

instance, when a person prays to have his sins forgiven, God has stated explicitly over and again, many times, what his will is on this point. If a person is not willing to forsake sin, if he secretly wishes or intends to continue in it, it is mocking God to ask forgiveness; if he hates sin and desires to be rid of it and from its dominion, there is no need of asking what the divine will is, for it is already sufficiently revealed in the scriptures and in every truth which speaks to us of God.

Just so with reference to prayer for a revival of our graces, or a revival in the churches. It is wrong to make this prayer when we are living and intending to live in a manner which is inconsistent with a revival; whereas, if we are grieved at the low state of Zion, and feel to bear her burden; if we suffer with her in our feelings, and weep for her, and are ready to welcome a revival, and do all we can to forward one, it is right and proper to pray for one in our own hearts; and if two or three are agreed in teaching such a thing in a church, the promise seems to extend to them, and afford them a reasonable ground of expectation, that it would be consistent for God to revive his work; and if it is consistent to defer his anger and exercise mercy, there can be no doubt about his will. God first loved us and gave his son to die for us, and he who has done this will certainly not withhold any good which he may consistently confer.

Again: A prayer is often put up by Christians to this effect — "Lord increase our faith." Now what do we gather from our subject in relation to this prayer? "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Some doubtless offer this prayer as though the Lord could or would answer it without any effort on their part, and as a consequence, it is not answered.

It is as unreasonable to expect to have our faith increased without intermediate means, as it is to have our hunger satisfied without food. If our faith is increased, it will be by our obtaining a clearer and more general understanding of the scriptures, or by a greater familiarity with the ways of God, as gathered from our observation of his providences. And we must not expect the Lord to interpose in our behalf the possibility of studying the scriptures and meditation, nor that he will do them for us. These are duties enjoined upon us, and should never be neglected by us — only therefore, when we are engaged in these duties, and are asking them to be right, we are asking this prayer.

But how, we would enquire, can we obtain this? It is by the means in which it is to be obtained, and these are the immediate and directly imparted means of grace, which, in connection with the means of grace, require God's blessing to