

Everything by Prayer

by
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Forward

As a little boy I was taught to pray at my mother's knee. After that my prayers were "said" faithfully when I was "good." I never recall having received an answer, in fact I did not expect answers. My conception of prayer was that to be good one must say his prayers. When I was "bad" my prayers were neglected, and if I persisted in my badness praying was entirely given up.

This state of things continued until I was converted at twenty. For a brief period after that, my prayers were real and I witnessed a number of answers. Then I fell into error in believing that my good works kept me saved. This grieved the Holy Spirit and I lost access to God in prayer.

Still I continued to pray, earnestly seeking access to God for the solution of my problems. There was no answer. If it were not for the fact that I had experienced answered prayers for the brief period just after my conversion, it seems to me that I would have lost all faith in prayer during this period, for it was prolonged for sixteen years.

Then, through a restudy of the Word, I regained access on the ground of grace alone and prayer again became real. How I reveled in my newly found blessing of "talking to God! Answered prayer now became a daily experience. This has continued through the years.

I seek to have the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my prayer life. I have set times and set objects for prayer, but as I am moved to pray, or if need for prayer arises, I pray in the day time, in the dead of night, riding, walking—anywhere, any time.

It may be necessary for some to pray from a sense of duty, but prayer at its best is spontaneous. I am in need; I take it to God. A problem arises; I ask God about it. A blessing is experienced; I cry, "Lord, Thou art so good!" This is to me the real prayer life. I walk and talk with God and He answers.

The Author.

NOTE: Public prayer, praying in groups or in families, is scriptural. But our Lord especially enjoined and commended personal, private, and secret prayer (Matthew 6:6). It is this type of prayer with which this manual deals. However, very much of what is said applies equally to all praying. Prayer groups should find this booklet of much help.

The Seven Laws of Prayer

- Asking
- Asking in the Will of God
- Asking in the Name of Christ
- Asking in Faith
- Asking by a Righteous Man
- Asking for Definite Things
- Asking by One Who Is Grateful

Introduction

Many, many Christians are only occasionally receiving answers to their prayers, or not at all. Many no longer expect answers and continue to pray only from a sense of duty. This is not because these persons are not Christians, neither is it always because there is some flagrant sin in their lives. It is often because the conditions of answered prayer are not being met. These conditions may not even be known or, if known, not understood. It is in regard to these conditions or Laws—for they are virtually that—that we purpose to write.

Unanswered Prayer a Tragedy

Where prayer is not being answered a tragedy has come into the life and also into the home. If my children hear me pray and know that my prayers are not answered—and they will know—they will soon lose their faith in prayer, or in God, or in their father. Perhaps if they have a kind father they will give up their faith in God or in prayer before they will give up their faith in him. This explains, in part, the cause of the multitude of people in our land who were raised in Christian homes but are not themselves Christians.

If no answer is being received to prayers, soon praying will become general. No definite requests will be made, at least not sufficiently definite to embarrass one if no answer comes. How much of this kind of praying is being done everywhere! Such praying is no more than a formality—in principle, no different from counting prayer beads. Were there any virtue in such prayers then the more of them the more virtue, and this would justify the heathen idea of having prayers said by machinery. They have been known to write their prayers and deposit them in a water wheel so that thousands of prayers were thought to be said while they slept.

Where prayer is not being answered, what should the Christian do? Should one go on praying and ease the conscience by the feeling that duty has been done? Would it not be wiser to endeavor to find out what is wrong?

An Illustration from Nature

In nature, God's power is released in harmony with law, just as in the spiritual realm. These laws are often very simple but yet very fundamental. In raising a crop of wheat, for instance, the laws are so simple that many have raised wheat all their lives without realizing that wheat-raising was under law. So, many have prayed all their lives without realizing that prayer, too, was under law. In both of these cases the persons had been so well taught in youth that they unconsciously complied with the laws in the given case.

If a crop of wheat is to be raised, there must be soil and seed, moisture and warmth; the soil must be tilled and the seed planted, and at the proper time. God must cause the wheat to grow and if these simple laws are complied with, His power is released. However, each of these laws is so fundamental that if any one of them is violated there will not be a less amount of wheat, but no wheat at all. Which of the several conditions could be dispensed with, if the grower expects to get wheat? The soil? The seed? The moisture? No, each one is so vital that they all must be included to avoid complete failure. So it is in the realm of prayer. There are at least seven laws of prayer, each so vital that if only one law is violated there will be no answer at all.

The Influence of the Element of Time

Even a casual study of the Laws of God reveals the fact that, for our sakes, God has subjected His power to the element of time. In the realm of nature a rose, for instance, is not produced in a moment, but by a slow process which involves time. God causes the rose to grow according to His plan. If we try to alter His plan and force the petals of the rose open before they are ready we destroy its beauty and fragrance.

Many have yet to learn the lesson of patience which God seeks to teach us. To “go slow with God” we find difficult. As a child, when I planted my first seed, I dug it up at least twice the first day, and several times later. It was hard to learn that it took time. When the plant finally did come up it was yellow and spindling, of course.

In the realm of prayer, the necessity of God’s working according to the element of time is even more necessary than in nature. Here our prayers involve men, not roses, and these men have free wills—some of them terribly stubborn ones. God does not break their wills when we ask Him to change their course or conduct, but He brings influences to bear that result in a change. This takes time, sometimes a long, long time. If we understand this, we will be safeguarded against losing our faith when the thing we have prayed for is delayed.

The Truth Exemplified

Should we be asking God for but little things we might soon get them, but if our prayers involve great undertakings where many are to be influenced, time will be required. It is like sending for a cargo of supplies. If the supplies are to be had at some place but a little way down the coast, the ship will soon be back with its cargo, but if they must be obtained from across the seas, it will require a longer time.

A girl in one of my high school classes came to me and said that she had nearly lost her faith in prayer. On inquiry it was found that she taught a class of children in Sunday school. She said that during all the preceding week she had prayed that every one of her children would be at class on Sunday. It was a very stormy Sunday, and none of them were there. And she was doubting whether God answers prayer. She was told that it was seldom right to put a time limit on the answers to our prayers, especially when others with free wills were involved.

Many, many times God answers prayer instantly when the need requires it, but it should be left to His love and wisdom as to when to send the answer. Some of them will be answered after we have departed this life to be with the Lord but every prayer, offered in harmony with God’s laws will be answered.

The First Law-ASKING

The first law of prayer is asking. God knows our needs, of course. Then why does He not supply them whether we pray or not? The answer is very simple. To be always getting, without the sense of responsibility or without being grateful would destroy us. A pampered child does not develop into a strong character. Selfishness is a besetting sin of all, and to be always getting without even asking would make us more selfish. Compliance with the requirements of the laws of prayer is necessary for the development of Christian character.

Recognizing God's Ownership and Sovereignty

Asking God for the things we need is just and right, for all things belong to God. Should we not ask the owner of them if we want them? 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." There are many things perfectly right for us to have and God is willing for us to have them, but the way to get them is to ask Him for them.

In reality many things which we need are already in some other person's possession. Why then should we take God into account at all in the getting of them? Why not deal alone with the person in whose possession they are? Simply because he is not the real owner—he is only a steward. Again he may be holding them sinfully and he may be unwilling to give them up. If we try to get them from him directly, we shall have to "fight and war" and then perhaps, because he is stronger than we are, we do not get them after all.

If we ask God, how does He proceed to answer our prayer? If the person involved is an obedient child, a true steward of His, it is all very simple. For if God revealed to him that we are to have the thing he would gladly part with it. Where the person is a rebellious sinner the problem is more difficult, but God is omnipotent and has ways beyond our understanding by which the desired end is brought about. This may take time but far better a little time than a great deal of "war," with little or no results.

With God All Things Are Possible

It is a fact that since God is dealing with this world in grace His will is not being done fully here on earth; far from it, but that does not mean that He does not have the power to bring His will to pass in any given matter in answer to prayer. But this very fact makes it necessary to limit prayer by law. God promises to answer prayer only when in accord with the laws of prayer, and the laws of prayer are so made that God will not need to alter His program of dealing with the world in grace in order to answer them.

It is very wonderful to know that God is still owner and sovereign, and He is a *friend of mine*. Not a partial friend but a friend indeed on the basis of love and justice—that is, justice on the ground of substitution. When we pray we ask an omnipotent Friend, the Owner of *all*, for the thing we need, or we commit to Him the problem. Surely we can trust Him to work it out. If a good deal of time is required, it is not because He has forgotten or is neglecting the matter, or cannot bring it to pass, but it is because He is dealing in grace even with the sinful folk, and they may be slow or very stubborn. Truly "How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out." Yet to the extent He has revealed His ways, how equitable and kind they are.

Prayer Makes God a Living God to the One Who Prays

How wonderful to know that, no matter how strong the forces who possess the land to be conquered, if the thing to be undertaken falls within the scope of God's promises, through prayer, it *can be done*. More than that it *will be done*. We are dealing with the living God. He is able. He keeps His *every* promise. *But they must be claimed in prayer*.

The Christian who knows how to pray, and then prays, will see almost daily answers to prayer. He will see God *bringing to pass* those things that were asked for a long while ago which required time to accomplish. This makes God so very real.

The Bible reveals that invariably those to whom God gave great blessing and through whom He wrought great deliverances were great men of prayer. Daniel prayed three times a day. It was through prayer that Elijah caused rain not to fall for three years and six months in Israel. It was through prayer that rain came again.

Christian biography teaches us the same great lesson. Hudson Taylor's wonderful ministry in China was wrought by prayer. George Muller's orphanages at Bristol, England, with 2,200 children, were literally the product of prayer. David Brainerd won the fiercest Indians, ones who had planned his murder, to fast friendship and to his Christ by prayer. So it has been always. It is just the same today.

A Personal Experience

The writer was called of God to undertake the work among children which is now being so greatly blessed. At the beginning there was no committee. There were no good "friends of the work." There was no salary, and no regular givers. There was God and His call, and there was a family of eleven with meager resources. Would God provide? Many said it was folly. It was facing abject want, they said. More, it was whispered that it was wrong, for the family was dependent upon the parent—the bread winner. If the parent would bring suffering upon himself, that was not so bad, but what would become of the children? Was it not sinful to involve them in another's folly?

But in prayer the die was cast, and truly the resources did grow less. All hell seemed to conspire to destroy even what resources there were. Soon the last available dollar was in sight, then it was partly spent. Did God know? Had He forsaken? Would He really provide? No one knew how acute was the need, except some of the home circle. Should not some employment be sought? Would it not be best to borrow from a friend? If God was going to answer prayer, why was He so slow? Satan stormed the castle of faith with these and many other questions.

Then there was a phone call and a request for an interview. It would take some of the precious "less than a dollar" to pay carfare. The party had not even intimated what the purpose of the interview was. The "still, small voice" said, "Go." When the carfare was paid, there was thirty-five cents in the earthly treasury. But heaven's coffers were full. When the greetings had been exchanged the one whom God had commissioned said, "God has been talking to me and here is a \$1,000 liberty bond to use for yourself in your work."

My heart was singing and my thanks was very profuse. But there was still a real difficulty. I didn't know where to dispose of the liberty bond immediately and real money was needed at once. But without my asking, the donor told me where the bond could be sold for cash that very day. There have been hundreds of miracles since, but this one will always remain unique, for it answered once for all the questions that Satan and well meaning friends had raised.

The Second Law-ASKING IN THE WILL OF GOD

No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11). Our God is glad to give us, through prayer, anything and everything that would be good for us. But in our shortsightedness we often ask for things that would prove harmful if we received them. Should God give us these? Would He be kind if He did? Surely not. Is this not one reason why there is so much unanswered prayer? But is there any way to find out what God is willing to give us without praying at random and then waiting in uncertainty as to the result?

A Vision of God's Purposes

"Where there is no vision the people perish." We all have personal problems and needs and they are proper subjects for prayer. The Lord has promised to supply them all, according to His riches in glory; not our wants but our needs. But real prayer warriors must have a vision of *God's purposes*.

Because Jesus gave the command to "Go ye into *all* the *world* and preach the gospel to *every* creature" (Mark 16:15), we know that God's highest will is to have the world evangelized. Those who pray with vision will always relate their prayers to this supreme objective. When this is done, no matter what the precise thing is we are asking for, we are really expecting God to answer the prayer *for His glory* instead of our selfish good. *Every answered prayer is a miracle*, and it is reasonable to ask God to work a miracle, even in a very small matter, when that miracle will result either directly or indirectly in the salvation of a soul.

God has declared that it is not His will that a single child perish (Matthew 18:14). This declaration regarding the evangelism of children reveals to us the will of God in this matter. But it too gives us a world vision, for it includes *every child in the whole world*. This should encourage us to pray just as earnestly and as believingly for the children in the nations where there is no religious liberty or where there are no missionaries working at present, as for children in the homeland.

How to Ascertain the Will of God

If we knew the will of God in a given matter before we began to pray, we would know whether to expect an answer or not; in fact we would know whether to ask for the thing at all. In 1 John 5:14, 15 we have a wonderful promise. "If we ask anything *according to his will*, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." This makes it clear that God grants every petition "in His will."

We can ascertain the will of God in many matters by searching the Scriptures for His promises and for plain declarations of His will. The Bible is full of promises made to His people and God stands ready to fulfill these promises if we ask Him in prayer. If the promise applies to us, we then know the will of God in that regard. Prayer should largely be claiming God's promises and such praying will always be answered.

Examples of Prayer Promises

In James 1:5 we have this promise, "If any of you lack wisdom (and who does not?) let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." Here is a definite promise to be claimed in believing prayer. When this promise is claimed, God is obligated to keep it, for His integrity depends upon it.

In Proverbs 3:5, 6 God has promised to guide us, on certain conditions. But even such a promise must be claimed in prayer and then the other conditions must be met. Some promises have conditions imposed in addition to praying and some do not. In claiming a promise, we should be sure that every condition is met or there will be no answer. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He *shall* direct thy paths."

The Bible is full of similar promises to those given above, each of which is very practical and exactly suited to our need. The Bible becomes a new book when we study it to find promises we can claim in prayer to obtain God's power for our daily problems.

Besides being sure that all of the conditions of a prayer promise are met, there is another thing about which we should be careful. We should examine the context and see if the promise applies to us. Some promises are general and apply to all Christians, while others were given in such a way that they are restricted to certain people.

Other Ways of Finding God's Will

When God's will is not known and no promise can be found that directly covers the problem, we must seek to find out His will in another way. The text which we just studied in Proverbs 3:5, 6 promises guidance to those who meet its conditions.

God has always guided His people when they sought guidance in faith. He guided the children of Israel on their journey to the promised land by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. But in addition to this, wonderful as it was, when a specific problem arose concerning which they did not know the will of God, Moses inquired of the Lord for them, and usually came away knowing exactly what God would have them to do.

This same service which Moses rendered was performed by every faithful prophet in Old Testament times, so that each generation, except in periods of great apostasy, could find what the will of God was.

In the more favored dispensation in which we live, every faithful believer may inquire of the Lord for himself, so that guidance now has been placed within easy reach. Beyond question, only a small proportion of believers today are enjoying this wonderful privilege, but that does not prove that it is not for us.

A failure to get guidance from God makes it difficult to pray in the will of God. The loss of one blessing always brings the loss of others. If we are to come to our fullest prayer privileges, we must believe for guidance and come in utter abandonment to God until this lost blessing be restored. Then we must be willing to 'wait upon the Lord' until He makes His will clear. To grow impatient and plunge ahead before He has given us understanding will take us out of His directive will. Delays, when caused by waiting upon the Lord, are never loss of time.

The Holy Spirit who indwells every believer is able to reveal the will of God to us if we look to Him in simple faith. The Spirit told Philip to join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian. When Peter had the vision on the house top, the Spirit said to him, "Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." This shows that the Spirit can and will guide those whom He indwells.

Committing Our Problems unto the Lord

There is another phase of praying in the will of God that still remains to be discussed. When we have faithfully sought to know God's will and have not found it as yet, or when a sudden emergency arises, how can we then pray in God's will? We can commit the whole problem to our God asking and expecting Him to work it out. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

God invites us in this text to bring our problems to Him and to leave them with Him. When we do, He will take them and solve them in His own good time and in His own wonderful way. We cannot worry about them then, for to worry then would be to doubt His promise or else His ability. Here is the only satisfactory cure for worry. Oh, how many Christians need to find and apply this remedy!

Guidance

Dr. F. B. Meyer, in giving advice out of his long experience, has set down these general rules regarding divine guidance:

1. Carefully remove all your preconceptions and prejudices, so that your mind and heart can be a tablet for God to write on.
2. Set aside much time for waiting on God, in the study of His Holy Word.
3. Let the glory of Jesus be the supreme consideration with you.
4. Do not run to and fro, asking your friends and companions what they would recommend.
5. Wait the Lord's leisure, do not dare to act unless you are sure that you are in the line of His purpose.
6. Mark the trend of His providence, for it will certainly corroborate His inner voice.
7. When you have once made up your mind in faith and prayer, dare to act, and never look back. He will not let you be ashamed.

The Third Law-ASKING IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

In John 14:14, we have a most wonderful prayer promise, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." Jesus, in all of His glorified omnipotence, stands ready to keep this promise if it is claimed in faith. This promise has been so generally known that scarcely a prayer is uttered without the expression "In Jesus' name," or some similar expression being made a part of the prayer. But experience proves that many such prayers, even by very devout Christians, are never answered. What can be the reason? Of course some other law of prayer perhaps is being violated, for every prayer promise is subject to all the laws of prayer. But may it not be because the prayer has not really been prayed in Christ's name?

What Does It Mean to Pray in Christ's Name?

There is a principle, great and vital, involved in praying in the name of Christ, or He would not have enjoined it. He certainly never intended that it should be a mere formality. The expression "In my name" clearly suggests that which has to do with our relation to God through Christ. Hebrews 4:15, 16 makes clear what this relationship is and how it involves our prayer life: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

God's throne would be a throne of judgment instead of a throne of grace if we approached it in our own merit. We not only were, but are still sinners and deserve nothing but judgment from a holy God. Many, many people do not see this solemn truth and reason that if God is good then sinners, or at least *pretty good* people, can approach Him. This cannot be, for unless God judges sin He is not good, for it is a ruler's duty to judge and punish sin and God is the *Ruler of all* as well as the Creator of all.

This was Cain's difficulty, for instead of coming to God with a sacrifice of blood which would have acknowledged his guilt and the need of a redeemer, he brought a present, the fruit of his

own labor, as though he could *bribe* God with this. And Cain knew better, for the Scriptures say that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice by *faith* and “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). So even in that early day they had the word of God as to how to approach God but Cain did not heed, as many do not now.

Christ the Believer’s High Priest

Christ is the believer’s High Priest, and none can come to God except by Him. The work of a High Priest is to make atonement for the sins of the people. This Christ has done, and all the high priests who preceded Him were but types of Him. They truly made atonement for sin, but only with the blood of animals. These could never suffice and had to be repeated every year, Christ “offered *one sacrifice for sins forever*” by giving Himself as a slain and spotless lamb for the sins of all.

Christ is a perfect High Priest, for He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” None is too sinful to come. None is too weak to come. No matter how often we have tried and failed we can still come, for He taught that we should forgive seventy times seven times *in a day*, and He surely would not do less than He taught us to do. Four hundred and ninety times in a day will surely meet the need of the weakest, but if it were possible to exceed this need in a day, He will still receive and forgive if we come on the ground of His shed blood, for this is coming in His name.

Realizing Our Relationship to God in Christ

Christ is the proffered High Priest of all men, but the real High Priest of those only who have accepted Him as their sin-bearer. These are those who have come with *empty hands*, claiming no good works or merit, or even promise of merit on their part. Acknowledging that they are helplessly and hopelessly guilty, they have accepted Him as the one alone who could cleanse them and forgive their sins. God’s Word declares that “all that believe are justified (or forgiven) from all things” (Acts 13:39). They may still be sinful, in fact they are more or less sinful, and if even less sinful, they are still sinful, but they are *free from guilt, through Him*.

We may come often to the “throne of grace” to seek forgiveness for some particular sin, but the throne of judgment became a “throne of grace” for us when we came and accepted the grace of God in Christ. This gives us the right to pray “in Christ’s name.” This is what is meant by praying in Christ’s name. When we come in this way, no matter what our guilt has been, we are now free from guilt through Him. The sense of this freedom from guilt takes away our fear of God and makes us bold to present our requests.

Boldness in Prayer

When we come to God in Christ’s name every barrier between us and Him, which sin has caused, is removed and we feel at ease in His presence and our first feeling is to praise Him that all this is ours through Christ. To pray in Christ’s name is to believe all this with the heart when we pray. This makes us bold.

When this condition is met, prayer will not be a cold formality, and with this token of His favor who could not be bold to ask? With such proof of His grace, who would not have faith to ask largely, especially for others?

“He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also *freely give us all things?*” (Romans 8:32). God is anxious to lavish upon us the things that we need if we will only come in Christ’s name. If Christ came and asked His Father for something, would He be denied? When we come “in His name” it is as though He had come Himself and we will not be denied. Those whom I know who pray best, pray with God *face to face*. He is in the room with them, more He is within them and the glory of His presence is there. He is to them a real, living, present God. He has manifested Himself. He has proved that His word is true—that He is omnipotent. Nothing is too hard to ask of Him now. Those who pray with power are, oh, so bold! They have found out God’s will. They know He is eager to answer prayer and release His power among men. Their sense of sin is taken away. They ask, and they ask largely, and their prayers are answered. Oh, what a privilege! Oh, what a joy!

The Fourth Law-ASKING IN FAITH

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive *any thing* of the Lord” (James 1:6, 7). In order to have and hold a faith that does not waver it must rest on something secure. It must rest on the Word of God. Satan assails us when we pray and tempts us to doubt, for he knows that if we pray in faith the victory will be won. There is only one sure way to meet Satan and that is with “It is written.” Jesus met him that way, and we should follow His example. To do this we must know the definite promise of God on which to rest our faith—and with which to meet Satan’s attack.

The Faith Which Appropriates

“And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we *know* that we *have* the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:15). When we know that the thing is according to His will, faith does not wait until the thing asked for is received but believes *at that moment* that the request is granted, that the prayer is answered. Even though it may be a long time before the thing is actually received. This is praying in faith. Anything short of this, where the will of God can be known, is not praying in faith at all and will bring no results.

If we ask God for something which we know to be His will it is our privilege immediately to claim it. “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe that ye receive* them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). This is real praying. This is taking God at His word and just resting in His promise. Then it is not too much to *thank Him* for the thing prayed for, for He has said “Yes” to the petition, and why not thank Him *at once*, if we really believe this.

Having prayed a prayer of this kind in faith we should be “watching thereunto with all perseverance” for the answer in hand (Ephesians 6:18). The answer may come quickly or may be long delayed, but faith never ceases to believe that the thing asked for will come to pass. Faith is not influenced by circumstances, but faith is resting in the promise and the integrity of the One who has promised. If there is a long delay it is perhaps because some stubborn freewill has hindered God in bringing the thing to pass, but He will surely prevail.

An Example of Praying in Faith

There is a wonderful prayer promise in Acts 16:31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*” This does not mean that our families will be saved without personal faith on their part but it does mean that if we claim them in believing prayer God will

bring them to Christ in answer to our prayers. He planned that we should go to Heaven “by families,” and so we would if we knew this promise and claimed it.

I was teaching this wonderful truth in one of my Bible classes when a woman came to me greatly agitated and said, “That sounds fine in theory, but it doesn’t work; it does not work at our house.” On inquiry I found that this woman was the mother of two grown children, a boy and a girl. They were both married, neither of them were Christians, the boy had separated from his wife, the daughter was on the verge of separation from her husband. The mother was heartbroken. She said, “I have prayed for them since they were born and here they are. I have lost my faith.”

As I tried to find where the difficulty lay, it soon became apparent that this mother had never found a promise and rested her faith upon it. She had asked God to save her children and then constantly doubted whether He would do it. The ground was thoroughly canvassed and she was brought to actually claim the salvation of her children in spite of the many difficulties which had grown up.

In less than two weeks this mother phoned me to come and talk with her son about his salvation *for he had requested it*. I went and succeeded in leading this young man to accept Christ as his Saviour. In perhaps a year and a half this mother came to one of my classes with her face all smiles, and said, “I just couldn’t stay away. I had to come and tell you. My daughter has accepted Christ.” Her face was radiant. She had prayed in faith and the double miracle had been wrought by the power of God. Though not always so quickly, the prayer of faith will always bring similar results. How wonderful! Let us “possess our possessions” in the field of believing prayer and bring God’s mighty power down into this needy world.

The Fifth Law-ASKING BY A RIGHTEOUS MAN

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). This text imposes righteousness as a condition to answered prayer. Of course we must have the imputed righteousness which becomes ours when we believe in Christ or we could not have answered prayer at all. But does this text refer to that righteousness? It certainly does not, for in the fifteenth verse it is said, “If he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” The teaching here has to do with righteousness in conduct instead of imputed righteousness.

Since this is the case, the question at once arises, what measure of righteousness of conduct is required to have answered prayer? Certainly not perfect righteousness, for the seventeenth verse in referring to Elijah as an example of one who had his prayers answered, says, he was “a man subject to like passions as we are.” No Christian is now sinless, for sins of ignorance are really sins and, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8). Truly we deceive no one but ourselves.

Walking in the Light

This sin question is discussed in the First Epistle of John under “walking in the light.” We must acknowledge that we have sinned, that we still sin and then we must *confess* our sins if we are to walk in the light. The promise here is that, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When we accept Christ as our Saviour, we are immediately born again and God becomes our Father. After that sin is no longer a thing to be dealt with by a judge but by a father. Neither is obedience so much a matter of keeping laws as it is endeavoring to do our Father’s will. As long

as we sincerely strive to do our Father's will He is pleased with us, even when there is still sin and failure. But when we refuse and rebel, or even flagrantly neglect to do what we know is His will, we are *unrighteous children*.

Confessing Our Sins

While we remain in this state of rebellion or neglect, our Father cannot bless us or *answer our prayers*. To confess our sins means to face them out with and before our Father—to acknowledge them, to again pledge to endeavor to do His will. Until this is done we will pray in vain for *favours*. While God as a Father does not punish sin as He does as a judge, yet if it is persisted in He does punish it as a means of discipline until we confess it, then He at once forgives it freely, wholly.

Many Christians are out of God's will but still expect God to answer their prayers. That cannot be. Others confess their sins in a formal way, but at heart they do not honestly endeavor to give up their sins. This will do no good. We must deal sincerely with our heavenly Father and then His blessing will come.

Some Prayers God Hates

Proverbs 28:9 says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." God detests such prayers for they seek to make God a party to the prayer's willful sin. God cannot approve of sin even in His own children. If He continued to answer the prayers of those who were deliberately living in sin, He would be encouraging them to remain as they were.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and *your sins* have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2). This fifth law of prayer is imperative. If we know there is unconfessed sin in our lives, let us face it at once. If we are not sure, we should ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and *show us* if there is sin which we have covered up. When He reveals it, let us confess it and take His free and full forgiveness. Then let us trust Him for the grace to overcome as we go forward. Then we can really pray.

The Sixth Law-ASKING FOR DEFINITE THINGS

To obtain the fullest results in our prayer life, the sixth law of prayer must be known and obeyed. This law is that our prayers must be definite. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11, 12). The teaching here is that God delights to supply our need and to give us precisely what we ask, if it is good for us. When we really know what we need, we show flagrant lack of faith not to ask for definite things.

There may be times when we "know not what to pray for as we ought" (Romans 8:26, 27), and these times are frequent. But if we have learned to pray "in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20), we will look to Him to guide us and burden us in prayer and He will lead us to pray for definite objects which otherwise would have escaped our attention. Spirit-guided praying is always definite and never selfish.

Some persons seem to have no vision of things to pray for. They do not sense the need of this old world, or they do not realize their privilege of bringing omnipotent power to bear upon the problems of themselves and others. These need to commune with the Holy Spirit to get His viewpoint. Much praying is but quiet communing with God, and waiting upon Him to speak to our hearts and to enlarge our horizon. Those who do all the talking when they pray are neither wise nor polite. We are none of us wise enough to plan our prayer program, which involves such tremendous issues, unaided. When Jesus spent hours in prayer much of this must have been in quiet communion. If He needed these times for prayer, so do we.

This will lead to a God-planned life and program, a God-planned prayer program. Do not promise lightly to pray for certain people or objects. Ask God about it first. As we do this we will find that our prayers will become less and less selfish. We will be led to pray for the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and for the Christian workers and missionaries who are in full-time work for the Lord. Then we should ask the Lord what service He would have us render; to go, or to stay. If to go, when and where. If to stay, what service to render where we are, in addition to praying.

Of course, the Lord would lead us to give of our means for the spread of the Gospel. Then we should ask Him how much to give and where to give it. He will surely do this, and a new day will dawn for us when we sincerely begin to pray about our giving. When God *commanded* that those under the Law give one tenth of their increase, and freewill offerings besides, for the support of the Tabernacle or Temple service, it would be reasonable that He would have us give at least that much under grace. Now that His plan is to have the Gospel preached to every creature, both children and adults, the need is much greater for money with which to support those who go.

Those who do definite praying, God-directed praying, will soon be able to look back on many answered prayers, so definitely answered that they cannot be doubted. This will surely lead to an increase in faith, and to more and better praying and serving.

Moody said that one of the greatest influences in his life came when he was a boy in his mother's home. His mother was a widow and very poor. They had but one horse and this one died. They must have a horse but they could not buy one. What was to be done? Widow Moody called her children around her and they knelt and asked God for a horse. The very next day a man brought a horse and gave it to them. Moody said no one could convince him that God did not send that horse.

Every spiritual program must be *defended* and *supported* by definite believing prayer. Every God-called man and every God-planned enterprise must have praying folk to pray out the problems. To carry on the work of God is to wage a terrific warfare with Satan and all of his hosts. Before the battle there must be preparation wrought in prayer; during the battle the warriors must be upheld by those guided of God to be intercessors; after the battle there should be praise.

The seventh Law-ASKING BY ONE WHO IS GRATEFUL

Praise and thanksgiving are fundamental to true praying. The Word says "in *every thing* give thanks." If we keep our vision clear, there is no hour so dark nor struggle so hard but that there is occasion for thanksgiving. Paul and Silas sang praises in the Philippian jail.

There are some blessings that abide, of which no one can rob us, and these are the greatest blessings of all, and all of them come from God. Let us enumerate a few of them:

1. We are saved—and know it. Our sins are all forgiven. We have peace with God. The perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, and we are complete in Him.
2. We are born again and are God's own children. As God's children we are heirs of all the fabulous riches of God. We are in the Kingdom and members of the body of Christ.
3. We are on the road to heaven, the eternal heavenly city, where sin and suffering are no more, where we will reign with Christ forever and ever. There joy shall be full and perpetual.
4. We are to be sinless and absolutely perfect, for He has promised to present us faultless before the throne of His Glory with exceeding joy.
5. We are to be glorified, with new bodies like unto the glorified body of our risen Lord, attuned both to earth and heaven; with such marvelous powers that neither distance nor elements, nor even mundane laws are a barrier. All heaven and the universe will be the field for our glorified activity.
6. Our needs are being supplied in the interim. *All things* are working together for good right now. The Holy Ghost has come and we have Him now as our indweller, to comfort us, to guide us, to teach us, and to give us power.
7. He has made us His own ambassadors! We are to win souls. The issue is their salvation for all eternity. A single soul is worth more than a world and He is trusting us to deal with world values right here and now.

Ought we not to be thankful? Should we not *adore* a God and Christ who has done all of this for us? And did we deserve it? Oh, no, we deserved but judgment instead!

Real praying should be preceded and succeeded by praise. God is so good. Each newly answered prayer should be an occasion for renewed praise. More, we should praise Him for the answer which is still on the way.

How the fogs of discouragement lift when we have the faith to begin to praise!

I walk with the King, hallelujah!
I walk with the King, praise His name!
No longer I roam, my soul faces home,
I walk and I talk with the King.

—James Rowe