

TRUE PRAYERS NEVER LOST.

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It is hard to believe that the fervent prayer of the righteous man is ever lost. The answer may be long delayed. It may come in a manner wholly unlooked for.—The return of the prayer may be such that it may not be recognized by the devout soul who uttered it. But it is not lost.

1. For example, there are some prayers which we cannot expect to see answered immediately. I was at a monthly concert last evening, where God's people were pleading with him for the conversion of the world. None of that praying company had any expectation of living to see the day when the last heathen nation should surrender to the victorious Jesus. Yet their petitions will never be forgotten.—Those pleading disciples will yet behold the glorious fulfillment of their desires from the battlements of heaven. For in our own experience we have seen many a prayer manifestly answered long after the saint who breathed it into the ear of the Saviour has gone to lay his weary head on that Saviour's breast.

A dying mother commits her beloved boy to a covenant-keeping God. She has often borne that child on the arms of faith to the mercy seat. He has been the child of many prayers; and in the feeble utterances of her passing spirit another and a last petition is breathed forth that Christ would have mercy on his soul. Years roll away. The sod has grown green, and the rank grass has long waved over that mother's tomb. In some distant land—maybe hundreds of miles from that spot—a full-grown man, who has long been ripening in sin, is seen bowed in prayer.—He is crying out of an agonized heart, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Behold he prayeth, and his prayer is the answer of the fervent petitions which his dying mother uttered many long years before.—Her requests were recorded in God's book of remembrance; and but for them we know not that the prayer of that penitent son would ever have ascended there. Let praying fathers and mothers never grow faint of heart. Let desponding churches—long unvisited by revival blessings—only close up their ranks more compactly about

the mercy seat, and besiege heaven with new importunity. For above the dark cloud of their discouragement is written in the clear, upper sky, "He that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

2. Other prayers are answered at the time of their utterance, but in a way so unlooked for that he who offered them is inclined to think that the very opposite of what he asked for has befallen him. One individual prays, for instance, that he may be enabled to glorify God. Ere he is aware, some tremendous calamity comes crashing down upon him, prostrating him to the dust. His fortune is swept away. Or his schemes of promotion are blasted. A favorite child is missed from the cradle or the hearthstone. His hopes are withered like grass. God has answered his prayer, but has answered it, as the Psalmist says, "by terrible things." From under the overwhelming pressure of affliction he flees to Jesus, his divine comforter, and how his love is kindled by the contact!—How his latent faith is called forth! How he glorifies God in the furnace of trial which is purging away the dross of selfishness and worldliness, and making his pure gold to shine with tenfold brightness!

We once saw an earnest enquirer who was praying most importunately for faith in Christ, and for peace to his troubled soul. But while he prayed a cloud of darkness gathered across his horizon.—And against that cloud which swung like a funeral pall before his vision played the sharp lightnings of the Almighty's wrath. The thunder of God's law roared against him, like the death-dealing guns of our frigates against the walls of those sea-coast fortresses of Hattens. Instead of peace came only the sword. Instead of the calm he sought came the fearful tempest; and under the stress of its terrors the poor, baffled soul betakes himself to the "covert" which Christ has raised on Calvary. There he finds the peace he so earnestly prayed for. There the long-sought confidence in Jesus pours its fulness through the soul. His prayer was answered—first by terrible things, but at last by the very blessings which he desired. And without that storm the true calm would have never come. Had the sinner not been led to that frightful view