

WHERE TRUE PRAYER IS FOUND

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A SERMON
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BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"Therefore has your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to you."
2 Samuel 7:27.*

DAVID had first found it in his heart to build a house for God. Sitting in his house of cedar, he resolved that the ark of God should no longer abide under curtains, but should be more suitably housed. The Lord, however, did not design that David should build His temple, though He accepted his pious intentions and declared that it was well that it was in his heart. From which we may learn that our intentions to serve the Lord in a certain manner may be thoroughly good and acceptable, and yet we may not be permitted to carry them out.

We may have the will, but not the power, the aspiration, but not the qualification. We may have to stand aside and see another do the task which we had chosen for ourselves, and yet we may be none the less pleasing to the Lord who, in His great love, accepts the will for the deed. It is a holy self-denial which in such cases rejoices to see the Lord glorified by others, and at the Captain's bidding cheerfully stands back in the rear, when zeal had urged it to rush to the front. It is as true service not to do as to do when the Lord's word prescribes it.

The reason why David was not to build the house is not stated here, but you will find it in 1 Chronicles 28:2-3, "Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: for me, I had in my heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: but God said unto me, You shall not build an house for my name, because you have been a man of war, and have shed blood."

David's wars had been necessary and justifiable, and by them the people of the Lord had been delivered. But the Ever merciful One did not delight in them and would not use for building His temple an instrument which had been stained with blood. The great Prince of peace would not have a warrior's hand to pile the palace of His worship, choosing rather that a man whose mind had exercised itself in quieter pursuits should be the founder of the place of rest for the ark of His covenant of peace. He is not so short of instruments as to use a sword for a trowel, or a spear for a measuring rod, especially when these have been dyed in the blood of His creatures.

In your own household affairs, you do not use the same implement or utensil for opposite purposes. If David, therefore, is used to smite Philistines, he is not to be employed in erecting a temple. Solomon, his son, a man of peace, is called to do that holy work. I have sometimes trembled on behalf of our own nation and especially just now, lest its warlike propensities should disqualify it for what has up to now appeared its highest destiny. If it should resolve to pick a quarrel and wantonly plunge itself into a bloody war, it may come to pass that our God may judge it to be unfit for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace. Even if it were granted that the war would be most just and right, yet should it be undertaken with solemn reluctance, lest it should deprive our nation of the capacity to be the preacher of righteousness and the herald of the cross.

With what face can we preach the Gospel of peace among the heathen if we provoke war ourselves? Little wonder would it be if the Lord should say of the English people, "You shall not convert the nations nor build up a church for My name, because you delight in war and have needlessly shed blood." God grant that all things may be so ordered according to His infinite wisdom that this land may be the

true Solomon among the nations and build a temple for God, which shall enclose the whole earth, wherein every language and every nation shall be heard praising and magnifying the Lord. Labor, I pray you, O you servants of the loving Savior, to promote peace if perhaps the temporary rage of the multitude may be appeased without carnage.

To return to personal cases, it may happen to any one of you to be called to pass through business or domestic trials in which you may be altogether blameless and yet you may, at the close of them, find yourself disqualified for certain prominent positions of usefulness, at least for a time. Henceforth you may not hope to accomplish certain high and noble purposes which once were laid upon your heart. God may have to say to you afterwards, "Your use lies elsewhere. I will not employ you for this, but still I accept you and it was well that it was in your heart." And if He should so see fit, do not repine, but like David, do all you can towards the work that the man who is to perform it may find materials ready to his hand. David gathered much of the treasure to meet the cost and did it none the less earnestly because another name would outshine his own in connection with the temple.

Beloved friends, there is a very sweet consolation in my text for those who may be placed in circumstances similar to those of David. If by any means a man of God becomes disqualified for any form of desirable service which was upon his heart, yet nothing can disqualify him from prayer. If he finds it in his heart to pray, he may boldly draw near to God through the sacrifice of Christ. He may still use the way of access which the dying body of our Lord has opened, and he may win his suit at the throne of grace.

It was well for David that though when the building of the temple was in his heart it could not be, yet when a prayer was in his heart, it might be presented with the certainty of acceptance. If you, my brother or my sister, are denied the privilege of doing what your heart is set upon, be not angry with God, but set your heart towards Him in prayer. Ask what you will and He will give you the desire of your heart.

By my text three thoughts are suggested. The first is it is well to find prayer in our heart, "Therefore has your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto you." Secondly, it is pleasant to be able to see how the prayer came there. I shall trace the rise and progress of the prayer of David. And, thirdly, it is most profitable to use a prayer when we find it in our heart, for David solemnly prayed the prayer which he discovered in his soul.

I. First, then, IT IS WELL TO FIND PRAYER IN OUR HEARTS.

In no other place can true prayer be found. Prayer with the lip, prayer with bended knee, and uplifted hand is worth nothing if the heart is absent. Prayer as a mere matter of form and routine is but the husk, heart-work is the kernel. Words are the oyster shell, the desire of the heart is the pearl. Do not imagine that the Lord looks down with any pleasure upon the tens of thousands of forms of prayer, whether liturgical or extempore, which are presented to Him without heart—such forms rather weary Him than worship Him. They are not adoration, but provocation. The God of truth can never accept an untruthful devotion. Our prayers must flow from our heart or they will never reach the heart of God.

But prayer is not found in every man's heart. Alas, many of our fellow men never pray. And many who think they pray are yet strangers to that sacred exercise. If an angel were now suddenly to announce that he would mark every man and woman here who has never prayed, I fear that many of you would be in a great fright, for fear the mark should be on you. If suddenly the complexion could change and each prayerless person's face should gather blackness, I wonder how many there would be among us whom we should gaze upon with intense surprise! There shall be no such Cain-like mark set upon any of you, but will you set some sort of seal upon your own conscience if you are compelled to confess, "I am one of those who have never prayed"?

What an acknowledgment for a rational being to make! Twenty years of life without a prayer to the Creator of its being! Be astonished, O heavens, and amazed O earth! Perhaps you deny that you are guilty, for you have always said a prayer and would not have gone to sleep at night if you had not done so. Then I pray you, remember that you may have repeated holy words from your youth up and yet may have never prayed a prayer with your heart. To pray as the Holy Ghost teaches is a very different thing

from the repetition of the choicest words that the best of writers may have composed, or the utterance of random words without thought. Have we prayed with our hearts or not? Remember, a prayerless soul is a Christless soul and a Christless soul is a lost soul and will soon be cast away forever.

The verses were meant for children, but I cannot forebear quoting them here, for they in simple language express my meaning,

*“I often say my prayers;
But do I ever pray?
And do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say?”*

*“I may as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.*

*“For words without the heart
The Lord will never hear;
Nor will He to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere.”*

Further, let me observe that the spirit of prayer, though it is always present in every regenerated heart, is not always alike active. It is not, perhaps, today nor tomorrow that every Christian will be able to say, “I find in my heart to pray this one particular prayer to God.” It may for the present be beyond our standard of grace and we may therefore be unable to grasp the blessing. In some respects we are not masters of our supplications. You cannot always pray the prayer of faith in reference to any one thing, that prayer is often the distinct gift of God for an occasion. Others may ask your prayers and sometimes you may plead very prevalently for them, but at another time that power is absent. You feel no liberty to offer a certain petition, but on the contrary feel held back in the matter. Well, be guided by this inward direction and follow, rather than press forward, in such a case.

There are times with us when we find it in our heart to pray a prayer, and then we do so with eagerness and assurance. But we cannot command such seasons at our pleasure. How freely then does prayer come from us, as the leaping water from the fountain? There is no need to say, “I long to pray,” we do pray, we cannot help praying, we have become a mass of prayer. We are walking the streets and cannot pray aloud, but our heart pleads as fast as it beats. We enter our house and attend to family business and still the heart keeps pleading as constantly as the lungs are heaving. We go to bed and our last thought is supplication. If we wake in the night, our soul is still making intercession before God and so it continues while the visitation remains. O that it were always so.

Now it is a very happy thing when the Christian finds it in his heart to pray with marked and special fervor unto God. Then he puts no pressure upon himself, nor thinks of supplication as a matter of duty, it has become a pleasant necessity, a sacred passion of the inward life, a holy breathing of the soul, not to be restrained. So it should always be, but, alas, most of us have to mourn that in the matter of prayer we are the subjects of many changeful moods. O that we had learned more perfectly how to be praying always in the Holy Ghost.

The presence of living prayer in the heart indicates seven things about that heart upon which we will speak with great brevity.

First, prayer in the heart proves that the heart is renewed. True prayer dwells not in a dead, corrupt, stony heart. If you find in your heart to pray a prayer unto God, you have assuredly been born again. “Behold, he prays,” is one of the first and one of the surest marks of the new birth. The faintest movement of the pulse proves that life still remains in a drowning man, and though prayer be weak,

feeble, fragmentary, yet if it is there at all the soul lives unto God. Though to your apprehension your prayer is so poor and broken and unworthy that it cannot be accepted, yet the desire of the soul towards God is an index of spiritual life most hopeful and instructive. Have hope, brother, as long as you can pray, for none who pray believingly, in the name of Jesus, can ever be cast into hell. He, whom faith in Jesus has taught to cry to God, shall never hear Him say, “Depart, you cursed,” for has not the Lord said, “Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”? Be glad, therefore, if you find it in your heart to pray, for it proves that the root of the matter is in you.

To find prayer in the heart proves, next, a reconciled heart. David might have been upset with God and have said, “If I cannot build a temple I will do nothing, for I have set my heart upon it and I have already laid up treasure for it. It is a laudable project and it has had the sanction of the prophet, and I am hardly used to having my design rejected.” There are some professors who would do a great thing if they might, but if they are not permitted to act a shining part in it, they are in the sulks and get angry with their God. David, when his proposal was set aside, found it in his heart not to murmur, but to pray.

Job asks concerning the hypocrite, “Will he always call upon God?” and thus he meant to say that only true and loyal hearts will continue to pray when things go hard with them. Let this be a test for you and for me. Can you pray, brother, now that the delight of your eyes has been cut off by death? Can you pray now that your substance is diminished and your bodily health is failing? Then I take it as a sign that you have submitted yourself unto God and are at peace with Him, being reconciled to Him by His grace. To cease from complaining and to give the heart to prayer is the sign of a soul renewed and reconciled.

Prayer is also the index of a spiritual heart. David sat in his house of cedar. It was costly and carved with great art, but it did not draw his mind away from God. It has too often happened that prospering professors have become proud professors, and have forgotten God. When they were poor they associated with Christian brethren whom they felt pleasure in recognizing, but now that they have gotten a large estate, they no longer know the poor people of God and they spend their Sabbaths where they can meet with a little “society,” and move among their “equals,” as they call them they, being so very much superior to the holy men and women whom once they held in honor.

Such folks become high and mighty like Nebuchadnezzar, and as they walk their grounds or sit in their painted chambers they say, “Behold this great Babylon which I have built.” A “self-made man,” risen from the ranks, comes to have a name like the name of the great men that are upon the face of the earth—is not this something?

Oftentimes has it happened that these things have turned away the hearts of professors from the God who loaded them with benefits. It was not so with David. In his cedar palace, he found it in his heart to pray. The more he had, the more he loved his God. The more he received, the more he desired to render thanks unto the Lord for his benefits. Plants, when they are root-bound, become poor weak things and so do men’s hearts when they are earth-bound, doting upon their riches. As a traveler finds it difficult to move when his feet stick in the mud of a miry way, so do some men make small progress heavenward because they are hindered by their own wealth. Happy is that man who has riches but does not suffer riches to have him, who uses wealth and does not abuse it by idolizing it, but seasons all with the Word of God and prayer.

Prayer in the heart also proves an enlightened heart. A man who does not pray is in the dark. He knows not his own wants, else he would make supplication. If he understood his own danger, the temptations which surround him, and the corruptions which are within him, he would be incessantly in prayer. He who has left off praying has surely lost his wits. If the Holy Ghost has taught us anything, He has taught us this, we must pray without ceasing. David prayed, too, as an enlightened man because he felt that devotion was due to God. Since the Lord had done so much for him, he must worship and adore. “Therefore has your servant,” says he, “found in his heart to pray this prayer to you.” He who is well-taught by the Spirit of God knows his position to be that of a humble dependent, who is bound to reverence his God with all his heart and hence, he daily sings, “Your vows are upon me, O God, I will render praise unto You.”

The heart in which prayer is found constantly welling up is also a lively heart. We do not all possess lively hearts, nor do we all keep them when we get them, for some men appear to have fatty degeneration of the heart after a spiritual manner, since their heart acts very feebly in prayer. They are lethargic and lifeless in devotion. Do we not all find ourselves at times in a cold state in reference to prayer? Brothers, I believe that when we cannot pray, it is time that we prayed more than ever. And if you answer, "But how can that be?" I would say, pray to pray, pray for prayer, pray for the spirit of supplication. Do not be content to say, "I would pray if I could." No, but if you cannot pray, pray till you can. He who can row down stream with a flowing tide and a fair wind is but a poor oarsman compared with the man who can pull against wind and tide, and still make headway. This our soul must endeavor to do.

But beloved, how delicious it is when you can pray and cannot leave off—when your heart pours forth devotion as the roses shed their perfume, or the sun gives his light. I love to feel my soul on the wing like the birds in spring, which are always singing and flitting from bough to bough, full of life and vigor. Oh to have the soul mounting on eagle's wings and no longer groping in the earth like a mole. To be instant, constant, eager at prayer—this is health, vigor, and delight. To feel the heart in prayer like the chariots of Amminadib, outstripping the wind, this is a joy worth worlds.

Beloved, this finding in the heart to pray proves, in the sixth place, that the heart is in communion with God, for what is prayer but the breath of God in man returning from where it came? Prayer is a telephone by which God speaks in man. His heaven is far away, but His voice sounds in our soul. Prayer is a phonograph, God speaks into our soul and then our soul speaks out again, what the Lord has spoken. Conversation must always be two-sided. God speaks to us in this Book, we must reply to Him in prayer and praise.

If you do not pray, my brother, why then you have shut the gates of heaven against yourself and there is neither coming in nor going out between you and your Lord. Prayer keeps up a heavenly commerce acceptable to God and enriching to your own souls. Do you find yourself mightily moved to pray? Then the Lord is very near to you. The Beloved has come into His garden to eat His pleasant fruits—take care to feast Him with your love. Prayer in the heart is the echo of the footsteps of the Bridegroom of our souls who is seeking communion with us. Open wide the doors of your soul and let Him in, and then detain Him and constrain Him, saying, "Abide with us."

When we find prayer in the heart, we may know that our heart is accepted of God and the prayer too. Brother, when a desire comes to you again, and again, and again, take it as a favorable omen regarding your supplication. If the Lord should especially prompt you to any one desire laying your child, perhaps, more than usual upon your heart, or causing the name of a friend constantly to occur to you, so that you find yourself frequently praying for him, take this as a token from the Lord that He would have you turn your thoughts in that direction, and that a blessing is in store for you.

If a certain church which seems to need revival is laid upon your soul, or a township or a district, mark well the fact. Suppose you find your heart going out towards a special country or city, bearing your mind there and working to pray with tears and entreaties, grieving because of its sin and entreating that God would remember and forgive, be sure that this is a prophecy of good to that place and redouble your petitions. When the gale blows, the navigator spreads his sails to catch the wind. And when the Spirit, who blows where He wills, comes upon you, influencing you to this or that, be sure to spread all sails. Reckon that the inclination to pray is the foretaste of the coming blessing. As coming events cast their shadows before them, your desire is the shadow of the mercy which God is sending down to you. He moves you to pray for it, because He Himself is about to give it.

Thus I have shown that it is well when we find it in our hearts to pray a prayer, for it proves the heart to be in many respects in a healthy condition.

II. Now, secondly, IT IS PLEASANT TO BE ABLE TO SEE HOW THE PRAYER CAME INTO THE HEART.

“I find it in my heart,” says David. Well, David, how did it come there? I answer as he did not, that any true prayer which is found in the human heart comes there by the Holy Ghost. If there is anything excellent in us, even if it is only a desire to pray acceptably, it is of the Holy Spirit’s creation, and unto Him be all the praise. But the modus operandi, the way in which the Spirit operates upon us is somewhat in this fashion.

First of all, He puts the promise into the Word of God. David tells us very plainly that it was because God had revealed such-and-such promises that, therefore, he says, “Has your servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto you.” The Lord gives the promise and that becomes the parent of our prayer. For first there are some mercies we should never have thought of praying for if He had not promised them. They would never have suggested themselves to us and we would not have known our need of them unless the supply had taught us and the promise of God itself incited us to the desire. There are other mercies for which we should not have dared to pray if the promise had not encouraged us.

We could not have had the heart to ask such great things if the Lord had not promised them to us. So that the Word of God suggests the desire and then encourages us to hope that the desire will certainly be fulfilled. Moreover when promise comes very close home to a man, as it did to David when it was spoken personally to him by the prophet, it vivifies the soul, causes the mind to realize the blessing, and both intensifies desire and gives grasp and grip to faith. We should not have felt the gift to be real had it not been placed before us in plain words. Brethren, this is how our prayers come into our heart.

The Word of God suggests them, encourages us to seek them, and then gives us a realizing power so that we plead with eagerness and believe with force. In saying, “therefore,” David means not only that the Word of God had put the prayer into his mind, but that his whole meditation had led him to the finding of this prayer in his heart. Had he not been sitting before the Lord in quiet thought, he might never have noticed the work of the Spirit upon his soul. But inward searching brought the right prayer to light. Will you kindly look through the chapter while I very briefly sum up its contents and show that each item excited David to pray? When the king sat before the Lord and spoke out his heart, his first word was about the Lord’s past goodness to him and his own insignificance, “Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that you have brought me here?”

Brethren, who are we that God should have been so good to us? But inasmuch as His grace to us has been amazing, do we not find it in our heart to pray a prayer to Him that He would bless us still more? Can you not inquire of the Lord in the words of the hymn which we sang just now,

*“After so much mercy past
Can You let me sink at last?”*

He has been mindful of us, He will bless us. Let our memory of His past loving kindness excite us to prayer for present and future favors.

David then passed on to speak of the greatness of the promise, “This was yet a small thing in your sight, O LORD God; but You have spoken also of your servant’s house for a great while to come.” We also have received exceeding great and precious promises, and since God has promised so much, will we not be much in prayer? Shall He be large in promising and shall we be narrow in asking? Shall He stand before us and say, “Whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive,” and will we be content with slender, starved petitions? Beggars seldom need pressing to beg and when a promise is given them, they usually put the widest possible construction upon it and urge it with great vehemence. Will it not be well to take a leaf out of their book? Come, brethren, the argument is strong with those who have spiritual sense—the greatness of the promise encourages us to find many a prayer in our heart.

Then he speaks of the surprising “manner” of God. “Is this the manner of man, O LORD God?” He saw that God acted far more graciously than the most generous human beings act towards their fellows. He perceived that “as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God’s ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts,” and therefore he opened his mouth wide in prayer. Was he not

right in doing so? And are we right, my brother, if we do not imitate his example? We are advised by the wise man not to go into our brother's house in the day of our calamity. And the same wisdom would move us not to ask too much from friends and neighbors, but no such prudence is necessary towards our Friend above. To Him we may come at all hours and to Him we may plead the largest requests.

Since the Lord deals not as men deal, but gives liberally and upbraids not, since He opens the windows of the treasury of heaven and is pleased to make no stint whatever in the showers of His liberality, let us wait upon Him continually. His unspeakable love should encourage us to abound in prayer.

Then the king goes on to speak of God's free grace, which was another argument to pray. "For your word's sake, and according to your own heart, have you done all these great things to make your servant know them." The Lord had entered into covenant with him, not because David had merited so great an honor, but entirely for His own mercy's sake. David recognizes the freeness and sovereignty of the grace and seems to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. If You have loved me so, then am I bold to ask great things of You. If You wait not for the merit of man, nor for human deservings, then will I ask You still further to bless me, unworthy though I am, to the praise of the glory of Your name." Pray mightily, my brethren, since God sits on a throne of grace. When the choicest treasures are to be had for the asking, who can refuse to pray?

Then He proceeded to mention the greatness of God, "Wherefore you are great, O LORD God: for there is none like you, neither is there any God beside you." Surely, to a great God we should bring great prayers. We dishonor Him by the fewness of our petitions and the littleness of our desires.

My soul, enlarge your desires. Be hungry, be thirsty, be greedy after divine grace, for whatever you desire you shall have, provided it be indeed for your good. Your desire to obtain shall be the test of your capacity to receive. Brethren, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. "Hitherto have you asked nothing in my name," said the Lord Jesus to His disciples, and He might say the same to us, for all we have ever asked comes to next to nothing compared with what He is prepared to give, compared with what He will give when once He has tutored us into something like largeness of heart in prayer like that of Solomon, of whom we read, "God gave him largeness of heart even as the sand which is on the sea shore."

We need to be delivered from narrow conceptions of God and limited desires in prayer, that we may ask of infinity with suitable capacity of soul, and so may receive grace upon grace and be filled with all the fullness of God.

David closed his meditation by speaking of God's love to His people, saying, "And what one nation in the earth is like your people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for your land, before your people, which you redeemed to you from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For you have confirmed to yourself your people Israel to be a people unto you forever: and you, LORD, are become their God."

Well, since the Lord loves His people so intensely, we may well be encouraged to ask great things for ourselves and especially to seek great things for the church. We are no strangers to God now, His chosen are neither aliens nor foreigners, they are His children, dear to His heart. And if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more sure is it that our heavenly Father will give good gifts to them that ask Him? When you pray for Zion, plead for great prosperity and speak with boldness, for you are asking blessings upon those whom God delights to bless, asking prosperity for that church which is as the apple of His eye.

I will sum up this point as to the pleasure of seeing how prayer comes to be in our heart, by briefly tracing the line of beauty along which it runs. First of all, the thought and purpose of blessing arises in the heart of God. David perceived that to be the case, for in the twenty-first verse he says, "For your word's sake, and according to your own heart, have you done all these great things." Prayer owes its origin to the heart of God.

The next stage is reached when it is revealed by inspiration—the Lord sent Nathan to tell David of His gracious intent towards him. The thought has passed, you see, from God’s secret purpose into God’s revealed Word, and now it filters into the heart of David and David sends it back to God in prayer. Prayer, like our Lord Jesus, comes forth from God and returns to God. That is the pedigree and history of all true supplication. It is like the mist which you see in the early morning, rising from the plains towards heaven in the form of clouds. It is like incense from an altar.

How did it get there? First of all, the moisture was in the heavens, in the secret treasuries of God. Then came a day when it fell in drops of rain and did not return void, but watered the earth. Afterwards, when the blessed sun shone forth, it steamed up again, to return to the place from where it came. The clouds are like the divine decree—who shall enter into the secret place where JEHOVAH hides His purposes? The rain is like the Word, with its sparkling drops of precious promises, the outcome of the mysterious purposes of God. These revealed blessings we see standing in pools in the Scriptures. Turn to the Book or listen to the Lord’s servants whom He helps to speak and you shall hear a sound of abundance of rain.

This rain waters the soul of man and when the warm love of God comes shining on the saturated heart, it rises up in earnest petitions. Prayer is never lost, for though the mist which rises in yonder valley may never fall again into the same place, it drops somewhere. And so, true prayer, though it comes not back into the offerer’s own bosom, is fruitful in good in some way or other. The result of honest hearty prayer may not be distinctly this or that according to your mind or mine, but it is always good. Supplication is never wasted, it is preserved in the divine reservoir, and in time its influence visits the earth and waters it with “the river of God, which is full of water.”

When you find a rare flower by the roadside and wonder how it came there, for it is no indigenous weed, but a fair stranger from another clime, it is pleasant to trace out its way to the place it beautifies. And even so, when you find a prayer in your heart, it is gladsome to see how it comes forth from the heart of God, by the Word of God, to blossom in the garden of your soul.

III. In the third place IT IS VERY PROFITABLE TO USE A PRAYER WHEN WE FIND IT IN OUR HEART.

Notice the phraseology of my text. He says, “your servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer unto you.” Not to say this prayer, but to pray this prayer. There is great force in the expression. Some prayers are never prayed, but are like arrows which are never shot from the bow. Scarcely may I call them prayers, for they are such as to form, and matter, and verbiage, but they are said, not prayed. The praying of prayer is the main matter. Sometimes, beloved, we may have a prayer in our hearts and may neglect the voice of the Lord within our soul, and if so, we are great losers.

What does praying a prayer mean? It means, first, that you present it to God with fervency. Pray as if you meant it. Throw your whole soul into the petition. Entreat the Lord with tears and cries. If you do not prevail at first, yet come to Him persistently again and again with the resolve that since He has written the prayer in your heart, you will not take no denial. Heat your prayers red hot. In naval warfare, in the old time, our men of war fired red hot shot—try that system, for nothing is so powerful in prayer as fervency and persistence.

Pray also spiritually for the text says, “I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer to you.” It is of no use pray to yourself or to the four walls of your room. Some persons even pray to those who are around them, like the preacher of whose prayer the remark was made that, “It was one of the finest prayers that ever was presented to a Boston audience.” I am afraid many prayers are presented to audiences rather than to God. This should not be.

Moreover, when you find a prayer in your heart, do not talk it over nor say to another, “I feel such-and-such a desire” but go and pour it out before God. Speak it into the divine ear. Realize that God is there as distinctly as if you could see Him, for that is the way to make a proper use of the prayer which is in your heart.

Pray with specialty. The text indicates that, "I have found it in my heart to pray this prayer." Know what you pray. Prayer is not putting your hand into a bag and pulling out what comes first. Oh, no. There must be definite desires and specific requests. Think carefully about it and ask for what you want and for nothing else but what you need. Pray this prayer.

David had a promise about his house and his prayer was about his house that God would bless and establish it. Much of what we think to be prayer is really playing at praying. The archers in the English armies of old, with their arrows a cloth-yard long, when they met the foe, took steady aim and they sorely galled the foe. Give your little boy his bow and arrow and what does he do? He shoots at random and sends his arrows all over the place, he plays at archery.

A good deal of praying is of that sort. There is no steadily taking aim at the white and drawing the bow with strength, and watching the arrow with anxiety. Lord, teach us to pray. We ought to pray, too, dear friends, when we find prayer in our hearts, with much boldness. He says, "I found in my heart to pray," that is, he had the heart to pray, the courage to pray. The promise influenced him to be bold with God. Some men fail in reverence for God, but far more fail in holy boldness towards God. Men who are mighty for God are generally famous for courage with Him. Look at Luther. They say it was wonderful to hear him preach, but a hundred times more so to hear him pray. There was an awful reverence about that heroic man, but there was also such a childlike simplicity of daring that he seemed as though he did really lay hold of God.

That is the way try it in your chamber this afternoon. Be bold with God. Find it in your heart to pray this prayer unto Him. And do so promptly. Let promptness mark your prayer as it did that of David. He did not wait a week or two after he had obtained the promise, he went straight away and sat down before the Lord and began to plead the divine word. He said, "Do as You have said." He found the petition in his heart and before it could lose its way again, he brought it before God. He was studying his soul and as he observed its movements, he saw a prayer lift up its head. "Ah," he said, "I will seize it." And he held it fast and presented it before God and so obtained a blessing.

I suggest, dear friends, to those whose hearts feel touched in the matter, that we should today make special supplication to God as to the peace of nations, now so miserably endangered. You will meet as teachers in the school. You will meet in the classes. And others of you will be at home in meditation this afternoon. But you can all, in various ways, help in the common intercession. At this moment, it is upon my heart very heavily to pray this prayer to God and I wish you would all make a point of joining in it, "Send us peace in our days, good Lord."

Not as politicians, but as followers of Christ we are bound to entreat our Lord to prevent the cruel war which is now threatened. A curse will surely fall upon all who are causing the strife, but blessed are the peacemakers. I believe that if all Christians would join in pleading with God, they would do much more than all the public meetings and all the petitions to the Houses of Parliament or to the Queen will ever accomplish. O Lord, prevent war, we pray You.

Another thing. During this week the various societies are holding their public meetings and I suggest, if you find it in your hearts, that you spend a little extra time in praying to God to bless His church and its mission work. There will, also, be meetings held of great importance this week, in connection with certain religious bodies. There are denominations which are sadly diseased with skepticism. But a healthy love for the truth remains with many and therefore there will come a struggle between the evangelical and the philosophical parties.

This week will witness such a struggle. Pray God to send the conquest to the right, to strengthen hesitating brethren, and to give decision to those who have long been too timorous in their actions. Pray that power and guidance from on high may be given to those who hold the orthodox faith. I find it in my heart to pray so and shall be glad to know that others are agreeing with me.

Find it in your hearts, too, at this time, to pray for the work of this, our own church, and I call special attention to the work of our tract distributors. We have now nearly ninety brethren going from village to village, from house to house, distributing the Word of God and preaching it to those who in the hamlets

might otherwise be left without the Gospel. Find it in your hearts to invoke a blessing upon them. And in summary, if there is anything that is more upon your heart than another, be wise enough to hedge in a quarter of an hour in order to pray the prayer unto the Lord. Shut yourself up and say, "I have business to do with the Master. I feel a call within my heart to speak with the King."

Beloved brethren, when such a season comes upon you, I would most humbly but most affectionately ask those of you who are benefited by my ministry to whisper my name into the King's ear, for I have much need of His grace and help. May the Lord accept your petitions, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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