

is the consequence of their holiness and not the reward of it. Their purity of heart has clarified their spiritual perception, so that they see plainly what they should ask for, and, asking that they are not disappointed. Thus the prevailing prayer of the closet is that of the righteous man, and the measure of personal holiness is the measure also of the power of petition. You hear of the great things that have been wrought by prayer in the history of men and institutions; but beware of supposing that nothing but asking is involved in such success. The asking was of a peculiar kind; it was that of men who lived much with God and were doing much for God, and whose characters, in the life of every day, illustrated the gospel of the Lord Jesus. It was that, moreover of men who were diligently seeking, by the use of appropriate means, to answer their own prayers; and not by one spasmodic leap can men vault into their privilege. It belongs only to their holiness and activity; and through growth in these alone shall men grow into their success. But if you seek it only for the sake of success, or only to be like those who have been successful, you shall ignominiously fail. They sought it from God that they might give it to God; and those who would imitate them must do the same.

As a final inference from these considerations it may be noted how necessary it is that prayers should be characterized by entire submission to the will of God. The undertone of every supplication should be, "Thy will be done." There is a warrant for stretching earnestness up to this point, "Father, if it be possible." But that must always be combined with the "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." This is a prayer that is always answered, and the answer to it can bring ultimately nothing but blessing to him who believes it sincerely, though in the immediate future there may be betrayals and crucifixions. So let the Christian go his way, undistracted alike by the objections which so-called philosophers have raised against prayer, and by the unguarded things which spiritual professors have said about the power of it; and having faith in God, let him leave every request with him, sure that in the end he shall