

Samuel Logan Brengle:

You are coming to a King, Large petitions with you bring:

For His power and grace are such, You can never ask too much.

Prayer is a puzzle to unbelievers, but a sweet privilege to us. A stranger will hesitate to approach a king, but the king's child will climb on the king's knee, and whisper in the king's ear, and ask all sorts of favors of the king; and get them, too, because he is his child. Now that is the secret of prayer.

When we have repented of sin, and given ourselves to God, and been born again, we are His dear children, and we have a right to come to Him in prayer. The devil will try to hinder us, and if our faith is weak, we may doubt and hesitate; but God invites, He wants us to come, to come with all our wishes, cares, burdens, sorrows, perplexities, everything. Nothing that is of interest to us is too small to interest Him. Many people do not believe this, but it is true. They think God is interested only in big things; but the same God that made the flaming suns and mighty worlds, made the tiny insect, and fashioned the lenses of its little eye, and painted with brightest colors its dainty wing. He is interested in the little quite as much as in the great. Therefore we may bring everything to Him in prayer.

I once heard a very intelligent old saint, past fourscore years of age, say, 'I moved into a flat by myself, so that I could be alone with Jesus. He and I keep house together; and when I lose anything, I ask Him to help me to find it, and He does.' She was right, and people who think God does not want His children to be so familiar as that are wrong, and have much yet to learn.

We should be definite and pray for what we want. A Christian told me the other day that she could come to God for a clean heart, but not for a new dress. She was wrong. If she seeks 'first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,' she has just as much right to lay before the Lord her need of a new dress, as of a spiritual blessing. Of course, spiritual blessings are far the most important, and should be sought first; but Jesus wants us to talk to Him about everything, and bring to Him all our wants. Let this sink deep into your heart, if you would be holy, and happy, and useful.

For many days there had been no rain in Ohio, the fields were parched and brown, and everything cried out for water. The people were anxious, and knew not what to do. One Sunday, before his sermon, Mr. Finney prayed for rain. One who heard that prayer reported it after twenty-three years, and said it was as fresh in his mind as though he had heard it but yesterday. Finney told the Lord all about their great need, and among other things said, 'We do not presume to dictate to Thee what is best for us, yet Thou dost invite us to come to Thee as children to a father, and tell Thee what we want. We want rain. Our pastures are dry. The cattle are lowing and wandering about in search of water. Even the little squirrels in the woods are suffering for the want of it. Unless Thou dost give us rain our cattle must die, for we shall have no hay for them for winter; and our harvests will come to nought. O Lord, send us rain, and send it now! Although to us there is no sign of it, it is an easy thing for Thee to do. Send it now, Lord, for Christ's sake!' And the Lord sent it. Before the service was half over the rain came in such torrents that the preacher's voice could not be heard; so with tears of wonder and joy and thanksgiving, they sang,

When all Thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view I'm lost In wonder, love and praise.

Finney took God at His word, and dared to ask for what he wanted. He used to say, 'Lord, I hope Thou dost not see that I can be denied.'

Many people pray for things they want; but James tells us that they do not get them because they ask amiss, to consume them upon their lusts. They want things for worldly pleasure or profit, or for sinful, selfish purposes. (James iv. 3.)

The secret of prevailing prayer is this; that we are so in love with Jesus, so at one with Him, that we do not want anything to use or spend in any way that 'would grieve Him. I want a new suit of clothes. What for? That I may strut around in pride, or to show myself off to the people I know? No, no, but that I may be suitably clothed for my work for God. I want food. What for? To strengthen me for sinful, selfish pleasures, and labors? No, no, but to glorify God. I want a clean heart What for? That I may be happy, and get to heaven? No, no, not that alone,

but that I may honor God, and help Him to win others to love and trust and obey Him. When I want things in that spirit, then the Lord can trust me with anything for which I ask Him, for I will not ask Him for anything that is not for His glory. If I am in doubt about anything being for His glory, then I will ask Him to give it to me only if He sees it is best to do so.

Again, we must pray in faith. It is sad, it is heartbreaking, the way people doubt God, the cold, lifeless prayers they utter before Him! You would not want a friend to come to you for anything you had promised to give, with such faithless asking, would you? God is much more willing to give good things to us than we are to give good gifts to our children. And we should come with lively faith that will not be denied. The promise is, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.' Bless the Lord!

Do you ask, 'How can I get faith?' I answer, through God's Word. Hunt up His promises, and go to God with them, and say with David, 'Remember the word unto Thy servant upon which Thou has caused me to hope.' That is what Finney did. He wanted rain, and he went to God with the promise, 'When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them?'

But again, we must persevere in prayer. We must hold on to God, and not let go till the answer comes, or until God shows us why it does not come. Sometimes the answer to prayer comes at once. The first person I remember praying with after God sanctified me, got the blessing at once.

One morning I prayed for a suit of clothes which I very much needed. A great peace came into my heart, and I got off my knees laughing, knowing that God had heard and answered my little request. How and when the suit was to come I did not know. After breakfast I went out, and when I returned a man was waiting for me to go to the tailor's, and be measured for the best suit in his shop. I knew absolutely nothing about this when I prayed, but God did.

But sometimes the answer is delayed. At such times we must not fold our hands and idly conclude that it is not God's will, but instead, search our hearts to make sure the hindrance is not in us, and still continue to plead with God, and in due time the answer will come.

Hold on to God for the salvation and sanctification of your loved ones, and God will hear and answer you. Wrestle with Him, give Him no rest, remind Him every day of His promise and your burning desire, and He must hear and answer you.

A young man prayed for a friend for thirteen months, and finally died without seeing him saved. But God was faithful and remembered the prayers of His child, and in due time that friend was converted, and became a martyr for Christ in Africa.

Finally, we should mingle thanks with our prayers, even before we see the answer. 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.' wrote Paul. (Phil. iv. 6.) A mother got gloriously sanctified at an Army penitent-form, and then began to pray in faith for the conversion of her daughter. For some time she prayed, but one day she said, 'Lord, I am not going to pray for this any longer, but I am going to thank Thee for the salvation of my child.' Within a week the girl was saved, 'and is now an Officer.

Holy people are in vital union and partnership with God, and their prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit move all Heaven in their behalf. Then the only reason why they accomplish so little is because they ask so little, and with such feeble faith 'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint,' said Jesus. Will you, my Comrade, give yourself up to a life of glad, persevering, believing prayer? If so, you shall be one of God's princes on earth.

Behold the throne of grace! The promise calls me near;

There Jesus shows a smiling face, And waits to answer prayer.

My soul! ask what thou wilt; Thou canst not be too bold:

Since His own Blood for thee He spilt, What else can He withhold?