

he gives only that which will be best; and, if men were to view the matter rightly they should see as much reason to be thankful to him for a refusal as for an answer to their prayers.

But this condition connects itself with the nature of the thing asked and is nearly akin to the third class of conditions which springs out of the purpose and prerogative of God himself. This is a view of the case which has not been sufficiently attended to by Christians; and they cannot wonder therefore that it has been quite overlooked by others. The hearer of prayer is not the only relation in which God stands to his people. He is the Father as well; and he is, besides, the moral governor of the intelligent universe. Therefore he uses his prerogative in answering prayer for moral purposes; and the action which he takes on the petitions of his children, is a portion of that discipline to which he subjects them, and by which he trains them into strength and holiness of character. Or it may be that the kind of answers that he gives is determined by the influence which the suppliant's example may have on others. He may give what is asked in order that they who ask it may be convinced of the folly of their request; he may deny that which is besought, in order that, by the denial, he may open the suppliant's eyes to the need of higher blessings, and stimulate him to ask for them. Or he may give something else than that which is craved, because, while it will be equally valuable to the petitioner, it will be an encouragement and assistance to many others.

There are illustrations of all these in the word of God. When the children of Israel cried for supplies, it is said that he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. So again when the tribes desired a king he gave them Saul; that through the infliction of that monarch's arbitrary and capricious tyranny they might be convinced of the wickedness of their desire. Never was there a more devout and sincere suppliant than he who wished to converse with God face to face; and yet, when he pressed his suit to be permitted to enter Canaan, Jehovah answered: "Let it suffice thee! Speak no more to me of this