

THE SECRET OF POWER IN PRAYER

NO. 2002

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8, 1888
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will,
 and it shall be done unto you."
 John 15:7*

THE gifts of grace are not enjoyed all at once by believers. Coming unto Christ, we are saved by a true union with Him, but it is by abiding in that union that we further receive the purity, the joy, the power, the blessedness, which are stored up in Him for His people. See how our Lord states this when He speaks to the believing Jews in the eighth chapter of this Gospel, at the thirty-first and thirty-second verses, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

We do not know all the truth at once. We learn it by abiding in Jesus. Perseverance in grace is an educational process by which we learn the truth fully. The emancipating power of that truth is also gradually perceived and enjoyed. "The truth shall make you free." One bond after another snaps, and we are free indeed. You that are young beginners in the divine life may be cheered to know that there is something better still for you. You have not yet received the full recompense of your faith. As your hymn puts it, "It is better on before." You shall have happier views of heavenly things as you climb the hill of spiritual experience. As you abide in Christ you shall have firmer confidence, richer joy, greater stability, more communion with Jesus, and greater delight in the Lord your God. Infancy is beset with many evils from which manhood is exempt. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world.

There are these degrees of attainment among believers, and the Savior here incites us to reach a high position by mentioning a certain privilege which is not for all who say that they are in Christ, but for those only who are abiders in Him. Every believer should be an abider, but many have hardly earned the name as yet. Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." You have to live with Christ to know Him, and the longer you live with Him the more will you admire and adore Him. Yes, and the more you will receive from Him, even grace for grace.

Truly He is a blessed Christ to one who is but a month old in grace, but these babes can hardly tell what a precious Jesus He is to those whose acquaintance with Him covers well-nigh half a century! Jesus, in the esteem of abiding believers, grows sweeter and dearer, fairer and more lovely, day by day. Not that He improves in Himself, for He is perfect, but that as we increase in our knowledge of Him, we appreciate more thoroughly His matchless excellences. How glowingly do His old acquaintances exclaim, "Yea, He is altogether lovely!" Oh, that we may continue to grow up into Him in all things who is our head, that we thus may prize Him more and more!

I call your earnest attention to our text, begging you to consider with me three questions. First, *what is this special blessing?* "You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." Secondly, *how is this special blessing obtained?* "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you." Then, thirdly, *why is it obtained in this way?* There must be a reason for the conditions laid down as needful to obtaining the promised power in prayer. Oh, that the anointing of the Holy Spirit which abides on us may now make this subject very profitable to us!

I. WHAT IS THIS SPECIAL BLESSING?

Let us read the verse again. Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Observe that our Lord had been warning us that, severed from Him, we can do nothing, and therefore, we might naturally have expected that He would now show us how we can do all spiritual acts. But the text does not run as we should have expected it to run. The Lord Jesus does not say, "Without me ye can do nothing, but if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall do all spiritual and gracious things." He does not now speak of what they should themselves be enabled to do, but of what should be done unto them, "it shall be done unto you." He says not, "Strength shall be given you sufficient for all those holy doings of which you are incapable apart from me."

That would have been true enough, and it is the truth which we looked for here, but our most wise Lord improves upon all parallelisms of speech, and improves upon all expectancies of heart, and says something better still. He does not say, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall do spiritual things," but "ye shall ask." By prayer you shall be enabled to do, but before all attempts to do, "Ye shall ask." The choice privilege here given is a mighty prevailing prayerfulness. Power in prayer is very much the gauge of our spiritual condition, and when that is secured to us in a high degree, we are favored as to all other matters.

One of the first results, then, of our abiding union with Christ will be *the certain exercise of prayer*, "Ye shall ask." If others neither seek, nor knock, nor ask, you, at any rate, shall do so. Those who keep away from Jesus do not pray. Those in whom communion with Christ is suspended feel as if they could not pray, but Jesus says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask." Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus, even as certain oriental trees, without pressure, shed their fragrant gums.

Prayer is the natural out-gushing of a soul in communion with Jesus. Just as the leaf and the fruit will come out of the vine-branch without any conscious effort on the part of the branch, but simply because of its living union with the stem, so prayer buds, and blossoms, and fruits, out of souls abiding in Jesus. As stars shine, so do abiders pray. It is their use and their second nature. They do not say to themselves, "Now it is the time for us to get to our task and pray." No, they pray as wise men eat, namely, when the desire for it is upon them. They do not cry out as under bondage, "At this time I ought to be in prayer, but I do not feel like it. What a weariness it is!" but they have a glad errand at the mercy seat, and they are rejoiced to go upon it.

Hearts abiding in Christ send forth supplications as fires send out flames and sparks. Souls abiding in Jesus open the day with prayer. Prayer surrounds them as an atmosphere all day long. At night they fall asleep praying. I have known them even dream a prayer, and at any rate, they are able joyfully to say, "When I awake, I am still with you." Habitual asking comes out of abiding in Christ. You will not need urging to prayer when you are abiding with Jesus. He says, "Ye shall ask," and depend upon it, you will.

You shall also feel most powerfully *the necessity of prayer*. Your great need of prayer will be vividly seen. Do I hear you say, "What! When we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, have we not already attained?" Far are we, then, from being satisfied with ourselves, it is then that we feel more than ever that we must ask for more grace. He that knows Christ best, knows his own necessities best. He that is most conscious of life in Christ is also most convinced of his own death apart from Christ. He who most clearly discerns the perfect character of Jesus, will be most urgent in prayer for grace to grow like Him.

The more I see to be in my Lord, the more I desire to obtain from Him, since I know that all that is in Him is put there on purpose that I may receive it. "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." It is just in proportion as we are linked to Christ's fullness that we feel the necessity of drawing from it by constant prayer. Nobody needs to prove to an abider in Christ the doctrine of prayer, for we enjoy the thing itself. Prayer is now as much a necessity of our spiritual life as breath is of our natural life. We cannot live without asking favors of the Lord. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,

ye shall ask,” and you shall not wish to cease from asking. He has said, “Seek ye my face,” and your heart will answer, “Your face, LORD, will I seek.”

Note next, that the fruit of our abiding is not only the exercise of prayer, and a sense of the necessity of prayer, but it includes *liberty in prayer*, “Ye shall ask what ye will.” Have you not been on your knees at times without power to pray? Have you not felt that you could not plead as you desired? You wanted to pray, but the waters were frozen up, and would not flow. You said, mournfully, “I am shut up, and cannot come forth.” The will was present, but not the freedom to present that will in prayer.

Do you, then, desire liberty in prayer, so that you may speak with God as a man speaks with his friend? Here is the way to it, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will.” I do not mean that you will gain liberty as to mere fluency of utterance, for that is a very inferior gift. Fluency is a questionable endowment, especially when it is not attended with weight of thought and depth of feeling. Some brethren pray by the yard, but true prayer is measured by weight, and not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length.

He that dwells with God in Christ Jesus, he is the man whose steps are enlarged in intercession. He comes boldly because he abides at the throne. He sees the golden scepter stretched out, and hears the King saying, “Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” It is the man who abides in conscious union with his Lord who has freedom of access in prayer. Well may he come to Christ readily, for he is in Christ, and abides in Him.

Attempt not to seize this holy liberty by excitement, or presumption. There is but one way of really gaining it, and here it is, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will.” By this means alone shall you be enabled to open your mouth wide, that God may fill it. Thus shall you become Israel's, and as princes have power with God.

This is not all. The favored man has the privilege of *successful prayer*. “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” You may not do it, but it shall be done unto you. You long to bear fruit, ask, and it shall be done unto you. Look at the vine branch. It simply remains in the vine, and by remaining in the vine the fruit comes from it. It is done unto it. Brother in Christ, the purport of your being, its one object and design, is to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father, to gain this end you must abide in Christ, as the branch abides in the vine. This is the method by which your prayer for fruitfulness will become successful, “It shall be done unto you.”

Concerning this matter, “ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” You shall have wonderful prevalence with God in prayer, insomuch that before you call He will answer, and while you are yet speaking He will hear. “The desire of the righteous shall be granted.” To the same effect is the other text, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” There is a great breadth in this text, “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” The Lord gives the abider *carte blanche*. He puts into his hand a signed check, and permits him to fill it up as he wills.

Does the text mean what it says? I never knew my Lord to say anything He did not mean. I am sure that He may sometimes mean more than we understand Him to say, but He never means less. Mind you, He does not say to all men, “I will give you whatever you ask.” Oh no, that would be an unkind kindness, but He speaks to His disciples, and says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” It is to a certain class of men who have already received great grace at His hands—it is to them He commits this marvelous power of prayer.

O my dear friends, if I may covet earnestly one thing above every other, it is this, that I may be able to ask what I will of the Lord, and have it. The prevailer in prayer is the man to preach successfully, for he may well prevail with man for God when he has already prevailed with God for men. This is the man to face the difficulties of business life, for what can baffle him when he can take all to God in prayer? One such man as this, or one such woman as this in a church, is worth ten thousand of us common people. In these we find the peerage of the skies. In these are the men in whom is fulfilled God's purpose concerning man, whom He made to have dominion over all the works of His hands. The stamp

of sovereignty is on the brows of these men. They shape the history of nations, they guide the current events through their power on high. We see Jesus with all things put under Him by the divine purpose, and as we rise into that image, we also are clothed with dominion, and are made kings and priests unto God. Behold Elijah, with the keys of the rain swinging at his girdle. He shuts or opens the windows of heaven! There are such men still alive. Aspire to be such men and women, I beseech you, that to you, the text may be fulfilled, “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

The text seems to imply that, if we reach this point of privilege, this gift shall be perpetuity, “Ye shall ask,” you shall always ask. You shall never get beyond asking, but you shall ask successfully, for “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Here we have the gift of *continual prayer*. Not for the week of prayer, not during a month’s conference, nor upon a few special occasions shall you pray prevailingly, but you shall possess this power with God so long as you abide in Christ, and His words abide in you. God will put His omnipotence at your disposal. He will put forth His Godhead to fulfill the desires which His own Spirit has inwrought in you.

I wish I could make this jewel glitter before the eyes of all the saints till they cried out, “Oh that we had it!” This power in prayer is like the sword of Goliath, wisely may every David say, “There is none like it. Give it me.” This weapon of all-prayer beats the enemy, and at the same time, enriches its possessor with all the wealth of God. How can he lack anything to whom the Lord has said, “Ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you”? Oh, come, let us seek this gift. Listen, and learn the way. Follow me, while by the light of the text I point out the path. May the Lord lead us in it by His Holy Spirit!

II. The privilege of mighty prayerfulness, HOW IS IT TO BE OBTAINED?

The answer is, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.” Here are the two feet by which we climb to power with God in prayer.

Beloved, the first line tells us that we are to *abide in Christ Jesus our Lord*. It is taken for granted that we are already in Him. May it be taken for granted in your case, dear hearer? If so, you are to abide where you are. As believers we are to remain tenaciously clinging to Jesus, lovingly knit to Jesus. We are to abide in Him, by always trusting Him and Him only, with the same simple faith which joined us to Him at the first. We must never admit any other thing or person into our heart’s confidence as our hope of salvation, but rest alone in Jesus as we received Him at the first. His Godhead, His manhood, His life, His death, His resurrection, His glory at the right hand of the Father—in a word, Himself must be our heart’s sole reliance. This is absolutely essential. A temporary faith will not save. An abiding faith is needful.

But abiding in the Lord Jesus does not only mean trusting in Him, it includes our yielding ourselves up to Him to receive His life, and to let that life work out its results in us. We live in Him, by Him, for Him, to Him, when we abide in Him. We feel that all our separate life has gone, for “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ.” We are nothing if we get away from Jesus. We should then be branches withered, and fit only to be cast into the fire. We have no reason for existence except that which we find in Christ, and what a marvelous reason that is! The vine needs the branch as truly as the branch needs the vine. No vine ever bore any fruit except upon its branches. Truly it bears all the branches, and so bears all the fruit, but yet it is by the branch that the vine displays its fruitfulness. Thus are abiding believers needful to the fulfillment of their Lord’s design.

Wonderful thing to say, but the saints are needful to their Savior! The church is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. I want you to recognize this, that you may see your blessed responsibility, your practical obligation to bring forth fruit, that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you. Abide in Him. Never remove from your consecration to His honor and glory. Never dream of being your own master. Be not the servant of men, but abide in Christ. Let Him be the object, as well as the source, of your existence. Oh, if you get there, and stop there in perpetual communion with your Lord, you will soon realize a joy, a delight, a power in prayer, such as you never knew before.

There are times when we are conscious that we are in Christ, and we know our fellowship with Him, and oh, the joy and the peace which we drink from this cup! Let us abide there. “Abide in me,” says

Jesus. You are not to come and go, but to abide. Let that blessed sinking of yourself into His life, the spending of all your powers for Jesus, and the firm faith of your union with Him remain in you forever. Oh, that we might attain to this by the Holy Spirit.

As if to help us to understand this, our gracious Lord has given us a delightful parable. Let us look through this discourse of the vine and its branches. Jesus says, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth it." Take care that you *abide in Christ when you are being purged*. "Oh," says one, "I thought I was a Christian, but alas! I have more troubles than ever, men ridicule me, the devil tempts me, and my business affairs go wrong." Brother, if you are to have power in prayer you must take care that you abide in Christ when the sharp knife is cutting everything away. Endure trial, and never dream of giving up your faith because of it. Say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

Your Lord warned you when you first came into the vine that you would have to be purged and cut closely, and if you are now feeling the purging process, you must not think that some strange thing has happened unto you. Rebel not because of anything you may have to suffer from the dear hand of your heavenly Father, who is the husbandman of the vineyard. No, but cling to Jesus all the more closely. Say, "Cut, Lord, cut to the quick if You will, but I will cling to You. To whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life." Yes, cling to Jesus when the purging knife is in His hand and so "shall you ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you."

Take care also that *when the purging operation has been carried out you still cleave to your Lord*. Notice the third verse, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you." Abide after cleansing where you were before cleansing. When you are sanctified, abide where you were when first justified. When you see the work of the Spirit increasing in you, do not let the devil tempt you to boast that now you are somebody, and need not come to Jesus as a poor sinner, and rest in His precious blood alone for salvation. Abide still in Jesus. As you kept to Him when the knife cut you, keep to Him now that the tender grapes begin to form.

Do not say to yourself, "What a fruitful branch I am! How greatly I adorn the vine! Now I am full of vigor!" You are nothing and nobody. Only as you abide in Christ are you one whit better than the waste wood which is burned in the fire. "But do we not make progress?" Yes, we grow, but we abide. We never go an inch further, we abide in Him. Or if not, we are cast forth, and are withered. Our whole hope lies in Jesus at our best times as well as at our worst. Jesus says, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you."

Abide in Him *as to all your fruitfulness*. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me." "Here, then, I have something to do," cries one. Certainly you have, but not apart from Jesus. The branch has to bear fruit, but if the branch imagines that it is going to produce a cluster, or even a grape, out of itself alone, it is utterly mistaken. The fruit of the branch must come forth of the stem. Your work for Christ must be Christ's work in you, or else it will be good for nothing. I pray you, see to this.

Your Sunday school teaching, your preaching, or whatever you do, must be done in Christ Jesus. Not by your natural talent can you win souls, nor by plans of your own inventing can you save men. Beware of homemade schemes. Do for Jesus what Jesus bids you do. Remember that our work for Christ, as we call it, must be Christ's work first, if it is to be accepted of Him. Abide in Him as to your fruit-bearing.

Yea, abide in Him *as to your very life*. Do not say, "I have been a Christian man now twenty or thirty years, I can do without continued dependence upon Christ." No, you could not do without Him if you were as old as Methuselah. Your very being as a Christian depends upon your still clinging, still trusting, still depending, and this He must give you, for it all comes from Him, and Him alone. To sum it all up, if you want that splendid power in prayer of which I spoke just now, you must remain in loving, living, lasting, conscious, practical, abiding union with the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you get to that by divine grace, then you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

But there is a second qualification mentioned in the text, and you must not forget it, "*and my words abide in you*." How important, then, are Christ's words! He said in the fourth verse, "Abide in me, and I

in you,” and now as a parallel to this it is, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.” What, then, are Christ’s words and Himself identical? Yes, practically so.

Some talk about Christ being the Master, but as to doctrine, they do not care what His word declares. So long as their hearts are right towards His person they claim liberty of thought. Ay, but this is a mere subterfuge. We cannot separate Christ from the Word, for in the first place, He is the Word, and in the next place, how dare we call Him Master and Lord and do not the things which He says, and reject the truth which He teaches?

We must obey His precepts or He will not accept us as disciples. Especially that precept of love which is the essence of all His words. We must love God and our brethren. Yea, we must cherish love to all men, and seek their good. Anger and malice must be far from us. We must walk even as He walked. If Christ’s words abide not in you, both as to belief and practice, you are not in Christ. Christ and His Gospel and His commands are one. If you will not have Christ and His words, neither will He have you nor your words, but you shall ask in vain, you shall by and by give up asking, you shall become as a withered branch. Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Oh for grace to pass through these two-leaved gates, these two golden doors! “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.” Push through the two and enter into this large room, “Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.”

III. It is my last work to try to show WHY THIS PRIVILEGE SHOULD BE SO OBTAINED.

This extraordinary power of prayer, why is it given to those who abide in Christ? May what I have to say encourage you to make the glorious attempt to win this pearl of great price! Why is it, that by abiding in Christ, and having His words abide in us, we get to this liberty and prevalence in prayer?

I answer, first, *because of the fullness of Christ*. You may very well ask what you will when you abide in Christ, because whatsoever you may require is already lodged in Him. Good Bishop Hall worked out this thought in a famous passage. I will give you the substance of it. Do you desire the grace of the Spirit? Go to your Lord’s anointing. Do you seek holiness? Go to His example. Do you desire pardon of sin? Look to His blood. Do you need mortification of sin? Look to His crucifixion. Do you need to be buried to the world? Go to His tomb. Do you want to feel the fullness of a heavenly life? Behold His resurrection. Would you rise above the world? Mark His ascension. Would you contemplate heavenly things? Remember His session at the right hand of God, and know that He “hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places.”

I see clearly enough why the branch gets all it wants while it abides in the stem, since all it wants is already in the stem, and is placed there for the sake of the branch. What does the branch want more than the stem can give it? If it did want more it could not get it, for it has no other means of living but by sucking its life out of the stem. O my precious Lord, if I want anything which is not in You, I desire always to be without it. I desire to be denied a wish which wanders outside of Yourself. But if the supply of my desire is already in You for me, why should I go elsewhere? You are my all. Where else should I look? Beloved, “It pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell,” and the good pleasure of the Father is our good pleasure also. We are glad to draw everything from Jesus. We feel sure that, ask what we will, we shall have it, since He has it ready for us.

The next reason for this is, *the richness of the Word of God*. Catch this thought, “If my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” The best praying man is the man who is most believably familiar with the promises of God. After all, prayer is nothing but taking God’s promises to Him, and saying to Him, “Do as you have said.” Prayer is the promise utilized. A prayer which is not based on a promise has no true foundation. If I go to the bank without a check I need not expect to get money. It is the “order to pay” which is my power inside the bank, and my warrant for expecting to receive. You that have Christ’s words abiding in you are equipped with those things which the Lord regards with attention. If the Word of God abides in you, you are the man that can pray, because you meet the great God with His own words, and thus overcome omnipotence with

omnipotence. You put your finger down upon the very lines, and say, "Do as you have said." This is the best praying in all the world.

O beloved, be filled with God's Word. Study what Jesus has said, what the Holy Ghost has left on record in this divinely-inspired Book, and in proportion as you feed on the Word, and are filled with the Word, and retain the Word in your faith, and obey the Word in your life, in that proportion you will be a master-man in the art of prayer. You have acquired skill as a wrestler with the covenant angel in proportion as you can plead the promises of your faithful God. Be well-instructed in the doctrines of grace, and let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, that you may know how to prevail at the throne of grace. Abiding in Christ and His words abiding in you, are like the right hand and the left hand of Moses, which were held up in prayer, so that Amalek was smitten, Israel was delivered, and God was glorified.

Let us go a little further. You still may say you do not quite see why a man who abides in Christ, and in whom Christ's words abide, should be allowed to ask whatever he wills, and it shall be done unto him. I answer you again. It is so, because *in such a man as that there is a predominance of grace which causes him to have a renewed will, which is according to the will of God.*

Suppose a man of God is in prayer, and he thinks that such and such a thing is desirable, yet he remembers that he is nothing but a babe in the presence of his all-wise Father, and so he bows his will, and asks as a favor to be taught what to will. Though God bids him ask what he wills, he shrinks and cries, "My Lord, here is a request which I am not quite clear about. As far as I can judge, it is a desirable thing, and I will it, but Lord, I am not fit to judge for myself, and therefore I pray You, give not as I will, but as You will."

Do you not see that when we are in such a condition as this, our real will is God's will? Deep down in our hearts we will only that which the Lord Himself wills, and what is this but to ask what we will, and it is done to us? It becomes safe for God to say to the sanctified soul, "Ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." The heavenly instincts of that man lead him right. The grace that is within his soul thrusts down all covetous lusting and foul desires, and his will is the actual shadow of God's will. The spiritual life is master in him, and so his aspirations are holy, heavenly, God-like. He has been made a partaker of the divine nature, and as a son is like his father, so now in desire and will, he is one with his God. As the echo answers to the voice, so does the renewed heart echo the mind of the Lord. Our desires are reflected beams of the divine will. You shall ask what you will, and it shall be even so.

You clearly see that the holy God cannot pick up a common man in the street, and say to him, "I will give you whatever you will." What would he ask for? He would ask for a good drink, or permission to enjoy himself in evil lust. It would be very unsafe to trust the most of men with this permit. But when the Lord has taken a man, and has new-made him, has quickened him into newness of life, and has formed him in the image of His dear Son, then He can trust him! Behold, the great Father treats us in our measure as He treats His Firstborn. Jesus could say, "I knew that thou hearest me always," and the Lord is educating us to the selfsame assurance. We can say with one of old, "My God will hear me."

Do not your mouths water for this privilege of prevailing prayer? Do not your hearts long to get at this? It is by the way of holiness, it is by the way of union to Christ, it is by the way of a permanent abiding in Him, and an obedient holding fast of His truth, that you are to come to this privilege. Behold the only safe and true way. When once that way is really trodden, it is a most sure and effectual way of gaining substantial power in prayer.

I have not quite done. A man will succeed in prayer *when his faith is strong*, and this is the case with those who abide in Jesus. It is faith that prevails in prayer. The real eloquence of prayer is a believing desire. "All things are possible to him that believeth." A man abiding in Christ with Christ's words abiding in him, is eminently a believer, and consequently eminently successful in prayer. He has strong faith indeed, for his faith has brought him into vital contact with Christ, and he is therefore at the source of every blessing, and may drink to his full at the well itself.

Such a man, once more, will also possess *the indwelling of the Spirit of God*. If we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, then the Holy Spirit has come and taken up His residence in us, and what better help in prayer can we have? Is it not a wonderful thing that the Holy Ghost Himself makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” What man knows the mind of a man save the spirit of a man? The Spirit of God knows the mind of God, and He works in us to will what God wills, so that a believing man’s prayer is God’s purpose reflected in the soul as in a mirror.

The eternal decrees of God project their shadows over the hearts of godly men in the form of prayer. What God intends to do He tells unto His servants by inclining them to ask Him to do what He Himself is resolved to do. God says, “I will do this and that,” but then He adds, “For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” How clear it is that if we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, we may ask what we will! For we shall only ask what the Spirit of God moves us to ask, and it were impossible that God the Holy Spirit and God the Father should be at cross-purposes with one another. What the one prompts us to ask, the other has assuredly determined to bestow.

I struck out a line just now to which I must return for a single moment. Beloved, do you not know that when we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us, the Father looks upon us with the same eye with which He looks upon His dear Son? Christ is the vine, and the vine includes the branches. The branches are a part of the vine. God therefore looks upon us as part of Christ-members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Such is the Father’s love to Jesus that He denies Him nothing. He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore does His Father love Him, as the God-man Mediator, and He will grant Him all His petitions. And is it so, that when you and I are in real union to Christ, the Lord God looks upon us in the same way as He looks on Jesus, and says to us, “I will deny you nothing. You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” So do I understand the text.

I call your attention to the fact that in that fifteenth chapter, the ninth verse, which I did not read this morning, runs thus, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” The same love which God gives to His Son, the Son gives to us, and therefore we are dwellers in the love of the Father and of the Son. How can our prayers be rejected? Will not infinite love have respect unto our petitions?

O dear brother in Christ, if your prayers speed not at the throne, suspect that there is some sin that hinders them. Your Father’s love sees a necessity for chastening you this way. If you do not abide in Christ, how can you hope to pray successfully? If you pick and choose His words, and doubt this, and doubt that, how can you hope to speed to the throne? If you are willfully disobedient to any of His words, will not this account for failure in prayer? But abide in Christ, and take fast hold upon His words, and be altogether His disciple, then shall you be heard of Him.

Sitting at Jesus’ feet, hearing His words, you may lift up your eyes to His dear face, and say, “My Lord, hear me now,” and He will answer you graciously. He will say unto you, “I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee. Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Oh for power at the mercy seat!

Beloved friends, do not hear this sermon, and then go away and forget it. Do try to reach this place of boundless influence. What a church we could be, if you were all mighty in prayer! Dear children of God, do you want to be half starved? Beloved brethren, do you desire to be poor, little, puny, driveling children, who will never grow into men? I pray you, aspire to be strong in the Lord, and to enjoy this exceedingly high privilege. What an army would you be if you all had this power with God in prayer! It is within your reach, you children of God! Only abide in Christ, and let His words abide in you, and then this special privilege will be yours. These are not irksome duties, but they are in themselves a joy. Go in for them with your whole heart, and then you shall get this added to you, that you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Unhappily, to a portion of this congregation my text says nothing at all, for some of you are not even in Christ, and therefore you cannot abide in Him. O sirs, what shall I say to you? You seem to me to miss a very heaven even now. If there were no hell hereafter, it is hell enough not to know Christ now,

not to know what it is to prevail with God in prayer, not to know the choice privilege of abiding in Him, and His words abiding in you.

Your first matter is that you believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of your souls, yielding your souls to His cleansing, your lives to His government. God has sent Him forth as a Savior, accept Him. Receive Him as your Teacher. Yield yourself up to Him as your Master. May His gracious Spirit come and do this work upon you now, and then, after this, but not before, you may aspire to this honor.

First of all, “You must be born again.” I cannot say to you as you are now, “Grow,” because you will only grow a bigger sinner. However much you may be developed, you will only develop what is in you, and that is, the heir of wrath will become more and more the child of evil. You must be made anew in Christ. There must be an absolute change, a reversal of all the currents of nature, a making you a new creature in Christ Jesus, and then you may aspire to abide in Christ, and let His words abide in you, and the consequent prevalence with God in prayer shall be yours.

Gracious Lord, help us this morning. Poor creatures as we are, we can only lie at Your feet. Come Yourself, and uplift us to Yourself, for Your mercy’s sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15:1-8

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—103 (VERSION 3), 761, 800

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