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THE GOLDEN CENSER

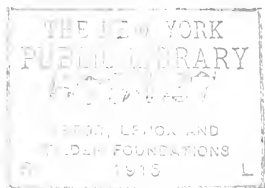


THE GOLDEN
CENSER

FLORENCE
L. BARCLAY
AUTHOR OF
'THE ROSARY'

1914

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
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PREFACE

THIS little book has been written in response to many anxious questions; and as the result of much personal experience of the necessity for a careful study of Holy Scripture, on the important matter of intercessory prayer.

No attempt is made to deal with the wide subject of the prayer-life, in all its bearings. Attention is mainly concentrated upon the one point under consideration.

The subject has not been approached along the lines of sentiment, nor of preconceived habits of thought; but entirely along the clear pathway of Bible precept and practice.

Every idea put forward, every suggestion made, is based upon the Scriptures. The passages quoted will be found to range from Genesis to Revelation.

Should any other view of the subject occur to the reader, let it equally rest upon

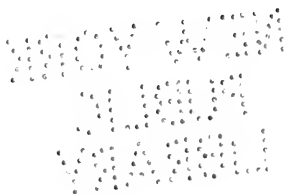
P R E F A C E

the firm foundation of the Word of God.

Let us study, as we also seek to pray, guided entirely by the Holy Spirit; and may our prayers and aspirations ascend to the mercy-seat, wafted thither by the Golden Censer of His sacred Presence within the soul.

FLORENCE L. BARCLAY

The Vicarage,
Hertford Heath, Feb., 1914



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CHAPTER I

“I PRAY NOT FOR THE WORLD”

IN STUDYING the earthly prayer-life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we realise one great fact: that every prayer of His was heard and answered.

We have His own testimony to this: John xi. 41, 42.
“Father . . . Thou hearest me always”;
and the testimony of a thoughtful and practical woman, who knew Him well: John xi. 22.
“Whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee.”

Why was this? All other lives, even of Bible saints, abound with prayers which cannot be granted, requests which may not be bestowed, desires which must not be fulfilled.

The prayers of the Lord Jesus were always in accordance with the will of God;

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they never clashed with the working out of the Divine purpose, or disturbed the harmony of spiritual law.

One instance only, do we find, of a prayer which could not have been granted; a prayer wrung from Him by great trouble
John xii. 27. of soul: "Father, save me from this hour."

But it was instantly amended; self was eliminated, the glory of God taking its place; and that prayer reached the Father's throne in a form which brought down
John xii. 28. an immediate and audible response:

"'Father, glorify Thy name.' Then came there a voice from heaven, saying: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'"

When doubtful as to whether a cry of the soul is in harmony with the will of God, apply this sacred test. Cut out the "I" and the "Me," and, where self stood at first, substitute "the glory of God." Then the answer will come with a power which shall reach and thrill, not only the
John xii. 29. troubled soul itself, but those also that stand by.

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In considering this difficult and important question as to how to pray always within the Will of God, we cannot do better than study the manner and method of the Lord Jesus in prayer; not only as regards those things for which He prayed, but also those things for which He did not pray. Foremost, and all-important among these, is the great statement of John xvii. 9: "I pray not for the world." John xvii. 9.

Jesus Christ did not pray for the world. Such a prayer as "O God, save India!" or "O God, have mercy upon the millions of China!" so common in our missionary prayer-meetings, would never have been heard from those inspired lips.

Jesus Christ died for the world, but He did not pray for it. His followers pray for the world, but they very rarely die for it.

A great and far-reaching truth underlies this statement of John xvii. 9.

Human prayer, either individual or collective, must never clash with any great law of the spiritual kingdom.

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Rev. xxii. 17.

Foremost among the laws of that kingdom, affecting mankind, is the great fact of free-will. "Whosoever will, let him take."

The right of choice, the responsibility of choice, rests with every human soul, and is its birthright.

Prayer must never clash with this Divine law of free-will. If a soul could be prayed into the Kingdom of Heaven, it would cease to be a free agent, and would become an automaton, unconsciously forced into salvation by a motive power, outside its own faith or its own desires. Its new birth would be the result, not of belief on its own part, but of an act of faith, and a responsive act of omnipotence, between another soul and God.

John iii. 16.

When the world believes, the world will be saved. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

You can win the world into belief, but

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you cannot pray the world into salvation; nor are you meant to do so.

Even He, Who came to save the world, had to say: "I pray not for the world." John xvii. 9.

A mistaken idea on this subject is responsible for much disappointed faith, and for a vast amount of wasted prayer-energy, which might work wonders if directed into the right channel.

Prayer for the world at large, for any particular country, for any community of unsaved people, or even for unconverted individuals, if it takes the form of pleading with God to "save them," to "bring them in," to "pour out His Holy Spirit upon them," to "have mercy on them," to "convert them," is uninspired and unscriptural prayer. It is either thoughtlessly urging upon God to do that which He has already most fully and completely done, thus practically disregarding and denying the "It is finished" of Calvary, and the John xix. 30. great Gift at Pentecost; or it is beseeching John xiv. 16. God to intervene between His own law of

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free-will and the souls to whom He has granted the right of choice; taking from them that right, and saving them, apart from their own desire, in response to the faith of others.

GOD CAN is a glorious fact; but GOD
2 Tim. ii. 13. CANNOT equally blessed, in its might and
in its majesty. And the greatest of all the
“Cannots” is that He cannot do this.

Bowing to that fundamental law, the
loving, yearning, human Christ, Who came

John iii. 17. To save the world

John vi. 33. To give life to the world

John viii. 12. To give light to the world

John i. 29. To take away the sin of the world

1 John ii. 2. To be the propitiation for the whole
world

John xvii. 9. yet had to say: “Father . . . I pray not
for the world.”

CHAPTER II

FOR WHOM TO PRAY

THE BIBLE is full of instructions concerning prayer; but you will not find therein any command to pray directly for outsiders, for the heathen, or for the world at large. Search and see.

For whom are we told to pray?

1st. For one another.

James v. 16.

2nd. For all the Saints.

Eph. vi. 18.

3rd. For the Apostles.

2 Thess. iii. 1.

4th. For the sick.

James v. 14.

5th. For them that persecute you.

Matt. v. 44.

Now examine in detail some of the prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

Luke xxii. 32.

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may

John xiv. 16,
17.

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abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive; because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Can we wonder that the apostles never thought it necessary to supplement their Master's prayer with petitions of their own? The Early Church knew well how fully this prayer had been answered on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent to abide with us for ever. It was left for a later generation, to whom perhaps the Blessing of Pentecost was less of a fully experienced reality, to form the habit of constantly reiterating: "Send Thy Holy Spirit!" Oh, hush such vain repetition, in presence of the sublime prayer of the Christ, eighteen centuries ago: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever"; and Peter's testimony, on the Day of Pentecost, to the complete fulfilment of that prayer and promise:

Acts ii. 33.

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“ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Instead of praying that the Holy Ghost may be “ sent,” let us ask that we may realise His Presence here, and receive in full measure His wonderful Indwelling, with all it involves of grace, of peace, and of power.

The longest recorded prayer of the Lord Jesus is in the 17th chapter of the Gospel according to St John, rightly called “ The Holy of Holies of the Bible.” This prayer is full of petitions for His own people. Notice particularly the 20th verse, which widens out those petitions, embracing— prophetically—“ them also which shall believe on Me through their word ”; and the 21st verse, which explains that the world is to be won into belief, by observing the unity of Christians: “ That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us:

John xvii. 20.

that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

Now study the prayers of the apostles. Take a most comprehensive passage of St Paul's in his epistle to the Colossians, the 1st chapter, 2nd and following verses:

- Col. i. 2. “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father
- Col. i. 3. and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we
- Col. i. 4. heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.” Note that it was their act of faith and acceptance of Jesus Christ, which brought them within the radius of the apostle's prayers.

- In the 5th and 6th verses he goes on to mention the gospel message, which came to them as to the whole world, but was bearing fruit in them, because hearing it had meant believing it, receiving it, and entering into “the grace of God in truth.” To
- Col. i. 9. which he adds: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to

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pray for you"; and then follow the wonderful and inspired requests, put up daily by St. Paul to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, on behalf of these young believers—prayers which were fully and richly answered.

Now it may be suggested that the apostle's statement that he prayed for these early Christians after he heard of their faith, does not necessarily imply that he did not pray beforehand for their conversion. Quite so. But where in the whole Bible do we find a single instance or record of any such prayer? The nearest approach to it is Romans x. 1.

“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” Rom. x. 1. And we need not enter into a lengthy discussion as to whether that passage implies definite prayer, or is merely an outburst of earnest longing; nor as to whether Israel, being the chosen people of God, can be considered to correspond in any sense to the heathen or to the uncon-

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verted of this dispensation. It is sufficient to inquire: Was that prayer granted? Were the people of Israel, as a nation, saved in response to the apostle's supplication?

One single recorded prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ was for outsiders: the Roman soldiers for whom He pleaded: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." But that request was not for a general forgiveness of the sins of those soldiers, such as would affect their eventual salvation; but rather that God the Father would overlook one definite act then being done to Himself, for which the suffering Saviour, in perfect justice, but with a marvellous exhibition of loving kindness, pleaded ignorance.

Let us pause for one moment to ask ourselves: do we, when pierced by the sharp pain of insult or injury, hasten to explain that those who are doing us the wrong most likely do it unwittingly, without realising the extent of the hurt they are inflicting; and that, therefore, we wish it at once for-

Luke xxiii. 34.

gotten and forgiven? This is a very Christ-like trait. In suggesting prayer of this kind for our enemies and traducers—and, alas, they are more often found within the Church than without it—our Lord Jesus Christ mentions three things which should come to them as the result of having been our persecutors and slanderers: Love, blessing, and good. Matt. v. 44.

We like to think of those Roman soldiers as never altogether losing the effect of having passed for one moment into the prayer-realm of the heart and mind of Jesus. And surely the prayer of the dying Stephen must have pursued young Saul, of Tarsus, with a haunting blessing. Perhaps it became one of those pricks, against which his conscience found it so hard to kick. Acts vii. 60.

But this is a digression. Let us return to our subject. Acts ix. 5.

What is to be our attitude toward the world? If we may not pray the world into salvation, what then can we do? We need not seek far for the answer.

“Go! Preach!”

Mark xvi. 15.

CHAPTER III

THE TRUE CHANNELS FOR PRAYER-ENERGY

GO! PREACH!

G This is our duty; this is our privilege; this is the sacred trust

John xx. 27. committed to us by our ascended Lord.

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send

Mark xvi. 15. I you.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

It is easier to remain upon our knees, than to arise and go.

It is easier to pray, than to preach.

But the clear command is: “Go! Preach!”

And notice that with the fulfilling of that command, our responsibility ceases. The great law of individual choice comes in. The mind, now made aware of the good news of the love of God and the finished work of Jesus, through our instrumentality and by the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit accompanying the Word, must now

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come to a decision, face to face with the God Who calls it, and with the Saviour Who has redeemed it. "He that believeth . . . shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." The Spirit and the bride may say, "Come." He that heareth may say, "Come." But there all pressure from without must cease. The final issue remains with the individual will. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Mark xvi. 16.

Rev. xxii. 17.

What are we to do for the world?

Up to the measure of our possible capacity, exactly what our Lord and Master did for it. For, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

John xx. 21.

We have already seen what the Lord Jesus Christ came to do for the world, and when we go forth at His bidding it is to strive to bring light, life and the message of reconciliation and forgiveness.

"Go ye into all the world."

Mark xvi. 15.

But if you cannot go? Then pray for those who can, and who do, go.

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And this brings us to the right channel for missionary prayer-energy.

Our Lord Himself gives us a very clear and precise missionary prayer.

After pointing out, as He well might do to-day, the greatness of the need and the inadequacy of the means for meeting it, He adds: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

Matt. ix. 38.

Notice how completely this—the great missionary prayer of the Bible—is within the will of God; even leaving entirely in His hands the question as to whom He would choose, although the men who prayed it were very ready to go themselves; and, as a matter of fact, were almost immediately sent.

Mark also that the first suggestion of this prayer arose from the fact that the heart of the Saviour was "moved with compassion" over a wandering multitude, "because they were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

Matt. ix. 36.

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On another occasion, somewhat later in His ministry, when again He was "moved with compassion" toward a great waiting multitude, He said to His disciples: "Give ye them to eat." It is helpful to note that this yearning of the loving heart of the Christ over the crowds who needed helping, healing, teaching, feeding, always took the form of calm and practical prayer and action. Emotion never moved Him from His steadfast purpose of walking, serene and ready, within the will of God.

Matt. xiv. 14.

Matt. xiv. 16.

John iv. 34.

Now examine in detail our Bible directions as to how we should help by prayer in evangelistic and missionary work.

St. Paul says, in 2 Corinthians i. 11, "Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." And in Romans xv. 30, 31, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

2 Cor. i. 11.

Rom. xv. 30,
31.

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that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." And, most important of all: Colossians iv. 2-4, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ . . . that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

Col. iv. 2-4.

Here are the true channels for our intercessory prayers on behalf of foreign lands, and of evangelistic work in our own land. Pray for the messengers—that a "door of utterance" may be opened unto them. Pray about the message—that it may be truth Divine to every heart, and may go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. ix. 38.

And, even this, is taking you three steps beyond the injunction of the Lord Jesus Christ, and is presupposing that you have already prayed the labourers out into the harvest fields. Always be ready to retrace

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those steps when necessary; and, in answer to that primary prayer, you may find yourself standing before a "door of utterance," and depending upon the prayers of those at home, for its opening.

One more very comprehensive passage of instructions as to how to pray for all fellow-believers, and for ministers, evangelists, and preachers. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 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."

Eph. vi. 18-20.

Notice that in all these explicit petitions there is no trace of such expressions as "O God, save souls!" or "Lord, convert the impenitent!" "May sinners be converted unto Thee."

These latter words take us to the 51st

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Psalm, where we almost expect to find them. But no. In the form taken by this wonderful prayer, we have our subject borne out, in every detail: first, prayer for the messenger; then, power in the message. For here the messenger pleads for himself: “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.”

Ps. li. 12, 13.

1 Tim. ii. 1-4.

In the first epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy, the 2nd chapter and the first four verses, we find this very comprehensive passage about prayer. “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”

While this passage undoubtedly com-

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mands universal intercession, there is not a word in it countenancing the mistaken lines of prayer which form the subject of our consideration; in fact the passage, taken as a whole, implies with absolute clearness, that the supplications, prayers and intercessions apply rather to the life and conduct of those for whom the Early Church thus prayed; the closing clause beautifully bearing out the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, given in the 13th chapter of the gospel according to St. John: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Also in the 17th chapter of the same Gospel, and the 21st verse: "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe"; and in the 23rd verse: "That they may be made perfect in one . . . that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me."

John xiii. 35.

John xvii. 21.

John xvii. 23.

A quiet and peaceable life, a spirit of love and unity amongst all branches of the Church of Christ, would do more to bring

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all men to the knowledge of the truth, than any amount of praying and preaching while discord is rife.

Here then is another inspired channel for our prayer-energy. Pray the Church into love and unity, so that the world may have some chance of believing in the Church's Lord.

CHAPTER IV

“REMEMBER LOT’S WIFE”

NOW, before turning to the more practical, experimental, and individual application of our subject, let us examine one instance, given in God’s Holy Word, of importunate prayer for the salvation of a family—a salvation to be accomplished against their own will and inclination, without any act of repentance, faith, or surrender on their part.

We shall see how these urgent and persistent prayers, for the salvation of a backsliding relative and his worldly family, were granted by the Lord; but with what strange and disastrous results.

Turn to Genesis xviii., and you find yourself on the plains of Mamre, overlooking the Vale of Siddim, which is now the Dead Sea. On this high table-land, Abra-

Gen. xix. 27,
28.

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ham walked in earnest communion with his God. The two angels had gone on to Sodom—see verse 22 of chapter xviii. and verse 1 of chapter xix.—Thus Abraham found himself alone with that blessed One —the Angel of Jehovah—Who “appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre.”

Gen. xviii. 1.

During this quiet time of converse, the Lord's purposes of investigation and of judgment were fully revealed to Abraham; and Abraham's whole soul yearned over his own kindred in that doomed city.

Gen. xviii. 20,
21.

Though not actually named in the account, it is impossible to doubt that the anxious cry of his heart was for Lot, and for Lot's erring family. And we know the Lord took it to be so; for we read in the 19th chapter: “And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.” Also we find how, owing to this special mercy of God, in response to Abraham's

Gen. xix. 29.

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importunate prayer, Lot and his family were saved from out the destruction of that condemned city, against their will; for "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city." Gen. xix. 16.

Mark the result, and then let us ask ourselves: Is this the sort of salvation we desire for our unconverted relatives and friends, when we so persistently cry: "O Lord, save them! O Lord, have mercy upon them!"?

(True, this was a forcible leading into safety from physical death, rather than from spiritual danger. But there is no doubt that, in all these Old Testament happenings, the natural typified the spiritual. Just as Abraham's call to be a tent-dweller typified consecration of heart and life, so Lot's progress toward Sodom, and eventual abandonment of tent-dwelling for a house Heb. xi. 9, 10.
Gen. xiii. 12.
Gen. xiv. 12.

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in that city, clearly indicates the backslider; while his wife and daughters, wholly absorbed in the life of Sodom, stand unmistakably for the unconverted of this dispensation.

It may be useful here to note, in passing, the solemn lesson of **Genesis xix. 14.** When Lot, alarmed by the angel's warning, attempted to pass on the message to his own children, saying: "Up, get you out of this place; for the **LORD** will destroy this city!" his words had no effect. "He seemed as one that mocked, unto his sons in law." It is useless for a backslider to attempt to be a preacher, especially in his own home circle. Backsliding and preaching are not compatible.)

Now mark the result of Divine intervention in response to Abraham's urgent and repeated requests.

Lot's wife was no sooner free from the compelling control of the angel, than she paused, and looked back. The pause must have been a long one, and the intention to

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return, if possible, very determined, for a descending wave of molten bitumen caught her, swept over her where she stood, and left her standing there, firmly fixed to the ground, a living woman, in a fast-hardening prison; a solitary statue of Unregenerate Despair, at which Jesus pointed a warning finger, nineteen hundred years later, when He said: "Remember Lot's wife."

Luke xvii. 32.

Better far for that poor woman to have perished among the multitude in the city, who, like herself, preferred sin to safety. What must have been Abraham's feelings whenever, in crossing the plain, he passed near that upright tomb, and traced in its outline the form and figure of one for whom he had offered such insistent prayer.

Into the darkness of the mountain cave we dare not follow Lot and his two daughters. Suffice it to say, that from that infamous dwelling-place there issued forth two nations, the Moabites and the Ammonites, who in the years to come were a perpetual hindrance, stumbling-block, and

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- cause of defeat and disaster to the descendants of Abraham in their attempts to enter into God's promises to him, and to dwell in the promised land. Even one thousand
- Neh. iv. 13. four hundred and fifty-three years later, it was Tobiah the Ammonite who opposed and discouraged Nehemiah and his brave little band, in their noble work of rebuilding
- Neh. ii. 10. the ruined wall of Jerusalem; because "it grieved him exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel."
- Rom. viii. 26. Truly "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." How thankfully we remember that "The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings
- Rom. viii. 27. 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 the will of God."
- 1 Tim. ii. 1. If your "intercessions for all men" are to be within the will of God, they must be inspired by that patient, all-wise Spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRE BENEATH

WE NOW reach the very essential of all true prayer: "Praying in the Holy Ghost." Jude 20.

Never attempt unaided prayer. To do so, is to court unreality, and consequent disappointment.

A prayer-meeting held without the realised Presence and Power of the Holy Spirit, resembles a group of perished people gathering for warmth and brightness around a fireplace in which the fuel is all laid and ready, but to which no match has been applied. Would they not go away chilled and disheartened? Coal, logs, and seats around a hearth, do not, in themselves, constitute a fire, if the essential be lacking.

The incense, used in the tabernacle wor-

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ship, is, throughout the Bible, the special type of prayer. See Psalm cxli. verse 2. "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense." Also Revelation viii. 3rd and 4th verses: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

Now turn to Leviticus xvi. in order to find the great lesson taught by this type.

Lev. xvi. 12. In the 12th and 13th verses we read: "And Aaron shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat."

Incense, we remember, is a hard, ar-

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omatic substance, somewhat resembling resin or gum. In its natural condition it has very little perfume, and no rising power. But put fire beneath it, and, at once, clouds of all-pervading fragrance mount and rise, filling and permeating the entire place.

Have you been conscious sometimes of a coldness and deadness in your prayers? Have you said: "Alas, they rise no higher than the ceiling! They do not reach the mercy-seat; they are not wafted to the throne of God."

Have you forgotten the Fire? Have you entered the Holy of Holies, the inmost sanctuary of prayer, with your hands full of incense—incense beaten small, it may be; for great need and long vigil have a way of breaking the anxious heart—yet hard and cold, for all that; devoid of rising power?

Where is the Fire? Must you lay that hard, cold, broken incense before the mercy-seat and go your way sadly, sighing for the fragrance, yearning for the ascending clouds?

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Where is the Fire, upon which to place your incense?

Jude 20. It is here! "Praying in the Holy

Eph. vi. 18. Ghost." "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." For "The

Rom. viii. 26. Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."

No more cold, formal, earth-weighted prayers, when you have learned to lay your broken incense upon the almighty Fire in the Golden Censer of His Presence within the soul.

This is the precious secret of Inspired Prayer.

CHAPTER VI

“ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF GOD”

LET US now consider this subject in its practical bearings: firstly, as regards collective petitions; secondly, as regards individual prayers for individuals.

Many who read these pages will remember a certain gathering, at a Convention, a few years ago, which unexpectedly became an all-night of prayer and testimony. Hundreds of earnest-minded people spent hours upon their knees, and a large part of the proceedings consisted in one voice exclaiming: “O God, convert Ireland!” most of those present immediately taking up the cry, “Ireland! Ireland! Ireland!” until the entire neighbourhood rang with it. “O God, save Scotland!” came from another voice in the assembly. “Scotland! Scot-

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land ! Scotland ! ” — “ O God, revive London ! ” “ London ! London ! London ! ”

The quiet night resounded with these cries of impassioned faith and zeal.

But—was Ireland converted ? Was Scotland saved ? Has a revival reached London ?

Now, we want to realise this. If prayer for the salvation of a country, of a town, of a community of people were an inspired and legitimate prayer, it would not necessitate hours of vigil and agonising before the Lord ; nor would it require shouts which resembled the cries of the prophets of Baal, rather than the quiet mountain-top prayers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It would be sufficient that one child of God, with “ faith as a grain of mustard seed ” should say : “ Father, convert every unconverted soul in London to-night ; for Jesus Christ’s sake : Amen ” — and every unconverted soul in London would necessarily be converted, because of two promises : “ If we ask anything ac-

1 Kings xviii.
26.

Matt. xiv. 23.

Matt. xvii. 20.

1 John v. 14.

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ording to His will, He heareth us." And
"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, in John xvi. 23.
My name, He will give it you."

No desire could be more clearly in ac-
cordance with the Father's will, than the
desire for the salvation of others. And 1 Tim. ii. 14.
every prayer put up in the name of the
Lord Jesus, reaches the throne. John xv. 16.

Why then is the world not saved? What
renders these prayers practically null and
void?

The fact that God cannot deny Himself.
He cannot take from man a gift bestowed.

The great law of human free-will inter-
venes. It is the law to which the Redeemer
of the World bowed, when He said: "I John xvii 9.
pray not for the world." It is the law to
which His people must bow when they
face the problem of the unbelievers and the
unsaved.

"Go, and preach" is our Lord's com-
mand; and we need to realise that we have
no right to change that command into
"kneel and pray." Mark xvi. 15.

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It is as easy to say, "O God, save China!" as to put a threepenny bit into the plate at a missionary meeting; in fact such a prayer is worth less than a threepenny bit, and partakes rather of the nature of the proverbial button, because it is uncashable. China will be saved, when China's millions believe; "and how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

Rom. x. 14.

Matt. ix. 38.

Now, as regards the important subject of prayer for individuals—a wife's prayers for an unbelieving husband; a husband's prayers for an unsaved wife; parents' for children; a friend's for a friend. Will the right understanding of this subject curtail or limit these earnest, anxious pleadings, or cause them altogether to cease? Oh, far from it! Rather shall we continue to pray with fresh hope, and with renewed comfort and ex-

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pectation, when we realise that our petitions are flowing through inspired channels, and that the Holy Spirit is making intercession for us, "according to the will of God." Rom. viii. 27.

Also, when we have definitely realised that the final responsibility of choice rests with each individual soul, a burden, which we were never meant to bear, will be lifted from us, and there will be no danger of a dark cloud of misunderstanding arising between us and our loving Heavenly Father.

Surely those of us who are called to minister to souls, are frequently confronted with this difficulty. Heartbroken children of God, worn with yearning prayer, come to us, sighing: "Ah, I have prayed for the salvation of various relatives and friends for years, yet they are still unconverted. Now I feel my own faith failing. Why does not God save them? Surely this petition is according to His will?"

Quite lately the case was brought to the knowledge of the writer of this little book,

of an aged Christian lady whose faith in her God and in prayer was practically wrecked, because her son, for whom she had prayed daily during forty years, had died, an atheist.

Now, however grievous might be such a sorrow, there could be no question of loss of faith, or of any cloud between the trustful soul and its God, if we realise that He could not respond to prayers which asked Him to go behind His own great primal laws of human choice, and of free-will.

Confronted by so hard a test, we should stand with faithful Abraham upon the plains of Mamre, and say: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" And the deep rest of fellowship with our Divine Lord in this, would prove an added blessing to our prayer-life.

Furthermore, a right apprehension of this subject will be an incentive to fulfilling in the home, and in the inner circle of friendship, the command of our Lord Jesus Christ: "Go, preach."

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How often a wife, who speaks sadly of having prayed for her unconverted husband during many years, considers that she has completely fulfilled her part, by all the hours of secret prayer, in her own chamber, and she must now "leave the rest to God," Who, "in His own good time," will hear and answer her prayers, and will save that soul.

Ah, poor anxious heart, ask thyself, honestly ! Has not this easier way of prayer, served to close thine eyes to the clear duty of brave word and faithful testimony ? Hast thou been asking thy God to do that which thou thyself shouldest rather have been doing ? "Go, preach !"

The word "go" is very simple, and in your case probably means: rise from your knees and go downstairs to the familiar room where sits one, for whom you have prayed during all these years, but to whom you have never spoken of your Lord.

Or, if your prayers have been on behalf of an unconverted son, abroad, it may mean

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that you must go to your desk and sit down to write a letter—a simple, earnest letter—
Phil. iii. 14. which shall open his eyes to God's high calling, for him, in Christ Jesus; and which shall cause him to listen at last to the pleading of that patient, loving Spirit, Whom he has long resisted, but Who, in response to your prayers, has never ceased to strive with him.

Yes; the meaning of "go" is very simple. The exact word, in the Greek, used in
Mark xvi. 15. Mark xvi. 15 (*porenomai*), signifies *to pass on*.

The word "preach" is more complicated, and requires careful study; because many Greek words in the original are all translated "preach" in our version; yet they hold many meanings other than that connected, as a rule, with pulpit and gown.

Let us glance at a few of these, giving one reference, only, for each.

"To tell, or announce thoroughly."
Luke ix. 60.

"To speak throughout." Acts xx. 7 and 9.

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“To tell good news or tidings.” Luke iv. 43.

“To tell thoroughly.” Acts iv. 2.

“To proclaim as a herald.” Matt. iii. 1.

“To talk, or discourse.” Mark ii. 2.

Study these various passages and meanings; then ask yourself whether you have done all these things in your own home; amid your circle of friends; throughout your neighbourhood.

If not, look up, O praying soul! You, whose faith seems clouded by long silent waiting; look up and see your risen Lord standing before you, His hand upon the open door, as He points the way, with a look of unutterable comprehension and love, and says to you: “Go; preach.”

CHAPTER VII

“HE SHALL COMFORT YOUR HEARTS”

BUT POSSIBLY some may still say: “Are we then to cease praying for the unconverted?”

1 Thess. v. 17.

Most emphatically not. “Pray without ceasing;” but taking careful heed that your prayer-energy is directed along inspired channels; that is to say along the lines clearly laid down, by precept and by practice, in God’s Holy Word.

1 John v. 14.

Moreover, should you find therein any line of prayer for the unconverted, not mentioned in these pages—any method of petition warranted by the Word, which has been here overlooked—then use that method, pray along that line, and the Divine blessing will rest upon your prayers; for “This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything ac-

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ording 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.” ¹ John v. 15.

But we need to remember that actual “petition”—even of a wise and an inspired kind—is but one phase of prayer.

Of the many Hebrew and Greek words translated “to pray” in our version, only a few mean “to ask”; while of those translated “prayer,” two only actually mean a request or supplication. Other meanings are—in the former case: “To bow down,” “To meditate,” “To want,” “To ask or interrogate,” “To call for”; and, in the latter: “A whisper,” “An intercession,” “A pouring out,” and “A song of praise.”

Surely one or other of these definitions will meet our every need.

How often a prayer for an unconverted child, takes the form of an outpouring. “O, my son, Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” ² Sam. xviii. 33.

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How consoling to remember that the
2 Cor. i. 3, 4. heart of "the Father of our Lord Jesus
Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God
of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all
2 Thess. ii. 16. our tribulations"—"God, even our Father,
which hath loved us, and hath given us
everlasting consolation and good hope
through grace"—can understand the cry of
anguish of an earthly parent's heart over a
Eph. ii. 1. son who is "dead in trespasses and sins."
2 Thess. ii. 17. He shall "Comfort your hearts, and stablish
you in every good word and work." Even
"a whisper," or an earnest meditation, can
penetrate to the Infinite, and shall soon be-
come a "Song of Praise," as you say:
Luke xv. 24. "For this my son was dead, and is alive
again; he was lost, and is found."

But, remember, the prodigal had to
"Come to himself" in the "far country."
He had to make the effort of will, which
turned from the far country to the father's
house, leaving behind both the riotous liv-
ing, and the consequent famine and husks.
Alone and unaided he had to come to the

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point of saying : “ I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, ‘ Father, I have sinned.’ ” Luke xv. 18.

CHAPTER VIII

TO THOSE IN THE FAR COUNTRY

THIS little volume will probably be read by some who are yet in the "far country"; who are spending all the best of life in the pursuit of amusement; in the absorbing pressure of business; in the rush for self-advancement; even, perhaps, in that weary bondage of "serving divers lusts and pleasures" upon which St. Paul himself looked back, in vivid remembrance; a condition of soul which our Lord described as being "choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life," and bringing "no fruit to perfection."

Titus iii. 3.

Luke viii. 14.

Heb. xii. 17.

The "pleasures of this life" are, without doubt, satisfying at the moment; but—there comes an "afterward."

Esau thoroughly enjoyed the red pottage;

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but, "afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance; though he sought it carefully with tears." And the most solemn point in the story is, that "no place of repentance" might be more correctly translated "No way to change his mind." If sorrow had been all that was needed, Esau was sorry enough. He "cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry"; he even "lifted up his voice, and wept"; but, for all that, "he found no way to change his mind." He had given in for so long to self-indulgence and self-pleasing, that he could not arrive at the change of mind which alone could have brought him into blessing.

Gen. xxvii. 34.

For those in the "far country" our subject holds just one clear message. It is this.

When you give yourself a few quiet moments in which to face the "afterward," do you not have a vague sort of idea that all is bound to come right in the end; that a life which began in the light of a Chris-

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tian home, cannot close in the outer darkness; that your mother's prayers cannot fail to be heard; and that, in answer to those prayers, God will save you somehow—some day?

Undoubtedly your mother's prayers have been heard.

It may even be in answer to some prayer on your behalf that you now find yourself with this little book in your hands, and have been led to read it, up to this point.

But its message for you is clearly this. Your birthright as a human soul is the great gift of free-will, the power and the responsibility of choice.

No prayers, however yearning, however constant, however persistent, can take from you that gift. Omnipotence Itself cannot save you against your will.

There is one very solemn passage on prayer for others, to which the attention of those for whom the first seven chapters of this book were written, was not directed. We came very near it, once or twice, yet

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we passed it by. We left it for this final chapter.

Let us look at it now.

The First Epistle of St. John, the 5th chapter and the 16th verse: "If any man 1 John v. 16. see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him Job xlii. 8. life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Oh, mark those closing words! Every other sin you have committed has been fully atoned for by the Lord Jesus Christ. The three facts of Isaiah liii. 6 are each equally true. "All we like sheep have gone Is. liii. 6. astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If we are forced, by self-knowledge, to assent to these first two facts, in their sadness, how can we withhold our assent to the glad certainty of a finished redemption?

What then is the sin unto death—that sin which is past praying for?

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John iii. 16. Obviously, it is the only damning sin—the sin of unbelief. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. . . .

John iii. 18. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but He that believeth not is condemned already.”

Belief and life; unbelief and death. Throughout the Word, they go together.

Again we are confronted with the solemn fact that the unbelieving mind cannot be prayed into belief. “I do not say that he shall pray for it,” says the tenderest writer of all the Bible scribes.

What then is to be done with this sin past praying for?

Each soul, for itself, must definitely give it up; making the mental surrender which means passing from death unto life; from unbelief into the belief which involves possession. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

1 John v. 12.

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But this entering into the blessing of life eternal, must be a definite act of your own free-will.

Mark this. A young man of the world, impelled by a certain amount of good intention, consulted the Lord Jesus Christ as to his chances of inheriting eternal life. He stood face to face with the Saviour of the World. He heard the lips of the Son of God Himself say: "Come, and follow Me." Yet—he went away!

Matt. xix. 21.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. . . . And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Rev. xxii. 17.

Prayer may have held open the door for you, during all these years; but prayer cannot compel you to enter; prayer cannot pass you in.

The door is open still. There are watchers at the gate.

But, out in the far country, you, yourself, must say: "I will arise and go."

File



