

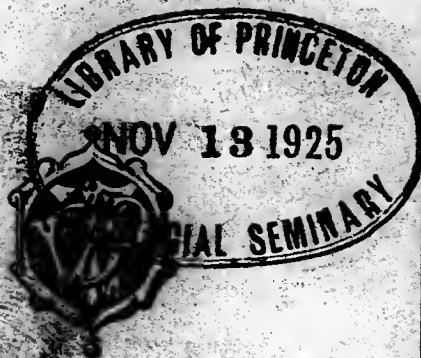
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F. 42

PRAYER
IN
THE NAME OF JESUS

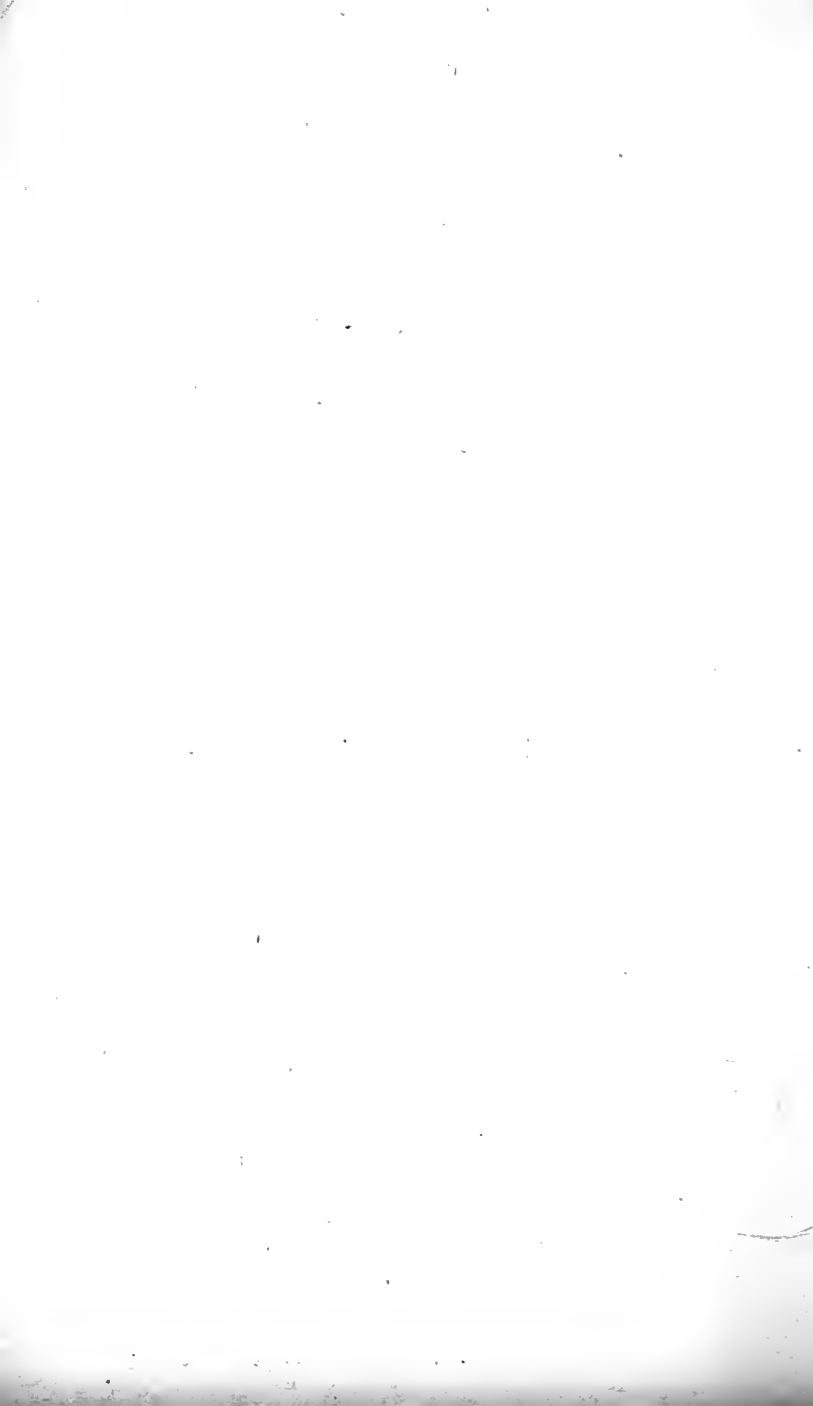
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PRAYER IN THE NAME OF JESUS.



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PRAYER

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

IN the closing moments of our blessed Lord's communications with his disciples, he uttered a sentence, deep in its significancy, and full of blessing for his people, which is still, to the majority of Christians, as treasure hid in a field:—

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (John xvi. 23, 24.)

Let us, then, dwell a little while on these wondrous words, seeing that they present us with nothing less than the keys of the treasure-house of our God, in which all blessings are laid up for us in Jesus.

What is commonly understood by praying *in the name of Jesus*, falls far short of the truth. It is said that *he* prays in the name of Jesus,

who presents his request before God, hoping for acceptance, not on the ground of his own worthiness, but upon the ground of the merits of Christ. We say, on the contrary, *he* prays in the name of Jesus, who approaches the footstool of the Majesty on high, in the humble confession that he is utterly destitute of any rightful claim to God's favour; yet that he is nevertheless fully persuaded of it, because he knows that he has been washed in the blood of the Lamb. For if this expression implied nothing more than praying on the ground of the merits of our Surety, then the Saviour could not have said to his disciples, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name." But who that has read the Holy Scriptures does not know how the Fathers of the old covenant were wont to pray, and how even they did not venture to bring their suit before God in their own righteousness, and without a mediator? The whole priesthood, and its attendant sacrifices, what was it but a continuous, loud-crying acknowledgment that they were to found the hope of a gracious reception at the hands of God, not upon a *personal* merit, but exclusively upon one *extraneous* to themselves, and only imputed to them?

Prayer "*in the name of Jesus*" announces itself, therefore, to us as something entirely

new. The Saviour himself presents it to us as a thing which, before his coming upon earth, was not yet known. It is consequently to be included in the exclusive prerogatives of the New Covenant dispensation.

Every prayer in the name of Jesus is uttered in dependence upon the merits of Jesus; but every prayer uttered in dependence upon the merits of Jesus is not on that account a prayer *in the name of Jesus*. The worshipper in the name of Jesus finds himself in a relationship towards God, which was still unknown to the disciples, as well as to the saints of the Old Testament. If I, painfully conscious that I deserve condemnation, draw near to the Eternal, interposing Christ as a shelter from judgment, then assuredly I pray, resting on the merits of Christ; but even then I do not pray *in Christ's name*. In my prayer, I regard the Father as still estranged from me, distant and hostile, and *myself* only *shielded* from His wrath by Christ. I continue, then, trembling, as it were, before the portals of heaven, because I still feel afraid in the presence of God. The feeling of *my guilt* and of the *holiness* of God still preponderates in my soul, and I have no sense of *my justification* and *His love*. I tremble still before the High and Holy One, whose eyes

are like flames of fire ; and my heart, while I pray, whispers to me tremblingly, " Miserable being that thou art ! trust in Jesus as the Saviour of sinners, else thou art undone."

Now when I pray thus, I pray not amiss, but well ; I pray not upon the ground of self-righteousness, but upon that of a Surety. But praying in the name of Jesus is something quite different still. For is it not truly another thing when I approach God as *my Father*, in the blessed assurance that I am now *His beloved child*, and that my transgressions are no longer remembered in heaven ? Is it not something very different from merely praying for mercy, when I bring my prayer before Him in the delightful assurance that His parental love prompts Him to grant me with joy, as to a member of His beloved Son, all that I ask ? And when I throw myself confidingly on His bosom, in the sweet, peace-abounding persuasion, that in Christ, my Surety and Mediator, I am not merely *safe* from His wrath, but also, through him, I am "beloved of God"—an object of His highest goodwill, the delight of His eyes, and His eternal pleasure ? When, in this manner, I see myself only in the garb which I wear in Christ ; when I enter the mansion of my Father as a child of the house, only

one conviction fills my soul—no more separation from Him! but the consciousness that I, through the intercession of my Mediator, please the Father superabundantly well. Say, oh! say, beloved, is not this, indeed, something quite different from *that* praying for the sake of Christ's merit, which we have previously described? Know then, now, my brethren, *this is drawing nigh to God in the name of Jesus.*

We all know that to seek a favour in the name of another, is considered nothing else but to represent the person of that other. So that, if I say to you, for instance, you are to ask of one of my friends aught *in my name*, and you do so, then surely it is not, strictly speaking, *you* that ask, but it is *I* who am the petitioner. *My* influence, in this case, passes over to you, and stands you in good stead; and, were you to receive a refusal, it is not *you* who would feel mortified, but *I*. Only imagine, then, what a precious privilege the Saviour extends to us, when he encourages us to ask of the Father *in his name!* For what else can he mean to say than that we may, by faith, suppose ourselves standing completely in his place, and, thus free and glad, walk before the Father as being one with Christ; and may we not expect for our supplications the same open and inclined ear which

his prayers ever found with the Father? What else can he mean but that we regard ourselves as those upon whom the entire grace of the only begotten Son has been outpoured? What else can he mean but that we should continue in the blessed conviction that God knows us no longer according to the flesh, and that, therefore, if He cast us off from Himself, it would not be, strictly speaking, *us* that He would cast off, but *him*—His own Son? Oh! wondrous grace! And such, truly, is the sense of the words of Jesus!

Whosoever, then, has faith to regard himself as "*accepted in the beloved,*" and knows the *filial* right that has been acquired for him, and views the glory of his Surety as his own, he can, with a conscience free and clear, bring his prayer before God with confiding, cheerful, and filial boldness. He has such an estimate of God's love to him, that it never occurs to him to doubt whether the Father will hear him. Such is he who prays *in the name of Jesus*. In this manner, the saints of the Old Testament had never as yet prayed. They knew that, for the sake of the Messiah, they would not be condemned, and, in so far, they rejoiced in their deliverance. But, little as a pardoned transgressor would infer, from the pardon be-

stowed upon him, that the king now, after presenting him with his life, would also clothe him in purple and silk, and receive him as a friend at his table, nay, in his arms, even so little did they think that the entire glory of the Mediator in whom they hoped, was accounted to them as their own property. With us, it is now quite otherwise. All that they only hailed as a promise afar off, we have seen brought forth into reality and truth. We know upon what ground "*he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist.*" We may, therefore, appear before the Lord in quite another frame of mind. We are not surprised when the Saviour mentions the praying in his name as something that could exist only after he came into the world. What is then promised in this prayer? Learn and marvel. "*Verily, verily!*" begins the Lord. That is his royal signet attached to this remarkable writing. That is the oath with which he confirms it. That is the solemn formula with which he makes the matter sure against every contradiction and doubt. "*I say unto you,*" he proceeds; "*I, who am in the bosom of the Father: on me you have to depend.*" And how runs now the great, the important saying, which he has so solemnly, so majestically introduced? "*What-*

soever ye shall ask the Father," saith he, or, "*all that ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you !*"

Now, what do we desire more, my beloved? Behold a large white tablet hung before us, reaching from earth to heaven. On that how much may not be written? "*All that ye shall ask,*" saith the Lord: in St. John, (chap. xv.,) it runs, "*ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" Here, then, are all barriers and boundaries torn away. Here is a field opened to our desires, which has no landmarks and no limits. Nothing good for us is so great, nothing so trivial, but that we may receive it from the Father, if we only ask it *in the name of Jesus*. Say, then, what is it you would most desire to have granted to you? Would you wish to be delivered from your troubles? Are you anxious that your sick child may recover? Approach, then, the Father; ask it of Him, in faith, *in the name of Jesus*, and, truly, if for your good and His glory, the desire of your heart will be granted you. Prayer is a magic wand in the hand of faith. Give a sign, and Amalek falls; smite the rock, and it will yield you water; command the waves of the Red Sea, and they will divide themselves; rebuke the tempests which

rage around you, and all will become calm. All, all may you have, if you are only in a state to ask for it *in the name of Jesus*.

But, in good truth, whether you will be successful in asking in the name of Jesus for *all* that you might desire for yourself, that I must doubt. You might *wish* that God would be pleased to raise up again from the grave a dead person; but only then, assuredly, would you be enabled to pray for that with full, undoubting confidence, when you were completely and divinely convinced such a miracle must be necessary for the honour of God. Luther was enabled to pray *in the name of Jesus*, for the lives of his friends, Melancthon and Myconius, who were sick unto death, and already despaired of. He doubted not, and, behold! what he desired was granted. For gold and silver, too, you may have a desire; ask for it only, however, in the name of Jesus, *if you can*, and it will be granted to you. But how will you be able to do that? Only follow the example of the late pious Professor Franké. He was enabled to do it most happily. Thousands forthwith flowed to him; and he who, on commencing, had scarcely command over a few pence, soon collected enough to build an institution for orphan children, as spacious nearly

as a small town. The Lord did what His servant desired. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not," saith St. John—that is, if we are not obliged to accuse ourselves secretly that we pray in self-will, or only out of love to our own flesh, or solicit God *temptingly*, "then have we *confidence* toward God; and whatever we ask, *we shall receive.*"

Now, what say ye to these things? Oh! since from those mighty words, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you,*" the veil has withdrawn itself from before me, I stand before them in amazement, as before an opened sanctuary, and know scarcely how to bear myself, for astonishment and rapture, at the abundance of magnificent and blessed thoughts which I see contained therein. I behold, as it were, a throne of God erected upon this saying. Gleaming lightnings shoot forth therefrom on all sides, only to illumine to my view the Holy of Holies in the temple of Christianity. The most blessed articles of the New Testament stand there grouped around it, in unveiled splendour, like sweet messengers of peace; and in its centre, appears the whole glory of the Gospel, condensed into one wonder-teeming, majestically refulgent, burning point. Oh, how

those mighty words chastise us! How disgraced do we stand before them! For, if the prayer in the name of Jesus is the ship that is to convey us to the opposite shore, where all that is desirable is to be obtained, it is evident that there must be among us a lack of people who know how to sail with this bark. The condition in which we are, proves it; otherwise things would have a different appearance in the midst of us. Heaven would not remain so little known and enjoyed. Spiritual barrenness would soon vanish. The Church would flourish like the lily, and gift upon gift would be showered down upon us from on high. Our weakness judges and condemns us. We know not how to make use of the key which has been given to us; and what Jesus said to his disciples may also be applied to ourselves: "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name.*"

Yet, in the same measure that these mighty words condemn us, so also do they raise us up again; for they open to us the golden prospect, that now, with every coming moment, a lovelier dawn may appear for the Church of Christ. It is true, the Church, viewed as a whole, presents us with a sad, gloomy picture, in these days of ours; but what more, with reference to those words, does it stand in need of, but that a

chosen band of pious men should be compelled and encouraged to ask in the name of Jesus, with full, fervent, and filial confidence, for a new day of Pentecost; and that the life of God might forthwith discharge itself in streams upon the earth, and a new spring of spiritual grace descend again from heaven? True it is, the aspect presented by our churches here is sad and gloomy, and, alas! there is little of awakened energy, and of the true vitality; but who knows, perhaps, this very day the heart of a single individual may be large enough to receive within it the whole Church, and to raise it up *in the Saviour's name*, even to the bosom of the Father; and from this hour forth the clouds again drop dew, and the heavens above our heads rain righteousness? True it is, of those we love, there is many a one going on in "the broad way that leadeth to destruction," and the fear creeps upon our mind that we may, at some future time, be forced to separate from him for ever. But soft!—how comforting here appear also those mighty words of Jesus! If I have hitherto never yet prayed *in the name of Jesus* for the soul of this or that of my beloved friends, I may still be able to do so before midnight—perhaps this very hour, and my cares are at an end: the beloved soul is saved!

Behold, thus let us take our stand upon those words, as upon a serene eminence, breathing blessed hope, with nothing before our eyes but a clear and cheerful prospect.

This description of *prayer in the name of Jesus*, corrects many erroneous impressions which are prevalent among us, as to the spiritual position of a true Christian. Thus, among other things, it is said that a poor sinner, which every Christian still is, has to consider, whenever he prays, that it is not becoming in him to enter the mansion of the mighty Lord with head uplifted like a saint, but only with downcast look. Whoever is not able to pray otherwise, let him pray in that manner. Let him, however, refrain from wishing to set up *his* manner of praying as the common model, and from attempting to describe it as the only proper and *evangelical* form. No; this style of praying is *not evangelical*. But it may be replied, has not Abraham so prayed? as, for instance, "Behold, now, I, which am but dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord;" and Jacob, Moses, and Solomon as well? Yes, my beloved, they may have done so. And a greater is here than even Abraham and Moses. For know ye not that it was said of John the Baptist, no one preceded him who was greater than he; and

yet, again, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist? We, my brethren, live in the New Testament dispensation, and have the privilege of praying *in Christ's name*, that is to say, *as being ourselves one with Christ*. We have the privilege of believing that all that makes Christ dear, and recommends him in the sight of the Father, has been wholly transferred to ourselves. We may, therefore, commune with the Father as Christ. Christ was not afraid. He threw himself on his Father's bosom as a well-beloved Son. Christ spoke in full confidence; Christ asked cheerfully and unabashed for whatever he wished to have, and doubted not that he would receive it.

There is another view of our relation with God, which is still more false and exceptionable. Some think to themselves, "I know that I am one of God's people; whatsoever, therefore, may be for my highest weal will be done unto me. My High-Priest is now praying for me; so henceforth I myself need not pray." Thus they pray but little, or not at all. Oh, backsliding without parallel! For, only once reflect—the Saviour solemnly confers upon a poor sinner the great, glorious privilege of being allowed to approach the Father in all

his troubles, with a filial confidence, as though he himself were Christ. The sinner, however, declines this offered prerogative. Oh! who does not feel the inward shudder of death at this miserable thought? "Aye," say we, and with good reason, "if *that* man were internally awake, he would not know how to bear himself for joy and amazement at the grant of such an heritage. He would regard it as his highest happiness to make use of so sweet a privilege day by day."

The words, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name,*" impress upon us a new seal of the sweetest and most blessed of all the truths in the Bible. You surely anticipate what species of truth I here mean. I mean not that we, for Christ's sake, are no longer under condemnation. I mean rather that we have become, *in Christ*, purified, endeared, and well-beloved children of the Father. Most assuredly, that is made known to us in a hundred passages of the Scriptures, but nowhere, methinks, more clearly and unambiguously than in those words; for, while the Saviour reminds us that we may pray to the Father *in his name*, then does it follow surely, that we are as dear and well-pleasing to the Father as Christ; and Christ intimates to

us in those words, nothing less than that the entire fulness of the glory and the grace which delighted the Father in him, is henceforth, by imputation, and in effect, bestowed upon ourselves. To imprint this indescribably sweet truth yet deeper on his disciples, he says to them, "You may look upon the matter, as though on that account you stood in need of an advocate with the Father. No," saith he, "I say not unto you, that I will pray unto the Father for you on *this* ground; for," continueth he, "*the Father Himself loveth you.*" And with that conclusion, he impresses it more deeply, more profoundly, on their hearts, that his glory is theirs. "*The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.*" These were his words in addressing the Father; and that, as often as they draw nigh to the Father, they should admit no tinge of fear into their souls, he adds, "and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.)

