

discipline. And on the other hand, if the mind were under perfect control and discipline we should never be able to pray without the help of God's Holy Spirit. The organ may be in perfect tune, but it needs the hand of the musician to draw out its powers. When we come to our prayers we must place ourselves beneath his influence "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought."

Let us consider these two elements, then, the natural and the supernatural.

I. The natural.

1. The mind must be prepared. So many of our prayers are poor and unworthy because the mind is not properly prepared; one kneels down with the best disposition, but the mind has got into a morbid condition, and the time of prayer is lost in a kind of unhealthy self-examination; or it is absorbed in some matter that it has allowed to take possession of it, and the time is spent without ever rising up to God. Or, again, no sooner does one kneel down than it seems to be the signal for the imagination to break loose and bring before the mind everything one has thought, said, or done, and every one that one has seen during the day. It is important therefore, that we should remember that the instrument with which we pray is that with which we do all our other mental work; when we turn it to God we shall find that it has the same defects and the same powers that it has at other times, only that we become more conscious of the defects in times of prayer. No wonder it is difficult to pray if there is no effort made to discipline or concentrate the mind at other times; how can the mind that is left relaxed and unguarded all through the day be recollected in prayer? Prayer is not the only time to struggle against distractions; the more orderly, methodical, disciplined, and concentrated our minds are during our daily life, the more we shall be able to direct them to God in prayer.

There is nothing therefore that we do during the day which may not prove a help or hindrance in times of prayer. In reading, working, thinking, we are unconsciously training our minds for prayer. If it is the same mind which we use for all our ordinary work, which we use in prayer, the same and no other, we shall find the same laxity, the same distractedness, the same slipshod and careless ways, the same habit of losing ourselves in day-dreams at prayer which we experience