follows a very simple argument as to why our heavenly Father can give us these things and should do it: "*...For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*"

The Lord's Prayer is petition, all the way. We are plainly commanded to pray like this daily. When the Bible speaks of prayer it always means asking.

Throughout the gospels Jesus gave examples of prayer. He said prayer is like a man knocking at a door and saying, "*Friend lend me three loaves.*" It is like a widow before a judge, saying, "*Avenge me of mine adversary.*" It is like a son asking bread or a fish or an egg of a father. According to Jesus, prayer is a very simple business; and anybody who can ask for things can pray.

The actual cases of prayer mentioned in the New Testament are likewise very simple examples of this. People really asked for what they wanted, the people who prayed in the New Testament, and got things

The publican in the temple prayed: "*...God be merciful to me a sinner,*" and he went down to his house already saved, forgiven! (Luke 18:14).

Peter, about to sink in the waters of Galilee, cried out, "*...Lord, save me!*" (Matthew 14:30).

Blind Bartimaeus by the roadside called out, "*...Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me*" (Mark 10:47). And then more definitely still he prayed, "*...Lord, that I might receive my sight*" (Mark 10:51). And he did receive his sight.

The thief on the cross prayed for salvation, saying, "*...Lord, remember me...*" (Luke 23:42), and the Lord saved him that day and took him to Paradise.

The Syrophenician or Canaanitish woman prayed: "*...Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil*" (Matthew 15:22), and again, "*...Lord, help me*" (Matthew 15:25). And she kept praying and asking it until she got what she asked; that is, until her daughter was healed.

In fact, the only "prayer" I recall mentioned in the New Testament that is held up to scorn is the

prayer of the Pharisee in Luke, chapter 18. He “prayed” in public long and loud, but he did not ask for a thing! That is the kind of a prayer that God hates!

We are so weak and sinful and God is so strong and mighty and gracious, that the only possible relationship that would be righteous and proper between us and God is that we should be asking and He should be giving. When men becomes occupied with how much he could do for God it is blasphemy and unbelief. But when poor, self-confessed sinners begin to call on God for what He so graciously and lovingly offers, then that is proper and legitimate prayer.

Do you really ask God for things when you pretend to pray? Too many people only “window-shop” when they “pray.” They do not go after anything, and they do not bring anything home.

Prayer is not a lovely sedan for a sight-seeing trip around the city. Prayer is a truck that goes straight to the warehouse, backs up, loads, and comes home with the goods. Too many people rattle their trucks all over town and never back up to the warehouse! They do not go after something when they pray. They do not ask, and therefore they do not receive. Much of our so-called praying is not asking, and so it is not really praying.

### **III. Hypocrisy in So-called Praying That Does Not Ask for Something**

In churches all over the land pastors are accustomed Sunday morning to go through the rigmarole of “the morning prayer.” But usually it is not prayer at all; it is a well-planned, pious speech, or sermonette. It includes praise, adoration, thanksgiving, and theology. It is addressed more to the people than to God in most cases, I fear. Its aim, I suppose, is to create a reverent atmosphere, to comfort the people, and edify them. But the aim of the so-called “morning prayer” is very rarely really to get things from God! It does not ask and it does not receive. It is not real prayer.

Dear Pastor, test your public prayer by this measurement. Was it answered? Did it expect an answer or require one? Most preachers believe that God answers prayer, I hope, and yet I never heard a pastor say, “I’ve just had a glorious and definite answer to my ‘morning prayer’ of last Sunday.” No, no, the average Sunday “morning prayer” was not intended to be answered. It was not asking anything. Really, it was not prayer. It was a professional part of a formal service.

Sometimes in the address there are some elements of real prayer, and this is not meant to be a wholesale criticism of my dear brethren in the ministry. But how sad God must be over our perversion of the doctrine of prayer, and of our failure to ask anything of God.

In revival services it is my joy to have many ministers of the gospel attend. They are the best men in the world and I want their love and sympathy and help and prayers more than I want the love and sympathy and help and prayers of any other group in the world.

But as a result of long and sad experience, I have grown accustomed to leading the prayer myself when we come to a serious crisis in a revival service and there is desperate need for God to work.

How many, many times when we have come to the close of an earnest revival sermon, and when sinners have held their hands asking that Christians pray for them the they may surrender to Christ and trust Him for salvation, I have asked some minister to lead in prayer, and had not a prayer, but a sermon or an exhortation. When called to lead us in prayer that these earnest and convicted sinners may this moment trust Christ and be saved. Instead he has addressed God and then talked around the world, thanking God for Jesus Christ, thanking God for the gospel and the Bible, thanking God for our free country, thanking God for the sermon, and for Christian fellowship, and then has come to the close of his so-called prayer, without ever once earnestly begging God to save these sinners who sit in the congregation before him, and who are already convicted and wanting to be saved! I am not exaggerating when I say that again and again I have had

this heart-breaking thing happen.

People ordinarily, at least in their public “prayers,” do very little praying. They sometimes praise God and sometimes exhort the people, and sometimes, perhaps, simply go through a form of beautiful and eloquent words without any special heart-feeling or crying out to God for anything definite. I say that that is generally true.

I say this is pretty generally true about *public* prayer. Of course, I cannot say about *private* prayer except about my own. Too often I find that in my own secret prayers I have a tendency to be indefinite and to follow a form, and to say the words which are customary, instead of really beseeching God for definite things. I think that probably in private prayer people are not so tempted to make a showing before men, and probably secret prayers tend to be more sincere.

I am not saying that exhortation to the people is wrong. I think it is often blessedly used of God. I am not saying that public praise is wrong. I know that public praise is many times commanded and certainly ought to be used to glorify God. But these things *ought not to take the place of prayer*. And they *ought not to be called prayer*. Prayer is asking. If it is not asking, it is not prayer in the Bible sense.

Oh, beloved reader, I beg you in Jesus’ name that when you come to pray, you ask things of God! Bring your wants and wishes before God, and make definite requests, and expect definite blessings! God is rich with blessings that He longs to give, and He but waits for us to ask, that He may give.

Much that we call prayer is not prayer at all. And all over the world our foolish pretense of praying, when we do not ask anything and do not get anything, has encouraged unbelief, has cast doubt upon God and the Bible, and millions do not know that there is a God Who is ready and willing to marvelously answer prayer. To millions, prayer is no more than a quiet meditation, which may do subjective good to the one who prays, like good exercise, a form of self-discipline, but which does not, they think, receive any objective results from God.

Prayer is asking. The Lord Jesus said that “every one that asketh receiveth.” James said by divine inspiration, “*Ye have not, because ye ask not.*”

Under any other definition of prayer, there might be some place for form and ceremony, but not since prayer is asking. Since prayer is really asking something from God, then it must come from the heart.

No wonder that in Isaiah 44:3 the Lord says, “*...I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,...*” Real asking comes from a thirst of the heart.

Mark 11:24 says, “*...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*”

Heart’s desire is back of honest prayer. It is all right to pray aloud. It is all right to pray in a whisper. But since prayer really comes from the desire of the heart, it may overleap the incidental matters of words and sentences. The heart cry may be manifested in tears, or in groans, or in quiet expectant faith. But real prayer, prayer that *asks* something from God, must come from the heart. Oh, what an abomination is this fake kind of “praying” that is not the honest petition of the heart.

Too much of our prayers are like the incantation of a witch doctor or the rites of some modern cult. That is, they may have rhythm, or eloquence, or beauty and aesthetic form; but they are not genuine prayers when they do not ask for things. The modern tendency to have pipe organ music during prayer is because we are not really praying at all. We say we seek reverence, but actually we are seeking some form of aesthetic beauty, some appeal to the senses.

When a lady orders groceries she does not quote poetry.

When the dispatcher gives orders to a trainman, they are not written on engraved stationery. He does not use classic illustrations or ponderous words.

When a beggar asks for a dime for a cup of coffee and a “hot dog,” he does not talk about the glowing sunset.

Brother, come to God, asking for what you want, and go home with it! Let us really learn to pray by asking things from God.



## CHAPTER IV

# THE ANSWER TO PRAYER IS RECEIVING

*“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him,...”* 1 John 3:22.

*“...if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?”*  
Matthew 7:9, 10.

In the preceding chapter I showed that *prayer is asking*. Prayer is not adoration, it is not meditation, it is not even praise and thanksgiving. Prayer is not just spiritual exercise. No, prayer is asking. There ought to be adoration and meditation and thanksgiving, to be sure, but these are not prayer; prayer is asking. So we are told, *“...yet ye have not, because ye ask not”* (James 4:2b). We are promised, *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”* (Matthew 7:7). Many, many Scriptures show that prayer, in the Bible sense, is asking God definitely for something.

Now there is another side to that truth. If prayers is asking, then the answer to prayer must be receiving. It is the will of our loving heavenly Father that we should be able to come to Him day by day, ask what we want, and receive it.

Preachers have a way, when faith grows dim and weak, of making alibis for the fruitlessness of their prayers. For example, preachers sometimes say, “God answers prayer three ways. He may say, ‘Yes’ or He may say, ‘No,’ or He may say, ‘Wait awhile.’”

Of course that statement is intended to mean that a Christian ought to be content for the will of God to be done and to be satisfied with anything God gives. But actually, it teaches exactly the opposite of what the Bible teaches about prayer. It makes us think of prayer as a mystical, indefinite matter, by which one may get what he wants, or may not, as if there were no way to know what is the will of God. It leaves the impression that there is not much use of praying because God will do what pleases Him anyway without any meddling of ours, so shy should we pray? And anything that makes prayer indefinite, and makes the answer seem uncertain, is contrary to the plan teaching of the Word of God.

Sensible people would not be content with any such slipshod and indefinite arrangement about asking and receiving in any other realm of life. Suppose I should drive into a filling station to buy gasoline, and say, “I want ten gallons of gas, please. And check the oil.” I expect the affirmative answer. That is, I expect to get just what I ask for. How surprised I would be if the attendant should say, “No, I am sorry, but I don’t think you need any gas,” and would refuse to fill my empty tank. Or if he should say, as some preachers say God does, “Wait awhile. When you have waited there until I think you deserve it, I’ll get you some gas.” Or I should be even more surprised if, instead of gasoline, the attendant should fill up my tank with soapsuds, or alcohol, or mud! This “yes” or “no” or “wait awhile” would not seem sensible, I say, to people in any other matters of asking and receiving; and yet they speak in that foolish way about prayer!

Suppose that a young man has learned to love devotedly a certain young woman and has cause to believe that she loves him. Suppose he then asks her to marry him, but she refuses. Would the young man then go along happily saying that he had received his request, that his request was answered? No, and neither should a Christian be content until he can be in such close touch with God that he can get exactly what he asks for, and rejoice in a “yes” from God in answer to his prayers.

### **I. The Scriptures Teach That an Answer to Prayer Is Getting What You Asked for**

Our modern way of thinking so indefinitely of prayer and expecting nothing when we talk to God, was not the way of Bible Christians. And the Bible promises clearly teach us to expect God to give us just what we ask for when we pray aright. According to the Bible, a genuine answer to prayer is simply getting

what you ask for. See how clear this is in the Scriptures.

For example, Jesus said, “*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened*” (Matthew 7:7, 8).

Now, in Scripture if *asking* is prayer, then *receiving* is the answer to prayer.

In these words of Jesus, if *seeking* is prayer, then *finding* is the answer to prayer.

If *knocking* is prayer, then *having the door opened* to us is God’s answer to prayer. There is not a hint here that a Christian should expect God to say, “No,” or, “Wait awhile.”

Again in John 16:24 Jesus said, “...*Ask, and ye shall receive...*”

Here if *asking* is prayer, then *receiving* is the answer to prayer.

In James 4:2 we are told that “...*ye have not, because ye ask not.*”

If *asking* is prayer, then God’s Word says that *having* is the answer to prayer.

Dr. Charles A. Blanchard in his book, *Getting Things From God*, has helped me greatly on this matter. Dr. Blanchard, in his chapter on “What Is An Answer to Prayer?” says: “I have repeatedly heard beloved brethren say that when God declined to do the things which his children desired, the answer was as real as when He granted the things which they desired. The statement is sometimes made in this manner: ‘God says sometimes “yes” and sometimes “no.” “No” is as really an answer as “yes,” so that prayer is always answered.’ It has ever seemed to me a cruel trifling with the souls of men to teach in this way. Of course, I do not mean to charge those who thus speak, with intentional cruelty or trifling. Nevertheless, that which they do seems to me a heart-breaking piece of work.”

Then Dr. Blanchard gives the example of a mother who prays for the life of her child, but not praying acceptably to God, and the child dies; the example of a businessman in difficulty who prays, but not according to God’s will, and becomes bankrupt, his business in ruin; and the example of a man who is tempted who prays for help but does not pray aright and so falls into shame, with his family broken up, the church embarrassed and the neighborhood demoralized. To all these, Dr. Blanchard says, some good ministers answer, “Oh, no, God has not refused your prayer. He has not failed to answer your prayer. He has just said, ‘no’.”

And Dr. Blanchard says, “I do not believe that this teaching is true, and I am sure it would not be a comfort to a mother whose heart lay cold and heavy under the shadow of the little grave....

“...I do not believe this teaching to be true and I do not believe it to be a comfort or help to anybody. I think it would tend to make infidels rather than Christian....”

Then Dr. Blanchard says: “An answer to prayer is a granting of the thing which a child asks of his heavenly Father, according to the directions which his Father has clearly set down. If a saint prays for healing for himself or his child or his friend, and God answers his prayer, the sick person will be recovered. If a saint prays in Scriptural fashion for relief from financial difficulties, he will be relieved. If he prays in Scriptural fashion for victory over the powers of evil, he will obtain victory. An answer to prayer is a granting of the thing desired. Saying ‘no’ to a request is not an answer to prayer in any real, substantial meaning of the expression. When God answers prayer He says ‘yes.’”

And again Dr. Blanchard says: “Let me once more record my conviction that answered prayer is prayer which accomplishes the results desired. To say that the answer may be ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and that the latter is as really an answer as the former, seems to me trifling with the sore hearts and great needs of man.”

As Dr. Blanchard so well teaches, if the proper answer of prayer is a “yes” answer, and if a Christian who prays in a normal and scriptural manner should receive that for which he prays, then when a Christian does not get what he prays for, the Christian should begin a thorough investigation. He knows that God is

not wrong. He should set out to discover by the Word of God and by the leading of the Holy Spirit why his prayer has not been accepted and answered. And this makes prayer a simple and understandable business, and the way to full and blessed answers to prayer will soon be open to honest, surrendered, Bible-believing hearts.

## II. How to Pray in the Will of God for a “Yes” Answer

All of us know that the average Christian does not usually get exactly what he asks for from God. On the contrary, the average Christian expects nothing of the kind. His prayers are indefinite; they do not pointedly and plainly ask for concrete, definite answers. Ordinary prayers are not really meant to be answered. The ordinary ‘prayer’ is not *asking*, and it does not expect an answer of *having*.

Doubtless this is the reason that so many Christians condition nearly every request with the words, “if it by Thy will.” We ask God to send a revival “if it be Thy will.” We ask God to save sinners for whom Christ died and over whom He yearns with inexpressible longing, “if it be Thy will”! We ask God for the things He has *promised* to give, the things which He *longs* to give, the things for which He has entreated us to ask; and then we ask and put a question mark by it—God forgive us! We put an IF in our prayers about whether God is willing to save souls or give revivals or keep His word! But that “if” is not a sign of submission to the will of God—it is a sign of our unbelief. It is a sign of our stumbling about in the dark in our prayers, with no assurance that God will hear us and give us the things for which we ask.

Suppose that in the pulpit your pastor should put an “if” about the virgin birth of Christ, as you put an “if” about His keeping His promises—would you like that? Suppose there is a doubt, an if, an uncertainty, an ambiguity about every doctrine a preacher preaches, with no certainty, no ring of victory, nothing you can absolutely depend upon, in the way the Word of God is proclaimed and taught—would you like that? Well, do you think God would like that? No more does He like us to come with such unbelief, such stumbling, doubting, uncertainty to ask for the things which He has promised and which He wants to give. No, God wants us to find out how to pray according to His will for things which can honor His great name; and then He wants us to expect definite and exact answers to those prayers. If we ask for bread, He wants us to expect bread, and not a stone. If we ask for fish, He wants us to expect fish, and not a snake. If we ask for an egg, He wants us to expect an egg, and not a scorpion. He wants praying to be on the basis of asking and receiving as simple as that of a child and his own father.

And for that kind of praying, there are certain important requirements. Before we can pray in the will of God with the certainty of getting what we ask for, certain important conditions must be met, which I will name.

1. First of all there must be a full surrender to the will of God. There can be no happy, successful prayer life for a rebellious child of God. Psalm 37:4 says, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*”

Remember that when Jesus taught us to pray He said the very first requests we are to make are these, “*...Hallowed be thy name.*” “*...Thy will be done in earth,...*” God is our Father, and children should be subject to their father. We are not our own. We are bought and paid for, redeemed with the awful price of Calvary. There can be no victory in prayer except as the heart humbly bows and says, “My Father, show me how to pray in Thy will, I want to ask what will please Thee. I want to have what You want me to have.” Every Christian who wants to be able to pray for certain definite things and get exactly what he prays for, day after day, should first pray, like the disciples of old, “*...Lord, teach us to pray,...*” (Luke 11:1). God delights to answer the prayer of a surrendered heart, wholly surrendered to His will.

In James 4:2 is the remarkable and blessed promise, “*...ye have not, because ye ask not.*” God has so many wonderful things that He longs to give us, and He only waits for our asking. And yet the next verse

tells us that *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”* Wicked hearts that seek to have success in prayer without first getting on the praying ground of a surrendered heart, are doomed to disappointment. No doubt here is a great secret of our lack of faith and lack of enthusiasm and lack of success in prayer; we ask amiss that we may consume things on our own lusts.

Sometimes a wife wants her husband saved, and she prays for him; yet her motives may be all wrong. It may be that the wife thinks, “If my husband were wived, it would be so much easier on me. He would take me to church. He would be kinder in the home.” So she prays for the thing that God really wants to do, longs to do; but God cannot righteously answer her prayers. God needs to make the wife’s heart right before He can save her husband. So many Christians hinder the answers to their own prayers, prayers that God would delight to answer, if it could be done to His glory, without His encouraging sin. Oh, how important it is that the heart should surrender to the Lord Jesus!

We need to pray with the words of the sweet hymn by George C. Stebbins:

“Have Thine own way, Lord!  
Have Thine own way!  
Thou art the Potter;  
I am the clay  
Mould me and make me  
After Thy will,  
While I am waiting,  
Yielded and still.

“Have Thine own way, Lord!  
Have Thine own way!  
Search me and try me,  
Master today!  
Whiter than snow, Lord,  
Wash me just now,  
As in Thy presence  
Humbly I bow.

“Have Thine own way, Lord!  
Have Thine own way!  
Hold o’er my being  
Absolute sway!  
Fill with Thy Spirit  
Till all shall see  
Christ only, always,  
Living in me!”

Dear Christian, if you really are tuned in to Heaven by a heart submitted wholly to the will of God, then you are ready to learn how to pray so you can ask God for exactly what you want and get it.

2. Next, we must have a heart-understanding of God’s Word, so we may know the will of God. How can we ask with any assurance that God will be pleased to give us what we ask, unless we know something of His will? For this reason Jesus said: *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* (John 15:7).

Here, asking just what we want, and getting it, is said to depend upon our abiding in Christ and His

Word abiding in us. We cannot know the will of God without familiarity with the Word. In Psalm 1:1-3, and in Joshua 1:7-9 the prosperity of a Christian in everything is conditioned upon his meditating day and night in the Word of God and walking therein. It is not enough just to read the Word of God. It should abide in us. We should love it, should meditate in it, should absorb it until it colors all our lives and thoughts. Then when you come to ask something from God and can say honestly: "My dear heavenly Father, I have found in Your Word that You want me to have thus and so, and that it would honor Thy name; You have said for me to ask for it so I claim Thy promise and believe Thy Word and take what Thou hast promised me"; then we can certainly expect the answer, and get exactly what we prayed for.

For example, notice the sweet promise of 1 John 1:9 that *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Knowing that verse, any Christian in the world can get instant forgiveness for any sin he is willing to confess with his whole heart; and he can get cleansing, too. He has the Word of God for it! It would be sin for a Christian to doubt that God is ready instantly to forgive and cleanse any Christian who honestly confesses that sin. Or, take the implied promise in the Lord's prayer when the Saviour taught us to pray, *"Give us this day our daily bread"* (Matthew 6:11). Any Christian familiar with the Word of God can pray for daily bread and get it, knowing already it is God's will. It would be a mistake to pray, "If it be Thy will," about a thing which God has already clearly told us His will.

On the other hand, if a Christian be thoroughly endued with the Word of the Lord he could not honestly ask for the great wealth of the world, to the ignoring of spiritual values. If he knew and loved and believed the words of the Saviour in Matthew 6:33, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"*; He would certainly know that spiritual blessings are far more important than great wealth, that to seek first the kingdom of God would bring the greatest happiness, the greatest peace, and the greatest prosperity. He would know that one who really seeks first the kingdom of God will have food to eat and garments to wear, beside the peace of God which passeth understanding.

I am saying that one cannot pray in the will of God without knowing the Word of God. The Bible is the revelation of the heart of God. It is the revelation of all that is good and right and true and pure. When you understand from the heart the teachings of God's Word, and when you meditate therein day and night, then you can pray knowing that what you ask for is in the will of God, and that it will both please and honor Him to hear and answer your prayer and give you what you ask for. And prayer that is not based on the Bible is likely to be not pleasing to God. And groups of Christians who put great emphasis on prayer and little emphasis on the Word are usually fanatical, extremists, who may enjoy emotional ecstasy, but who do not always pray in the will of God and do not get, many times, the things for which they ask.

3. Next, to pray in the will of God one needs the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit's guidance, our poor carnal minds would get only the bare letter of the Bible, and not understand the will of God; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned. And there are a thousand details on which we need to know the mind of God, about which the bare letter of the Word of God does not give information. What shall be the theme of my next sermon? To which sinner should I speak first about his soul? How shall I approach him? Should I ask God for a new car, or do with the old one for awhile? Does God want my children to take music or not? Shall I send this money to foreign missions, or give it to the local church? What part of the Scripture shall I read in my devotions today? Does God want me to take this business venture? Thus there are a thousand questions about which one needs the personal and detailed guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, or we cannot certainly pray in the will of God and be assured that we have a right to expect exactly what we ask.

But, bless God, every Christian can have the Holy Spirit to help him pray. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God"* (Romans

8:26, 27).

No, we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but our infirmity in this matter is helped by the Holy Spirit. He makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And then our prayer, led and dictated by the Holy Spirit, reaches the heart of God; and we get what we ask because the Holy Spirit “maketh intercession for the saints *according to the will of God.*” The Holy Spirit can pray always “according to the will of God.” So any prayer that is inspired and guided and aided by the Holy Spirit can be assured of an answer. When one prays according to the will of God, then that prayer will be answered. Someone has well said that any prayer that begins in Heaven will certainly not be rejected there.

The Holy Spirit is called “...*the Comforter...*” by our Saviour (John 14:16, 26; John 15:26; John 16:7). This “Comforter” is a translation of the word *parakletos*, meaning “one called alongside.” So the blessed Holy Spirit is alongside of every Christian. Better yet, the Saviour said in John 14:17, “... *ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*” The Holy Spirit dwelled with the apostles before the resurrection. But in the future after Christ was glorified, the Holy Spirit is promised to be *within us*. So when Jesus rose from the dead, He breathed on the disciples and said, “...*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*” (John 20:22). Now from that time, every saved person has the Holy Spirit abiding in his body. Romans 8:9 says, “*But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” The Spirit of God dwells in us who are saved; and if anybody does not have this Spirit of Christ, this Holy Spirit, dwelling in him, he is not saved. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 says, “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” The body of every Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God Who dwells within. And, oh, how eager this blessed Holy Spirit is to comfort us and to guide us into all truth and teach us.

In fact, this Holy Spirit of God is also “the Spirit of Christ,” as Romans 8:9 says. Jesus promised the heartsick disciples on the night before the crucifixion, “*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*” (John 14:18). And He explained that He would come in the person of the Holy Spirit of God. And John 14:26 says, “*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send IN MY NAME, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*”

So the blessed Holy Spirit makes known to us the will of Christ and calls to our remembrance what He has said in His Word, and teaches us all things we need to know, as we submit ourselves to Him and with fervent hearts meditate on God’s Word. So Christians, then, have a blessed and sure way of knowing the will of God. If they pray according to the plain promises of the Word, and if they are led and helped by the Holy Spirit, then their prayers will be pleasing to God. God can put in the hearts of Christians what He wants them to pray for, what will honor His name, what will prosper His cause, what will be for the happiness and good of His children. And when we pray thus according to the will of God we can get exactly what we pray for.

And since the Holy Spirit is Christ’s own personal representative, His Spirit, His Comforter, then one who is led by the Holy Spirit can honestly pray in Jesus’ name.

Every prayer that is honestly presented in Jesus’ name will be answered. That is the express statement of John 14:13, 14. Let us read it again: “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask ANY THING in my name, I will do it.*” There it is as plain as day. Anything under Heaven, asked in Jesus’ name, will be given.

But how often we lie to God about this matter! People have fallen into the custom of saying at the close of their prayers, “This we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.” But are we always asking in Jesus’ name? Do we really mean, “Father, in Thy Word I have found what You have promised, and the Holy Spirit has made clear this petition is exactly what Jesus wants. Here He puts His endorsement on the prayer, and I know You will give it because Jesus wants it.” Is that really always true about the prayers where we add the formal statement, “in Jesus’ name”? I believe it is not. I know it is not, because many such prayers do not get the answer

they seek; and that proves they are not really given in Jesus' name.

With the above things in mind it seems to me that there are clearly these elements in getting ready to pray. First, we should surrender our own will and decide we will be willing to have God's own will, whatever it is, wherever it leads, and whatever it costs. Second, we should eagerly seek in the Bible to find what is the will of God on the subject, and to pray according to the expressed will of God written down in His word. And third, we should earnestly submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit for guidance and seek to have clear leading from God as to what we should pray for, and how. And if the Holy Spirit of God gives a divine expectancy, a conquering faith, then we may be sure God will answer the prayer. And no matter how I feel, if I have surrendered my own will and am earnestly trying to find just what God wants me to pray for, and if I pray according to the written Word of God, and pray as the Holy Spirit leads out and as He prays with me and helps me in prayer, then I can be bold in my praying! I can claim and have the best God has for me!

I suggest that you go over your prayer list. Criticize and weigh carefully every item. Are you asking this for a personal, selfish reason? Is it according to the written Word of God? And does the Holy Spirit specially lead you out in prayer for this? If you have given up your own will and if it stands the test of the last two points, then you may with holy boldness storm the gates of Heaven to get the answer to your prayer, and say like Jacob, *"...I will not let thee go, except thou bless me!"* (Genesis 32:26).

Now, beloved Christian, will you put this teaching in practice? Will you begin to pray definitely, asking God for concrete things? And will you seek to pray in the will of God and then expect day regularly, complete answers to prayer, receiving from God exactly what you ask Him for?

Remember that prayer is ASKING.

Remember that an answer to prayer is HAVING.

Therefore, *"...ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full"* (John 16:24).

*"...yet ye have not, because ye ask not"* (James 4:2).

*"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"* (Matthew 7:7, 8).

If you do not get just what you pray for, then you should set out today to find what is wrong with your prayers. Do not claim to have the answer until you get what you pray for. Either change your prayers so that God can righteously answer them, or correct any fault and sin that grieves the Spirit and hinders your prayers. Then if nothing is found that hinders the affirmative answer you seek, and if you are assured after prayerful study of the Word of God, and opening your heart to the quiet voice of God's ungrieved Holy Spirit, that your prayer is according to the will of God, then you should wait before God insistently, with supplication and importunity, insisting on receiving the thing you have asked for!

Prayer is asking, and the answer to prayer is receiving.

Prayer is seeking, and an answer to prayer is finding.

Prayer is knocking, and an answer to prayer is having God open the door to you.

Prayer is asking, and the answer to prayer is having!

Oh, Christians, I beg you, enter into your privileges, and get the things you want and need and ask for from God!