

the divine will. He must pray for outward things, only so far as they may be for God's glory, and for his own real good. Thus praying, the believer knows that his petitions are granted. True, though granted, and that speedily perhaps, yet they may not be granted exactly as he expected; but he is satisfied that they are granted in the best manner; and though his requests should for the present be denied, yet he is sure, when made in faith, they shall in the best time and way, at length be answered, and therefore he knows that he has obtained what he asked. James and John, on one occasion, failed thus to ask. They made their petition to their Lord, thus, "Grant unto us, that we may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand in thy kingdom." They thought of the honors of a temporal kingdom. They asked for what God had not promised to give. They asked also with improper views. Jesus therefore reproved them saying, "Ye know not what ye ask." This prayer was of no avail, for it accorded not with the divine will; it was not grounded on the divine promise.

True prayer is offered in the name of Christ. Whatsoever ye shall ask, in my name, that will I do. To pray in Christ's name, is to pray, relying on Christ's merits, and mediation alone, for acceptance with God. When the believer presents Christ to God in prayer, —when he carries the Lamb slain in his arms, —when he says, "Lord, I am a sinner, but here is my propitiation—here is my surety, for his sake be gracious," this is coming to God, in Christ's name, and this is to pray in faith.

But how shall we thus pray in faith? Of ourselves we cannot pray as we ought. We must implore the Spirit of God. We cannot call God Father, but by the Holy Ghost. Though we should be believers, yet we cannot bring our souls into a prepared frame for this duty, without the Spirit's assistance. Because of ignorance, because of remaining unbelief and corruption, left to ourselves, without the Spirit, we shall pray amiss. How many instances are there of even the greatest saints in Scripture, through these causes, asking things unlawful, when they failed to implore the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We find Elijah, for example, requesting for himself that he might die, and saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life," etc. 1st Kings 19. v. 4. We find Job saying, "O that I might have my request!" etc., Job 3, 8; "even that it would please God to destroy me, that he would loose his hand and cut me off." We find Jonah saying, "O Lord, I beseech thee, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." We find Moses putting up a prayer that was altogether unbecoming, both as to the matter and manner of it. Num. 11: 11-15. In another instance, we find him asking for a thing which he knew beforehand God would not grant him, Deut. 3: 25; on which occasion, God says, "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter." We find Peter saying, "De-

part from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." These eminent believers, when left to themselves, for their humiliation, because of prayed amiss, and had their prayers rejected. When left to themselves, believers are weak like other men; they are compassed with infirmities. They become dead in their affections, cold and indifferent. Their thoughts wander in prayer. They are not earnestly desirous of the blessing.

To pray in faith, therefore, it is not enough to be believers. We must have the immediate assistance of God's Holy Spirit. We must see that we have the spirit of grace and supplication. We must have the guidance and influence of the Spirit. "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered." The Spirit of God gives his people lively apprehensions of divine things,—shows them their sins, their wants and their necessities,—moves them to seek God with their case,—suggests to them suitable arguments with which to plead,—mends their hearts,—fires their souls with fervor, and enables them to persevere in prayer, with confident expectation of receiving what they ask in faith.

Having thus explained the nature of true prayer, I come now to show its efficacy. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." There are numerous other passages in Scripture, which are so many promises and assurances that God will answer true prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc., Mat. 7: 7, 8. The Lord Jesus, the utterer of these words, adds, that it would be most dishonorable to God to suppose the contrary, after all the displays which God has given of his fatherly compassion to sinners. "For what man is there of you," etc., v. 9, 10, 11. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name," said Christ, to his disciples, "I will do it." John 14: 13, 14. "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." But these words are not of any private interpretation; they were not to be confined to the disciples. They are addressed to all believers. How many believers can witness that Jesus has heard their prayers. Yes, they have received answers to their prayers sufficient to convince them that their prayers have been heard. He may not have granted the very thing they asked for, because he has promised only to give them good things; and sometimes in their ignorance, they have asked for things though good in themselves, yet not good in them. St. Paul thought it would be good for him to be relieved from the thorn in the flesh, but the Lord knew it would be better for him to bear it, lest the abundant revelations he had received should exalt him above measure. Therefore, when he besought the Lord that he would take it away, he received this answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee." And he found it sufficient, for he was able afterwards to say, "I take pleasure in infirmities."

A man deludes himself egregiously who