

PRAYER FOUND IN THE HEART

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.”
2 Samuel 7:27

IT is a very blessed thing for a child of God to be anxious to glorify his Heavenly Father, whether his wish is realized or not. The strong desire to magnify God is acceptable to Him, and is an indication of spiritual health. It is certain, in the long run, to bring blessing to our own souls, and I have frequently noticed that, when we earnestly desire to do something special for the Lord, He generally does something for us very much of the same kind.

David wished to build a house for God. “No,” says JEHOVAH, “thou hast been a man of war, and I will not employ a warrior in spiritual business, but I will build thee a house.” So, although David may not build a house for God, it is well that the plan of it is in his heart, and God, in return, builds up his house, and sets his son, and his son’s son, upon the throne after him.

But my dear friend, if you should not find an opportunity to do all that is in your heart, yet, nevertheless, it is well that it is there. Carry out the project if you can, but if you can not, it may be that, as you have desired to deal with the Lord, so will He really deal with you. If you have sown sparingly, you shall reap sparingly. If you have sown liberally, you shall reap largely, for often and often, the Lord’s dealings with His own people are a sort of echo to their hearts of their dealings with Him.

Sometimes it happens that God will not let His servants do what they would most of all like to do. David had long been storing up gold and silver in great quantities that he might build that house for the Lord. It had been the great project of his life that he might make a fit sanctuary for the ark of the covenant. “I dwell,” said he, “in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.” The dream of his life was that he might build a magnificent temple, which should be supremely gorgeous for architecture, and rich in all the treasures of the ends of the earth, that there the ark of his God might be appropriately housed. But the Lord would not have it so. David might pray about it, and think about it, and plan about it, and save his money for it, but the Lord would not have it so. It was not in that particular way that David was to serve His God.

And I have known some good Christian young men who felt that they must be preachers. They had not the proper gifts and qualifications for the ministry, but they felt that they must preach, so they have striven very hard, but at all points they have met with rebuffs. People, who have heard them once, have been quite satisfied, and have not desired to hear them again. Doors have been shut against them, no conversions have followed their efforts, and thus God has said to each one of them, “Not so, my son, not in that way shalt thou serve me.”

And there are others who have had other plans in their heads—brethren and sisters, who have arranged wonderful schemes and plans, which they have dreamed over, and said, “Thus and thus will we serve God.” Yet, hitherto, my brother, you have had to keep to the workman’s bench, and you, my sister, have had to keep to nursing those little children. Up till now, you have not been very successful in any special path of usefulness, or that which is commonly thought to be the path of usefulness. But God knows best, and He has uses for all the vessels in His house, and it is not right for any one vessel to say, “I will be used here, or there, or not at all,” but it is for God to use us as He pleases.

Every private soldier would like to be an officer, but it is only a very few who ever will be, and if every private soldier could be an officer, what sort of an army would it be where all were officers, and none were men in the ranks? So we would, perhaps, each of us, like to do something more remarkable than we have hitherto done, but it is for our great Commander to say to this man, "Stand here," or to that man, "Go there," and it ought to be equally a matter of contentment to us whether God permits us to serve Him here or there.

I think it was good Mr. Jay who used to say that, if there were two angels in heaven, and God wanted one of them to go and be the ruler of a kingdom, and the other to sweep a crossing, the two angels would not have the slightest choice which post they would have provided that they knew they had the Lord's command to occupy either position.

Brother, if ever the Lord should rebuff you, and seem to refuse that which you desire to offer to Him, do not sulk, do not get into a bad spirit, as some have done in similar circumstances, but know that the very essence of Christian service is to be willing not to serve in that particular way if, by not serving, God would be the more glorified.

Be willing, O vessel in the house of the Lord, to be hung up on a nail in the wall, be willing to be laid aside in a corner, if so God would be glorified, for thus was it with David. God would not let him erect the temple which he wished to build, but He gave him great blessings in return for his desires, and then David, instead of sulking, and saying, "Well, then, as I cannot have my own will, I will do nothing at all," went in, and sat before the Lord, and blessed and praised him, and never uttered one grumbling or surly word, but blessed the name of the Lord from the beginning of his meditation even to its close. Oh, to have a heart molded after the like fashion!

In the midst of David's memorable address to God, we meet with this suggestive expression, "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." I am going to speak upon that subject in this way. First, concerning David's prayer, *how did he come by it?* Secondly, *how came this prayer to be in his heart?* And thirdly, *how may we get into such a condition that we shall find prayers in our hearts?*

I. First, then, HOW DID DAVID COME BY HIS PRAYER? He tells us that he found it in his heart, "Thy servant hath found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee."

Then it is pretty clear that *he looked for it in his heart*. How many men seem to begin to pray without really thinking about prayer! They rush, without preparation or thought, into this presence of God. Now, no loyal subject would seek an audience of his sovereign, to present a petition, without having first carefully prepared it, but many seem to think there is no need to look for a prayer, or to find one, when they approach the mercy seat. They appear to imagine that they have only just to repeat certain words, and to stand or kneel in a certain attitude, and that is prayer. But David did not make that mistake, he found his prayer in his heart.

David and his heart were well acquainted, he had long been accustomed to talk with himself. There are some men, who know a thousand other people, but who do not know their own selves, the greatest stranger to them, in the whole world, is their own heart. They have never looked into it, never talked with it, never examined it, never questioned it. They follow its evil devices, but they scarcely know that they have a heart, they so seldom look into it. But David, when he wanted to pray, went and looked in his heart to see what he could find there, and he found in his heart to pray this prayer to God.

This leads me to say, dear friends, that *the best place in which to find a prayer is to find it in your heart*. Some would have fetched down a book, and they would have said, "Let us see, what is the day of the month—how many Sundays after Advent? This is the proper prayer for today." But David did not go to a book for his prayer, he turned to his heart to see what he could find there that he might pray unto God.

Others of us would, perhaps, have been content to find a prayer in our heads. We have been accustomed to extemporize in prayer, and so, perhaps, bowing the knee, we should have felt that the stream of supplication would flow because we are so habituated to speaking with God in prayer. Ah, dear friend, it is no worse to find a prayer in a book than to find it in your head! It is very much the same

thing whether the prayer be printed or be extemporized, unless it comes from the heart, it is equally dead in either case.

How many, too, have found a prayer upon their lips! It is a very common thing with those who pray in prayer meetings, and those of us who pray in public, for our lips to run much faster than our hearts move, and it is one of the things we need to cry to God to keep us from, lest we should be run away with by our own tongues, as men are, sometimes, run away with by their horses, which they cannot restrain, and you know, the horse never goes faster than when he has very little to carry. And sometimes, words will come at a very rapid rate when there is very little real prayer conveyed by them.

This is not as it ought to be with us, and we must look into our hearts for the desire to pray, and if we do not find it in our hearts to pray a prayer, let us rest assured that we shall not be accepted before the throne of God.

How was it that David found this prayer in his heart? I think it was *because his heart had been renewed by divine grace*. Prayer is a living thing, you cannot find a living prayer in a dead heart. Why seek ye the living among the dead, or search the sepulcher to find the signs and tokens of life? No, sir, if you have not been made alive by the grace of God, you cannot pray. The dead cannot pray, and the spiritually dead cannot pray, but the moment you begin to pray, it is a sign that life has been given to you. Ananias knew that Saul was a living soul when God said to him, "Behold, he prayeth." "It is all right," said Ananias, "for the Lord must have quickened his heart." David found this prayer in his heart because his was a living heart.

And he found it there, also, *because his was a believing heart*. How can a man pray if he does not believe in God, or if he merely thinks that there may be a supernatural Being, somewhere or other in the universe, but that He is not within hail—and cannot be made to hear—or is not a living personality, or if He is, He is too great to care about us, or to listen to the words of a man. But when the Lord has taught you the truth about His own existence, and His real character, when He has come so near to you that you know that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, then, in that believing heart of yours prayer will spring up as the corn springs up in the furrows of the field.

The Lord, who has sown in your heart the seed of faith, will make that seed to spring up in the green blade of prayer. It must be so, but until you do believe in God, you cannot pray. It would be useless for me to say to some men, "You should pray," when I recollect that Christ has said, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," and that is what these men cannot do. How can they, therefore, pray acceptably? "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Where there is that true faith in God, there is fervent prayer in the heart, but nowhere else.

David's was also *a serious heart*. Some men's hearts are flippant, trifling, full of levity. God forbid that we should condemn holy cheerfulness! As oil to the wheels of a machine, so is cheerfulness to a man's conversation, but there is a frothiness, a superficiality, a frivolity, which is far too common. Some men do not seem to think seriously about anything. They have no settled principles, they are "everything by starts, and nothing long." "The Vicar of Bray" is their first cousin. Perhaps they have scarcely as much principle as he had, for they do not so steadily seek their own interests, and scarcely seek any interest at all but that of the transient pleasure of the hour. If that is your case, I do not wonder that you cannot pray.

A man says, "I cannot find prayer in my heart." No, how should you? Yours is a heart full of chaff, full of dust, full of rubbish—a heart tangled and overgrown with weeds—a sluggard's heart, where grow the nettles of evil desire and unholy passion—where live the docks and thistles of idleness and neglect. Oh, may God grant us the grace to have serious hearts—hearts that are in solemn earnest—hearts that are intense—hearts that can really give due heed to things according to their merits, and that give to eternal things their chief concern, because eternal things deserve them best. David's heart was a serious heart and therefore, he found this prayer in it.

And once again, David's was *a humble heart*, for a man who is proud will not pray. A man who is self-righteous will not pray, except it be in the fashion of the Pharisee, and that was no prayer at all. But a man, humbly conscious of his soul's needs, and realizing the guilt of his sins—that is the man to pour out his heart in prayer before the living God. I pray the Lord graciously to break your hearts, for unless our hearts are broken in penitence, we shall never find in them a real prayer unto God.

There are some of you who have got on wonderfully since your Lord called you by His grace. You were wretched enough when He looked at you, cast out in the open field, covered with blood and filthiness, and He washed you, and clothed you, and nourished you, and now He has even begun to use you in His service, and you are already beginning to be rather proud that He has given you some success. I charge you, brothers and sisters, not to pilfer any of the glory that belongs to God alone. Never begin to throw up your caps, and to cry, "Well done!" It is all up with us if we do that.

Keep down low, my brother, keep down low, my sister. The lower we keep, and the more we fear and tremble—not through unbelief, mark you (that kind of fear I denounce with all my heart), but with that really believing trembling and believing fear that grows out of genuine love to Christ, and is not inconsistent with that love—the more we have of that sort of fear, the more securely shall we walk, and the more will it be safe for God to trust us with His goodness.

When your ship floats very high upon the water, I hope that you will not have much sail spread, or else the vessel will almost certainly go over, but when it floats low, almost down to the Plimsoll line, you may crowd on as much sail as you like. If you carry but little ballast, and you have huge sails up aloft, the first gust of wind will topple you over, but if you are well ballasted—that is to say, if you are weighed down with a sense of your own unworthiness, you will weather any gale that may come upon you, God the Holy Ghost being in the vessel with you, and holding the helm.

I pause here a moment just to ask each one—Do you pray? Do you present to God prayers that come from your heart? I do not ask whether you use a form of prayer, or not, but does your heart really go with the prayer you offer? I think I hear someone say, "I always say my prayers." Ah, my dear friend, there is as great a difference between saying prayers and really praying as there was between the dead child and the living one that were brought before Solomon! Saying prayers is not praying. Why, you might as well say your prayers backward as forward unless your heart goes with them!

It is quite extraordinary how some people can use a form of prayer without any thought whatever as to its meaning. Some time ago a man, seventy years of age, was asked if he prayed, he replied that he always had prayed, and he would tell the inquirer the prayer he used. It turned out that he still persisted in repeating what his mother taught him when he was a child, "Pray, God, bless father and mother, and make me a good boy." He had got those words so deeply engraved upon his memory that he still kept to them at his advanced age. Naturally, you smile at the story, yet it is very pitiful. It may be an extreme instance, but still it is a clear instance of what I mean—that there is a way of merely saying prayers which is rather a mockery of God than a real approach to Him such as He desires.

"Well," saith one, "I never pray." I question the truth of that assertion, but if it is true, there is another thing that I do know, and that is this, the time will come when you will want to pray. Let me explain what I mean when I say that I question your assertion about never praying. I have heard men pray who would have thought themselves insulted if they had been told that they did. What awful prayers they have presented to God when they have imprecated upon their souls, and bodies, and eyes, and limbs, and children, and everything else, the most terrible curses from God! There are some men who will do this at the least provocation.

O sirs, mind that God does not grant you your wicked requests! I am afraid that, when an ungodly man prays in that shameless way, he does find his prayer in his heart, and I am also afraid that his heart must be full of damnation, or he would not find so many oaths in it, for that which comes out of a man is what is in him, and when you hear a man swear, you know that there is a deal of "swear" in his heart, for the language in which he dares to imprecate God's vengeance proves how alienated his heart must be from God.

I would remind you, who do not pray, that you will want to pray one day. If there were to be a pledge exacted from you that you never would pray to God—if you were offered money never to pray, suppose you took the money, and promised never to pray—I know what you would think, you would say to yourself, “What shall I do with this money? It is the price of my soul’s salvation.” It would strike you at once that it was an awful thing never to be allowed to pray, and you would feel that you had sold yourself to the devil, body and soul, and you would be in dire trouble.

Well, but as you say that you never pray, you might as well take the money that is offered to you. As you do not pray, I do not see what use the privilege of prayer is to you. “If it be of any use to pray to God,” say you, “I shall pray at the last.” Then pray now, for you never know what may be your last moment. Who knows how close you may be to your grave even while you are sitting in your pew? You saw one friend faint, just now, and we have seen hearers fall back dead even while gathered in the congregation. God grant that we may not see it again! Still, the fact that it has happened is a loud call to all of us bidding us begin to pray.

Thus I have shown you where David found his prayer, he found it in his heart.

II. Now, secondly, HOW CAME DAVID’S PRAYER TO BE IN HIS HEART?

I answer that he found it in his heart *because the Lord put it there*. Every true heart-prayer, that is accepted of God, first came from God. The Lord Jesus passed by David’s heart, and threw this prayer in at the window, and then, when the good man went down to look for a prayer, he found this prayer lying on the floor of his heart ready for him to use.

How does God put prayers into a man’s heart? I answer, first, *He instructs us how to pray*. We none of us know how to pray aright till we have been to school to the Holy Spirit. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit comes, and shows us our need. Thus we see what to pray for. He also shows us what Christ has provided for us, and thus we see what we may hope to obtain. He shows us, too, that the way to God is through the precious blood of Jesus, and He leads us along that crimson, blood-besprinkled road, and so, by His instruction, He puts the prayer into our hearts.

In the next place, He puts it there *by inclining us to pray*. Benjamin Beddome wrote—

*“When God inclines the heart to pray
He hath an ear to hear;”—*

and his short hymn contains a great truth. God does bend the heart to pray, and oftentimes, He does this by filling us with sorrow, and then, in the day of our distress, we cry unto Him. But I have also known Him do it in the sweeter way, as He did with David, by filling the heart with joy till we have been so glad and grateful that we have felt that we must pray, as David did on another occasion, when he said, “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.”

So, the Lord puts prayer into our heart by instructing us how to pray and by inclining us to pray.

Then He puts prayer into the heart *by encouragement*. You notice that my text begins with “Therefore.” “Therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.” What does David mean by that “therefore”? Why, God had promised to do great things for him, and my brother or sister, you may always safely ask for that which God has promised to give. When He gives you the promise of anything, He does as good as say to you, “Come, my child, ask for this, be not slow to come to me with your requests.” If the Lord has said that He will bestow any blessing, what greater encouragement to pray can you possibly desire?

But this promise, according to the Hebrew, had been given to David in a very special manner. In our version, it is rendered, “Thou hast revealed to thy servant,” but the marginal reading is, “Thou hast opened the ear of thy servant.” A promise in the Bible is, often, a promise to a deaf ear, but the promise, applied by the Spirit of God, goes right through the outer organ, and penetrates to the ear of the soul. I am sure, dear friends, that you can never be backward in prayer when God opens your ear, and puts a promise into it. The richness, the sweetness, the sureness, the preciousness of the promise, when the

Holy Spirit seals it home to the heart, makes a man go to his knees, he cannot help doing so, and thus, the Lord greatly encourages the needy soul to pray.

I will not keep you longer upon this point when I have just said that I believe God puts prayers into our hearts *by a sense of His general goodness*. We see how kind and good He is to the sons of men as a whole, and therefore, we pray to Him. By His special goodness to His own chosen people, we see still more of His compassion and tenderness, and so we are moved to pray to Him.

Especially does He put prayer into our hearts when He gives us a sight of the cross. We see there how greatly Jesus loved us, and therefore, we pray. We rightly argue that He, who gave Jesus for us, will deny to us nothing that is for our good, and therefore, again we pray. Often are we stirred up to pray by the recollection of former answers to prayer, and sometimes by observing how God hears other men and other women pray. Anyhow, it is a blessed thing when the Lord comes by, and scatters the seeds of prayer in our hearts, so that, when we want to pray, we have only to look within our own renewed nature and there we find the prayer that we shall do well to pray unto God.

III. Our last question, upon which I must speak but briefly, is this. **WHAT MUST YOU AND I DO IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO FIND PRAYERS IN OUR HEARTS?**

Ah, dear friends, I am afraid that *some of you can do nothing in this matter until, first of all, your hearts are renewed by grace*. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” No one. And who can fetch an acceptable prayer out of an unaccepted person? No one. So, sinner, you must first come to Jesus, confessing your sin, and looking to His dear wounds, and finding a broken heart within you as the result of His pierced heart, and when the Lord has looked upon you in His pardoning love, then you will find many prayers in your heart.

I asked a young friend, “Did you pray before conversion?” She answered that she did pray “after a sort.” I then inquired, “What is the difference between your present prayers and those you offered before you knew the Lord?” Her answer was, “Then, I said my prayers, but now, I mean them. Then, I said the prayers which other people taught me, but now, I find them in my heart.” There is good reason to cry “Eureka!” when we find prayer in our heart.

Holy Bradford would never cease praying or praising till he found his heart thoroughly engaged in the holy exercise. If it be not in my heart to pray, I must pray till it is. But oh, the delight of pleading with God when the heart casts forth mighty jets of supplication, like a geyser in full action! How mighty is supplication when the whole soul becomes one living, hungering, expecting desire!

But some Christian people often feel as if they could not pray, they get into a condition in which they are not able to pray, and that is a very sad state for any child of God to be in. How much do I personally desire ever to possess the true spirit of prayer! When I was at Mr. Rowland Hill’s house at Wotton-under-Edge, many years ago, I asked, “Where did Mr. Hill use to pray?” “And the answer of someone, who had known him when he was there, was, “He used to pray everywhere.”

I said, “Yes, but did he not have a special place for prayer?” “The reply was, “I do not know, I never saw him when he was not praying.” “Well, but,” I asked, “did he not study somewhere?” I was told that he was always studying, wherever he went, yet that he was always in the spirit of prayer. The good old man, at last, had got into such a blessed state of mind that, when he sat down on the sofa, he would be going over a familiar hymn, and when he walked in the garden, he would be to-tooting something gracious. You know how they found him, in George Clayton’s chapel over yonder. His carriage had not come, after the service, and he was walking up and down the aisles, softly singing to himself—

*“And when I’m to die, ‘Receive me,’ I’ll cry;
For Jesus hath loved me, I cannot tell why;
But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He’ll not be in glory, and leave me behind.”*

Good old soul! he had got to find it in his heart to pray always. He used to wander down the Blackfriars Road, with his hands under his coat tails, and stop to look in very nearly every shop window, but all the while he was talking with God just as much as any man could have done who had shut himself up in a cloister. This is a blessed state of mind to be in—to find as many prayers in your soul as there are hairs on your head, to pray as often as the clock ticks, to wake up in the night, and feel that you have been dreaming prayers, and when you rise in the morning, to find that your first thought is either that of praising God for His many mercies, or else pleading for somebody or other who needs your prayers.

How are you to get into this state? Well, I cannot tell you, except this, live near to God. If you live near to God, you must pray. He that learns how to live near to God will learn how to pray, and to give thanks to God. Look into your hearts, also, as David did. You cannot find prayer there if you do not look for it. Think much of your own needs, for a realization of how many and how great they are will make you pray. When you see the falls of others, recollect that you also will fall unless God holds you up, so make that a reason and subject for prayer. When you see others who are slack in devotion, or who have become cold in heart remember you will be as they are if grace does not prevent. So, let your own needs drive you to prayer.

Then read the Scriptures very much, study them, suck the sweetness out of them, for they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. You cannot fail to be much in prayer if you spend much time in the reading of the Word. If you will let God speak to you, I am sure you will be constrained to speak with God. Dwell much upon the doctrines of the Gospel, seek to understand them, live upon them, and upon the promises too.

It is a blessed temptation to find one of God's precious promises, for you feel then as if you were tempted to pray, so as to plead it. If a man were to give me a cheque, I do not think I should be so foolish as not to cash it, and if God gives me a promise, which is better than any man's cheque, the most natural thing is for me to go on my knees to heaven's bank to seek to have it changed—to get the blessing God really promised He would give me. So, keep hard by the promises, and closer still to the faithful Promiser.

Live to God, live for God, live in God, and you will find prayers come out of your soul as sparks come out of the chimney of the blacksmith's smithy. If there is a blazing fire within, and the bellows blowing it up, and the smith is hard at work in his calling, the sparks will fly. And in this cold weather, dear brethren, it is necessary to keep our hearts warm. Have you noticed thatched cottages, and other houses where the snow lies on the roof? You say, "Yes." But have you noticed, where there is a good fire in the house, anywhere near the roof, how soon the snow is melted? And if you want to get warm, and keep warm, in the midst of a cold, graceless world, that chills the very marrow in a believer's bones, keep a warm heart inside, for that will tend to make it warm outside too. God grant you this blessing, and keep you ever abounding in prayer, and He shall have all the praise.

I do trust that some, who never prayed before, will try to pray. Nobody ever sneers at prayer but the man who does not pray, and nobody ever denies its efficacy but the man who knows nothing at all about it. And such men are out of court, and have no right to speak upon this matter. But men who are honest in other things, and who would be believed in a court of law, should be believed when they bear their solemn testimony that, times without number, God has heard their prayers. Try it, friend. God help you to try it! Especially begin by believing in Jesus, and then shalt you rightly seek unto the Almighty, and He will be found of you. Yea, you shalt lift up thine eyes to heaven, and the Lord will look down upon thee, and accept thee, and bless thee, both now and for ever. So may it be, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

2 SAMUEL 7:18-29 AND LUKE 18:1-14

2 Samuel Chapter 7. Verse 18. *Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD,—*

David desired to build a temple for God, and the prophet Nathan conceiving that such a design must be acceptable to the Most High, told the king to proceed with it, but God's mind was otherwise, and Nathan had to tell David that it was well that it was in his heart, but that God intended the temple to be built, not by him, but by his son Solomon. However, the Lord gave to David very large promises, and when he had received them, through Nathan, he was so overcome with gratitude that he went in, and "sat before the LORD." That was his posture in prayer on this occasion.

Good men have been known to pray kneeling, which seems to be the most natural attitude. Some have prayed with their faces between their knees, as Elias did. Some have prayed standing, as the publican did. Some have prayed sitting, as David did. Probably, he was mingling prayer and meditation when he "sat before the LORD,"—

18. *And he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

How often has a similar feeling leaped into our heart! Why should the Lord have dealt so well with us?

*“What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?”*

19. *And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?*

No, man could not have been so kind as that. The love of Jesus surpasses the love of women, and the love of God surpasses all the kindness of men.

20. *And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, Lord GOD, knowest thy servant.*

“What I cannot utter, thou canst perceive in my heart, though I cannot express it.”

21-25. *For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And what one nation in the earth is like thy 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 thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said.*

That is a very short, but exceedingly pithy prayer, “Do as thou hast said.” You do not need any larger promises, brethren, than the Lord has already given to you, could He give you any larger ones?

*“What more can He say than to you He hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

What you have to do is to take the promises He has given, and spread them out before the mercy seat, and then say to Him, “Do as thou hast said.” What strength there is in this plea! “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” Will He break His promise, or shall His right hand fail to perform that which has gone forth from His lips? Far be it from us to think so, but let us say to Him, “Do as thou hast said.” That is the very essence of prayer. Take care not to forget it.

26-29. *And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. And now, O lord GOD, thou art that God, and thy words be*

true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant: therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee:

You see how he clings to God's promise, "Thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant." If you get a promise from the Lord, and cling to it as you wrestle with the angel, you will surely prevail. You must win the blessing if you can plead, as David did, "Thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant."

29. *For thou, O lord GOD, hast spoken it:*

How he dwells on it!

29. *And with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.*

Now let us read two of our Lord's parables concerning prayer.

Luke Chapter 18. Verses 1-8. *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

The whole force of this parable goes to show the prevalence of importunity. If you cannot get your desire of God the first time, go again, and if need be, go again seven times. Yea, if need be, in submission to His will, go seventy times seven. I am afraid there is no fear of our having to be asked the question, "Will ye weary my God also?" Oh, no! we do not pray enough for that, neither are we so importunate as this poor widow was. Let us prove the power of importunate prayer, and rest assured that heaven's gate must open if we do but know how to knock, and that the blessing must be given if we do but continue to ask for it, for praying breath is never spent in vain.

9-11. *And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*

And he drew up his skirts, and got to windward, for fear lest any breath that should blow from the publican should defile his sanctified person.

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*

It was not a prayer at all, as you perceive. It was a thanksgiving; but the thanksgiving was merely a veil for self-adulation.

13. *And the publican, standing afar off,—*

Not daring to come near to the inner shrine,—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*

I do not suppose that he thought he had really prayed; he scarcely dared to call it prayer. Perhaps, as he went home, he said, "I went up to the temple to pray, but I was so bowed down with a sense of my guilt that I could not pray." But that was not our Lord's verdict:—

14. *I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"-992, 996, 229

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