



## Course DC207: Divine Healing

<sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. James 5:14-15

### The Reasonableness of Divine Healing

**Intro:** The possibility of Divine Healing must be plainly evident to every reasonable person. God who created the world *ex nihilo* [Latin, *out of nothing!*] is certainly able to heal or repair His already existing creation. While standing in chains before King Agrippa, Paul asked, “**Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?**” (Acts 26:8). Though the world mocks this, to the Christian, the resurrection of the dead is one of the elementary principles of Christ (i.e., *a basic Christian doctrine* [Heb. 6:1-2]). But how unreasonable it would be for one to believe in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead while not believing in divine healing (*divine healing also being listed as an elementary principle of Christ* [i.e., “*... laying on of hands...*”]). Adapting Paul’s words to this unreasonableness—“*Why should it be thought incredible to any Christian that God heals the sick?*” Miracles, signs and divine healings did not pass away from the Church with the apostles—an explanation/excuse often heard to justify little faith. Clearly the Great Commission, given to the entire Church through whom Christ works (“**to the end of the age**” [Matt. 28:20]), includes the miraculous; including *laying on of hands and the sick recovering* (Mark 16:18). Furthermore, Church history definitely confirms that divine healing did not stop in the first century—and testimonies continue to abound from around the world to this very day. Furthermore, any discussion of divine healing and the miraculous is an interrelated topic to prayer itself. One would be required to first prove that God’s promises of prayer have ended with the death of the apostles who seeks to reason away the miraculous. May faith be stirred afresh in believers to rise above any surrounding Nazareth of unbelief.

### The Need for Faith

- <sup>43</sup> Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, <sup>44</sup> came from behind and touched the border of His garment. [For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." (Mark 5:28)] And immediately her flow of blood stopped. <sup>45</sup> And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me." <sup>47</sup> Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately. <sup>48</sup> And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." Luke 8:43-48
- <sup>8</sup> And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. <sup>9</sup> This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, <sup>10</sup> said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. Acts 14:8-10
- When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Matthew 9:2

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## Ask, Seek, Knock

**7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks [cf. Greek, asking] receives, and he who seeks [cf. Greek, seeking] finds, and to him who knocks [cf. Greek, knocking] it will be opened.** Matthew 7:7-8

[The Greek verbs, **asks, seeks and knocks** in v:8 are given as *present-active-participles*, as if to say: *He who asks and keeps on asking, seeks and keeps on seeking, knocks and keeps on knocking.*]

What great reason and encouragement regarding prevailing in prayer is given in these three words: **ask, seek** and **knock** (and their counterparts: **receives, finds** and **opened**). *Taken in the order, these words give us a wealth of instruction concerning prevailing prayer.*

**1<sup>st</sup>. “Ask”:** How incredible and wonderful that prevailing prayer should be revealed to us by the word **ask**. However, there are certainly different ways of *asking*, and not all the ways incline the one asked to grant a request (cf. James 4:3). *However, praise the Lord, there is an asking which does arrest attention.*

Many years ago I heard an illustration concerning how children ask for things which reveals this (I know not whom to credit). Certainly every parent of young children understands the difference between a child asking for something that they really desire and asking for that which they really don't care much whether they receive it or not. We see this difference with little children at Christmas time. Every commercial for a toy between cartoons a child may say: "I want that! Can I have that?" But such asking is not from a desire worthy of the parent's consideration, for 15 minutes later they have forgotten about that toy and are "*asking*" for something else. The request was nothing but a momentary craving, a wish—but not a request born of any desire worthy to be taken seriously. The parent knows that Christmas will not be ruined for the child if that particular toy doesn't show up under the tree.

However, when they see their little girl day after day talk about how she so badly wants the *baby alive Susy doll that really cries and wets* — when that is all that the little girl talks about at dinner, before she sleeps, and when she rises ... when she looks longingly under the tree at the boxes and says: "Oh I hope one of them is *baby alive Susy doll!*"... all the other "requests" were not the longing of the child. But, she will be greatly disappointed and shed hot tears Christmas morning if *baby alive Susy doll* isn't found under the tree. And you can be certain that as long as it's in the parent's ability to get that doll, they will not substitute it with a fish, a rock, a scorpion—nor even with a tea set.

In like manner there is a lot of asking in prayer which doesn't reflect the burdened desire of the soul of the one who prays—requests being raised which would never shed a tear over not seeing the prayer answered. Ask what you desire, but be certain it is true asking rather than the unworthy asking of a silly child.

In many cases the failure in prayer is revealed right there. But if one says —"Yes! My heart breaks for this

request! My desire is true, it is good and it is right! I only desire what I am asking for the glory of the Lord, yet still the request is hindered!" Then consider:

**2<sup>nd</sup> “Seek”:** If the answer is delayed, **let one seek** — seek for any reason that the answer is not yet given. Is there perhaps some impure motive of which you were unaware? Is there perhaps something else that must be first surrendered, done, restored? Is there something which would make it unsafe for your spiritual life for God to grant the request now? The seeking purifies the asking lest we ask amiss in order to spend it on our selfish pleasures. Seeking prepares our soul to receive, causing the glory of God to become our great desire. Heavenly insight may be revealed through our seeking so that our prayer even begins to change in some manner. Perhaps the seeking is necessary for things to change which are outside of us. The believer and his request may become wonderfully altered in the seeking process. The secrets of the delay may not be known fully until Judgment Day—let God work in order for the way to be opened. The process of seeking not only purifies the asking, *but faith is strengthened!* Confidence in the request grows that it is pleasing and right before God as one *seeks and keeps on seeking* – even to the point of confidence so that we:

**3<sup>rd</sup> “Knock!”:** Knocking with great expectation! How precious it is to come to such a place where we can knock with confidence that our hearts and our requests are purified, our faith having become strengthened through the seeking process for the reception. For as seeking purifies the asking, *knocking with confidence crowns the seeking.* How blessed it is to come to the place in a person's praying (as many can and have testified) that they begin to *knock* with confidence. When the request and the asker are enlightened through the seeking, *and the burden of the request still remains*, then one becomes emboldened to storm the gates of hell in faith—***FOR HE WHO PROMISED CANNOT LIE.*** Surely, our Heavenly Father is honored through such praying. ***“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”***

How wonderful it is to have prayed through to the point where one knows he just has to keep on knocking like the man at his friend's door at midnight (Luke 11:5-8). Who but God knows why things must take time?! — there may be reasons we never discover in this world. But prayer changes things and prevails—and that is why Satan fears the praying Christian and does what he can to discourage us from it.

## The Prayer of Faith

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:13-16

What is **THE PRAYER OF FAITH**? This phrase is of great importance concerning divine healing. Some have insisted that **the prayer of faith** is a special gift sometimes given by God so that one is healed in response to it being offered—making **the prayer of faith** a gift specifically and sovereignly granted by God only when He so chooses to bestow it. Now truly, many believers (myself included) can testify of a time when God seemed to simply overwhelm them with faith for a certain thing—a faith that gripped them beyond human explanation. How grateful believers should be for such times, for such times are gifts indeed. However, this can hardly be the definition of “**the prayer of faith**” which the Holy Spirit speaks of in verse 15. If this were so, Jesus would never have expressed disappointment in His disciples for their little faith. Having considered “**asking, seeking and knocking**” (recalling in Greek that these verbs are given as *present-active-participles* [a continued in action]) reveals that faith grows by the one who so unceasingly prays. Clearly James has linked “**the prayer of faith**” in verse 15 with “**The EFFECTIVE FERVENT PRAYER of a righteous man**” in verse 16—*the prayer which avails much*. We are told of Epaphras’s “**laboring fervently**” in prayer (Col. 4:12). Certainly prayer is often a rest, but at other times it is a wrestling. Truly, “**... God has dealt to each one a measure of faith**” (Rom. 12:3), but we are all to exercise our faith—asking, seeking, and yes, the blessed knocking in assurance. Let the believer ponder anew how real the promises of prayer become to the one exercising **the prayer of faith**—whether it comes as a sudden gift, or through great and fervent labor (i.e., asking, seeking, knocking):

## The Promises of God and the Prayer of Faith from a Righteous Man

## Difficulties Concerning Prayer

Great and varied are the questions concerning prayer. There is much we may not understand about prayer in this life. However, we are never to let what we do not understand hinder us from praying in faith concerning what we do understand. Clearly faith can be little or great, just as it can increase or decrease. We read that “**... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God**” (Rom. 10:17). Perhaps in pondering the above Scriptures today you are experiencing a reviving of faith—remember it came through hearing the Word of God. “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...**” (Col. 3:6). Regarding delays... who but God knows why? Daniel’s prayer was hindered 21 days (Dan. 10:12-13). Some prayers have taken years—time is not the issue. And sometimes those who prayed died in faith, “**not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off embraced them**” (Heb. 11:13). It has been reported that George Muller prayed for a friend for decades, confident the man would be saved. He died without seeing him come to Christ, but even before the burial service could be held, his friend got saved. There are difficulties too deep for humanity to explain, this we know. And truly, God does sometimes say “*no*” to a request, but when He does, the praying soul is satisfied with the answer which God has given, just as Paul was with the answer he received (2 Cor. 12:9). But sadly, multiple times the fact that God sometimes says “*no*” has wrongly been used as an excuse for many to cease praying until they prevail or receive the peaceful grace of God that comes with His “*no*.” Let the believer ever humbly remember that it is true: “**Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures**” (James 4:2-3). God has not over-advertised His promises, men have under-believed them. Divine healing is not a promise that one shall never die, for “**it is appointed for men to die once**” (Heb. 9:27 [cf. 2 Kings 13:14]). Yet, let us take soberly the words of our Lord to—Ask, Seek and Knock.

### Various Obstacles to be Overcome Related to Prayer:

#### **Obstacle; The Nazareth of Unbelief around Us:**

- **Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.** Matthew 13:58

Let the Christian focus *not upon the hindrance of many mighty works in Nazareth*, but rather focus on the truth that **SOME mighty works took place **EVEN** there in**

#### **Obstacle; Not Truly Praying in Jesus’ Name:**

- **<sup>13</sup> And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.** John 14:13-14
- **... that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.** John 15:16
- **<sup>22</sup> Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. <sup>23</sup> And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, what-ever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. <sup>24</sup> Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.** John 16:22-24

To pray in Jesus name must never be thought of as simply adding the phrase, “*In Jesus name, Amen.*” Just adding the phrase will never make a prayer to be offered in His name. Rather, the one who would pray in the name of Jesus must be seeking to live and pray in the character (in the manner, and with the desires) with which Jesus Himself would pray. Someone has said: “To pray in Jesus name is to pray so that Jesus Himself can say ‘Amen!’ and sign His own name to the request.” To pray in His name is to be brought in tune with the Spirit of God interceding within us. It is to find and grasp by faith our true identity in Jesus so that we pray in His name.

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- <sup>16</sup> By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. <sup>17</sup> But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? <sup>18</sup> My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. <sup>19</sup> And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. <sup>20</sup> For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. <sup>22</sup> And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 1 John 3:16-22
- And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:17
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Philippians 4:13
- I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. John 15:5

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One of the solid convictions which Andrew Murray came to regard concerning prayer is:

...that the Father waits to hear every prayer of faith, to give us whatsoever we will, and whatsoever we ask in Jesus' name. We have become so accustomed to limit the wonderful love and the large promises of our God, that we cannot read the simplest and clearest statements of our Lord without the qualifying clauses by which we guard and expound them. If there is one thing I think the Church needs to learn, it is that God means prayer to have an answer, and that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God will do for His child who gives himself to believe that his prayer will be heard. *God hears prayer*; this is a truth universally admitted, but of which very few understand the meaning, or experience the power.

Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1885), vii-viii.

### Obstacle; Thinking that the Will of God is much too Narrow for a Person to Confidently Ask from God an Acceptable Request:

- <sup>9</sup> For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, <sup>10</sup> making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. Romans 1:9-10

accomplished through their desires, grants them! Worship Him! Notice that the will of God in regards to what takes place in this earth is not a small and narrow window which excludes most of our requests. Rather, it is large enough to allow God to often work through the desires/prayers/requests of men. Thus, Paul prayed that he might "find a way in the will of God" that his request could be granted. What reason there is to pray!—to ask, to seek and to knock.

Certainly the holy counsel in the Trinity needs not man's directions or input in order to accomplish His holy will. But marvelous is the truth, that because of the Man Christ Jesus, the request and desires of mankind (who prays in the name of Jesus) are taken into consideration—and when God's will can be

## Obstacle; Holding on to Known Sin:

- If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. Psalms 66:18
- Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:16
- <sup>8</sup> For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain *much*, If God takes away his life? <sup>9</sup> Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him? Job 27:8-9
- One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. Proverbs 28:9
- Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. John 9:31

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## Obstacle; A Double-Mindedness and being Self-Serving:

- <sup>2</sup> My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, <sup>3</sup> knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. <sup>4</sup> But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. <sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup> But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup> *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.* James 1:2-8
- <sup>1</sup> Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they not come* from your *desires for pleasure* that war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. <sup>4</sup> Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. <sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? <sup>6</sup> But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "*God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.*" <sup>7</sup> Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. <sup>8</sup> Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your hands, you sinners;* and purify *your hearts, you double-minded.* <sup>9</sup> Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your joy to gloom.* <sup>10</sup> Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. James 4:1-10
- Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard. Proverbs 21:13

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<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And **THE PRAYER OF FAITH** will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. James 5:13-16

In spite of what we may not know or fully understand, let us not refuse to boldly obey what we do understand:

- Is anyone among you sick?
- Let him call for the elders of the church
- let them pray over him
- anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord
- the prayer of faith will save the sick
- and the Lord will raise him up
- if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven
- Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed
- The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much

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*...let patience have its perfect work...*

In the Gospels we find that there were various levels of faith manifested among those who came to Christ. The centurion revealed great faith (Matt. 8:5-15 & Luke 7:1-10), so also the Canaanite woman (Matt. 15:21-28 & Mark 7:24-30). We are not surprised to see how mightily the Lord worked for them. However, *how wonderful it is to know that Jesus works even with a struggling faith in order to encourage and enable it to grow.* What marvelous comfort there is in the account of the man who cried out and said with tears, "**Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!**" (Mark 9:24). To such a man Jesus said, "**If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.**" It is wonderfully said of the Church of God in Thessalonica: **We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, BECAUSE YOUR FAITH GROWS EXCEEDINGLY, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other**" (2 Thess. 1:3). Truly, faith can exceedingly grow, and our love can truly abound.

### Praying without Losing Heart / Faith being found on the Earth

<sup>1</sup> Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, <sup>2</sup> saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. <sup>3</sup> Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Avenge me of my adversary.' <sup>4</sup> And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, <sup>5</sup> yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" <sup>6</sup> Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. <sup>7</sup> And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? <sup>8</sup> I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8

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She brings her request to a judge who cares not if she lives or dies	– <i>But</i> –	We come to our Father who longs to be near us
She comes to a man who is unjust and uncaring	– <i>But</i> –	We come to Him who is merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in love
She with a pitiful hope	– <i>But</i> –	We with promises in His name
She came to a man who only cared for his own ease and comfort	– <i>But</i> –	We come to Him who spared not even His own Son for us but who freely gives all things as well
She came as a stranger, uninvited before his presence	– <i>But</i> –	We have access to the Throne of Grace as His children, whose thoughts of us are more than the sands by the sea
Her case was one he had no interest in helping	– <i>But</i> –	He tells us to cast our cares upon Him for He cares for us
She came without an advocate to plead her case	– <i>But</i> –	We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous
When she prayed she provoked the judge to anger	– <i>But</i> –	We pray and melt the Father's heart

*...He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart...*

## He Who Has an Ear, Let Him Hear What the Spirit is Saying

<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. 1 John 5:14-15

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*This article contains many of the gems found in Andrew Murray's classic book on prayer, With Christ in the School of Prayer. This public domain book has so many printings that the various quotes have been referenced by chapter rather than by page number.*

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There have been periods throughout Church history where revival took hold in a generation, and the wonderful promises of God were grasped anew by them. Yet (as someone [unknown] has said), "Every revival dies in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation"—meaning, the promises of God must be freshly grasped personally.

Sadly, every generation tends to judge the promises of God by the experience of the believers in their own surrounding generation and area—seeking to *interpret/qualify* the promises of God in a manner which will not embarrass that generation's lack of faith. But we are to judge our faith by the promises of God, rather than judge the promises of God by a generation's (*or our own*) lack of faith. Murray wrote:

How speedily we are deceived into a resting in the form, while the power is wanting. Our early training, the teaching of the Church, the influence of habit, the stirring of the emotions—how easily these lead to prayer which has no spiritual power, and avails but little. (Chap. 1)

Let the believer consider afresh that "**without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is A REWARDER OF THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM**" (Heb. 11:6). Murray wrote:

...every one that asketh, receiveth. This is the fixed eternal law of the kingdom: if you ask

and receive not, it must be because there is something amiss or wanting in the prayer. Hold on; let the Word and the Spirit teach you to pray aright, but do not let go the confidence He seeks to waken: Every one that asketh, receiveth. . . .

It is far easier to the flesh to submit without the answer than to yield itself to be searched and purified by the Spirit, until it has learnt to pray the prayer of faith. . . .

There may be cases in which the answer is a refusal, because the request is not according to God's Word, as when Moses asked to enter Canaan. But still, there was an answer: God did not leave His servant in uncertainty as to His will. . . .

Every one that asketh, receiveth. Let us not make the feeble experiences of our unbelief the measure of what our faith may expect. (Chap. 5)

Imagination is not able to begin to fathom the glory of prayer—do not sell it short just because little faith should abound in a generation. The fact that God (*who needs nothing at all, whose plans and methods are always perfect*) should be **willing** and **able** to arrange all manner of things (*He even stopped the natural course of the heavens for Joshua's prayer [Joshua 10:13]*) in order to accommodate the request of His child who prays in Jesus name, *is great and true!*—Worship Him! We can be confident that the prayers of saved mankind can be heard because **Man, in the Person of Jesus Christ**, is within the counsel of the Godhead through our Lord's Incarnation. We are in Jesus, He is our Head, we are now seated in the heavenlies in Christ—and God is still the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

There may be delays to answers which we will not understand on this side of glory—for *who but God knows all that has to take place in us, or in another, or in the circumstances, or even in nature* (as in the case of Joshua's prayer) before the answer should be given? But this we are plainly told: <sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt. 7:7-8).

Leonard Ravenhill said:

One of these days some simple soul will pick up the Book of God, read it, *and believe it*. Then the rest of us will be embarrassed. We have adopted the convenient theory that the Bible is a Book to be explained, whereas first and foremost it is a Book to be believed (and after that to be obeyed).

(Leonard Ravenhill, *Why Revival Tarries* [Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1991], 69.)

We have not only the Word of God but also the Spirit of God to strengthen our faith in all of our praying that we might ask according to the will of God. Truly, we do not always know what to pray, but that need not be a hindrance to receiving what only prayer can grant, for “**the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God**” (Rom. 8:26-27). Murray wrote:

One often wishes for a thing without willing it. I wish to have a certain article, but I find the price too high; I resolve not to take it; I *wish*, but do not *will* to have it. The sluggard wishes to be rich, but does not will it. Many a one wishes to be saved, but perishes because he does not will it. The will rules the whole heart and life; if I really will to have anything that is within my reach, I do not rest till I have it. . . . Alas! how many prayers are wishes, sent up for a short time and then forgotten, or sent up year after year as matter of duty, while we rest content with the prayer without the answer. (Chap. 10)

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Ere we can believe we must find out and know what God's will is; believing is the exercise of a soul surrendered and given up to the influence of the Word and the Spirit; but when once we do believe nothing shall be impossible. . . . In one aspect there must be faith before there can be prayer; in another the faith is the outcome and the growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the Saviour, in intercourse with

Him, that faith rises to grasp what at first appeared too high. It is in prayer that we hold up our desire to the light of God's Holy Will, that our motives are tested, and proof given whether we ask indeed in the name of Jesus, and only for the glory of God. It is in prayer that we wait for the leading of the Spirit to show us whether we are asking the right thing and in the right spirit. It is in prayer that we become conscious of our want of faith, that we are led on to say to the Father that we do believe, and that we prove the reality of our faith by the confidence with which we persevere. It is in prayer that Jesus teaches and inspires faith. He that waits to pray, or loses heart in prayer, because he does not yet feel the faith needed to get the answer, will never learn to believe. He who begins to pray and ask will find the Spirit of faith is given nowhere so surely as at the foot of the Throne. (Chap. 11)

God would not have made His promises so great and wide if He wasn't able to do what He promised. He has held out to us the privilege and power of both living and praying in Jesus Name—and He has set before us His desire, “**that men always ought to pray and not lose heart**” (Luke 18:1). Let us not lose heart because of all the mysteries which may surround prayer and the spiritual realm into which prayer brings us. Prayer requires persevering. Concerning persevering in prayer, Murray wrote:

Of all the mysteries of the prayer world, the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest. . . . When, after persevering supplication, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our slothful flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious submission, to think that we must now cease praying, because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request. It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome. When once faith has taken its stand upon God's word, and the Name of Jesus, and has yielded itself to the leading of the Spirit to seek God's will and honour alone in its prayer, it need not be

discouraged by delay. It knows from Scripture that the power of believing prayer is simply irresistible; real faith can never be disappointed. . . . And so, even as Abraham through so many years 'in hope believed against hope,' and then 'through faith *and patience* inherited the promise,' it accounts that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation, *waiting* and *hasting* unto the coming of its Lord to fulfill His promise. (Chap. 16)

Faith will truly grow, but growth, even in the natural, requires time. No one expects in the natural realm to be a champion athlete without perseverance in the discipline his sport requires. No farmer expects a harvest to come about by wishful hoping. Let not time be the measure of the eternal realm. The aches and disciplines of the athlete, the perseverance of the farmer, and laboring fervently in prayer (like Epaphras [Col 4:3]) are not in vain. Temptations from our adversary will be to let go of the promised power and blessing through prayer, for prayer is greater than he is. What defense does the devil have to the one who refuses to lose heart and just keeps praying anyways?! What shall he do if all his wicked efforts are only resisted by the believer but flee away at some point before the Lord shows up?! For to draw near to God is to have God draw near to us. Be not surprised at the temptations to lose heart rather than to always pray—for Satan will never succeed over the one who continues to pray without losing heart. Murray wrote:

Our great danger in this school of the answer delayed, is the temptation to think that, after all, it may not be God's will to

give us what we ask. If our prayer be according to God's word, and under the leading of the Spirit, let us not give way to these fears. Let us learn to give God time. God needs time with us. . . . There is nothing so heart-searching as the prayer of faith. It teaches you to discover and confess, and give up everything that hinders the coming of the blessing; everything there may be not in accordance with the Father's will. It leads to closer fellowship with Him who alone can teach to pray, to a more entire surrender to draw nigh under no covering but that of the blood, and the Spirit. It calls to a closer and more simple abiding in Christ alone. Christian! give God time. He will perfect that which concerns you. (Chap. 16)

**Persevering Prayer**

**... just as water, to exercise the irresistible power it can have, must be gathered up and accumulated, until the stream can come down in full force, there must often be a heaping up of prayer, until God sees that the measure is full, and the answer comes. . . . just as the ploughman has to take his ten thousand steps, and sow his ten thousand seeds, each one a part of the preparation for the final harvest, so there is a need-be for oft-repeated persevering prayer, all working out some desired blessing. It knows for certain that not a single believing prayer can fail of its effect in heaven, but has its influence, and is treasured up to work out an answer in due time to him who perseveres to the end. (Ch. 16)**

Him who prayed, "**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do**" (Luke 23:34)? ". . . the word 'in my Name' is its own safeguard. It is a spiritual power which no one can use further than he obtains the capacity for, by his living and acting in that Name" (Murray, Chap. 24).

Murray wrote:

It has been said: There is nothing so heart-searching as believing prayer, or even the honest effort to pray in faith. O let us not turn the edge of that self-examination by the thought that God does not hear our prayer for reasons known to Himself alone. By no means. 'Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss.' Let that word of God search us. Let us ask whether our prayer be indeed the expression of a life wholly given over to the will of God and the love of man. . . . It is he who gives himself to let the love of God dwell in him, and in the practice of daily life to love as God loves, who will have the power to believe in the Love that hears his every prayer. (Chap. 14)

Consider one who wishes to be a champion long-distance runner. He may make some good choices, such as lifting weights in order to build up his arms and legs. He may set for himself a rigid healthy diet of nutritious food. However, if time is never taken to condition his heart, lungs and muscles through running, all the good choices have availed him nothing towards his goal. Likewise, it is a good choice to read the Word of God. It is a good choice to have a healthy habit of hearing sound preaching. But unless one takes the time to pray, and works out and through all the agonies associated with praying, he will not arrive at a sound prayer life. Murray wrote:

Where the child of God really lives and walks in the Spirit, where he is not content to remain carnal, but seeks to be spiritual, in everything a fit organ for the Divine Spirit to reveal the life of Christ and Christ Himself, there the never-ceasing intercession-life of the Blessed Son cannot but reveal and repeat itself in our experience. Because it is the Spirit of Christ who prays in us, our prayer must be heard; because it is we who pray in the Spirit, there is need of time, and patience, and continual renewing of the prayer, until every obstacle be conquered, and the harmony between God's Spirit and ours is perfect. (Chap. 13)

How powerful and effective is the fervent prayer of a righteous man. Yet, how wonderful and *kingdom-of-hell-shattering* it can be when two or three come together in His Name, stirred up in heart and mind, drawing from the faith of one another until they come to an agreement for a request which they lay before the Throne of their Father! All the agonies associated with the flesh through a life of prayer are worth it. Fasting can also become a great asset in prevailing prayer. We are to lay aside the sin which so easily besets, but also every weight of any kind which hinders prevailing prayer (cf. Heb. 12:1) Murray wrote:

Prayer is the one hand with which we grasp the invisible; fasting, the other, with which we let loose and cast away the visible. In nothing is man more closely connected with the world of sense than in his need of food, and his enjoyment of it. . . . [T]he first thought suggested by Jesus' words in regard to fasting and prayer, is that it is only in a life of moderation and temperance and self-denial that there will be the heart or the strength to pray much.

But then there is also its more literal meaning. Sorrow and anxiety cannot eat: joy celebrates its feasts with eating and drinking. There may come times of intense desire, when it is strongly felt how the body, with its appetites, lawful though they be, still hinder the spirit in its battle with the powers of darkness, and the need is felt of keeping it under. . . . [F]asting helps to express, to deepen, and to confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, to sacrifice ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God. . . . And then follows a still wider application. Prayer is the reaching out after God and the unseen; fasting, the letting go of all that is of the seen and temporal. While ordinary Christians imagine that all that is not positively forbidden and sinful is lawful to them, and seek to retain as much as possible of this world, with its property, its literature, its enjoyments, the truly consecrated soul is as the soldier who carries only what he needs for the warfare.

...Without such voluntary separation, even from what is lawful, no one will attain power in prayer: this kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer. (Chap. 31)

Questions about prayer are best answered by actually praying rather than by reading books on prayer—as helpful as a good book may be. One may as well read a menu at a restaurant and say, “I’m full, I couldn’t read another bite” as to think that reading about prayer will make us a person of prayer. A prayer life takes time and discipline, there are no short-cuts. We may be very grateful to men like Andrew Murray who took the time to elaborate so meticulously upon the theme of prayer. However, it will do our spirits no lasting good just to read his helpful words about prayer if we do not give ourselves to develop a sound prayer-life. Yet, how grateful I trust the reader is for his labor. Let us hear one final lesson from Murray upon prayer before this article closes:

One of the greatest hindrances to believing prayer is with many undoubtedly this: they know not if what they ask is according to the will of God. As long as they are in doubt on this point, they cannot have the boldness to ask in the assurance that they certainly shall receive. And they soon begin to think that, if once they have made known their requests, and receive no answer, it is best to leave it to God to do according to His good pleasure. The words of John, ‘If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us,’ as they understand them, make certainty as to answer to prayer impossible, because they cannot be sure of what really may be the will of God. They think of God’s will as His hidden counsel—how should man be able to fathom what really may be the purpose of the all-wise God.

This is the very opposite of what John aimed at in writing thus. He wished to rouse us to boldness, to confidence, to full assurance of faith in prayer. He says, ‘*This is the boldness which we have toward Him*,’ that we can say: Father! Thou knowest and I know that I ask according to Thy will: I know Thou hearest me. ‘This is the boldness, that

if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us.’ On this account He adds at once: ‘If we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know,’ through this faith, that we have,’ that we now while we pray receive ‘the petition,’ the special things, ‘we have asked of Him.’ John supposes that when we pray, we first find out if our prayers are according to the will of God. They may be according to God’s will, and yet not come at once, or without the persevering prayer of faith. It is to give us courage thus to persevere and to be strong in faith, that He tells us: This gives us boldness or confidence in prayer, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. It is evident that if it be a matter of uncertainty to us whether our petitions be according to His will, we cannot have the comfort of what he says, ‘We know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.’

But just this is the difficulty. More than one believer says: ‘I do not know if what I desire be according to the will of God. God’s will is the purpose of His infinite wisdom: it is impossible for me to know whether He may not count something else better for me than what I desire, or may not have some reasons for withholding what I ask.’ Everyone feels how with such thoughts the prayer of faith, of which Jesus said, ‘Whosoever shall believe that *these things which he saith* shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith,’ becomes an impossibility. There may be the prayer of submission, and of trust in God’s wisdom; there cannot be the prayer of faith. The great mistake here is that God’s children do not really believe that it is possible to know God’s will. Or if they believe this, they do not take the time and trouble to find it out. What we need is to see clearly in what way it is that the Father leads His waiting, teachable child to know that his petition is according to His will. It is through God’s holy word, taken up and kept in the heart, the life, the will; and through God’s Holy Spirit, accepted in His indwelling and leading, that we shall learn to know that our petitions are according to His will. . . .

It is not as a matter of logic that we can argue it out: God has said it; I must have it.

Nor has every Christian the same gift or calling. While the general will revealed in the promise is the same for all, there is for each one a special different will according to God's purpose. And herein is the wisdom of the saints, to know this special will of God for each of us, according to the measure of grace given us, and so to ask in prayer just what God has prepared and made possible for each. It is to communicate this wisdom *that the Holy Ghost dwells in us.* The personal application of the general promises of the word to our special personal needs—*it is for this that the leading of the Holy Spirit is given us.*

It is this union of the teaching of the word and Spirit that many do not understand, and so there is a twofold difficulty in knowing what God's will may be. Some seek the will of God in an inner feeling or conviction, and would have the Spirit lead them without the word. Others seek it in the word, without the living leading of the Holy

Spirit. The two must be united: only in the word, only in the Spirit, but in these most surely, can we know the will of God, and learn to pray according to it. In the heart the word and Spirit must meet: it is only by indwelling that we can experience their teaching. The word must dwell, must abide in us: heart and life must day by day be under its influence. Not from without, but from within, comes the quickening of the word by the Spirit. It is only he who yields himself entirely in his whole life to the supremacy of the word and the will of God, who can expect in special cases to discern what that word and will permit him boldly to ask. (Chap. 29)

<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will. He hears us.

<sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. 1 John 5:14-15

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_