

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

A S E R M O N

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 19TH, 1865, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“ He will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”—Luke xi. 8.

THESE words stand connected with the Saviour's own representation of the spirit of grace and of supplication; and we see from this description thereof, as well as from other parts of the word of God, that in order to pray acceptably unto the Lord there must be either an implied or else an actual reconciliation unto him; for the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. And for any person under the canopy of heaven to be otherwise than wicked before God is by his own doings an utter impossibility. The Lord himself declareth that all are under sin that all are under judgment, that all are a thing of nought, that all are abominable. How, then, and in what way, seeing all are wicked, can prayer be acceptable unto God? Only by becoming righteous; it is the prayer of the righteous, and only of the righteous, that availeth with God; and there is but one way of becoming righteous, and that is by faith in that atonement which put sin away; that is, by faith in that righteousness which justifieth the ungodly. And if a man be blessed with this faith in Christ, either by implication or actually, that is to say, there is a concern in his soul; and such an one does not yet know how, or in what way, he can be righteous before God, but he begins to fear God; fearing God enough to say with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Now where that language exists, and where it is real, there are in that man all the elements of reconciliation; so that as the Lord is pleased by degrees to unfold the truth, such an one will fall in with truth after truth, with revelation after revelation, with opening up after opening up, until he is brought into entire harmony with the Mediator of the new covenant, and when brought into entire harmony with the Mediator of the new covenant, then he has power with God as a prince, that is, the Prince of peace, Christ Jesus, and with men, and such an one is sure to prevail.

Now I shall take a threefold view of my subject this morning. First, *that spirit of prayer with which the words of our text stand connected.* Second, *the circumstance under which the person to whom this promise is made applied to his friend.* Thirdly, and lastly, *this exceeding great and precious promise; “he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”*

I notice, then, first, *that spirit of prayer with which the words of our text stand connected.* The Saviour said to his disciples, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." The Lord God is the Father of us all by creation, but that is not the thing there meant. The Lord God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and so, in order for us to pray to him as a Father, it must be by his own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the way in which we are to look to God. Never mind how bad you have been, or how bad you are, or what you are; here is, by the Lord Jesus Christ, an infinity of mercy in God that defies every case that is brought before it, that is able to pardon the very worst.

"No sinner shall ever be empty sent back,
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

But mark the second feature of this spirit of prayer; not only in thus looking to God, but here is the consecration; "Hallowed be thy name." Saith such an one, Henceforth the name of God, that I have blasphemed—the name of God, that I have taken with lips profane without shuddering, but rather enjoying the awful profanity,—that name henceforth shall be to me a sacred name, a solemn name, a great name, a weighty name,—the great and eternal God. God give me grace to hallow that name, that I may never again take that name in vain; that henceforth that name may be that to me that shall put down everything else, and make me feel that my everlasting all lies in that great name that I have in times gone by blindly and wickedly profaned. He hath not cut me down, he hath spared me, and now hallowed be his name; let his name stand out now infinitely holy and sacred. And especially will this be your feeling when you are brought to see what a Father he is to you in Christ Jesus; what a provision he has made for you; you will thus run along in this spirit of prayer, looking to him by Christ Jesus, and holding his name hallowed and sacred. Then comes the royalty; here is a kingdom,—"Thy kingdom come." Jesus Christ hath founded an everlasting kingdom, an immovable kingdom, a kingdom that cannot be moved. Let that kingdom come to me, Lord; help me to believe in that substitutional kingdom, represented by Daniel as covering the whole earth, that is, becoming a substitute for everything else. I know most of you are well established in the meaning of that Scripture; still, there is no harm in looking at it again and again, that this stone cut out of the mountain, the tribes of Judah, descended from the nation of Israel,—this stone, Christ Jesus, covered the whole earth, the good and the bad; so that its covering the earth, the earth came to nothing, and this kingdom of Christ Jesus, that shall break in pieces all others, became everything. So with you, Christ Jesus, in what he has founded, will become the substitute for everything. Hence the apostle, when looking at the relations, and joys, and sorrows of life, and dwelling rather tediously upon them, himself felt weary of it, in enlarging so much upon those poor, perishable things; he says, "But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not;" seeing that all come to

nothing; the endearments, the joys, and the pains—all pass away, and Christ is to be all in all. This is what is meant by "Thy kingdom come;" everything else come to nothing; Christ all in all, and God all in all by him. Then comes a good will to be done; "Thy will be done." This is the spirit of prayer,—we look to God by Christ Jesus, hallow and honour his name; and we look to his substitutional kingdom, Christ Jesus substituted for everything. And there is a good will to be done; "Thy will be done." And how is that to be done? I will give one essential of it, without branching out. "This is the will of my Father, that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father." It there says, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth." Is there any analogy there to be traced out? If it be the will of God the Father that we should honour the Son in his dignity and perfection, even as we honour the Father, then not the highest archangel in heaven, not the greatest prophet in heaven, not the most favoured (not that I believe in degrees of glory, I speak so after the manner of men) of the spirits of just men made perfect, more willingly honours in heaven Jesus Christ than the saints do on earth. We have not the power, but we have through grace the will; we are as willing that our dear Redeemer, in the infinite dignity of his complex person—we are as willing that the dear Redeemer, in his wondrous achievement as an incarnate God, having swallowed up with infinite ease all that stood against us—we are as willing to attribute infallibility, perfection, and immutability, to him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, as we are to God the Father; and the man that does not do that does not do God's will. Christ came to do the will of God as it pertained to him, and he delighted to do it; and he teaches us that will, and we delight to do it. The whole work of the Holy Spirit is to endear the Saviour, thereby reveal the glories of the Father; the whole work of the prophets was to give witness concerning Jesus, and thereby glorify the Father. "Show us the Father," said a simple, earnest disciple, "and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father?" What am I, but the brightness of the Father's glory? What am I, but the express image of his person? Upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself put away our sins, sat down at the right hand of God. The spirit of prayer, then, will direct itself, or rather the Holy Spirit will direct it, to God in Christ Jesus, make his name hallowed, recognize the kingdom; will in time understand God's will, and have as much willingness to do God's will on earth as any saint in heaven can have. Have not the prophets shown this in all ages? Did not the holy apostles show it? Did not the martyrs show the same spirit? Nay, I feel I could stop and speak for an hour upon this one department. I feel it one of the highest privileges I have ever had, one of the highest privileges I ever shall have while on earth, to so honour the Saviour as to set him over against and infinitely above all my sin, and guilt, and woe. I should dishonour him, were my sins ten million times more than they are, if I were to set them above him;

I should dishonour him if I were to set Satan in any shape or form above him; I should dishonour him if I were to set hell, or death, or anything else, above him. He always did, and he does now travel in the greatness of his strength, and his strength is omnipotent, and in that we shall ever rejoice. The spirit of prayer, then, is this spirit of faith in God the Father, in Christ; the spirit of prayer is this spirit of consecration to God; his name becomes hallowed; the spirit of prayer is that which recognizes, in the Lord's own time, this substitutional kingdom; the spirit of prayer is that which does pray for grace to do the will of God on earth even as willingly as those that are in heaven do it. Why, some of you little ones doubt and fear—I do not speak to you pretended doubters, mind, you frothy hypocrites, if there should be any here—I hope there are not—that put on your doubts and fears, and croak about like frogs, and pretend to be doubting and fearing; I do not mean you, if there are any of that stamp, I mean the soul that solemnly trembles before God, lest he should be against him; I mean the man that knows his own heart, and that confesses before God that if he could live a life as spotless as did the Saviour himself, he has sins enough in his own heart to damn him ten thousand times a day. These are the persons I mean. They shall know every man his own plague, and his own grief, and his own sore. These are they that are in solemn earnest in the matter; their doubts and fears are real. But you will never be lost; because your minister, whoever he may be that you may choose, the more he exalts the Saviour, the more he suits you; the more he probes into the deep diseases of your soul, and opens up the deep-seated wounds there; and the more he extols the virtue of the dear Redeemer's healing blood, sets forth the riches of his grace and mercy, the more your tried soul gains hope. Already you are desiring and willing that Jesus should be exalted; and should you die to-day, and enter—which you would do—the gates of heaven, you would not be at a loss for one moment what to say when you got there. The very sound of the song, "Unto him that loved us,—that is the origin, not originating in any shape or form in self, but with him,—" washed us from our sins in his own blood, made us kings and priests to God." Why, the very sound of the distant thunders of the eloquence would call all the power of your disembodied spirit into operation; your raptures would be those that could not by human language be described. "I heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible a man should utter." Oh, my hearer, religion, remember, God is the strength of religion; Christ is the essence of religion; the Holy Spirit is the great author of religion. Religion doth not lie in a little formality in this place, that, or the other; but in living vitality, in imperishable reality, in everlasting bliss. The spirit of supplication, then, looks to God in Christ, hallows his name, recognizes the kingdom, and with delight infinite doeth his will. In what way do you do his will in heaven to all eternity, but in this same way?

The next feature in this spirit of prayer is that you will wish to live with God. "Give us this day our daily bread." Yes, you will want the Scriptures to be your bread every day; for we are not to live by providence alone, but by grace; not to live by bread alone, but by every word

that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. I like the idea of *daily* bread; I like a daily religion and a nightly religion—an everywhere religion, at all times. Religion, as I said the other night—I think at Holborn—and I repeat the remark now, because I have not lost the impression of it yet; I have been meditating upon these same blessed things; and there are sometimes such endearments flow into my soul that language cannot describe.

David says, "Oh, how I love thy law," meaning the law of liberty. And I thought to myself, How is this? I feel as though I could hardly contain myself. Whatever can it be? The truth of God, so dear to my heart, and that blessed God represented by that truth so glorious in mine eyes,—what meaneth this? What can it mean? I seem to want an explanation. And the words came with sweetness; "She loved much, because much was forgiven her." Ah, then, I said, that's it—that's all the explanation I need. If it is because I stand a pardoned sinner that the truth of God is dear to mine heart, then I will still, grace enabling me, go on in the same way, and pray that I may have my daily bread, and that the people of God at large may have their daily bread, be daily sustained, and that from day to day, as sheep are ruminating creatures, we may ruminate, as it were,—if, without being coarse, I may say, chew the cud, as it were,—that we may meditate upon the blessed truths of the gospel, and find them sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. So those of you to whom the truth is dear, and yet fear you shall never see his face, you see the explanation the Lord gave me; he gave me that explanation with power. I can distinguish between a scripture very apt and suited coming to my memory, and a scripture coming and doing something, putting the enemy down, and making me happy in spite of myself, and in spite of the devil, and in spite of anything and everything. "Daily bread;" it is a great thing, then, to live upon these things. God grant that all of you that have a desire for these things may to-day be favoured with a little strengthening, a little encouraging; that you may feel that the house of God, after all, is the house of mercy; that the house of God, after all, is the house of bread; that the house of God, after all, is the house of wine; that the house of God, after all, is the house where there are all manner of pleasant fruits, which the Lord hath laid up for them that have a taste for the same.

But we will go on with this spirit of prayer. Now here is a prayer for forgiveness—"Forgive us our sins as we forgive others." Now just notice this—just see where it is placed. The Lord does not ask you to forgive others first. Now you will go a little on in the path of mercy yourself, and then, when you go on in the path of mercy yourself, you will say, Not one sin laid to my charge? Not one fault laid to my charge? Not one blemish laid to my charge? Is the accuser of the brethren, both in his false and in his true accusations against me, cast down? Is the victory by the blood of the Lamb complete? If I am interested in such mercy as that, what shall I do? Do to others as you would be done by; do to others as the Lord hath done to you; and remember, it is written, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain

mercy." If I were dying to-day, one of the comfortable thoughts that I should have on my dying bed would be this, that while the Lord hath said, "The Gentiles shall glorify God for his mercy," I have never withholden God's testimony of that mercy from the people; I have never withholden, knowingly or wilfully, his testimony of his superabounding grace from the people; I have never hid his righteousness within mine heart; I have never withholden, to my knowledge, anything that I am authorized, from the word of God and from my own experience, to advance for the good of the people; because I know what human nature is, and I know how those who are taught of God are tried in ten thousand ways, that none but himself and themselves know anything of; were it not so, they would not be so eager for the gospel as they are. But alas! alas! a man risks everything; let a man once preach the truth in its purity, you may depend upon it he is cast out directly,—he is hated directly, despised directly; "ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." But I must not enlarge here. The spirit of prayer, then, is that spirit that looks to God, hallows his name, recognizes his kingdom, doeth his will, lives with him; and it is a spirit of mercy.

"Lead us not into temptation." Doth the Lord lead men into temptation? Certainly he does. He doth not tempt any man; but he places them by his providence where they shall be tempted, and that to their own destruction. God did not tempt Pharaoh, but he raised up Pharaoh, and put him into possession of that power by which Pharaoh was tempted to oppress, and, if possible, to destroy the Israelites: into that temptation Pharaoh fell, to his own destruction. The Canaanites, Amorites, Amalekites, were placed by the providence of God where Satan should avail himself of their blindness and depravity, and tempt them to come against the Israel of God to their own destruction. Goliath was placed in a similar position; Nebuchadnezzar was placed, by the providence of God—not tempted by the Lord—God tempteth no man with evil—but where he should be tempted to do what is recorded of him. So of Belshazzar; and so the Jews were placed, by the providence of God, where Satan should have such dominion over them as to tempt them to crucify the Lord of life and glory, and to follow up that crucifixion by the persecution of the apostles. Judas was placed, by the providence of God, where he was tempted to sell the Saviour, and betray him; and a great many more instances I could give. Now, then, pray that we may not be so placed where Satan shall gain such an advantage over us as to get us to say a word against even a little one; better a millstone tied about our necks, and we cast into the depths of the sea. "Lead us not into temptation." Oh, it is a great temptation to the world! Whenever we are tempted to touch God's anointed, that comes from the devil. "Touch not mine anointed; do my prophets no harm." When we are tempted to injure any child of God, however insignificant he may be in society or position, that temptation comes from the devil.

"But deliver us from evil." The same word there translated "evil" is applied to the bondchildren; and the evil there (I fear no contradiction from any Greek scholar in England, though we have in our day some

right down good Greek scholars, I grant), the evil there has special reference to the bondchildren, and special reference to Ishmael mocking promises and persecuting him that is born after the spirit. "Deliver us from evil;" that is, from that evil spirit. That is the spirit of prayer, then, that will bring you out of the evil spirit of the bondchildren, and will bring you into the spirit of brotherly love, the spirit of Christ's love, the spirit of gospel love, the spirit of that love that covers the multitude of sins, that goes triumphantly on, bearing testimony of the riches of the grace of God. I say not these things for my own sake, because I have them all in private, and I can enjoy them; but I say them for your sakes. We have lost, I think, four or five ministers this last week; I am spared to you; I am not spared for my own sake, I am spared for your sakes. I am not supplied from time to time for my sake, but for your sakes. And may the Lord make my last days my brightest and my best days, that while the body grows in weakness, faith and the soul may grow in power; for it matters not to the Lord how insignificant a piece of clay is that he makes use of; it is not the sword, as we say, but the hand that wields it.

"Thine is the kingdom"—entirely under the Lord's dominion—"and thine is the power;" therefore we look nowhere else; and certainly his must be the glory. Now, then, the spirit of prayer is first to look as a poor sinner to God; second, to hallow, honour his name as a Father in Christ Jesus; third, to recognize the substitutional kingdom of the Saviour; fourth, to do his will; fifth, to live upon his bounty; sixth, while we receive mercy to show the same mercy to others; seventh, to be delivered from temptation and from evil, and to walk in the liberty of that glorious kingdom into which he hath brought us.

I have got through only one item of my text, and that which stands related to the text rather than that which is in the text; and I suppose the second item will be as much as I shall get through this morning. I will not fall into this error again, if I can help it, of getting only part of the way through my subject; but somehow or other, these things, I meditate upon them day and night—I may say day and night; and sometimes overwhelmed for the want of them, and sometimes overwhelmed with them. I bless the Lord for sabbath days becoming increasingly dear to my heart; Saturday evenings are pleasing evenings to me; the thought of meeting the King of kings the next day; the thought of meeting some of his dear, blood-bought people; the thought of being employed in so holy a service; the thought of the sweet promise of his Spirit, and of his presence, and of his dear Son; these things endear the sabbath, especially so as I more and more feel my need of this precious gospel. And when the Lord does grant us a little of his presence in his service, what is there like it?—

"One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been,"—

what can equal it?—

"'Tis heaven to rest in his embrace,
And nowhere else but there."

But I notice, in conclusion—that is all I can notice—the *circumstance under which the person to whom this promise is made applied to his friend*. He had a friend; and if you are brought into this spirit of faith in Christ, God is your friend, Jesus Christ is your friend. He went to his friend, and seemed discouraged. He from within said, "Trouble me not; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed," or in rest. I know not whether I dare so spiritualize this as to make this friend represent the Saviour in glory. And how very often in prayer the door seems shut, and the Lord seems to say, "Trouble me not; I have no mercy for such an one as you are;" that is, when we judge by our feelings. But this man came under necessity; therefore, not merely because he was his friend—that of course would be a something in the scale, to weigh in his

favour—but because of his importunity; and his importunity arose from his necessity. Now he says, “A friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him; lend me three loaves.” Now the question is, what friend is this in his journey? The Holy Spirit? That would be true; but I do not think that is the way in which we should view it. I think it must be spiritualized. “A friend of mine in his journey is come to me.” What friend can that be? And he has brought my poverty to light; he has brought my destitution to light: “I have nothing to set before him.” “A friend of mine in his journey is come to me.” What friend can it be? I know not in what way to spiritualize this except thus, that this friend is a quickened conscience. My conscience has always been more or less a friend to me; but now he is come making such demands upon me, and he is in his journey; where is he going to? To the bar of God, to eternity, to hell, I am afraid. He is come to me; my conscience comes, and imperatively demands certain provision. I have nothing to set before him; to quiet my conscience I cannot. Similar idea when the prodigal came to himself; when conscience came to the prodigal, and said, “Prodigal, do you know that you are under privation? do you know that in a little time, if you die as you are, you will be a damned man?” This is the friend; conscience is thus turned into an effectual friend. “A friend of mine in his journey.” The margin gives another reading, not perhaps unprofitable to notice: “A friend of mine out of his way;” come out of his way; he never visited me so before. Oh, I look back at the time when God turned my conscience into an effectual friend; my conscience urged me, and said, This will not do, and that will not do; till at last I was obliged, like the prodigal, to arise and go to my Father, and see if I could get some provision somewhere. And so, here is darkness and ignorance here; but still, at the same time, there is earnestness. “Lend me three loaves.” That seems to look like this, I want something done to put the past to rights; I want something, a little for the present, and something for the future; and so I will settle it. How many times did I try to settle matters with God in that way. I thought, Now, if I can get something in my favour to-day, I will set that over against the past; that will put that right: if I can get something else in my favour, I will set that over against the present; that will put that right: then, if I can get a few more good works, I will set them over against the future; and so, with these three loaves, I think I shall supply all my needs. “Lend me three loaves.” What a poor prayer in comparison of the promise! My text says, “He will rise, and” —not *lend* him, but—“*give* him as many as he needeth.” Time does not allow me to enlarge. Let us ask ourselves the question, Have our consciences been made to come to us, and made to discover to us the mighty famine we are under as sinners, our privation and destitution, that our destiny as sinners, considered apart from Christ, is to lift up our eyes in hell, not so much as a drop of water to cool our burning tongues? Oh, then, if this conscience, in its journey towards the bar of God, towards eternity, is thus come to us, and has driven us to the throne of grace, driven us to the Friend of friends, driven us to the God of mercy, he will fully and willingly supply all our needs. But as your time is gone, I must this morning add no more.