

should stop. He goes no farther, for God prompts him no longer. "The Lord went his way, and Abraham returned unto his place." If he had run beyond the Spirit's impulse, and had asked Sodom's safety for Lot's sake alone, we cannot think he would have gained an answer to his prayer. Take an instance, perhaps even more strong than this. Daniel's petition, recorded in the book that bears his name. Before the Jews had been carried into Babylon, the prophet Jeremiah had foretold that their captivity should last for seventy years. Daniel had read and understood these prophecies. He knew that the fulfilment of the time had come. What did he do? Did he say—"God has decreed the deliverance of Israel; we have nothing to do but to stand still and see His salvation?" Not at all. He tells us that "he set his face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. He uttered one of the most intense and urgent petitions that was ever spoken, making confession of his own and of his people's sins, but beseeching pardon, and imploring that God's promise be performed. That prayer comes straight from God. He has revealed His purposes to Daniel, and so has induced him to ask that they shall be fulfilled. Is it answered? He says that while he was yet speaking and praying and confessing, and presenting his supplications before the Lord his God, the angel Gabriel touched him and said, "Daniel, I am come to give thee skill and understanding!"

Look at Elijah on Mount Carmel. He bows in agony of prayer; he bids his servant go and look towards the sea, if a cloud is rising there. The man returns and reports that there is nothing. "Go seven times and bring me word," the prophet cries, and casts himself down, as it would seem, in silent prayer, for no word of his petition is recorded. Probably it was an illustration of the statement in our text—"The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." He stirred within Elijah's heart thoughts that were too great and deep to be expressed by words. But God searches the heart and knows the mind of the spirit. The divine ear heard and read the prophet's yearnings, and gave the blessings that he craved. The servant came the seventh time and said, "there is a little cloud the size of a man's hand,"—a thing of slight importance, scarcely worth the mentioning. Elijah springs to his feet and cries, "Go tell the king to make haste and get him down, for there is the sound of abundance of rain in the land." Why was it that the prophet wrestled thus with heaven?