

if he would obtain what he needs. How vain to say, there is no reason in prayer, for God knows what we need even before we ask it. Look at the example of Christ. No abstract reasonings will set aside what is plainly a duty, and what is obviously a privilege. Christ prayed.—“Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.” Never such importunate prayers ascended from this earth. In all circumstances of trial and temptation, we may betake ourselves to prayer. But let us first see that we do really pray. Let it not be the prayer of hypocrisy, but that which proceeds from unfeigned lips. Let it not be the prayer of form, but true prayer, the prayer of faith. Think of Christ’s praying in the garden—and at all times relieve your burdened spirits by the same cries and tears, the same urgent prayers. Christ retired when he was going to pray. “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.” Retirement is often suitable to prayer. Our own wants, perhaps, can be best expressed alone. Our own griefs can be poured into no other ear but God’s. We may make known all our griefs—we may express all our wants to him. He knows them all beforehand, but we may not utter them all in his hearing, and he will regard the prayer of faith. Christ’s prayer was heard though the cup did not pass from him. He was heard, the apostle tells us, in that he feared. What did he fear? Did he fear lest he should dishonour our God, and not complete his work?—Was he afraid lest he should faint in the way. As possessed of a sinless humanity, he had all its sinless fears and apprehensions; and he shrank from suffering—therefore it was that he prayed: “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” If it had been possible, he was willing to be delivered from this extreme suffering. This was a real prayer; and it shows the intensity of Christ’s agony, of his sufferings, when he would be delivered from them, if possible. Christ was heard in that he feared. There appeared an angel unto him, strengthening him. He was strengthened with strength inwardly; so that he was able at last to say: “Arise, let us be going, behold he is at hand who doth betray me.” He did not leave that praying ground without an answer. He was girt for the contest.—He was now prepared for the worst. He baffled the powers of darkness in the garden, and he went to contend with them on the cross! He was upheld even under the stroke of God’s wrath, and he

went forward to encounter that anew in the great act of sacrifice itself. We may not have our prayers answered in the way that we wish, but they may be heard notwithstanding, as effectually, and more for our good and for God’s glory.

It is remarked in Henry’s own incomparable way: “Thick as the cloud was, Christ could see God as a Father through it. In all our addresses to God we should eye him as a Father, as our Father; and it is in a special manner comfortable to do so when we are in an agony. It is a pleasing string to harp upon at such a time; my Father; whither should the child go, when any thing grieves him but to his Father?”

Christ connected his prayer with the condition: “nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” This does not imply that Christ’s will was at variance with God’s will—“not as I will, but as thou wilt.” He was still willing, if it was God’s will, to suffer. He did not shrink from it if it was God’s will that the cup should not pass from him. Christ could say, “I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea by law is within my heart.” Christ ceased not himself. It was God’s will he came to perform, and nothing would make him resist or draw back, though it involved such inconceivable agony and suffering as for a moment to produce a recoil. “O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt.”—Do we not learn a lesson of submission here to the will of God in whatever circumstances we are placed? It is hard for flesh and blood, often, to endure the sufferings imposed upon us. Our hearts rebel against them, or sink under them. But God’s will must be done.—Not all the risings of nature, not all the strugglings of our own hearts will mend the matter. God’s will is paramount, and our prayer, our words of devotion and submission must be: “not as I will, but as thou wilt.” It is a hard lesson to learn, but it must be learned.—In the school of Christ all are more or less partakers of this discipline; and it is a salutary discipline. It brings the will into conformity with God’s. If all were agreeable to the believer, all would doubtless be according to his own will, and how then would his will be disciplined, so as to become conformed to God’s? It is when it is God’s will, even although not agreeable to us, that we are tried whether we will still choose God’s will, be dumb, not opening our mouth—