

cannot embrace *all* the afflicted, but must necessarily confine its remedial efforts to a few,—*indifference*, because if He is able to heal *all*, and yet willfully limits that ability, and confines its exertions to certain fixed dates. God would thus appear careless of the case of many who could not avail themselves of the opportunities these established periods afforded. During the intervals of healing many would succumb to the fatal power of their malady, and yet have evinced as great an anxiety for restoration as those had who received the blessing of healing, and thus we should find the penitent lifting his voice in vain, and calling on God for naught! But that the above is not the arrangement Divine mercy has made is abundantly evident from the teaching of Scripture and the experience of penitents. At all times, and under all circumstances, we are welcome to the Throne of Grace. Whenever we feel the pressure of need, we are bidden come with no faltering faith, no trembling doubt, but with boldness to the Father.

A careful observation of the religious practices of many Christians leads us to fear, that while they do not believe that their coming to God in prayer is confined to stated periods, they act as if this were true. Too often, while they are regular in their attendance on the means of grace in the public assemblies of the sanctuary, they neglect those seasons specially set apart for social prayer, and the privileges of the closet are almost ignored. While they apparently sympathise with public devotion, their homes have no family altar, and private, personal communion with God is rarely sought.

Unless we carry with us the consciousness that God is always willing to hear prayer, we cannot obey the apostolic admonition,—“pray without ceasing.” Nor will we cultivate the feeling that God is constantly ready to hear, unless we also believe in His unlimited ability to answer prayer. It would be worse than vain to place our petitions before the Throne of Grace if we were assured, that though the Divine Being is willing to hear, He yet lacks the power to answer. Let the heart, burdened with its need, be invited to bring that burden to God, and find, that though there is an unhesitating readiness on His part to stretch forth the hand to unloose the burden, yet the hand is too feeble to carry out the purpose of the will, would not the petitioner feel the treatment tantalising? If parched with thirst, the pilgrim is directed to a fountain, and, guided thither, finds a *mirage* instead, may he not well complain of studied cruelty?

But no such disappointment meets the soul that comes to God in earnest prayer. The invitation—“Ho! ye that thirst, come ye to the waters;” is based on the well-known fact that there are waters to which we are urged to come, and from which no one needs carry back an unquenched thirst. The omnipotence of Jehovah sustains his will. What He wills He is able to perform: and whatever we ask, that is agreeable to His will, He is able to grant.

If this were not true there would be a region in which the Divine will is impotent; for we might feel the necessity for blessings that it required omnipotence to secure, and although there might be a readiness on the part of God to grant us these, yet if He lacked the power needful to procure them, our prayers would be but the cry of anguish, appealing to hopeless weakness. Moreover, while we were left to repeat our unavailing cry, or give up in despair, would not the consciousness of impotence prove a constant torture to Him who heard, but could not help us? We need the *merciful power* and the *powerful mercy*. Nothing but omnipotence can uphold a human soul, and satisfy its legitimate requirements. That God is all powerful we need not stay to illustrate. The very fact that He justly claims the worship and service of immortal beings—beings with such varied necessities, such constant feebleness, and such deep yearnings for the infinite,