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The Cross-centered prayer life

by Octavius Winslow

“Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24)

“A most powerful incentive to prayer is found in a close and realizing view of the atoning blood. What encouragement does it present to this blessed and holy life of communion with God! The atoning blood! The mercy seat sprinkled over! The High Priest before the throne! The cloud of incense constantly ascending! The Father well pleased! What can more freely invite the soul that pants for close and holy communion with God? And when the atoning blood is realized upon the conscience, when pardon and acceptance are sealed upon the heart by the Eternal Spirit, oh, then what a persuasion to draw near the throne of grace has the believer in Christ! Then, there is no consciousness of guilt to keep the believer back; no dread of God; no trembling apprehensions of a repulse. God is viewed through the cross as reconciled, and as standing in the endeared relationship, and wearing the inviting smile of a Father. With such an altar, such a High Priest, such atoning blood, and such a reconciled God, what an element should prayer be to a believer in Christ! Let the soul, depressed, burdened, tried, tempted, as it may be, draw near the mercy seat: God delights to hear, delights to answer. Taking in the hand the atoning blood, pleading the infinite merit of Christ—reminding the Father of what His Son has accomplished, of His own gracious promise to receive and favorably answer the petition endorsed with the name and presented in behalf of that Son—the feeblest child of God, the most disconsolate, the most burdened, may approach and open all the heart to a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. Let the atoning blood be strenuously pleaded, let the precious and infinite merit of Christ be fully urged, and the blessing petitioned for will be obtained.”

“May not this be assigned as a reason why so few of our petitions are answered, why so little blessing is obtained: The faint pleading of the atoning blood? There is so feeble a recognition of the blessed way of access, so little wrestling with the precious blood, so little looking by faith to the cross, the dear name of Immanuel so seldom urged, and when urged so coldly mentioned—oh, is it any marvel that our prayers return to us unanswered, the petition ungranted, the draft on the full treasury of His love unhonored? The Father loves to be reminded of His beloved Son; the very breathing of the name to Him is music; the very waving of the censer of infinite merits to Him is fragrant. He delights to be pressed with this plea; it is a plea at all times prevalent; it is a plea He cannot reject; it glorifies Himself, honors His Son, while it enriches him who urges it. And, oh, in the absence of all other pleas, what a mercy to come with a plea like this! Who can fully estimate it? No plea has the poor believer springing from himself: he searches, but nothing can he find on which to rest a claim; all within is vile, all without is marred by sin; unfaithfulness, ingratitude, departure do but make up the history of the day. But in Christ he sees that which he can urge, and in urging which God will hear and answer.”