

Tenth Lesson. 'What Wilt Thou?' Or, Prayer Must Be Definite

by Andrew Murray

To pray effectively, we must be specific in our requests, trust in God's promises, and have a firm will to receive what we ask.

Scripture: Matthew 9:28, Mark 10:51, Luke 18:41, John 15:7, Philippians 4:6, James 1:5

Topics: "Definite Prayer", "Faith in Prayer"

Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the necessity of definite prayer, illustrating how Jesus asked the blind man, 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' to highlight the importance of articulating specific needs in prayer. He argues that vague prayers often lack the power to elicit a response from God, as they do not reflect a true understanding of one's desires or faith. Murray encourages believers to examine their hearts and express their requests clearly, as this not only strengthens their faith but also aligns their will with God's. He asserts that true prayer involves a commitment to seek God's will actively and to expect answers, fostering a deeper relationship with the Father. Ultimately, Murray calls for a prayer life that is both earnest and specific, leading to a more profound experience of God's grace and provision.

Transcript

'And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?'--Mark x. 51; Luke xviii. 41.

THE blind man had been crying out aloud, and that a great deal, 'Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' The cry had reached the ear of the Lord; He knew what he wanted, and was ready to grant it him. But ere He does it, He asks him: 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' He wants to hear from his own lips, not only the general petition for mercy, but the distinct expression of what his desire was. Until he speaks it out, he is not healed.

There is now still many a suppliant to whom the Lord puts the same question, and who cannot, until it has been answered, get the aid he ask. Our prayers must not be a vague appeal to His mercy, an indefinite cry for blessing, but the distinct expression of definite need. Not that His loving heart does not understand our cry, or is not ready to hear. But He desires it for our own sakes. Such definite prayer teaches us to know our own needs better. It demands time, and thought, and self-scrutiny to find out what really is our greatest need. It searches us and puts us to the test as to whether our desires are honest and real, such as we are ready to persevere in. It leads us to judge whether our desires are according to God's Word, and whether

we really believe that we shall receive the things we ask. It helps us to wait for the special answer, and to mark it when it comes.

And yet how much of our prayer is vague and pointless. Some cry for mercy, but take not the trouble to know what mercy must do for them. Others ask, perhaps, to be delivered from sin, but do not begin by bringing any sin by name from which the deliverance may be claimed. Still others pray for God's blessing on those around them, for the outpouring of God's Spirit on their land or the world, and yet have no special field where they wait and expect to see the answer. To all the Lord says: And what is it now you really want and expect Me to do? Every Christian has but limited powers, and as he must have his own special field of labour in which he works, so with his prayers too. Each believer has his own circle, his family, his friends, his neighbours. If he were to take one or more of these by name, he would find that this really brings him into the training-school of faith, and leads to personal and pointed dealing with his God. It is when in such distinct matters we have in faith claimed and received answers, that our more general prayers will be believing and effectual.

We all know with what surprise the whole civilised world heard of the way in which trained troops were repulsed by the Transvaal Boers at Majuba. And to what did they owe their success? In the armies of Europe the soldier fires upon the enemy standing in large masses, and never thinks of seeking an aim for every bullet. In hunting game the Boer had learnt a different lesson: his practised eye knew to send every bullet on its special message, to seek and find its man. Such aiming must gain the day in the spiritual world too. As long as in prayer we just pour out our hearts in a multitude of petitions, without taking time to see whether every petition is sent with the purpose and expectation of getting an answer, not many will reach the mark. But if, as in silence of soul we bow before the Lord, we were to ask such questions as these: What is now really my desire? do I desire it in faith, expecting to receive? am I now ready to place and leave it in the Father's bosom? is it a settled thing between God and me that I am to have the answer? we should learn so to pray that God would see and we would know what we really expect.

It is for this, among other reasons, that the Lord warns us against the vain repetitions of the Gentiles, who think to be heard for their much praying. We often hear prayers of great earnestness and fervour, in which a multitude of petitions are poured forth, but to which the Saviour would undoubtedly answer 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' If I am in a strange land, in the interests of the business which my father owns, I would certainly write two different sorts of letters. There will be family letters giving expression to all the intercourse to which affection prompts; and there will be business letters, containing orders for what I need. And there may be letters in which both are found. The answers will correspond to the letters. To each sentence of the letters containing the family news I do not expect a special answer. But for each order I send I am confident of an answer whether the desired article has been forwarded. In our dealings with God the business element must not be wanting. With our expression of need and sin, of love and faith and consecration, there must be the pointed statement of what we ask and expect to receive; it is in the answer that the Father loves to give us the token of His approval and acceptance.

But the word of the Master teaches us more. He does not say, What dost thou wish? but, What does thou will? One often wishes for a thing without willing it. I wish to have a certain article, but I find the price too high; I resolve not to take it; I wish, but do not will to have it. The sluggard wishes to be rich, but does not will it. Many a one wishes to be saved, but perishes because he does not will it. The will rules the whole heart and life; if I really will to have anything that is within my reach, I do not rest till I have it. And so, when Jesus says to us, 'What wilt thou?' He asks whether it is indeed our purpose to have what we ask at any price, however great the sacrifice. Dost thou indeed so will to have it that, though He delay it long, thou

dost not hold thy peace till He hear thee? Alas! how many prayers are wishes, sent up for a short time and then forgotten, or sent up year after year as matter of duty, while we rest content with the prayer without the answer.

But, it may be asked, is it not best to make our wishes known to God, and then to leave it to Him to decide what is best, without seeking to assert our will? By no means. This is the very essence of the prayer of faith, to which Jesus sought to train His disciples, that it does not only make known its desire and then leave the decision to God. That would be the prayer of submission, for cases in which we cannot know God's will. But the prayer of faith, finding God's will in some promise of the Word, pleads for that till it come. In Matthew (ix. 28) we read Jesus said to the blind man: 'Believe ye that I can do this?' Here, in Mark, He says: 'What wilt thou that I should do?' In both cases He said that faith had saved them. And so He said to the Syrophenician woman, too: 'Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Faith is nothing but the purpose of the will resting on God's word, and saying: I must have it. To believe truly is to will firmly.

But is not such a will at variance with our dependence on God and our submission to Him? By no means; it is much rather the true submission that honours God. It is only when the child has yielded his own will in entire surrender to the Father, that he receives from the Father liberty and power to will what he would have. But, when once the believer has accepted the will of God, as revealed through the Word and Spirit, as his will, too, then it is the will of God that His child should use this renewed will in His service. The will is the highest power in the soul; grace wants above everything to sanctify and restore this will, one of the chief traits of God's image, to full and free exercise. As a son, who only lives for his father's interests, who seeks not his own but his father's will is trusted by the father with his business, so God speaks to His child in all truth, 'What wilt thou?' It is often spiritual sloth that, under the appearance of humility, professes to have no will, because it fears the trouble of searching out the will of God, or, when found, the struggle of claiming it in faith. True humility is ever in company with strong faith, which only seeks to know what is according to the will of God, and then boldly claims the fulfilment of the promise: 'Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'

'LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.'

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Lord Jesus! teach me to pray with all my heart and strength, that there may be no doubt with Thee or with me as to what I have asked. May I so know what I desire that, even as my petitions are recorded in heaven, I can record them on earth too, and note each answer as it comes. And may my faith in what Thy Word has promised be so clear that the Spirit may indeed work in me the liberty to will that it shall come. Lord! renew, strengthen, sanctify wholly my will for the work of effectual prayer.

Blessed Saviour! I do beseech Thee to reveal to me the wonderful condescension Thou showest us, thus asking us to say what we will that Thou shouldest do, and promising to do whatever we will. Son of God! I cannot understand it; I can only believe that Thou hast indeed redeemed us wholly for Thyself, and dost seek to make the will, as our noblest part, Thy most efficient servant. Lord! I do most unreservedly yield my will to Thee, as the power through which Thy Spirit is to rule my whole being. Let Him take possession of it, lead it into the truth of Thy promises, and make it so strong in prayer that I may ever hear Thy voice saying: 'Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' Amen.

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