

LECTURE LX.

PRAYER.

SYLLABUS.

1. What is the definition, and what the parts of prayer ?
Conf. of Faith, ch. xxi. Shorter Cat. Qu. 98 to end. Directory of Worship, chs. 5, 15, Dick, Lect. 93. Ridgley, Qu. 178.
2. Who is the proper object of prayer ?
Dick, Lect. 93. Ridgley, Qu. 179.
3. What are the proper grounds by which the duty of prayer is sustained and enforced ?
Pictet, bk. viii, ch. 10. Dick, Lect. 93. Hill, bk. v. § 3. Knapp, § 133, Appendix.
4. Refute the objections to the reasonableness of prayer, drawn from God's omniscience, immutability, independence, decrees ; and from the stability of Nature.
So. Presb. Rev., Jan. 1870. Art. i, Dr. Girardeau. Chalmers' Nat. Theol. bk. v, ch. 3. Dick, Lect. 93. McCosh, Div. Gov. bk. ii, ch. 2, § 5, 6. Duke of Argyll, "Reign of Law," ch. 2. Sensualistic Phil. of 19th Cent. ch. 13.
5. What is the rule of prayer, and what the qualities of acceptable prayer ?
Dick, as above. and Lect. 94. Pictet, as above. Ridgley, Qu. 185, 186.
6. What is the nature and extent of the warrant given us to expect answers ?
See, e. g., Matt. vii : 7, 8 ; Mark, xi : 24. Dick, Lect. 94. Pictet, as above. Dr. Leonard Wood's Lectures, 95-99. So. Presb. Rev., Jan. 1872., Art. i. Theol. of Plym., Br. Life of Trust, or Biography of the Rev. Geo. Muller of Bristol.
7. Show that prayer should be both secret, social, ejaculatory, and stated.
Dick, Lect. 94.
8. What model is given for our prayers ?
Dick, Lect. 95. See on the Whole, Magee on Atonement, dissertation 8th ; and Dr. Leonard Wood's Lectures, 95 to 99.

“PRAYER is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.”

Its several parts are stated, in the Directory for Worship, to be adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, intercession and pleading. See Directory. Ch. v : § 2.

God alone is the proper object of religious worship. Matt.

2. God the Only
Proper Object.

Beign who is to be worshipped by all the Church must be omniscient. Otherwise our prayers would never reach His ears.

And if conveyed to Him, they would utterly confound and overwhelm any finite understanding, in the attempt to distinguish, comprehend, and judge concerning them. Then, moreover, the being to whom we resort in prayer, must be all-wise, in order to know infallibly what is best for us, and how to procure it. Such omniscience as we have above described implies, of course, omnipresence. Second. This Lord must be infinitely good, otherwise we should have no sufficient warrant to carry Him our wants, and His benevolence would be overtaxed by such constant and innumerable appeals. Third. He must be almighty, else He is no adequate refuge and dependence for our souls, in all exigencies. Some most urgent wants and dangers might arise, which only omnipotence could meet.

For these reasons the offering of prayer is a virtual ascription of divinity to its object; and we reject all such appeals to saints and angels as idolatrous. For us sinners, the door of prayer is only opened by the Covenant of Grace. (Why?) Now we have seen that God the Father stands economically as the representative of the whole Trinity, on the part of the Godhead, as Christ the Son stands as sinner's representative in that transaction. Hence prayer is usually addressed to the Father through the Son, and by the Spirit. Eph. ii: 18. But we must not imagine that one person is more properly the object of prayer than another. All are made alike objects of worship, in the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. xiii: 14, in the formula of baptism, and in Rev. i: 4. But more: we find Jesus Christ, so to speak, the separate object of worship, in Gen. xviii: 23; Josh. v: 14; Acts vii: 59; Rev. i: 17: v; 8; Heb. i: 6, etc. These examples authorize us to address a distinct petition to either of the Persons.

The duty of prayer reposes immediately on God's command, who "wills that men pray everywhere." 1 Tim. ii: 8. But this is a precept which most eminently commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, because so clearly founded in nature. That is there are numerous and powerful reasons proceeding out of our very relations to God, for the duty of prayer. That this is true is obviously suggested by the strength of the instinct of devotion in every rational breast. The immediate prompting of the sense of want or sin, in the creature, is to make him say: "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I." Ps. lxi: 2. And to pray, is mentioned of Saul as the characteristic evidence that he had learned to fear God. Acts

3. The Duty Reasonable. (a.) It Cultivates Piety.

iv: 10. The general reason for this is, that He alone possesses the attributes which are implied in the offer of religious worship. The

ix: 11. Wherever there is religion, true or false, there is prayer. Even the speculative atheist, when pressed by danger, has been known to belie his pretended creed, by calling in anguish upon the God whom he had denied. This natural instinct of prayer reposes for its ground on God's perfections, and man's dependence and wants. And so long as these two facts remain what they are, man must be a praying creature. Let the student remember, also, that man, while finite and dependent, is also an essentially active creature. Emotion, and the expression of emotion, are the unavoidable, because natural outgoings of his powers. He cannot but put forth his activity in efforts tending to the objects of his desires; he must cease first to be man; and prayer is the inevitable, the natural effort of the dependent creature, in view of exigencies above his own power. To tell him who believes in a God, not to pray, is to command him to cease to be a man.

Prayer is the natural homage due from the creature to his heavenly Father. God being Himself all blessed, and the sole Source and Giver of blessedness, can receive no recompense from any creature. But is no form of homage therefore due? To say this, would be to say that the creature owes God nothing, because God bestows so much! It would extirpate religion practically from the universe. Now, I assert, in opposition to the Rationalistic Deists, who say that the only reasonable homage is a virtuous life, and the cultivation of right emotions; that prayer also is more directly, and still more naturally, that reasonable homage. God must bestow on man all the good he receives; then man ought to ask for all that good. It is the homage to God's beneficent power, appropriate to a creature dependent, yet intelligent and active. Man ought to thank God for all good; it is the natural homage due from receiver to Giver. Man ought to confess all his sin and guilt; it is the natural homage due from sinfulness to sovereign holiness. Man ought to deprecate God's anger; it is the appropriate homage due from conscious guilt to power and righteousness. Man ought to praise God's perfections. Thus only can the moral intelligence God has created, pay to Him its tribute of intellectual service. I should like to see the reasoning analyzed, by which these skeptics are led to admit that the creature does owe to God the homage of a virtuous life and affections. I will pledge myself to show that the same reasoning equally proves he owes the homage of prayer. Conceive of God as bestowing all the forms of good on man which his dependent nature needs, without requiring any homage of prayer from man as the means of its bestowal; and you will immediately have, man being such as he is (an active being), a system of practical atheism. Religion, relation between man and God will be at an end.

True, God would be related to man, but not man to God! Anomalous and guilty condition! No feeling of dependence, reverence, gratitude, wholesome fear, would find expression from the creature.

This leads us, third, to the important remark, that prayer is the natural means of grace appropriate to the creature. Prayer is not intended to produce a change in God, but in us. Rev. Rowland Hill explained to sailors: "The man in the skiff at the stern of a man-of-war, does not pull the ship to himself, in hauling at the line, but pulls the skiff to the ship. This line is prayer. Prayer does not draw God down to us, but draws us up to God, and thus establishes the connection." Now, as we have seen, man being an essentially active creature, the exercise of all those right affections which constitute gracious character necessitates their expression. And again, to refuse expression to an affection chokes it; to give it its appropriate expression fosters and strengthens it. See examples. We see at once, therefore, how prayer is a natural and necessary means for all gracious growth. Let us exemplify in detail. Faith is a mother grace to all others; but prayer is the natural and necessary expression of faith; it is its language, its vital breath. In spiritual desire the life of religion may be said to consist. Desire is implied in faith itself, for a man does not trust for what he does not want, and it is yet more manifest in hope. For hope is but desire, encouraged by the prospect of obtaining the desired object. Repentance includes a desire for deliverance from sin and attainment of holiness. Love of God includes a desire for communion with Him, and for His favour. So that it would not be very inaccurate to say that practical religion consists in the exercise of holy desires. But what is prayer, except "the offering up of our desires to God?" Prayer is the vital breath of religion in the soul. Again, it cultivates our sense of dependence and of God's sovereignty. By confessing our sins, the sense of sin is deepened. By rendering thanks, gratitude is enlivened. By adoring the divine perfections, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. From all this it is apparent that prayer is the Christian's vital breath. If God had not required it, the Christian would be compelled to offer it by his own irrepressible promptings. If he were taught to believe that it was not only useless, but wrong, he would doubtless offer it in his heart in spite of himself, even though he were obliged to accompany it with a petition that God would forgive the offering. To have no prayer is, for man, to have no religion.

But last, and chiefly, prayer is a means of grace, because God has appointed it as the instrument of man's receiving His Spiritual influences. It is chiefly; is Ordained in God's Promises. It is enough for the Christian to know that all his

growth in grace is dependent, and that God hath ordained: "hè that asketh receiveth."

Thus we see the high and essential grounds on which the duty of prayer rests, grounds laid in the very natures of God and of man, and in the relations between the two.

But it is from the nature of God that the rationalistic objections are drawn against the reasonableness of the duty. It is said, "Since God is omniscient, there is no meaning in our telling Him our wants, for He knows them already, better than we do. Since He is good, He already feels every proper impulse to make us happy, and to relieve our pains; and does not need any persuading on our part, to incline Him to mercy. And since He is immutable, and has already determined from eternity, every act of His future agency, by an unchangeable decree, to hope to change God by our importunity, is worse than useless; it is a reproach to Him. Hence there is nothing for the wise man to do, but to receive His allotments with calm submission, and to honour Him by imitating His moral perfections."

We reply: to him who had any reverence for the Scripture these assertions of God's wisdom and goodness would be arguments to prove, instead of disproving, the propriety of prayer. For has not this wise and good being commanded prayer? Has He not seen fit to appoint prayer as the instrument for receiving His purposed blessings? Then, to the humble mind, there is the best proof that prayer is reasonable. But farther, we have already remarked that, so far as prayer is intended to produce any change, it is not a change in God, but in us. He does not command it because He needs to be informed of our wants, or to be made willing to help. He commands it because He has seen fit to ordain it as the appointed means for reception of His blessings. And we have seen abundant reasons why it is a suitable means to be thus ordained: a wise means, a right means. It is a necessary and instinctive outgoing of the rightly feeling soul. It is the proper homage for man to render God. It is an influence wholesome for man's soul itself. And now, God having seen these good reasons (doubtless with others) for ordaining prayer as the means of receiving His favour; there is nothing in His wisdom, goodness, or immutability, inconsistent with His regular enforcement of the rule, "ask, and ye shall receive."

Not in His goodness: For if any one should take such a view of the Divine benevolence as to suppose that it will in every case bestow on the creature such blessings as God's nature and purpose permit, without requiring to be persuaded by the creature's use of means, the whole course of His providence

4. Reasonableness
of Prayer Objected to.

General Reply.

God's Benevolence
No Objection.

would refute it. God is benevolent in bestowing on multitudes of farmers the fruits of the earth. If any one trusts to His immutable goodness, without plowing and sowing his field, he will certainly be disappointed. The truth is just here: that God is infinitely benevolent, but still, it is a benevolence exercised always in harmony with His wisdom, and with all His other attributes. The question then is: Have God's wisdom, sovereignty, and other attributes, impelled Him to decide that He cannot consistently give some particular gifts except to those that ask? If so, it is vain to argue from His infinite goodness.

Nor do God's decree and unchangeableness show that it is inconsistent in Him to answer prayer. His immutability does not consist in acting with a mechanical sameness, irrespective of change of circumstances. It is an immutability of principles. The sameness of principle dictates a change of conduct when outward circumstances change. To refuse to change in such cases would often be mutability. And the familiar old answer here applies, that God's decree embraces the means as much as the end. Wherever it was His eternal purpose that any creature should receive grace, it was His purpose equally that he should ask. In a word, these objections are just the same with those of the vulgar fatalist, who objects that, because "what is to be, will be," therefore it is of no use to make any effort. There is no difference whatever in the refinement or wisdom of the objectors. To be consistent, these rationalists who refuse to pray should also refuse to plow, to sow, to cultivate, to take medicine when sick, to watch against danger, &c.

The difficulty, however, which is now thought most formidable, and is most frequently advanced by Rationalists, is that drawn from the stability of nature. The argument of the objection is, that except where God acts supernaturally, as in regeneration and the resurrection, He acts only through second causes; that the tie between cause and effect is efficient, and the result regular; so that each effect is potentially in its antecedent cause, which is, very probably, an event that has already occurred, and is therefore irrevocable. Hence, it is impossible but that the effect must follow, pray as we may against it; unless God will miraculously break the ties of natural causation; but that, we know, He will not do.

Now, this is either an argument *ad ignorantiam*, or it is atheistic. The simple, popular (and sufficient) view which refutes it is: That God governs this world in every natural event through His special providence; and the regular laws of nature are only the uniform modes of those second causes, which He employs to do so. Now, the objection is simply this: that God has constructed a machine, which is so perfect, and so completely His, that He

His Immutability no
Objection.

Objection from Sta-
bility of Nature.

General Reply.

cannot modify its action without breaking it! That is, His success has been so complete, in constructing this machine of nature to work His intended ends, that He has shut Himself out of His own handiwork! Such is the absurdity which the matter must wear in the hands of a theist. Nature is a machine which God made and now uses to effect a set of ends, all of which were foreseen and purposed; and among which were all the destined answers to the acceptable prayers foreseen to be uttered. Of course God has not so made it as to exclude Himself and His own purposes. How does He manage the machine to make it work those purposes? We may not know how; but this is no evidence that He does not. The inference from His general wisdom and promise is proof enough that He can and does. A very good illustration may be taken from a railroad train. It is propelled, not by an animal which has senses to hear command, but by a steam engine. The mechanical force exerted is irresistible by man. The conditions of its movement are the most rigidly methodical; only up and down one track, within certain times. But there is a Conductor; and his personal will can arrest it at the request of the feeblest child.

But to be more exact: The objector urges that the general laws of nature are stable. Grant it. What is nature? It is a universe of matter and mind related, and not of matter only. Now only postulate that desire, prayer, and the answers to prayer are among those general laws, which, as a complex whole, have been assigned to regulate nature, and the uniformity of nature only confirms the hope of answers to prayers. Has the philosopher explored all the ties of natural causation made by God? He does not pretend so. Then it may be that among the unexplored ties are some subtle and unexplained bonds which connect prayers with their answers as natural causes and effects. And all that we have said, in showing how natural prayer is to creatures, makes the postulate probable.

Again. Does natural law govern the universe? Or, does God govern it by natural law? Men perpetually cheat themselves with the idea that law is a power, whereas it is simply the method of a power. Whence the power of the natural second cause? Originally from God; and its working is maintained and regulated by God. Hence it is utterly improbable (whether we can comprehend or not) that God should have so arranged His own power communicated to His works as to obstruct His own personal will. Remember that God is personal, and not a mere *anima mundi*. He is a sovereign moral Person.

Last, recurring to the views given in explanation of God's providence (Lect. xxv), you will be reminded, that power in second causes only acts when the suitable relations are established between

Prayer a Part of the
General Law.

God Rules by His
Laws of Nature as He
Pleases.

His Providence in
all Second Causes.

them and those things which are to be the recipients of the effects: that among all possible relations, many might be fruitful of no effects, and others of very different effects: That hence, there is here, room for the perpetual, present manipulation of the invisible Hand in providence. Thus, God always has resources to modify the acting of natural causes, they still acting according to their natures. As I remarked: All God's providence is special; and the supernatural is always with the natural; else the latter could not be.

The proposal has been made by modern Materialists, to test the efficacy of prayer by a physical test, such as is applied to try the efficacy of material causes. The absurdity, as well as impiety of this proposal appears from two remarks. One is, that the physical answers to prayer; or in other words, those effects which confer physical change and benefit, belong to that class of things which, as we shall show anon, God has never bound Himself, by any categorical promise, to bestow. We are encouraged to pray for them; but God holds the answer contingent to us, deciding to give or withhold according as He sees best in His secret sovereignty. Hence, in the only cases where a physical test could possibly apply, there is no definite promise to be tested. The other remark is: that unless the atheist's theory be demonstrated, it will remain at least possible that we shall find a personal will dispensing the answer to prayer. This proposal then requires this venerable Person to submit Himself to an additional test of His fidelity, after He has given His promise; and that on a demand which may always appear to Him petulant and insolent. So that, unless the proposed test is guilty of the sophism of begging the very question to be ascertained, it is always presumable, that this majestic Person may choose to refuse all response to the proposed test, and may deem this refusal necessary to His self-respect. In the parallel case, there is every probability that anyone of these Materialists would be silent, and stand on his dignity. If there is a God, (the thing to be ascertained in this inquiry) shall He not consult His self-respect? The proposed method of inquiry is then worthless.

The proper rule of prayer is the whole Word of God. Not only are its instances of inspired devotion our exemplars, and its promises our warrant; its precepts are the measure of our petitions, and its threatenings the stimulants. There is no part of Scripture which may not minister to the guidance of the Christian's prayers. But further, the Word of God is the rule of our prayers also in this sense, that all which it does not authorize, is excluded. Prayer being a homage to God, it is for Him to say what worship He will accept; all else is not homage, but presumption. Again, both man's blindness and corruption, and God's infinitude for-

Physical Test of Prayer.

5. Rule of Prayer.

bid that we should undertake to devise acts of worship, of our own motion. They will be too apt to partake of some of our depravity, or else to lead in some way, unforeseen to us, to developments of depravity. And God's nature is too inscrutable to our feeble minds, for us to undertake to infer from it, except as we are guided by the light of the Word. Hence, the strict Protestant eschews "will worship" as a breach of the decalogue.

When we examine the inspired rule of prayer, we find that, to be acceptable, it must be sincere and hearty; it must be addressed to God with faith in Christ; it must be for objects agreeable to God's will; it must be prompted by the Holy Ghost; it must be accompanied with genuine repentance and gratitude. See Ps. lxii : 8 ; Jer. xxix : 13 ; Jno. xiv : 6 ; 1 Jno. v : 14, 15 ; Rom. viii : 26 ; Phil. iv : 6, 7 ; 1 Jno. iii : 22 ; Ps. lxvi : 18 ; Heb. xi : 6, &c.

The more immediate model which God has given for our prayer, is the Lord's prayer. That it was not intended for a liturgy to be servilely followed, our authors have shown, in their discussions of liturgies. But that it was intended both as a general guide in the structure of our own petitions, and as a form whose very words are to be employed by us on proper occasions, is manifest. cf. Matt. vi : 9 ; Luke xi : 2. The most plausible objection to it, as a model for Christians is, that it contains no express reference to a Mediator, and answer through His merit and intercession. The answer is, that it is an Old Testament prayer : is intended as such, because that dispensation was still standing. When it was about to close, Christ completed this feature of it, by enjoining the use of His name. See John xiv : 13 ; xv : 16 ; xvi : 23, 24.

We apprehend that there is much vagueness in the views of Christians concerning the nature and extent of the warrant which they have to expect an answer to their prayers. Some err by defect, forming no definite view of the ground on which their faith is entitled to rest; and consequently, approaching the throne of Grace with no lively hopes whatever. Others err by excess, holding the promises in a sense God did not intend them to bear; and consequently their hopes are fanatical and superstitious. Now, in order that our faith may be firm, it must be correct and intelligent. The consequence of these erroneous views ultimately is disappointment, and hence, either self-accusation, or skepticism.

The warrant for prayer is of course to be sought, immediately, in the promises. Of these some seem very emphatic : e. g., Matt. vii : 7 ; Mark xi : 24. On promises of the latter class especially, some have built a theory of prayer, thus : that the only

Qualities of Acceptable Prayer.

6. Extent of Warrant for Answer.

Extreme View Described and Refuted.

reason any prayer of one in a state of grace, and actuated in the main by pious motives, is not specifically and infallibly answered, is, that it was not offered in faith, and that wherever such a saint fully believes that he shall receive that which he asks, he will receive it, as surely as inspiration. And such prayer it was the fashion to dignify with the title, "the prayer of faith," among some religionists. In opposition, I would urge that common sense refutes it; and shows that practically there is a limitation to these general promises of answer to prayer. Who believes that he can, provided his motives are in the main pious, pray away a spell of illness, or raise up a sick friend, or convert an individual sinner, with infallible certainty? But may they not put in a saving clause by saying: "Such prayers are dictated by the Holy Ghost? This makes all right." Ans.: The Christian has no mode of distinguishing the specific cases of spiritual impulse in his own heart; because the Holy Ghost operates in and through his natural capacities. Hence, to the Christian, the universal warrant is practically lacking. It is manifestly incompetent to the Christian to say, in advance of the answer: The Spirit dictates this prayer beyond doubt. Second: Scripture refutes it; for there are clear cases of petitions of Bible saints, made in faith, piety, urgency, and not specifically answered. See 2 Sam. xii : 16, 19; 2 Cor. xii : 8-10 : and above all, Matt. xxvi : 39. And third: We can hardly suppose that God would abdicate His omniscience in His dealings towards the very objects of His redeeming love, and make their misguided, though pious desires the absolute rule of His conduct towards them. This would be the literal result, were He absolutely pledged to do for shortsighted Christians exactly what they, with pious motives, ask of Him. We may add here, that such an assumption is refuted by God's claim to chastise believers for their profit. They of course pray, and innocently pray for exemption. ("Remove Thy stroke from me; for I am consumed by the blow of Thine hand.") If God were under bond to hear every prayer of faith, He would have to lay down the rod in each case, as soon as it was taken up.

There is then, of course, some practical limitation in these general promises. What is it? I answer, it is to be found in the whole tenour of Scripture. And generally in the language of 1 Jno. v : 14. All our prayers shall be specifically answered in God's time and way, but with literal and absolute accuracy, if they are believing and pious prayers, and for things according to God's will. Now there are only two ways to find out what things are such; one is by special revelation, as in the case of faith of miracles, and petitions for them; the other is by the Bible. Here the explanation of that erroneous view of the warrant of prayer, above described, is made easy and plain. It is said that if the Christian prays with right motives, and with

Scriptural Limitations
to Warrant.

an assured belief that he shall obtain, he will obtain ; no matter what he asks, (unless it be something unlawful). Yes, but what warrant has he for the belief that he shall obtain ? Faith, without an intelligible warrant, is sheer presumption. Suppose, for instance, the object of petition is the recovery of a sick friend ; where does the applicant read God's pledge of a specific answer to that prayer ? Certainly not in Scripture. Does he pretend a direct spiritual communication ? Hardly. He has no specific warrant at all ; and if he works himself up into a notion that he is assured of the answer, it is but a baseless fantasy, rather insulting than honourable to God. I know that pious biography is full of supposed instances of this kind, as when Luther is said to have prayed for the recovery of Melancthon. These are the follies of good men ; and yet God's abounding mercy may in some cases answer prayers thus blemished.

We return then to Scripture, and ask again, what is the extent of the warrant there found ? The answer is, that God, both by promise and example, clearly holds out two classes of objects for which Christians pray. One is the class of which an instance has just been cited — objects naturally desirable, and in themselves innocent, which yet are not essential to redemption ; such as recovery from sickness, recovery of friends, good name, daily bread, deliverance from persecution, conversion of particular sinners, &c., &c. It is right to pray for such things ; it is even commanded : and we have ground, in the benevolence, love, and power of God, and tender sympathy of the Mediator, to hope for the specific answer. But still the truest believer will offer those prayers with doubts of receiving the specific answer ; for the simple reason that God has nowhere specifically promised to bestow it. The enlightened believer urges such petitions, perhaps warmly : but still all are conditioned on an "if it be possible," "if it be consistent with God's secret will." And he does not know whether he shall receive or not, just because that will is still secret. But such prayers, offered with this general trust in God's power, benevolence and better wisdom, and offered in pious motives, are accepted, even though not answered. cf. 2 Cor. xii : 8, with vs. '9 ; Matt. xxvi : 39 ; with Heb. v : 7. God does not give the very thing sought, though innocent in itself ; He had never promised it : but He "makes all things work together for good to the petitioner." This should be enough to satisfy every saint.

The other class of objects of prayer is, the benefits accompanying redemption ; all the gifts which make up, in the elect, growth in grace, perseverance, pardon, sanctification, complete redemption. For these we pray with full assurance of a specific answer, because God has told us, that it is His purpose specifically to bestow them in answer to all true prayer. See

Ps. lxxxiv : 11 ; Luke xi : 13 : 1 Thess. iv : 3 ; Luke xii : 32 ; John xv : 8. So, we have a warrant to pray in faith, for the grace to do the things which God's word makes it our duty to do. In all such cases, our expectation of an answer is entitled to be as definite as was that of Apostles, when inspired with the faith of miracles. God may not give it in the shape or channel we expected ; He may choose to try our faith by unexpected delays, but the answer is sure, because definitely promised, in His own time and way. Here we may say, Habak. ii : 3, " For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie ; though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

In addition to the promises, our expectation of an answer to prayer is strengthened by the following Promises Confirmed. precious considerations. (a) When we pray for things agreeable to God's will, we virtually pray for what will promote His glory and good pleasure. We are like the industrious servant petitioning to a wise master, for a new tool or implement in order to work better for him. (b) Such prayers are prompted by the Holy Ghost, and therefore (Rom. viii : 27), are surely destined to be answered, because the good and truthful God would not evoke such desires only in order to repulse them. (c) Our union to Christ confirms this ; because we know that the sap of spiritual affections circulates in us from Him our Root : so that the way we come to have a good desire is, by His having it first. Now, if He desires that thing too, we shall be like to get it. (d) Christ's intercession, so tender and generous, so prevalent, and perpetual, presents the most glorious ground of hope. He rejects no pious applicant. He ever liveth to intercede. The Farther heareth Him always. Hence, Heb. iv : 15, 16.

We are commanded to "pray always," "without ceasing."

7. Prayer Should be Social and Secret, always prevalent : and ejaculatory prayer Stated and Ejaculatory. That is, the temper of prayer should be should be habitual, and frequent as our spiritual exigencies. But it is also our duty to pray stately : the morning and evening, at least, being obviously proper stated seasons for secret, and the Lord's day, at least, for social and public prayer. The reason is, that man, a finite creature, controlled so greatly by habit, cannot well perform any continuous duty, without a season appropriated to it ; and that, a stated season. He needs all the aids of opportunity and leisure. Nor is there any incompatibility of such stated seasons, with our dependence on the Holy Ghost for ability to offer acceptable prayer. Some Christians seem to be infected with the Quaker idea, that because all true prayer is prompted by the Spirit, it is best not to attempt the duty at the stated hour, if His *afflatus* is not felt. The folly of this appears from our Saviour's words : "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

The Spirit is always waiting to prompt prayer. His command is, to pray always. If, at the appointed hour, an indisposition to pray is experienced, it is our duty to regard this as a marked symptom of spiritual want; and to make it a plea for the petition, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Again: Man must join in acts of social and public worship, because he is a social being; and hence he derives important aids in the difficult work of keeping alive the spirit of prayer within him. It is also his duty to glorify God before his fellow-creatures, by these public acts of homage, and to seek to benefit his fellows by the example of them. Yet the duty of public worship does not exclude that of secret. See Matt. vi: 6. Every soul is bound to pray stately in secret, because of the example of Christ and the saints; because the relation between God and the soul is direct and personal, admitting no daysman but Christ: because secret prayer is the best test and cultivation of the spirit of true devotion: because each soul has special sins, mercies, wants, of which he should speak confidentially to his God; and because there is in secret prayer the most childlike and unrestrained intercourse between God and the soul. So important are these facts, that we may usually say, that he who has no habit of secret prayer has no spirit of prayer at all.