

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

The human mind is generally slow to believe that very great effects may be compassed by very simple means. In religion especially, in every branch of it, whether it be to understand it or to practise it, it is apt to conjure up difficulty, if only that it may better excuse to itself its own ignorance, or perplexity, or disobedience. It loves the darkness rather than the light, from instinctive conviction that there is much in men which the light shall rebuke. It scarce thanks the hand which offers to lift from it the veil that shrouds it and to show unto it the splendours and consolations and power of God's truth. But you may ask proof that the Spirit, if prayed so to do, and if obeyed in godly living, shall lead you, each of you, without any intervention whatever between the Spirit and each of you, unto such knowledge of saving truth as may be sufficient in the case of each of you. Then hear to this end what the Scripture saith, "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true"—and again, "When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth"—and more especially this passage, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. Now we have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;—and yet this passage, as particularly, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (meaning, ye have the Holy Spirit poured out on you), "and ye know all things; but the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any

man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." And thus prays Paul for the Ephesians, "I cease not to make mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." And thus he prays for the Colossians, "We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, increasing in the knowledge of God." And thus if we pray, so will it be unto us; and if thus we pray not, so will it not be unto us. The Spirit given unto us will rest within us a grieved and a grieving Spirit, until we seek its aid; but seeking its aid, it will give it, and more than we ask. And it is God's Spirit, the Spirit of Wisdom and of Truth, and wisdom it will give, and unto truth it will guide. It will do this, for it is bound by God's promise to do this. It was because it could and should do this, that Christ won it from heaven, and sent it down to men. But not only by prayer must it be sought. Prayer may be hollow, the mere word of the lip. It must be the prayer of the true heart; and the heart shows its truth but in one way, the loving God's will, and the endeavour to do it. Therefore, it is not to the prayer only that the help and guidance of God's Spirit unto the attainment of truth, and the discerning of the truth amid the doctrines of men, are promised; but to the prayer of him who shows his love and sincerity by heartily endeavouring to do that will of God which his word reveals. Thus St. Paul says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." And thus our Saviour saith, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free."—*Dean Elliot.*