

“PRAYING ALWAYS WITH ALL PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION IN THE SPIRIT.”

EPHESIANS vi. 18.

This kind of prayer denotes confidence in God. It is not the cry which, as to a judge, the poor sinner would make under conviction of sin, but the appeal of a child in trial and difficulty unto the known love of its father,—the prayer of those who are spiritual, and who find themselves to be in a condition wherein they are thrown simply on God. Again, it is not the seeking to gain strength, in order merely to know that our strength is there, but that we may practically learn what God is, by the power which He exercises toward us and for us.

This “praying always” supposes the person not to be fainting, but to be *using* the “**ARMOUR**” in connection with it; “having the loins girt about with truth,” for instance, the soul not resting vaguely on God, but whilst casting itself on Him, reckoning on an answer according to the mind of God as revealed in His word. The saint may not always get a direct answer to his petition: Paul, we know, prayed that the “thorn in the flesh” might depart from him: what was the Lord’s answer? was it removed? No: “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness”—that is to say, “It is better for thee to know the sufficiency of my grace, than to have the thorn taken away.” He got the victory over it, but he did not lose it. He was able

to say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather *glory* in infirmities, *that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*" It was not sin in which he gloried; people often call their sins, the spirit of unbelief, and the like, infirmities; the things wherein he gloried were—affliction, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake, &c.; for through them he learnt the sufficiency of the Lord's grace.

John says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, *if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*" Now how are we to know the Lord's will from our own fancies and imaginations? By His word. If I go and pray for a thing not founded on the knowledge of the Lord's will as revealed in His word, I cannot have confidence about it. Were He to grant me what I desire, He might very likely only be answering my own foolish, corrupt will. If my flesh is at work, and my soul is not brought into obedience and subjection to the word, I cannot be "praying in the Spirit." The first thing the Spirit would do would be to humble me by the word into a sense of the condition in which my soul is. Supposing, for instance, I am walking carelessly and inconsistently, and yet am beginning to ask, as a very great Christian, for things only suited to the state of such an one; if the Lord were to answer my petition, it would only tend to make me a hypocrite: the first thing the Spirit would do in such a case would be to make me

humble under a sense of my real need. *Prayer in the Spirit* is always from a humble sense of need; then be it but a sigh or a groan, it is *prayer in the Spirit*; if we know our spiritual need, and cry to the Lord under the sense of it, we may always reckon on an answer. If our desires are according to God, they cannot be according to the flesh. The very thing the Lord would ever have us to learn is *our real need*; and He would have us do this in order that we might draw out of His fulness for its supply.

In Jude 20, 21, we read, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We do this, "pray in the Holy Ghost," when in putting up our petitions we are conscious of His presence, and conscious too that we are asking according to His will, even though our understanding may not be able fully to unfold to us what we need. When Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus He wept and groaned within Himself; this was not merely because Lazarus was dead, but because of the power of Satan which was there displayed. Then lifting up His eyes to heaven He said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." Here was the

full answer—power and victory exhibited over death. If we at all rightly estimate the condition of misery in which man is, the way sin is abounding, and Satan triumphing, the dishonour done to the name of God; if our eye is fixed on the glory into which ourselves and creation around us will shortly be brought, and we then look at the groaning and travailing in which it all is now—we too must “groan within ourselves.” But then we shall often “*know not what to pray for as we ought;*” there will be that felt by us which we have not the capacity to express; this is taken up and expressed by that blessed Spirit which dwelleth in us (Rom. viii. 26, 27); He “helpeth our infirmities; . . . He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints *according to God.*” This groaning is not the cry of the wounded spirit (though God’s ear is ever most open to that), but groanings against the evil within and around us, yearnings for the day of the glory of Jesus, and of the manifestation of the sons of God, which is the only possible remedy for all that evil through which the name of God is now dishonoured.

If I am standing myself in truth, without guile of heart, having no hidden sin, I can look to God in intercession for others. Just accordingly as the word of God is used by us in self-judgment, can we pray with the confidence of being heard and answered. (1 Jno. iii. 21, 22.) In Heb. iv. we read, “the

word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," &c. Here we first see the word searching the heart, then in the discernment of what we are, we are brought in truthfulness before God, and then, Jesus being our High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Just so far as we rightly understand what is our own place and the place of the Church by the word, can we "*pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" Nothing short of this is "*prayer in the Holy Ghost.*"

But let not this weaken our sense of the liberty we have to bring *all* our desires, our every request, to God in prayer. Whilst we can look for a definite answer to our prayers, if acquainted with the mind and will of God, yet we know that it is according to His will that we should "*cast all our care upon Him.*" Have we a care or an anxiety about any thing; remember that He bids us "*be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" However foolish our "requests" may seem, let us not demur on that account to draw nigh, but in childlike confidence bring them unto Him; He will grant them if it would be good for us, and if not, if they be foolish, or wrong, He will teach us

better. He says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Your very difficulty may be darkness and uncertainty of mind; go and tell God that you do not know what to ask for, this is your need, and your need is the very thing to be carried to God. He will meet you there—"it shall be given him." God loves the confidence and seeking to Him of His children. We should ourselves like our children to tell us all their wishes, all their wants, leaving it to us to act as we saw right about them. He has all the feelings of the father's heart towards His little ones. But "*praying in the Spirit*" is our privilege, and the more blessed when in full understanding also.

This "*praying always*" is that which meets the tendency there is ever in us to faint. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." How can I wield effectually the "SWORD OF THE SPIRIT" unless my arm is strong, or hold up the "SHIELD OF FAITH" if I am weary? We are cast in the use of these things entirely upon God. As the poor widow mentioned in Luke xviii. 1-5, our refuge is "*always to pray, and not to faint.*" There must be the sense of continual, abiding dependence upon God. This is the place which our blessed Lord took, and it is ours. Where Satan seeks to come in is just here, as to communion between us and God. His effort is to weaken our actual power of communion. He does not try all at

once to destroy a person's faith, but he saps the source of it as well as he can. Thus was it with the Church of Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy *first* love." There was still found in it the work, the labour, the patience, but the power of communion there had once been was gone, and therefore the message, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place. except thou repent." The way by which Satan ever gets in is by giving some little satisfaction in *self*, thus weakening the "*praying always*," the very thing which sustains practical righteousness, then he draws on the soul further and further, till at last he makes it doubt whether it has ever prayed at all. The sense of God's love gets weakened, and then the world becomes more attractive. Communion with God maintains two things, the sense of blessedness in His presence, and separation from the world.

"*And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*" Watching unto prayer is the continual, the habitual exercise of the priestly function; the taking up every matter that falls within our cognizance in the power of fellowship with God—so using persons and circumstances as to make them matter of intercourse with God.

We do not sufficiently seek to have the Lord with us in the *prospect* of suffering. How was it with Jesus? Our blessed Lord, when the hour of His conflict was coming on, when, in the garden of

Gethsemane, He was entering by anticipation into the bitterness of death, spent the whole night in *watchings and prayer*. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here and *watch* with me. And He went a little farther and fell on His face and *prayed*, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Coming to His disciples, He finds them "sleeping for sorrow," they sank under it. He says to Peter, "What, could ye not *watch* with me one hour? *watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation*: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Jesus prays yet more earnestly, and is strengthened for "this hour"—so that when the "great multitudes with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people," come to take Him, He steps calmly, firmly forward, saying, "Whom seek ye?"—"I am He." Then "they (the disciples) all forsook Him and fled."

Christian, when you feel or fear any trial approaching, go at once with it to the Lord, pass through the trial in spirit with your God; and then, when you have actually to pass through it, He will give you strength to bear it, He will be with you in it; and, like the children passing through the fire, you will lose nothing but your bands, or you may even find the Lord has put the trial away.

This watchfulness of the Spirit is ever contrary to the flesh; but remember the words, "*Watch and*

pray, that ye enter not into temptation." When in this state of watching unto prayer, I see Satan's hook under the bait, I detect him who laid the snare, and then, "in vain is the snare spread in the sight of any bird." "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." When I am watchful everything turns to prayer. I can "put on the **WHOLE ARMOUR** of God," and am "able to stand against the *wiles of the devil*:" but on the contrary, when walking in the flesh my prayers are turned into confession and self-reproach, and my life will be a life of sorrow. Watchfulness sees the host, but *looks to the Lord against* the host; it sees the evil before it is brought out, but remembers the word, "Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us."

The real anxiety, the watchfulness, and caring for the Church, of Paul, brought him into very much difficulty and conflict. (See 2 Cor. vi. and xi.) He passed many a sleepless night because he so cared for it, and where this is found in its measure in us there will also be "in *watchings* often" for "*all saints*." There can be no true energy of love in the Spirit in us towards *one* saint apart from the rest; we shall find ourselves to be connected with *all* saints. Christ loves *all* saints: when we shut up our love to *one* or even to *so many* saints, it matters not what the number, we shut up ourselves in narrowness of spirit, we lose part of the comprehensiveness of Christian love; Christ intercedes for *all* saints. The blessed place in which we are set (as brought before us here), is that of intercession

with Christ for all saints—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for ALL SAINTS."

When the deacons were chosen (Acts vi.), why was it? That the apostles might give themselves "to prayer, and to the ministry of the word:" the very first thing they thought of was recognized dependence upon Him from whom all the ability to minister in the word came. And this was not merely a casual circumstance, the way in which Christ has knit the members of His Church together, is, in making them dependent one on another; the greatest minister that ever was, dependent on the weakest saint for power in his ministry, as we see here; "and FOR ME, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." When Paul was sent forth of God anywhere, he went dependent on the prayers of the saints—"Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Whilst he had a great gift of ministry for the comfort and edification of the saints, he felt his dependence on their prayers for the profitable exercise of it. Whether he was "afflicted," or whether he was "comforted," it was for their sakes, for their "consolation and salvation," and they in turn were "helping together by prayer" for him. (See 2 Cor. i.) Just as the eye, the ear, the foot, the hand, are all

necessary (1 Cor. xii. 14-26) in the natural body, so we read of the Church the body of Christ, that "fitly joined *together* and compacted by that which *every joint* supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," (Ephes. iv.) Thus the very feeblest saint *has his place* in the Church, as well as the most highly gifted, but the blessing that each is *practically* to it, depends on personal communion, not on gift; we cannot have light without oil. It is quite true that God gives as He sees fit, "dividing to every man severally as He will," but it is only as we are kept in humble dependence on Him that there is real profit in any thing.

"*Praying always,*" &c. If we are not walking in the Spirit, Satan will turn even our very cares and duties into occasions of sin, by making us do them in the wrong time or in the wrong way. He will seek to make our duties and our prayers conflict, because he knows that it is only as they are done in a prayerful spirit that we shall have blessing in them. If otherwise there may be much busy activity, it will but deaden the soul. If you say, "I cannot pray, I cannot find God's presence now," it is just the very time you need to pray; where will you find strength? in staying away? No. When people say they cannot find God's presence, the truth is very generally that they *have* found it, and that it has discovered to them the evil, careless, unprofitable state in which they were before, though

they did not know it then because they were not in His presence. There may be distraction of thought, but let not that hinder your "praying," it is the very thing which shows you have a need to be supplied. Why is there this distraction? because your mind has become occupied with other things beside the Lord. Go to Him; you may whilst in this state have less freedom in your prayers; the joy you would otherwise have had may be denied, yet you will return with profit, and more power of communion.

You will be humbled, and is there no profit in being humbled? yes, very great; for grace, whilst it humbles, always encourages.

The Lord is ever a "sanctuary," a "hiding place for His children;" but in order habitually to realize this there must be the "*praying always,*" the "*watching thereunto.*" We hear people say continually, "I am able to look up to God in the midst of my work." This may be very true, but can you say that you are thus able to look up to God at any time in the midst of distraction of mind? No; it is only by carrying the presence of God with you into your work that you can do so. It is true that the grace of God often abounds over our carelessness, but it is by the habitual power of communion that we can fly to God at any time. We never can tell in the beginning of the day *when* and *how* a difficulty may arise during the course of it; it is only by having the presence of God with us to suggest right thoughts and words by living in the power of communion, that we shall

be able to meet it when it occurs. Then in every place, in every company, we may "hide" "in the secret of His presence from the strife of tongues" around. *Better never enter into company at all, even with Christians, if we do not take our hiding-place with us.*

Accordingly as we are filled with the Holy Ghost, shall we be able to look up steadfastly into heaven. We may go on carelessly—return back to God and find grace; He may quicken, refresh, and stir up our souls; but it will not be with us as if we had walked in the strength and power of communion.

The presence of the Holy Ghost ever makes us find out fresh short-comings, some dark shade unknown before, but then Jesus is now in the presence of God for us, and thus, whilst we learn our own emptiness, we practically learn what is the fulness, the riches of the grace of God.

Is there no joy in having fellowship with the Spirit of Christ in the things his heart is occupied about here? Yes, great joy! Then "*pray always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints,*" &c.; but let us remember that it is only by being rooted and grounded, and made to stand in *grace*, that we can do this.

Heaven is to us the place of grace. I could never have looked to God at all but for grace; and it is only as our hearts are "established with grace," that they are set at liberty in the wide field of love, to embrace and supplicate for "all saints." May

we learn more of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of that grace. Knowing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature!" may we practically be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

It is very hard for us to see ourselves and Satan to be as nothing, and God to be everything. The moment we get out of dependence on God, we find out our own weakness. We may perhaps think that one good battle with Satan, and all will be over; but no such thing,—we have the security of victory, but no cessation from conflict till the Lord comes. Then Satan will be bound, and then we shall have the full result of victory; but now we are called to unceasing dependence, moment by moment to be reckoning on the grace and strength of God. Where there is not this dependence there is not blessing, joy, and comfort. The tendency of the flesh is ever to get out of it, and then we have not strength with us in the battle, but have to learn our need of grace through weakness and failure, instead of in joy and confidence in God.

“FAINT YET PURSUING.”

(Continued from No. 3.)

How pride should be hid from man, and salvation of the Lord fully manifested, the sequel discloses—three hundred only of the many thousands of Israel, and with such weapons of war as appeared very folly in the eyes of the world. But the deliverance would be more manifestly of God, and the hearts of His people brought back to *Him*; for this was the object, not the triumph of a party but the blessing of the whole people of Israel. We lose sight of this. . . . Surely there is encouragement for faith from the very fact of our chastening. Let us beware of writing (as has before been observed) the sentence of death upon our *position* and *privileges* instead of upon ourselves. To recognize the hand of our Father, and to acknowledge the needs be, is the first step towards recovery.

This was attained to by Gideon. The Lord's hand was seen in permitting the chastisement; the Lord's hand made bare to faith in working deliverance. But the position of faith is the path of trial and that, too, because it is the one of faith. We have forgotten this in our folly. We have asked, with Gideon, if it be so, why, then, has all this befallen us? And, instead of the language of Nehemiah, “Should such an one as I flee?” (Nehemiah vi. 11), “we have run every man into his own house,” whilst the Lord's house lay waste, (Haggai

i. 9.) Trial by the way is no excuse for getting out of the way; failure in man, no reason for quarrelling with God. But the rather, our every discomfort should quicken our feet to our hiding place. "Thou art my hiding place," (Psa. cix. 114.) But the path of faith is one of trial. Service for God can only be sustained in the power of God. There is danger whilst working ostensibly for Him, of ceasing to abide in Him: and then leanness of soul enters, and the heart, unsustained by communion, shrinks under trials which, in a healthy condition, would have had no pressure upon us. Now Gideon had eminent service, and consequently trials in it. He wrought a victory in the energy of the Spirit of God, and this exposed him to the envy of Ephraim, (chapter viii.) He came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, "faint, yet pursuing." And he asked bread of the men of Succoth, and he was mocked of them: the princes of Succoth saw nothing imposing in the small band of the faithful, so wearied and famished, for whom unbelief had no sympathy, and less of discernment when acting for God. And he passed on to Penuel, where a like reception awaited him. There are few allies for faith, and few spirits to lead on a forlorn hope into conflict. Yet pursuing God's enemies, and employed in His service, though faint, *He* sustains them. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." The hosts of Zeba and Zalmunna are defeated in Karkar, and

the two kings taken, (chap. viii. 11) and slain; the elders of Succoth taught with thorns and briers in the wilderness (verse 16); the men of the city of Penuel slain, and their tower beaten down, (verse 17), and all this by a feeble few, "faint, yet pursuing."

What comfort and encouragement is here! Have faith in God. How imperative the precept! How certain the results! The Lord strengthen the hands that hang down! *May the good of His church be the object of pursuit, the truth of His presence where two or three are gathered, the testimony borne; and though Ephraim wax wroth in the spirit of envy, and Succoth and Penuel will furnish no sustenance, yet onwards is the word. "Speak to the people that they go forward." May the Lord encourage us that we may be found though "faint, yet pursuing."*

"THE GOD OF ALL GRACE."

I have lately been meditating on the rich and perfect display of the grace that the Lord makes in David. . Indeed it is *grace* that the Lord exhibits in David, as it is *glory* that He exhibits in Solomon. But it is grace in all its actings, that shines in this wondrous and varied history. The sinner and the saint get all godly consolation and encouragement from it, and find (a) fulness in the treasures of grace for (their) need whatever complexion or character that need takes. *Election* of grace shines in

David, for he was chosen when he was the despised one. (1 Sam. xvi.) The *preserving* power of grace shines in David, for he is kept, and kept holy and harmless too, when persecuted and tempted of the enemy. (1 Sam. xviii. 30.)

The *victory* of grace shines in David for the hand of the Lord leads him through all resistance and enmity up to the place of honour and safety. (2 Sam. i.-x.) And lastly, the brightest too of all displays, the *restoring* power and love of grace shines in David, for when after all the divine goodness he sinned against the Lord and caused His Name to be blasphemed, grace restores the soul, and leads it again in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. (2 Sam. xi. 23.) Thus grace makes a blessed shew of itself in this wondrous and varied history, that whether we be sinners still at a distance, or saints who have been overtaken and lost our due place and honour in joy and blessing, we may still know what God is to our holy encouragement and comfort. The (saint) wants the same treasures of grace after he has believed as he did before. Nothing but fulness of it will do for him. But Jesus still has it to the end. He not only *elects*, *preserves* and *blesses*, through His grace, but He *restores* also, and this is to His highest praise. . . . David the blotted, tainted David has a song. (2 Sam. xxiii.) He tasted 'tis true the dreadful bitterness of trespassing against the God of all goodness, but grace had its way in his soul, and *gives David a song again*.

FRAGMENTS.

“The cross and the crown go together : and more than this, the cross and communion go together. The cross touches my natural will, and therefore it breaks down and takes away that which hinders communion. It was when Peter rejected the thought of the cross that Jesus said, “Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me:” it is with a rejected Saviour we have to walk. The whole system of the world is a stumbling-block to turn the heart from God—dress, vain show, flattery, even the commonest things which tend to elevate nature. All that puts us into the rich man’s place is a stumbling-block. Heaven is open to a rejected Christ. Remember this. God’s heart is set upon carrying His saints along this road to glory; He would have us walk by faith and not by sight. Whatever tends in me to exalt the world that rejected Christ is a stumbling-block to others; in short, anything that weakens the perception of the excellency of Christ in the weakest saint.”

“It is *He* who has not only given free access to Himself by the blood and by the presence of Christ in heaven for us, but who is continually occupied with all the details of your life; whose hand is in all your *trials*, who thinks unceasingly about you in order to make you partakers of His holiness.”

"MARK YE WELL HER BULWARKS."

PSALM XLVIII.

Mark ye well her bulwarks,
 'Tis God that made them strong,
 With mercies sure and grace divine,
 His City loved so long;
 Mark ye well her bulwarks,
 Her site how wondrous fair!
 Her palaces a refuge are,
 For God Himself is there!

Mark ye well her bulwarks—
 Behold, "what God hath wrought!"
 In dust she lay, her beauty gone,
 Forsaken and unsought;
 But graven on *His* hands is she,
 And Israel's God is true;
 He loved her, and He raised her up,
 And built her gates anew.

Mark ye well her bulwarks—
 Was this the guilty one?
 That killed and stoned the messengers,
 Cast out and slew the Son?
 Messiah's blood lay at her door,
 Her hands imbrued in sin
 Of crimson dye—blood-guiltiness
 Like this had never been!

Mark ye well her bulwarks,
 And praise the grace divine,
 That raised her when in death she lay,
 And called her light to shine;
 Messiah's blood lay at her door,
 But 'twas for her *He* died;
 Her stones are laid, her walls re-built
 Through Him—the Crucified.

Mark ye well her bulwarks,
 And see that "God is love,"
 Where sin abounds, grace o'er abounds,
 His matchless love to prove;
 Consider well her palaces,
 And all her streets explore
 This God of grace is our God,
 E'en now, and evermore!