

PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE WITH THEIR ANSWERS

by Church Member A

A devotional study surveying the prayers recorded throughout Scripture and tracing how God answered them, encouraging believers in their own prayer life. The work covers prayers from the Old and New Testaments, drawing practical lessons about faith, persistence, and God's faithfulness in responding to His people.

134 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 000.3. Inscription
2. 000.4. Poem
3. 001. Introduction.
4. 002. Prayers of the Old Testament
5. 004. A Prayer Of Abram.
6. 005. A Prayer Of Abraham For The Cities Of The Plain.
7. 006. A Prayer Of Abraham's Servant.
8. 007. A Prayer Of Jacob For Deliverance From Esau.
9. 008. Israel's Prayer For God's Blessing On Joseph, Ephraim, And Manasseh...
10. 010. Prayer Of Moses.
11. 011. Prayer Of Moses For Water For The Children Of Israel.
12. 012. Prayer Of Moses To Avert The Divine Anger.
13. 013. Prayer Of Moses When The People Made The Golden Calf.
14. 014. Prayer Of Moses That He May See The Glory Of The Lord.
15. 015. Prayer Of Moses On Mount Sinai
16. 017. A Prayer Of Moses For The Scattering Of The Lord's Enemies.
17. 018. Prayer Of Moses When The People Weep For Flesh To Eat.
18. 019. Of Moses As To The Manner In Which The Lord Will Give The People Fl...
19. 020. Prayer Of Moses For Miriam.
20. 021. Prayer Of Moses That The People May Not Be Smitten With Pestilence.
21. 022. Prayer Of Moses That The Lord Would Set A Man Oyer The Congregation...
22. 024. Prayer Of Joshua.
23. 026. Prayer Of Hannah.
24. 027. Prayer Of Samuel.
25. 028. Prayer Of Samuel For A Thunder Storm In Time Of Wheat Harvest.
26. 029. Prayer Of David Under Trying Circumstances.
27. 030. Prayer Of Dayid When The Amalekites Had Invaded Ziklag.
28. 032. Prayer Of David And Thanksgiving.
29. 033. Prayer Of David As He Went Weeping Up The Mount Of Olivet.
30. 034. Prayer Of David After His Transgression In Numbering Israel And Jud...
31. 036. Prayer Of Solomon For Wisdom.
32. 037. The Prayer Of Solomon At The Dedication Of The Temple.
33. 038. The Prophet's Prayer For The Restoration Of Jeroboam's Withered Han...
34. 039. The Power Of Effectual Fervent Prayer.
35. 040. The Prayer Of Elijah For The Restoration Of The Widow's Son.
36. 041. The Prayer Of Elijah On Mount Carmel.
37. 043. A Prayer Of Elisha For His Servant.
38. 044. Prayer Of Hezekiah.
39. 045. Prayer Of Hezekiah In Sickness.

40. 047. Prayer Of Jabez.
41. 048. The United Prayer Of An Army.
42. 050. Prayer Of Asa.
43. 051. Prayer Of Jehoshaphat.
44. 052. Prayer Of Hezekiah For Those Who Had Eaten The Passover Without Pur...
45. 053. Prayer Of Manasseh When In Affliction.
46. 055. Prayer Of Nehemiah For The Captive Remnant Of Judah
47. 056. Prayers Of Nehemiah While Building The Walls Of Jerusalem.
48. 058. Prayer Of Job.
49. 059. Prayer Of Job After He Had Been Visited By His Friends.
50. 060. Prayer Of Job That God Would Hide Him From His Anger.
51. 061. Prayer Of Job That He Might Feel God's Presence.
52. 062. Job's Prayer For An Answer To His Petitions.
53. 063. The Prayer Of Job After He Had Received The Answer.
54. 064. Psalms
55. 066. Prayer Of Agur.
56. 068. An Allegorical Prayer Of The Church.
57. 070. Isaiah's Thanksgiving.
58. 071. Isaiah's Acknowledgment Of God's Mercy.
59. 072. Isaiah's Trust In God And Prayer For The Church.
60. 073. Prayer Of The Church For Deliverance From Her Enemies.
61. 074. Israel's Prayer In Returning To God, And For The Unconverted Remnan...
62. 076. Prayer Of The Prophet Jeremiah.
63. 077. A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Israel.
64. 078. Jeremiah Prayeth And Teacheth His People How To View Calamity.
65. 079. Jeremiah, Perplexed On Account Of Conspiracy, Prays.
66. 080. Jeremiah Intercedes For His People In Time Of Famine.
67. 081. A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Rachel.
68. 082. The Bemoanings Of Ephraim.
69. 083. The Prayer Of Jeremiah In Prison.
70. 085. Lament Of Jeremiah.
71. 086. Jeremiah Acknowledges The Lord As His Portion.
72. 088. The Intercession Of Ezekiel.
73. 089. Ezekiel Complains That The People Do Not Understand.
74. 091. The Prayer Of Daniel And His Companions That The Lord Would Interpr...
75. 092. Nebuchadnezzar Convicted Blesses God.
76. 093. The Thanksgiving Of Nebuchadnezzar.
77. 094. The Prayer Of Daniel For The Restoration Of Jerusalem.
78. 096. The Prophet Joel's Prayer In Time Of Famine.
79. 098. Prayers Of Amos That God Would Avert The Judgments Of The Fire And ...
80. 100. Prayer Of The Mariners In The Storm.
81. 101. The Prayer Of Jonah From The Midst Of The Sea.

82. 102. Jonah Prays That God Will Take His Life.
83. 104. Prayer Of The Church Complaining Of Small Numbers, And Of The Gener...
84. 106. The Prayer Of Habakkuk.
85. 107. Habakkuk Prays In Prospect Of Approaching Trials.
86. 108. Habakkuk's Expectation Of Answers To His Prayers.
87. 109. Prayer Of Habakkuk Upon Shigionoth, (Or Musical Instrument.)
88. 111. Prayer Of The Jews Concerning Their Fasts.
89. 112. Prayers of the New Testament
90. 114. The Lord's Prayer.
91. 115. The Leper's Prayer.
92. 116. Prayer Of The Centurion.
93. 117. The Prayer Of The Disciples In The Storm.
94. 118. The Prayer Of Jairus.
95. 119. The Silent Prayer Of Faith.
96. 120. The Prayer Of Two Blind Men.
97. 121. A Prayer Of Our Blessed Lord.
98. 122. The Prayer Of Peter.
99. 123. The Prayer Of The Syro-Phoenician Woman.
100. 124. The Prayer Of A Mother For Her Sons.
101. 125. The Prayer Of The Five Foolish Virgins.
102. 126. The Prayer Of The Disciples At Meat With Our Savior.
103. 127. A Prayer Of Our Savior.
104. 128. Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross.
105. 130. Prayer Of The Man That Had Been Possessed With A Devil.
106. 132. The Prayer Of Mary, The Mother Of Our Savior.
107. 133. The Prayer Of Simeon In The Temple.
108. 134. The Prayer Of Anna.
109. 135. The Prayer Of Simon Peter.
110. 136. The Prayer Of Peter On The Mount.
111. 137. The Prayer Of The Prodigal Son.
112. 138. The Prayer Of Dives.
113. 139. Prayer Of The Ten Lepers.
114. 140. The Prayers Of The Pharisee And Publican
115. 141. The Prayer Of The Young Ruler.
116. 142. The Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross.
117. 143. The Prayer Of The Thief From The Cross.
118. 145. The Prayer Of A Nobleman.
119. 146. The Prayers Of Martha And Mary.
120. 147. The Prayer Of Philip.
121. 148. The Prayer Of Judas, Not Iscariot.
122. 149. A Prayer Of Our Savior.
123. 151. A Prayer Of The Apostles.

- 124.** 152. The Prayer Of The Church.
- 125.** 153. The Prayer Of Stephen.
- 126.** 154. The Prayer Of Saul Of Tarsus, After His Conversion.
- 127.** 155. The Prayers Of The Church For Peter.
- 128.** 156. The Prayers And Praises Of Paul And Silas.
- 129.** 157. The Prayer Of St. Paul In The Temple.
- 130.** 159. Prayers Of St. Paul For The Church At Rome.
- 131.** 161. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Corinth.
- 132.** 163. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Ephesus.
- 133.** 165. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Colosse.
- 134.** 167. Paul's Prayer For The Church At Thessalonica.

000.3. Inscription

TO THE FRIEND WHO SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF THE PRESENT VOLUME IT IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED, BY THE AUTHOR.

000.4. Poem

“THINK!—the shadow on the dial, For the nature most undone, Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.

“LOOK!—look up in starry passion, To the throne above the spheres, LEARN!—the spirit’s
gravitation Still must differ from the tear’s.

“HOPE!—with all the strength thou usest In embracing thy despair;

Love!—the earthly love thou, lovest Shall return to thee more fair.

“WORK!—make clear the forest tangling Of the wildest stranger land;

TRUST!—the blessed, deathly angels Whisper, ‘Sabbath hours at hand.’”

001. Introduction.

Introduction.

“YEA, very vain The greatest speed of all the souls of men Unless they travel upward to thy throne;

There sittest Thou, the satisfying One, With help for sins.” The hand of the Almighty had forever closed the gates of Eden and left there the flaming sword of the cherubim to prevent the return of our guilty first parents. The alluring voice of the tempter had led their souls into sin, and as they wandered forth to inherit the earth, cursed for their sakes, they were troubled in the presence of the God whom they had offended, trembling because conscious guilt stood before the perfection of the Almighty. But there was a ray of hope for their despairing hearts. Satan had not, as he fancied, achieved a permanent triumph over them, or separated them from God forever, for while the wrath of an offended Deity hung over the soul, and justice cursed it, love and mercy lifted it where it might breathe the still air of heaven—no chains were to bind the spirit of ruined man in everlasting darkness, for this exiled world and its inmates were objects of God’s infinite love, man’s restoration had been a thought hidden in the eternal mind before the world was, and it was breathed into the human soul in that glorious promise which should bruise the head of the serpent, and open a way where man might seek and find the lost favor of his God. In that early history of the human race sacrifices were instituted, and on the sacred page we have the accepted and the rejected offering; through the long ages that have rolled away since then, man has held communion with his Maker, “there has been no such curse in the calendar of time as a day without prayer”—

“Earth and heaven hold commune day and night;

There’s not a wind but bears upon its wing The messages of God.”

“There is a link of communication between the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity, and the heart of the contrite in which he delighteth to dwell.” Between our present earthly and, we trust, our future heavenly home, God has established a telegraph, free to us all; it bears not to the soul of man sad messages of sorrow to clothe him in sackcloth and bathe him in tears; no, its tidings are from a better land where sin has no entrance and sorrow is unknown; they are answers of a kind father to his children’s call for help and strength in their life journey.

God has seen fit to preserve in his holy word the prayers of many of his children; the patriarchs and prophets spake as they were moved by God, but they like us were mortal, sent forward on a long and tedious pilgrimage, called to battle with the same inborn corruptions and outward temptations with which we are called to struggle; they filled their inch of time, and passed as we are passing, onward to meet our God and Judge. We have carefully gathered from the Bible the “recorded prayers” and their answers; we would show you where lay the creature’s strength—would remind you by them, that the same mercy-seat is now open before you, at which those holy men were so often found. You will learn a lesson here that God dwelleth not in temples

made with hands. He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain is calling each one to his mercy-seat; it is found equally in that house of prayer where with one heart and voice our cloud of incense is wafted upward, and in the cottage of the poor man, where no eye but God's is watching, and no ear but his hears.

It is then the duty of all to avail themselves of the high and holy privilege of prayer, for we have the promise of the immutable Jehovah, that not in vain shall we enter his council-chamber. We would draw the attention of all to the recorded prayers of the Bible—to their simplicity and earnestness—and would point out to the believer what God called true devotion; would lead you to see, by His help, that the poor sacrifice so many of you are now making stately at his altar, must not be dignified by the name of prayer; that you may no longer call yourselves in his presence “miserable, blind, and naked,” when there is no tear of sorrow, and no sigh over the conceit of your hearts. In the prayers of Abram and Isaac, and all those men who walked with God, you will learn the Almighty accepts no such empty sacrifice as yours.

“He requires fruits of more pleasing savor, From his seed sown with contrition in the heart.” The spirit in which most of these prayers are breathed is child-like; they are uttered thoughts to Him who is not only able but willing to satisfy; they are the opening of the heart to God with its simplest as well as largest desire, uttered with directness and earnestness.

Oh, learn from these prayers to walk with God as they walked who have fallen asleep; learn to live on earth and breathe in heaven. Oh, make the way to his mercy-seat a worn and beaten track, talk daily and hourly with God; then all your desires, your hopes, your affections, shall be centered in Him, and as we have sought to purify them by prayer, so shall He who regardeth the faintest whisper in his ear, take us when the scenes of earth have faded, where we shall be satisfied—where all the eager, anxious questions of our thinking minds shall be answered, our desires all gratified, and every care lost in the bosom of God.

002. Prayers of the Old Testament

Prayers of the Old Testament

004. A Prayer Of Abram.

A Prayer Of Abram. The Prayer as recorded.—Genesis 15:1-3. The Answer.—Genesis 15:4-7. The Prayer continued—Genesis 15:8. The answer continued.—Genesis 15:9; Genesis 15:13-16. The life of “the father of the faithful” was chequered and eventful; although he is not introduced to our notice till his seventy-fifth year, yet we meet him as the friend of God, and are able to follow him through many sad and bitter trials. At times an exile and wanderer, homeless and houseless, we find him, everywhere and under every circumstance, rearing an altar to God, and calling upon him for strength and support. When the following prayer was made by Abram, he was rich and respected, a conqueror over his enemies, a blessing to his friends; his life’s work seemed almost over, and he felt death was not very far distant. He contemplated his present position, and as his mind rested upon his wealth, there was no regret in his heart that he must leave it behind him. Oh, no, his treasure in heaven was far greater to his eye of faith. Still there was a sorrow in his bosom that not one of his own name might inherit his worldly possessions, but they must descend to the steward of his household. In the language of the prayer, and from what we learn of the character of Abram, we are satisfied his desire was not the merely natural one, for he rejoiced in the coming Savior, and was ready at the command of God to sacrifice the son for whom he had prayed, and was one who at the call of duty had ever been ready to give up home and friends, firmly relying on the promises of the Almighty. Nothing seemed for any length of time to disturb the steady faith of his soul; but now and then in his eventful life, we see the slight temptation prevailing when the greater were overcome; in the firmest believer we sometimes see the weakest man.

God in his answer to this prayer does not check the ardor or seeming impatience of Abram, but promises a speedy fulfillment of all his wishes, even a son, the progenitor after the flesh of the blessed Savior. “The sincere Bible reader is always gratified when he remembers, that here is the model of every religious rite that has existed in any age. Many described by profane writers derived their pattern from those mentioned in the writings of Moses.” It would be useless to inquire into the nature of the vision that appeared to Abraham. Every true believer feels the presence of God in his heart, and as long as he loves, and serves Him, he is visible to his spiritual eye, and “his ear hears the voice of the Lord.” The holy friendship existing between Abraham and his heavenly Father, may be ours; he lived like a pilgrim—his whole life proved he was tarrying but a night. All that was earthly of Abram lies now in the dust of yonder cave; his spirit is in heaven—his prayers stored there, and for us preserved on the sacred page. The descendants of Abram indeed became strangers in the land of Canaan, and were there oppressed and down-trodden; “a prophecy fore-uttered through the tongues of time, ages of ages.”

005. A Prayer Of Abraham For The Cities Of The Plain.

A Prayer Of Abraham For The Cities Of The Plain. The Prayer and its Answer, as recorded.—Genesis 18:23-32.

Most nobly bad Abram given Lot the choice of his home, and the fertile plain of Sodom was now his dwelling-place. Wickedness abounded there, and the Lord had made known his intention to Abraham of destroying the “cities of the plain.”

Abraham is alarmed at the intimation, and knows it is no small sin that has thus called down the terrors of the Almighty. There are precious souls in those (loomed cities, and Abram pleads at the throne of the Most High for them. Every circumstance connected with the intercession of Abraham is interesting to the believer: his unselfishness toward his nephew, his earnest affection for him after his choice of a home in Sodom, unfolds to us the heart of a humble follower of God, seeking not his own good, but the glory of the Father and the true welfare of man. Abraham comes to God in prayer, with the assurance that the great Judge of all will do right; there is a sacred ingenuity in the argument which he uses in his intercession—he does not ask the Lord to spare the wicked for their own sakes, but for the pious souls that are in the cities. The promises made by God to the successively reduced number of the righteous for whom this prayer was made, encourages us in the duty of interceding for others. The effectual, fervent prayer availeth much, and brings to our own hearts a blessing, even if in our view God has not directly answered us. While Abraham earnestly pleads with God, his soul is full of humility; I am a mortal in the presence of the great Creator, I have nothing to give but all to ask; this is his spirit, as he owns himself but dust and ashes. The intercessory prayers of Christians are destined instruments in the hand of God for bringing on the glorious time when all the earth shall know him; each one as it is breathed in the ear of God, is dearer to him than the brightest effort of unhallowed genius—although this may be derided by the world as a distraction, and the unbeliever may talk to us of mistaken zeal.

006. A Prayer Of Abraham's Servant.

A Prayer Of Abraham's Servant. The Prayer as recorded.—Genesis 24:11-14. The Answer.—Genesis 24:15-17; Genesis 24:61; Genesis 24:67. Not only was Abraham himself a man of prayer, but his family and those of his household seem to have breathed his spirit. Isaac his son is mentioned as one who loved to meditate, and we find him at the evening hour communing with God; “mistrusting self, he leaned on heaven.” Sarah, the beloved wife of Abraham, slept in death; grief rested heavily on the heart of Isaac, for his mother was one whom he had loved and cherished.

He appealed to his father Abraham for direction and advice, in a matter involving his temporal happiness, and, no doubt, sought the Lord to guide the servant whom Abraham sent to the fair Rebekah. In the choice of a wife for his son, Abraham is not influenced by worldly considerations; he would choose for him a virtuous and religious companion—with whom he could go down the vale of life, with one prayer, one God, and one heart. The servant whom he sends to meet the chosen one is a man fearing the Lord, and in all his ways acknowledging him. While on his journey he prays. Affectionate to his master, faithful to his trust, with the blessing of God he is ready for duty; and so should it be ever with us—let us do nothing in our own strength; as long as—

“Evil walks the world unsleeping, Evil sleeps within the soul,” we need the protection of our heavenly Father; prayer must nerve us for duty, prayer must teach us to be faithful. Scarcely is the petition made when the servant beholds its answer, in the form of Rebekah at the well. In the whole of this scene we see the guiding hand of God. There is no want of modesty in Rebekah—a trait so essential to perfect female character—but all the simplicity of nature. God, in answer to prayer, prepared the hearts of Isaac and Rebekah to realize, when they meet, that union of soul, of which the cold, calculating world knows nothing—a union which only heaven and nature teaches, and God will hallow—

“Making hearts, like double stars, One in their bright effect.”

It is not well or man to walk through life alone; Isaac felt the want of gentle companionship—felt the want of his mother's love. “That wild flower, the soul, with its tendrils the affections,” needs the training of the planter, and while they twine round the frail supports of earth, must also twine upward; and, would we make them ready for a purer soil we must bring them where the air of heaven will fan and the dew of prayer moisten.

007. A Prayer Of Jacob For Deliverance From Esau.

A Prayer Of Jacob For Deliverance From Esau. The Prayer as recorded.—Genesis 32:9-12. The Answer.—Genesis 33:1-4. The first impression made by the character of Jacob, as recorded in the Bible, is far from favorable. There is much enmity existing between himself and his brother Esau. We meet him under a great variety of circumstances, the subject of many deep and heavy trials, hated by one who should have been nearer than a brother, an exile and wanderer, deserted and alone in the plain of Bethel; when poor, the object of persecution, when prosperous, the victim of the envious.

There is not one of all the patriarchs whose path lay so thickly strewn with sorrows, many of them, too, the bitter fruits of the seed of his own wild sowing. The plan of divine providence had been imparted to Jacob in that vision of the night, in that dream from which he awoke filled with the presence of the Lord—a holy sense which enabled him to endure with submission almost uninterrupted hardship, and made his death a happy and quiet release.

Jacob was about to meet Esau at the head of an army of four hundred men. Knowing he had given his brother cause for resentment, he had much reason to dread the encounter, and has recourse to prayer; with all his anxiety and evil foreboding he comes to God; we have reason to infer that a whole night was passed in communion with his Maker; his prayer was earnest and anxious. It is thus God likes to be importuned, and in this prayer we are taught the nature of true, heartfelt petition.

God does not answer this prayer as we would be led to suppose; he does not destroy the gathered hosts, or send some calamity on the brother's head; he pours into the heart of Jacob a right spirit so that he may turn the wrath of Esau into feelings of peace. There is much wisdom displayed in all the plans of Jacob; humbled and subdued he uses the language best calculated to pacify his brother; it is, "Thy servant," and "My lord;" and they meet as friends. The prayer though long and importunate was answered. God requires this spirit, and will finally yield to it. We must be—

"Watching, waiting, hoping, yearning, With the lamp well trimmed and burning." The sign given to Jacob convinced him of God's approbation of his faith and perseverance, and showed him how frail man was in his own strength

008. Israel's Prayer For God's Blessing On Joseph, Ephraim, And Manasseh.

Israel's Prayer For God's Blessing On Joseph, Ephraim, And Manasseh. The Prayer as recorded.—Genesis 48:15-16; Genesis 48:20-21.

Joseph was the long-expected son of Rachel, the wife of Jacob, or Israel. Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's children, and the scene in which the following prayer is introduced is one of peculiar interest to the believer, and will teach him to trust more firmly in the promises of God. The feebleness of old age had stolen over the form of the patriarch Jacob; his sight is dimmed by time, but the eyes of his soul look out clearly, through the shadows of the future, far into a "glorious day," in a coming age. The life of the old man is drawing to a close. He had suffered as one suffers to whom God gives deep and strong affections, but through all his trials he had learned, "the foolishness of God was wiser than men, and his weakness stronger;" his hand, like every human hand, had clasped some fleeting shadows, but it rested now where earth could never loosen it, in the firm grasp of the Almighty.

Joseph, the wise, the humble, the discreet, the attractive son of the never-forgotten Rachel, has come with his children to receive a father's blessing, a father's parting words ere he sleeps in death. Guided by heaven the hand of Jacob rests first on the head of the younger as he asks the protecting care of God to be over and above the loved ones before him; he prays that they may inherit the privileges and walk in the footsteps of their progenitors, and that the name Israel, that name of so much import, might descend upon them, and they might be raised to their hereditary rank and honor. God guided the spirit of Jacob while he prayed, taught him what to ask for, and how to ask; thus instructed he knew the will of God respecting those who were to come after him, the children of Rachel now kneeling before him. The patriarch's work is nearly over; in his dying hours his voice is raised to God, bearing testimony to others that the "angel" had redeemed his soul from evil—as he will the souls of all who call upon him with the faith of Jacob. A Christian deathbed, the last prayers of the dying believer are themes on which we love to linger, as we walk through the world. They strengthen our faith and encourage our tottering footsteps over its rough places. Teach us to pray on, pray ever, till our own day draw to a close, and our spirits rest, "Like some deep lake upon a mountain summit, High above cloud and storm of life like this,.

All peace and "power"

010. Prayer Of Moses.

Prayer Of Moses. The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 3:13. The Answer.—Exodus 3:14.

He who came this time in prayer was Moses, one whose spirit rested on God, who amidst the corruptions of an idolatrous court, and surrounded by worldly allurements, was still the meekest man. There shone a light in the heart of Moses which God had kindled there, one which taught him then as it has taught others since, the emptiness of earth's distinctions, and that true goodness alone is true greatness. Filled with contempt for honors that he knew could never satisfy his soul, trusting in God, Moses had quitted a high station in life, and retired to a quiet retreat, where he might the better cultivate his friendship towards God, and fulfill the designs of Providence in regard to his future. At the age of eighty he is invested with a high commission, and called to an enterprise which it required all his courage and energy to undertake. The burning bush in which the presence of the Lord was manifested to Moses at this time was emblematical; it represented the state of the church in Egypt, in the midst of flames but not consumed, oppressed, but not forgotten by the great I Am. Maybe all rashness in approaching God is here discouraged, while at the same time friendship is tendered to all who put aside worldliness, and come as all should who come to talk with the great Jehovah. The mercy-seat is holy ground; cast off thy jealousies, thy strife, thy pride, thy bitter feelings, and God will reveal himself to thee. Our friendship with the Almighty must be cultivated as was that of Moses; life is given us that we may not at its close first begin to know Him. We must learn early to trust, and if we remain steadfast we shall find him a friend who sticketh closer than a brother.

Moses, the trembler at Horeb, endured the presence of God forty days and nights in Sinai. As we have come more particularly to notice the nature of his petition at this time, we must carefully examine his feelings. There seems to have been a lurking of pride in the good man's breast, which to the careless observer might appear like humility; there is not an entire relinquishment of will to that of God, for perhaps the memory of Moses had treasured the question so rudely put to him forty long years back, by the same people he was now sent to teach, "who made thee a ruler?" He doubts the success of his undertaking, and calls upon his Father in heaven, while laboring under these doubts. At this time he does not seem willing to go out, not caring whither he went, because sent by the great Jehovah—who bears with him, and in one short sentence exhibits the fullness of the Godhead, "I am that I am;" for this was the seal he gave to Moses, as he sent him to his afflicted people. The great God bears with our forwardness and often seems to overcome evil with good; doubting and irresolute, Moses urges difficulty after difficulty in this one thing he is called to perform; but God still showed patience and forbearance, promised to fill his mouth with arguments, and teach him what he should say. In the answer to this prayer we see the mercy of God is far above his judgments, even though his anger was kindled against Moses; Aaron his brother is brought out of Egypt—of whom it is written that could "speak well;" strengthened and stimulated by each other's prayers, they go on their way together, with their message from the great Jehovah.

011. Prayer Of Moses For Water For The Children Of Israel.

Prayer Of Moses For Water For The Children Of Israel. The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 17:4. The Answer.—Exodus 17:6.

We meet Moses at the time of this prayer marching with the hosts of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, and still looking upward to that God who had led them thus far, whose stores are never exhausted, and whose love is boundless. Peevish and weary, the children of Israel complain bitterly to Moses; escaped from servitude, supplied with manna, led through the parted waters of the sea, they yet forget God, and now put to a severe trial the meekness and forbearance of their leader. But in this hour Moses forgets not his great Guide; he has a refuge when every other fails, and the rod which had bruised and broken Egypt is now used to restore the thirsty spirit of those murmuring children. God heard the prayer of Moses; the stream that flowed from that flinty rock accompanied their whole way through the wilderness; in it was a type of Him whose precious blood was shed for a dying race—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

012. Prayer Of Moses To Avert The Divine Anger.

Prayer Of Moses To Avert The Divine Anger. The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 32:11-13. The Answer.—Exodus 32:14.

Moses interceded for his people with an agony of mind; he would not descend from the mount till God had promised mercy, although the voice of that God had pronounced his people wicked and rebellious. In this prayer there is “the outgushing of a soul that lay near to the throne,” the earnestness of one who feels the greatness and importance of his desire. With an idea of the possible desertion of the Almighty at this trying time, Moses refers to the promises made to the fathers, especially those which regarded the multitude of their race, and remembers that the Egyptians and the neighboring nations regarded the recent conflict as one testing the power of the God whom Israel trusted. He prays to “The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.”

Moses prayed with a faith that knew no doubt; his prayer prevailed, if not to prevent God’s displeasure at sin, at least to stay his hand in the punishment. The language in this answer is addressed to the understanding of men: “The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.” Let us pause, fellow Christian, over a prayer that is represented as changing the purpose of Omnipotence; let us look into the heart of him who addresses the Almighty in behalf of his people; let us study and make our own a spirit that could thus move heaven. This is attainable; man, puny man, may have power with God, and prevail, when clinging to the mercy-seat. Far above the immediate desire of Moses was a regard for the honor of God’s name; he was willing to become as it were nothing, so that the Lord would be honored, and Israel saved: there was a greatness of soul that only true faith could give—a faith which dictated prayers:

“That could rend the clouds, And rising through the dark of space, Reach to God’s central throne”— a faith which gives to the soul of the believer a feeling of “oneness with God and heaven.”

013. Prayer Of Moses When The People Made The Golden Calf.

Prayer Of Moses When The People Made The Golden Calf. The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 32:31-32. The Answer.—Exodus 32:33-34. The prophet still continues his intercession for his people Israel, after he has descended from the mount, where his last recorded prayer was made. The sound of revelry had struck the ear of the prophet on his way, and as he approached the scene of his people's wickedness, and beheld the golden calf, his heart was filled with a just anger—a holy indignation. Surely, he says within himself, the Lord will not hear me on behalf of so great sin; my people merit the wrath of Jehovah—but I know the value of intercession. Moses begins his petition with, great tenderness; his "Oh, this people," shows us what was lying near his heart.

"One stream of light came to him from above, And that was what he saw by, light of God."

It guided him to the throne again; it led him to Jehovah. The broken sentence in this petition brings before us the full heart of the prophet; he remembers the oft-repeated sins of his people; he bears them in his heart to that God, who is, he knows, a God of justice as well as mercy; he obtains a reprieve for the rebellious, but feels that iniquity will not go unpunished.

It has been supposed by some that Moses was willing to renounce his own hope of salvation for what seemed to be to him the greater glory of God. In the language of another we would explain what we conceive to be the prophet's meaning: "Lord, if thy decree against this people may not be reversed, if justice demand their utter extermination, let mine eyes be just closed in peace, subject me not to the mortification of surviving all my nation, and of enduring the scorn of our enemies; rather take me out of the world, where I should lead a life of sorrow heavier than death itself."

014. Prayer Of Moses That He May See The Glory Of The Lord.

Prayer Of Moses That He May See The Glory Of The Lord. The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 33:12-13. The Answer.—Exodus 33:14-16. The Prayer continued.—Exodus 33:15-16. The Answer.—Exodus 33:17. The Prayer.—Exodus 33:19. The Answer.—Exodus 33:19-23.

Moses still knew and felt the power of importunate prayer. God had granted favor after favor, and, encouraged, he still prays. God had hitherto given to Israel that symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud and fire, but because of their sin and rebellion he has removed it and left them to choose out their own paths. The thought of being deserted by the Almighty, of being estranged from him who had led them thus far, filled the soul of Moses with sorrow.

He knew his people had deservedly lost the favor of God, but he earnestly pleads the return of it, pleads like one who will not be denied; his prayer is full of love to Israel and zeal for the honor of God; it is one that prevailed; his spirit was calmed by the divine answer; the promise, “My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest,” encouraged Moses; he would still inquire and implore knowledge of the Most High. The believing soul is never satisfied with present attainments in divine life. Moses had not forgotten the glory displayed to him in the bush at Horeb, the still more awful glory at Sinai, his close communion when in the tabernacle; he had met the Lord as it were face to face, but he has the spirit of an earnest seeker; he has the desire which angels are not reproved for indulging—a desire to see more of the glory of the Almighty.

Man in his present state could never bear a full discovery of the glory of God; to have been answered according to the letter of his desire would have proved fatal to the prophet. The Lord returns an answer suitable to his condition; he shows his glory to him by filling his soul with a sense of his goodness, points out to him what was presumptuous in his prayer and approves what was right God holds back, in compassion to our weakness, the face of his throne, and draws before it his cloud, as if to shield us from its too dazzling glory; our mortal eyes could never behold it and live.

He covers us with his protecting hand while he is passing by, and his presence can only be known by the tokens he leaves in every renewed heart—a heart which will ever be bursting with the desire expressed in this prayer of the prophet, to know more of the glory of the Lord. To enjoy the vision of God’s goodness as it passed by, Moses re-ascended the mount to draw nigh to God; he went to meet him as a friend—one that could protect him from himself as from his worst enemy. “Man, imperfect, is momentarily sinning.” There is provided a cleft in the rock for every soul—a refuge of safety; it is a type of Him who is a covert from the tempest, and a hiding-place from the storm.

015. Prayer Of Moses On Mount Sinai

Prayer Of Moses On Mount Sinai The Prayer as recorded.—Exodus 34:8-10. The Answer.—Exodus 34:10.

According to the command of the Lord, Moses ascended the mount, with the tables of stone. In his haste he had broken those which contained the law, and the first token of God's reconciliation to Israel was his renewal of them. Moses remained in the mount forty days and nights, in close communion with God, who at this time granted him a special manifestation of his holy presence—"And the Lord passed by before him;" the prophet bowed his head to the earth and worshiped. His prayer was affectionate and earnest; his people needed the presence of the Lord; the prophet implored help and strength from heaven to guide them; for they had become stiff-necked, and trials and sorrow have ever been lightened by prayer.

"God, for thy glory only can I act, And for thy creatures' good. When creatures stray Farthest from thee, as these have done, Remember them in mercy." The prophet knew God would not reject his prayer, though breathed from earthly lips; he remembered the promises made to him, but they did not supersede the necessity of prayer, they encouraged and directed him in his approach to the Being who alone could grant the first and greatest desire of his heart. Moses was permitted to hold communion with the Lord for forty days and nights; it was no wonder he should bear some visible mark of this high and holy fellowship with the Father of lights. He was himself unconscious that he bore about with him the evidence that he had been with God. It is so in some measure, dear reader, with every prayerful person; we know him when he is near, his face is full of the beauty shining out from a Christian heart; we know him, the friend of God; the world can never hide him, though his path may be among the meek and lowly. No one can come from communion with God without breathing on all around him the sweet breath of charity and gentleness; his face will shine out with love to his fellow man, and the wicked will not be able to bear the light of his countenance, for it shines brightly with the beauty of holiness. This petition of Moses was granted, for the Lord promised to make a covenant with Israel; the sun stood still, in its course in the heavens, the waters of Jordan were dried, and marvelous things were done in the earth, according to the answer of the Lord.

017. A Prayer Of Moses For The Scattering Of The Lord's Enemies.

A Prayer Of Moses For The Scattering Of The Lord's Enemies. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 10:35-36. The breathing of Moses' desire at this time was prophetic, for the enemies of the Lord were then and ever have been hastening to their own destruction. After the Israelites had remained a year at Sinai, they again commenced their march towards Canaan; they took with them the ark of the covenant of the Lord, by which their communion with him was to be kept up; when the ark set forward this prayer was made by Moses, and followed by another when it rested. The prophet asks of the Lord success for his people abroad, and rest at home, that his powerful hand may scatter the enemies of his cause, and that all that hate him may flee before him. We are taught the useful lesson in these prayers, to commit our way unto the Lord, and everything in which the church, the Israel of God, is interested, claims the earnest and sincere petition of every Christian. Prayer should precede our going out and should follow our coming in; then will "Our way appear, steps unto heaven:—

All that thou sendest us in mercy given," and ever, in the changing scenes of life, the cloudy pillar shall be our Guide; we shall be fed with food from heaven, and drink from the smitten rock— from that stream which alone can satisfy.

Earth's cup is poisoned; Her renown most infamous; her gold, Seem as it may, is only dust; Her gain, eternal loss; her hope, a dream; Her love, her friendship, enmity with God."

018. Prayer Of Moses When The People Weep For Flesh To Eat.

Prayer Of Moses When The People Weep For Flesh To Eat. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 11:11-15. The Answer.—Numbers 11:16-20. The history of Israel is truly the history of human nature in all ages of the world; man is ever peevish and complaining till his own stubborn will is brought into submission with that of his God. Moses, weary and sorrowful at the ingratitude of his people, again poured his grief into that ear which is ever open. In their discontent the people are looking back to Egypt, and forward with distrust to the promised land; their souls had no relish for what they called the light food which God had in kindness bestowed; the stream that followed them from the rock was to them no water at all, and Israel shed tears of discontent and passion. Moses at this time seems to feel that his people are unfitted for the vocation to which they have been called, and there is a more than usual fainting of his strong spirit; his resource is the one never failing, ever calming; it is prayer; there is in his heart no distrust of God, but a consciousness of his own weakness in guiding this people. The Almighty showed great pity towards Moses, heard every sigh, saw every tear, sympathized with him in his weakness, and sent to his aid seventy elders, upon whom was- poured a portion of, that spirit which had led the prophet thus far in his way.

“God is great and God is just, He knoweth the hearts of The children of dust:

He is the helper; in Him I trust.”

019. Of Moses As To The Manner In Which The Lord Will Give The People Flesh To Eat.

Of Moses As To The Manner In Which The Lord Will Give The People Flesh To Eat. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 11:21-22. The Answer.—Numbers 11:23.

God had promised in answer to the last prayer of Moses to send a sufficient quantity of food to supply his people; the largeness of his promise startles Moses, for the supply was not for a day, or even ten, but for a whole month, and this too for six hundred thousand footmen. We will quote from an intelligent traveler a short passage, for it will the better enable us to comprehend the spirit in which the prayer now under consideration was made: “No reflection forced itself upon me so often or so urgently as the utter and universal inaptitude of that country for the sustenance of animal life; it really seemed to possess no element favorable to human existence besides a pure air, and no present appearances favor the idea that it was ever any better. I am filled with wonder that so many travelers should task their ingenuity to get clear of the miracles which, according to the narrative of Moses, were wrought to facilitate the journey of that vast host, for they could not have subsisted three days without supernatural resources.” The quiet and mild rebuke to Moses, in the Lord’s answer, encourages us to come to him with every desire, however impossible it may seem in its fulfillment, so long as it springs from love to God; “His arm is not shortened that it cannot save.” Let us ask great things, then, for Israel. Are his people hungering and thirsting? the Lord has plenty and to spare. Are they languishing and drooping? The Lord’s spirit can revive them. Prayer, persevering prayer, will come from a heart that truly feels for the afflicted people of God; we have only to implore the great Giver, as did Moses, and the supply will be forthcoming. The children of Israel had inordinately desired the meat the Lord promised to give; he therefore made it by its quantity loathsome to them. It is ever thus with man, in his desires greedily pursuing a fancied good, covetous and over-anxious to acquire this or that, and if he obtain, and find the possession cloy, yet he turns to another object, still to pursue, still to be disappointed.

“Sweet world!

We all still cling to thee, though thou thyself Passes away.” The spirit severed from its God is ever longing, ever restless, for some imagined good, forgetful that “the heart must shed its pleasures, as the eye its tears.” Let our desires come, then, from a heart full of love to God, but let the measure of them and their fulfillment be of the Lord.

020. Prayer Of Moses For Miriam.

PrayerOf Moses For Miriam. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 12:13. The Answer.—Numbers 12:14-15. The sister of Moses, for whom this prayer was made, was a person of much interest, although under the present circumstances her conduct was highly blamable, and called forth the indignation of God The part she enacted in the preservation of Moses, in his infancy, from the waters of the Nile, her tenderness and care attach us to her. We suppose Miriam a woman of much personal beauty— the “chief lady of Israel,” but possessed of vehemence of spirit and much vanity. The affliction for which Moses prayed had been sent upon her as a punishment in speaking rashly of the prophet of the Lord. Her heart was filled with jealousy towards Zipporah, whom Moses had chosen for a wife, and whom Miriam feared might usurp her rights or rule over her. Aaron was guilty of the same sin as his sister, but she was the first in the transgression, and no doubt excited him by her rashness. God punished Miriam in a way which made her feel more deeply than anything else could have done, and as we hear nothing further of her history, we infer her days were passed in the only true sphere of woman, in quiet. We are led to confess that woman is capable of doing far more good and far more, evil than man; even when she is imagined pure and spotless, her heart, more than man’s, may be the home of the very worst as well as the best passions.

Men are, to outward appearance, either the one thing or the other—good or bad; a keen observer is seldom deceived; a woman to the world’s eye is always good, till by some outward, flagrant act she proves herself otherwise. This prayer of Moses exhibits a spirit of meekness and forbearance which everywhere in his history stamps his character. In the jealousy shown by his brother and sister he suffered one of the most bitter trials with which God’s children are called to strive; he had hitherto been supported in all his movements by his own family, but he is now the subject of resentment from those nearest to him, but the Lord heard it, heard all their taunts, and stood ready to defend the prophet; he says to them, “Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” In this leader of Israel we have an instance of continuance in well-doing; we find him pursuing the path of duty, “enduring, as seeing him who is invisible,” “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,” holding close communion with his Maker, and drawing strength to fulfill, with meekness and submission, his duties, from that source which alone can supply it, submitting to insult, returning good for evil, and praying for those who so despitefully used him; yes, in his own words, “his mother’s children were angry,” those, too, who were eminent in religion, bitterly assailed him. We are here taught another lesson of the frailty of human nature, its liability to be drawn into sin; it should teach us to cultivate the spirit of Moses, to bear with the faults of God’s children, nor to condemn or speak rashly of those whom He has called—remembering we are all sinful, erring beings. Let us take with us that charity which seeks rather to hide than to expose the weaknesses of others.

021. Prayer Of Moses That The People May Not Be Smitten With Pestilence.

Prayer Of Moses That The People May Not Be Smitten With Pestilence. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 14:13-19. The Answer.—Numbers 14:20-24. This humble intercession of Moses exhibits him still as a type of Christ, praying and pleading for his persecutors. The prophet does not offer any excuse for the sins of his people, but he feels that if the Lord consume them, the story of their destruction would not, by those who knew not God, be attributed to him as an act of justice, but gloried in as a shortening of that arm that had hitherto delivered them; he is jealous for the glory of God; he would not have the power of the Almighty questioned; hence his plea, “Let the power of my Lord be great.”

Three of the attributes of Jehovah are brought up by the prophet to urge him to listen to his request—his goodness, his mercy, and his willingness to forgive, all of which had been shown in times past towards his sinful people. His fervent prayer prevailed with God, who had threatened at this time to destroy them with pestilence, and make of Moses himself a mighty nation; their doom is respited in answer to the fervent appeal. “They were indeed to perish in the wilderness, but not yet; forty years were the adults to wander, and gradually die out, never to enter or see the promised land; cowardly, distrustful, and enfeebled by bondage, the fathers should be succeeded by their children, trained up under the institutions God had given them, moulded under them into a nation, and strengthened into manly character under the freedom which had been so triumphantly won for them” (Dr. Kitto). The only survivors of all the children of Israel who were to live to enter Canaan were Caleb and Joshua. The spirit of the former is particularly spoken of as a new spirit, one which led him to “follow the Lord fully;” he was assured of inheriting the promise, “Him will I bring in due time into the land whereinto he went;”—it was a spirit differing from that which loves the world and the fleeting things of it—a spirit which leads to prayer.

022. Prayer Of Moses That The Lord Would Set A Man Oyer The Congregation.

Prayer Of Moses That The Lord Would Set A Man Oyer The Congregation. The Prayer as recorded.—Numbers 27:15-17. The Answer.—Numbers 27:18-21.

Moses was now under sentence of condemnation; he was not permitted to pass over Jordan; from the hour he fell under the displeasure of God, and which shortened the date of his life, we realize that he is not only a prophet but a man of like passions with ourselves; sometimes we hear him entreating the Lord to permit him to pass into the goodly land, and then again quietly resigning himself to the will of God, now manifesting a love of life, and then vindicating the righteous judgment of God in the punishment of his transgression. The prayer under our present notice was no personal appeal; the soul of the prophet was full of desire for Israel; he seems to lose sight of self, and prays as one who earnestly wished the advancement of God's cause, and the eternal welfare of his people. Humble-minded, he seems willing to see himself abased and others exalted, if so be the glory of the Lord is acknowledged. Joshua, a man of unshaken fidelity and singular piety, is brought before us; in answer to the prophet's prayer, God was pleased to appoint him as the leader of Israel, to finish the work of Moses, and introduce his children to their inheritance. There is no murmuring word from the prophet as he sees his dignity about to rest upon another; he prays for one that might lead his flock as a faithful shepherd. Joshua was taken to his heart as a friend and brother.

How unlike the spirit of the world is that displayed by the prophet; how rarely do we see one who can rejoice over the exaltation of inferiors, even when such advancement is for the glory of God! How will jealousy exhibit itself to one who knows the evil of his own natural heart, when its possessor is unconscious of it! How it breathes itself in the bitter sarcasm, the whispered reproach, the fault-finding spirit, towards the exalted one, who, instead of being taken to the heart as a better instrument in working for God, is cast aside and hated as an enemy! Moses, in the answer to his prayer, is commanded to cause Joshua to stand before Eleazar the priest; the form of laying on of hands was one recommended by divine authority, and of significant simplicity. The words, "Thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him," imply that Moses should be associated with Joshua and enjoy the satisfaction of beholding one who would, acting with him and with the same spirit, conduct the affairs of the people. In this petition of Moses we have again a striking exhibition of his meekness.

024. Prayer Of Joshua.

Prayer Of Joshua. The Prayer as recorded.—Joshua 7:6-9. The Answer.—Joshua 7:10-15.

Joshua was anointed with the unction of the Divine spirit, and, like Moses, sought for strength and guidance from God, to fit him for the right discharge of the duties of the high station to which he had been called. The Lord, in infinite justice, had sent defeat to the hitherto successful arms of Israel, and as a punishment for the covetousness of Achan, had caused them to flee before the men of Ai; their loss was comparatively small, yet as a military man Joshua felt the effects of the defeat deeply; he also knew it was a rebuke from God; the people felt it also, and, in the expressive language of Scripture, "The hearts of the people melted and became as water." Joshua with bowed head inquired of the Lord, while he expressed sorrow and humiliation for the present condition of his charge. Dejected, he lay before the ark in prayer, till evening, when he was informed that Israel could not prosper while "the accursed thing remained among them, and is told the way and means of its discovery.

Achan acknowledges his sin—he had for the goodly garment and the wedge of gold, brought trouble upon Israel, and exposed his own soul to danger. The conduct of Joshua on the discovery of Achan's sin, as well as his prayer, is worthy of our serious notice; there is no bitter denunciation in his words, no harshness of manner, but sorrow for his sin: "Why hast thou troubled us?" he says, and leads him to acknowledge the justice of God, in punishing those who sinned against Israel. When he approaches him it is tenderly, and the words "My son, tell me what thou hast done," maybe, should be borne in the heart and on the lips of all Christian ministers at the present day; human nature is perverse and resistant; the bitter denunciation will never lead a man to confess his sins, even if they are clear to his eye and lie heavy on his soul. One of our old poets has said, "When man ceases to justify himself, then it is the last extremity of evil."

Conceit is the last passion that dies out in the soul when God's love enters it; its death too is gradual— so gradual, that often in the heart of the believer, we see it welling up and troubling the clear waters of truth. Go, then, Christian teacher, tenderly to the sinner; remember the pit from which thou hast been taken; go gently to warn, to admonish, to caution; teach that God is a Father, a Friend; implant this feeling, and the heart will learn to fear as well as love him.

026. Prayer Of Hannah.

Prayer Of Hannah. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Samuel 1:10-11. The Answer.—1 Samuel 1:20; 1 Samuel 1:27-28. An all-wise Jehovah sees fit to try his children in the school of affliction; these trials are as varied as their disposition and temperament; each one is brought through the waters by the way best fitted to purify his or her heart, and is attacked in those desires which separate him from his God.

There are few even of those who are the professed children of the Most High, but are still waiting for, still pursuing some object which they fancy will increase their happiness. God does not reprove us for these desires, if their attainment is the advancement of his glory; he rather encourages us to express to him every want of our hearts. The prayer before us is a striking example of clearness and precision in the subject matter, of confidence and reliance on the great Hearer; it was made by Hannah, the memorials of whose life comprehend but a few years, indeed embrace only this prayer and its answer, with the attendant circumstances. The wife of a distinguished servant of God, who loved and appreciated her, and surrounded by comfort and competence, she was conscious of one desire ungratified, a want in her bosom ungratified—a want which was rendered a bitter sorrow by the taunts of a rival, who triumphed over her with the evil spirit of an enemy; human nature is weak and erring, and we see this godly woman disturbed in mind, her devotional feelings ruffled and fretted by her adversary. We doubt not but Hannah had made her peculiar trial a frequent subject of prayer; but we observe much selfishness mingled in her desires, and perhaps she had a rebellious feeling against the will of the Almighty.

We remark, however, under all the disturbed feelings of Hannah a quiet, steady walk in the path of duty, and we read of her going up yearly with her household, to offer the required sacrifices to God at the appointed Shiloh. The discipline through which she passed purified her spirit, and taught her to bear her burden of sorrow in silence. As she sat quietly during the feast in Shiloh, her tears flowed fast and free, and afterward she poured out her soul to God in prayer. A descendant of Abraham, one in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed, she had the covenant of Abraham to plead; this strengthened the particular desire of her heart—a desire she possessed in common with all Hebrew women. She came with earnestness to God, and asked for a son, not that she might rid herself of the taunts of her rival, or enjoy him selfishly, but that she might dedicate him to the worship and service of the God of Israel, not for a time, but for his life; to the prayer is added her vow to consecrate him whom God would send, to a life of purity and holiness. A trial awaited Hannah even at her hour of prayer, for, unmindful of the presence of man, and communing with heaven, she poured out her full soul into an ear that always listens; hers was the language of strong faith in and hope towards God, the exertion of a soul struggling to free itself of a burden that was oppressing and overcoming it; and well was it that God saw not as man saw, else the heart of Hannah would not have been full of the peace with which she rose from that prayer. The charge of Eli was not even repelled in anger, gross as it was to the sensitive mind of Hannah; calm, in conscious innocence, she felt as every true believer always feels when charged falsely. "If God justifieth, who is he that condemneth." Her soul was fortified by prayer, and she

stood ready for any attack; the joy in her heart shone out in all her after conduct, “and she was no more sad.” There is great fullness in the expressions in this prayer; God is addressed as the Lord of Hosts, who has the universe with its myriads at his sovereign disposal; there is in it deep humility—not the language of one who fancies himself heard for his much speaking, but the feeling of a sinner in the presence of a just God. The desire of Hannah’s heart was gratified, and a son was granted.

Prayer does not always bring, as it did with this godly woman, the blessing solicited, but it brings its best answer in a will perfectly submissive to that of the Almighty. Were our specified desires always granted they might bring many a sorrow now happily averted. While, then, we are encouraged by this prayer to whisper our wants in the ear of God, let us leave them to his wisdom, let us be careful to have them regulated by his love, and be satisfied with the hope, that all things work together for good to them that love God.

027. Prayer Of Samuel.

Prayer Of Samuel. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Samuel 8:1-6. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 8:7-9. The child Samuel, the memorial of a mother's prayer, the living witness of the blessed truth, that God will hear and answer sincere and earnest petition, is now an old man, and through his whole character we trace the wisdom and fortitude imparted to him by the guidance of his excellent and godly mother. The time has come with Samuel when the "Eye dims, the lithe limbs stiffen, The sun-hued locks thin themselves Off, or whitely wither." But his heart is quick to feel, and his prayers as fervent as when first he lisped them to his God. He cannot now as formerly watch over the interests of the whole country, or make his accustomed circuit through the land; he therefore appointed his sons to relieve him, and put them in his place at Bathsheba. At the time of this appointment they were no doubt fitted for it, for we hear no word of censure from God or man, but we find them afterward wandering from their father's ways, their hearts bound with "the leaden chains of that dull lust, a love of gain." The elders of Israel plead this sin as an excuse for their request to Samuel to give them a king. It is not because a holy God is grieved by the sin of the sons of Samuel, but it is because of the injury done their temporal interests that they make this request. Samuel, who had been faithful over Israel and an instrument in God's hand of much good, was grieved at the ingratitude of the people, but does not attempt to answer them in his own strength, or rely on his own judgment; he prays to the God of wisdom to guide him in his reply. The people do not murmur or even propose the name of any to fill the place; and this is indeed a noted fact, for it is the only recorded instance of a public determination to appoint a king, and no name proposed. We know these people were sure the law of Moses was from God, but it is probable they were tired of being ruled by those raised by God to reform religion, and though they respect Samuel, their desire to be great and powerful in the eyes of other nations seems to be their motive in asking of Samuel a king to reign over them. The answer of the Lord to Samuel's prayer leads us to infer the request of the people was improper.

028. Prayer Of Samuel For A Thunder Storm In Time Of Wheat Harvest.

Prayer Of Samuel For A Thunder Storm In Time Of Wheat Harvest. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Samuel 12:16-17. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 12:18. A shower of rain was an uncommon occurrence in that country during wheat harvest, and the answer to the following prayer was calculated to produce conviction, and alarm the people. Terrified with the power of God displayed in the thunderstorm, and fearful of some immediate judgment of God, they saw, in answer to Samuel's prayer, "The sky grow darker; then came booming on The deep-voiced thunder, while at distance rolled The wild wind's dirge-like and yet tempest tone; And lightning's evanescent sheets of gold Burst in their anger from the cloud's dark fold." With one united cry the people call upon Samuel to pray to the Lord God Almighty. Pray, say they, that we die not; pray, for we have added sin to sin; we have desired a king when God hath chosen other government for us; but we acknowledge the power of the God who speaks in the thunder and rides upon the storm.

029. Prayer Of David Under Trying Circumstances.

Prayer Of David Under Trying Circumstances. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Samuel 23:1-2. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 23:2.

David continues his prayer.—1 Samuel 23:10-11. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 23:11.

David still prays.—1 Samuel 23:12. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 23:12.

David was at this time an inspired writer of the Holy Scriptures; yet the Lord spoke to him by his prophet and then by the high priest, for the honor of his own institutions. Saul had neglected the protection of Israel, and the depredations of the Philistines were extremely distressing.

David is called in the Scriptures the man after God's own heart; and it is with feelings of peculiar interest we review his prayers; they are songs from the "sweet singer of Israel," and come from the heart of him whose life was one of deep devotedness to God and his cause. In his youth he says, "Thou art my trust," and in age, "Now when I am old and grayheaded, O Lord, forsake me not." A man of prayer, we find him always at the mercy-seat in times of trial or of rejoicing. From the throne of God came down the strength that filled this good man's heart. When David could not divine clearly his duty, as in the present instance, he called to the high priest to put on the Urim and Thummim, and by him asked God to direct him in all his decisions.

030. Prayer Of Dayid When The Amalekites Had Invaded Ziklag.

Prayer Of Dayid When The Amalekites Had Invaded Ziklag. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Samuel 30:8. The Lord's Answer.—1 Samuel 30:8.

Ziklag was distant from the camp of the Philistines about three days' march, and David did not receive an authentic account of the battle at Gilboa till two days after his return thither. The Lord had delivered him from his ensnaring connection with Achish, but his conduct had not been entirely free from deceit while connected with him; he found it difficult to avoid all insincerity, and from fear or courtesy had been disingenuous in his intercourse with the king.

God severely rebuked him for his conduct, by the calamity that befell Ziklag in his absence. David's fear of offending Achish had induced him to leave the city without placing a proper guard over the inhabitants; but the Amalekites were wonderfully restrained from destroying any of them, after the example which David had set them; in this God showed his intention to rebuke David alone, but protect his family and friends. His wives were led into captivity, and David and the people shed bitter and sorrowful tears over the destruction made in the city by the devouring flame. In this deep sorrow David remembers the Lord his God—remembers the promises and encouragements he gives to his children to call upon him in trouble, and immediately consults him by the high priest.

032. Prayer Of David And Thanksgiving.

Prayer Of David And Thanksgiving. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Samuel 7:18-29.

One of the first acts of David's reign was to place the ark in the tabernacle in the presence of all the people; it was he that collected the priests and Levites, and bade them, morning and evening, remember the Lord their God, and offer their daily sacrifices to Him who had created and sustained them; it was he who first taught them unitedly to chant his praises in the tabernacle, and in every house and cottage in Israel were sung the hymns of David. The time will come when it may be said of their sweet strains—"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." In this prayer he seems to remember God's continued goodness to him, and how wonderfully he has been led from the "mountain fold" to the royal throne. As he sits in the tabernacle whither he had gone to pray, he tells the Lord the thoughts of his heart, and pours out his thanksgiving to him; he also reiterates God's promises to him, by which the Lord had connected the glory of his own truth with the establishment of David's family, that those who came after him might walk in the path of salvation, and work for the cause of God in the world.

033. Prayer Of David As He Went Weeping Up The Mount Of Olivet.

Prayer Of David As He Went Weeping Up The Mount Of Olivet. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Samuel 15:30-31. The Lord's Answer.—2 Samuel 15:32-34, 2 Samuel 17:14.

Ahithophel, who is mentioned in this prayer, was a man of great ability. David feared more from him than from the whole number of Absalom's followers; he had just heard of his uniting himself to the conspirators, and his heart is grieved. This feeling is caught by the people, and a mourning, weeping multitude are slowly ascending the mountain. David felt himself guilty in God's sight for the misery he had brought on himself and people, and, humbled under the hand of God, his expressions of sorrow are deep, while with bowed head and tearful eyes he makes the request contained in his prayer. He knows the God of Israel can turn the wisdom of the wise man into foolishness, and render the might of the strong man powerless. Hushai was an intimate friend of David's; he was from Archi, a town on the southern border of Ephraim; he is made the instrument in defeating the counsel of Ahithophel, in answer to the prayer of David.

034. Prayer Of David After His Transgression In Numbering Israel And Judah.

Prayer Of David After His Transgression In Numbering Israel And Judah. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Samuel 24:10. The Lord's Answer.—2 Samuel 24:11-16. When we consider the character of David, and hear him spoken of as "the man after God's own heart," we are apt to forget he was, like ourselves, human and imperfect. In some of the acts of David's life, even after his conversion, there is sad evidence of natural corruption; pride, vanity, and deceit are still in his heart. We know these hateful passions were not nourished by him, and cannot be by one who, like him, daily waits on his God. This is an encouragement to Christians struggling with the deep-rooted malady in their own hearts, and ought to fill them with a joyful hope that at the last they will come off more than "conquerors through him who loved them. It should awaken for the whole world that loving charity which "thinketh no evil," and though all about us there are wandering children from the fold of God, yet they may, like David, be struggling in prayer, their lives be a warfare against sin and Satan, and theirs that sorrow for which nothing but prayer, deep and fervent, is an antidote. Now what was the sin David committed in numbering the people? Some have thought it a contempt of God's promise that they should be innumerable, and that, as in the days of Moses, he should have been expressly commanded by God to do this; but we think it an evidence of pride in David.

Elated with the prosperity and extent of his dominions, he evinced a complacency natural to those who have been eminently successful; there seems to be also an ambitious curiosity to discover how many of his people were fit for service; and with the like feeling, indulged by many an aged man, after a life of prosperity and success, he would have it said he had left a populous and flourishing kingdom to posterity. But these feelings of David called forth the displeasure of his God; pride and worldly ambition were still in his heart, and by chastisement from the Lord they must be subdued.

036. Prayer Of Solomon For Wisdom.

Prayer Of Solomon For Wisdom. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 3:5-9. The Answer.—1 Kings 3:11-13, 1 Kings 4:29-31.

Solomon the son of David had succeeded his father as ruler of Israel. Being young and inexperienced, he had, no doubt, felt his need of great wisdom, to fill with honor and justice the position in which he was placed; his mind had been filled with his own weakness, so that when the Lord appeared to him in a vision at Gibeon and asked the desire of his heart, Solomon was ready to ask for a supply of heavenly wisdom such as God only could bestow on man. The spirit of this prayer is commended by God, and is especially worthy of note to those who are in high places of position or power; Solomon asks not for wealth, long life or particular earthly distinction, but wisdom to guide and direct his people in the fear of that God whom his father David had so much loved and honored. He would be “strong in the spirit,” “deep-thoughted,” clear-eyed, “To walk step for step, with an angel beside, On the heaven heights of truth.” From that fountain of living waters, “the wish to know, that endless thirst,” must be satisfied; as the fountain is pure, so will the waters be; and would you be wise, come hither and drink.

“The clouds may drop down titles and estates, Wealth may seek us, but wisdom must be sought.”

037. The Prayer Of Solomon At The Dedication Of The Temple.

The Prayer Of Solomon At The Dedication Of The Temple.

“It seemed as if a temple rose Before me brightly there, And in the depths of its repose, My soul o’erflowed with prayer.”

“Be mute who will, who can, Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice.

Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine, In such a temple as we now behold, Reared for thy presence; therefore am I bound To worship.” The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 8:22-54. The Lord’s Answer.—1 Kings 9:1-5.

About a year after the completion of the temple, the ark of the covenant was placed in it, so that in a peculiar manner it became the abode of Jehovah in the midst of Israel. It was now to be dedicated to the service and worship of the living God. A large multitude of worshiping Israelites, and of the chiefs and heads of the tribes had assembled to witness the scene, and unite in the solemn prayer of Solomon. The temple was the visible pledge of God’s presence with his people, as long as they adhered to his ordinances and loved his commandments. In pleading with God in this prayer Solomon was a type of Christ. The Lord has said, “The silver and the gold are mine,” and freely had it been brought to the temple, to add to its beauty and enlarge its walls; but Solomon reminds the people, that heaven, with its boundless shore, could not contain the Lord of all, much less this temple made with hands; the ark might abide within its walls, and God would be in the midst of those who came thither to worship and love him, but his presence would still fill immensity, and “God be everywhere.” In the “temple” He has however “recorded his name,” and the Israelites were to advert to it in all their prayers; when they journeyed far distant from Jerusalem their faces were turned to it, as an evidence their hearts were with its worshipers; and when near it they forsook not the assembling of themselves together. This prayer of Solomon’s is one of the most heartfelt and beautiful in the Bible, and the spiritual reader will find it highly suggestive. We are satisfied it was an outpouring of Solomon’s spirit to God, suggested by the occasion.

038. The Prophet's Prayer For The Restoration Of Jeroboam's Withered Hand.

The Prophet's Prayer For The Restoration Of Jeroboam's Withered Hand. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 13:6-8.

Jeroboam had neglected to worship God at the temple, and wickedly built another altar at Bethel, and while a prophet—"a man of God out of Judah," was prophesying against the altar, the king stretched forth his hand to lay it violently upon him, and by a sudden interposition of Providence it became withered. The suffering man thus thwarted in his resolve, entreats that the prophet would pray that his hand might be restored; he would have him pray to the Lord his God. We see by this request his confidence in his idols and his self-invented sacrifices was shaken. The sudden judgment and the rending of the altar had produced conviction in him, and he knows nothing but prayer to the Lord God of the prophet will avail. After the prayer and restoration we hear no thankful strain from Jeroboam's lips to the God who had restored him; a sense of gratitude to the prophet is evinced by his offer of hospitality for the present, and a reward in the future; here let the reader pause for a moment, and consider how like the world is the conduct of Jeroboam, how often, like him, is one the recipient of God's favor, but no word of thankfulness is heard. One is, perhaps the object of God's mercy in some special deliverance from evil, but there is no upward glancing of the eye, no lifting of the voice of thanksgiving to heaven. "Pensioner of God be grateful; let thy full heart pour out its treasure of thanks to Him who has sent the blessing."

"A wicked man scorneth prayer; in the shallow sophistry of reason, He derideth the silly hope that God can be moved by supplication; But I knew that his reasonings were false, for the promise of the Scripture is true."

039. The Power Of Effectual Fervent Prayer.

The Power Of Effectual Fervent Prayer. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 17:1. The Answer.—James 5:17-18.

He who makes the following prayer is Elijah the Tishbite; his name signifies “The Lord my God is He.” He was raised up under the reign of the most wicked king of Israel, and his introduction to our notice on the Scripture page is rather abrupt. Ahab had probably been repeatedly warned by Elijah to forsake his idols and worship God, but he scorned the admonition. To show him the power of prayer, and give him an incontrovertible proof that he would be heard and answered, he asks that the Lord will send neither dew nor rain for the space of some years, and not until he again prayed for it, should it come upon the earth.

We find the answer to this prayer recorded in the New Testament. Doubtless the prophet was instructed by the Lord to offer this petition; and to some it may seem a strange request to make in prayer. The glory of God and the interests of true religion were concerned in it, however, and there is much of wise zeal as well as true benevolence in it. The benefit of the calamity on the minds of apostate Israel would far outweigh the misery attending it. Elijah was a most distinguished servant of God, and endowed with extraordinary gifts for the purpose of exciting a hardened generation.

040. The Prayer Of Elijah For The Restoration Of The Widow's Son.

The Prayer Of Elijah For The Restoration Of The Widow's Son. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 17:19-21. The Lord's Answer.—1 Kings 17:22; 1 Kings 17:24.

Never before had a prayer like this ever been made and answered; and well might the mother, as the good man called upon Him who only could answer, be confirmed in her faith, and praise the Lord God of Israel. There lay all that remained of one who was once dear; the soul, the living, breathing power, that had once dwelt in it, was no longer there; and the expression in the prayer of the prophet, "Let the soul come into this body again," proves to us its complete separation at death. It is when gazing at such a scene as the prayer presents, that we are furnished with an argument, the hardest and most unbelieving are forced to admit, for the immortality of the human soul. The mother for whose child Elijah prays was a widow, and he had dwelt with her and been miraculously sustained during the famine consequent upon the dry weather which followed his prayer. It appears he was in the house of this woman when her son died. She had been a worshiper of Baal in bygone days, but seems to have been convinced of God's power, as manifested in the drought in answer to prayer, and from her language to Elijah we infer she imagined this heavy affliction was sent upon her in consequence of her sin, and that he was in some way involved in the death of her child. The "loft" where Elijah carried the body to pray over it, was an upper room dedicated to communion with God and meditation; the word in the Greek has this meaning attached to it, and no doubt it was the place of holy, sacred, and sweet communion, between the prophet and the High and Holy One. Like many a similar occurrence in our own time, there was mystery hanging round this afflictive dispensation. Here was a woman who loved God and entertained his prophets, bowed down in grief the deepest, saddest, earth can know. Elijah cannot understand it, and he seems to expostulate with God in his prayer.

"O Death all eloquent! you only prove What dust we dote on when 'tis man we love."

"Oh! what a shadow o'er the heart is flung, When peals the requiem of the loved and young."

God, in the miracle of restoring life to him who lay then in that "deep stillness, in that dreamless sleep," intended a greater display of his glory and more peculiar favor to this widow than the mere sparing of his life could have been. He was dead, but God heard Elijah's prayer, and then sank deep in this widowed heart the lesson that God was the author and giver, the hearer and answerer. How does this prayer encourage us to plead for all who are in sorrow! It is true we cannot work miracles, but we can implore the blessing of God on an affliction, so that the sorrowing heart may rejoice like this widow's.

041. The Prayer Of Elijah On Mount Carmel.

The Prayer Of Elijah On Mount Carmel. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Kings 18:36-37. The Lord's Answer.—1 Kings 18:38-39.

Elijah seems distressed at the wavering conduct of his people; sometimes they worship Jehovah and then again turn back to their idols or to Baal. He calls upon them to decide whom they will serve—if Baal be the true God, he exhorts them to worship him, but if not, he would implore them to worship the Creator of the world. The prophet's language is full of sarcasm, and even pours ridicule upon them, while they are going through ceremonies as absurd as they prove fruitless; and then he requests them to come with him, at the evening hour, to call upon the God he served.

Before them stood the altar, and upon it the burnt offering prepared for the worship of Baal, the god to whom the people's prayers had been offered; but in the expressive language of Scripture, "There was no voice, or any that answered." In this prayer Elijah beseeches God to show to his people, that he was indeed the God of their fathers and their nation, and that all he had done, even in regard to the famine, was in direct obedience to the command of the Almighty.

043. A Prayer Of Elisha For His Servant.

A Prayer Of Elisha For His Servant. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Kings 6:16-17. The Answer.—2 Kings 6:17.

God had given most extraordinary powers to Elisha, both in working miracles and in curing the sick; but whenever we see an exhibition of them, they are nearly always preceded by prayer. The servant for whom the prophet now prays had succeeded Gehazi, who by falsehood had secured the present which Naaman would have bestowed on Elisha, in remembrance of the wonderful cure he had performed upon him. In consequence of this sin Gehazi was seized with leprosy, and forfeited his place as servant to the prophet. Benhadad perhaps remembered the fire from heaven which had consumed the small companies which marched against

Elijah, and, as though there would be strength in numbers, he had marshaled a large army to apprehend Elisha. When the servant of the prophet saw the host which compassed the city—

“The troubled blood through his pale face was seen To come and go, with tidings from the heart, As it a running messenger had been.” The prophet reminds him that God is on their side; with the eye of faith he sees the hosts of heaven gathered for his defense, and, strong in the might of God, he prays that the eyes of his servant may be opened to behold what was even now before his mortal vision.

“Fear not, I am with thee. O be not dismayed, For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid.

I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand, Upheld by my mighty, omnipotent hand.”

044. Prayer Of Hezekiah.

Prayer Of Hezekiah. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Kings 19:14-19. The Answer, by Isaiah.—2 Kings 19:20.

Hezekiah had just received a letter from Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, who, having invaded and laid waste much of the kingdom of Judah, was contemplating an attack on the capital. Hezekiah proposed to capitulate on certain terms, but was answered by a most insolent letter from Sennacherib. This haughty king had dared to raise his voice against the Most High, his heart was filled with pride and ambition, and he laughed to scorn the counsels of the God who could crush him as a moth. Hezekiah goes into the house of God to consult him by prayer in this matter. His mind is stayed on the Almighty, and his prayer is fervent and heartfelt. “Jehovah, the God of Israel who dwells between the cherubim on the mercy-seat, had been regarded by Sennacherib as the local deity of a small region, but Hezekiah implored the Lord to make himself known as the Creator of all things, the God of the heaven and the earth.”

045. Prayer Of Hezekiah In Sickness.

Prayer Of Hezekiah In Sickness.

“How full of dread, how full of hope, loometh inevitable death, Of dread, for all have sinned; The dread is drowned in joy, the hope is filled with immortality.” The Prayer as recorded.—2 Kings 20:1-3. The Lord’s Answer.—2 Kings 20:4-6.

Prostrate on a bed of languishing and pain lies Hezekiah, the man who had walked before God in uprightness of heart, and used his influence to promote his worship during many years of a useful life

Death is hovering over his dwelling, and “sickness sits caverned in his hollow eye.” And what are the thoughts of this good man in view of the approach of the “king of terrors.” The son of Amoz had come with the message of the Lord, for him to “set his house in order,” for his death was inevitable, to make without delay a full and final settlement of domestic and civil affairs, and prepare for that event which must come to all—

“The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave, The deep, damp vault, the darkness, and the worm.” As if to shut out the world, Hezekiah turns his face to the wall of his chamber, and prays not for composure to meet the last great adversary—no! for the “king of terrors would be to him the prince of peace”—but he “wraps the drapery of his couch around him,” and, in communion with the Almighty One, who holds in his hand the keys of life and death, prays for life. Hezekiah had lived “in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not breaths, in feelings, not in figures on a dial;” and his reluctance to die must be ascribed to the state of his nation and family, for whose interests he had labored in the love and fear of God.

It will be remembered at the time of Hezekiah’s sickness he had no son; Manasseh was not born till three years after; by his death, therefore, this branch of David’s family would have become extinct. He therefore desired restoration to life and health, that he might work a little longer for the sake of true religion; and his prayer is to this effect. Tears flow freely with his words; each drop of sorrow is itself a prayer, and God gathers them into his treasury, as he asks for “the life of heart and life of soul mingled with life for the body.”

047. Prayer Of Jabez.

Prayer Of Jabez. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Chronicles 4:10. The Lord's Answer.—1 Chronicles 4:10.

Nothing is recorded of the parentage or family of this man of prayer, except that he was eminent for wisdom, valor, and piety. His prayer is full of earnest faith, and like Jacob, he seems to wrestle, and will not depart without a blessing. He is led into war with the Canaanites, but conducts it not in his own strength, but in faith and prayer. In the land of Canaan believers under the Old Testament dispensation, saw a type of heaven, and in their wars the conflict of God's people with their spiritual enemies.

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;

Prayer makes the Christian's armor bright; And Satan trembles when he sees The weakest saint upon his knees.”

048. The United Prayer Of An Army.

The United Prayer Of An Army. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Chronicles 5:18-20. The army that was marshaled for action numbered four and forty thousand and seven hundred and three score. The conflict is with the Hagarites, or Ishmaelites—a nation of plunderers. The war was a just one and undertaken in the fear of God.

“Dream not of their fight as of a duel Or the local wounds of head and heel.”

Oh no; the Lord of battles was on their side, and their united prayer, as it ascended to his high and holy throne, was heard and answered. The multitude that were taken prisoners by them, may convey an idea of the superiority of numbers among the enemy. A firm trust on the Almighty will always be expressed in humble, heartfelt prayer; anywhere and everywhere God will listen to his children when they cry; the remembrance that the “race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,” should encourage us to be instant in season, and always in a prayerful spirit. There is something impressive and affecting in the united cry of these prayerful soldiers, each one of whom was engaging in a spiritual conflict, which nerved him for this battle with the Hagarites. God is with them, and victory is theirs.

050. Prayer Of Asa.

Prayer Of Asa. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Chronicles 14:11. The Lord's Answer.—2 Chronicles 14:12-13.

Asa was son and successor of Abijam, on the throne of Judah, and employed the first part of his reign, which was peaceful, in the furtherance of religion and peaceful overthrowing of idolatry. At the time this prayer was made, Asa was characterized by exemplary piety, and his prayer was one of faith and dependence on God. Zerah, an Ethiopian king, came into his territories with "a host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots;" Asa met him with six hundred thousand, and defeated him; the Ethiopians were entirely overthrown and dispersed, and the spoil which had been deposited in Gerar, of the Philistines, and in other cities of the vicinity was taken. Here the whole man, the whole army, is given over to the care and guardianship of God; there is a call for help, the confession that just such a protector is needed, as God would be in the fierce battle before Asa and his hosts Experience has taught him that God has never yet failed to hear prayer, and the future is filled with hope drawn from the promises of a God of truth and mercy.

051. Prayer Of Jehoshaphat.

Prayer Of Jehoshaphat. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Chronicles 20:5-12. The Lord's Answer.—2 Chronicles 20:14-18.

Jehoshaphat was a king of Judah and the successor of Asa. He was a man of distinguished piety, and enjoyed a long reign of twenty-five years. It is said of him, that the more his riches and honors increased, the more "his heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord." During his reign the kingdom of Judah was invaded by the Moabites and others; and so great were their forces, that the king and people were thrown into consternation. It was a time to call upon the Lord, a time of danger and peril, and Jehoshaphat assembled the people at Jerusalem, proclaimed a fast, and made the following remarkable prayer, which was almost immediately answered by the promise of certain victory. "This was an instance of a fast observed in obedience to the proclamation of a chief magistrate, who acted with the power his station gave, and not by the spirit of prophecy." The Lord's answer came by a Levite descended from Asaph, and not by a high priest. The language of this prayer is full of humble and genuine faith. Jehoshaphat feels his own inability to combat against the powerful forces of the enemy, relies on God for help, appealing to him as to the justice of his cause. One expression of the prayer strikes us as remarkably expressive; it is— "Neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee." How it tells of man's weakness and

God's strength, and in one short sentence expresses the feelings of every child of God. We would recommend especial attention to the reading of the chapter in which this prayer is recorded; it is full of interest, and is one of the most striking instances of prayer heard and answered that the Scripture contains.

052. Prayer Of Hezekiah For Those Who Had Eaten The Passover Without Purification.

Prayer Of Hezekiah For Those Who Had Eaten The Passover Without Purification. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Chronicles 30:18-19. The Lord's Answer.—2 Chronicles 30:20.

It was the custom for the people to assemble at Jerusalem some days before the Passover, and prepare themselves, by removing all false altars and all abominations from the city. Many of the ten tribes had come up at a very short notice and had no time for the customary preparation, and were therefore considered ceremonially unclean. Hezekiah prays that God will pardon every omission, as their hearts are in the observance. To the prayer is granted a favorable answer, and they were allowed to eat the Passover when the Levites had killed it for them.

053. Prayer Of Manasseh When In Affliction.

Prayer Of Manasseh When In Affliction. The Prayer as recorded.—2 Chronicles 33:12-13.

If we confine our attention strictly to the history of Manasseh as recorded in the book of Kings, we should infer that a career of wickedness had been followed out by him to the end of his long reign of fifty-five years; but in the second book of Chronicles we find a heart-broken, humble prayer from the lips of a man whose former life had been stained with every vice, for it is said of him, "He did evil in the sight of the Lord, like the abominations of the heathen." In the sixth verse of this chapter a sin of his is mentioned which caused the Lord to be angry with him; and we speak of it here because it is one that is prevalent in our own days, and is leading many away from the simple faith of the Bible; to all such we would call attention to the repentance and prayer of Manasseh. When Manasseh and his people became violent in their opposition to God, he brought upon them the Assyrians, and gave them success in their invasions, permitting them to follow out their own worldly ambition, in order to chastize Manasseh, who was taken prisoner, loaded with fetters, and sent to Babylon.

"High walls and huge the body may confine, And iron gates obstruct the prisoner's gaze, The massive bolts may baffle his design, And vigilant keepers closely watch his ways;

Yet scorns the immortal mind this base control. No chains can bind it, and no cells inclose;

Swifter than light it flies from pole to pole, Or, in a prayer, from earth to heaven it goes!" By the especial grace of God solitude and affliction brought reflection to Manasseh—

"Through the shadowy past, Like a tomb-searcher Memory ran, Lifting each shroud that time had cast."

Every act of sin seems like a serpent's sting, and is imbued with fresh bitterness; there is a burden weighing down his stricken heart. He betakes himself to prayer in his extremities, and the soul that lay in darkness is lifted up to heaven; and at last, we trust, he found an entrance there. And this, my reader, is neither more nor less than "to be born again." There are those who love to hang around this "change of heart," a dark veil of mystery; heed it not, but read in this faith and repentant prayer the secret of your own salvation.

055. Prayer Of Nehemiah For The Captive Remnant Of Judah

Prayer Of Nehemiah For The Captive Remnant Of Judah The Prayer as recorded.—Nehemiah 1:4-11. The Lord's Answer.—Nehemiah 2:1-8.

Nehemiah was a Jew of great piety, and occupied the station of cupbearer to Artaxerxes the king of Persia. The whole of this book is a record of his actions, of his zeal and disinterestedness for the advancement of the true religion. His station in the Persian court had prevented him from going to Jerusalem, but he expressed a godly concern about the condition of his brethren in Judea, and the temple of God. Jerusalem lay without walls or gates of defense, and had done so since its devastation by the Chaldeans.

Nehemiah, on hearing of the sad state of his brethren was troubled, and the impulse of his heart was to go over and help them, if he could only secure the patronage of the king. In this perplexity he remembers a God who reigns king over all, blessed forevermore, in whose hand are the hearts of even the highest of earthly rulers, and he calls upon him in prayer. No circumstances should ever render the Christian careless of the interests of the church of God; like Nehemiah he should be concerned for her welfare, and like him pray that God would build her walls and strengthen her borders. He should improve his talents and take advantage of every circumstance to add to her numbers, and even when far separated from her, his efforts for her prosperity, though in his own sight feeble, God may bless, and make eminently powerful in spreading the cause of truth in the world.

“Till, filled with light and joy and love, Thy courts below, like those above, Triumphant hallelujahs raise, And heaven and earth resound thy praise.”

056. Prayers Of Nehemiah While Building The Walls Of Jerusalem.

Prayers Of Nehemiah While Building The Walls Of Jerusalem. The Prayers as recorded.—Nehemiah 4:4-5; Nehemiah 5:19; Nehemiah 6:9. The Lord's Answer.—Nehemiah 6:15-16.

Sanballat, the governor of the Samaritans, and other enemies of the Jews, endeavored by every means to overthrow the attempts of Nehemiah and his followers to rebuild the temple; they laughed him to scorn, and ridiculing the idea of his being able to procure the necessary materials, with the most bitter sarcasm endeavored to dissuade him from the work. The Jews were at this time the church of God, and were employed in his worship, and for this they were hated by their enemies. They had need of much prayer in the midst of such violent opposition, and we find the petitions of Nehemiah recorded in the fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of this book. To some readers the second recorded prayer may appear tinctured with conceit and a boasting spirit, but we would refer such to the language of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians; of whom he would take nothing, that he might stop the mouths of false apostles and covetous people.

058. Prayer Of Job.

Prayer Of Job. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 1:20-21. The book of Job has been regarded by some writers as a mere fiction or parable, but this notion, has been refuted by eminent divines; and the opinion now entertained by most Bible readers, is that so ably presented by Dr. Kitto, who says: “We have the testimony of the sacred writers themselves to the reality of Job’s person and history. We are told in the fourteenth chapter of Ezekiel that though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in such a place they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness; from the context, and the manner in which this is introduced the characters here named seem to be taken as real; for first Job is joined with Noah and Daniel, who were certainly real characters; and these are spoken of as real and living men. In the New Testament are allusions to the patience of Job and his character as one belonging to a real person. St. Paul and James both speak of him.

We cannot suppose the Holy Spirit would make a reference to a feigned history for an example of faith and patience and its ultimate reward, if the person, the faith, and its recompense, were alike unreal.” The prayers of Job must not then be regarded as fanciful pieces of composition, but as the “thanksgivings, complaints, and communings of one, human like ourselves,” whose submission, faith, and patience, through the grace of God, acquired by prayer, made him triumphant over bodily weakness, over calamity, and the trials of a “vale of tears.” He was an eminent saint of God, although we often see in reading his history an evident struggling of the human and mortal with the spiritual. The afflictions of Job were heavier and the circumstances more aggravated than usually fall to the lot of mankind; his cup was indeed full of deep and bitter sorrow, but it was the Lord who had mingled it; in the manner in which he drank it we see the strength of his faith and submission. One messenger after another had borne to Job the evil tidings of his swift and sudden trials, and when the last great sorrow, the loss of all his numerous family, is communicated to him, he is bowed to the earth with “the weight of the heavy heart in his bosom,” and breaks forth in words that will live as long as time and sorrow last, and while a God of love and justice reigns.

059. Prayer Of Job After He Had Been Visited By His Friends.

Prayer Of Job After He Had Been Visited By His Friends. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 13:20-27.

Job, as usual in cases of affliction, had many so called sympathizers; three are mentioned particularly as conversing with him and treating his sufferings and his character with contempt. In the daguerreotypes of Job's friends are features familiar to all the children of suffering and affliction; and there are few who are not painfully acquainted with Zophar, Eliphaz, and Bildad. In obedience to the command "to weep with those that weep," there are many, very many, of the good and kind who would and do change the sentence into talking with those that weep; not that words of sympathy and kindly advice should remain unuttered, but that they should be "words fitly spoken, like apples of gold in pictures of silver," that they should be forcible and right. We can imagine how, under his deep and heavy affliction, and after the conversation of his friends, Job was led to inquire so particularly into the cause of his trials, and we can almost excuse the passionate strain in which he speaks; he regards himself as a mark for the arrows of the Almighty; to use his own words: "Thou writest bitter things against me." He desires to clear away the clouds and darkness hanging round these trials, and know of God a reason for them. He says, in bitterness but in dependence, "My friends scorn me, but my eye poureth out tears unto God." He asks for the love of God in his heart, for fear seems to have taken possession of it. It is right for us to wait patiently God's time, and though in deep sorrow we see nothing but the frown of Providence, the knowledge that there is behind it a smile, will be sweet to our souls; and though heavy and severe be our trials, we may, by patience, be led with Job to exclaim: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

060. Prayer Of Job That God Would Hide Him From His Anger.

Prayer Of Job That God Would Hide Him From His Anger. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 14:13-22.

Job feels that death must soon release him from his suffering; he is willing to wait till the last great change shall come, but he prays that God will hide him till his displeasure pass away. In some verses of the prayer there is much of faith and hope, in others a feeling of deep despondency. “Job seems to have an affecting view of the miseries of human life, and pleads its brevity as a reason why man should be exempted from constant or extraordinary sufferings. Job believed dimly in a future existence, and in the immortality of the soul, but there is no evidence to show that either he or his friends had any distinct ideas of a place of future retribution. The difficulties with which Job labored, having, as he did, contracted views of the Divine plans, and under which the good labored before our blessed Lord brought in a ‘ better hope ’ —these difficulties should teach us properly to appreciate the better conception of the spiritual world which the gospel has enabled us to realize” (Dr. Kitto).

061. Prayer Of Job That He Might Feel God's Presence.

Prayer Of Job That He Might Feel God's Presence. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 23:3-17. In perusing the history of Job no doubt many have felt that his sorrows were greater than he could possibly have deserved, and with Job himself they have inquired, "How many were his iniquities and sins that it was necessary for him to endure such a 'burden of trial?' We must not lose sight of the fact that Job was a righteous man; he knew and felt that his afflictions were from the hand of God. How differently they were received from their Author by Job, than they are by men who have no love for that great Being in their hearts! All over the world we see the mourning of unbelievers unattended by religious benefit. God oftener tries and purifies the heart of the good man, by affliction, than he does that of the unbeliever. The good and the bad both mourn in tears, yet there is a sorrow that worketh repentance, and leads to prayer; and there is a sorrow of the world that worketh death. Overcome, but not cast down utterly, Job is willing to leave himself in the hands of God. He feels that his faith is being tried, and in his prayer seems to look forward to that glorious time when he shall come forth from all his trials purified and refined.

Those of our friends who have felt what it is to have a conflict between faith and unbelief, hope and despondency, a desire to be submissive, and the self-will opposing, enduring heavy trial and heavier temptations to sin, may easily account for the apparent changes in the character of Job; but his vehement desires and passionate protestations were quieted when he reflected that it was God's will he should be afflicted so bitterly, that it was the way appointed for him; and with these convictions he prays, assured that the judgment of God will be according to truth. It is thought, by the "judge" in this prayer, Eliphaz the Temanite is meant, for he had fearfully misjudged Job and brought in many accusations against him. In an hour of gloom, when he could get no fixed views of God's presence as his deliverer, Job prays.

062. Job's Prayer For An Answer To His Petitions.

Job's Prayer For An Answer To His Petitions. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 30:20-31. The Lord's Answer to Job's Prayers.—Job 38:1-23. The Lord's Answer is continued through this chapter, and the Thirty-Ninth, Fortieth, and Forty-first (Job 39-41). That the prayers of Christians are not immediately answered ought never to discourage or dishearten, we must "pray on, pray ever," remembering the promise, that God will hear and answer in his own good time. The ways of the Almighty are not as our ways, neither are his thoughts like ours; his plans and purposes with regard to us are concealed, and the Christian should find it "sweet to lie passive in his hands, and know no will but God's." However dark the dispensations of Providence, however cold and bleak our path in life may have become, when the loved are buried and the idol taken, we should remember there is a source of comfort; it is earnest, heartfelt prayer; it is this which will lead us under the heaviest trial to say with the poet—

"Nearer, my God, nearer to thee, E'en though it be a cross That bringeth me, Nearer my God, nearer to thee!

Then let my way appear Steps unto heaven, All that thou sendest me, In mercy given.

Nearer, my God, to thee, Nearer to thee!"

Job's distress was great that he could receive no answer to his prayers, and he therefore infers rashly that God is cruelly afflicting him. He forgot in his present terrible condition—for his body is wasted by disease, and sorrow deep and heavy is in his heart—that "God prepares the ear to hear;" he seems impatient for the Lord's answer. This spirit is reproved in that answer.

063. The Prayer Of Job After He Had Received The Answer.

The Prayer Of Job After He Had Received The Answer. The Prayer as recorded.—Job 42:1-17.

Before the Lord vouchsafed an answer to Job, we perceive something of conceit and self-righteousness in his words, but all now is humble acquiescence. “Poor in spirit, meek in heart,” Job acknowledges he has been rash in his language, and passionate and vehement in his desires. However wise in our own conceit, however great the stores of our knowledge attained in the schools of human learning, man is never allowed to call himself truly wise till he is lowly in heart, poor in spirit, and dead to the world;

Simple, teachable, and mild, Changed into a little child:

Pleased with all the Lord provides Weaned from all the world besides;”— till, in the language of Job in the following prayer, we can “abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes;” then afflictions, pains, temptations, waves, and storms may come, yet we will not be discouraged nor cast down, for our deliverance is near. His promises, and oath even, are engaged for our preservation, and “Who shall pretend to teach him skill Or guide the counsels of his will? His wisdom, like a sea divine, Flows deep and high beyond our line.”

064. Psalms

The Prayers Contained In The Psalms. As these prayers have been referred to in a former part of this work, and as it is not within the limit of the present volume, to comment upon or write each one of them out in order, we shall only allude to some of the more important among them, making, as it were, an index for the reader, which we trust will lead to an examination of the prayers as they are recorded in God's word.

We find in the prayers contained in the book of Psalms the language of every heart awakened to a sense of its obligations to God. Here is mourning for sin, thirsting after God and rejoicing in him; here is the language of the soul borne down by sorrow and grief, struggling against the temptation of a wicked world, and the "song of triumph" and hope of deliverance; indeed there is a prayer for every possible frame of feeling which can belong to any penitent under any circumstances. The Psalms have been called an epitome of the Bible adapted to the purposes of devotion. "They present religion to us in its most engaging dress, communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry could never equal, while history is made the vehicle of prophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of redemption" (Bishop Horne). They are called the "Psalms of David," as he was undoubtedly the writer of the greater part of them, and he was warranted in saying of them, "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." In some of the prayers there is apparently a spirit of private resentment, and Scott, in remarking upon this says, these must be considered as direct prophecies or divinely inspired declarations of the certain doom awaiting all opposers of Christ and his cause and people. We mention this here, to disabuse the mind of an objection often offered against some of these petitions, and would recommend a prayerful spirit with their careful perusal. The answers to many of them will be scattered throughout the Old as well as New Testament.

Prayer of David when he fled from Absalom.—Psalms 3:1. The Answer.—Psalms 3:4.

Prayer of David in Sickness.—Psalms 6:1-2. The Answer.—Psalms 29:11. See also Psalms 6:9. A Prayer of David in the midst of the Wicked.—Psalms 10:1. The Answer.—Psalms 10:17.

Prayer of David that God will deliver him from his enemy.—Psalms 13:1. The Answer.—Isaiah 54:7-8.

Prayer of David for the Solvation of Israel.—Psalms 14:7. The Answer.—John 8:36.

Prayer of David for God's Protection.—Psalms 17:8. The Answer.—Psalms 91:4.

Prayer of David that he may be heard always.—Psalms 19:14. The Answer.—Psalms 37:4.

Prayer of David for Protection.—Psalms 25:1-5. The Answer.—Psalms 24:9, 1 John 4:4.

Prayer of David that God will be his Judge.—Psalms 26:1. The Answer.—Psalms 32:8. (Also Romans 14:4.) Prayer of David to be taught of the Lord.—Psalms 27:11. The Answer.—Psalms 25:8; Psalms 25:12.

Prayer of David to be led in the Way of the Lord.—Psalms 31:3. The Answer.—Jeremiah 31:9.

Prayer of David in great Grief—Psalms 31:9-10. The Answer.—Psalms 32:10, Isaiah 40:29.

Prayer of David that God would defend him in his Fight against his Enemies.—Psalms 35:4-6. The Answer.—Psalms 34:21, Psalms 36:12.

Prayer of David for Light and Truth.—Psalms 43:3. The Answer.—Proverbs 4:18.

Prayer in which David confesses original depravity.—Psalms 51:1-10.

(This Prayer is continued through the Psalm.) The Answer.—1 John 1:7, Jeremiah 3:22, Jeremiah 31:3.

Prayer of David in Terror from his Enemies.—Psalms 55:1-5. The Answer.—John 16:33.

Prayer of David that God will not forsake him in Old Age.—Psalms 71:18-19. The Answer.—Isaiah 66:3-4.

Prayer of David that Affliction may be sanctified.—Psalms 90:15. The Answer.—Psalms 94:12-13.

Psalms 109:25-28, Prayer for spiritual Life.—Psalms 119:17-19. The Answer.—John 12:46, John 13:12.

Prayer of David that he may be delivered from the deceitful.—Psalms 120:2-4.

There are two instances in the sacred record of David hiding in a cave, or concealing himself from his enemies; on one he is driven from the court of Achish, on the other from Saul, who was seeking him. It is supposed by commentators that this prayer was made on one of these occasions:

Prayer of David from the Cave of Adullam.—Psalms 142:1-7

066. Prayer Of Agur.

Prayer Of Agur. The Prayer as recorded.—Proverbs 30:1-9.

Among the writings of one who was full of sublime devotion as well as practical piety, the “extemporizer of the loftiest litany in existence,” as he has been called—in the midst of his pungent proverbs, we find this prayer of Agur. It is placed in this brilliant setting, that the most careless may be attracted to it, and that the Bible student may read and examine the prayer of an humble follower of God. Agur was a teacher of Israel, and the names of his two pupils, Ithiel, (God with us,) and Ucal, (a mighty one,) lead us to suppose them both remarkable for learning and piety.

It is not unreasonable to us to infer that he to whom they came for lessons in wisdom, should have excelled them, and was himself a man of eminent learning and piety. His prayer is full of that humility which marks the Christian, and is the offspring of true love to God. Agur seems to have been contemplating the works of the Creator, and we feel satisfied he had looked from Nature up to Nature’s God; he feels his littleness and dependence, and from the depths of his heart pours out his prayers. His reflections have left in his soul two great desires, one regarding his temporal interests the other his spiritual, both involving the earnest wish to become a humble follower of God, by walking in the path the righteous have chosen—one equally removed from the alluring vanities of life, and from the temptations incident to the path of extreme poverty. Agur asks not the “flagon of oil or the widow’s cruse,” neither does he canonize want into a Christian grace, or debase wealth to a bitter evil. We suppose him a man of observation; he had probably seen but few of God’s devoted followers among the very wealthy, and perhaps quite as few among the extremely poor—both situations bringing an attendant train of evils tending to lead the soul away from the path of life. In much wealth there is much, danger, and though it may become a great blessing, it may be “kept by the owner to his hurt,” and become a curse to wither the brain, and turn to ice a heart that once may have been the home of love and charity. Agur had seen a crown, “golden in show, yet but a wreath of thorns, bring trouble, care, and sleepless nights.” The desires in his prayer came from the heart, and were the result of his reflections; with his eye fixed on that safe resting spot midway on the road to fortune, and beyond which one loses the capacity for enjoyment, he asks a moderate amount of temporal good, so that in the gift he may not forget the Giver, and with Pharaoh ask, “Who is the Lord?” So on the other hand, he would be delivered from the anxieties, toils, and temptations incident to a state of extreme poverty, and chooses that middle path from which he may the better lay up his treasures in heaven, and fix his affections there.

“Give me enough, saith Wisdom; For he feareth to ask for more;

Give me enough, and not less, For want is leagued with the tempter.”

We would have the reader ponder over this prayer, for in this gold-seeking, gold-loving age, it is seldom brought to the throne of grace. If God in his providence has given us wealth, may the petition of Agur warn us of danger, and may we become, by the blessing of him who has bestowed

it, the honored instrument of relieving many who are in that state of poverty from which the teacher of Israel prayed to be delivered.

068. An Allegorical Prayer Of The Church.

An Allegorical Prayer Of The Church. The Prayer as recorded.—Solomon's Song of Solomon 1:2-7.

(There is a continuation of the same prayer in the fourth chapter of Solomon's Songs, and the Church still keeps up her imploring song for God's love and favor in Song of Solomon 1:16.)

We would call the attention of the believer to the prayer in the first of Solomon's Songs. We would have him remember it is the Holy Spirit speaking by the "wise man." It is full of that love which brought the Son of God to bleed and die for man, and of that love which he entertains for his chosen people, towards whom he manifests himself as he doth not unto the world. In the prayer the Church is represented as the spouse of Christ, desiring earnestly an evidence of God's love, and close fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. As we advance in the prayer the strain becomes still more ardent, and, as if not satisfied, the Church begs repeated expressions of God's favor; she would be led as a flock, be guarded from those who would lead her astray, and be continued steadfast in that love which was now more precious than wine. The force and beauty of this allegory can only be appreciated by the truly spiritual—those who are the humble children of God, who have struggled and striven with sin, and whose hearts are the abode of the Holy Spirit.

070. Isaiah's Thanksgiving.

Isaiah's Thanksgiving.

Isaiah's Song of Thanksgiving, as recorded.—Isaiah 12:1-6.

We might almost call Isaiah's thanksgiving a song of praise; it is closely connected with the prophecy in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, and predicts that the converted nation of Israel, reflecting on their sufferings, the expression of God's anger for their rejection of the Messiah, will, when this wrath is taken from them, break out in the strains of the prophet. The deliverance of Israel was a shadow of the deliverance of the Church from the galling yoke of Satan. The effects of the Holy Spirit are often beautifully shadowed forth by the emblem of clear and springing water, purifying and fertilizing whatever it flows upon; so the Spirit, when he enters the heart, changes its vile nature, washes away its stains of guilt and sin. This figure alludes to a custom among the Jews. On the last day of their feast of tabernacles, water was brought from the fountain of Siloah, at the side of Mount Zion, and after being mixed with wine, was poured upon the sacrifice as it lay upon the altar. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come draw from the fountain of living water; come with faith and prayer, and our souls will be satisfied, and one and all make this the song of our thanksgiving, till we rest on the bank of that river which flows by the throne of the Eternal.

071. Isaiah's Acknowledgment Of God's Mercy.

Isaiah's Acknowledgment Of God's Mercy.

Isaiah's Acknowledgment, etc., as recorded.—Isaiah 25:1-8. In his most lofty and poetic strains the prophet extols the Divine perfection, and praises God in prospect of the accomplishment of the prophecies he had just delivered. Isaiah had himself witnessed the fulfillment of many prophecies. Egypt in all her strength and beauty had been laid waste that Israel might be delivered; the cities of Canaan had been destroyed that the Israelites might possess their inheritance; Babylon the Great and Tyre, with their splendid palaces and glittering domes, would be desolated, while Jerusalem the "holy city," would become a "palace of strangers." These and all other changes relating to the ruin of all anti-Christian opposers of the gospel, were the burden of the prophet's thought.

God has always protected his Church, and guarded well her bulwarks; though at times her numbers have been small, the prophet has predicted that all nations shall be gathered unto her. By the term "strangers," is meant heathen, and, as St. Paul calls them, "aliens to the commonwealth of Israel." In the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, there is a prophecy of the sufferings of our Savior, and the glory which should follow, from the time of his coming on earth till the heavens shall be rolled away as a scroll and time be no longer. In the last verses there is an allusion to the joy of heaven, the home of the redeemed. How wonderfully in these latter days is God removing "the veil that is spread over all nations," as the prophet so poetically expresses it, and the banner of Jehovah has not only been raised in the islands of the sea, but God is fast fulfilling the predictions of this inspired prophet, and making to himself a "feast of fat things of wine on the lees well refined."

072. Isaiah's Trust In God And Prayer For The Church.

Isaiah's Trust In God And Prayer For The Church.

Prayer of the Church as recorded.—Isaiah 26:1-19.

Many and often were the prophet's prayers offered at the throne of the Eternal, the silent night watches and early morning hour found him engaged in this high communing, and it is no wonder his heart was the abode of that peace the world knows not of, or that the trust and confidence he expresses should in so large a measure be enjoyed by him. The prayer following is full of that victory God gives to his people over their foes. The day spoken of in the first verse refers to that point in the future when the New Testament Babylon shall be destroyed; then shall the Church break forth with this prayer or thanksgiving. The ruin of Rome will prepare the way for the establishment of the church of God. "The foot of the poor and needy" God will make a powerful instrument in carrying out his mighty plans. The "righteous nation," instead of being confined to Judea will be finally extended to all the ends of the earth. In Israel, the very land of righteousness, were many hardened and impenitent; this seems to cause great grief in the prophet's heart, and he bewails bitterly their blindness.

073. Prayer Of The Church For Deliverance From Her Enemies.

Prayer Of The Church For Deliverance From Her Enemies. The Prayer as recorded.—Isaiah 51:9-11. In the first part of the chapter of which this prayer forms a part, are many assurances of help and protection; and the Church, encouraged by these, offers her petition. By the “arm of the Lord,” is meant his power, and by “the ancient days,” the former generations of Israel. As the Jews of old returned from Babylon to Zion with songs of joy, so that nation will be delivered and restored to the promised land. The Church reposes in confidence in God’s promises; from every land the voice of prayer for her prosperity enters the ear of the Almighty. “The Lord’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance; he found him in a desert land, he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.” For the safety of his chosen people, and for their deliverance from oppression, God has overthrown nations and destroyed kings. There is a light in every page of history to the spiritual vision of the child of God; he reads in its records the annals of Infinite Wisdom and Mercy as blended and developed in the great work of human redemption. Let not the children of God faint and grow weary, for “the pillar of cloud and of fire,” guards them as safely as it did of old; “the vine brought out of Egypt” can never be uprooted, for the “Christian Church is the favorite child of an ever-watchful Providence.”

074. Israel's Prayer In Returning To God, And For The Unconverted Remnant Of The People.

Israel's Prayer In Returning To God, And For The Unconverted Remnant Of The People. The Prayer as recorded.—Isaiah 63:15 to Isaiah 64:12 The Lord's Answer.—Isaiah 65:1 to Isaiah 66:24 In the following prayer the prophet has given us the words that penitent Israel shall use in returning to the Lord. The prayer is preceded by a thankful commemoration of God's former mercies, and an earnest inquiring whether they are forgotten by the Most High; though all should disown them, yet they earnestly beseech him to remember them, acknowledging humbly there is help in no other. There is a beautiful allusion to the frailty of human hopes, represented by the figure of the fading leaf, so also an expression of the willingness of God's chosen people to be entirely submissive, even as the clay in the hands of the potter. The "beautiful house alluded to was the temple of Jerusalem, now desolated. But this prayer of Israel will be heard; she hath not been cast off forever, nor is she to be always trodden down by the Gentiles. In the beautiful imagery of this prophet, a voice will say to the oppressed and fallen ones, "Arise shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee." We know not the precise instrumentality God will employ to call these wanderers from every island and shore on which they are scattered, but we believe that the north shall give up and the south keep not back, and the sons and daughters of Israel shall be gathered from far, for the voice of the Almighty has spoken it. God will hear the prayer of penitent Israel, and of his chosen children, for her welfare and restoration. The religion of Jesus, so long despised, will yet become theirs, and every hill-top and valley of Judea shall echo the song, "Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth and good will to men." We are taught by the prophet in this prayer to put no trust whatever in our own merits, that our supplications must be earnest, that God may be approached as a Father, and that all who come in this way will prevail; and though God chooses his own time, and his people are sorely afflicted, yet all who trust in his mercy shall be accepted, and inherit, in the language of this prayer, the joy that no eye but God hath seen.

076. Prayer Of The Prophet Jeremiah.

Prayer Of The Prophet Jeremiah. The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 1:4-6. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 1:7-10.

Jeremiah was one of the chief of the Hebrew prophets, the son of Hilkiah, and of the sacerdotal race. When he was called to prophecy by the Lord, Jerusalem was in a distressed condition, and being very young, he seems afraid to undertake the great work before him—a feeling clearly expressed by his prayer. But he was the “chosen of the Lord,” and through the long period of forty-two years, was a faithful and devoted servant—in the midst of severe persecution faithful in prayer and in denouncing God's judgments upon his guilty nation and the devoted city of Jerusalem. It is the opinion of many Bible students that he finally died a martyr to the cause to which his life had been devoted.

077. A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Israel.

A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Israel. The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 3:21-25. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 4:1-2. The prophet in most touching and tender strains, represents Israel as weeping over their sad condition, confessing that they are suffering the consequences of gross sin and departure from God, acknowledging that from their youth up they have disobeyed the voice of the Almighty. In carefully reflecting on the beautiful language of the prophet, we find it teaching a lesson of deep significance to every heart, We cannot be truly penitent without being conscious of our depravity, and of the iniquity of even our most holy things, and while God invites us to come to his mercy-seat with all this guilt upon us, and thus glorifies the abundance of his own grace, he requires the knowledge and humble confession of our sin. In this frame of mind the greatest transgressor has nothing to fear. God offers everything to the penitent and nothing to the presumptuous. There are tears mingled in this petition; for the prophet tells us it was a "voice of weeping and supplication."

078. Jeremiah Prayeth And Teacheth His People How To View Calamity.

Jeremiah Prayeth And Teacheth His People How To View Calamity. The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 10:23-25.

Rebellious under trial, and disinclined, the people are invited by the prophet to God's throne in prayer, to the only source of strength and power. They had indeed great need of support, for grievous were their present troubles. The haughty Nebuchadnezzar hearing of Zedekiah's rebellion, came with all his power against Jerusalem, and his forces were too strong to be resisted. The Egyptians on whom the Jews had relied for help failed to assist them; the Chaldeans were marching directly to Judea; this explains the phrase, "the noise of the bruit." The prophet prays that God would remember them in love. The phrase "They have eaten up Jacob," refers to the idolatrous nations who had oppressed Jacob his people.

079. Jeremiah, Perplexed On Account Of Conspiracy, Prays.

Jeremiah, Perplexed On Account Of Conspiracy, Prays. The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 12:1-4. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 12:5-6. The prophet's heart is troubled on account of the prosperity of the wicked about him, and the success of their conspiracies. Anathoth was a city of the tribe of Benjamin, near Jerusalem, and it was from the men of this place the prophet feared much, and in his own judgment supposed if the Lord would but pour out his fury on them, the ruin of his nation might be prevented. This is the theme of the prophet's prayer. He knows the Lord is righteous in all his dealings, but he would "talk with the Lord," to use his own language, "of his judgments." He exercises a degree of impatience which in the Lord's answer is gently reproofed. We are taught by this prayer that God's ways are not our ways, and that although his dealings with us are often mysterious, He, the All-wise, is making our path for us; guiding every event for our good, and will eventually deliver us from all trials.

080. Jeremiah Intercedes For His People In Time Of Famine.

Jeremiah Intercedes For His People In Time Of Famine. The land of Judah, was mourning, her hills and valleys were parched, and her people suffering from the effects of famine. The highest in the land as well as the poorest were alike panting for water, and the children of the nobles returned from the dry fountains with their pitchers empty. The animal creation too joined in the universal cry of distress and sorrow, and a wail was heard through all the land; the prophet pleads with God with more zeal than knowledge, as the Lord's answer leads us to infer; he would have him show to the Gentiles he was ready to save, that the honor of his name—his goodness—laid him, as it were, under obligations to succor his people. But the Lord says, in reply to the prophet, he will punish them for their sins, as they do not forsake them through love or fear to him; the prayer is not accepted. Here again is the Christian reader taught a useful lesson, that he must forsake his sins and love God, would he have his prayers answered; if there is secret sin cherished, in vain will he call upon Him. Such petitions are an "abomination." The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 14:7-9. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 14:10-13. As if convinced the Lord was right and just in thus dealing with them, the prophet seems at a loss to know what to plead further for his people; he remembers that false prophets have given them repeated assurances of the favor of God; but the prophet is met here by the answer of the Lord, in denouncing these prophets as false. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 14:14-17. The Prophet still pleads earnestly for his people.—Jeremiah 14:19-22.

Hath the Lord cast off Judah? By this he means the visible church in which the promised Messiah should be raised up. The temple in which he manifested his especial presence above the mercy-seat, was the "throne of his glory," would it not be disgraced if heathen were allowed to enter and profane it? The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 15:1-6.

Jeremiah, not yet satisfied with the Lord's Answer, still pleads.

Jeremiah felt as many a child of God has felt, and there are but few who cannot sympathize with the prophet as he continues to plead. We think, with the aid about us, we may look into his mind for a moment as he pours out his prayer, and see him reasoning with himself, and wondering, no doubt, at the Lord's answers to him. He feels himself hated, despised, and rejected by the world—the fearful lot of many of God's chosen, and he cannot yet understand why all these afflictions may not be removed; he seems to review his own life, to examine his own heart as he prays to the Almighty; he is not conscious of holding back the truth, but he knows he has proclaimed the whole counsel of God. Is it for any sin he has committed? In deep grief the prophet pours out his petition and reminds God of his promises. The Prayer continued, as recorded.—Jeremiah 15:15-21.

Jeremiah still prays.—Jeremiah 17:13-18.

He pleads for calmness of mind, for peace and composure, and to be saved from the power of his enemies, who continued to treat his predictions with contempt. The prophet spake as moved by

God, or rather God spake by the prophet, and those who forsook him forsook the Lord. Would not the memory of such be soon blotted out or become infamous—their names be “written in the earth,” as the prophet expresses it in this prayer? He reminds the Lord he would not have chosen the path that he had appointed him to walk in, neither had he desired this “woeful day.” There is much confusion in his mind on account of his great troubles, and some apprehension of God’s displeasure towards him. The Lord’s Answer.—Jeremiah 17:19-27.

081. A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Rachel.

A Voice Of Weeping And Supplication From Rachel.

Rachel's Supplication, as recorded.—Jeremiah 31:15. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 31:16-17.

Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, and a large proportion of her descendants now inhabited Israel; the prophet in a figure represents her as rising from her grave, which was in Ramah, or between it and Bethlehem, and weeping over the desolation made among her descendants. The Lord in his answer promises that those who are scattered shall finally return, and that her labor in rearing them shall eventually be rewarded.

082. The Bemoanings Of Ephraim.

The Bemoanings Of Ephraim. The Bemoanings of Ephraim as recorded.—Jeremiah 31:18-19. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 31:20.

Ephraim represents here the ten tribes of Israel. Rebellious under God's chastisements they had been impatient and unsubmitive, but convinced of the depth of their guilt, astonished at their great ingratitude, and deeply penitent like the prodigal son, they are represented as coming to themselves, or to a knowledge of their position, as one of danger, and seeking God as their portion. In his answer the Lord assures them he has followed them in all their wanderings, waiting to be gracious, and now that they are sensible of their sin and God's justice, they shall surely find mercy. Let the unconverted man, as he reads the bemoanings of Ephraim, draw from them the great lesson God has written here for the salvation of his soul.

083. The Prayer Of Jeremiah In Prison.

The Prayer Of Jeremiah In Prison. The Prayer as recorded.—Jeremiah 32:16-25. The Lord's Answer.—Jeremiah 32:26-44.

The Lord's Second Answer to Jeremiah, in Prison.—Jeremiah 33:1-26. The prophet had been confined in the court of the prison, that he might not deliver his predictions. Zedekiah and his princes were determined to silence this man of God, and to hold out to the very last extremity against the superior power of the Chaldeans. In prison the prophet could still pray; no circumstance could shut him away from this privilege; thus far had he been faithful to his high commission.

“Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought The better fight, who singly hast maintained Against revolted multitudes the cause Of truth, in word mightier than they in arms; And for the testimony of truth hast borne Universal reproach, far worse to bear Than violence; for this was all thy care, To stand approved in sight of God, though worlds Judged thee perverse.” The Lord made known to the prophet that Hanameel would come to sell him a field which he must buy. All the land was now already in the hands of the Chaldeans, and during the famine the field was offered for the small price of about forty shillings; the prophet found it inconvenient to part even with so small a sum, and could not possibly in his own judgment, at present, reap much advantage from the purchase. The Lord was explicit in directions with regard to the deeds, and ordered them preserved in such a manner that they would not be liable to decay or loss. The prophet in his prayer seems perplexed; he cannot understand why the command should clash with the predictions he had been sent to deliver, and he seems to inquire of the Lord respecting the matter in this prayer. “The mounts” signifies anything that is cast up—a rampart—and is also used for engines of war laid on a high place to be ready for an attack on a city. The prophet seems to mourn deeply, for he had, no doubt, a secret hope that the “city” would be spared. Why had the Lord been so particular about the purchase of this field, so exact about the witnesses and deeds, if the land was to be inhabited by his enemies.

085. Lament Of Jeremiah.

Lament Of Jeremiah.

Lament of Jeremiah as recorded.—Lamentations 1:18-22.

After Israel was carried captive and Jerusalem desolated, the prophet mourned, or as has been said, “bewailed this wailing.” The whole of this book of Lamentations might be called a poem, for it is not only highly poetical in its language, but there is much order as well as rhythm in it. There are twenty-two stanzas in each chapter; each verse in the first two begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in regular order. The affliction, the desolation and distress, surrounding the prophet, are represented by such images and language as convey to us the magnitude and religious importance of the great calamities he weeps over. The Jews have called this book of the prophet, “Kinnoth,” or tears. In the annexed prayer Jerusalem, or Zion, is represented as a sorrowful female bereft of her children, deserted, “sitting solitary,”—adversaries surrounding her—but in the midst of trouble acknowledging God is just; her sense of guilt is intolerable to her; from friends she finds no relief, her appeal is then made to God, who alone can help, and who will deal with his enemies and friends according to his eternal justice. This prayer is peculiarly applicable to the case of every convinced sinner. In this cold world there is little of comfort. Sin, the “fruit of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste brought death into our world and all our woe,” has taken deep root in the human heart, has marred the glory and beauty of our moral nature.

Tears, floods of tears, should be shed by us, as with the “sorrowing female” of the prophet we weep over the desolation that vice has spread around us. But there is a mercy-seat, an ear open to hear our “complaint,” and to it we may have access, if we but acknowledge with the prophet we have grievously rebelled; if we find the earth “a vale of tears,” we may call upon a God of love. To the mourner be is pointing
To a borne of light above,
Where sorrow is forgotten
And all is joy and love.
His ready hand will wipe away
Your penitential tears,
Will heal your wounded broken heart,
And banish all your fears.

086. Jeremiah Acknowledges The Lord As His Portion.

Jeremiah Acknowledges The Lord As His Portion.

Jeremiah's Acknowledgment, etc., as recorded.—Lamentations 3:24-66. The prophet in this prayer shows us the benefit of affliction, and in the chapter in which it is contained seems to consider his own personal sorrow, and sympathizes deeply with others under similar circumstances with himself. We are expressly told by the prophet not only to lift our hands but our hearts to God; not to come in formality, but after searching our ways, to acknowledge our sin, and that God, who doeth right in afflicting the children of men, will hear such prayer. In the words of the hymn suggested by the prayer of the prophet, we shall find it "Sweet to look inward and attend The whispers of his love;

Sweet to look upward to the place Where Jesus pleads above.

"Sweet in the confidence of faith To trust his firm decrees, Sweet to lie passive in his hand, And know no will but his."

088. The Intercession Of Ezekiel.

The Intercession Of Ezekiel. This prophet seems to have been raised up by God especially, by his predictions and prayers to animate and encourage the pious remnant of his people. There is something in his vehement energetic style, which strikes us with awe and astonishment; we feel it is no common man who prays, but a servant chosen of God, and bearing a high and sacred commission. The language of many parts of the book of Ezekiel is very figurative. The scope of his predictions was very similar to Jeremiah's. His writings contain several visions representing the calamities of the Jews, reproofs of their wickedness, God's anger as well his mercy. In the verses in immediate connection with the prophet's address to God the Lord is represented as leaving his "mercy-seat" to denounce judgment on the people, to withdraw from his temple at Jerusalem, and give them to the power of their enemies. He then gives an order to "the man clothed with linen"—the second person of the trinity, to set a mark on the forehead of all, that sighed continually, or that protested against sin. This alludes to a custom among eastern nations, whose servants were marked in their foreheads. These the Lord tells the executioners of his vengeance not to spare, but slay without mercy all others. The prophet seeing the great destruction about him intercedes for his people. Left alone as it were in the court of the temple; the ten tribes had been entirely destroyed or dispersed, a very small remnant of Judah remained, and the prophet's heart seems full of fear lest not one should be left. The Intercession of Ezekiel as recorded.—Ezekiel 9:8. The Lord's Answer.—Ezekiel 9:9-10. The further Intercession of Ezekiel.—Ezekiel 11:13-20.

While the prophet was delivering the message of the Lord to the princes, one of them was cut off at Jerusalem very suddenly by death. The prophet seems to be alarmed.

089. Ezekiel Complains That The People Do Not Understand.

Ezekiel Complains That The People Do Not Understand.

Ezekiel's Complaint, etc., as recorded.—Ezekiel 20:49. The Lord's Answer.—Ezekiel 21:1-7. As God had chosen this prophet to become the vehicle of the most extraordinary series of prophecies concerning his people, he also teaches him to employ figures to illustrate his meaning. Some of which are very peculiar, and to the careless reader no doubt as incomprehensible as they were to some of those to whom the prophet spoke. It will be well here to enumerate some of the most striking figures used by the prophet; although not immediately connected with this prayer, they may serve to give us a just appreciation of the prophet's meaning.

He speaks of a "wheel," or a sphere made of a wheel in the middle of a wheel; this vision was emblematic of Providence. Of a "cloud" out of which are the likenesses of four living creatures, with attributes denoting wisdom, strength, swiftness, and obedience, they move "straight forward;" these are the ministers of Providence, turning not to the right or left, directed by one mind, for whither "the spirit went they went;" the "wheel" had four faces looking every way, moving every way, and connected with the living creatures—"full of eyes," representing the omniscient and omnipresent God. The "height of the wheels was dreadful." "Such is God's providence—a scheme for carrying out purposes high as heaven, and lasting as eternity. God is the soul of providence." (Read.) In the Lord's answer to this prayer the prophet is told to make his language plainer, and drop these figures, which word we shall see the prophet obeys.

091. The Prayer Of Daniel And His Companions That The Lord Would Interpret Nebuchadnezzar...

The Prayer Of Daniel And His Companions That The Lord Would Interpret Nebuchadnezzar's Dream. The Prayer as recorded.—Daniel 2:16-18. The Lord's Answer.—Daniel 2:19.

Daniel returns Thanks.—Daniel 2:20-23.

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken away Daniel and his friends, and in the second year of his reign had the remarkable dream, the subject of Daniel's prayer. The king's heart was troubled, for "a vision of the night had left a weight upon his waking thoughts;" it was from the Lord, and so ordered as to bring Daniel into notice—to make known his glory as Israel's God, and the God of the whole earth. This vision consisted of a description of four monarchies which would continue to the end of the world, and one of them till the kingdoms of the world should become the kingdoms of "his son," whose right it is to reign in the armies of heaven and among the children of men. Man's feeble knowledge could not satisfy the king, the magician's art had failed, and the monarch's heart was restless— his harsh decree is issued. There is a never failing source of knowledge, Daniel has often been at the mercy-seat; and though, O man! in thy own strength frail and erring, in prayer—

"Thy momentary breath can still the raging waters, Thy hand can touch a lever that may move the world;

O Merciful, we strike eternal covenant with thee." For man may take for his ally the "King who ruleth kings." Daniel seeks his companions to call with them upon the Almighty. Can we not imagine this prayer-meeting? Are not two or three met here for the purpose of communing with their Maker? Here we have high authority for persevering in the practice of meeting for social prayer. God has promised to be in the midst of the little company, to reveal to his children knowledge the world knows not of. Daniel, high in power in Nebuchadnezzar's court, surrounded by all the temptations that wealth and royalty could give, was humble-minded and spiritual, prayerful and devoted to the end of life.

092. Nebuchadnezzar Convicted Blesses God.

Nebuchadnezzar Convicted Blesses God.

Nebuchadnezzar's Prayer.—Daniel 3:28-29.

In, the prayers of this monarch we have a striking instance of the difference of conviction and conversion. In this petition we see the king's heart touched with the power of truth. He had beheld the firm faith, "that vital principle," making his servants, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, calm under the most trying circumstances, serving a God of power and might, who had delivered them unharmed from the devouring flame. Captives, and far from the land of God and his ordinances, in the hands of a proud monarch, these three children of God had dared to be "singular;" they obeyed the Lord of heaven and earth rather than man, they felt not their bonds, their spirits knew no yoke, and fearless they stood before the king.

"He is a freeman whom the truth makes free, And all are slaves beside."

They felt this, and "strong in trust, endured the fire." Terrified as well as astonished at the miracle he witnessed, the king is convinced there is a power stronger than his own, a will mightier than man's, and for a time retains these impressions. His prayer is impulsive; there is no humbling of that proud heart, no change in it; there is an acknowledgment of God's power, but there is yet no passing from death unto life—no confession of sin. God has trials sore and deep before that proud will becomes subdued.

093. The Thanksgiving Of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Thanksgiving Of Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel's Thanksgiving.—Daniel 4:29-37.

One short year has rolled away, and with its hurried flight had borne the convictions of the monarch's heart. We behold him as he paces his lofty terrace overlooking the splendid city, and we hear from Holy Writ his musings as he contemplates the splendor and magnificence around him: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?"—these palaces with all their beauty, are they not mine? How great is my power! and am I not a king? In the few fleeting months that have passed he has forgotten the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, "the Lord of lords and King of kings." Self is exalted, self is the object of his homage.

Daniel has been to him a faithful friend, but the wise counsels of "the prophet of God" have been disregarded by the king. God had listened to Daniel's prayers, had met him at the mercy-seat, and in his own way would yet humble the proud heart of Nebuchadnezzar. Deep and bitter were his trials, but they brought him to his God. They gave him a knowledge that opened his eyes to see his own strength weakness; his pride was humbled, and a spirit of deep humility pervades his thanksgiving.

094. The Prayer Of Daniel For The Restoration Of Jerusalem.

The Prayer Of Daniel For The Restoration Of Jerusalem. The Prayer as recorded.—Daniel 9:3-19. The Answer.—Daniel 9:20-27.

It is said of Daniel that three times a day he entered his closet to commune with God; though surrounded with cares and anxieties, as chief president of the kingdom, he sought relief from them all where only relief could come, he sought that wisdom which stamped his career as a man of God and a ruler. In the chapter preceding this particular prayer, we are told of these stated devotions, and also that upon his knees, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he sought God's favor. With every token of sorrow, humiliation, and love, Daniel has come to pray at this time for God's promised mercy to his afflicted people.

There is deep confession of his own sin and the sin of his people, that the punishment is justly deserved, but that even the most guilty might hope in God; he alludes to the fact, that many, very many of the Jews had failed to call upon the Most High, or sought to be turned from their iniquities, but his desire that God would restore his temple, and cause his face to shine upon his sanctuary, was earnest and heartfelt. While he pleads with God his prayer is answered, for we are told that a "holy visitant," one sent from God, but in the form of a man, comes to instruct Daniel concerning the Lord's designs, with regard to the subject of his prayer. He has repeated assurances of the Lord's favor and is called by the angel the "beloved." In the angel's answer to Daniel we have one of the most striking and undeniable prophecies of the coming and salvation of Christ which is contained in the Old Testament; this is one of the reasons why the Jews refused to recognize Daniel as a true prophet—the "seventy weeks" are four hundred and ninety years; and to this day the rabbinical teachers withhold it from their people.

096. The Prophet Joel's Prayer In Time Of Famine.

The Prophet Joel's Prayer In Time Of Famine. The Prayer as recorded.—Joel 1:19. The Lord's Answer.—Joel 2:12-13 In most beautiful and pathetic strains this prophet represents all nature joining in a universal lament, even the beast of the field, the “lowing herd,” and grazing sheep in the valleys, are dying and falling thickly around for want of sustenance. Verily it is a time to call upon him who bringeth summer and winter, seed time and harvest, in his own good time, and the prophet calls upon high and low, the rich and poor, to unite with him in prayer to the Almighty, for in his own poetic language, “The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree, also are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men.”

He also calls upon the ministers who kept the watches at the temple, to gather their people together on this distressing occasion, to unite in his cry to God, to let it be loud and universal from saint and sinner, to lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth, a striking figure of the deepest sorrow of earth.

098. Prayers Of Amos That God Would Avert The Judgments Of The Fire And Grasshoppers.

Prayers Of Amos That God Would Avert The Judgments Of The Fire And Grasshoppers. The Prayers of Amos as recorded.—Amos 7:2. The Lord's Answer.—Amos 7:3.

Second Prayer of Amos.—Amos 7:4-6. The Answer.—Amos 7:6.

Amos was a simple herdsman; his words "I am no prophet or son of a prophet," seem to distinguish him from those who were educated in the schools of Samuel. The Lord had shown him in a vision the judgments he would bring upon Israel. His first prayer relates to the grasshoppers which should consume the beauty and verdure of the land, and the next to a desolating fire.

Both of these petitions are heard and answered. They encourage us to regard and mention in our own prayers the evils about us. God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and though our own petitions may seem but a feeble instrument in removing great calamity, yet we know that "prayer is the slender nerve that moveth the muscles of Omnipotence," and it is grounded on the promise of the Eternal Jehovah."

100. Prayer Of The Mariners In The Storm.

Prayer Of The Mariners In The Storm. The Mariners' Prayer as recorded.—Jonah 1:14. The Answer.—Jonah 1:15-17. The whole of the narrative of the ancient prophet Jonah is full of interest, and suggestive of salutary reflection; the prayers are peculiarly so. In his character of a prophet he had received directions from God to go to Nineveh, a city full of idolatry and wickedness, to announce its ruin. Jonah, fearful of rebuke and insult, and, perhaps, of death, resolved to disobey the command of God, and embarked in a ship bound for Tarshish. But there was an eye that “never slumbers or sleeps,” and that eye saw his transgression.

He “that bringeth the wind out of his treasures,” that holdeth the waters in the hollow of his hand, is Lord of the elements, and caused them to do his pleasure. The sky, so serene when the prophet embarked, is suddenly overcast, and the storm rages about the frail vessel “like a giant in his fury.” The crew of this bark were idolaters, each man apparently having a different deity, for it is said in a former verse, “The mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god. They had probably been idolaters from childhood, and in this moment of peril, each called upon the being he had been taught to worship. Their case is desperate, and they seek Jonah, who, like too many inactive Christians, lay quietly sleeping. From the shipmaster he receives a rebuke for his apathy in this time of danger, and it must have been most cutting and severe to a servant of Jehovah, that an idolater should rouse and urge him to duty. Jonah, conscious of his guilt, and aware that the storm is the wrath of an angry God, confesses his nation, his profession, and his sin. In vain do the hardy crew, overcome no doubt by Jonah's words, use every exertion to reach the shore. It is at this moment that the mariners' prayer ascends to the God of Jonah. While the waves are beating and dashing angrily around them, they cast the prophet, according to his own request, into the sea, and the waves are calm, the waters cease their raging. The mariners perceiving the power of the Almighty, cast aside their gods, and worship the God of heaven and earth.

101. The Prayer Of Jonah From The Midst Of The Sea.

The Prayer Of Jonah From The Midst Of The Sea. The Prayer as recorded.—Jonah 2:1-9. The Lord's Answer.—Jonah 2:10.

We must not regard, as some have done, the present position of Jonah in a figurative sense, for we have full proof of its reality in the words of our blessed Lord himself, who repeatedly speaks of it in terms too plain to be mistaken by us. God, in judgment for disobedience, had mercy upon him, and even from the belly of the fish heard and answered his prayer. The prophet was placed in a position where he felt his sin, and this led him to prayer; but where is the solitude that God cannot fill? And where is the spot on earth or in the seas where his eye does not rest, and from which the voice of prayer may not ascend? In this remarkable event in the life of the prophet Jonah, we may see a type of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. His prayer is earnest, and the state of his mind rendered his position, as he says, like the "belly of hell," or like the state of the wicked in death, from whose torment there is no escape. So it seemed, no doubt, to the prophet, there was no ray of light, except as the love of God in his heart lit up his prison-house, and from that dark abode of the praying prophet, "Pure thoughts were borne, Like fumes of sacred incense o'er the clouds, And wafted thence on angels' wings through ways Of light to the bright Source of all."

102. Jonah Prays That God Will Take His Life.

Jonah Prays That God Will Take His Life. The Prayer as recorded.—Jonah 4:1-3. The Lord's Answer.—Jonah 4:4.

We should expect to find the prophet after such a merciful preservation humble and submissive, but such was not the case. In obedience to the will of God, after his deliverance from the deep, Jonah went to the city of Nineveh; the burden of his prophecy to them was their utter destruction, unless they repented and turned to the Lord. But the ears of the Ninevites were opened, and they listened eagerly to the prophet's words. The fame of the works God had wrought amongst the Jews had reached them, and they heard Jonah with eagerness, for we are told that from the king to his lowest subject there was fasting and prayer to God, and "turning from every evil way."

Ought not the success of his mission to inspire Jonah with joy and gratitude? Instead of this his heart is ruffled, and he is angry at his success. It will be remembered that the Israelites held an unfounded prejudice toward the Gentiles, and the prophet no doubt, in his own mind, encouraged this feeling; he might also, in the language of another, "have had a mistaken zeal for the honor of God, and feared that as he was sent to predict destruction, it might cast an imputation on the cause in which he was engaged." We find him angry and rebellious, and calling upon

God in this frame of mind. He seems to hasten away from the city lest he should witness the turning of the people, and retiring to a booth or tent he had raised, waited there till he should see what became eventually of the city. The winds in those hot countries are often very suffocating, as they sweep over the deserts, and come laden with its sand and heat, and this, with the fretted, impatient spirit, the prophet had nourished in his heart, made him angry and despairing.

104. Prayer Of The Church Complaining Of Small Numbers, And Of The General Corruption.

Prayer Of The Church Complaining Of Small Numbers, And Of The General Corruption. The Prayer as recorded.—Micah 7:1-10. The Lord's Answer.—Micah 7:15-20. The prophet Micah was of the kingdom of Judah, and cotemporary with Isaiah and Hosea.

“Micah, admired through every age, The babe of Bethlehem crowns thy page! With what precision dost thou trace The then obscure, now honored place.” His authority as a prophet is twice alluded to in the New Testament, (Matthew 2:5-6, and John 7:42.) It was given to this prophet to predict a glorious High Priest. “The clouded ark of God,” for whose peace and prosperity this prayer is made, this servant of God knew was yet to be enshrined in a glorious living temple; it had the promise of Heaven that—

“He to his own a Comforter will send The promise of the Father, who shall dwell His spirit within them, and the law of faith, Working through love, upon their hearts shall write, To guide them in all truth, and also arm With spiritual armor.”

After lamenting over the general corruption of the Church, the prophet alludes to his firm confidence and trust in God, to the poor broken friendships of earth, and the friend who knows no changing, and in forcible language speaks of the punishment of the wicked and their sudden fear.

106. The Prayer Of Habakkuk.

The Prayer Of Habakkuk. The Prayer as recorded.—Habakkuk 1:1-4. The Lord's Answer.—Habakkuk 1:5-11. The prayer with which the writings of this Hebrew poet and prophet open is full of lamentation and mourning for Zion; that few come to her solemn feasts grieves the heart of this chosen and devoted one. This prophet predicts the Chaldean invasion, and its terrible effects, bewails in this prayer the wickedness of the invaders, mourns deeply the decay of religion; his heart is full of grief, and he has come to the mercy-seat, weary of the wickedness, to ask of God how long sin must abound and the love of many was cold. He sorrows for the poor who are abused and oppressed. He has brought his troubles and sorrows to God; his heart heavy with its weight of woe, is poured into an ear ever ready to answer the complaints of his loved ones. As He was to the prophets, a "Guardian," a "Mystery" and a "Guide," such he is to this chosen people now, as he heard and answered their petitions because "Zion mourned," as he was ever with his people even when with weeping and lamentation the prophets plead for her, so he is with her still to listen to the lament of his poorest and most humble follower. The "Shepherd of Israel" is watching his flock with his all-seeing eye; and who are his flock? All, whoever and wherever, on mountain, hill-side, or valley, in whatever or whenever they worship the "Shepherd Jehovah," trust in him, and are saved by his grace. He encourages his children to pray for his little flock, if she is scattered and clouds hang heavy about her, for he has promised to gather his lambs in his bosom, and gently lead his erring ones. He has through his prophets predicted days of gloom, but through them he has shown us the Sun of Righteousness.

107. Habakkuk Prays In Prospect Of Approaching Trials.

Habakkuk Prays In Prospect Of Approaching Trials. The Prayer as recorded.—Habakkuk 1:12-17. As an Israelite and representing the nation, the prophet addresses God as the everlasting Jehovah, and his Portion forever. He had been full of the hope that God would deal lightly with the people, and his corrections would not be so heavy as God caused him to predict they would be; he is assured by the word of Him who is Truth, that heavy and dire calamities were to be poured out, and in prospect of these he prays. His language is figurative in some degree, and weak and powerless become the people in the hands of the wicked; like the “creeping thing of the earth,” or like the “fish of the sea,” easily taken in the net.

He alludes to the helpless Jews in the hands of the victorious Chaldeans. He shows how the successful in victory would become foolish in prosperity, and make sacrifices to vain, empty, and unsatisfying gods. He asks of God if he will permit all this. This is the theme of the prophet’s prayer; he wonders the Almighty will keep silence in the midst of what seems to him unjust oppression. God worketh by means, and doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the children of men. “As thy day so shall thy strength be,” he has whispered to his children’s hearts. God will prepare his “own” for every trial however bitter, even heavy as those in prospect of which Habakkuk prayed.

108. Habakkuk's Expectation Of Answers To His Prayers.

Habakkuk's Expectation Of Answers To His Prayers.

Habakkuk stands watch.—Habakkuk 2:1. The Lord's Answer.—Habakkuk 2:2-4.

Like a faithful watchman at his post the prophet waits further instructions from the Lord, that he might know what answer to make to those who had rebelled and contended against his former predictions.

“Let Zion's watchmen all awake, And take th' alarm they give;

Now let them from the mouth of God, Their awful charge receive.”

109. Prayer Of Habakkuk Upon Shigionoth, (Or Musical Instrument.)

Prayer Of Habakkuk Upon Shigionoth,(Or Musical Instrument.) The Prayer as recorded.—Habakkuk 3:2-19. This prayerful hymn of the prophet is full of fervor and deep piety, and is of peculiar interest to all, especially to those who have been tried in the furnace of affliction, and over whose path many clouds have rested. “Remember thou art a heritor of evil, with a right to nothing good.” Wait, child of hope, and yours may be the faith of Habakkuk, and with him, in the midst of trial, you “may joy in the God of salvation.” Thy sorrows may humble thee, and the furnace of affliction refine thy soul, and with the prophet you too may know “’Tis sweet to feel that he who tries The silver, takes his seat Beside the fire that purifies, Lest too intense a heat, Raised to consume the base alloy, The precious metal too destroy. But ah! how much of earthly mould Dark relics of the mine, Lost from the ore must he behold, Ere in the silver he can trace The first faint semblance to his face.” In this prayer the prophet speaks of God as coming from Teman—Mount Seir—and Paran, to meet them on Mount Sinai, that- hallowed place. The “brightness” alluded to was an emblem of God’s glory, the “coals” of the Shekinah; the “tents of Cushan” were the dwelling-places of several tribes —the Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, and Arabians; the “curtains” were the hangings of these tents; the “bow” often represented all the weapons of war, and its being made naked signified it was ever ready. The Red Sea and the smitten rock are alluded to, and God is represented as marching through the land of Canaan in great wrath, “wounding the neck,” or cutting off the chief person in the families of the enemies of Israel. This prayer will not only attract the Christian, but him who is only a lover of poetry, and while we know God looks at the heart, and men are not heard for their much speaking, we must admire the chosen language, and the words of the inspired man as he addresses the Most High God.

111. Prayer Of The Jews Concerning Their Fasts.

Prayer Of The Jews Concerning Their Fasts. The Prayer as recorded.—Zechariah 7:2-3. The Lord's Answer.—Zechariah 7:4-14. The Lord's further Answer.—Zechariah 8:18-22.

Sherezer and Regem-melech were probably men of distinction among the remnant of Jews at Babylon, and were sent to the temple to inquire of the prophets and priests concerning their fasts. They kept an annual fast in the fourth month in remembrance of the breaking down of the wall of Jerusalem, one for the burning of the temple in the fifth month, another in the seventh month on the day Gedeliah was slain, and one at the time of the siege of the city commenced in the tenth month.

They had wept and mourned over their sins and had fasted often, separating themselves from the world, and denying themselves ordinary food; weary of these fasts they make it a subject of special prayer. It is evident from the answer to it they had not fasted with the right spirit; although not of divine appointment, it would have been of spiritual benefit to them had they uprightly observed it; they exhibited no humility and no deep sorrow for sin, and these "appointed times" were kept as a mere matter of form; there was no heart work in it, and such a service was not acceptable although appointed by high authority. Is there not much fasting which is not "unto the Lord," even in these latter days? Where is the hunger and thirst of the spirit for heavenly food that should accompany an acceptable fast? We fear it is sometimes forgotten in the formality of the service, or in the "customary prayer," or lip devotion, that so often attracts the heart where grace has never entered, and where the love of God is not the living, moving, acting, principle. Let no deluded worshiper come with such a "vain oblation," for by the Lord's answer to this prayer of the Jews, we know it will not be acceptable. Cease, too, thy weeping, for thy tears are not those God measures in his sacred bottle. There is a fasting of the spirit which he alone can satisfy, and there are prayerful tears, like those of Moses; silent and unexpressed as was the desire of his heart, when the Lord said I have heard thy crying."

112. Prayers of the New Testament

Prayers of the New Testament

Introduction. But a part of our pleasant task is accomplished; but we trust we have gathered that “hidden fire” from the hearts of the patriarchs and prophets which sheds a halo of glory over the Old Testament, and we trust will kindle to a brighter glow the flame of devotion in the Christian heart, while it lightens the path of the wanderer to the mercy-seat and cross of Calvary. We will go softly for the ground is holy; we have come to glean in a field which the men who spake as moved by God saw only through the veil of prophecy. We have come to gather into the Christian granary a rich harvest—the Prayers of the New Testament. The wall of partition between Gentile and Jew is now broken away, and the veil that covered the most holy place is severed.

He whom Israel waited for—the theme of the loftiest, holiest strains of patriarchs and prophets—has come, treading the same earth, breathing the same air with ourselves, a perfect God and perfect man, and as we tremble at the mystery, and read of the incarnation, atonement, and sanctification by the Spirit, our hearts are melted in love, for we know we have an Intercessor pleading for us at the right hand of God.

It is our precious privilege to review the wanderings of the meek and lowly Jesus with a few of earth’s humble children as his followers; we watch him as he listens to the inward struggle with sin, the groan for mercy, the first whispered desire of the penitent, the wail of the lonely and brokenhearted, the sob of the afflicted, and the call of the terror-stricken, we hear his gentle encouragement to the weak, his mild rebuke to the proud, his caution to the self-righteous, his admonition to the worldly and covetous, his soothing words to the sad and sorrowing.

We follow him from the low manger where slept in infancy the “God omnipotent,” while on his vesture and thigh his name is written, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” We see his humble parents bearing not the crown or scepter of Judah— no, the Savior came to pour contempt on the pride of man, to bring him a beggar to the mercy-seat, that every knee might bow before him, and every tongue confess him “Lord of all.” We may go with him “When slipping from his mother’s eye, He went alone into the temple, Among the gravest rabbis disputant.”

We see him in the wilderness, and on the wave, homeless and houseless, at the mountain side, always ready, and never weary of listening to and answering the prayers of his loving children. Our Savior has ascended to heaven, but he has not left us comfortless, for from his holy home above he is calling each one of us to follow him. He knows that in our infirmity we cannot struggle alone; his almighty arm is therefore stretched out to help, and he would have us daily ask for strength to battle with our inborn sin and corruption. He struggled with the waves of life that we too might breast the current; as he found the world a vale of tears so every Christian will find it; he tells us to “Lean not on earth, ’twill pierce thee to the heart, A broken reed at best, but oft a spear, On its sharp point peace bleeds and hope expires.” Our blessed Lord has established a throne of grace, at which we may hold as immediate communion with him as did his followers when he was made

flesh and dwelt among them; the star in the East is ever guiding to the new and living way, and with the same unerring light as when it first brightened the plains of Judea, and will lead each one as truly as it did the eastern magi to where the Savior lies.

While we take Christ as our great exemplar in our journey homeward and heavenward, it becomes us Christians to search the Scriptures to examine well and closely the lives and characters, and more particularly the prayers of those who were associated with our Savior on his earthly career, that we may, from their petitions and his approving answer or gentle rebuke, be guided in our own prayers at the mercy-seat. We see a company of men, mortal as we are, subject to like passions, some leading lives of faith and holiness, some proud and covetous, some following closely in the footsteps of the Savior, and others following afar off; each one of us may here find a daguerreotype of his own heart, in some one of the many who came to Jesus in prayer. In the eye of the world we may not all be self-denying and devoted as Paul, or faithful and loving as John, yet we may follow the injunction of the one to pray without ceasing, and strive for the name of the other, the "loved disciple of the Lord." At the throne of grace the rich and the poor man may meet together; the Lord is the Maker of us all, no matter what our name or profession among men. We are called to the mercy-seat, and, through this waste howling wilderness, we need aid from above to guide us. If to any God has given earthly power, and yours is an exalted station among your fellow men, trust not in your own strength, go to your Creator for wisdom, encourage in your heart no longer the ambition that makes you forget to pray, or leads you to be satisfied with the poor crumbling crown earth can bestow. Seek at the mercy-seat that which can be found only there, a crown of immortality, which you may wear forever in heaven.

God rules among the armies of heaven; and to the soldier he is calling from the tented field and amid the din of battle, to lift up his spirit in prayer, strengthened by it he will be nerved for every conflict, for there is for him a shield of faith, a sword of the Spirit. Under the banner of the King of kings victory is sure; in the good fight he will be able to subdue his last great enemy, and enter as a conqueror a land, where garments dyed in blood are rolled away and rumors of war never reach the ears of the ransomed. In the dark house of the body our souls must struggle with our nature's base desires, and man has many temporal as well as spiritual interests; but these interests with all their cares and anxieties should be brought before the mercy-seat, and committed to the guidance of that God who marks the sparrow's fall.

Let the way to the mercy seat be a worn and beaten track, and whether your work be little or great, you will do it with your might, for beyond your toil and care you will see a home of rest in heaven. If to any have been given the light of genius or the pen of ready writers, forget not the mercy-seat, depend not on your own strength to guide you in the use of such great and good gifts; consecrate them to your God. He who placed within you the light of mind, would have you go where its flame may burn purely, fanned by the Holy Spirit, that its beams may soften, and warm the hardened heart, and lead some convicted sinner to kneel with you before the Lord. Beware lest it be said of you in the sarcasm of the prophet, "Ye were wise to do evil." Your works will live long after you are at rest in the shadowy valley, and if written without prayer they may draw from the worldly a voice of praise, but from God a withering curse. In this volume of prayers mothers will see that parents brought their little ones to Jesus. Oh, bring yours to him, he is ever ready to welcome you, and those he has given you. Angels are at the mercy-seat to bear your prayers upward. Teach your children to hold communion with their heavenly Father, whose kind care will be over them when

earthly parents are sleeping in death, and early instill the lesson, that there is naught in all this hollow world to lighten sorrow but prayer.

We are able to point out to the poor man as he struggles with the ills of life a rich treasure; we have “a golden key to the wicket of mercy;” if you use it yours may be gifts that cannot be bought, for the price of them is far above rubies; he who died that you might win this treasure was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, poor and rejected with no resting place; weep not then over thy poverty, for Christ himself was poor. “Heaven wept that man might smile.”

“Therefore pray, O creature, for many and great are thy wants;

Thy mind, thy conscience, and thy being—

Thy rights, commend thee unto prayer, The care of all cares, the grand pauacea for all woes;

Doubt’s destroyer, ruin’s remedy, the antidote to all anxieties.”

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.” Colossians 4:2.

“Thou shalt call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am.”—John 15:1

114. The Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 6:9-13.

There were two occasions on which the Lord delivered this form of prayer. The one before our notice was his sermon on the mount at the time of Pentecost, the other some months after. In our own mind there is no doubt the Lord intended this form of prayer to be used in both our public and private devotions; we infer this from the circumstances connected with its delivery both the first and the second times. The Jews, in their merely petitionary prayers never used the "amen" at the close, but where there were expressions of thanksgiving and benediction always; we will remark this in the prayers of the Psalms, and also of the apostles. We do not for a moment suppose our blessed Lord intended us to confine ourselves solely to this form or any other, but has given it to us as a guide—a high and holy model. It is a ray from the Sun of righteousness to lead us in the right road to the mercy-seat. Coming as it does from lips that spake as never man spake, it bears the seal of heaven the stamp of the Almighty.

We are taught in the verses preceding this prayer what was meant by a high and holy communion with the "hearer and answerer." On our approach to our Savior in prayer, we are to bid adieu for that hallowed hour to earth with her thousand cares, and to close the door of these wandering hearts; in such a frame we may erect an altar, and here and there and anywhere make known our requests unto God, and to all such secret communion we are promised an open, full reward from the great Giver of all good.

We find expressed in the Lord's Prayer every desire of the Christian heart, every wish of the spirit struggling for a home on high. One has beautifully remarked of this prayer, "that however, in the fullness of our hearts, we may depart from this model, in the choice of our expressions, into whatever laminae we may expand the pure gold of which it is composed, yet we will find the general principles of our own enlarged application to God substantially contained in this brief compendium."

We will not now attempt to divide the links of this sacred chain, or comment on its several parts. A circle of bright and shining jewels, each brilliant and full of light in itself, it is a blaze of glory when taken as a whole, and is the richest treasure in the Christian cabinet of sacred relics. Through the long ages that have rolled away since it was first dictated to the ears of the listening multitude, it has been breathed from every Christian heart, and been the "pure incense" from the lips of infancy, and the last prayer from the soul of the aged.

115. The Leper's Prayer.

The Leper's Prayer. The Leper's Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 8:2. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 8:3. Our Savior had just finished his blessed sermon on the mount, and returning is met by one borne down with sickness and distress. An outcast and lonely, he is separated from those he loves, for he is the poor victim of a loathsome and incurable disease. Human means in this hour of agony are unavailing, and he knows no arm but one is sufficient to succor him; shunned as he is by the world, avoided even by the crowd who eagerly follow the Savior, he fears not to pour out his complaint in an ear he believes is open to the cry of the sorrowing; and was not this faith? Pure, simple, trusting faith, it burned brightly in that leper's heart, "The bulb enshrouds the lily, and within The most unsightly form may folded Lie the white wing of an angel." As this leper came to Jesus to be healed of his malady, so every soul must come. "Degraded, weak, and blind of sin, and darkened by the leprous scales"—just as you are, in all your uncleanness and pollution; if you are in sorrow, come; if you are despised and rejected of men, come; if you feel your own vileness, come in simple faith as the leper came; the Spirit and the Bride say come, and The angels watch are keeping, In their holy homes of light, Above poor sinners weeping—

There is joy at such a sight. To you they're loudly calling, Saying, Come! to one and all.

While round the Savior falling Ye are listening to the call, Come all the sick and suffering To the great physician there;

Come kneel in simple, humble faith, And breathe the "leper's prayer."

116. Prayer Of The Centurion.

Prayer Of The Centurion. The Centurion's Prayer.—Matthew 8:5-6. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 8:7. The Centurion still prays.—Matthew 8:8-9. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 8:10-13.

It is with feelings of peculiar interest we review the petition of this Roman soldier, for we regard him as the first Gentile convert to the religion and faith of Jesus. Endowed with authority in the army, the mere expressing of his will producing obedience, he comes to the meek and lowly Savior to ask his blessing. He does not at this time crave it for himself—he comes for another. The boon he seeks is for one lying in sickness in his dwelling. He is deeply sensible of his own unworthiness, and his heart is full of that heaven-born virtue, humility, which ever becometh man in his converse with his Creator. Well might the Savior call his faith the greatest he had seen, even in Israel.

There were many alluring temptations in his position to fill his soul with pride, for his path in life was one of worldly honor and distinction. Safe in the midst of the world's false lights, this Roman officer is shielded, for he hath the breastplate of righteousness ever raised between his heart and the world. Such faith cannot be shaken. The poor sick servant in his dwelling is to him an object of interest, and in love and faith he brings him to the "Healer." And have you, reader, no "sick servant," no "diseased soul," among those whom your heart loves, for whom you too may seek the "Healer?" Is there not one lying "sick" in your dwelling whose malady you have never once remembered at the mercy seat? Are you a "soldier of the cross," a follower of the Lamb, and will you put up no plea for the sin-sick around you?

"Man was made to wrestle, not to reign," to plead for others as well as for himself, to remember the poor and desolate, the untaught and forsaken, the sick and the dying, and the Christian's prayer takes in the world; it is full of that faith so strikingly manifested by the Centurion in his appeal to the Savior.

117. The Prayer Of The Disciples In The Storm.

The Prayer Of The Disciples In The Storm. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 8:23-25. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 8:26.

Above the noise of the tempest, and sounding over the waves of the troubled Sea of Tiberias, comes the wail of the terror-stricken disciples.

Fear is within the tossing bark, The stormy winds grow loud, And waves come rolling high and dark, And the frail mast is bowed. In that open vessel the Savior of the world lies quietly sleeping. He, of whom the holy man has said "the sea is his and he made it," is not disturbed by the tempest, or wakened by the waves. To the voice of prayer his ear is opened, and he is ready to listen when his alarmed disciples cry. He gently rebukes their want of faith, quiets their alarm, "And slumber settles on the deep, And silence on the blast; As when the righteous falls asleep, When death's fierce throes are past." And are we not all tossed by the waves of the stormy sea of life? Are we not in great danger if Christ is not at the helm to rebuke the raging billows? Lord, as he is, of the elements, so that he bringeth the wind out of his treasures, and causeth the waters of the sea to roll calmly on in their channel, so he will bring repose to the tempest-tossed soul, when the waves are the highest. We are taught by this rebuke to the disciples that Christ would have our faith grow stronger, our trust firmer, though heavy clouds arc round about us, and we see no light. There is one that will break away these clouds, and show you far in the distance a port of peace and safety—a home of light and love, "Though rocks and quick sands deep Through all our passage lie, Yet thou wilt safely keep, And guide us with thine eye."

118. The Prayer Of Jairus.

The Prayer Of Jairus. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 9:18-19. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 9:23-25.

Come with us, reader, for earth is full of such scenes of sorrow. Death, with its dark wing, is hovering in that chamber of luxury and beauty, there are tears in that stern ruler's eyes, for he weeps by the bedside of a loved and cherished one. Wealth with its thousand resources in that dark hour cannot soothe one pang, or lessen the grief in that father's heart.

"O! earth ye have no sorrow, So withering or so deep As that within the hearts of those Who o'er the child must weep;

When love so strong and deathless, From the fountain is unsealed, There is naught in all this hollow world Can aught of comfort yield." The spoiler is fast setting his seal of silence on those pallid lips, and even while the death damps are gathering on the brow, there is a ray of light and hope that beams in on the dark heart of the ruler, "there is a mercy seat" where prayer may be made, there is a balm in Gilead—a great physician there. Feeble as was the ruler's faith, it led him to the Savior. He can change the "minstrel's mournful requiem to hymns of gladness," and stay the flitting breath of the dying. Sorrow deep and heavy God often brings on his children, to bow the proud head and bend the stiffened knee in prayer. The gentle teachings that are everywhere breathing a lesson of God's omnipotence, may and do often fall unheeded on the ear, and man may be as hard and unbelieving as though there were no God, and he were not immortal; but when from stout hearts the mighty Ruler uproots affections which have twined into their very core, when he changeth the countenance of the loved one, and "sendeth it away," must it not bring the soul to a recognition of an Almighty will. There are few even among the most doubting who can lay the form of a child in the cold, dark earth, without a prayer, and as we look upward in faith, be the spark ever so feeble, our Father in heaven will see it; in the hour of loneliness he will whisper to our spirits—"She is not dead but sleepeth."

"The Savior raised Her hand from off her bosom, and spread out The stiffened fingers in his palm and said:

Maiden, arise! and suddenly a flush Shot o'er her forehead, and along her lips, And through her cheek, the rallied color ran, And the still outline of the cherished form Stirred in the linen vesture, and she clasped The Savior's hand, and fixing her dark eyes Full on his heavenly face, arose."

119. The Silent Prayer Of Faith.

The Silent Prayer Of Faith. The Silent Prayer of Faith.—Matthew 9:20-21. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 9:22. On his way to the house of the ruler Jairus, our Savior was followed by a pressing crowd, but his sacred footsteps are arrested, and a cry that no human ear might hear enters his heart. It is the silent breathing of the spirit of a sick and lonely one. She dares not attract the passing multitude; the world will turn coldly upon her, and cannot satisfy her want.

Conscious of her need and the Savior's power, if she "can but touch the hem of his garment" she may be healed; but will he turn aside from his errand to the ruler's dwelling, to notice or listen to this lonely one? Hers though silent was a prayer of holier, humbler, deeper faith, than that of the ruler, and our Savior's halting footsteps, maybe were to sow precious seed in the hearts of the witnessing multitude, and teach us a lesson which each of us should treasure. Humility raises the soul from the dust, and brings it into contact with the spirit of the Savior.

"Though no sweet hymn ascended, No murmur of prayer, Yet He knew that the spirit Of worship was there."

He saw that this humble one had fled from every other hope and trusted in him alone to heal her infirmity; he turns aside to listen to and answer her silent prayer. God knows the heart; its secret wishes, its earnest desires cannot be hidden from that eye that never slumbers or sleeps. The lowliest and most obscure of earth's children may hold as high and sweet communion with God as the most lofty and elevated. The moment a sinner will trust as this woman trusted salvation is his; he has only to touch the hem of the robe of righteousness, and his pollution and infirmity are gone. The "multitude" cannot keep us from the observation of the Savior; he knows all our wants, he remembereth our frame and he knoweth we are but dust. Do we fear to kneel at his mercy-seat? Have we no words to express the anxious desire to become a Christian, to be healed of the infirmity which has been in our hearts for many long years? We have only to read of this woman's silent prayer.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Unuttered or expressed, The motion of a hidden fire That trembles in the breast.

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

120. The Prayer Of Two Blind Men.

The Prayer Of Two Blind Men. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 9:27-28. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 9:29-30. Our Savior on his return from the ruler's house, is met by two afflicted ones. They are blind; the world with all its varied scenes is shut out from their view; they cannot even gaze on the blessed form of Jesus, in whom is centered all their hope. Though all is dark outwardly faith is shining clear and bright in their hearts; Jesus is to them the "Son of David," the promised Savior, the King of Israel; they have come in blindness and in sorrow to seek him, for they know he will restore them. The prophets had predicted many times that the Savior would perform the miracle of unsealing the eyes of the blind, and this is the first recorded fulfillment of the prophecy. Our Lord had given repeated proofs of his power to the "multitude," and, as if satisfied for the present, goes away from the crowd to the house of Andrew or Peter, and would then quietly draw from these blind men the confession of their faith. It is evident they had a knowledge of the Scriptures, and believed the Savior could open their eyes, and would answer prayer. Oh that the blinded and deluded around us would follow their example and offer their prayer. God alone can perform the miracle of opening the eyes of the spiritually blind. As our Savior was the only one who had ever performed the miracle recorded in connection with this prayer, so can they who are blind in sin be restored only by Him. He hath said, "He that followeth after me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," and he is ever ready to fulfill this gracious promise. The moral light which beams in on the soul of the once blinded is but the reflected light of heaven. It is drawn there by the earnest petition, the sincere desire, and such was the prayer of "these blind men." The more earnest we are, the brighter the light beaming into the soul; our eyes are opened, and prayer illuminates the darkened understanding with a halo of glory. The convicted sinner exclaims, "Once I was blind, but now I see;" once with my soul it was "O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon;

Irrevocably dark! total eclipse but day has dawned, and hope and faith have led me to the mercy-seat; there is no film before my moral vision; the eyes of my soul look over the thorny and rugged places of this wilderness, for beyond I see "the King in his beauty, and a place where is no darkness, for there is no night there, where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light."

121. A Prayer Of Our Blessed Lord.

A Prayer Of Our Blessed Lord. A Prayer of our Blessed Lord.—Matthew 11:25-26.

It is when our Savior prays that every Christian heart is drawn closely to him. We feel he is “our elder brother,” and we walk in the “way of the mercy-seat,” following where his precious footsteps have led us, to seek comfort and blessing, strength and light. Oh, when we weep over discouragements and murmur at disappointments, we forget the Savior prayed; when our path in life seems so dark we can see no “silver lining” to the clouds that thickly gather, we forget the Savior prayed; but it is that we might not forget this that we see the Son of God looking upward while wandering upon this desert waste. Oh, does not the privilege grow dearer to our souls when we think of this? The prayer which we notice at present reveals the wonderful truth that God’s spirit dwells in the heart of the true Christian. This our Savior tells us himself in the prayer. We have divine testimony of a truth whose simplicity the wisdom of earth cannot fathom, and yet whose power the simplest, most unlettered child of God may comprehend and feel. He attempts not to explain this great truth, but simply tells of it, and resolves it all into the will of “our Father in heaven.” We have it from our Savior’s lips, recorded in the word of life in characters of living fire, sacred to all who believe “To the humble disciple it is bread, but a stone to the proud and unbelieving, A scorner shall find nothing but the husks wherewith to feed his hunger; But for the soul of the simple it is full of plenty and ripe wheat; Religion taketh by the hand the humble pupil of repentance, And teacheth him lessons of mystery;

Solving the questions of doubt, She maketh man worthy of himself, Of his high prerogative of reason, Threadeth all the labyrinths of thought, And leadeth him to his God.”

122. The Prayer Of Peter.

The Prayer Of Peter. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 14:25-30. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 14:31-32.

If there are any who feel confident that nothing can disturb their faith, learn from the prayer of a man devoted to the Savior, excitable in temperament, but unacquainted with his own heart, a lesson; learn to cast your all upon Christ, for in time of trial your faith may waver like Peter's, and unless your Savior rescue you, you may sink in the sea of despair. Alone in the mountain, our Savior had been engaged in prayer, and at the hour of sunrise hastened to join his disciples, whom he had sent a little in advance of him in a ship. It was a frail, open vessel, and exposed to the fury of the waves, for the winds were contrary. But a cheering, peaceful voice is sounding over the waters, and a form of light and love is treading them beneath his feet. It is a voice assuring the disciples that help is nigh at hand, and that the Savior has come to rescue them; from their troubled spirits he would drive away all fear, and bids them trust in him. Peter, confident in his faith, and trusting in it, is upheld for a time as the waves bear him towards the Lord; but as they clash around him he becomes fearful. Then comes his wild cry for help. As long as his faith was fixed on the power of Christ he was firm and supported, but the angry billow drew him away, and he began to sink. He knows, however, though the storm staggered his faith, his great deliverer is near. His prayer proves that Peter knew where his safety lay, and where to flee in time of danger. Our Savior bid him come to show him his weakness, and to teach every humble follower of his since the lesson, that would we walk firmly on the waves of life's troubled ocean, we must never lose sight of the Savior, or become deaf to the declaration, "It is I, be not afraid." We are frail beings, tossed and easily overcome by the billows, but if God is our strength we need not fear; there is a land of peace and beauty which no eye hath seen. This land can only be reached by crossing a boisterous sea. If the waves of sorrow seem about to engulf you, trust in the Savior to sustain you; if one after another of those you love fall around you, and you are in danger of sinking under the waters of affliction, go to Jesus; he will strengthen you that you may stand upright on those waters, and you will be comforted by the truth that "they who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" Is it the loss of property which threatens to shake your dependence on the Almighty? listen to the voice "It is I"—in heaven is a more enduring substance. Is it broken friendships, the scattering of cherished hopes, the failure of plans, which "like a sea of trouble" threatens to overwhelm you, and lead you to forget the Savior? Remember your "light afflictions" are working for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and after battling with the waves, Christ will gently lead you to a heaven of rest—the winds will cease, and the waves stop their moaning, for you will have safely walked over the waters, and with outstretched arms your Savior waits with the joyful words, "It is I, be not afraid." O trust not in your own strength, or think your faith too strong to waver, till God has tried you as he did Peter.

123. The Prayer Of The Syro-Phoenician Woman.

The Prayer Of The Syro-Phoenician Woman. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 15:21-27. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 15:28. Our Savior, after denouncing the Scribes and giving offence to them by exposing their delusions, retired to the most remote part of the land in the borders of Tyre and Sidon; but his fame has reached this quiet place, and a mother a descendant of the Canaanites, a remnant of whom were settled in Tyre, comes to him with a prayer for her afflicted and diseased child. There has been a diversity of opinion as to the precise nature of the malady; some supposed it a nervous disease like epilepsy; others that Satan had such full possession of the faculties as to produce a state of mind entirely subservient to his will; but whatever it was, we know it was the cause of deep grief to the mother, and induced her prayer to the Savior.

Filled with great desire for the cure of her child, she is not diverted from her purpose, though the Savior apparently does not hear her first petition; he is trying her faith, as he often does that of his children now, and we would earnestly beg attention to the importunate, resolute manner of this mother. The apparently strange answer of our Savior cannot divert her— she is determined. Our Lord's answer that he is sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel refers to her Gentile origin. The Jews frequently called them dogs. Satisfied that he was the Son of David, the Messiah who was to come, she is sure he has the power of casting out devils, and is therefore convinced if she perseveres he will hear and answer her. O learn from her to be earnest; though God delay the answer to our prayer, learn from this woman to persevere.

“There are God and heaven above thee—

Wilt thou languish in despair?

Tread thy woes beneath thy feet—

Scale the walls of heaven with prayer.” Be anxious to obtain a blessing; ask often, and do not weary. As God heard this mother so will he hear you. “His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, nor his ear heavy that he cannot hear.” However great the boon you crave you will receive it, if you ask believingly and importunately.

124. The Prayer Of A Mother For Her Sons.

The Prayer Of A Mother For Her Sons. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 20:20-21. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 20:22-23.

There is a dream of ambition in that mother's heart as, with her sons, James and John, she comes to the Savior. Her petition is full of worldly ambition. She asks for a high seat for her sons among the wealthy and powerful of earth's children. And what mother, as she reads this, will not say—I, too, have made this prayer. Let them read it carefully, with its connection and circumstances, as well as the rebuking answer of our precious Lord, for it will teach a lesson that involves the eternal happiness of those so near and dear to them. This mother thought, with many others, that our Savior's reign on earth would be one of worldly triumph, of pomp and power, and with a heart filled with pride would exalt her sons to a high seat in Christ's earthly kingdom. Their temporal position is filling her heart, and is the burden of her prayer. Our Savior mildly rebukes her, and gently tells her she knows not what she is asking. And does not this, too, teach us how short-sighted and feeble is our knowledge in regard to our own best interests? When we have this or that desire, and flee to the great Giver, should we not say "Not my will by thine be done?" Attempt not to make out your own path, for you will stumble on many a dark landing-place, when all seemed light before you. Mothers dedicate your little ones to God, guide them to his mercy-seat, let him do whatsoever seemeth good in his sight, let their spiritual interests be your great end in training them, and God will be the arbiter of their destiny, both for time and eternity.

125. The Prayer Of The Five Foolish Virgins.

The Prayer Of The Five Foolish Virgins. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 25:11. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 25:12-13. The short prayer contained in this forcible parable is full of deep meaning and vital interest to every soul. Ere we pass it by, would it not be well for us to examine ourselves as to which class we belong— to the wise or the foolish? Have we oil in our lamps, and are they trimmed and burning, or are we slumbering in darkness? In one of these classes each of us has taken his position, and it becomes us to see what answer will be made when we offer the petition, "Lord open unto us." If we are not on the side of the wise, in vain will be our cry; if we are not watching, with our lamps trimmed and burning, we will find no entrance into the kingdom of our blessed Lord; but we have a promise, sure because it is Jehovah's, that if we are ready we may enter in. There are many about us who are bearing their lamps, but we fear they are empty. In ignorance, it may be, they are carrying them without oil, and they are neither trimmed nor burning. Some who are bearing the name of Christian, some who have enlisted under the "Captain of Salvation," but who are resting in darkness, shall find when they reach the shadowy valley there will be no light to guide them through its mazes—the door of that city, whose builder and maker is God, will be closed upon them forever. Oh, how earnestly we would plead with the careless to look at and ponder over this prayer. There is a deep meaning in its figurative language. Let every Christian weigh well this meaning; let him see to it his own lamp is trimmed and burning, that others, seeing his light, may be led to the path which he has chosen—a path of peace and righteousness, and one that leads to "That land, and that alone, Where tears are all forgotten, And sorrow is unknown."

126. The Prayer Of The Disciples At Meat With Our Savior.

The Prayer Of The Disciples At Meat With Our Savior. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 26:21-25. The Lord's Answer.—Matthew 26:25. At table the disciples of our Savior are seated. He has just announced a sorrowful truth which has left its impress of sadness on the countenances of each, and caused the short and earnest prayer now under consideration. Knowing their love to Jesus, as he announces that one among them is a betrayer, they, like true Christians, examine their own hearts; they would be satisfied with their present position; and as the united prayer is made to Jesus, there is one tongue silent—it is that of the betrayer. As if conscious of the great truth, that the eyes of the Lord are upon all, and that nothing can be concealed, and yet to deceive the disciples, his inquiry is made after their prayer. Judas, notwithstanding his plausible conduct, was a hypocrite and a dishonest man; sin had a full and firm possession of his heart, and Satan's deep, dark teachings, were listened to by him and guided him. As we read in the holy word of God, his sacred will, and the denunciations, so deep and heavy against every class of sinner, oh let us go to Jesus with the inquiry, with the deep earnestness of prayer, "Lord, is it I?" Let us give no rest to these bodies or souls, until an approving conscience and inward feeling of sin pardoned, and peace with God is ours, until we can feel our Father's smile is on us, when he whispers to our spirits in the hour of prayer, "There is now therefore, no more condemnation to them who are in Christ," "for he has given his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

127. A Prayer Of Our Savior.

A Prayer Of Our Savior. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 26:39-42. The Answer.—Luke 22:43.

Dr. Chalmers on this subject says, (and we prefer to quote the words of this sainted man,) “I know I am treading on the confines of mystery; I cannot tell the battle our Savior fought, I cannot compute the terror or the strength of his enemies, I cannot say, for I have not been told, how it was that they stood in marshaled and hideous array against him; nor can I measure how great the firm daring of his soul, when he tasted that cup in all its bitterness, which he prayed might pass away from him; when with the feeling that he was forsaken by his God, “he trod the winepress alone.” With his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, in the garden of Gethsemane, our Savior is exceeding sorrowful in view of his sufferings and death. Oh the deep mystery of those tears—the mystery of those prayers! Could nothing else but these, O man, lift up thy ruined, withered soul to heaven? Could nothing but the groan, the sigh, the agony, of God’s only Son, restore thee to his love and favor? Let us not dare to tread where an angel’s desire may not be gratified, but listen in awe, and reverence to the Savior’s prayer.

“It passed not, though the stormy wave
Had sunk beneath his tread;

It passed not, though to Him the grave
Had yielded up its dead. But there was sent him from on
high A gift of strength for man to die. And was his mortal hour beset
With anguish and dismay?

How may we meet our conflict yet, In the dark narrow way?

How but through Him that path who trod?

‘Save or we perish!’ Son of God.”

128. Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross.

Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross. The Prayer as recorded.—Matthew 27:45-46.

It was the design of the Atonement—deep and unfathomable though the mystery—that our blessed Lord should endure all that was possible for human nature to suffer, both spiritually and physically. In the touching language of Isaiah, “He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.”

Darkness deep and heavy brooded over the earth for the space of three hours. “During the time the darkness lasted, our Lord appears to have relapsed into his garden agony. It seems to have been part of the Divine plan, that he should again labor under the hiding of the Father’s face, and again be oppressed by the consciousness of the weight and burden of that sin in man for which he laid down his life” (Dr. Kitto). Terror deep and heavy is in the hearts of the witnessing multitude, and the rending rocks and trembling earth proclaim, that if “A God bleeds, he bleeds not for a worm.” In agony the depth of which no finite mind can fathom—for it was the wrath of God on millions concentrated on our great Savior’s head—the mysterious prayer is made. Angels are about him in that hour, but “I feel the farthest stars Are all stricken and shaken, And I know a shadow sad and broad Doth fall—doth fall On the vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the cross—My God, my God, Why hast thou me forsaken!”

130. Prayer Of The Man That Had Been Possessed With A Devil.

Prayer Of The Man That Had Been Possessed With A Devil. The Prayer as recorded.—Mark 5:18.

The Lord's Answer.—Mark 5:19.

Quieted and calmed by the power of Jesus, the once diseased but now healed person comes to our Lord with a prayer. Like too many, he would mark out a line of duty for himself, or live quietly on in the presence of the Savior, without spreading the good news of his remarkable cure. He earnestly asks to be admitted into the ship where our Savior was; but there was work for this healed man to do. "He was born to wrestle not to reign." He was to lead others to the great physician who had restored him, and spread abroad the wisdom and the power of Jesus. Tell, O Christian, those who are going on in carelessness, what God hath done for you; if you are the subjects of his grace. This is not your place of rest; labor, labor still, labor on for God. You have a work to do while life lasts; that night is coming when you can work no longer.

Never grow weary in well doing, but "sow beside all waters;" let not an aching wearied heart deter you, for in sickness you can work; your sweet and patient example, your smile of submission, may lead some disturbed and forsaken soul to trust in the "God of your love." In health, when the arm is strong and the intellect vigorous, you can work mightily to "the pulling down the strongholds of sin and Satan," prayer will strengthen your arm for the battle, your fingers for the fight. Then too there is a field in which every Christian must serve a severe warfare, in the silent, secret world within him, that others may see the kingdom of God that cometh not with observation is indeed set up there. Is it not labor to struggle and strive against the rebellious thoughts, the sinful desires, the wicked impulses, which make their way in every breast, and yet this is your labor, which is indeed in vain, if your prayer for strength goes not up with it. He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city, and it is only he that can work for God who can govern himself—a government which can only be accomplished by much and earnest prayer.

Let God guide you in your requests, place yourself in his hands, commend yourselves to him, that you may show to others, as well as feel yourself, the good he hath done for your soul. Oh, we fear there are many who are entering the ship where Christ is, thinking to rest in the light of his presence, without working for the advancement of his cause and kingdom in the world. Such have forgotten to pray—

"Father above, in tender mercy look
On us thy children. Through the o'ershadowing cloud
Of sorrow and mortality send aid.

Save, or we perish. We would pour our lives
Forth, as a joyous offering to thy truth;
But we are weak. We, the bruised reeds of earth,
Are swayed by every gust." But prayer will make us strong;
prayer will fill our hearts with an energy which God alone can give, and which he requires of every created being. There is a nice distinction, and one which God makes, between the religion of action and the religion of sentiment. There are many who love the beautiful in religion, whose tears flow freely at the tale of woe, whose hearts are trained to the emotions of benevolence, but the

sympathy of such a one is quicker to be spoken of than acted upon. His sensibilities are easily disgusted, and he is careful his field of action shall never lead him beyond what is refined and of good report. We speak of this class at present because the world is full of just such persons; there are so few who have professed to be the followers of Christ who are living religiously, according to the rules laid down in the inspired volume.

Religion is not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth; not mere feeling, but principle; not some mysterious change, which at some time may have raised you to the seventh heaven of rapture, to let you fall deeper into the depths of sloth and inactivity: no, the "change of heart, the new birth," wakens every nerve into activity in the service of God. You must, in the language of Chalmers, "go to the poor man's cottage, though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you with the gentleness of its murmurs."

There is a feeling in the hearts of many, which steals upon them under the semblance of virtue; it is supported by the delusive coloring of imagination and poetry; it has all the graces of literature to recommend it; yet by it vanity is soothed, and conscience lulled to repose. Oh, beware! It is nothing else but a "dream of feeling." "Go home to thy friends," every human being, the poor, the blind, the wretched, the loathsome; the black and the white are all included in the class, and maybe as these words came from the Savior's lips, in answer to the healed man's prayer, there was a depth of meaning, which should fill our hearts with love to every human soul, which would lead us in very truth to tell all and every one how great compassion the Lord hath shown to us.

132. The Prayer Of Mary, The Mother Of Our Savior.

The Prayer Of Mary, The Mother Of Our Savior. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 1:46-55. As a part of the mysterious work of redemption, a part of the grand, the awful, and merciful plan of salvation, the mother of our blessed Lord was chosen from the humblest of earth's children to become the "blessedest of women;" lowliest, but most glorified —chosen of heaven to guard with her love and care the helpless infancy of the Redeemer. Oh, mystery! deep and strange, "Mother, tears were mingled With thy costly blood-drops, In the shadow of the atoning cross." And the Savior, the Captain of our salvation, the Judge of the world, the Son of God himself, was "born of a virgin;" his mother, "Mary, the poor maiden of Nazareth." This prayer, or rather hymn, is full of poetry as well as piety and thankfulness for God's mercy in thus choosing her from among women to be the mother of the Savior. A sweet strain in it refers to her ancestors, and that battle between Saul and David, when the "slight stripling of the mountain-fold" displaced and took the throne of the proud monarch.

It was because the Lord had regarded her low estate, it was because "He that is mighty hath done to me great things, and holy is his name." It was all the Lord's doing, marvelous in her eyes, and to him she gives all the glory. There are no reflections in her own mind as to the cause of this great distinction; had there been, she would have shown herself unworthy. Her thoughts go out from herself, and what he has done for her engages her soul. "It is not in me, but it is in thee," is the burden of all her reflections. Herself a sinner, her mind contemplates the great benefit conferred on a ruined world, and she rejoices in God her Savior, in the fulfillment of the promise to Israel, and the blessing infinite to future generations. Mary's soul is full of humility, "I am not proud—not proud;

Albeit in my flesh God sent his son, Albeit over him my head is bowed As others bow before him, still mine heart Bows lower than their knees.

O, centuries That roll in vision, your futurities My future grave athwart, Whose murmurs seem to reach me While I keep watch o'er this sleep, Say of me as the heavenly said, Thou art The blessedest of women—blessedest, Not holiest, not noblest."

There is but little revealed to us on the sacred page regarding the youth of Jesus, and from the time we see him a babe upon his mother's bosom, "A king without regalia, A God without the thunder, A child without the heart to play, Aye, a Creator rent asunder," until we meet him in the temple, disputing with the learned and wise, there is silence concerning him.

Here, then, is the prayer of the mother of the Savior, a part of that "free service which is all in all to heaven," a "voice of praise and thanksgiving" to the Great God of All for the gift of his son to a lost, a perishing world.

133. The Prayer Of Simeon In The Temple.

The Prayer Of Simeon In The Temple. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 2:27-32.

After the “custom of the law,” Mary and Joseph had brought the infant Jesus to the temple. Simeon, a man of great piety, residing at Jerusalem, had received a divine intimation that he should live to see the Redeemer, and it is in the temple he meets him with his parents. He had long waited for the “consolation of Israel,” the coming of the promised Messiah, and now his prayers were answered; the desire of his waiting, anxious heart gratified, the old man is permitted to enfold the Savior in his arms, and lift his soul to heaven in gratitude. By his prayer we infer he was especially endued with the spirit of prophecy, and his mind stretches far beyond the narrow Jewish point of view. He sees the kingdom of the Redeemer extending not over one nation or people, but filling the earth with its blessings; not only a glory to the Jew, but a light to the Gentile also. He tells the mother of our Lord, “with the clear, sharp tongue of prophecy,” of the sword that should pierce through her own soul.

Dr. Kitto says of this remark of Simeon, and the one preceding it, “It is an important addition to his prayer, for we learn by it that he believed that Israel would be eventually glorified in the Messiah, yet that at first he would be to them a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.”

Simeon calls the child Jesus, the “Salvation of God,” because in his person all the purposes and promises of salvation are centered; in him are grace, mercy, and peace, from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The old man’s work is done; he is ready to obey his Father’s call, ready to lie down in peace, ready for his home in heaven.

134. The Prayer Of Anna.

The Prayer Of Anna. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 2:36-38. The union of old age and piety is always attractive. It is a peaceful twilight after a long and busy day; life mellowed into ripeness; the “start and the flush, and the idle dream all over,” and a temporary calm for the soul ere it takes its journey toward its everlasting home. The sketch of the character and life of Anna in the Bible furnish materials for an interesting biography, and to the Christian one of peculiar attractiveness. Lonely and desolate, and yet not lonely and desolate, although for many years a widow, she had chosen that Friend for her guide who is the “God of the widow, and father of the fatherless.”

Anna was a woman of prayer, living near to the temple, and as we are not told of her having any family, we find her devoting herself to God, free from the vexations incident upon domestic duties. It does not seem to have been necessary for her to be careful and anxious about anything but the spiritual welfare of herself and people, not that these things should exempt any from the duties they owe to God, for there are few who cannot imitate Anna in her daily stated times of prayer, and though domestic duties may crowd and press us sometimes, like the traveler who stops to take necessary rest and food, we may still keep on our journey, if we gather daily strength for it from prayer. This devoted Christian came into the temple at the time of Simeon’s prayer; her eyes were permitted to gaze on the “Hope of Israel,” the infant Savior.

Like an active Christian she spake of him to the pious remnant of her people; spoke of redemption and its wondrous plan—“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” It is but a poor, paltry excuse the Christian offers that he has no gift of speech in this matter, that his tongue is sealed in silence, when careless sinners are all around them. Is your soul full of love to your God, and can you not tell of it to the dying, perishing children of men? Is your heart bursting with the riches of his grace, which He has poured into your otherwise ruined soul, and are your lips sealed, and that grace a secret you are shutting within the portals of your own heart? We have some excuse to make for natural diffidence, but the grace of God will make the “righteous as bold as a lion.” Learn timid Christian to fear your God, not man—poor, puny worm of the dust, bound to an eternity of misery or happiness. Oh, it is time the closed lips of the Christian should be unsealed. Ye, who are young, look at the aged Anna. Tell me not of experience and years in her case fitting her more than you for God’s work; there is no such thing as age in Christian life. The moment a sinner believes, he has a heart full of rich treasures God bids him dispense among the famishing and hungry. Anna had been a working, active, devoted, prayerful Christian all her life long; this brought her a serene and quiet old age. Life was full of pleasant memories—her prayers were stored in heaven. Would you be like Anna imitate her example; neglect not the little circle where two or three are gathered to worship God; neglect not the holy sanctuary, neglect not the duties of the closet—and your experience will be sweet; “Age cannot wither you;” and when “thy summons comes,” like “one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him,” you shall “lie down to pleasant dreams.”

135. The Prayer Of Simon Peter.

The Prayer Of Simon Peter. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 5:8. The Lord's Answer.—Luke 5:10. On the calm bosom of a peaceful lake, in a boat near the shore, are a few poor fishermen; they have toiled all day, and as yet have taken nothing. They are loved by the Savior, and as the eager crowd press closely after him, he enters the vessel of Simon, to talk with him and make there an exhibition of his power. Their boat is pushed lightly a little farther from the shore, in obedience to the command of Jesus, and the nets let down into the water; but so great is the weight of fish in them they can scarcely be brought up again.

Overcome by the words and the miraculous power of the Savior, Simon Peter in deep humility prostrates himself at his feet, confesses his own sinful nature and weakness. His prayer is full of the feeling of unworthiness expressed by every truly convicted and converted person. Scott says, this miracle itself was emblematic of many things relative to the preaching of the gospel, and especially of Peter's great success on the day of Pentecost.

136. The Prayer Of Peter On The Mount.

The Prayer Of Peter On The Mount. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 9:33. The Answer.—Luke 9:34-36.

It is the hour of prayer, for our Savior has taken with him his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, for the especial object of devotion, and we are expressly told they went up into a mountain to pray. It was on this occasion the wonderful scene of the transfiguration of Christ occurred, and the amazement created by it in the mind of Peter bewildered him so that he scarcely knew what he was saying.

Two angelic beings were near the Savior, talking with him. They were the glorified spirits of Elias and Moses. Peter's prayer seems prompted by a fear that these beings would disappear. Dr. Kitto says Moses and Elias were the chiefs of the law and the prophets, who came, as it were, to give testimony and homage to the Consummator, who had in these latter days appeared, to finish the work which they had in their day been employed to advance and prepare.

137. The Prayer Of The Prodigal Son.

The Prayer Of The Prodigal Son. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 15:20-24. A wanderer from his father's love, his home and friends, the prodigal is in a state of abject servitude and misery. The world with its thousand siren voices had lured him from the path of virtue; dissipation in its most bitter form had made him wretched; his eyes had been dazzled by the attractive light of a wasting, consuming fire, and he is ready to perish. In his present forlorn condition, the poor man, in the expressive phrase of Scripture, "came to himself," he has all along acted against reason, judgment, and conscience; sin has blinded him, but now deep and bitter reflections awaken him to a sense of degradation and misery; but there is something to be done if he would be relieved—he must resolve.

Observe the promptness of his resolution after he sees his true state; perhaps his father will hear him although he has despised his authority and wasted his substance. There is a hope—a "beam of comfort like the moon through clouds;" it inspires him to "arise and go to his father," and while he is yet a great way off, that father forgives him, has compassion on him, falls on his neck as he comes to him, and receives him as a child. God is willing to receive every sinner just as this father did his son, if "coming to himself," he resolve in prayer to seek him.

"The greatest attribute of heaven is mercy; And 'tis the crown of justice, and the glory, Where it may kill with right, To save with pity."

There is a general and intellectual conviction of sin which remains as it were shut up in the heart or understanding, and there is another which controls all the affections and acts, which makes a man a Christian; it leads him to prayer, and makes him prompt in serving God. David was a man in whose life we see distinctly these two states of feeling, one before Nathan came to him and the other after. The latter was the feeling of the prodigal.

We do not find him remaining where he is, but active in using the means to ameliorate his condition, he goes to his father. Reader, have you done this? Are you often at the mercy-seat confessing your sin against heaven? We know that many have felt themselves sinners, their convictions have been deep, billows may have rolled over the soul mountains high, and yet the waters may not have washed away one sin, or cleansed it from its deep pollution. You must go with the spirit of the prodigal; your heavenly Father will come to meet you at your first resolve to seek him. There is joy through all the shining courts of heaven when one repenting sinner comes to the mercy-seat.

"Satan trembles when he sees The weakest saint upon his knees." But God, his Father and his Friend, is there to meet him. It may be said by some who have no idea of God's justice, no conception of his broken law, our own case and this prodigal are entirely dissimilar; our course has not been one of recklessness and folly; to such we would say, sin has made you, like him, miserable and wretched; sin has made you a wanderer from your Father's heart and love, and the words of living fire on the page of Holy Writ tell you, "If a man say he hath no sin he deceiveth

himself.”

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. As long as you do not arise and go to the Father whom you have offended, you are in a state of abject misery; however brightly the world may smile upon you, you are feeding on husks. Oh, be warned in time! We would lead you to return with the prodigal, we would show you the affectionate embrace of the Father, the hearty welcome; and the peace of that restored heart. His prayer is simple but efficacious; it enters the father’s heart, and so will yours if you will go with him.

138. The Prayer Of Dives.

The Prayer Of Dives. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 16:22-26.

Continuation of Dives'Prayer.—Luke 16:27-28. The Answer.—Luke 16:31. The following prayer is a wail of agony from the depth of that hell to which all the impenitent are destined; the day of mercy with that soul is over, and the time for prayer to God passed away forever. Through the long ages of a "limitless future" will that Avail come up deeper and louder to tell of the agony of a ruined soul. Our Savior in his teachings to the multitude has introduced this parable of the rich and poor man, which, in its grand outlines, is being continually acted out under the eye of even the most careless observer at the present time. The earthly and spiritual condition of the two men are forcibly delineated, and the final result is given to show us the destiny of all who must come under either one of the classes these two men so strikingly represent. We shall be particular in our notice of this prayer, hoping we may, by our plainness of speech, arrest the eye of the mere worldling. He who makes it, it will be observed, is not guilty of the grosser vices; his were sins we may call "popular sins," fashionable among those whom the world worships, and whose favor many are so earnestly seeking. The rich man was of the stock of Abraham, a Jew, and we may infer had a form of godliness also. He fared sumptuously—all that wealth could bring in the way of luxury was his; but these were not enumerated as sins, he might have had all these and been a devoted child of God.

We cannot think him a miser, for his table was sumptuous, and no doubt he entertained those who were congenial to him; but we may infer safely they were not the lowly followers of Christ, or Lazarus would not have been despised. Me- thinks I hear some reader ask, What, then, was this man's sin? And to such we would reply, In not using his wealth to the glory of God—he had forgotten the poor and the sick, the miserable and dying beggar. Grace was a stranger to his heart; that grace which brings with it a tenderness of spirit that enables its possessor to feel that earth's poorest and most miserable children are brethren; that will not permit him to hear one sigh of the distressed without relieving it, and will keep ever in his hand "the cup of cold water" which he, as a Christian, dare not or will not withhold. There are many, dear reader, who are living as this rich man lived, many who can weep over imaginary woe, but never see the real misery which they may lighten; many of our own loved friends whose hearts beat quicker when told of this or that scene of sorrow, but who will not go with you to the midst of it; there is many a poor beggar lying at their gates, whom they are despising and sending empty away. God forbid you should ever be brought to the misery of Dives! Ere the echo of his sorrowing wail dies away on your ear, be warned of your own danger.

I tell you of it in the voice of Christian love, the gay and worldly are singing to your listening ears a sweet song that is lulling you into a dangerous sleep, and no word of condemnation comes from the world about you to show you your condition; you are not desolate and forsaken, for "the rich have many friends," yet the few chosen of God's children are asking you to go with them; they are praying for you, and beseeching you to save yourself from the fate of Dives. This prayer, and

indeed the whole parable, is figurative, and "Abraham's bosom," according to Scott, means a place near that "father of the faithful," that occupied by the beggar, and is intended to shadow forth the joy of the believing soul after death; the position of the rich man exhibits a vivid picture of the misery of the lost. The latter part of the narrative furnishes the true Christian with a powerful argument against those false doctrines which the holy word predicts shall deceive the very elect; it tells the tormented spirit "one shall not rise from the dead to minister to his brethren in holy things."

God has his own shining hosts to camp about the good man's tent, but they are not the souls of those who have entered the pit of despair. Angels form a quiet ministry to those who are the heirs of salvation; how, or when, or where, it is not given to man to know, for they belong to the army of God, who does his own will among the shining troops before his everlasting throne; his ways are not our ways, neither are his thoughts our thoughts. We know his children are guarded and watched while they are lingering near his mercy-seat. We have Moses and the prophets, the voice of justice and of tender compassion; we have the warnings of earthly friends, and a vivid picture of the eternally happy and eternally miserable; and is not this enough? God in his answer would and does say, enough!

139. Prayer Of The Ten Lepers.

Prayer Of The Ten Lepers. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 17:12-14. The Lord's Answer.—Luke 17:17-19. On the borders of Samaria or Galilee, a company of men suffering with leprosy, having heard of the fame of Jesus, and his ability to cure this hopeless disease, have come to beseech him to heal them. Lepers are among the last who are mentioned as seeking the aid of Jesus, and when his great power was spoken of by those who followed him, many said, he hath not yet healed a leper. The ten acknowledge the power of Jesus, their disease is the same, their prayer for help the same, but in the spirit of but one is that heaven-born feeling, gratitude. Christ had listened to their prayer and healed them, and sent them to their priests to obtain from them a formal attestation of their cure—to perform the rite of purification according to law. All were healed, but there is only one who returns thanks for the benefit received. Our Savior's question as to where are the nine, maybe ought to startle the heart of every careless Christian, for there are many, very many, who have received daily and hourly mercies, and have forgotten with these nine to give thanks to God. Jesus commends the faith of the grateful-hearted man, as he falls in thankfulness at his feet. It is probable the one who returned and glorified God, alone of all of them really believed in Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior of the world. This faith in his heart caused his thanksgiving, for we are told the others went back to the temple, and it may be there returned thanks to God; but their gratitude was not the offspring of faith—the spontaneous outbreak of a Christian heart, and thanksgiving to Jesus as their immediate benefactor; else, why does the Savior commend so particularly the conduct of this one leper? It would be well for the reader to refer to the few verses following the leper's prayer. It will more distinctly show him the difference between them, and open the heart of the one leper, in whom the "kingdom of God" was indeed set up.

140. The Prayers Of The Pharisee And Publican

The Prayers Of The Pharisee And Publican The Prayers as recorded.—Luke 18:10-13. The Lord's Answer.—Luke 18:14.

We will not separate these two prayers, for, connected like the light and shadow in a picture, the effect is more startling, and may make a deeper impression on the heart. Here are two men going up into the temple to pray, just as we all go at the sound of the Sabbath bell, and a few at the hour for social prayer. There is nothing in the exterior of these two men that would particularly attract our attention, for both have gone there to pray. It is after they enter we observe the difference. The one with drooping eyes comes like a grateful almsman and humbly begs his bread; the other is like one "the music of whose own vain tongue doth ravish like enchanting harmony." One is "poor, and blind, and naked," the other full, proud, and satisfied. One has seen himself with the eye of faith a lost and ruined soul, and seeks the only remedy; the other's heart still nurses that deadly passion which blinds him to his sin, and brings before his deluded vision his imagined virtue. One would exalt, the other abase himself, when communing with the Omnipotent Jehovah. Let us examine well these two prayers, for they represent two large classes in this world of ours. The Publican knew himself—the Pharisee did not. This knowledge made the one humble, and the want of this filled the heart of the other with pride.

"Acquaint thee with thyself, O man! so shalt thou be humble; The hard, hot desert of thy heart shall blossom with the lily and and the rose; The frozen cliffs of pride shall melt as an iceberg in the tropics."

All that thou hast done, all thou canst ever do in thy own poor, puny strength, can never win for thee the crown in heaven. God has to do with thy heart. All its secret springs, its hidden desires, its unseen emotions, are naked and open to that all-seeing eye, which knows no sleeping. Then, wherefore wouldst thou boast? frail worm of the dust, a withering flower, a fading leaf, a morning vapor, or an evening cloud I Be wise—fight against thy pride; with humble prayer thou canst subdue the evil, hateful passion.

"Mark, amid all his transformations, The complicate deceitfulness of pride; And the more he striveth to elude thee, Bind him the closer in thy toils.

Prayer is the net that snareth him;

Prayer is the fetter that holdeth him.

Thou canst not nourish pride, while Waiting as an almsman on thy God." Would we have our prayer acceptable, we must remember the humble Publican—remember God himself hath uttered the eternal truth, "There is not one good; no, not one." This is difficult for the merely moral man to comprehend; he may, like the Pharisee, give "tithes of all he possesses," but he has never yet laid the offering of his heart, broken and contrite, on God's altar. He cannot, until God takes the film from his blind eye, see the deep, dark shadow of his indwelling corruption; nor will he, till he can

make from his heart the prayer of the poor Publican. Oh, there are many among those we love who know not the deep sin of their hearts; circumstances have made them refined, society with the good has made them winning and gentle, but beneath all this, behind this soft and silken curtain, which the world so much admires, is a human heart, “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

We would, with a gentle hand, draw aside this curtain; we would show you just such a heart as your own, for such was that of the Pharisee, and yet it is not I who can do this, it is the reader of the secrets of all hearts. I may point out the way to the mercy-seat, and tell you there, and there alone, is your remedy; the spirit in which you may come, learn for yourself in the narrative below, and may God give you strength to come in humility.

141. The Prayer Of The Young Ruler.

The Prayer Of The Young Ruler. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 18:18-21. The Lord's Answer.—Luke 18:22-24.

It is with feelings of peculiar interest we read the prayer of this young man, for we regard him as strikingly representing in his outward circumstances, as well as in the state of his heart, a large class of the young and attractive about us. Loved and courted, occupying a high station, and surrounded by all the luxuries wealth could procure; trained religiously—for he seems to have an acquaintance with the law of God, a theoretical knowledge of his duty—his outward observances were, no doubt, strictly gone through with, and yet when he comes to Jesus, he seems surprised that his heart was not right, that that eye whose power extended into the hidden recesses and windings of his soul, saw the dark plague-spot blackening the otherwise attractive character. The young ruler's wealth had made him covetous;

“The lust of gold, unfeeling and remorseless, The last corruption of degenerate man,” had made him forgetful that God had given these riches merely as a loan to be paid back with interest in the prayers of the poor man, in the grateful acknowledgment of the sick and suffering he should have relieved, in the rays of light shining out from the darkened soul he had been the instrument of opening to God's truth, in the smile of the oppressed he had unburdened, and in the clear laugh of the freed prisoner to sin, whose chain he had unloosened.

Young man, these were works you might have done, and deep and heavy the weight of your sins of omission following on in the train of the one thing thou lackest. And the world is full of the young who are walking in your footsteps, who know not their own hearts, who are living on and dreaming on, burying in this or that cherished sin, all that is good and lovely, useful or attractive about them. Are you covetous, you are not a Christian; else, why all over the sacred page, do we see such bitter denunciations against this sin? Are you forgetful of the poor, you cannot be accepted; it was the sin that sent the young man away sorrowing. If there is in thy heart one shadow of this soul-ruining sin, oh, fall at the mercy-seat! oh, see what good thing thou lackest to make thee acceptable! Oh, give your early years to God! There is a glorious promise for all that do this—“Those that seek me early shall find me.”

Life is fleeting fast away; one year follows quickly upon another, and it is soon, soon over, with its toils, its cares, its joys, and sorrows. A hope, a smile, a tear, these are all; and then, oh God! thou knowest, “Every muffled drum is beating funeral marches to the grave;” we see the young and loved falling around us, many as attractive to the world as this young ruler, but in whose hearts we fear one thing is lacking; it is not enough that you should be steady and regular in the performance of stated religious duties, your heart must be right in the sight of God, you must often enter the closet for self-examination and prayer; without this no one can be in the world and not of it, with it he can mix with men and breathe the atmosphere of heaven, can walk in the dust and mire and never be soiled or polluted, for his spirit is soaring in a purer, holier air, where prayer bears up his wings, and will bear them upward, till they soar unfettered in worlds where sin is forever banished,

and all is purity and joy.

142. The Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross.

The Prayer Of Our Savior From The Cross.

“Helplessly, heavily— On the cheek that waxeth colder, Whiter ever—and the shoulder—”

The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 23:34. Where the government was laid, death is slowly creeping; but will the great heart still beating there be full of pity for a world, and show no pity for itself? Will it not unearth this cross? Is there no prayer to the Father that his own place be restored to him? Oh, no. Far above the voice of trembling, saddened nature, rises the prayer, Father, forgive them, above the taunts and jeers, above the contempt and scorn, these blessed words are heard.

“No rod, no sceptre, is Holden in his fingers pale—

They close instead upon the nail.” And still the prayer—words of mercy, words of hope to lost and ruined man. Oh, as we ponder over them, maybe they would drive from every heart each feeling of hatred, every thought but that of love to God and all his creatures. If those you love have turned coldly upon you, remember this prayer, “Father, forgive them;” they are the dying accents of a Savior who died to redeem those who hated him.

If for your tears of pity you have a frown of ingratitude, remember the precious words; if you look for sympathy, and meet with the heartless and unfeeling, still remember them; if you would lead the gay and thoughtless to the mercy-seat, and your endeavors are treated with bitterness and scorn, let your prayer be, Father, forgive them. Oh, maybe it is dearer, richer, holier than any on the sacred page; in it is the Christian’s joy, the Christian’s hope, for daily we sin against the pure and holy God; but above our call at the mercy-seat we hear the sweet words of a pleading intercessor, they are the never-dying echo of the prayer of the Savior from the cross, “Father, forgive them,” and every bowed spirit at the “throne of grace” makes new notes of joy from “the unworn string of an eternal worshipping.” “Father, forgive them,” is sounding yet above the song of seraphs, and the music of these words will never die away, till all the ransomed are gathered into their homes of light above. Without this prayer man would be eternally lost, no ray of hope would light up the dark, the fathomless abyss before him; but this prayer of a bleeding, dying Savior is his salvation. No sooner is our own knee bent in worship, than in accents of love and tenderness the words of Christ, our great intercessor, are heard in the prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;” know not, for they cannot conceive the depth of the smallest sin against infinite love and mercy; sin, that sent the Son of God to bleed and die that man’s ruined soul might be lifted to the clear, still air of heaven. Will you, then, be a prayerless being, when Christ is pleading for you? will you not pray for yourself? No matter what your situation among men, despised, and poor, and sick, and miserable, you may be sure that Jesus is pleading for you; your prayer, if sincere, will enter his ear. Give to him the homage of your heart, “render strong praise and benediction from your feeble, mortal lips,” for “incense-smoke out of a little censer may fill heaven.” At the mercy-seat God has given you a place; be there often, be there much, and whisper in the ears of others that Christ is there, and as you kneel together, in music sweeter than the ear hath

heard, the echo of these words will linger in your hearts, "Father, forgive them."

143. The Prayer Of The Thief From The Cross.

The Prayer Of The Thief From The Cross. The Prayer as recorded.—Luke 23:42. The Lord's Answer.—Luke 23:43.

"I see Beyond the city crosses three, And mortals three that hang thereon, Ghast and silent to the sun; And round them blacken, and welter, and press, Staring multitudes, whose father Adam was, whose brows are dark With Cain's corroded mark."—Browning. On either side of the Savior were crucified with him two malefactors; one of them seems to be seriously affected by his position, for from his rebuke to the other we know he was satisfied that the Savior was suffering innocently, and that he was the Messiah, the king of Israel. Overcome by his convictions, and led by the immediate teaching of the Holy Spirit, he becomes repentant, and prays to the suffering Savior.

"The moment a sinner believes, And trusts in his crucified God, His pardon at once he receives, Redemption is full through his blood."

"T'is faith that still leads us along, And lives under pressure and load; That makes us in weakness more strong, And leads the soul upward to God."

It is true, the case of this thief is a peculiar one, for when we consider his position we might be led to imagine it an unusual exhibition of God's mercy to so great a sinner; but it furnishes encouragement to all to come to Jesus, however guilty they may have been, and the same mercy and forgiveness shown to the repenting malefactor will be given to others. All God requires of any is this turning in faith to him, this relinquishing of self, and throwing ourselves upon him who is mighty to save, and strong to deliver; his pierced hands are still stretched out to lay gentle hold on every soul, as on that of the departing thief. This guilty man had only to feel himself a sinner, and come to Jesus. So you must come, sinner; you may not have been a malefactor, but you have broken God's holy law. and there is no remedy but in Jesus. Come, then, "just as you are," without one plea, save that the Lord hath died for thee, and thine shall be the glory and the crown of paradise. Ye cannot leave this prayer without considering an argument that many would draw from it in favor of death-bed repentances. This is the only instance of the kind in the sacred page, and while it encourages the most vile to hope in God's mercy, it offers not the shadow of an excuse to any for putting off the making of their peace with God, "Now is the accepted time, the day of salvation," and, reader, as your eye rests on these words of God, you know there is danger in delay. Remember the foolish virgins sought no oil till alarmed at the bridegroom's approach. Oh, come now to God, when you are warned; your soul is full of the dark and troubled waters of sin, continually casting up mire and dirt, "yet a spirit-wind may blow white those waters," and wash your soul in the blood of the crucified Jesus. Ten thousand voices are calling you to come. This poor thief may have never been told of God; your case is not like his; light is all around you, friends are whispering to you come, the fresh made graves of those you love speak in a soft voice to your soul, be ye ready; and the Savior is whispering, in this "story of the cross," I am waiting for thee, waiting for thee in paradise! Oh, turn believing unto Jesus.

145. The Prayer Of A Nobleman.

The Prayer Of A Nobleman. The Prayer as recorded.—John 4:46-49. The Lord's Answer.—John 4:48-53. Our blessed Savior had lingered in his wanderings at Cana of Galilee, where he had exhibited to many his miraculous power. While there he was besought by a nobleman of Herod's court to heal his son, who lay dangerously ill at Capernaum, which was a considerable distance from where the Savior now was. The faith of the nobleman is weak, like a small spark it lay in his heart ready to be kindled. He seems to imagine that the Savior must go with him to the dying bed; but in the prayer and answer we are taught a useful lesson—God is everywhere, his presence is about and around us, he is the omniscient, omnipresent Jehovah; in proportion as we feel this in our hearts, our faith is strong or weak.

There are times in the lives of all Christians when Jesus is especially near; and then, again, in the language of Job, they are led to exclaim; "O, that I knew where I might find him, I would come even to his seat." Christ is always present when the prayer is earnest, heartfelt, believing, the eye of the spirit sees him, and the calmed soul is sure of his presence Oar Lord, in order to increase the faith of this nobleman, orders him to go home; he is obedient to the command; and as the servant meets him with the joyful news of his son's recovery, he gives thanks to the Lord. There is in that nobleman's house a believing family circle—all love the Lord Jesus. This side of heaven there is no picture so full of beauty and interest to the Christian as this household presents; no dark line mars its harmony, for they are one in Christ, with hearts united by a chain of the Savior's forging—spirit-links to bind those hearts through time and eternity.

United on earth, and united forever, Death cannot part, death cannot sever;

Hands knit in love, are hands never parted, One in Christ Jesus are all the true-hearted;

Pure spirits on earth, will be spirits in heaven, For spirits in heaven are spirits forgiven.

You here sound the key note, above is the song The ransomed will sing in the bright happy throng.

Now children in knowledge, then children no longer, For faith there is perfect, here faith groweth stronger.

One in your worship, and one in your love, One in your praises, with angels above.

146. The Prayers Of Martha And Mary.

The Prayers Of Martha And Mary. The Prayers as recorded.—John 11:20-22. The Lord's Answer.—John 11:23-27.

Mary's Prayer.—John 11:32. The Lord's Answer.—John 11:35. The Prayer of Jesus at the grave, as recorded.—John 11:41-42. The Answer.—John 11:43-44. In the small village of Bethany, on the southeast side of the Mount of Olives, lived Mary and Martha, and their brother, Lazarus. They were a godly family, and seem to have been especially beloved by the Savior, as their house was his frequent resort. We would suggest to the reader a careful perusal of this whole chapter. The characters of these two women are simply yet vividly drawn—both different, yet both loving the Lord Jesus. When Lazarus was taken ill, the anxious sisters had sent a message to our Savior, and it may appear strange to the casual reader, that attached as he was to this family, he did not hasten immediately to them, or then use his power to prevent the death of Lazarus. It will be seen that after the message,

“He whom thou lovest sick,” two days elapsed before the departure of the Savior for Bethany. This delay was to make the miracle the greater, for the body had lain in the grave and corrupted, when the sisters came out to meet Jesus. If he had been there, as the sisters say to him, and prevented the death, or suffered him to die and raised him, there would then have been an appearance of ostentation in the act, which nowhere stamps the movements of Jesus. According to a Jewish custom, Mary and Martha were surrounded by comforters, who were wont to weep seven days with those who were in affliction, and they were thus situated when the message was given to Martha that Jesus had arrived; in great haste she rose to meet him, not even delaying long enough to tell Mary the glad news, who “sat still in the house.”

“One grief, one faith, oh, sisters of the dead, Was in your bosoms. And which to Him, the All-seeing and All-just, Was loveliest, that quick zeal, or lowly trust?”

Oh, mortal! question not, for we are told he loved Mary and her sister Martha, and they found sympathy, full and satisfying, in the Savior's heart and tears. The answer of our Savior to Martha is somewhat vague to her understanding, and we infer from her words to him that she addresses him as a prophet, and not as the Incarnate Son of God. He reminds her that life is in Him, and is imparted to the faithful by union with Him, and as if to impress the truth upon her, questions her closely and convincingly of her belief in Him as the Messiah. It is then that she awakens to a knowledge of the truth, and hastens to call her sister, who uses the same language; they do not ask a restoration to life for their brother—they know not what they need; they know Jesus can do all things, and in sorrow and grief they come to him.

147. The Prayer Of Philip.

The Prayer Of Philip. The Prayer as recorded.—John 14:8. The Lord's Answer.—John 14:9-20.

Philip seems to have possessed rather confused ideas with regard to the divinity of the Savior; we infer this from not only the prayer, but the gentle rebuke of Jesus in reply to it. It seems the simple announcement of the truth that he was one with the Father, was not sufficient for Philip, but he wished some remarkable demonstration of it; and are there not many Philips now? Many who are not willing to accept this mystery simply because it is the truth of God. Shall a man comprehend his Maker? or finite fathom infinity?

If God be nothing more than one, a child can compass the thought. But seraphs fail to unravel the wondrous unity of three.

“It is written, and so we believe, Waiting not for outward proof, Inasmuch as mysteries inscrutable Are the clear prerogatives of Godhead.”

Christ's answer to Philip is full of love, and his explanation of the union of believers with himself and the Father, is clear and comforting to the Christian heart. However weak your faith, or burdened your spirit, you have here a gentle word of encouragement. In view of his separation from his disciples, Jesus seems to pour out a large and full measure of those precious promises which have cheered the path of many a lonely and broken-hearted one, many a timid and struggling child, to the arms of that “friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” We have here, too, another announcement of that sacred truth, that Jesus is our intercessor and advocate with the Father, that though the world see him not, yet his children see him, and he is ever present to comfort and guide them.

148. The Prayer Of Judas, Not Iscariot.

The Prayer Of Judas, Not Iscariot. The Prayer as recorded.—John 14:22-31. This prayer and its answer furnishes a satisfying evidence to all believers that Christ is ever present with them. Our Savior, in reply to Judas, as to how he would manifest himself when the time of his departure came, reminds him that a disposition to obey his commandments and love him would always be a proof of his presence with them. As a precious remembrance he promised peace that the world know not of, peace and joy in believing.

Let not your hearts be troubled, he says, but rejoice; my day of humiliation is over; I have taken upon myself the form of man; have been made flesh and dwelt among you; my Father 'is, in one sense, greater than I—Scott says, as an ambassador is equal in nature, but is inferior in office, to the prince that commissioned him, so Christ, in humbling himself, and leaving the Father, as God manifest in the flesh, has made the words that occur in the answer to this prayer appropriate. Our Savior has promised peace to all that love him and keep his commandments; no doubts or fears should find a home in the hearts of those who follow him; nothing but joy, whose tide swells broader and deeper as they trust in the promises, and seek the mercy-seat. We cannot refrain from dwelling a moment on a sin common among Christians, and indulged by those who no doubt are the followers of Christ, but they know not how many they are keeping away from those paths of pleasantness and peace in which they have been permitted to walk; it is the sin of clothing the joyful religion of Jesus in a dark robe of gloom, and in wearing upon the countenance the forbidding, repulsive look of sorrow. This is not the index of that joy and peace which may be the Christian's, that spirit which the Savior promised to the praying Judas, and which he has left as a legacy to his children. Christ came in love, and not with a rod; let us then imitate his blessed example, when we would win others to walk with us in the "green pastures, and by the side of still waters." If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, if our eyes have been opened to see ourselves as sinners, and we have been washed in the blood of Jesus, and are clinging to his cross; if the promises, and the full and sufficient sacrifice, are ours, have we not reason, above all others, to rejoice? If we cannot, the fault is not in our religion, it is in ourselves, and somewhere in a dark corner of our hearts sin is still treasured. We regard it a sin to be gloomy; the Christian may have tears to shed over his wanderings, and sighs to heave over the wickedness about him, but these belong to the hidden sanctuary of his own chamber, and not to the world.

We regard it as a Christian duty always to be cheerful; much may here be said of natural temperament, and the great influence of the body over the mind, but prayer is a panacea for every kind of weakness, either mental, spiritual, or physical; the whole man is brought under its power, and the weak one may forget his pains, the nervous be quieted, the sick may rejoice, as long as he lingers near the Savior, trusts in the promises, and loves the mercy-seat.

149. A Prayer Of Our Savior.

A Prayer Of Our Savior. The Prayer as recorded.—John 17:1-26. This prayer has been the foundation of the church of God from the creation of the world, is now, and ever will be, to the consummation of all things. Through all the instructions of our Savior to his apostles, he addressed them as the Incarnate Son of God, but when he comes to the mercy-seat in prayer, he comes as a man imploring of his Father. He asks of God to glorify his Son, to restore him that place in heaven which he had with the Father before the world was. “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” This prayer was not only made for the eleven apostles, but included the seventy disciples, and the whole church of God, the whole body of believers, no matter what their name or station, rank or office, among all generations of men. Lift up your hearts, ye poor and forsaken ones. If ye have been born again, the Father hath given you to the Savior. This prayer is yours—your hope, your comfort, your consolation, your all. Our Savior by it consecrates himself as the great atoning sacrifice for lost and ruined man; he tells us the world will hate those that love him, because they are not of the world, and prays that the Father may sanctify them by his truth—his word is truth. By the “son of perdition,” is meant Judas, the betrayer of his Lord and Master. The Savior’s words, in the few concluding verses, should encourage unity among Christians, take away every wall of partition that now separates the church of God, and should make all true believers one in Christ Jesus. In the language of another, we would say here, “The religious professions and opinions of some have too much of mere machinery in their composition. If every wheel, pivot, chain, spring, cog, or pinion, be not exactly in its place, or move not precisely according to a favorite and prescribed system, the whole is rejected as unworthy of regard. Ye who are so warmly striving for your rights as churchmen, and churchwomen, in vain do you try to narrow the limits of these world-covering words of the Savior’s prayer; ye may not, ye cannot, ye dare not, when ye read and ponder over them.

Christ loves us all; in the language of scripture, “The Lord knoweth them that are his,” his seal is upon all those who name the name of Christ and depart from iniquity; we are all one in the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, on earth, and will all be gathered into one fold, under one Shepherd, in heaven.

151. A Prayer Of The Apostles.

A Prayer Of The Apostles. The Prayer as recorded.—Acts 1:24-25 The Lord's Answer.—Acts 1:26.

It was the custom of the followers of our Savior, while he was yet on earth, to meet for conference and prayer. On an occasion of this kind Peter stood up to address the meeting on the subject of appointing some one of their number to fill the place of Judas, the betrayer of our Lord, who had taken his own life, and died a horrible death.

Peter proposes that he shall be chosen from among those who had attended upon the Savior's teachings from the very beginning of his ministry, so that he might teach the truths taught him, and be with the rest a witness of the resurrection. Two are selected, and the matter is made a subject of prayer. To God, their great guide and counselor, the choice is left, and when the lots are drawn, Matthias is the chosen one. There is no special power or authority granted to one more than the other, not even to Peter, as some have claimed; for Paul, in Galatians 2:11, withstood Peter because he was to be blamed; he therefore was not infallible, although he was honored by being the first to preach the gospel to Jew and Gentile.

God's chosen ministers have a high commission, and should be selected for their holy office with prayer for guidance in the choice—we are taught this lesson by the prayer of the apostles; but the only apostolic mark God requires them to bear is that which is stamped by the Holy Spirit in their hearts; they should be men of prayer, men following closely the footsteps of the Savior, and like Enoch of old, walking with God; such have a passport from on high to the baptismal font, the marriage altar, to the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

152. The Prayer Of The Church.

The Prayer Of The Church. The Prayer as recorded.—Acts 4:23-30. The Answer.—Acts 4:31-32. This prayer is made by a company of the Savior's followers, probably the hundred and twenty heretofore mentioned. They speak of a prophecy here which God had before spoken by his prophet David, concerning the Messiah. Before our Lord's crucifixion the apostles had overlooked every prediction of this kind, but now they are part of the knowledge of each heart. Scott says: "The language used in applying this prophecy to the 'child Jesus,' may refer to his immaculate conception by the Holy Spirit, this unction of the spirit preserved him holy through all the trials and temptations to which he was exposed; this aggravated the guilt of Pilate, the professed idolater, his attendants, Herod, the king, and the bulk of the Jewish nation, who treated him with cruelty and contempt." This is a united prayer, the whole company are influenced by the spirit of Jesus; it alludes to God's foreknowledge and determination of things future; they ask for boldness to proclaim the word of truth, for they had been injured, and threatened by those who had crucified the Savior, and had need of the aid of the Holy Spirit to defend and help them, in spreading the knowledge of God in the world. Their prayer is answered, their hearts are filled with the Holy Spirit, they are now no more in bondage to sin, for grace hath set them free; all and everything they possess is given to their Maker; one spirit of love and union pervades the whole company, and they speak with boldness the word of God.

153. The Prayer Of Stephen.

The Prayer Of Stephen. The Prayer as recorded.—Acts 7:59-60.

Stephen is usually known as the first martyr, he was also one of the seven “men of honest report,” who were elected to relieve the twelve apostles of a certain class of their labors. He was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. In the chapter in which his prayer is recorded, we read of his defense against false and cruel charges, his powerful exhibition of the truth, and its effect on the people, among whom was Saul of Tarsus. The people were so maddened and excited by his words, that they drove him beyond the walls of the city, and there stoned him to death. In the petition of the expiring Stephen is the same gentle spirit of forgiveness shown by the Savior toward his enemies; a spirit, which nothing but the grace of God in the heart can produce, and which none but the true Christian possesses.

154. The Prayer Of Saul Of Tarsus, After His Conversion.

The Prayer Of Saul Of Tarsus, After His Conversion. The Prayer as recorded.—Acts 9:3-5. The Lord's Answer.—Acts 9:5.

Continuation of the Prayer.—Acts 9:6. The Lord's Answer.—Acts 9:6-18

“Behold, be prayeth.” He who had breathed out threatenings and slaughter, had persecuted the church, despised and abused the followers of Christ, now breathes the vital breath of a Christian, and through all his subsequent life inculcates the doctrine of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and enjoins, more than all the sacred writers, the duty of always “praying with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereto with all perseverance.” And what has caused this great change in Saul of Tarsus? The ardent, zealous persecutor is a child of God, the Holy Spirit, with his enlightening, purifying influence, has caused him to renounce all confidence in his own virtues; his strong will is now submissive to that of his Maker; he seeks to be justified not by his own merits, but by the Savior; to use his own forcible words, it has been “given him to believe.”

All this revolution in the mind and heart of Saul must be attributed, then, to the divine infusion of faith in his heart; it is not a mere conviction of his understanding, but a new life-giving principle, which fills his whole soul with new motives, new desires; its nature is spiritual, and the holy spark is only kept alive by spiritual communion with the great God who first kindled it in the soul. “It gathers energy as it proceeds; the more advanced are its attainments, the more prospective are its views. The nearer it approaches to the invisible realities to which it is stretching forward, the more their dominion over it increases till it almost makes the future present, and the unseen visible.” Its light becomes brighter, its flame purer, its aspirations stronger, as life advances, and it approximates to its great object. This faith is an active principle, hence the prayer of Saul; the will of God was henceforward to guide him, not his own desires, or the sinful corruptions of his natural heart. God hath taken away that stony heart, and hath given a heart of flesh; he is born again; and now what is his work on earth, what will the Lord have him to do. Chosen as the apostle to the Gentiles, to tell of the riches and freeness of the grace of our God and Savior, his soul was filled with incessant desires to advance the cause of the Redeemer. And is this he who so short time ago courted the favor of the intolerant Sanhedrim, who hailed men and women to prison, and who bitterly persecuted the followers of Christ?

It is Saul of Tarsus, but over his heart has come that change, without which no child of Adam can be saved. This doctrine, so plainly exemplified in the ease of Saul, is jeered at by the learned, the wise, the foolish, and the weak; but the Church of God, and the whole body of faithful followers of Christ, since Saul trembling and astonished made this prayer, will bear testimony to its truth. In the language of another we would say, “Let not the timid Christian be discouraged, let not his faith in this doctrine be shaken, though he may find that the principle to which he trusts his eternal happiness is considered false by him who knows nothing of its truth, that the change, of which the sound believer exhibits so convincing an evidence, is derided as absurd by the philosophical

skeptic, treated as chimerical by the superficial reasoner, or silently suspected as incredible by the decent moralist.”

155. The Prayers Of The Church For Peter.

The Prayers Of The Church For Peter. The Prayers as recorded.—Acts 12:5; Acts 12:12. The Answer.—Acts 12:6-8.

Enter with us, reader, the same dark prison in which the apostles have been chained before. There, between two soldiers, oppressed in body by the heavy chains, lies Peter, watched by a vigilant sentinel. How is it possible an escape can be made? “God giveth his beloved sleep.” Nothing disturbs the mind of Peter, although the next day he may lay down his life for the Lord. There is a feeling of firm trust in Peter’s heart that all will be well, and perhaps a conviction drawn from the words of the Savior to him, that his death would not occur till he was more aged.

“Sleep’s calm wing is on his brow, And thoughts of peace his spirit lull.”

There is a united prayer from God’s children ascending to heaven for Peter, that these bars and bolts which bind him may be broken, and that body and soul may be free: the Church prays, and God hears and answers. There is, too, in the house of Mary, the sister of Barnabas, a prayer-meeting that night, and Peter in bonds, Peter in prison, is not forgotten at the throne of grace. The effectual, fervent prayer availeth much: we must not only pray for ourselves, but for others. God’s love enlarges man’s heart, and fills it full of sympathy, it makes the eye of the Christian watchful over the true interests of others; are any in bonds, we are exhorted to pray for them; are any sick, or in prison, we must still pray on; we must pray as individuals, pray as a church.

Prayer was made without ceasing for Peter. This is the strong language of scripture— the example is for us as Christians. Peter slept sweetly and well, for not even the strong light that filled that prison cell, nor the presence of the angel aroused him, till smitten and awakened by the words of the spirit, “Rise up quickly;” his fetters are all unloosed, and Peter knows it is the work of the Lord. And was not his deliverance an answer to sincere, earnest prayer?

156. The Prayers And Praises Of Paul And Silas.

The Prayers And Praises Of Paul And Silas. The Prayers and Praises as recorded.—Acts 16:25. The Lord's Answer.—Acts 16:26-34.

“There be three chief rivers of despondency, sin, sorrow, fear.

Sin is the deepest, sorrow hath its shallows, and fear is a noisy rapid.” In the hearts of Paul and Silas is joy that the world knows not of, “joy and peace in believing.” Sin is forgiven, sorrow hath flown away, and there fear has no resting place. Within the gloomy walls of that prison are heard “songs in the night,” prayer to the God of Israel: they are not captives; man cannot bind their spirits, it is only the poor clay tenement he has cruelly imprisoned, their souls are free. Chained in that low dungeon, suffering from the chastisement of the preceding day, instead of the groan of pain, the curse against the magistrates who had caused them to suffer for spreading and teaching the truth, the prisoners, who are confined with them, are awakened at the hour of midnight by the voice of prayer, and the hymn of praise.

Paul and Silas are singing in that prison cell; it is music hallowed to God's service, sweet breathings of the spirit, whose strains are caught by waiting angels, and carried to heaven, to swell the chorus which is sung there to the praise of God and the Lamb for ever. And why are their fellow prisoners lost in wonder as their midnight praises reach their ears? Why does the world look on in astonishment, as it sees a smile lightening up the face of the suffering Christian, the child of God, calm in the midst of trial, rich in poverty, singing in prison, and filled with hope? Oh, they see, but they know not what is swelling the harmony in these calm hearts of Paul and Silas. It is a spirit born of heaven; its holy source, the great God himself; it is the moon that lights this little night of time, the night before a glorious morning.

Paul and Silas realize what David, the sweet singer of Israel, expresses so beautifully: “The Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his songs shall be with me.” And, reader, the spirit of Paul and Silas may be yours. You, too, may through all your trials, and the clouds that gather so thickly over you, may look up and pray; instead of the tears that now bathe your sorrow-worn cheeks, the light of joy may be there; but before you can realize all this “Your hearts must cast off their slough of darkness, Their eclipse of hell and sin.” Your spirit, bound to earth, must be unloosened from its fetters here, would you breathe with Paul and Silas the pure air of heaven. God will take away all that is bearing your spirits downward, all that is binding them to deceitful, unsatisfying earth. Ere you wait to see the idol mouldering to ashes, the phantom fading away, give your heart and its affections to God; your spirit then will sing a purer, holier song than the world has ever charmed you with; and in the prison house of earth your spirit may be free. Is your head bowed by the weight of sorrow in your heart, and the thousand strings of that “harp” shattered and broken, God's spirit can bring from them strains of heavenly music; hymns at morning, hymns at midnight; man cannot do this—earth, with all its wealth, cannot give your spirit rest—none but God, none but God, giveth songs in the night.

157. The Prayer Of St. Paul In The Temple.

The Prayer Of St. Paul In The Temple. The Prayer as recorded.—Acts 22:17-20. The Lord's Answer.—Acts 22:21. The Lord had chosen Saul, the persecutor, as his apostle, to be a witness of the resurrection to men of all nations, and to teach the wonderful truths of God; to tell what he had himself seen and heard; to set forth to them the first elements of the gospel as a new development of the most ancient faith known to men; as a "chosen vessel" he was permitted visions of "that just one," who came to die and suffer for man. Some time after his conversion, while worshiping in the court of the temple, he is thrown into a trance, and in this state of ecstasy he is permitted to realize the immediate presence of the Lord

Jesus, and his prayer is there made to him. Paul seems to be fearful that the people will not receive his testimony, remembering, as they did, his former life, and his presence at the stoning of Stephen, as well as the part he had performed in his death; he reminds the Lord of all this, and would know his will concerning him. St. Paul seems to realize how difficult it will be for the worldling to comprehend the change in his heart, in his life, and doctrine, caused by his conversion, and his words are very suggestive, and full of deep meaning, "the putting off the old man with his deeds," the becoming a "new creature," were truths he could not proclaim in his own feeble strength.

St. Paul prays like one that could feel for others, like one familiar with the weaknesses of our nature, who could allow for distrust, for misapprehension, who expected abuse and unbelief; he had not forgotten the deep pit out of which he had been taken, and he knew that the people still remembered him as Saul, the persecutor; how, then, would they receive him as the advocate of a cause on which he had once trampled?

159. Prayers Of St. Paul For The Church At Rome.

Prayers Of St. Paul For The Church At Rome. The Prayer as recorded.—Romans 1:8-12.

Another Prayer.—Romans 10:1.

Another Prayer.—Romans 15:5-6; Romans 15:13.

Another Prayer.—Romans 15:30-33.

St. Paul, like all who feel an interest in the church of God, ever remembered her at the mercy-seat. The church at Rome was large, and among her numbers were persons of consideration, as well as young converts; he longs to commune with, and to encourage them, and in his earnest love for them exhibits a tenderness and watchful care that shows itself more particularly than in anything else, in his constant prayer for their spiritual welfare; “thus feeding the Church of God,” in his absence, with food from heaven.

He seems to feel in his inmost soul the great price that has been paid to purchase souls, and watches with a prayerful, intense interest, the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer, calling often upon that God for her welfare, “who had brought him out of darkness into marvelous light.” St. Paul’s faith was constantly kept bright by continuing in prayer. This is the reason he so constantly urges this duty upon the Church, assuring them that the spirit will help all infirmities, and teach each to pray aright. As a consequent upon these unceasing devotions, Paul tells us we shall grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth, and each heart shall be full of that love, which, in his own forcible language, is described as surpassing knowledge.

Every Christian should pray often and much for the Church of God, not for this or that particular branch of it alone, but for the whole Church; Paul prayed for it, and condemns, through all his writings, a spirit of favoritism or partiality, and is ready to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all, and to pray for all. He says, “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one spirit. But now are there many members, but one body.”— 1 Corinthians 12:13. For each of these members or branches we are enjoined to pray, to cultivate for each that spirit of charity which thinketh no evil, and is not easily provoked, to quell every feeling which should lead the eye to say to the hand, I have no need of thee, or the head to the feet, I have no need of you. If this member or that branch of the Church of God is suffering, let every other branch suffer with it, and pray for it. These are the lessons Paul would teach, viz., unity of spirit, and Christian charity.

161. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Corinth.

The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Corinth. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Corinthians 1:3-4.

There was no branch of the Church of God which had fallen into so many errors as that of Corinth, for there were contentions, divisions, and strife among the people. St. Paul laments over these in prayer, while at the same time he thanks God for his gifts conferred on Christians in the church established there, and asks for an increase of this grace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. His affectionate and pathetic prayers for the Corinthians are intermingled with exhortations and directions to them. Prayer with St. Paul was not a solitary, independent exercise, but an exercise incorporated with many, and inseparably connected with that golden chain of Christian duties, of which, when so connected, it forms the most important link. St. Paul acted as well as prayed. This quickened his spiritual pulse, increased his ardor, made him watchful and anxious for the welfare of the Church.

Prayer was the great motive power which moved the machine; prayer kept him supplied with work; it made him "keen-sighted, clear-eyed;" he was enabled to survey the whole Church, to see clearly the temptations with which she was surrounded in this licentious city of Corinth; he saw the influence of false teachers on the minds of the people; saw the effect of the "enticing words of man's wisdom;" hence he comes to them with prayer, and the simple story of the cross; prays for them "with the spirit and the understanding;" he would confirm them to the end of their course in the faith and hope of the gospel. St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, in which this prayer is recorded, is filled up with vindications of his own character against the calumnies which, had been heaped upon it by his opposers, and contains, also, the most perfect and triumphant argument for the doctrine of the resurrection.

163. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Ephesus.

The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Ephesus. The Prayer as recorded.—Ephesians 3:14-21. This prayer is a part of St. Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus, written while he was a prisoner at Rome, and forwarded by Tychicus, who is called a beloved brother and faithful minister. Ephesus was at this time the metropolis of Asia; the worship of the goddess Diana was the prevailing religion; here was the temple reared for her followers; here, too, the Theatre, the largest structure of the kind ever erected by the Greeks—the ruins still remain, and are of interest as identifying the scene of one of Paul's most perilous conflicts. But the Church of God had been planted here through the instrumentality of Paul, and this prayer is made for its growth and welfare. Confined within the walls of a prison, his desire for their prosperity is unabated, and he seeks the throne of grace that they might be strengthened by God's spirit. The religion of Jesus Christ had many powerful opposers at Ephesus; the worship of the goddess Diana furnished employment to many in the manufacture of shrines and ornaments for the temple; it was also the seat of the black art, so that the public mind was familiarized with the pretension to supernatural-gifts, "and Ephesian charms," and thus the people were hardened against the due effects of miracles. This art was not alone practiced by the low and ignorant, but studied as a science by the learned philosophers of the age, as well as men of letters; these books sold for immense sums, and were a source of wealth to the people.

These were a few of the many powers acting against the advancement of the simple religion of Jesus—that Jesus, whose name afterward turned the cheeks of the sorcerers to a pallid hue, and their books to ashes. St. Paul prays, he cannot now go to the Church, but he can, in his prison cell, bow low the knee in prayer, and lift up his voice to God for the prosperity of his children; they were dear to the heart of Paul, and he asks for them a heavenly father's care, a heavenly father's blessing.

165. The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Colosse.

The Prayer Of St. Paul For The Church At Colosse. The Prayer as recorded.—Colossians 1:2-16. The letter in which mention is made of Paul's earnest prayer for the Church at Colosse, is somewhat similar to that sent by him to the Ephesians, and exhibits his love and zeal for the success of God's cause. This branch of the Church is supposed to have been founded by Epaphras, who was sent there by Paul, and it is not recorded that the apostle had ever visited it. This church, at this time, seems to have been in a flourishing condition, for "his dear fellow servant," as Epaphras is called by St. Paul, had assured him of their love to Christ, and to him for Christ's sake. Heretical sects had sprung up at this time, and philosophy, under different names.

Aristotelian, or Platonic, prevailed to a great extent in that age; and mixed up, as it was, with Judaism, and Jewish tradition, it had assumed rather a religious form, and had crept into Colosse. St. Paul feared its effects on the Church; he warns Christians against its wily doctrines, a warning as necessary in every age of the Christian Church as then; a warning needed as long as men, in things of religion, take philosophy rather than God's holy written word, as their guide.

167. Paul's Prayer For The Church At Thessalonica.

Paul's Prayer For The Church At Thessalonica. The Prayer as recorded.—1 Thessalonians 3:10-13. The good tidings of the love and devotedness of his brethren in the city of Thessalonica, filled the heart of Paul with thankfulness, and comforted him in his heavy trials, for he says: "Now we live if ye stand fast." Every message concerning the success of the gospel among the people of God, filled the soul of Paul with joy, and his lips with praise. In this petition there is expressed no desire for wealth, fame, or even an increase of converts, but that he may meet them again, and that not alone for the pleasure he would realize in beholding those for whom so often his prayers had risen to God, but that he might aid them spiritually, and perfect that which was lacking in their faith. It is the prayer of one risen with Christ, of "one whose spirit was so large in its affections, so high in its object, of a man who had so much of heaven in his friendships, so much of soul in his attachments, that he thought time too brief, earth too scanty, worldly blessings too low, to enter deeply into his prayers for those for whom life itself would so soon be no more."

"This truth in all your hearts receive: That all the saints unite with care, To prove the omnipotence of prayer;

Oh, then pray on, 'twill clear the way—

Chiefly for God's own Spirit pray:

There you shall And, if there you seek, Wealth for the poor, strength for the weak;

Soundness for sickness, life for death, Derived from this inspiring breath."

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