

The motto, do good because it is good, although high sounding, is one which may take the form of essential selfishness by drawing away our minds to an independent standard of right, instead of keeping the eye of love fixed upon God as the embodiment of all true good. In offering up our petitions, therefore, we should endeavor not only to bring our desires into harmony with the divine will, but also to make the divine will as much as possible the motive power to our requests. This, then, is the true efficacy of prayer, to change the ardent longing into silent surrender, to strive after that disposition of soul which will enable us to say, "Not as I will but as thou wilt;" for it is really the cultivation of this submissive spirit, this transference of man's wish into God's wish, which qualifies us to receive rich supplies of grace, just as it is the lack of it which prevents streams of mercy from flowing in upon us. Let us then endeavor to ask for blessings, not because they are pleasing unto us, but because we believe it is according to the good pleasure of God to bestow such blessings.

We should also bear in mind that prayer does not stop at petition. It is an unworthy view to suppose that we should never raise our hearts to heaven, except when we stand in need of some specific favor. Many who come into the fold of Christ's kingdom remain in a perpetual state of spiritual infancy, by using prayer as a mere begging expedition to the throne of heavenly grace. They urge too much upon God and wait too little upon Him. It is this spirit of unsubdued selfishness which we should strive to eliminate from our lives. It is our privilege as Christians, not only to present ourselves before the Giver of all good in the attitude of suppliants, but also to cultivate His divine companionship, and this should be one of the main objects of our prayers. Let it be our aim, then, to imitate the spirit of our Divine Master, who was wont to retire into lonely tops of mountains and deep shades of night, not so much for the purpose of securing any definitive event as from the inward longing after holy communion with his father. If we would be conformed into His blessed image, we also must keep our hearts constantly refreshed by dwelling much in the immediate presence of God, not so much for the sake of seeking favors as for the spiritual nourishment to be derived from *communing* with so good and so gracious a Father. It is only by subjecting ourselves to such holy influence that we can reasonably expect to grow unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

It is the soul's prerogative, its fate,
 To shape the outward to its own estate.
 If right itself, then all around is well;
 If wrong, it makes of all without a hell.

Richard H. Dana.