

confession of weakness and sin and inactivity, in having neglected many duties and failed to perform what should have been done for the purpose of making the Gospel of Jesus Christ a living reality in us and in others.

And the more humbly we acknowledge our shortcomings, the more earnestly will He pray also to God to give to us and the church more strength to succeed in the battle for the truth and for the cause of Christ during the period we are yet members of the church militant. This will be a prayer for ourselves and for others and for all Christianity; a prayer for the inner and outer prosperity of the church in all of her members.

And that prayer, in the third place, will be a prayer for a final peace to the church and to all Christians when the time of struggle shall have been ended. The prayer for the deliverance of the people of God from their adversaries will ever be a part and portion of such petitions. And such a prayer will express the feeling that it will in God's own appointed hour and time be heard. The last words of the New Covenant books directed to the congregation of Christ are the words: "Yea, I come quickly, Amen! come, Lord Jesus," and it behooves the congregation of the Lord Jesus at all times to be mindful of this truth, and at every repetition of the second petition, "Thy Kingdom come," remember the final return of Christ to transform the church militant into the church triumphant.

III. That this threefold prayer of the church can not fail of a hearing and a realization, but must finally end in a glorious consummation, is a third lesson taught us by the parable now being considered.

The widow is clearly a picture also of comfort, in so far as she shows us the success in which the church militant will end. We can prove the truth of what is elsewhere also taught by the Scriptures, namely, that the earnest, persistent prayer of the

righteous avails much, and that such prayer, even if seemingly not heard at first, will yet, in the end, successfully appeal to the Throne of Mercy. The widow gains her end at last; even the unjust judge yields and the wicked adversaries are routed. Of course the judge shows that, as far as he was concerned, not the justice of her cause, but the persistency of her plea was the cause that finally induced him to yield. He listens to her because he is tired of hearing her complaints. The lesson the Christian is to learn from this final victory of the widow is expressed in the words that the Lord, who is just and right, will all the more listen to the prayer of His children when they plead before Him.

And the people of the Lord have at all times experienced such deliverance and salvation. How often has bloody persecution tried to stamp out the life of the church, and yet the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church! Again and again the church has fallen into error and false doctrine, and again and again the Lord has restored to her the truth and the light. The history of the evangelical church is one continued demonstration of the fact that the truth of God eventually will prevail. When Martin Luther, after the Diet at Worms, was put under the ban, all hope for the revival of truth, of which he was the champion, seemed to be lost. And yet how gloriously was the Gospel cause saved and became a blessing to countless millions!

But in this the widow is also a picture of comfort for the church, that she was delivered from temporal oppression. It is a grand thought suggested by the experience of this woman, that it presents to us the idea that the church shall be delivered from all the adversaries that oppress and antagonize her, and that she shall be gloriously changed from a church militant to a church triumphant. Sin and sorrow, evil and wrong, all shall be removed; she shall be cleansed and purified and delivered and, in absolute holiness, dwell in heaven, blessing God and the Lamb forevermore. Amen.