

plainly implies Divine omnipotence. He to whom we pray is not only willing to hear and able to help, but He *does* help us. To suppose that God has both the will and the power to grant us our petitions, and that He declines to do so, is a direct contradiction. He *does* hear prayer. It is at this point the sceptic meets the Christian ; and at this point the latter should appeal to his own experience, and instead of discussing the subject theoretically, let him look at it practically. Has God answered our prayers in the past ? No Christian can fail to give to this question an affirmative reply.

The Divine promise never looses its faithfulness. While we agree that our petitions have *generally* been granted, we are sometimes inclined to think that there have been occasions when our prayers called back no response—at least not the response we anticipated. This is quite likely ; but is it a reason why we should withdraw our faith from the hearer of prayer ? If at times He has not given us what we desired, are we to cease asking ?

Every Christian is aware, that without the enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost, we know not what to pray for as we ought. That the Spirit alone can help our infirmities in this matter, and that it is only when guided by Him that we pray intelligently. But we sometimes attempt prayer without the aid of the Spirit, and on such occasions we never *pray aright* ; for if divine influence is essential to true prayer, we cannot ask for things agreeable to God's will, unless we are subject to the Spirit's guidance. It is when we engage in this duty, trusting to our own wisdom to direct us ; or, when through spiritual negligence we have no assurance that our thoughts are prompted by the Spirit, we offer petitions not in accord with God's will, and which, consequently, cannot be granted. Let us be guarded against the mistaken notion, that what we ask must *always* be given us. God is a sovereign, and as such, it is His prerogative to grant or to refuse, according to His pleasure ; and as He always pleases to grant what will at once glorify Himself and bless us, He never declines the request that embraces these conditions. But seeing that we are, in large measure, ignorant of our need, we often ask for those things that, if given, would neither glorify the Giver nor bless the petitioner ; and, consequently, the prayers we suppose unanswered, are not prayers in the *Scripture* sense, and ought not to be granted. If God must, as a matter of course, send us whatever we requested, then He stands in a different relation to us from that which the Bible teaches. He would no longer be sovereign, doing according to the good pleasure of His will ; but our servant, under obligation to us to do whatsoever we require. Let us remember He is our Father, who knows us better than we know ourselves ; and who, tenderly taking note of our minutest care, will surely withhold no good from them that repose their confidence in Him. Let us not forget how dependent our spiritual life is on the Holy Spirit. The Church needs a baptism from on high. We may possess the means of grace ; may listen to the voice of a stated ministry ; may have all the outward appliances to ensure success, but if the influence of the Spirit be not felt, all these are fruitless. The coldness of formalism takes possession of the heart, and soon all desire for spiritual life perishes, and we rest satisfied with a name to live while we are dead. If we would have the Word of God come to us with power, let us frequent the Throne of Grace with pleadings—earnest, faithful, specific and persevering. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."