

## Prayer, and Its Answer

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"Call unto me, and I will answer thee; and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Jeremiah 33:3

These words were spoken by the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah under peculiar circumstances. We read in the first verse of this chapter, "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second time, *while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison.*" Jeremiah, at this time, then was a close prisoner. But what brought him into prison? The *real* cause of his imprisonment was his *faithfulness*; as we find in the preceding chapter. "Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the King of Judah's house. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it." (32:2, 3.) Jeremiah's *faithfulness*, in the exercise of his prophetic office, was then the *real*, substantial cause of his imprisonment. But it would not do to assign *this* as the *real* cause; they must needs therefore lay hold of a *pretext*; and this pretext was, that Jeremiah was a traitor to Judah and Jerusalem. For when the army of the King of Egypt came up to deliver Jerusalem from Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah, going out of the city, was apprehended in the gate of Benjamin, and imprisoned as intending to desert to the Chaldeans. (Jeremiah 37:11-15.)

But what were *the circumstances of the city itself*? Jerusalem at this time was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar. For nearly a year had that mighty conqueror hemmed her in; the sword was made bare against her bosom; famine and pestilence

were walking in her streets; and God was about to bring down upon her those judgments which he had so long denounced. It was a time of general mourning; a period of universal sorrow. Deeply was the heart of the prophet bowed within him; not merely by his own personal calamities, of which he had so very large a share, but also by the dark cloud of destruction which he saw was about to burst forth upon the city of Zion.

It was, then, under this trying state, and amid these perplexing circumstances that the Lord spoke these words to Jeremiah: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee; and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

Two things strike my mind as particularly worthy of notice in the text.

I.—*The invitation—"Call unto me."*

II.—*The promise connected with the invitation—"And I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."*

I.—It seems to me, that the condition of Judah and Jerusalem at this time is emblematical of the state of God's people before the Lord stretches forth his right arm to deliver them. If you read this chapter attentively, you will find it contains a whole cluster of the richest blessings for God's people. "Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; and I will cause the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have transgressed against me." (verses 6-8.)

What, then, was the season, and what the opportunity, that the Lord took to give these blessed and unconditional promises? When Judah and Jerusalem were sunk to the very lowest point; when there was no hope, nor help; when Nebuchadnezzar was about to burn the city with fire, and to drag into a miserable captivity those of her children who should escape the sword. At that very gloomy time, at that very hopeless season, God revealed these promises, which he fulfilled in a measure when he restored Judah from the Babylonish captivity; and which, I believe, he will one day more fully accomplish, when he sets his hand the second time to bring back his own for a time cast-off Israel.

Judah's sunken condition seems, then, emblematical of that of the Lord's people before there is any real deliverance. They have to sink down into similar spots of helplessness and hopelessness, out of which he, and he only can deliver them. And when all that the creature can do is thoroughly exhausted, when the right arm of man's strength is withered, then is the time that the Lord usually appears, and manifests himself as "the God of all grace." Jerusalem must be besieged, and Jeremiah imprisoned, before any promise can come to the one or the other.

But let us, with God's blessing, look a little more closely at the invitation before us; for it is applicable not merely to Jeremiah under his distressed circumstances, but to all the family of God under similar states spiritually. *"Call unto me."*

True prayer is the gift of God. It is one of those "good gifts," and those "perfect gifts," which "come down from the Father of light, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17.) The Lord, therefore, says, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." (Zech.

12:10.) And again, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8:26.) There is no real, no spiritual, no acceptable prayer to the Lord except that which is created by the operation of God the Spirit upon the heart of a believer. The invitation, therefore, is not addressed to men generally; nay more, it is not addressed to the people of God generally; but it is addressed to the people of God under peculiar circumstances. It belongs to them only so far as they are brought into those trying circumstances and perplexing states into which God is pleased to bring them that he may enable them to cry and sigh unto himself. The gracious invitation, "Call unto me," is made to that prayer only which enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and brings down in God's own time and way the desired answer.

But it is necessary for several things to be wrought with divine power in the soul before we can spiritually act upon this invitation. The Lord says, "*Call unto me.*" Can I therefore at once call unto him? can I seek his face? can I pray unto him acceptably? I cannot, except he is first pleased himself to work certain things in my soul. What are these things?

1. The *first* is, a deep sense of my sinfulness, guilt, and vileness. There is no real prayer to the Lord except the soul is abased, humbled, and laid low. And what abases, humbles, and lays low? Reading about sin, hearing about sin, talking about sin? No: a spiritual sense of our guilt, our shame, our vileness, our pollution, our unworthiness, divinely wrought in the soul, abases, humbles, and lays low at the footstool of mercy. And I am bold to say, no prayer will rise up with acceptance into the ears of the Lord of hosts, except that which springs out of a broken heart and a contrite spirit,

made so by the blessed Spirit of God, discovering to us what we are, and thus humbling us, laying us low in our own eyes, and making us to feel guilty and filthy in our own sight.

2. *A sense of our ignorance* is another gracious qualification before we can call upon the Lord. As long as we think we can teach ourselves, instruct our own minds, and bring into our own hearts, by dint of creature exertion, the truth of God, we shall never pray sincerely, earnestly, and spiritually for divine teaching. But when we are brought to this point, that we know nothing, absolutely nothing, except what God himself is pleased to teach us by the special operation of the Spirit; when we feel so shut up in blindness, darkness, and folly, that nothing short of God's light, nothing short of divine manifestation, can communicate to our souls that which we want to feel and enjoy,—*then* we begin to pray aright. This knowledge, then, of our own ignorance, blindness, and folly is absolutely necessary to make us cry to the Lord with sincerity and earnestness that he himself would be pleased to teach us. If I can teach myself the truth as it is in Jesus; if I can bring into my own heart with sweet and unctuous power the word of God's grace; if I can feed upon it, enjoy it, and sit under the shadow of it by my own exertions, it is but awful mockery in me to pretend to go to the throne of grace to ask the Lord to do it for me. But if, on the other hand, I am oppressed by a sense of my ignorance; if this feeling is deeply wrought in my heart, that I know nothing, absolutely nothing, except so far as the Spirit of God is pleased to unfold the truth to my soul, *then* I come to the Lord to ask him to teach me, not because I have read in the Scriptures of such a doctrine as divine teaching; nor because I have heard others ask the Lord to teach them; but because I feel utterly unable without this teaching to bring into my soul those heavenly realities it longs to experience.

3. *A sense of our helplessness, inability, and impotency in divine things* is a third qualification before we can truly and spiritually call upon God. How much there is of false prayer in us! How much there is of formality and self-righteousness even in true Christians! How much bowing of the knee without God's hand bowing down the heart! How many words escape from the lips that have never been indited by the Holy Ghost in the soul! But a sense of our helplessness, insufficiency, and inability must be created by the hand of God in our souls before we can sincerely and spiritually ask him to bless us, manifest himself unto us, shine upon our hearts, and lift up upon us the light of his countenance.

4. *A glimpse of the things which we desire to experience*, is another qualification before we can put in practice this divine invitation. It is not because we read about certain blessings in God's word, that we are enabled to go to a throne of grace, and ask the Lord to confer these blessings upon us. We may do it naturally; but this reading and praying in the letter will not profit; for "the flesh profiteth nothing." But, on the other hand, when the Lord is pleased to shine upon the sacred Scriptures; to give us glimpses in our hearts of the blessings revealed in them; to show us the promises which are all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" and the blessings which are stored up in him for those that fear God—when we enjoy glimpses of these heavenly blessings, *then* we rightly, sincerely, and earnestly call upon God to bestow them upon us.

5. *Faith in the promises*; faith in God who gives them; faith in Jesus in whom they are stored; faith in the blessed Spirit through whom they are communicated;—this precious faith, God's gift and work, is absolutely indispensable before we can call upon God aright. "Let him," says James, "ask in faith, nothing wavering." (1:6.) "The word preached did not

profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." (Heb. 4:20.) If there be no faith in our prayers they are not acceptable to God; they do not enter his ears; they do not bring down the promised blessing. Therefore, before we can call upon the Lord aright, we must have a living faith raised up in our heart, whereby we believe that God hears us, and that he will in his own time and way communicate his blessings to us. It is thus that we find access through the Mediator into God's presence, and plead with him for those blessings which he has to bestow.

6. *Hungering, thirsting, panting, longing, and languishing after those blessings which God has to grant*, is another qualification before we can call upon him to bestow them upon us. Is it not mockery, awful mockery, to go to the Lord in prayer, and to ask him to give us this, and to give us that; to bestow this mercy, to enrich our souls with that blessing; to apply this and that promise; and all the time have no earnest longings, pantings, thirstings, hungerings, and breathings after them? It is awful mockery to ask God for a blessing, and have no desire in the soul after that blessing; to ask him for food, and have no hunger; to beg of him the water of life, and feel no thirst; to request divine clothing, and to know no nakedness; to implore sweet manifestations of his favour and love, and not desire them above thousands of gold and silver. It is but awful mockery, I repeat it, to go with these pretended petitions, and all the while have no earnest, sincere longings or languishings after the blessings which God has to bestow.

7. The last qualification I shall mention is, *patience and perseverance to wait at God's footstool*; as we read, "Be followers of them, who, through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. 6:12.) We must resemble the woman, of whom the Lord spake in the parable, that though the unjust

judge feared not God, nor regarded man, yet he was overcome by her importunity; we must be like the man who was in bed with his children, but was brought out of it by the importunity of his friend to give him all that he needed. So must the Lord's people not only seek, cry, and beg, but also wait and persevere till he arise to satisfy their desires.

If, then, these qualifications are absolutely needful; if there is no right calling upon God except this experience has been wrought in the heart by God the Spirit himself, how much true prayer is there in the world? How much true prayer is there in our hearts? And is not this the reason why there are so few answers? why we pray so much, and get so little? why we have so little prevalency with God? why we seek, and so seldom find? knock at the door, and find it so rarely opened? May not this be the reason, that with all our calling upon God, we lack these needful qualifications? They are indeed God's own gifts, God's own work; but still, if we lack these needful qualifications, prayer is but empty breath, and the words of the lip but idle mockery.

But when the Lord himself would give us a blessing; when it is in his heart to bestow a favour, he raises up these divine qualifications in the soul; he puts us spiritually where Jeremiah was naturally—in the prison; shuts us up, lays burdens upon us, makes our chain heavy, brings upon us troubles, trials, temptations, afflictions, sharp distresses, perhaps outward persecutions; in a word, puts us into those spots and states out of which none but he can deliver. When then, in this state, the divine "Author and Finisher of faith," the bounteous Giver of every good and perfect gift, begins to raise up desires and breathings in the soul; prayer at once springs up out of the heart, and enters into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth; and, in God's own time and in God's own way, brings down the blessed answer.



And this leads us to the second branch of the subject.

II.—"Call unto me, and I will answer thee; *and shew thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not.*"

Let us cast a glimpse at the state of Jerusalem at that time. It is, as I before observed, emblematical of the state of God's people before he answers their prayers, and reveals to them the abundance of peace and truth. Was not Jerusalem sinking as low as she could possibly fall? Was not the sword of destruction hanging over her head by a single thread? Was not Nebuchadnezzar about to thrust the edge of his slaughter-weapon into her very bosom? It was so. And did she not justly deserve it? Had not her sins and iniquities drawn down divine indignation? Could she plead innocent? Could she justly say, 'I have not sinned! these things have come upon me unmeritedly?' The carnal and self-righteous might have said so; as we know there were some who uttered that language in her streets, "Yet thou sayest, because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." (Jer. 2:35.) But the God-fearing people of the city could not say so. When the Lord said, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" (Jer. 2:17,) each and all who feared God would answer, 'Yes, yes; we have, we have.' And thus no God-fearing man, who has had a discovery of his own sinfulness, can ever plead innocent. Whatever he suffers, he suffers deservedly; whatever he endures, he has justly merited. This makes him put his mouth in the dust; because he knows that every suffering, yea, hell itself, is his just desert.

In this state, then, when the cloud of destruction was lowering over Jerusalem; when the lightning-flash at times

was bursting through the heavens; when the pattering drops, the harbingers and precursors of the coming storm, were falling thick and fast, and it seemed as though Judah and Jerusalem were about to be swept utterly away—*then* God reveals the promise, that "he would bring her health and cure; would cause her captivity to return, would cleanse her from all her iniquity, and make her a name of joy, and praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth." O how wonderful that God should take that very time and that very occasion to lay open the bounty of his loving bosom, and assure her, that his heart was full of love to her! At the very time that his sword, bathed in vengeance, hung over her to destroy, he tells her there was love in his heart towards her; that his covenant should stand for ever, and the purposes of his heart be fulfilled. Is not this emblematic? Is not this strikingly descriptive of the dealings of God with his people? That he smites with one hand, while he blesses with the other; and that while he holds the sword of chastisement over their head, yet his heart is full of love and mercy? He, therefore, says to Jeremiah, "'Call unto me;" I have blessings to bestow; my heart is full of love to Judah and Jerusalem; I have promises to bestow upon her; I will never leave her, nor forsake her; I will forgive her; I will restore her; she shall be a name and praise to all around her; my covenant with her shall stand for evermore. "Call unto me:" thou hast but to ask, thou hast but to seek, thou hast but to beg, thou hast but to implore; I will shew her mercy, I will make known my love, I will reveal pardon and peace, I will comfort her, I will bless her and do her good.'

How suitable is this for a child of God in a similar state! And to such a soul, he says, "'Call unto me." Thou hast but to plead, but to beg, but to petition; the blessing is in my bosom: thou hast but to draw it forth. My heart is full of love; it only waits for thee to open thy mouth wide, and I will

fill it with every good thing. "Call unto me, I will answer thee;" not by the sword, not by judgments, not by pestilence, not by famine. "Call unto me, I will answer thee; and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

But what are these "great and mighty things" which Jeremiah knew not? He could not believe that God had love in his heart towards Jerusalem. But the Lord says, 'Only seek me, only supplicate me; I will shew thee these great and mighty things.' So he says to his people: 'Though thou art deeply sunk under a sense of thy sinfulness, ignorance, helplessness, yet "Call unto me, I will shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

What are some of these "*great and mighty things*" which they know not?

1. One is, *Divine sovereignty*—that God "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and that he will fulfil all his pleasure." The *doctrine* of God's sovereignty is very easily learnt: it may be caught up under one sermon, or by reading half a page of a tract; it may be known in theory in less than half an hour. But have I then learnt it? Have I got it aright? Say, I have read an author, Elisha Coles for instance, who writes admirably on God's sovereignty—can I learn it *thus*? I might walk by the Bank of England, and say, 'What a noble building! what beautiful architecture! its cellars too full of bullion!' But is it all mine because I walk by and look at it? Just as much might I lay hold of divine sovereignty by merely reading a book, or hearing a preacher explain it, as I can lay claim to all the gold in the Bank cellars by walking round it, and admiring it as a beautiful structure. I must learn divine sovereignty in a very different way from merely reading, hearing, or talking

about it. I must know and feel it in my heart by a divine power. And how must I learn it there? For the most part, by having this divine sovereignty cross me at every turn. If I lay plans, to have divine sovereignty overthrowing them; if I wish for something very much, to have divine sovereignty thwarting me in it; if I want to be something, to have divine sovereignty in that very thing pulling me down; nay, if I want something really good, to find divine sovereignty bestowing it in a way most painful to my flesh. Thus we learn divine sovereignty where Jeremiah learnt it—in the prison-house, amidst persecutions, through afflictions, in sharp temptations, and having the corruptions of our heart laid bare. Here we learn God will execute his own purposes, let proud nature kick and rebel, pine and fret her utmost.

When, then, you "Call unto the Lord," he begins to show you a little of divine sovereignty; and not merely shows it you, but brings you to submit to it. That is a very hard thing to be brought to—to submit to God's sovereignty when it is thwarting some desired purpose, some deeply-cherished and much-longed-for plan, crossing you at every turn, disappointing the wishes of your heart! Can man, proud, rebellious, independent man, submit to God's sovereignty? Yes! he can, when he is brought down by the Spirit of God, laid low, and made to find and feel that God will execute his own purposes, whether man kick against it or submit. To learn God's sovereignty thus is somewhat different from lying on a sofa on a May morning, and reading Elisha Coles.

2. *The salvation of the soul by the blood and obedience of God's only-begotten Son*, is another of these great and mighty things which God reveals in answer to true prayer. Is that point easily settled? the salvation of our souls? our interest in the love of the Lamb? our election before all time? our redemption by the precious blood of Jesus? our

regeneration by the power of the Spirit? and our certain perseverance unto the heavenly kingdom? Is all this easily learnt? If you have learnt it so easily, you will have to go to another school. You have got to learn it again, to know it in a different way. Salvation, as *a doctrine*, may be learnt in a quarter of an hour; salvation, as *a blessing*, may not be learnt in many years. When a vessel of mercy becomes exercised to know whether his name is in the Book of Life; whether the work of the Spirit is begun upon his heart; whether he is one of those for whom the Lamb of God shed his atoning blood; whether he is one of the sons or daughters of the Lord God Almighty; and becomes restless, tried, and exercised upon this point, he will call upon God to make that point clear in his soul. And it will be made manifest in God's own time and way; he will in answer to prayer give clearer or fainter testimonies to the soul's eternal salvation in the blood and righteousness of his dear Son.

3. *The reason of all our trials; the end to be answered by all the providential circumstances through which we pass; the cause of all the afflictions, temptations, and distresses that the soul has had to endure;* is another of those great and mighty things which God makes known in answer to true prayer. Can I often see the reason of them? I cannot. And I must say, if you often or usually can, you are favoured. There are some who, directly a trial comes, say, 'I know why this trial befalls me;' directly an affliction visits them, 'O, I see the reason of this affliction, and I am sure it will be a blessing to my soul.' If you can feel and speak in this way, you have stronger faith than the majority of God's people. The usual operation of affliction on the souls of God's people is this,—they know not why it has come upon them; they see not what profit it is to produce; they cannot believe any blessing is couched beneath it. As we cannot perceive the sun behind the cloud, so they cannot see the Lord's face

when he hides himself behind a cloud of afflictions and sorrows. But the Lord says to his afflicted people, "Call unto me; seek my face; lay your petition at my footstool; press earnestly forward with thy request. I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." 'Thou knowest not what this trial is for; thou knowest not what is the benefit of these temptations thou art labouring under; thou knowest not what this affliction is to produce; thou knowest not what this reverse in circumstances is to bring about. Thou art therefore tried, perplexed, exercised. But do not go to man; do not look to the creature; seek not to unravel it thyself; "Call unto me; I will show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." I will show thee what this trial is for, what this temptation is to do—to humble thee; this trouble is to wean thee from the world, this affliction to break some snare, this exercise to meeken and soften thy heart, and bring thee to the footstool of mercy. Thou shalt see that there is a blessing lodged beneath this trial and couched in this affliction, which thou wilt have reason to bless God for to the latest day of thy existence.' And I believe (it is not part of my theory, but, through mercy, part of my experience,) that our greatest blessings spring out of our greatest trials; and that those clouds which seem most dark, so dark that we think we never shall see a ray of light upon them, in God's own time and way disperse; light bursts through them;—and we bless God for the very trial, however heavy it may have been at the time, however much we may have despaired of seeing it made a blessing to our souls.

4. *That all things work together for good to our souls;* that whatever we pass through in providence or in grace, is for our spiritual profit—is another thing that God will show us when we rightly call upon his name. He says, "Call unto me." 'Do not go to the creature that is but a broken reed; do not trust to an arm of flesh—that will fail you when you want it

most; come to me, to my bosom—pour out your petition in my ear; seek my face; lay your wants at my footstool. "Call unto me, I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

To believe that all our trials, temptations, and afflictions are working together for our spiritual good—is a great, a mighty thing, which often we know not. 'How can *that* be for my good, and how can *this* be for my good?' Is not our mind often thus perplexed? But the Lord says, "Call unto me, I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not;" amongst them, that "all things are working together for good;" and that spiritual profit will be answered by all and each.

5. *The superaboundings of God's grace over the aboundings of our sin*, is another great and mighty thing that God will shew and make known to those that call upon him. What a blessed truth is this—the superaboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin! yet how painfully learnt. How the soul must grapple hard with sin and temptation! What workings up of the depth of our fallen nature before we can know any thing of the superaboundings of grace over it! But the Lord says, "Call unto me, I will answer thee; and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not"—and amongst them, the superaboundings of my mercy and grace over the aboundings of thy iniquity. Have iniquity and sin abounded in us? Have we felt and known it, and been so filled with it, as to have sunk very low at times with a sight and sense of what we have thought, said, or done? Have our backslidings, our vain thoughts, our inward adulteries and idolatries, and the workings of our fallen nature, sometimes made us sink very low, and to feel that sin has indeed abounded in us? "Call unto me, I will answer thee; and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Among them shall

be the superaboundings of my grace over the aboundings of thy sin; that though "sin hath reigned unto death, grace shall reign through righteousness unto everlasting life;" that God takes occasion by the very sins of his people to manifest more of his mercy in forgiving them, his love in covering them, and his grace in superabounding over them.

Are not these rich blessings? Time will not suffice to enumerate more, such as the pardon of sin, the sweet enjoyment of God's favour, testimonies of his eternal love, smiles of his loving countenance, the witness of the blessed Spirit, the leadings, guidings, and teachings of that divine Comforter.

These are the "great and mighty things" that God's people are longing from time to time to experience. And is not the Lord from time to time drawing us to his bosom? and raising up sighs and cries in the soul? When the Lord has raised up these inward desires, he answers them, and begins to show the "great and mighty things" which we know not, and to reveal the abundance of peace and truth.

If you have gathered my meaning (however feebly and faintly expressed,) from what I have endeavoured to speak this morning, you will have observed, that there are two leading features in every gracious man's experience; one, a sense of his own sinfulness, ignorance, and helplessness; and the other, a longing and languishing after those blessings which God has to bestow. And these the Lord from time to time opens up to his soul, revealing to his heart, and discovering by the teaching and operations of his blessed Spirit those blessings, favours, and mercies, that he is longing to enjoy. And I believe, if you will look at your experience under the teachings and leadings of God in your soul, you will know something of this. You will find, that your



experience may be summed up in these two features. Sometimes you have sunk very low, have been tried in your mind, harassed in your soul, deeply perplexed, every thing making against you and little for you. But the Lord from time to time has raised up desires, sighs, cries, and groans in your heart, draws you to his footstool of mercy, and there enables you to tell him all that you are and all that you want. And then, there are times and seasons when the Lord graciously and mercifully opens his hand, gives you a testimony, bestows upon you a word, a visit, a whisper, a smile, softens your heart, melts your soul, raises up some evidence, and blesses you more or less with that blessing which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it.

Do you expect to have any other experience all your life long? Do you expect to find the dream of your early youth ever realized? to be better and better, holier and holier, wiser and wiser, stronger and stronger; every day that you live? I never expect to find the fond dream of my early religious youth thus fulfilled. But I believe, so far as God is our teacher, this will be, more or less, our daily experience, so long as we are tenants in this fallen world—a growing sense of our sinfulness, ignorance, helplessness, nothingness, inability, and impotency. At times (for the Lord only at times makes us to feel our complete dependence upon him) we shall cry, sigh, and groan, breathe out our heart, wrestle with the Divine Majesty, and supplicate at his footstool. And then, there will sometimes come a word, a promise, a testimony, a token, a smile, a whisper, a melting, a softening, a breaking down, an encouragement; and this produces a going forward in the strength of the Lord. It is thus, and thus only, that we shall live to praise his name, and crown Jesus Lord of all.

Is not this the way which is most glorifying to God, though so humbling to man? And must not this be a right way? Shall

you and I be such sacrilegious wretches, as under the cover of religion to creep into the very sanctuary, and snatch the Redeemer's crown off his head? But to be nothing but what God makes us, know nothing but what God teaches, feel nothing but what God inspires, enjoy nothing but what God communicates—this is to bless him for everything which he freely imparts. And therefore, in order to keep a sinner at the footstool of mercy all his days; to hide pride from man, and abase him in his own eyes; to break to pieces all his wisdom, strength, and righteousness, God keeps his people ever poor and needy, ever crying, sighing and begging for what he has to bestow. And when he gives it, it is in a gracious, in a sweetly manifestative way, that the creature shall know from whom it comes, and not be able to take to itself an atom of glory. And thus, by these gracious dealings upon the hearts of his people, contrary to flesh and blood, contrary to our fond dream of early days, contrary to all the arguments and reasonings of our reasoning mind, and to the creed of all the world, religious or profane, the Lord carries on his own work in his own way. And thus, when a man is sufficiently humbled to be raised; sufficiently brought down to be made to stand; sufficiently stripped to be clothed; and sufficiently emptied to be richly filled—then, the Lord begins to manifest his favour, grace, and love; and thus he covers the creature with shame, while he crowns himself with glory.