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**WHEN PRAYER SEEMS NOT TO WORK**  
**By Harry Edward Jessop**

A Companion Volume to  
The Ministry of Prevailing Prayer

Other Books by the Same Author:  
Foundations of Doctrine in Scripture and Experience  
The Ministry of Prevailing Prayer  
The Day of Wrath  
I Met a Man With a Shining Face  
The Lord Shall Guide Thee Continually  
That Burning Question of Final Perseverance  
The Consecrating Believer and the Sanctifying  
God Studies in Christian Essentials

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## DEDICATION

To those perplexed believers and patient sufferers who have prayed sincerely, long, and often, concerning what have seemed to be such utterly insurmountable problems, and are so sorely tried because prayer does not seem to work, these pages are sympathetically dedicated.

\* \* \* \* \*

## INTRODUCING THE THEME

The theme of these pages is the age-old subject of prayer but discussed in some of its less popular aspects. Prayer is the simplest and yet the most profound spiritual exercise we humans will ever know. It is simple in that we are plainly urged to ask and receive, yet it is amazingly profound and often strangely puzzling in that some things so earnestly sought seem to take so long to materialize while other things seem never to be received at all.

Yet, if we are to believe our Bibles -- and for those of us who adoringly acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives, there is no other course -- no prayer breathed in faith out of an honest heart is ever Divinely disregarded, and no real need is ever left unsupplied.

It would be useless to pretend that these things do not present their problem, yet the wholly yielded soul is confident that somewhere a complete solution is to be found. Our present purpose is to work in that direction, taking the Bible and authenticated Christian experience as our guides.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PART ONE -- THE PRIVILEGES OF PRAYER

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That burns within the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,  
The falling of a tear,  
The upward glancing of an eye  
When none but God is near.

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

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,  
The Christian's native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death;  
He enters heaven with prayer.

-- James Montgomery

\* \* \* \* \*

## 01 -- IT IS NATURAL FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO PRAY

To the Christian heart, the most natural thing is to pray. In its moods of devotion, its times of uncertainty, its moments of perplexity, and its seasons of difficulty it turns instinctively to God. True it may be that some, professedly Christian, do not know such experience, yet one of two facts will always explain their lack: either, though outwardly religious, they have not as yet found a vital Christian life, or else what was once a conscious enjoyment has been allowed to die.

It is as natural for a Christian to pray as for a baby to cry. Prayer is the native language and Godward expression of the Christian soul. Methods of prayer may yet need to be acquired, and the

laws by which it is governed may need to be learned -- for the life of prayer is a school from which few among us will ever dare claim to have graduated -- yet in grace as well as in nature it is undeniably true that as soon as a child is born, beginning to live, it begins to cry. A crying babe and a praying believer are two of the most natural objects in the world.

Are you Spirit-born? Then the Father loves to hear you cry. Do not wait to learn how -- just take to crying; carry your need into your Father's presence, unload it at His feet, and begin to call upon Him.

It is interesting to notice how frequently in the inspired Word prayer is referred to as a cry. It is not an elaborate address presented in solemn awe, but a plain, simple, old-fashioned, heartfelt cry, the voice of the soul poured out into the ears of a listening God.

Of Israel in Egypt we read: "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God... and God heard their groaning" (Exodus 2:23, 24). It was a cry produced by pressure, wrung out of their very souls by the intensity of the situation in which they found themselves, a cry of agony which God heard.

Of the prophet Samuel it is recorded, "And he cried unto the Lord all night" (1 Samuel 15:11). So concerned was he over the delinquencies of Saul that while others slept he poured out his burdened heart in an agony of prayer to God.

In the Psalms it is recorded: "He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." "This poor man cried." "His ears are open unto their cry." "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth." "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me" (Psalm 9:12; 34:6, 15, 17; 138:3).

"And shall not God avenge his own elect," said Jesus, "which cry day and night unto him?" (Luke 18:7).

This soul cry is indicative of conscious helplessness. It is only when one is consciously powerless to help himself that he is likely to cry for assistance. This is well illustrated in that amazing night scene on the Galilean lake where Peter, the impetuous disciple, having stepped out of the sheltering boat onto the boisterous waves, walked on the water to go to Jesus; but his eyes, being momentarily turned away from his Master, whose power alone was holding him up, he lost his storm-treading power "and beginning to sink, he cried ..." (Matthew 14:30).

There is something so natural and instinctive about all this that it immediately arrests us. It is no stiff, starchy, half-condescending address; the situation is far too desperate for that. A soul consciously helpless is more concerned about reaching God with its need than impressing Him with its eloquence. Our heavenly Father loves to hear a crying child.

True prayer, then, is often reduced to a cry. It forgets decorum and breaks in upon Deity without asking permission. It does not pause for impressive words and well-rounded sentences; it is the soul's daring and desperate approach to an almighty God in its hour of realized need.

"For all the promises of God, whatever their number, have their confirmation in Him; and for this reason through Him also our 'Amen' acknowledges their truth and promotes the glory of God through our faith." 2 Corinthians 1:20 (Weymouth, 1908 Ed.)

\* \* \* \* \*

## 02 -- THE GROUND OF ALL TRUE PRAYER IS THE PROMISES OF GOD

All the promises of God! What an arresting expression! They are so numerous -- and so marvelously comprehensive. They are declared by Peter to be "exceeding great and precious" (2 Peter 1:4). As we peruse the Sacred Book there seems to be no end to their number and no limit to their scope. They are so vast in their range, so varied in their coverage, and so vibrant in their assertions that the soul inclined to believe God and take Him at His Word is constrained to bow in adoration and to stand in awe. They are so amazingly apparent. Open the Book anywhere, and begin to read, and there they are, page after page, promises by the thousand, unsolicited, unlimited, unbreakable, and unsurpassed.

When God makes a promise, He keeps it, fulfilling it to the letter. God always keeps His Word; the very foundation of our prayer contact with Him is the assured fact of His unimpeachable faithfulness and the inescapable guarantee in the unequivocal pledges He has made. So insistent has he become that He has gone to almost unbelievable lengths in His endeavor to convince His people of His benevolent intentions. He pleads with them to take Him seriously and to believe that He really means what He says. Take, for example, His dealing with Abraham, and that, not for Abraham's sake alone but for the sake of all who are Abraham's seed through faith.

"When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Here then, are two immutable things from an unfailing God who cannot lie -- a promise confirmed by an oath -- and all for one distinct and outstanding reason, that "we might have a strong consolation."

If it be true then that a faithful God has made such specific promises to believing souls, would it not seem reasonable to assume that where circumstances are such as to warrant it, where conditions are met so as to entitle the soul to make its claim, and where the will of God has been carefully sought so as to link the soul unfailingly with His great purposes, every promise in the Word of God should be capable of a definite fulfillment?

Nor are these promises limited in their application; they are the birthright property of all the Spirit-born. In many of them there are dispensational reaches which for their most complete fulfillment must await God's appointed time, but within all these there is a spiritual core, a timeless center, the application of which is for all time. All that is of abiding value in any Divine affirmation is made accessible to the believing soul in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you God's Spirit-born child? How much do you know about your birthright riches? Have you yet learned to take your Lord seriously in the amazing things He says to His believing people?

He means what He says! Therefore when He speaks a promise to you, making the written Word to live as you read it, you can well afford to trust Him.

"We've His Word and His oath,  
And His blood seals them both,  
And we know the Almighty can't lie."

"He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth."  
Daniel 6:27.

\* \* \* \* \*

### 03 -- MAGNIFICENT DELIVERANCES

To the believing heart, not only are these marvelous promises made, but with them also magnificent deliverances are given. God is seen again and again to equal His matchless words by His mighty works.

This proved to be true in the case of Daniel. (Daniel 6.) Humanly speaking he had no way of escape -- both men and devils had seen to that. To be thrown among hungry lions, shut in, and sealed up with the royal seal did not leave a man much of a way out. But when Darius the king, heathen though he was, saw Daniel cast into the den, he immediately expected Jehovah to work a miracle on Daniel's behalf. The words he uttered suggest this. "Thy God whom thou servest continually," said he, "he will deliver thee." These words are not to be read as a promise Divinely given to Daniel, but rather as a heathen expectation of what Daniel's God would do. It was inconceivable to this heathen mind that a man known for his faithfulness should perish while trusting his God. His mental processes seem to have been somewhat as follows: "This man is a servant of Jehovah, and he has served Him faithfully. It is solely because of his faithfulness that he now finds himself in this desperate situation. The God to whom he has been so true will surely now be true to him." Hence we have this magnificent utterance which no doubt was an encouragement to Daniel and since that time has been made a means of blessing to so many in their seasons of trial. It is worthy to be written in letters of gold or to be emblazoned in flaming words across the sky. It is a heathen king's expressed expectation, yet more! It is what the outsider expects of a God like ours all the time, and again and again His own trusting people have proved it to be true.

Yet while Daniel was proving his God inside that closed den, other things were happening on the outside. What were Daniel's friends -- Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and others -- doing that night? It would hardly seem likely that they had organized a friendly get-together, or even that they were soundly sleeping while their friend, facing hungry lions, was in danger of his life. What were they doing? There is only one reasonable answer; these men were holding a prayer meeting, and a very earnest one, too. "what proof is there?" does someone ask? There is abundant proof by implication for all who possess a spiritual conception -- the loyalty of their prayerful hearts.

Nor were Daniel's friends the only ones concerned that night. Within the royal palace the king also had a night of prayer in the best fashion he knew. We are not suggesting that he prayed intelligently as we pray, yet we cannot but feel that out of the semi-darkness of that heathen mind he manifested a concern about Daniel which Jehovah did not disregard. The customary music of the palace was silent and the feasting stopped, as with a tension hitherto unknown the heathen monarch paced those royal halls.

Then may it not also be assumed that Daniel himself prayed? Who would not pray under conditions such as these? What would you have done? Even men without previous religious convictions have begun to cry mightily to God with less danger than hungry lions facing them. There was no panic in his heart -- his entire demeanor is conspicuously marked by the absence of fear, but that very fact would argue for a praying heart. Moreover, as we read the story we are reminded that it was the fact of his prayer habits that was responsible for getting him into the den; it is therefore reasonable to assume that he would be likely to continue praying when he reached it. Without doubt, Daniel also prayed his way out.

It also proved to be true in the case of Peter. (Acts 12.) A persecution was being waged against the Church, organized by the king himself. James, the brother of John, had already been executed, and Peter was the next victim on the list. He had been arrested and placed under armed guard and was now being kept in prison. The night before his scheduled execution had arrived, but before the fatal hour when the executioner should have entered the cell, another visitor, altogether unexpected by the authorities, made a surprise call. Peter was serenely sleeping, bound though he was and lying between his soldier guards. Suddenly a light flooded the dungeon; a shining presence appeared, and Peter, his bands having been miraculously struck off, was led triumphantly out.

What was the secret of all this? Was Peter specially favored above the rest? We think not. The secret, if such it could be called, is plainly stated in the story itself: "Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him... He came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying" (Verses 5, 12).

It proved to be true with the heroes of faith whose deliverances are listed by the writer to the Hebrews. (Hebrews 11.) What an amazing list it is -- Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab -- leading to verses such as these: "And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and of Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of

weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned, to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again."

It has been proved true in the case of many another since that day. The Bible is vibrant with Divine deliverances through answered prayer, but these miracles did not cease with the closing of the sacred record; they have happened all through the years, and they are happening still.

Not long ago the heart of our nation thrilled with thanksgiving over the marvelous deliverance of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker. The story is now so familiar that only the barest details need to be repeated. Their plane having been wrecked, the captain and his men drifted without food and water on the open sea, they having only four small oranges to sustain them for more than three weeks. But here is the amazing part of the story: "The little boy in my boat had a Bible in the pocket of his jumper, and the second day out we organized prayer meetings in the evening and morning and took turns reading passages from the Bible, and frankly and humbly we prayed for our deliverance. After the oranges were gone, there showed up a terrific lot of pangs of hunger, and we prayed for food. We had a couple of little fish-lines with hooks about the size of my little finger, but no bait, and if it wasn't for the fact that I had seven witnesses, I dare not tell this story because it seems so fantastic. Within an hour after prayer meeting a sea gull came in and landed on my head, and you can imagine my nervousness in trying to turn around and get him, which I did. We wrung his head and feathered him, carved up his carcass, and distributed and used his innards for bait..."

The story of the thrilling rescue of these men has amazed the world, and this nation has been compelled to acknowledge, on the testimony of one of its most honored and trusted citizens, that God still answers prayer.

Don't you ever have any prayer miracles to record? How long is it since you had a real answer? Are you content to go on without receiving them and without even asking why? If no prayer answers are being seen, it is surely time you were making some inquiries. It must be a desolate heart to whose pleading God never responds. Other people get answers to prayer, why not you?

Sometimes the answer is of such a nature that it cannot be gainsaid, but more often the things of which the praying soul would speak are of a personal and private nature and could not be related to the general public. A stranger, not being acquainted with the background circumstances, would fail to realize the significance of the deliverance, while the one immediately concerned is deeply conscious of answered prayer. Spectacular display is not at all important; it is the prayer life itself that counts. The just shall live by faith!

These magnificent deliverances, seen in life's major crises or worked out in life's manifold details, are the treasured memories of the believing soul.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Romans 9:1-3.

Of the world's Redeemer it is prophetically stated: "He shall see of the travail of his soul" (Isaiah 53:11). Into that deepest mystery of His amazing Redemption price, we, His redeemed people, may never enter. There, the road trodden was essentially solitary; His deepest sufferings were borne alone. When, with herald's shout, He proclaimed His Calvary victory, crying with a loud voice, "It is finished," He left nothing to be added, for there He accomplished what none other could ever perform.

There is, however, an identification with Him -- a faith union in death and resurrection which, according to some very definite Scripture passages, deals with the sinfulness of our nature, severs us from world fascination, and brings the soul into a risen life of victory and blessing not of the soul's own origin but by Divine impartation; it is the risen life of the Son of God. (Romans 6; Galatians 2:20.)

Within this risen life, approached through a personal appropriation of the Calvary work of Jesus and applied by the Holy Spirit as He baptizes the soul into Christ's death and leads it On into a suffering fellowship, there is a ministry of intercession which becomes precious indeed. Calvary is more than a place where the God-man died alone, precious though that thought may be. It is the place where the members of His body are identified with Him, their suffering Head. Moreover, the place opens out into a way, a lifelong path, beginning in that moment of supreme surrender when the soul determines to make God's will, as He reveals it, its enduring life pattern, and which, though winding through many a stony valley and over many a rocky height, at length reaches the city of God.

This thought of suffering fellowship is touched, though lightly, by the apostle in two notable passages:

"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10).

The question here immediately arises: What is this suffering? What is its nature? Of what does it consist? And soon we begin to realize that the answer is far more comprehensive than at first it appeared. It has, without doubt, a physical content.

This is seen in numerous passages, representative of which are the following:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we

which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:8-11).

"In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Such amazing catalogues of physical suffering for Christ's sake mean little to us, situated as we are in this highly favored land. They meant much to those early believers, and are not without meaning to many who are suffering for Christ's sake in other lands today.

Yet physical suffering is not by any means all that this suffering fellowship contains.

There is a suffering in spirit, a distinct travail of soul. Not all Christians know it. Some there are, though upright in life, unblemished in character, and without question honestly loving and serving their Lord as best they know how, who never seem to enter into this deeper secret. In the days of His flesh our Lord took all His disciples to the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee where the joys of fellowship were known; into the fields and lanes and crowded cities all His disciples accompanied Him in those days of strenuous service; yet into Gethsemane's Garden with its shadows, its wrestling, its agonies of sweat mingled with blood, He led only three specially selected souls.

And are there not those today who know what it means to enter into a suffering fellowship with their Lord? to bleed in spirit that others might be blessed? to pray until prayer becomes an agony, and being in agony to pray more earnestly?

What did Paul mean when he wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19)? Ask that expectant mother soon to be delivered; she can tell you.

"What!" exclaims someone, shocked by the analogy, "do you mean to suggest that spiritually a person may go through agonies equivalent to physical birth pangs on behalf of another soul?" There can be no doubt about it, and, moreover, when those agonies are endured, something inevitably happens in the experience of the one concerned. However, let this be clearly understood, soul travail is a sacred thing -- as sacred as the birth pangs of a mother. It can neither be manufactured nor worked up. It may be imitated, but a spurious travail produces nothing save confusion. Soul travail is the work of the Holy Spirit alone; it is He who intercedes through the yielded soul with groanings which cannot be expressed.

\* \* \* \* \*

## PART TWO -- THE PERPLEXITIES OF PRAYER

"We are perplexed, but not in despair." 2 Corinthians 4:8.

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up His bright designs,  
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.

HIS purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding ev'ry hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flow'r.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
And scan His work in vain:  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.

-- William Cowper

### 05 -- THE PERPLEXITIES STATED

After all that has been written in the earlier pages, it may come as a surprise, even a shock to some, when we suggest that the life of prayer may have its perplexities. Surely, in the light of the plain teaching of the Word of God, with its marvelous promises, its clear declarations, and its outstanding examples, there can be no room for perplexity with regard to answered prayer.

On first thought, this would doubtless seem to be the case, yet when these things are measured in the light of actual experience, it is often their very explicitness which produces the difficulty. Here, however, at the very outset of our inquiry, we must distinguish between the

perplexity of an honest heart through lack of spiritual understanding, and the doubting moods and critical attitudes which arise in an unyielded nature.

Who has not met these difficulties? No Christian worker is long at his job without having to face them concerning his own experience and also concerning the experiences of others. It is not uncommon to see the young Christian begin with a bounding enthusiasm as, open Bible in hand, he declares with an unfailing emphasis bordering on dogmatism what God is able to do. He puts God to the test, as we often hear him call it, and rejoices to find that God is as good as His Word. Sooner or later, however, other things begin to happen. In his own experience needs arise of a different nature from those he has known heretofore. He prays and believes, but there are long delays. Some of the things for which he asks do not seem to come at all. In his heart he is sure that God is true, but in his mind he is perplexed, and while he praises God for the prayer answers he receives, he maintains a judicious silence about the other petitions which have not materialized.

Then, there are other difficulties. There is the voice of the skeptic who scornfully declares, "There is nothing to it"; the wistful word of the anxious soul who says, "I have prayed, but nothing seems to happen; it just doesn't work"; the tragic questioning of the mother who, in spite of almost frantic praying, has been compelled to relinquish her hold on that baby boy and to see its lifeless little body placed in the cold damp ground; the bereaved husband, who, through a process of years, has watched his wife's condition grow steadily worse. She has received the best medical attention he has been able to secure, even though he has been compelled to borrow the money to obtain it; they have prayed together for her deliverance, and hundreds of God's best praying people have joined them in their petitions; yet, despite it all, she has died, and as he sits looking at the lifeless form and then turns his eyes to the pathetic figure of his motherless little girl, he naturally wonders, Why?

Or, take a case like the following: Here is a young lady whose piety is beyond question; her life is wholly yielded to God, and she has placed herself, as she describes it, "on the altar for service." She has taken what little money she has saved to go to Bible School and has supplemented it by what work she has been able to obtain. Before her training is completed, however, there are signs of lameness, and after her graduation she works for only a little while before being compelled to quit. She and her friends begin to pray for her deliverance, yet month after month she grows worse. Doctors do not seem able to help. Operation after operation is performed until in a hospital ward she lies helpless, and from the human viewpoint, hopeless, too. Day after day she prays, and request after request is sent to her praying friends. Those who esteem her highly in the Lord lay hold of God with strong crying and tears, but in her case it doesn't seem to work. Here is a quotation from one of her letters:

"They tell me now my hips are solid from arthritis." Some heart-rending details follow; then she adds, "I can't explain this. I'm fighting hard, but oh, I can't explain it. It seems I have prayed and believed so long, and now I can't pray as I did. I tried to witness for God daily, but now, when it seems almost as though God has forsaken me (and yet I know He has not), I just can't say anything. I can't understand why my knees must stay stiff. Oh, if God would only touch them. I can't wait on myself, and I don't know what I am going to do. I am not afraid to die, but I am afraid to face life, helpless... I can't understand why..."

Here then is a heart supremely loyal to its Lord, yet sorely perplexed. She is not rebellious, but she is deeply concerned. Is the Lord grieved when His perplexed people, unable to comprehend His providential dealings, humbly but tearfully turn and ask Him, Why?

Here again is a letter of very recent date, from an entirely different source and having behind it an entirely different set of circumstances.

"This letter may sound strange to you. I am reading your Ministry of Prevailing Prayer, and the directness of answers to prayer has impressed me, and yet one of the great evangelists in this country, who has experienced very definite touches of healing on more than one occasion, was sick in my house. People were praying for recovery all over the country., and yet my friend suddenly slipped away. I confess that it has proved a shock to me... With all the prayers that went up, why did not something avail...?"

There it is again -- the same old heart cry. Why? Why?? Why???

Then, in contrast to the thrilling rescue story of Captain Eddie Rickenbacker referred to in an earlier chapter, take the following:

Alleta N. Jacobsz, an honored servant of God, known for her consecrated service and deep piety, was on her way home from the mission field, and on February 19, 1942, addressed a letter from South Africa to her friend, Miss Helen Santee in California. Here is a portion of what she wrote:

"His grace has become to me so marvelous that tears have been the only language sometimes. When I deserved that He should upbraid me, He comforted me; that He should cast me off, He drew me to His heart; that He should forget me, He was more than a mother to me. His love is the sweetest sweetness my life has ever known! Oh, when I think of the costliness of His love! Oh, the luxury of just being free to love Him and having the one longing just to be good to Him, He 'the sweet Friend of my soul.'

"The gift of forgiveness has become sweet to me in a new way as I have pondered the cost. To pardon me, He had to curse His only Child, the Treasure of His heart! To mend me, He had to break Him until nought save the Cross on which He hung was whole! To lay nothing to my charge, He charged His own Son with the guilt the world could produce! To give me a father's pity, He met His own Son with wrath and a curse in His dying hour! To give me a mother's care, He forsook His own, unlike a mother, in His hour of loneliness and need! To let me have a taste of the sweetness of Heaven, He caused His own Son to have a taste of the bitterness of hell in His soul. To fill my heart with all the peace it can contain, He filled the heart of His own Son with all the agony it could contain.

Oh, fathomless love of a father's heart  
For me a sinner, once sunk in fathomless sin!  
I love Him! I love Him!

"Will you pray for me that God may get all out of my life that Calvary can get out of it, and that in me and through me He may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

One has only to read this letter to realize how close its writer lived to the Lord, but after reading it, it will come as a shock to the reader to learn that this saint of God never reached America. The ship on which she sailed was sunk, and after many days of drifting at sea, she died of exposure.

Could it be that, unlike Captain Rickenbacker, this godly woman did not pray for deliverance during those days of stress? The very suggestion seems like sacrilege. Of course she prayed. Prayer to her was a second nature and under such circumstances she must have prayed as she had never prayed before. Yet Captain Rickenbacker was saved but Miss Jacobsz, whose life was of inestimable value to the cause of Christ in the foreign field, died of exposure. Again the question comes, Why? O Lord, Why?

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## 06 -- WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

As this inquiry is pursued, it will probably come as a further shock when it is realized that not all the prayers of even the best among the Bible characters were immediately answered. Some were positively denied; in other cases there were seasons of grave concern over what seemed to be direct indications of Divine inactivity when help was needed most. Take for example the case of Moses.

"And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God... let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Mount Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan" (Deuteronomy 3:23-27).

Note some expressions found in the Psalms.

"I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief" (Psalm 6:6, 7).

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:1, 2).

"I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God" (Psalm 69:2, 3).

"Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die... I am distracted" (Psalm 88:14, 15). Take the experience of Job.

"I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not. Thou art become cruel to me" (Job 30:20, 21).

Listen to the Lamentation of Jeremiah.

"Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lamentations 3:44).

Hear the cry of Habakkuk.

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" (Habakkuk 1:2).

Consider the experience of Paul.

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me... For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me" (2 Corinthians 12:7, 8).

Think of those listed on that glorious Honor Roll in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

In the earlier section, captioned "Magnificent Deliverances," we cited that glorious company recorded in chapter eleven who did exploits for God in the realm of faith. Those familiar with the chapter, however, would be conscious that in our quotation we stopped rather than finished. The faith of those there quoted was expressed in their manifested victories, and those marvelous victories have set hearts aglow and have encouraged and stimulated to Christian endeavor down through all the ages. Yet we cannot but feel that, had the Honor Roll closed there, it would have been exceedingly incomplete, for it would have excluded representatives of another section of heroes not always so readily recognized, joined to the illustrious triumphants by those two simple words, "and others." "And others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy: ) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith..." (Hebrews 11:36-39).

And has it not ever been so? We say much about those fine Hebrew lads who trod triumphantly a furnace floor, the heat of which consumed the men who worked the furnace; yet let it never be forgotten that the history of the Church has pages aflame with burning fagots amid which trusting believers have actually burned for the sake of their Lord, and no miracle has been worked to free them from the flames. Daniel defied the royal decree and braved the lions. God honored his faith and closed the mouths of the savage beasts, yet the Church has its records of brave men and gentle women, even of youths and maidens who, rather than renounce their faith in Jesus, went

calmly into the arena, but no miracle was worked for their deliverance; the lions tore them to pieces and crunched their bones in their cruel teeth.

Peter went into the dungeon, and though manacled and bound, his chains were struck off, formidable doors were opened, and an angel led him out; yet some of God's choicest saints have languished in prison and died in dungeons while so miraculous intervention has been made on their behalf. Nay, it is also true that many of the very people for whose deliverance miracles were definitely wrought have at a later period found themselves in circumstances from which they were not delivered, and as martyrs they died for their Lord.

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## 07 -- FACING THE WHY OF UNANSWERED PRAYER -- Where The Answer Is Denied

It now becomes evident that this subject of prayer and its answers is much wider in its reach than hitherto many have realized. To some prayers, the answer is immediately dispatched; to others the answer is indefinitely delayed; while to others the answer is necessarily denied.

With the immediate answers we are not now concerned. These, to all true believers, are an established fact, as we have already sought to show. The problem before us is not, "Does God answer any prayer?" If this were the question, it would be readily answered, and the issue would easily be closed. The problem rather is this: God does answer prayer! His Word declares that He does, and His people bear witness that this is true, and yet in some lives there are seasons when prayer does not seem to bring the desired results. What may be stated as the reason for this?

We are left then with the two remaining types of prayer -- namely, those where the answer is denied and those where the answer is deferred. Between these it is not always easy to draw a hard and fast line, although there are some prayers which God manifestly cannot answer.

There are prayers to which the answer is definitely denied.

In other words, there are prayers which God could not stoop to answer:

1. God does not answer prayer where there is cherished sin in the heart.

The Psalmist expressed it well when he wrote: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

Sin cherished in the heart shuts God's ears to our praying. When we say sin cherished, we do not necessarily mean sin committed. Sin regarded in the heart is damning in its effect. The fall of Lucifer, son of the morning, is attributed to this very thing: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!... For thou hast said in thine heart..." (Isaiah 14:12, 13).

There is no evidence that anything disloyal to Jehovah had passed his lips, yet rebellion had transpired in his heart. It is possible to refrain from sinning because of the feared consequences and yet to find pleasure in the thought of it, thus cherishing it in the heart. The wise

man of the Scriptures showed how deep was his insight when he wrote: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Sinful thoughts in the heart and praying words on the lips are not compatible. "The Lord will not hear."

2. God does not answer prayer where there are idols in the heart. The prophet Ezekiel portrayed such a situation when he wrote as follows:

"Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the Lord will answer him by myself: and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 14:1-8). Note the threefold expression:

"Their idols in their heart" (Verse 3). "His idols in his heart" (Verse 4). "His idols in his heart" (Verse 7).

An idol, in the Scriptural sense, is to be interpreted as either thing or person which tends to occupy an undue place in the affections. Whatever is loved and worshipped in the place of God is an idol. Heathen people set up idols in their temples; Christians -- so called -- set up idols in their hearts. If your inner nature could be made bare, what would be found on the shrine of your heart? Any thing or person though good in itself, may, if out of Divine order, defile the heart and mar the life. Three times this heart difficulty is called "The stumblingblock of... iniquity" (Verses 3, 4, 7). Idols in the heart stand directly in the way of access to God.

3. God does not answer prayer where there is an unreconciled heart.

"If thou bring thy gift to the altar," said Jesus, "and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24).

The Holy Spirit is always faithful to the seeking soul at the altar. He is the Divine Remembrancer. To faithful souls it is promised, "He shall... bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26). At the altar of prayer where a soul is seeking, He is always specially present, showing the way, and reminding of things long since pushed into memory's background which may need to be cleared up.

Frequently the difficulty standing in the way of blessing is a misunderstanding, a grudge, an old account between the seeker and some other person; this the faithful Holy Spirit will never fail to reveal. When the blockage is removed, the blessing begins to flow.

4. God does not answer prayer where there is a wrongly disposed heart. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" writes the apostle James. "Ye ask, and receive not," says he, "because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:1, 3, 4).

Here then are three traits of the inner life which block the spirit of prayer and stand directly in the way of an answer getting through:

a. Antagonism within the heart blocks the life of prayer. "Wars and fightings among you." A spirit which retaliates, perpetuates a grudge, and keeps old feuds alive will never know the joy of answered prayer.

b. Selfishness within the heart blocks the life of prayer. "Ye ask... that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Praying for selfish ends! The thing sought may in itself be good, but if the motive in seeking it is wrong, the way to blessing is definitely blocked.

c. Worldliness within the heart blocks the life of prayer. "A friend of the world is the enemy of God." It is possible to become worldly and remain in membership with the visible Church, but no man ever began to walk with the world and retained his walk with God. Whoever tries to do this will find that his prayer life will immediately begin to wilt; either he will cease to ask, or continuing to ask, he will ask amiss.

5. God does not answer prayer where there is carnal contention in the home. The apostle Peter has an illuminating word here; it is a much needed message to husbands and wives concerning the details of the daily lives of the people of God.

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:1-7).

Literally, what Peter here says is this: Be careful concerning the little things; glorify God in the details of life behind the scenes; otherwise your prayers will be hindered. The poise of soul union between two whom "God hath joined together" is so delicate and fine that the slightest twist

is reflected in the spiritual experience of both and reacts upon the prayer life of each. For the sake of the spiritual experience of its occupants no home can afford to have its spats and minor estrangements; they rob the home of its prayer power and leave its occupants spiritually poor.

6. God does not answer where the petition crosses the line of His sovereign will. This brings us more directly toward the heart of our subject--namely, that there are cases, as we have already seen, where the soul is clear in its relationship Godward, yet in the hour of emergency the cry to God for deliverance has been seemingly in vain. Take, for instance, the question of bereavement. The answer should not be difficult to find.

There is a time, known only to God Himself, when the earthly sojourn of each individual must terminate. Sometimes this Home-call will come through natural causes, sometimes through sudden death, sometimes through death by accident, or sometimes through lingering disease. To pray for recovery when it is God's appointed time for a person to leave the world would obviously be to pray contrary to the Divine purposes and consequently to pray in vain. Yet even here a warning note should be uttered. There have been cases where death has been suspended in response to a perpetual clamor which refused to be silenced, yet where the person praying has lived to regret the prayer that was uttered and the answer received.

While we have no means of checking the following story, it is passed on to the reader in good faith as having been heard on several occasions, and there seems to be no reason to doubt its truth. A mother whose baby was desperately sick cried impetuously to God for its restoration. When it was suggested to her that it might not be the Divine will to heal the child, but that in His own good providence which she might not then understand He might want to take it Home, she stubbornly rebelled and clamored for its healing. The child recovered and grew to manhood, only to commit a major crime for which he paid the supreme penalty of the law. Through her blinding tears the weeping mother is said to have exclaimed, "If only I had let God take him when He wanted him, my heart would not be broken today."

Our stubbornness even in prayer may cross God's will, but let us be assured that it will not bring us anything better than God had originally planned. A broken heart in the will of God is ten thousand times better than an easy path of our own choosing. A loved one taken in His good providence is a link forged between us and the Glory World. Our stubbornness may for the moment thwart what God in His wisdom would do, but that, surely, cannot be called answered prayer. Is it not written concerning Israel when with carnal hearts they lusted in the wilderness, "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul"?

"It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). That appointment is not made according to age but in the all-wise planning of an omniscient God whose heart overflows with compassionate love. Prayer surely cannot be intended as a means of thwarting that appointment. So long as the race is under the curse, death is God's method of taking His loved ones Home. Whenever that Home-call comes, broken hearts will be left behind to mourn the loss. Does it seem unkind to suggest that in the insistence that our loved one may be spared there may be an element of self-pity? Would not the submissive seeking of the Divine will first and foremost become a ground for the assuaging of our grief, and the Divine grace so freely given causing us to triumph in the midst of our tears become such a testimony to a skeptical world as to make it pause and think?

When William Booth, founder and first General of the Salvation Army, passed to his reward, his funeral was an occasion of triumph. As that great procession passed the Salvation Army Headquarters in Queen Victoria Street, the Army flag remained flying at the top of the flag-staff. A newspaper reporter commented on this, inquiring why the flag had not been lowered to half-mast if only while the funeral procession passed. The answer received was magnificent, "The Salvation Army never lowers its flag to death." The death of any one of their number is spoken of as a "promotion to Glory." Said John Wesley concerning the early Methodists, "Our people die well." "Call this death?" said D. L. Moody. "It is my coronation." Alfred Cookman, facing death's open portals triumphantly cried, "I am sweeping through the gates of the New Jerusalem, washed in the blood of the Lamb."

For the bloodwashed believer called home to God, and for the child not having reached the age of accountability, death has no sting. Why, then, should we, who for a little while are left behind, begin to murmur and complain? We are yet human, and in our bereavements our hearts must ache, but by His wonderful grace we may triumph in the midst of our sorrow and thereby glorify Him whom we love and serve. We are aware, of course, that disease, disaster, and death may threaten the life prematurely, and in such a case a soul in contact with God will be discerning and will pray through to victory.

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#### 08 -- FACING THE WHY OF UNANSWERED PRAYER -- Where The Answer Is Deferred

There are prayers to which the answer is indefinitely deferred.

We say deferred because the thought to which we now come differs from that which we have just discussed; it is the suffering of the believer -- and we use the word, suffering, in the widest sense -- where, although the prayer life is faithfully maintained, the promises are pleaded, and deliverance is expected, there is within the soul a strange sense of frustration. At first it is puzzling, for there is no consciousness of having side-stepped the Lord's will, yet, while on the one hand there is the assuring sense of the Divine caress, there is also the consciousness of pressure, even to the point of pain. Then, circumstances become difficult, and misunderstandings arise. Physically there is difficulty, and withal, the powers of darkness, taking advantage of the situation, bring their accusations, insinuations, and suggestions, and hurl their fiery darts against the soul. This is the evil day in which the perplexed believer must learn to stand.

Something vital is now going on deep down in the experience of the believing soul. It is not now indwelling sin that concerns him; it is rather the vital issues of a deeper life. Prayer begins to take on a new meaning. It is no more a convenient agency for getting things, but rather an intimate relationship where immediate answers for things take a very secondary place, and God's will and purpose covering the process of spiritual development is the greatest concern. By slow degrees two things begin to be realized:

1. The Holy Spirit is now leading the soul into a fellowship of suffering. That fellowship is deep and mystical; it is far-flung and wide. It concerns not merely ourselves and our

contemporaries but also all the great souls of the past who through grace have walked the Holy Way. It embraces the prophets and the apostles, the Church Fathers, the mystics and the martyrs, the men and women of God of all ages who have scorned the sinful, renounced the carnal, triumphed over the natural, and found a new realm of spiritual relationship in Christ. Moreover, it embraces Christ Himself, our mystic Head in whom all are joined and from whom, to all who know the vital contact with Him, streams of spiritual virtue flow. Numerous Scripture passages may be cited, some of which will help us here:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:16-18).

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:7-15).

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:11, 12).

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:12-19).

Consider then these outstanding expressions as they appear in the Scriptures just read:

"If so be that we suffer with him .... The sufferings of this present time..." (Romans 8:17, 18).

"The fellowship of his sufferings..." (Philippians 3:10).

"If we suffer..., with him..." (2 Timothy 2:12).

"Partakers of Christ's sufferings .... Them that suffer according to the will of God." (1 Peter 4:13, 19).

This suffering fellowship is more fully expressed by the apostle Paul in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. The fact of suffering and its reward in its Old Testament aspect is beautifully set forth in the book of Job, as later we shall see, but the suffering here is different in its character. Job's suffering was not by choice; it was inescapable. Paul's suffering was endured as the result of a position he took, a cause he espoused, an experience he sought, a prayer he offered. It was a fellowship into which he deliberately entered. Listen to him as he puts it on record:

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:6-18).

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in lastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:1-10).

What then must be our conclusion concerning this suffering fellowship? We can only conclude that in some manner, the depth of which we shall never fully understand until we reach the Shore where all mysteries are made plain, there is a ministry of suffering out of which blessing is made to flow in a rich abundance to the lives of others. Hence that remarkable word of Paul to the Colossian believers:

"I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the church" (Colossians 1:23, 24).

2. The Holy Spirit is taking the soul into a school of learning. As He becomes Master of the life, there are ever deeper lessons which He seeks to teach us. This teaching is vital. In the days of His flesh even our Lord Himself needed it, as the following Scriptures will show:

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:10,11).

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:7-9).

How much more then shall we in the school of the Holy Ghost need our lessons today. a. We must be taught deep lessons in patience. Who among us has ever felt that these lessons have been learned with sufficient thoroughness? And yet how few have realized that when prayer along some lines has seemed so far from being answered, that very fact is the answer to the petition of an earlier day? What was it you said when kneeling at the altar of consecration seeking a holy heart and a Christlike life? In your eagerness to become wholly the Lord's, were not your utterances somewhat as follows: "Dear Lord, whatever it may cost, make me all Thou would'st have me be!" Soon the Lord began to do that very thing, but how different and even unexpected has been the Divine making from the idea you had in asking. The asking was momentary, but the making became much more than that. Now a process is involved, and here it is, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:3-5).

"Tribulation worketh patience." For what did you ask? Patience? Then He immediately set the machinery in motion for its working. Why should you now complain of unanswered prayer because of God's faithfulness in answering that earlier petition?

Is it not conceivable that something of this very nature is involved in what we have learned to call Paul's "thorn in the flesh"? (2 Corinthians 12:79). The thorn, whatever it might have been, was for spiritual profit -- Divinely given ballast to enable him to keep an even keel. One sometimes wonders how many of us would actually make Port at all if it were not for the ballast we are made to carry -- ballast which so often Satan would have us believe is merely a dead weight.

b. We must be taught stern lessons in obedience. Again we must go back in time to the earlier days of our experience and recall those sacred occasions when with hands raised to heaven so prayerfully we sang:

"Have Thy way, Lord, have Thy way;  
This with all my heart I say;  
I'll obey Thee, come what may,  
Dear Lord, have Thy way."

What is the worth of a pledged obedience which is never tested? And what if it should please the Lord to test by inactivity rather than by activity? We are apt to associate our obedience to God with marching, fighting, and working. But what if it has to do with our being on our back rather than on our feet? Shall we then from that horizontal position so persistently cry to God for a miraculous manifestation of His power that later we may find ourselves in other circumstances from which in His all-wise foreknowledge He was graciously seeking to save us? Are not His tender withholdings far better than His indiscriminate givings, and do these discriminations violate any of His beneficent prayer promises? Shall He now mar the magnificent plan for the development of our spiritual experience in Christlikeness of character by heeding our childish screams and groans when the probing begins to hurt? What if, like our Lord, our obedience is to be learned through the things that we suffer?

c. We must be taught direct lessons in trust. The case of Elijah will help us here not when he shone so conspicuously at Carmel, but when, in preparation for Carmel, he sat inactive at Cherith and at Zarephath. (1 Kings 17:1-16.) There was something magnificently daring about the faith exercised on Carmel's Mount when, in the face of a sinning king, a polluted priesthood, and a backslidden nation, he challenged the power of Baal and in the name of Jehovah called down fire from heaven. There is something about the very thrill of a great occasion that lends impetus to the faith of a praying man, but when there are no crowds to challenge him, no forces to drive him, and nothing but a drying brook or a poverty-stricken widow with a handful of meal facing him through weary weeks, months, and even years of inactivity, the story is very different. Here then is the lesson of simple trust, one of those seasons when it is plain that, for the present at any rate, the situation cannot be altered. What man with any sense of initiative wants to sit by a drying brook, and who with strength to work will easily tolerate the thought of being fed out of the slender resources of a widow? What strange lessons God has to teach us! It is still true that he who would triumph openly at Carmel must first tread the way of Cherith and Zarephath. A straight path to Carmel without the Cherith and Zarephath discipline would be so dangerous as to ruin the experience and wreck the service of many a daring soul.

d. We must be taught lessons in faith.

As we now use the words, we would distinguish in our thinking between faith and trust, in that trust is the restful attitude of the soul in repose, while faith is the aggressive quality which a trusting soul can exercise. Faith is a fighting weapon with various degrees of effectiveness, hence we read of "great faith" (Matthew 8:10; 15:28); increased faith (Luke 18:8.); "little faith" (Matthew 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8); "faith as a grain of mustard seed" (Matthew 17:20);

mountain-moving faith (Mark 11:22, 23.); understanding faith (Hebrews 11:3.); discriminating faith as seen in Abel (Hebrews 11:4.); God-pleasing faith as seen in Enoch (Hebrews 11:5, 6.); obedient faith as seen in Noah and Abraham (Hebrews 11:7-10, 17-19.); expectant faith as seen in Sara, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (Hebrews 11:20-22); renouncing faith as seen in Moses (Hebrews 11:23-27.); protecting faith as seen in Moses and Israel on the Passover night (Hebrews 11:28.); miracle-working faith as seen in the Red Sea crossing and in Jericho's falling walls (Hebrews 11:29, 30.); kingdom-subduing, righteousness-working, promise-obtaining, lion-conquering, fire-quickening, sword-escaping, alien-chasing faith as seen in Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets (Hebrews 11:31-34.); martyr-producing faith as seen in the heroes who preferred death to deliverance (Hebrews 11:35-40.).

Someone has said that faith has three distinct stages -- namely, the faith that reckons, the faith that rests, and the faith that risks. The men of faith are men of abandonment, but not by the desperate gamble of immature, reckless, and suicidal acts. That is not faith; it is stark fanaticism. The abandonment of faith is reached through a step-by-step obedience; short steps at first like an infant's stride, then as confidence is gained and lessons are learned, the steps become quickened and lengthened until miracles happen. In this development, unexpected sacrifices are demanded, as with Abraham (Genesis 22.); hard and difficult tasks are assigned, as with Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jeremiah 1:1-10; Ezekiel 2.); painful and humiliating experiences are permitted, as with Paul and Silas (Acts 16:22-24.); perplexing delays are experienced, as with Mary and Martha (John 11:1-21.); buffeting temptations are endured as described by the apostle James (James 1:2, 3.).

Sometimes the soul is brought to the fortified city which he must compass to the accompaniment of ram's-horn testimony day after day before being permitted to raise the shout that brings down the walls (Joshua 6.). Sometimes he is compelled to stand and watch a process of depletion and defection before being permitted to give the signal to blow the trumpets and break the lamps (Judges 6, 7.). Sometimes he is called upon to dig ditches in the valley for expected water when there is no appearance of rain (2 Kings 3.). Sometimes he is bidden to go and borrow empty vessels and not to stint the number, even though to fill them there is only a small pot of oil (2 Kings 4.). Sometimes he is sent to show himself to the priest although it is not until he is on his way thither that his leprosy is cleansed.

In taking the soul through these strange experiences, what is the great Teacher doing? He is drawing it out in step-by-step obedience, strengthening it as onward it goes, until at length, as it stands before seemingly impossible things He can say, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" and in answer to the "Yea, Lord," He can reply, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:27-30).

Thus, step by step is the soul led on into a victorious faith experience which rejoices to sing:

"Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you cannot tunnel through?  
God specializes in things that seem impossible,  
And He can do what no other power can do."

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### PART THREE -- THE POTENCY OF PRAYER

"The skin of his face shone while he talked with him." Exodus 34:29.

"And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." Luke 9:29.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18.

### 09 -- PRAYER IS A TRANSFORMING POWER

If it could be proved with unanswerable certainty that no tangible material benefits were ever received in answer to prayer, it would still be abundantly worth while for every sensible human being to engage in that holy exercise, not for the sake of the influence his praying would have with God, but solely for the sake of the influence such praying, under the blessing of God, would have upon his own nature. There are some suggestions of this in the three Scripture passages here quoted. Concerning Moses -- Exodus 34

At the call of Jehovah he had been alone in the Mount where for practically six weeks he had enjoyed unbroken fellowship with Him.

Just what transpired there we are not told, except that "he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Verse 28).

As he descended the mountain, emerging from that hallowed communion which had so entranced him as to lift him beyond the consciousness of physical needs for a period of forty days, his countenance beamed with a supernatural glory. Something divinely wrought had taken place within his personality, the working of which had for an entire six-week period superseded even his natural appetites and imparted to him a radiancy instantly recognized by all who saw him. Concerning our Lord Jesus -- Luke 9

Here also is a Mount, known to us now as the Mount of Transfiguration. The fact of the Transfiguration is recorded for us by each of the three Synoptic writers, yet, strangely enough, only Luke notices the fact that it was "as he prayed" that "the fashion of his countenance was altered." Matthew and Mark place the emphasis on the fact of transfiguration. Luke, however, seems to get a deeper insight into the incident and emphasizes the cause which brought it about.

It would be interesting to know how many times our Lord was transfigured during those many nights of prayer. Only one occasion is reported and that possibly because only one was witnessed; consequently it has become known as The Transfiguration, yet one sometimes thinks that if human eyes could have followed the praying Christ continually in His night vigils among the Palestinian hills, they might have witnessed other experiences of a similar character. On this

occasion, however, He had taken with Him three of His disciples, hence their astonishing experience and the amazing threefold report.

Moses appeared, and Elijah was present, but the impressing fact was the radiant glory. It was around Him and also upon Him, but more wonderful still, it was in Him and from Him. "His countenance was altered." Just how all this actually happened is a question far too sacred for general discussion, for we are now standing on holy ground. Instinctively we take the shoes from off our feet, but even then we can approach no farther; we fall on our faces and adore, and when compelled reluctantly to leave the holy place, our hearts are murmuring, "Here is transfiguration which is the product of intercession -- Lord, teach us to pray." From the pen of Paul -- 2 Corinthians 3

The argument of the apostle in this chapter embraces both the previous Scriptures. He begins by discussing the radiancy of Moses -- which, he reminds his readers, was a fading glory and therefore was to be done away -- and contrasts it with the glory of the gospel, abiding in the face of Jesus Christ. Finally, he takes up the word used by the Gospel writers concerning the experience of Jesus on the Transfiguration Mount, a word used only four times in the New Testament, twice in the Gospels concerning the Lord at His Transfiguration, once by Matthew and once by Mark (Luke also describes the incident but does not use the word), and twice in the epistles concerning the spiritual experience of the believing soul. It is the Greek word metamorfoo, from which we get such English words as metamorphic, metamorphose, metamorphism, and so on. These words take us into the realm of geology and indicate for us that process due to recrystallization which goes on in the rocks where, we are told, under the active agency of heat, moisture, and pressure, there is continually going on a change of form, shape, and even of substance, the common limestone being turned into the beautiful marble.

It is this word, then, which the evangelists, Matthew and Mark, used concerning our Lord, and the apostle Paul used of the believer, and which is given three different translations in our English version. In Matthew's and in Mark's Gospels it is translated transfigured; in 2 Corinthians 3:18 it is translated changed; and in Romans 12:2 it is translated transformed.

In other words, the suggestion is that the mighty spiritual phenomenon displayed so magnificently in the prayer life of our Lord is, in the measure in which we in our poor, frail souls can comprehend it, to be re-enacted in us as we spend time in His presence and linger there to pray. For us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is to be seen "in the face of Jesus Christ." We are to gaze on it, and "beholding... the glory," we are to be transformed.

"Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus,  
I behold Thee as Thou art,  
And Thy love so pure and changeless  
Satisfies my heart;

Satisfies its deepest longings,  
Meets, supplies its every need,  
Compasseth me round with blessings.  
Thine is love indeed."

The change -- transfiguration, transformation -- of which we here speak, is not to be confused with the instantaneous blessing received by faith in that moment of entire sanctification by the wholly yielded child of God. The instantaneous blessing is received by believing, but that of which we here speak is a progressive change realized through beholding. For all who desire the transfigured life there is but one way--a spiritual metamorphosis wrought in the Mount; it is an experience for the waiting soul.

The marks of this transformed life soon begin to manifest themselves in a praying soul. These are numerous and various, but we shall mention only three:

1. There will be beauty of character--a shining life. This is an age of beauty culture, yet what a travesty of real beauty so much of it is! The loftiest beauty is to be found, not in the world's culture, but in a spiritual communion which affects the hidden man of the heart.

As that beauty develops, the roughness of the earth life will disappear; the little meannesses, the narrowness, and the coarseness within the personality will dissolve, while the Christ stamp will become increasingly manifest. Lines of saintliness will become more and more defined; Christian character will become more definitely set--and character is always far more important than creed. There is an unmistakable dignity about a praying man, a heavenly etiquette acquired only by those who tread the palace courts of heaven's King.

2. There will be breadth of experience an illuminated mind. To live with God is to learn of God. There is only one way to acquire spiritual knowledge the abandonment to the ministry of prayer. Concerning this spiritual knowledge Paul has an arresting passage in his First Epistle to the Corinthians; it reads thus:

"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:6-13).

This is not true experientially of all God's professing people, but all may make it true as they are prepared to furnish that which it costs to possess it. Such an illumination calls for more than a momentary plunge of faith; it becomes known only through a life of constant faithfulness.

3. There will be a balance of soul--a steadfast experience. The person sincere in praying will be consistent in plodding. If he really meets God in the Mount, he will fear neither difficulties nor demons on the plain.

Thus the transformation goes on and will continue through the years, for "the path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18, R. V.).

"In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks... And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand..." Daniel 10:2, 11-14.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Ephesians 6:12-18.

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## 10 -- PRAYER IS A FIGHTING FORCE

While it is undeniably true that prayer has its rich subjective value, transforming the life, it would be fatal to progressive Kingdom work if we left it there; for while the prayer chamber is not to be dishonored by being regarded a mere relieving office, neither must it be degraded by being turned into a spiritual beauty parlor. To ask, "What profit shall I have if I pray unto Him?" is subtly selfish. Your training in the prayer life has been for Kingdom purposes. There is Throne work for you to do, where mandates are uttered with regal authority, where strong powers are bound, victories are wrought, and Divine purposes are accomplished on your knees. You have now become a member of a fighting force, and at times you may be amazed to find how keen that fighting is and how strenuously you will need to hold the line against seemingly overwhelming odds to prevent the powers of darkness breaking through on the one hand and to make possible the triumph of the forces of light on the other. Difficult as it may be to explain it, there will be times when you will be holding a strategic point on which the entire battle line will depend. Then, fail God if you dare!

This strategic position in prayer is clearly indicated in the case of Daniel in his fast on the banks of the Hiddekel, which lasted three whole weeks. During this time, though unknown to Daniel, away in the upper air a battle was in progress, and he was holding a key position at a prayer station which was vital to the success of the combat. It is evident that prayer answers may be intercepted on their way through by Satanic forces, conveyed though they be by the strongest archangels; hence Paul's word to the Ephesian believers about the wrestling, not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, the powers, the rulers of this world darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly realms. It is against these that the armor-clad believer is called to stand; he is to withstand, and having done all, to stand, it being immediately made clear that this standing and withstanding is the position of faith in the work of prayer.

The prayers of these warrior saints, interested only in Kingdom purposes, are declared to have binding and loosing power:

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:18, 19).

Mountains standing in the way of Divine purposes are to be prayed to the level of the plain, while other difficulties withered by prayer power, will be dried up at the roots.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:21, 22).

"And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God, For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:22-24).

Doors for service are to be prayed open (Colossians 4:3.), power and vitality is to be prayed into the Word as it is preached (2 Thessalonians 3:1.), the ministering servants of Christ are to be prayed through in their work (Romans 15:30; Ephesians 6:18-20.).

Prayer is a fighting force indeed! Let us not become weary in the day of battle. Those last few minutes may decide far more than we shall ever know until we see our Lord face to face. Therefore, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Matthew 6:6.

"And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" Luke 18:7.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is mighty in its working." James 5:16  
(Possible translation).

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## 11 -- THE CONSEQUENT CHALLENGE OF THE PRAYER CHAMBER

The prayer chamber, then, is of the utmost importance because it is the strategic place in Christian life and service. Where prayer does not seem to work, it is only seemingly so, for true prayer, Divinely inwrought, always works; but the first law of answered prayer is necessarily the ensured advancement to Kingdom purposes. Whatever, in the knowledge of an all-seeing God, would contribute to this end is inspired as prayer fuel by the faithful Holy Spirit within the believing heart, while whatever may not so contribute, however humanly desirable, must fade out and die.

Here then is the inevitable challenge of the prayer chamber. It comes to you as you read. Dare you face it -- and dare you accept it? It is no easy thing; it is the most costly business this side heaven. Its demands are often staggering. Beside it, everything else must needs be secondary. Selfish ends having been utterly renounced and personal considerations set aside, time must be given freely and strength spent willingly, while the heart must be set on the will of God being accomplished in all things. You must recognize, once for all, that the agency of prayer was not designed primarily for your relief, but as an instrument for the accomplishment of Kingdom purposes and for the glory of God.

Again we say, Dare you face it? Are you willing for less time with those attractive friends that you might spend more time in the prayer chamber with God? Are you ready, if need be, for your own cherished plans to be blighted in order that God's Kingdom plans may be worked out?

How costly! did you say? That is surely so. You will never face a more costly place than the prayer chamber as long as you live. The farther you go with God, the keener the vision will become, and the sterner will be the demands. Time spent there will develop soul sensitiveness and will tend more and more to brokenness of heart. It is there, and there only, that compassion for the sinner is developed. In the atmosphere of that holy place men have pleaded with God until even their own soul's salvation has seemed to be of no account unless the lost ones for whom they have prayed were saved. Take the case of Moses (Exodus 32:31, 32.), and the case of Paul (Romans 9:2, 3.). It is there, and there only, that God's great Kingdom program begins to unfold until to the wholly yielded soul nothing matters but the fulfillment of that great world program for which Jesus died.

The intercessor now comes to realize that he is not an isolated unit related to God for his own benefit alone but a member of a Kingdom of priestly prevailers. To him, the cross and the altar are no longer mere symbols; they have a real live meaning in his life. The only effective prayer chambers are along the Calvary Way. The men who pray with power are men whose own hearts are willing to break under the load. The price of usefulness and blessing is ever the bleeding heart. Lord, make me live and pray to bless, no matter how much I may have to bleed!

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THE END