

SHALL AND WILL NO. 3416

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1914
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.”
Psalm 91:15

THIS psalm is full to the very brim of exceeding great and precious promises, nor is our text the least choice of them all. We have here two pearls. I am not sufficient merchantman to be able to say which is the more precious, but certain I am that the two put together are priceless beyond all computation. “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.”

“He shall call upon me.” Prayer is itself a blessing. The desire to pray, the disposition to pray, the resolve, the determination to pray—what hopeful, healthy symptoms these are! But to be able to pray—ah! what some might give if they could put forth their soul’s strength in this cheering exercise. Then comes the divine engagement favorably to hear prayer, “And I will answer him.” What would some give, especially the lost, those beyond the reach of mercy, if they could but hope that their cry of anguish could meet with a response of pity, that God would answer them, even if it were to relieve, though it might not be to remove their torments.

We have this privilege. Prayer is encouraged, and prayer is answered. These two are stars which shine in the Christian’s sky, lit up of God to lead him to the land where darkness shall be all unknown.

We have no time for a preface, therefore let us at once notice that *prayer must be offered, and that prayer must be answered.*

I. THERE MUST BE PRAYER.

“He shall call upon me.” It is not said, “I will give him this and that, without his praying.” He that *asketh* receiveth, to him that *knocketh* it shall be opened, he that *seeketh* findeth. The asking, the knocking, the seeking must come before the reception, the opening of the door and the finding. This is God’s way. “For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” Though the promise is good and sure, and will be fulfilled, we are to bring it in our hands, lay it before the throne, and plead with God’s faithfulness and mercy that He will do as He has said. Prayer is essential.

The text seems to assert that the man who dwells near to God must and shall pray. “He *shall* call upon me.” Others may refuse, man has a will of his own, but this will shall not stand in the way or prevent prayer. He shall be willing to pray. He shall be made willing in the day of God’s power. Having received a new heart and a right spirit, his will shall be in such gracious order that he *shall* will to pray. God declares that if other men are silent, this man *shall* pray. This is a bell which God will ring. This is a flute upon which God will play. This is an organ which shall send forth its peals, for God puts His hands upon the keys. This man shall pray.

Beloved, you who know Christ, who are in the habit of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High, *you know that there is a constraint upon you that you should pray.* You are free agents, just as Paul was in the matter of preaching, and yet he said, “Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!” You are free agents in the matter of prayer, and yet do you not feel that there is a divine constraining that moves you, so that it is woe unto you unless you draw near to God?

This necessity springs from divers causes. *Within you there dwells the Holy Spirit.* The Spirit of God is a Spirit of intercession. Wherever He is, there will be a groaning which cannot be uttered—intercessions made within the heart which has become the temple of the Blessed Spirit. You cannot help praying if the Spirit of God be in your hearts. Drive out that sacred visitant, and you will soon become as

dumb as the fish in the sea, but while He is there, you shall be like the seraphs who continually do cry before Him. Your prayer and your praise shall never cease, but like the incense upon the golden altar, it shall always smoke, the fire shall never go out by day or by night. The presence of the Holy Spirit secures the fulfillment of this promise, “He shall call upon me.”

Moreover, *as the Holy Spirit gradually teaches you and educates you, everything that you learn tends to make you pray.* I say everything, my brethren, whether you read in the illuminated books wherein you see the glory of the person of Christ, or whether you turn to the black-letter volume in which you discover the depravity of your own heart. Whichever may be the book, all sacred literature alike shall lead you to pray.

Certainly a sight of your own heart will do it. You will tremble as you see the envyings, the prides, the murders, the murmurings, the rebellions of every sort that lurk there, and you will turn to the Strong for strength, feeling that the monster evils of your nature cannot be overcome by your own powers. They have chariots of iron, they dwell in cities that are walled up to the skies. You cannot drive them out, except a mightier power than yours shall be enlisted in the warfare. Hence you will be driven to cry mightily unto the Lord God of Israel, that He will put forth His omnipotence because of your impotence to overcome your corruptions and lusts.

And a sight of Christ—which is the opposite extreme of experience—equally instructive and far more pleasant—*a sight of Christ will bring you to your knees.* When Peter’s boat was full, and began to sink, then down he went, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Sometimes a sense of the weight of sin may make us wish to escape from Christ. Sad that it should be so! But when we see the glory of Christ Himself, and behold His condescension towards us, then we come very near to Him, and constrain Him to abide with us, finding arguments in our circumstance to constrain Him to tarry yet a little longer, since we cannot afford to lose his blessed fellowship.

So, *as we learn and grow in grace,* we are sure to grow in prayer. If we do not increase in prayerfulness, we may take it as a sign that we are not advancing in the divine life. I am certain that the closet is the thermometer of the entire man. Beloved brethren and sisters, how grow you if this be the case? How is it with some of you if this be true?

Oh! how little time is spent upon your knees! Time, however, is of small consequence, for I sometimes think we can pray more in five minutes at one time than we can in hours at other seasons. Have you had personal dealings with God of late? Have you come close to the Most High? Have you wrestled with the covenant angel? If not, there is something wrong. Begin the search. Perhaps, under your beloved Rachel, your most favored delight, some evil is hidden, some idol concealed. Search and look, for if there be a want of prayerfulness, there is mischief somewhere.

Moreover, dear friends, not only does the Holy Spirit constrain us to pray, not only will all that we learn from Him lead us to prayer, but I think the *sense of holy joy which communion with God in prayer brings will entice us into our retirement.* We can look back upon some very, very happy times that we have had, when no stranger’s foot could intrude into the sacred enclosure of our retreat with the Most High.

Have we not looked into the face of God—a marvelous sight!—and have we not been made to reflect from our own faces afterwards the light of His glory? Have we not spoken to Christ? Why, I dare to say there are some of us who have as surely spoken with Him as a man speaks with his friend, and it has sometimes become to us scarcely a matter of faith as to whether there was a Christ or not, and whether He heard and fulfilled our desires, for we have whispered right into His ear, and have felt Him to be near us. I do not mean with any carnal feeling, or under a sense of mere excitement, but in all sobriety, when there was no flush of feeling, for we have been heavy of heart with the world’s troubles, or we have been racked with physical pain.

Or at other times, when our passions have been subdued by long reading, by searching of the Word, or by the exercise of prayer, then in our clearest senses we have been cognizant of spiritual things as surely as ever in our lives we were conscious of worldly things. Well, now, having once been at that

table, we long to get there again. Having once sipped of this glorious river, we shall never be content with the muddy rivers of Egypt any more. We long for the hour to strike when secular business shall be over, that we may begin spiritual business, the real business of our souls in commerce with heaven. We have wished that we could prolong the time when we could sit, like David, before the Lord, when our spirit could gather such confidence that we could almost dance before the Lord, as he did when girded with a linen ephod.

I am sure that the sweetness of prayer attracts and draws the believer. Even as birds are drawn with baits towards the snare, so towards the holy exercise of prayer we are drawn by the sweet attractions it has.

The Lord takes care that His people shall pray, by *giving them a plentiful supply of daily trials and needs*. If there be anyone here without needs, I can suppose him to live without prayer, and if you have had a long course of prosperity, I can easily imagine that the mercy seat has grown neglected. But it will not be so with those of you who have to fight hard for daily bread, or with those of you who have many cares in the household, or who have much trouble in your position in life by persecution, by ridicule, and sneers.

Certainly, we who are engaged in the business of a large church, with the care of many souls upon us, cannot afford to do without prayer, and when we come into contact with other people's souls, and get to be earnest about them, if we did not pray, we should be worse monsters than those that throw their young into the depths of the sea, for we should have forsaken utterly those who have a call and claim upon us, deserting them in the most important of matters, neglecting to make intercession before the Lord for them. Surely, we should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.

You who never look after sinners, and do not care whether they perish or not, you can live without prayer. But those of you who come into contact with the desponding, and try to encourage them, and find you cannot, you who talk with the despairing and find you cannot comfort them, you are driven to God. You call to Him to do what you cannot, to perform what you cannot accomplish. I am persuaded that the more intelligently active and the more earnestly vigorous a man is in God's work, the more will he find the necessity of prayer.

I do not wonder that Christ spent whole nights in prayer. As a man, He could not have preached and done all He did without it. It would not have been possible to have sustained the ardor of such zeal daily, hourly, incessantly, without feeding it by nightly, restless, almost incessant intercessions.

Brethren, God will have us pray, and if we will not pray by reason of charm, He will force us to pray by reason of fear. If we will not pray when the dish is dainty, He will break our teeth with gravel stones, and make us drunken with wormwood. If treat will not bring you to your knees, trial shall. If one cut of the rod does not remind you of your negligence, you shall have the stroke upon stroke till there be wales upon the skin, till you have smarted, groaned, and wept, till at length you shall say, "Before I was afflicted from the mercy seat I went astray, but now have I kept thy word, and come near to thy throne of grace."

But you *shall* call upon Him. If you are an elect man, you shall cry unto Him. "Behold, he prayeth," must, and shall be said of you. If you are a quickened soul, you shall pray. You shall not be allowed to forget to breathe out your soul unto God. If the Lord intends to crown you in glory, He will make you wrestle in prayer before you win that crown. "He shall call upon me." I delight to look at the text in this light—not merely as the Christian's duty and privilege, but as God's own purpose to make us pray. By the divine influence of His Holy Spirit, and by the workings of His providence, He will constrain His beloved ones to live near to Him. "He shall call upon me."

And now please to observe the relative truth—

II. PRAYER MUST BE ANSWERED.

"And I will answer him." If your experience has not got so far as the first head, you cannot enjoy the second. If you do not feel the propulsions and compulsions of the Holy Spirit constraining you to pray,

you will have nothing to do with this—“And I will answer him.” But if you have been much engaged in prayer, then, as there was a necessity for you to pray, so there is a necessity for God to answer.

Let me show you this. *It is a part of the divine scheme and plan by which God governs the world and manages providence that men should pray, and that He should answer them.* I do not know why God is pleased so to ordain it, but I do know that this is one of His statutes. In reading Scripture, you constantly see evidence of it in precept, in promise and in example. Now, when the sun rises, there is light. Why, I do not know. There might have been light without the sun and there might have been a sun that gave no light, but God has been pleased to put these two things together—sunrise and light.

So whenever there is prayer, there is a blessing. I do not know why. There might have been prayer without a blessing, for there is in the world of wrath, and there might have been a blessing without prayer, for it often is sent to some who sought it not. But God has been pleased to make this a rule for the government of the moral and spiritual universe, that there shall be prayer first, and that then there shall be the answer to prayer.

I do not expect God to alter His rule about the sun rising. I do not expect to see it light in the middle of the night before the sun is up. Neither do I expect to see God altering this rule, that there shall be a blessing upon the church without His people seeking it. If we did but observe it aright, we would perceive this to be as certainly a rule of God’s government as any law of nature which has been discovered by experience and embodied in science. And instead of wondering that prayer is answered, we would come to look out for, and expect, answers.

Some of you good people who have been wont to pray for your children to be converted, have been not only pleased, which is quite right, but you have been amazed, which is quite wrong, when you have seen the grace that was in them, and heard their profession of faith in Christ. That surprise of yours looks as if you were wonder-struck to find that God was honest and kept His Word, whereas you should take that as a matter of course.

But as this is so reliable, “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him,” when you do not get an answer to prayer, you should go to the Lord with this question, “Show me wherefore thou contendest with me. What is this that hinders the blessing? Why do You withhold it? Is my prayer faulty? Or did I ask amiss? Or have I a wrong intent? Or did I not plead the blood of Jesus enough? Or is it that I am altogether unfit to receive such a blessing? Whichever it may be, Lord, set me right, that I may pray again, and have given to me the answer to my prayer.” You ought to get an answer, and will get an answer, because it is a part of the rule of God’s government.

It should be enough for every believer to know that his prayer will be heard *because he has God’s word for it.* Why raise objections or multiply arguments? We have it before us. “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.” It is no longer a matter of conjecture. God has said He will, and “let God be true, and every man a liar.” Settle it for certain, that what God has promised, He can perform, and He will perform.

Has not *God always answered prayer?* In looking back throughout the history of the saints, this seems to be their constant testimony, “This poor man cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard him.” He has heard them in strange places—Jonah, to wit, in the whale’s belly. He has delivered them, in answer to prayer, out of very difficult positions—Peter, to wit, when sleeping with four soldiers to be his guard, and yet brought out of prison in answer to the prayers of God’s church.

He has answered prayer to some of us. We are the living witnesses to this. I have sometimes said to skeptics, “You are believers in the Baconian philosophy, by which matters are proved by induction, that is to say, certain facts are collated, and then an inference is drawn from them.

Now, as an honest man, I solemnly declare that I have met with not twenty, but hundreds of facts, facts certain to me, because they concerned myself, in which God has given me what I asked of Him, who, then, are you, that you should say there is no God? Or who are you that you should say God does not answer prayer, when I, as credible as you are, and quite as capable of judging of my own consciousness, and of observing facts as you are, state this and that, and when not only I, but hundreds

of others, reliable people, who, if put into the witness box tomorrow, would be accepted by any lawyer as being among the most honorable and trustworthy witnesses in the parish, the very men whom he would like to get on his side of a case, declare that God has answered them? Why are they not to be believed?" Are all the thousands of God's people to be put down as fools or fanatics, and a few addle-headed infidels to be taken after the estimate of their own conceit, to know everything?

Well, when the world is turned upside down, perhaps it may be so, but as long as things stand as they are, and plain evidence carries its weight with impartial jurymen, we shall hold to what we know, and testify to what we have seen. God *does* hear. He *has* heard me. He changes not. You may rest assured that if you call upon Him, He will answer you.

Our God compares Himself constantly in Scripture to a Father. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" You do not let our children cry to you for things which you have promised them, and then refuse them. Of course, if they take whims into their heads, they may take them out again, and if they like to cry for that which is not good for them, they may cry till they are tired. But if they ask for that which you have promised to give them, you give them according to their desire. Are you better than your Father in heaven? I think not.

He condescends to represent Himself *as a friend*. Surely one friend will give to another who has need. Is Christ such a poor friend as to deny us our repeated and importunate prayers? He calls Himself a *husband*. You who have a tender husband's heart would not refuse to your bride, your spouse, anything that would give her joy that it was in your power to bestow. You know you would not. And do you think that the Husband of the church will let her cry to Him and refuse her? Oh! no. He is a model of a husband in the love He has, and He will be a model in the generosity with which He proves His love. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." The relationships of Father, Friend, and Husband, all go to prove that an answer shall, and will, come.

Were the duty of prayer enjoined, and no promise of answer vouchsafed, of what use would it be? *Has God enjoined upon us constantly a useless observance, and perpetually commanded us to abide in the practice of an unmeaning service?* He says, "Continue in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." Does God delude us and send us to an exercise which can by no possibility be profitable? God forbid! We pray because He leads us, and He bids us because there is an end to be answered by it. Therefore, an answer will come.

If God does not answer prayer, *to what purpose is the Holy Spirit given to us to make intercession for us?* 'Twere blasphemy to suppose the Holy Spirit doing a work of supererogation. Prayer is necessary, and as we know not what to pray for as we ought, the Holy Spirit comes condescendingly to fulfill a useful office in helping our infirmities and assisting us to pray.

Were there no answers to prayer, *to what end would be the mercy seat?* It was the central part of the Jewish worship, the most mysterious of all their religious furniture—the ark overshadowed by the cherubim, the hilasterion, the mercy seat, which covered the law and concealed the sacred things. In symbol, or in spirit, the Scripture teaches us it is a great privilege to be allowed to come to that mercy seat. Christ has died to rend the veil, has sprinkled His own heart's blood to make it possible for us to approach without our being smitten down for our presumption as Nadab and Abihu were. And is all this for nothing? Never tolerate such a thought for a single moment.

Ah! my dear brethren and sisters, there is a wonderful reality in prayer. I am afraid that some professors have not proved it, and those of us who really do know its power do not use it as we should. If a man could have somewhere in his house some little secret spring which, but to touch it, would bring him all he wanted, which could shake the world, which could move heaven, which could stop the sun and moon if necessary—would you not think him insane if he never put his finger on that spring, but let it lie idle by him? The insanity is our own.

We may move the arm of God if we will. There is nothing in earth or heaven that we may not have, if it is really good for us, if we do but know how to be importunate with God in prayer for it, and yet we

do not pray as if we believed in its efficacy. Do you not often find yourselves hurrying through your prayer, and then going away without ever getting near to God? Depend upon it, there is not one ounce more of prayer in the world than there is of real dealing with God. That is the measure of prayer.

Unless you draw near to God, and speak with Him, you may use the best language, you may think yourselves in the most devout frame, but you have not prayed at all. It is getting the grip spiritually, laying hold upon Him that is invisible, talking with Him as a man talks with his friend, ordering your cause with arguments, and then feeling, "I have really asked this of the great invisible God, who has promised to give it, and I expect it, I must look out for it, it will surely come, as sure as God is God, He will keep His promise, and as He has made me call upon Him, He Himself will answer me"—this is the essence of true prayer.

Do I hear somebody saying, "*But there are persons who really pray, or who think they do, but who do not get an answer.*" That is quite true, for *there are a great many persons who do formally pray, and do not verily pray.* They offer a dead prayer, there is no life in it. The heart is not at work, there is no faith, there is no communion. Now, if a man will obtain of God, he must ask in faith, nothing wavering. How can he that doubts expect that he shall be heard? I must believe, if I come to God, that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and if I will not so believe, in vain do I expect to be answered.

But, brethren, *do not suppose that prayer will be answered in every case according to the caprice of the suppliant, or that God will give us just whatever we like to pray for.* No more dangerous power could be committed to mortals. If the Lord would say to me, "I will give you whatever you wish for," I should tremble at the responsibility. Infinite knowledge alone could regulate unlimited choice. It were a prerogative not to be entrusted to any but God.

Only suppose what would occur if every prayer that everybody offers were to be answered. It is pretty certain no child of God would ever resign his creature life. There would be sure to be something or other that would prompt each one to live. We should have all the aged men who lived in the days of David here still, as spectators, if not as competitors in this world's struggles.

I think, too, it is very likely that none of us would ever have any trials. We should be sure to pray not to have them, and then there would be no room for faith to be exercised and no room for God to be glorified. The world would come to a dreadful pass if men were entrusted with an absolute power to have whatever they liked. It would be, indeed, a terrible curse for any man to be put in possession of such a faculty as that. You have no right to ask of God what He has not promised.

Somebody prayed the other day that he might be led to ask a person to give him five hundred pounds. He was so led, or he said he was, and he asked me to do it. All I could say was that whenever I was "led" to do it, I would do it, but just then I was not led. Another person was led to pray that I might build him a cottage. Well, I was not led. A young man was once led, in answer to prayer, to ask me to let him preach for me at the Tabernacle. I was obliged to tell him, also, that when I had had it revealed to me, as it had been to him, I would then cheerfully obey the revelation, but it was lop-sided as yet, and had only been revealed to one person, and not to the other.

Such fanaticism surely grows up where you get the idea that God will give you anything you ask for. He will do no such thing. He will give you what He has promised to give you, and if in His Word, He has promised to bestow it, you have but to ask in faith, and He will be as good as His Word. Hold to that. If it is not a promised blessing in some form or other, you have neither the right to ask for it, nor the right to accept it!

Should any man say, "I asked for a blessing that was plainly promised, but did not obtain it," I should then say, *Are you equally clear that the obtaining of it would be for your good?* "Yes," say you, "it would make me comfortable." Just so, but is it for your good to be comfortable? "And it would get me out of my difficulty." But may it not be for your lasting good to be in the difficulty, and may there not be something in the world a great deal higher for you and for me than merely to be comfortable, and to get out of difficulties? "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," was the prayer of the man who had more

power in prayer than all of us put together—"Not as I will, but as thou wilt." We must always put that in.

God does not give up His prerogative as King when He bids us pray, and promises us to answer. He still holds everything in His own hands. You say to your child, "My dear, I will give you anything that is for your good." He asks you to let him have his father's razors to play with. You know that very soon he will be cutting himself, and you say, "No, my child, that is preposterous." Or he asks you to let him have those sweets that are poisonous and you say, "No, my dear child, I have no doubt they taste sweet to your palate, but think of the bitter medicines you would have to take afterwards, and of how much mischief they would do you. No, I cannot let you have those."

So it is with our God. He denies us many things we wish for because they are not good for us, but there is one thing that is certain, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." If it is really good for you, you shall have it, and God shall be glorified by it.

To sum up all I have been saying tonight, I want, dear friends, these two promises to stand vividly set forth before your eyes—"He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." I want to stir you up to prayer. Do let us have more prayer during this year than ever we have had. It has been by prayer that we have been established up till now. When we were very few at Park Street, before I had the pleasure of knowing the most of you, among the best signs of the coming blessing was your numerously-attended prayer meetings. We had a little vestry there, and I think we tried it about twice, but it was no use, we could not get in, but we must needs go into the chapel.

Oh! there were prayers there that have been turned into answers since. When we could not speak, because we have felt so much of the presence of God that we had need to sit still and pour out in tears and sobs the groanings that could not be uttered. We did pray with real, mighty, prevailing prayer, and then there came a blessing.

Wherever we went, God was with us. Wherever the Word was preached—whether in Exeter Hall or the Surrey Music Hall—it mattered not in what place, the Word was blessed. And though I am sometimes afraid that we shall get slack in prayer, yet when I frequently see the whole of this basement full, and see you sitting in the aisles on Monday evening (though some careless people say, "Oh! it is only a prayer meeting!"), it does cheer and make glad my heart. We cannot lose the blessing while we keep the spirit of prayer. I want you to pray more still.

Among other topics, I suggest to you much more prayer for your children and for your families. We must have them saved, beloved. We cannot bear it that our children should be cast away. The angel said to Lot, "Hast thou here any beside?" I say that to each of you tonight. Have you in London any beside? You have seen some saved, are there any left? Is there one left? Oh! father, never cease to pray till that one child is brought to God. Let your prayers go up perpetually. "Oh! that Ishmael might live before thee!"

When you have done with your families, pray for your neighbors. You need never be short of objects for petition in this great city, which is so full of sin. In these times of poverty and distress, men, perhaps, are more easily reached than they were. Let us pray more for them, and may the Eternal God soften them in their distress, and bring them to Himself.

I claim myself to have a very special right to the prayers of some here. I think I have a right to the prayers of all the members of this church, but on some of you in particular I have a claim which none can dispute, for it has been through the Word preached here that you have been brought from darkness to light, and I charge you, my children in Christ, by the love which I trust subsists in your hearts, never forget me in your prayers. You know not how much I want it. It is not possible for any but God to know how much I need the daily prayers of the Lord's people.

Others of you are members of other churches. Well, pray for your ministers, and pray for us all. The weakest of us will be strong when you pray, the strongest will grow weak when you flag. Brethren, pray for us that we may be faithful, earnest, useful, and we say, as you shall pray for us, so may God help you in that day when you shall draw near unto Him for yourselves in distress.

Pray for all your fellow church members, pray for the backsliding, pray for any that are faltering, pray, I beseech you, for our work connected with the church here. I ask your prayers for our college in particular, that our brethren who are going out to preach the gospel may go as God-sent servants, having their feet winged with love, and their souls fired with zeal.

Again and again, and again would I say it. If I should never say another word to you, I think I would conclude by saying: Brethren, pray for us! Pray for yourselves, and your families, and your neighbors! “Continue in prayer,” “Watch and pray.” Watch continually, but pray also, and the Lord hear you, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 5:41-48, 6:1-8

Matthew Chapter 5. Verse 41. *And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*

If you can do him any service, do it cheerfully, do it readily. Do what he wants of you.

42. *Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*

This is the spirit of the Christian—to live with the view of doing service.

43-46. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?

You have done what anybody would do.

46-48. *Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans do so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Rise out of ordinary manhood. Get beyond what others might expect of you. Have a high standard. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Matthew Chapter 6. Verse 1. *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

Our blessed Lord does not tell His disciples to give alms, but He takes it for granted that they do. How could they be His disciples if they did not so? But He tells them to take care that they do not do this in order to get honor and credit from it. Oh! how much is done in this world that would be very good, but it is spoiled in the doing through the motive done to be seen of men. “Ye have no reward from your Father which is in heaven.”

2. *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

So that they will never have another. They have been paid once for it by the approbation of their fellow men. They will never have any further reward.

3-5. *But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest,—*

He does not tell His disciples to pray, but again takes it for granted that they do so, and he cannot be a Christian who does not pray. “A prayerless soul is a Christless soul.” “When thou prayest.”

5. *Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*

All they will ever get. People say, “What a wonderfully pious man he is to pray up at the street corner.” Ay, but that is the reward. The prayer will die where it was offered.

6. *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,—*

Get into some quiet nook—some secret place, no matter where.

6. *And when thou hast shut thy door,—*

So that nobody can hear you—not wishing anybody to know even that you are at prayer. “When thou hast shut thy door.”—

6-8. *Pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathens do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*

Prayers are never measured by the yard in heaven. They are estimated by their weight. If there is earnestness in them, truth, sincerity, God accepts them, however brief they are. Indeed, brevity is often an excellence in prayer. Let us never, therefore, use vain repetitions.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.