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"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem! let my right hand forget its cunning."—Ps. 137, v. 5.

LECTURE

On St. Matthew VII., 9-14, inclusive.

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THE language of Scripture is remarkable for its simplicity, comprehensiveness, and force. Many volumes have been written on the all-important subject of prayer; yet the single sentence of our blessed Lord contained in the 7th verse of this chapter, presents a complete view of what prayer really is, and exhibits all that has been or that can be advanced on this subject. Prayer is the expression of desire; "it is to ask, to seek, and knock;" prayer is the language of the heart; words are not necessary to it; fervor and importunity are essential characteristics of prayer. The Hearer of prayer desires nothing so much as to find in us that state of mind which Jacob of old exhibited when he expressly said to God, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." And such kinds of prayer will always be effectual. The answer may not be immediately given. It may not come in the exact form or way that was desired and expected. But we should rest assured that all earnest, fervent and persevering prayer will not remain unanswered. Sooner or later, and in one way or another, "those who ask shall receive, those who seek shall find, to them that knock it will be opened." We find this substantially to be the case, even among men. Our Lord puts the question, appealing to our own experience, as we find in verses 9 and 10, "*What can is there of you, whom, if his son ask*

bread, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?"

There is here a strong appeal to the common feelings of our nature—the feelings of a father to his children. The parent who should withhold from his children or family the necessary supplies of food, would be looked upon as a monster of inhumanity. He would be deemed a murderer of the most atrocious kind, who, in answer to a demand for food by his children, should give them, not wholesome and nourishing food, but destructive and deadly poison. The parent who acted in the manner here supposed would undoubtedly be unworthy of the name of a man, much less of a parent. But cases of such unnatural conduct seldom occur. Parents in general attend to the temporal wants of their children, and give them what is necessary for their support, and what is conducive to their comfort. Natural instinct and natural affection dispose the parent to comply with the prayer of a child asking for what is needful to the body. Parents would transgress the great and universal law of their nature were they to act otherwise. They would resist the impulse of those feelings which the Great Creator has implanted within them. They would trample on all the finest emotions of the human heart. From this view of the parental character, our blessed Lord and Saviour deduces an apt illustration of the parental character of God the Father of mankind, and also an argument very cogent to shew that the prayers of His children will assuredly meet with a favorable reception at His gracious hand. This is seen in verse 11: "*If ye, being evil, know how to*