

Prayer Answered and Unanswered

GOD of Israel, God of Jesus Christ, our God forever and ever! Help us now by the sacred Spirit to approach Thee aright with deepest reverence, but not with servile fear, with holiest boldness, but not with presumption. Teach us as children to speak to the Father and yet as creatures to bow before our Maker.

Our Father, we would first ask Thee whether Thou hast ought against us as Thy children? Have we been asking somewhat of Thee amiss and hast Thou given us that which we have sought? We are not conscious of it, but it may be so, and now we are brought as an answer to our presumptuous prayers into a more difficult position than the one we occupied before. Now it may be that some creature comfort is nearer to us than our God. We had better have been without it and have dwelt in our God and have found our joy in Him. But now, Lord, in these perilous circumstances, give us grace that we may not turn away from Thee.

If our position now be not such as Thou wouldst have allotted to us had we been wiser, yet nevertheless, grant that we may be taught to behave ourselves aright even now lest the mercies Thou hast given should become a cause of stumbling, and the obtaining of our hearts' desire should become a temptation to us. Rather do we feel inclined to bless Thee for the many occasions in which Thou hast not answered our prayer, for Thou hast said that we did ask amiss and therefore we could not have, and we desire to register this prayer with Thee that

whensoever we do ask amiss, Thou wouldst in great wisdom and love be pleased to refuse us.

O, Lord, if we at any time press our suit without a sufficiency of resignation, do not regard us, we pray Thee, and though we cry unto Thee day and night concerning anything, yet if Thou seest that herein we err, regard not the voice of our cry, we pray Thee. It is our hearts' desire now, in our coolest moments, that this prayer of ours might stand on record as long as we live, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.

But, O Lord, in looking back we are obliged to remember with the greatest gratitude the many occasions in which Thou hast heard our cry. We have been brought into deep distress and our heart has sunk within us, and then have we cried to Thee and Thou hast never refused to hear us. The prayers of our lusts, Thou hast rejected, but the prayers of our necessities, Thou hast granted. Not one good thing hath failed of all that Thou hast promised.

Thou hast given to us exceeding abundantly above what we asked or even thought, for there was a day when our present condition would have been regarded as much too high for us ever to reach, and in looking back we are surprised that those who did lie among the pots of Egypt should now sit every man under his vine and fig-tree, that those who wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way should now find a city to dwell in, that we who were prodigals in rags should now be children in the Father's bosom, that we who were companions of swine should now be made heirs of God and joint heir's with Christ. Oh!

what encouragement we have to pray to such a prayer-hearing God who far exceeds the request of His children.

Blessed be the name of the Lord forever, our inmost heart is saying. Amen, blessed be His name. If it were only for answered prayer or even for some unanswered prayers, we would continue to praise and bless Thee as long as we have any being.

And now, Lord, listen to the voice of Thy children's cry. Wherever there is a sincere heart seeking for greater holiness, answer Thou that request, or wherever there is a broken spirit seeking for reconciliation with Thyself, be pleased to answer it now. Thou knowest where there is prayer, though it be unuttered, and even the lips do not move. Oh! hear the publican who dares not lift his eye to heaven. Hear him while he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Hear such as seem to themselves to be appointed unto death. Let the sighing of the prisoner come before Thee! Oh! that Thou wouldst grant peace and rest to every troubled spirit all over the world who now desires to turn his face to the cross and to see God in Christ Jesus. O Lord, if there are any of Thy servants exercised about the cases of others, we would thank Thee for them. Raise up in the Church many intercessors who shall plead for the prosperity of Zion and give Thee no rest till Thou establish her and make her a joy in the land.

Oh! there are some of us that cried to Thee about our country. Thou knowest how in secret we groaned and sighed over evil times and Thou hast begun to hear us already, for which we desire to praise and bless Thy

name. But we would not cease to pray for this land that Thou wouldst roll away from it all its sin, that Thou wouldst deliver it from the curse of drunkenness, rescue it from infidelity, from popery, from ritualism, from rationalism, and every form of evil, that this land might become a holy land.

O, Lord, bring the multitudes of the working men to listen to the Gospel. Break in, we pray Thee, upon their stolid indifference. Lord, give them a love of Thy house, a desire to hear Thy Gospel, and then wilt Thou look upon the poor rich who so many of them know nothing about Thee and are worshipping their own wealth. The Lord grant that the many for whom there are no special Gospel services, but who are wrapped up in self-righteousness, may be brought to hear the Gospel of Jesus that they also, as well as the poor, may be brought to Christ.

God bless this land with more of Gospel light and with more of Gospel life and love. Thou wilt hear us, O Lord.

Then would we pray for our children, that they might be saved. Some of us can no longer pray for our children's conversion, our prayers are heard already. But there are others who have children who vex them and grieve their hearts. O God, save sons and daughters of godly people. Let them not have to sigh over their children as Eli did and as Samuel did, and may they see their sons and daughters become the children of the living God. We would pray for our servants, for our neighbors, for our kinsfolk of near or far degree, that all might be brought to Jesus. Do Thou this, O God, of Thine infinite mercy.

And as we are now making intercession, we would, according to Thy Word, pray for all kings, such as are in authority, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives. We pray for all nations also. O Lord, bless and remember the lands that sit in darkness and let them see a great light, and may missionary enterprise be abundantly successful. And let the favored nations where our God is known, especially this land and the land across the mighty ocean that love the same Savior and speak the same tongue, be always favored with the divine presence and with abundant prosperity and blessing.

O Lord, Thou hast chosen this our race and favored it and multiplied it on the face of the earth and whereas with this staff it crossed this Jordan, it hath now become two great nations. Lord be pleased to bless the whole of the race and those absorbed into it, and then all other races, that in us may be fulfilled the blessing of Abraham, "I will bless you and ye shall be a blessing." And now, Father, glorify Thy Son! In scattering pardons through His precious blood, glorify Thy Son! In sending forth the Eternal Spirit to convince men and bring them to His feet, Father glorify Thy Son! In enriching Thy saints with gifts and graces and building them up into His image, Father glorify Thy Son! In the gathering together of the whole company of His elect and in the hastening of His kingdom and His coming, Father glorify Thy Son! Beyond this prayer we cannot go, "Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee," and unto Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be glory forever and ever. Amen.