

A Quiet Time with George Müller

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Introduction

A Quiet Time

“Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35).

WHAT is the most important Christian duty? The most important Christian duty is having a daily quiet time with our Heavenly Father. Like the old hymn says:

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord; abide in Him always, and feed on His Word. Make friends of God’s children, help those who are weak, forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek. Take time to be holy, the world rushes on; spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone. By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be; thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Jesus knew the importance of having a quiet time with His Heavenly Father. We read in the Gospel of Mark how “in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed” (Mark 1:35). Jesus knew the importance of having a daily quiet time with His Heavenly Father. He felt the need to rise early before daylight, to avoid any possible distractions, and to depart to a solitary place to pray. Now if Christ, who was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), felt the need to have a quiet time with His Heavenly Father, how much more should His followers?

David too had a quiet time with His Heavenly Father. David cries to the Lord in the 5th Psalm: “Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, my king and my God, for

to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up” (Psalm 5:1-3). Also in the 63rd Psalm: “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory” (Psalm 63:1-2). David made sure he sets time each day to spend with his Heavenly Father. He says: “As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:16-17). The Psalmist in Psalm 119, who most likely was King David, says: “I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word” (Psalm 119:147-148).

Daniel also had a quiet time with God. We read how “he knelt down on his knees three times” and “prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days” (Daniel 6:10). His enemies knew they would find him “praying and making supplication before his God” (Daniel 6:11). Job also had a prayer life. We read in the Book of Job how he would rise early in the morning and pray for his children and “offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, ‘It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts’” and “thus Job did regularly” (Job 1:5).

In the spring of 1841, George Müller (1805-1898) had a life-transforming discovery that changed his life. He saw more clearly the importance of a daily quiet time with God in the Word of God and prayer. He says in his autobiography:

I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord, or how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to benefit

believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

E.M. Bounds (1835-1913), the great man of prayer and the author of numerous books on prayer, spent the last nineteen years of his life in his home, rising 4 a.m. and praying until 7 am. Even during his speaking engagements as an evangelist, he would not neglect his early morning time with God in prayer. Claude Chilton, Jr., in his Foreword to *Necessity of Prayer* by E.M. Bounds, speaks of E.M. Bounds saying: “As breathing is a physical reality to us so prayer was a reality for Bounds. He took the command, ‘Pray without ceasing’ almost literally as animate nature takes the law of the reflex nervous system, which controls our breathing.” E.M. Bounds writes in his book “Power through Prayer” that:

The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, he will be in the last place the remainder of the day. Behind this early rising and early praying is the ardent desire which presses us into this pursuit after God. Morning listlessness is the index to a listless heart. The heart which is behind in seeking God in the morning has lost its relish for God. David's heart was ardent after God. He hungered and thirsted after God, and so he sought God early, before daylight. The bed and sleep could not chain his soul in its eagerness after God. Christ longed for communion with God; and so, rising a great while before day, he

would go out into the mountain to pray. The disciples, when fully awake and ashamed of their indulgence, would know where to find him. We might go through the list of men who have mightily impressed the world for God, and we would find them early after God.

One of the most gifted Scotch preachers, Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), said: "I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God. It is my noblest and most fruitful employment, and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours, from six to eight, are the most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed; but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night, I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession. I ought to pray before seeing any one. Often when I sleep long, or meet with others early, it is eleven or twelve o'clock before I begin secret prayer. This is a wretched system. It is unscriptural. Christ arose before day and went into a solitary place. David says: 'Early will I seek thee'; 'Thou shalt early hear my voice.' Family prayer loses much of its power and sweetness, and I can do no good to those who come to seek from me. The conscience feels guilty, the soul unfed, the lamp not trimmed. Then when in secret prayer the soul is often out of tune, I feel it is far better to begin with God -- to see his face first, to get my soul near him before it is near another."

Martin Luther (1483-1546), the great reformer, said: "If I fail to spend two hours in prayer each morning, the devil gets the victory through the day. I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours daily in prayer." John Bunyan (1628-1688), author of the famous "Pilgrim's Progress" said "he who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day." Andrew Murray (1828-1917), the great devotional author, says: "Shut the world out, withdraw from all worldly thoughts and occupations, and shut yourself in alone with God, to pray to Him in secret. Let this be your chief object in prayer, to realize the presence of your heavenly Father."

What about you dear reader? Do you have a daily quiet time with God? If not, I encourage you to begin one. Start today; do not delay. George Müller writes in his autobiography:

I want to encourage all believers to get into the habit of rising early to meet with God. Someone may ask, ‘But why should I rise early?’ To remain too long in bed is a waste of time. Wasting time is unbecoming a saint who is bought by the precious blood of Jesus. His time and all he has is to be used for the Lord. If we sleep more than is necessary for the refreshment of the body, it is wasting the time the Lord has entrusted us to be used for His glory, for our own benefit, and for the benefit of the saints and unbelievers around us. It may be said, ‘But how shall I set about rising early?’ My advice is: Do not delay. Begin tomorrow. But do not depend on your own strength. You may have begun to rise early in the past but have given it up. If you depend on your own strength in this matter, it will come to nothing. In every good work, we must depend on the Lord. If anyone rises so that he may give the time which he takes from sleep to prayer and meditation, let him be sure that Satan will try to put obstacles in the way. Trust in the Lord for help. You will honor Him if you expect help from Him in this matter. Pray for help, expect help, and you will have it. In addition to this, go to bed early. If you stay up late, you cannot rise early. Let no pressure of engagements keep you from going habitually early to bed. If you fail in this, you neither can nor should get up early because your body requires rest. Rise at once when you are awake. Remain not a minute longer in bed or else you are likely to fall asleep again. Do not be discouraged by feeling drowsy and tired from rising early. This will soon wear off. After a few days you will feel stronger and fresher than when you used to lie an hour or two

longer than you needed. Always allow yourself the same hours for sleep. Make no change except on account of sickness.

We trust this book will be a great encouragement to you and help you in your walk with God. So, dear reader, take the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and all His saints and begin and cherish your daily quiet time with God and you will be greatly refreshed and strengthened.

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Peter

Sarkis

George Müller Letter to J. Hudson Taylor

Excerpt of letter

Honoring Jesus: Müller's Secret of Success

and

The Care of His Soul: Müller's Chief Work

And the point to which as an older brother allow me to draw your attention is this: For the first 3 years that I preached, I saw scarcely any fruit resulting from my labors, but when 4 years, 3 months since it pleased God to bring me into such a state, that I was willing to be content to be only the instrument provided any good was done, and was willing to give to God all the glory if any good was accomplished, it pleased Him to allow me at once to see fruit, yea much fruit resulting from my labours.

This then beloved in the Lord is what we have to aim after: the lowly mind. The true and faithful servant seeks the Master's honour, not his own. So should we, to the utmost regarding our service for the Lord Jesus. Just in the measure as we are not willing in our inmost soul to give all the honour to the Lord Jesus, so in proportion are we unfit practically to be used by the Lord. He will not use us, lest if He did we should rob Him of His honour.

Further, I have in my own experience found it of the utmost moment to make the care about my own soul the chief business of my life. Abundant as my work is, so much so, that if I had strength to work 24 hours every day, I would not accomplish what is ready for my hands, and feet and head, and heart; yet with all this I consider my first business to be, and my primary business, day by day, to get blessing for my own soul, food for my own soul, to be happy in the Lord; and then to work, and to work with all diligence. Now in your case, with all the many

millions of idolaters around you, the temptation is, to be overpowered by the immense quantity of work to be done, to the not minding sufficiently your own souls. But this would only lead to loss. No amount of work can make up for the neglect of meditation in the Holy Scriptures and for the neglect of prayer. Moreover it is not the amount of work we do, at which our Heavenly Father looks, but the Spirit in which we do His work.

Now, this right state of heart, which we need for this, we can only enjoy by seeking to feed our own soul through meditation on the Holy Scriptures. We should therefore habitually and prayerfully as much as possible in the early part of the day, read with meditation the Holy Scriptures and seek with reference to our own individual necessities to enter into what we read. There is great temptation for preachers of the Gospel to read the Holy Scriptures with reference to others, to the neglect of their own souls; this is greatly to be guarded against for if we read the Scriptures not with reference to our own souls, primarily we shall lose the blessing, which God meant to convey thereby to our hearts.

I send by this mail and with this letter a cheque to all the dear brethren and sisters connected with the CIM (China Inland Mission), as a token of loving interest in their service, to whom I have not sent anything before; in order that I may thus manifest interest in the service of all and some love in the Lord to all.

It will give me pleasure to hear from time to time from all of you though I may be able to write but little. I also send to those of you who have not yet had it, a copy of my last Report the reading therefore may be a little encouragement to you, and I will also send 12 copies more of my Narrative, one for each of those of you, who have not yet had a copy.

I am

Beloved brethren and Sisters,

Yours affectionately in our Lord,

(Signed) George Müller

How George Müller Started His Day

“I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help; I hope in Your word.” Psalm 119:147

While I was staying at Nailworth, it pleased the Lord to teach me a truth, irrespective of human instrumentality, as far as I know, the benefit of which I have not lost, though now...more than forty years have since passed away.

The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I might seek to set the truth before the unconverted, I might seek to benefit believers, I might seek to relieve the distressed, I might in other ways seek to behave myself as it becomes a child of God in this world; and yet, not being happy in the Lord and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day, all this might not be attended to in a right spirit.

Before this time my practice had been, at least for ten years previously, as an habitual thing, to give myself to prayer, after having dressed the morning. Now I saw, that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd, instructed; and that thus, whilst meditation, my heart might be brought into experimental, communion with the Lord. I began therefore, to meditate on the New Testament, from the beginning, early in the morning.

The first thing I did, after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God; searching, as it were, into every verse, to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word; not for the sake of

preaching on what I had meditated upon; but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. The result I have found to be almost invariably this, that after a very few minutes my soul has been led to confession, or to thanksgiving, or to intercession, or to supplication; so that though I did not, as it were, give to prayer but to meditation, yet it turned almost immediately more or less to prayer.

When thus I have been for awhile making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me that food for my own soul is the object of meditation. The result of this is, that there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, supplication, or intercession mingled with my meditation, and that my inner man almost invariably is even sensibly nourished and strengthened and that by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful if not happy state of heart. Thus also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found to become food for other believers, though it was not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word that I have myself to meditation, but for the profit of my own inner man.

The difference between my former practice and my present one is this. Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally spent all my time till breakfast in prayer, or almost all the time. At all events I almost invariably began with prayer... But what was the result? I often spent a quarter of an hour, or half an hour, or even an hour on my knees, before being conscious to myself of having derived comfort, encouragement, humbling of soul, etc.; and often after having suffered much from wandering of mind for the first ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or even half an hour, I only then began really to pray.

I scarcely ever suffer now in this way. For my heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend (vile though I am, and unworthy of it!) about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

It often now astonished me that I did not sooner see this. In no book did I ever read about it. No public ministry ever brought the matter

before me. No private intercourse with a brother stirred me up to this matter. And yet now, since God has taught me this point, it is as plain to me as anything, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning-by-morning is to obtain food for his inner man.

As the outward man is not fit for work for any length of time, except we take food, and as this is one of the first things we do in the morning, so it should be with the inner man. We should take food for that, as every one must allow. Now what is the food for the inner man; not prayer, but the Word of God; and here again not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts....

I dwell so particularly on this point because of the immense spiritual profit and refreshment I am conscious of having derived from it myself, and I affectionately and solemnly beseech all my fellow-believers to ponder this matter. By the blessing of God I ascribe to this mode the help and strength which I have had from God to pass in peace through deeper trials in various ways than I had ever had before; and after having now above forty years tried this way, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it. How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when, without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials and the temptations of the day come upon one!

Rising Early with George Müller

I want to encourage all believers to get into the habit of rising early to meet with God. How much time should be allowed for rest? No rule of universal application can be given because all persons do not require the same amount of sleep. Also the same persons, at different times, according to the strength or weakness of their body, may require more or less. Most doctors agree that healthy men do not require more than between six or seven hours of sleep, and females need no more than seven or eight hours.

Children of God should be careful not to allow themselves too little sleep since few men can do with less than six hours of sleep and still be well in body and mind. As a young man, before I went to the university, I went to bed regularly at ten and rose at four, studied hard, and was in good health. Since I have allowed myself only about seven hours, I have been much better in body and in nerves than when I spent eight or eight and a half hours in bed.

Someone may ask, "But why should I rise early?" To remain too long in bed is a waste of time. Wasting time is unbecoming a saint who is bought by the precious blood of Jesus. His time and all he has is to be used for the Lord. If we sleep more than is necessary for the refreshment of the body, it is wasting the time the Lord has entrusted us to be used for His glory, for our own benefit, and for the benefit of the saints and unbelievers around us.

Just as too much food injures the body, the same is true regarding sleep. Medical persons would readily agree that lying longer in bed than is necessary to strengthen the body actually weakens it.

It also injures the soul. Lying too long in bed not merely keeps us from giving the most precious part of the day to prayer and meditation, but this sloth leads also to many other evils. Anyone who spends one, two, or three hours in prayer and meditation before breakfast will soon discover the beneficial effect early rising has on the outward and inward man.

It may be said, "But how shall I set about rising early?" My advice is: Do not delay. Begin tomorrow. But do not depend on your own strength. You may have begun to rise early in the past but have given it up. If you depend on your own strength in this matter, it will come to nothing. In every good work, we must depend on the Lord. If anyone rises so that he may give the time which he takes from sleep to prayer and meditation, let him be sure that Satan will try to put obstacles in the way.

Trust in the Lord for help. You will honor Him if you expect help from Him in this matter. Pray for help, expect help, and you will have it. In addition to this, go to bed early. If you stay up late, you cannot rise early. Let no pressure of engagements keep you from going habitually early to bed. If you fail in this, you neither can nor should get up early because your body requires rest.

Rise at once when you are awake. Remain not a minute longer in bed or else you are likely to fall asleep again. Do not be discouraged by feeling drowsy and tired from rising early. This will soon wear off. After a few days you will feel stronger and fresher than when you used to lie an hour or two longer than you needed. Always allow yourself the same hours for sleep. Make no change except on account of sickness.

Every Day a Precious Portion

HELPFUL HINTS IN THE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD

FIRST DAY “Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” Jer. 15:16.

If the reader understands very little of the Word of God, he ought to read it very much; for the Spirit explains the Word by the Word. And if he enjoys the reading of the Word little, that is just the reason why he should read it very much; for the frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them.

SECOND DAY “Every day a portion.” Jer. 52:34.

It is of immense importance for the understanding of the Word of God, to read every day a portion of the Old and a portion of the New Testament, going on where we previously left off. This throws light upon the connection; for a different course will make it utterly impossible ever to understand much of the Scriptures.

THIRD DAY “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them.” 1 Tim. 4:15.

We should meditate on what we read, so that perhaps a small portion of that which we have read, or, if we have time, the whole, may be meditated upon in the course of the day. Or a portion of a book, or an epistle, or a gospel, through which we go for meditation, may be considered every day.

FOURTH DAY “The Spirit of Truth . . . He will guide you into all truth.” John 16:13.

The Word of God can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; He is the teacher of His people. The first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously.

FIFTH DAY “Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.” Neh. 8:10.

Also the Lord is pleased to communicate unto me that which, very soon after, I have found become food for other believers. My heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend about the things He has brought before me in His precious Word.

SIXTH DAY “Dig for it more than for hid treasures.” Job 3:21.

When I have been for a while making confession, or intercession, or supplication, or have given thanks, I go on to the next words or verse, turning all, as I go on, into prayer for myself or others, as the Word may lead to it; but still continually keeping before me, that food for my own soul is the object of my meditation.

SEVENTH DAY “Feed me with food convenient for me.” Prov. 30:8.

God has taught me this point, that the first thing the child of God has to do morning by morning is to obtain food for his inner man. Now what is the food for the inner man? Considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.

EIGHTH DAY “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.” James 1:5.

When I do not understand a passage of the Word of God, I lift up my heart to the Lord, that He would be pleased by His Holy Spirit to instruct me, and I expect to be taught, though I do not fix the time when, and the manner how, it should be. When I am going to minister in the Word, I seek help from the Lord, and believe that He for His dear Son’s sake will help me.

NINTH DAY “Our God, whom we serve is able.” Dan. 3:17.

The Believer will repose upon the ability of God to help him, because he has not only learned from His Word that He is of almighty power and infinite wisdom, but he has seen instance upon instance in the Holy Scriptures in which His almighty power and infinite wisdom have been exercised in helping His people.

TENTH DAY “Reading in the book the words of the Lord.” Jer. 36:8.

I continue to wait upon God, and seek to encourage my heart by His Holy Word, and while He delays giving me answers, to be occupied in His service. Of this my soul has not the least doubt, that, when the Lord shall have been pleased to exercise my soul by the trial of faith and patience, He will make bare His arm and send help.

ELEVENTH DAY “They are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come.” 1 Cor. 10:11.

Why may not all believers act in the spirit of apostolic Christians, seeing that the same blessed Spirit who dwelt in them dwells in all who believe in the Lord Jesus; and that we have the whole revealed will of God in our possession in the Holy Scriptures; and like apostolic believers

are looking for the return of the Lord Jesus, with whom we shall share the glory.

TWELFTH DAY “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” 2 Tim. 3:16.

I believe that all the books of the Old Testament and of the New Testament are written by inspiration. My great love for the Word of God and my deep conviction of the need of its being spread far and wide, have led me to pray to God to use me as an instrument to do this.

THIRTEENTH DAY “With my spirit within me will I seek Thee early.” Isa. 26: 9.

My heart being nourished by the truth, being brought into experimental fellowship with God, I speak to my Father, and to my Friend, about the things that He has brought before me in His precious Word.

FOURTEENTH DAY “I hope in Thy Word.” Ps. 119:81.

Is it not precious to have the living God as a Father to go to, who is ever able and ever willing to help, as may be really needed? All believers, according to the will of God concerning them in Jesus Christ, may cast, and ought to cast, all their care upon Him who careth for them, and need not be anxiously concerned about anything.

FIFTEENTH DAY “Thy servant did meditate in Thy statutes.” Ps. 119:23.

Prayer requires, generally speaking, a measure of strength or godly desire, and the season, therefore, when this exercise of the soul can be most effectually performed, is after the inner man has been nourished by

meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us to encourage us.

SIXTEENTH DAY “My soul, wait thou only upon God.” Ps. 62:5.

Often it may appear that we wait upon the Lord in vain; but in His own time God will abundantly prove that it was not in vain. Go on to wait upon the Lord. Continue to make known your requests to Him; but do not expect help from Him. You honor God by believing that He does hear your prayers, and that He will answer them.

SEVENTEENTH DAY “I love Thy commandments above gold.” Ps. 119:127.

I have been for sixty-eight years and three months a lover of the Word of God, and that uninterruptedly. During this time I have read considerably more than one hundred times through the whole of the Old and New Testaments, with prayer and meditation.

EIGHTEENTH DAY “I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” Job 23:12.

Before we went to work we had, as an habitual practice, our seasons for prayer and reading the Holy Scriptures. Should the children of God neglect this and let their work or service for God interfere with caring about their own souls, they cannot be happy in God; and their happiness must also suffer on account of it.

NINETEENTH DAY “Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.” Exodus 14:13.

Were we to stand still in order to see the salvation of God, to see His hand stretched out on our behalf, trusting in Him alone, then our faith

would be increased, and with every fresh case in which the hand of God is stretched out on our behalf in the hour of the trial of our faith, our faith would be increased yet more.

TWENTIETH DAY “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Acts 13:48.

The question, therefore, simply is this: Do I believe in the Lord Jesus? Do I take Him to be the One whom God declares Him to be, i.e. His Beloved Son in whom He is well pleased? If so, I am a believer, therefore the matter is a very simple one; if I believe in the Lord Jesus, I am a chosen one-I have been appointed to eternal life.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY “Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy Name.” Psalm 138:2.

He has condescended to enable me to circulate the Scriptures in all parts of the earth, and in various languages; and has been pleased thus, simply through the reading of the Holy Scriptures, to bring thousands of persons to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY “We through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Rom. 15:4.

This morning Luke 7 came in the course of my reading before breakfast. While reading about the Centurion and the raising from the dead of the widow’s son at Nain, I lifted up my heart thus: “Lord Jesus, Thou hast the same power now. Thou canst provide me with means for Thy work in my hands. Be pleased to do so.”

TWENTY-THIRD DAY “If thou . . . searchest as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord.” Proverbs 2:4.

The first thing I did after having asked the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate on the Word of God, searching, as it were, into every verse to get blessing out of it; not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY "Them that honour Me I will honour." I Samuel 2:30.

I have not been in the smallest degree a loser in acting according to the dictates of my conscience, and as regards spiritual things the Lord has indeed dealt bountifully with me, and led me on in many respects, and moreover, has condescended to use me as an instrument in doing His work.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest." John 17:8.

Be not discouraged if you have unconverted relatives. Perhaps very shortly the Lord may give you the desire of your heart, and answer your prayer for them; but in the meantime seek to commend the truth by manifesting towards them the meekness, gentleness, and kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY "Thy testimonies also are my delight." Psalm 119:24.

This evening I was walking in our little garden meditating on Hebrews 13:8. I was led to say to myself, Jesus in His love and power has hitherto supplied me with what I have needed, and He will provide me with what I may need for the future. A flow of joy came into my soul while realizing the unchangeableness of our adorable Lord.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Acts 16:31.

How may I know that I shall be saved? Notice here in particular (1) It matters not how great a sinner I am; (2) The promise is positive concerning my salvation, if I believe in the Lord Jesus; (3) I have only to believe in the Lord Jesus. If I trust in and depend upon the Lord Jesus for salvation, I shall have everlasting life.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY “My meditation of Him shall be sweet.” Psalm 104:34.

Through reading of the Word of God, and especially through meditation on the Word of God, the believer becomes more and more acquainted with the nature and character of God, and thus sees what a kind, loving, and faithful Being He is; thus meditation on the Word of God will be one special means to strengthen our faith.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY “I will perform My Word with thee.” I Kings 6:12.

Let God work for us when the hour of trial of our faith comes, and do not work a deliverance of our own. Wherever God has given faith, it is given, among other reasons, for the purpose of being tried. However weak our faith may be, God will try it; and as in every way, He leads on gently, gradually, patiently.

THIRTIETH DAY “They that fear Thee will be glad . . . because I have hoped in Thy Word.” Psalm 119:74.

We may have to wait upon the Lord, yea, even a long time; but at last He helps. It may seem as if the Lord had forgotten us, but at last He helps abundantly, and shows that only for the trial of our faith, both for our own benefit and the benefit of those who might hear of His dealings with us, has He allowed us to call so long upon Him.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY “I will hasten my Word to perform it.” Jer. 1:12.

Whilst He is pleased to sustain me, I am able, day by day, to pass on peacefully, and thus, by God’s help, even with my present measure of faith, if continued to me, should be enabled to bear up under other difficulties and trials; but I look for an increase of faith with every fresh difficulty through which the Lord is pleased to help me.

How to Profit from Reading the Word of God

“If anyone should ask me, how he may read the Scriptures most profitably, I would advise him, that:

“I. – Above all he should seek to have it settled in his own mind, that God alone, by His Spirit, can teach him, and that therefore, as God will be enquired of for blessings, it becomes him to seek God’s blessing previous to reading, and also whilst reading.

“II. – He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind, that, although the Holy Spirit is the best and sufficient teacher, yet that this teacher does not always teach immediately when we desire it, and that, therefore, we may have to entrust Him again and again for the explanation of certain passages; but that He will surely teach us at last, if indeed we are seeking for light prayerfully, patiently, and with a view to the glory of God.

“III. – It is of immense importance for the understanding of the word of God, to read it in course, so that we may read every day a portion of the Old and a portion of the New Testament, going on where we previously left off. This is important – 1, Because it throws light upon the connection; and a different course, according to which one habitually selects particular chapters, will make it utterly impossible ever to understand much of the Scriptures. 2, Whilst we are in the body, we need a change even in spiritual things; and this change the Lord has graciously provided in the great variety which is to be found in His word. 3, It tends to the glory of God; for the leaving out some chapters here and there, is practically saying, that certain portions are better than others: or, that there are certain parts of revealed truth unprofitable or unnecessary. 4, It may keep us, by the blessing of God, from erroneous views, as in reading thus regularly through the Scriptures we are led to see the meaning of the whole, and also kept from laying too much stress upon certain favorite

views. 5, The Scriptures contain the whole revealed will of God, and therefore we ought to seek to read from time to time through the whole of that revealed will. There are many believers, I fear, in our day, who have not read even once through the whole of the Scriptures; and yet in a few months, by reading only a few chapters every day they might accomplish it.

“IV. – It is also of the greatest importance to meditate on what we read, so that perhaps a small portion of that which we have read, or, if we have time, the whole may be mediated upon in the course of the day. Or a small portion of a book, or an epistle, or a gospel, through which we go regularly for meditation, may be considered every day, without, however, suffering oneself to be brought into bondage by this plan.”

The Careful and Consecutive Reading of the Holy Scriptures

"I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word" (Psalm 119:16).

Concerning this subject Mr. Müller says: "I fell into the snare, into which so many young believers fall, the reading of religious books in preference to the Scriptures. I could no longer read French and German novels, as I had formerly done, to feed my carnal mind; but still I did not put into the room of those books the best of all books. I read tracts, missionary papers, sermons, and biographies of godly persons. The last kind of books I found more profitable than others, and had they been well selected, or had I not read too much of such writings, or had any of them tended particularly to endear the Scriptures to me, they might have done me much good. – I never had been at any time in my life in the habit of reading the Holy Scriptures. When under fifteen years of age, I occasionally read a little of them at school; afterwards God's precious book was entirely laid aside, so that I never read one single chapter of it, as far as I remember, till it pleased God to begin a work of grace in my heart. Now the Scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God himself has condescended to become an author and I am ignorant about that precious book, which His Holy Spirit has caused to be written through the instrumentality of His servants, and it contains that which I ought to know, and the happiness; therefore I ought to read again and again this most precious book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life. For I was aware, though I read it but little, that I knew scarcely anything of it. But instead of acting thus, and being led by my ignorance of the word of God to study it more, my difficulty in understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it (for much prayerful reading of the Word, gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the delight we have in reading it); and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God. The consequence was, that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge I say; for all true knowledge must be

derived, by the Spirit, from the Word. And as I neglected the Word, I was nearly four years so ignorant, that I did not clearly know even the fundamental points of our holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the ways of God. For it is the truth that makes us free, (John viii. 31, 32,) by delivering us from the slavery of the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. The Word proves it. The experience of the saints proves it; and also my own experience most decidedly proves it. For when it pleased the Lord in Aug. 1829, to bring me really to the Scriptures, my life and walk became very different. And though even since that I have very much fallen short of what I might and ought to be, yet, by the grace of God, I have been enabled to live much nearer to Him than before.

“If any believers read this, who practically prefer other books to the Holy Scriptures, and who enjoy the writings of men much more than the word of God, may they be warned by my loss. I shall consider this book to have been the means of doing much good, should it please the Lord, through its instrumentality, to lead some of His people no longer to neglect the Holy Scriptures, but to give them that preference, which they have hitherto bestowed on the writings of men. My dislike to increase the number of books would have been sufficient to deter me from writing these pages, had I not been convinced, that this is the only way in which the brethren at large may be benefited through my mistakes and errors, and been influenced by the hope, that in answer to my prayers, the reading of my experience may be the means of leading them to value the Scriptures more highly, and to make them the rule of all their actions. * *

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be enquired of for blessings, it becomes him to seek God's blessing previous to reading, and also whilst reading.

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“Learned commentaries I have found to store the head, with many notions and often also with the truth of God; but when the Spirit teaches, through the instrumentality of prayer and meditation, the heart is affected. The former kind of knowledge generally puffs up, and is often renounced, when another commentary gives a different opinion, and often also is found good for nothing, when it is to be carried out into practice. The latter kind of knowledge generally humbles, gives joy, leads nearer to God, and is not easily reasoned away; and having entered into the heart, and become our own, is also generally carried out.”

How to Study the Bible

Reading the Bible

As most of you know already, the especial object of our meeting is, to continue the subject of last Tuesday evening. On that evening, I sought to lend a helping hand to beloved Christian friends, specially the younger brothers and sisters, who are setting out in the divine life.

As one who for fifty years has known the Lord, and has labored in word and doctrine, I ought to be able, in some little measure, to lend a helping hand to these younger believers. And, by the grace of God, I can say, I am able to lend this helping hand; that is, if God will only condescend to use my own failures, to which I have freely referred, and my experience, as a help to others in walking on the road to heaven, I trust that your coming here will not be in vain. As I already told you, this was the very purpose of my leaving home, that I might help these dear young brethren.

I have already referred to seven different points, which appeared to me to be of great moment. There still remain, however, some other deeply important ones to be considered.

The Manner of Reading the Bible

One of the most deeply important points is, that of attending to the careful, prayerful reading of, and meditation on the word of God. I would ask your particular attention to one verse in the epistle of Peter (I Peter ii. 2) where we are especially exhorted by the Holy Ghost, through the apostle, regarding this. For the sake of the connection, let us read the first

verse, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

The particular point to which I refer is contained in the second and third verses, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word." As growth in the natural life is attained by proper food, so in the spiritual life, if we desire to grow, this growth is only to be attained through the instrumentality of the word of God. It is not stated here, as some might be very willing to say, "the reading of the Word may be of importance under some circumstances." That you may gain more by reading this tract, or this and that book, is not the statement here; it is "the Word, " and nothing else, and, under all circumstances,

Stick to the Word of God

You say that the reading of this tract or that book often does you good. I do not question it at all. Nevertheless, the instrumentality which God has been pleased to appoint and use is that of the Word itself ; and just in the measure in which the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ attend to this, they will become strong in the Lord; and in so far as it is neglected, so far will they be weak. There is such a thing as babes being neglected, and what is the consequence? They never become healthy men or women, because of that early neglect.

Perhaps—and it is one of the most hurtful forms of this neglect—they obtain improper food, and therefore do not attain to the full vigor of manhood or womanhood. So with regard to the divine life. It is a most deeply important point, that we obtain right spiritual food at the very beginning of that life. What is that food? It is "the sincere milk of the Word;" that is the proper nourishment for the strengthening of the inner

man. Listen, then, my dear brethren and sisters, to this advice with regard to the Word.

Read Consecutively

First of all, it is of the utmost moment that we regularly read through the Scripture. We ought not to turn over the Bible, and pick out chapters as we please here and there, but to read it regularly through. We should read carefully and regularly through the Scriptures. I speak advisedly, and as one who has known the blessedness of thus reading the Word for the last forty-six years. I say forty-six years, because for the first four years of my Christian life I did not carefully read the word of God. I used to read a tract, or an interesting book; but I knew nothing of the power of the Word. I read next to nothing of it and the result was, that, though a preacher then, and though I had preached in connection with the establishment made no progress in the divine life. And why? Just for this reason, that I neglected the word of God.

But it pleased God, through the instrumentality of a beloved Christian brother, then labouring in this very city and neighbourhood, with whom I became acquainted in Devonshire, to rouse in me an earnestness about the Word, and ever since then I have been a lover of it.

Let me, then, press upon you my first point, that of attending regularly to reading through the Scripture. I do not suppose that you all need the exhortation; many, I believe, have already done so, but I speak for the benefit of those who have not. To those I say, my dear friends, begin at once. Begin with the Old Testament, and when you have read a chapter or two and are about to leave off, put a mark that you may know where you have left off. I speak in all simplicity, for the benefit of those who may be young in the divine life. The next time you read, begin the New Testament, and again put a mark where you leave off. And thus go

on always, whether in the Old or New Testaments, putting a mark, and reading alternately the Old and the New Testaments. Thus, by little and little, you will read through the whole Bible; and when you have finished, just begin again at the beginning.

Connecting the Scriptures

Why is this so deeply important? Simply that we may see the connection between one book and another of the Bible, and between one chapter and another. If we do not read in this consecutive way, we lose a great part of what God has given to instruct us. Moreover, if we are children of God, we should be well acquainted with the whole revealed will of God—the whole of the Word. “All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable.”

And much may be gained by thus carefully reading through the whole will of God. Suppose a rich relative were to die, and leave us, perhaps, some land, or houses, or money, should we be content with reading only the clauses that affected us particularly? No, we would be careful to read the whole will right through. How much more, then, in the will of God, ought we to be careful to read it right through, and not merely one and another of the chapters or books.

The Benefits of Consecutive Reading

And this careful reading of the word of God has this advantage, that it keeps us from making a system of doctrines of our own, and from having our own particular favourite views, which is very pernicious. We often are apt to lay too much stress on certain views of the truth which affect us particularly. The will of the Lord is, that we should know His whole mind. Again, variety in the things of God is of great moment. And God

has been pleased to give us this variety in the highest degree; and the child of God, who follows out this plan, will be able to take an interest in any part of the Word.

Suppose one says, "Let us read in Leviticus." Very well, my brother. Suppose another says, "Let us read in the prophecy of Isaiah.", Very well, my brother. And another will say, "Let us read in the gospel according to Matthew." Very well, my brother; I can enjoy them all; and whether it be in the Old Testament, or in the New Testament, whether in the prophets, the gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles, I should welcome it, and be delighted to welcome the reading and study of any of the divine Word.

A Special Benefit

And this will be particularly of advantage to us in case we should become labourers in Christ's vineyard because, in expounding the Word, we shall be able begin at the beginning. We shall equally enjoy reading of the Word, whether of the Old or the New Testament, and shall never get tired of it. I have, as before stated, known the blessedness of this plan for forty-six years, and though I am now nearly seventy years of age, and though I have been for nearly fifty years in divine life, I can say, by the grace of God, that I more than ever love the word of God, and have greater delight than ever in reading it.

And this day, though I have read the Word nearly a hundred times right through, I am as fond as ever of reading the Scripture; I never have got tired of reading it, and this is more especially through reading it regularly, consecutively day by day, and not merely reading a chapter here and there, as my own thoughts might have led me to do.

Read the Word Prayerfully

Again, we should read the Scripture prayerfully, never supposing that we are clever enough or wise enough, to understand God's Word by our own wisdom. In all our reading of the Scriptures let us seek carefully to have the help of the Holy Spirit; let us ask, for Jesus' sake, that He will enlighten us; He is willing to do it.

I will tell you how it fared with me, at the very first; it may be for your encouragement. It was in the year 1829, when I was living in Hackney, not far from here. My attention had been called to the teaching of the Spirit by a dear brother of experience. "Well," I said, "I will try this plan; and will give myself to the careful reading and meditation of the word of God after prayer, and I will see how much the Spirit is willing to teach me in this way."

Prayerful Reading in George Müller's Life

I went accordingly to my room, and locked my door, and putting the Bible on a chair, I went down on my knees at the chair. There I remained for several hours in prayer and meditation over the word of God; and I can tell you that I learned more in those three hours which I spent in this way, than I had learned for many months previously. I found the blessing was so great, that all the manuscripts, which I had written down from the lectures of the professors of Divinity in the university that I previously attended, I now considered to be of so little value, that when, soon after, I moved into Devonshire, I did not think them worth the carriage. This was because I now found the Holy Spirit to be a better teacher than professors of Divinity. I obtained the teaching of the divine Spirit, and I cannot tell

you the blessedness it was to my own soul. I was praying in the Spirit, and putting my trust in the power of the Spirit as I had never done before.

You cannot, therefore, be surprised at my earnestness in pressing this upon you, when you have heard how precious to my heart it was, and how much it helped me.

Also Meditate On the Word

But again, it is not enough to have prayerful reading only, but we must also meditate on the Word. As in the instance I have just referred to, kneeling before the chair, I meditated on the Word; not simply reading it, not simply praying over it; all that, but, in addition, pondering over what had read. This is deeply important. If you merely read the Bible, and no more, it is just like water running in at one side and out at the other. In order to be really benefited by it, we must meditate on it.

Not all of us, of course, can spend many hours, or even one or two hours, each day thus. Our business demands our attention. Yet, however short the time you can afford, give it regularly to reading, prayer, and meditation over the Word, and you will find it well repaid.

Make the Meditation Personal

In connection with this, we should always read and meditate over the word of God, with reference to ourselves and our own heart. This, is deeply important, and I cannot press it too earnestly upon you. We are apt often to read the Word with reference to others. Parents read it in reference to their children, children for their parents, evangelists read it for their congregations, Sunday-school teachers for their classes. Oh! this is a poor way of reading the Word; read so it will not profit. I say it

deliberately and advisedly, the sooner it is given up, the better for your own souls. Read the word of God always with reference to your own heart, and when you have received the blessing in your own heart, you will be able to communicate it to others.

Whether you labour as evangelists, as pastors, or as visitors, superintendents of Sunday schools, or teachers, tract distributors, or in whatever other capacity you may seek to labour for the Lord, be careful to let the reading of the Word be with distinct reference to your own heart. Ask yourselves, How does this suit me, either for instruction for correction, for exhortation, or for rebuke? How does this affect me? If you thus read, and get the blessing in your own soul, how soon will it flow out to others.

Read With Faith

Another point. It is of the utmost moment in reading the word of God, that the reading should be accompanied with faith. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." As with the preaching, so with the reading—it must be mixed with faith. Not simply reading it as you would read a story, which you may receive or not: not simply as a statement, which you may heed or not, or as an exhortation, to which you may listen or not; but as the revealed will of the Lord: that is, receiving it with faith. Receive,] thus, it will nourish us, and we shall really reap benefit. Only in this way will it benefit us; and we shall gain from it health and strength, in proportion as we receive it with real faith.

Be Doers of the Word

Lastly, if God does bless us in reading His word, He expects that we should be obedient children, and that we should accept the Word as His will, and carry it into practice. If this be neglected, you will find that the reading of the Word, even if accompanied by prayer, meditation, and faith, will do you little good. God does expect us to be obedient children, and will have us practice what He has taught us. The Lord Jesus Christ says "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And in the measure in which we carry out what our Lord Jesus taught, so in measure are we happy children. And in such measure only can we honestly look for help from the Father, even as we seek to carry out His will.

If there is one single point I would wish to have spread all over this country, and over the whole world, it is just this, that we should seek, beloved Christian friends, not to be hearers of the Word only, but doers of the Word. I doubt not that many of you have sought to do this already, but I speak particularly to those younger brethren and sisters who may not yet have learned the full force of this. Oh, seek to attend earnestly to this; it is of vast importance. Satan will seek with much earnestness to put aside the word of God; but let us seek to carry it out and to act upon it. The Word must be received as a legacy from God, which we have by the Holy Ghost.

The Fullness of the Revelation in the Word

And remember that, to the faithful reader of this blessed Word, it reveals all that we need to know of the Father—all that we need to know about the Lord Jesus Christ, all about the power of the Spirit, all about the world that lieth in the wicked one, all about the road to heaven, and the blessedness of the world to come. In this blessed book we have the whole gospel, and all rules necessary for our Christian life and warfare. Let us see, then, that we study it with our whole heart, and with prayer, meditation, faith, and obedience.

The Secret of Prevailing Prayer

I desire, beloved Christian friends, to bring before you, for encouragement in prayer, a precious instance in which an answer to united supplication is given, as we have it recorded by the Holy Ghost, in Acts xii.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” This was the first apostle who became a martyr for Christ. Stephen had previously been stoned, but he was not an apostle. This one was an apostle.

SATAN’S POWER, LIMITED

“And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.” Now Peter, indeed, seems to be at death’s gate; but the Lord said, “Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.” This we have to keep before us, that Satan, though he hates us, can go no farther than the Lord gives him liberty.

The most striking instance of this, we find in the case of Job. Satan had tried to get at him, but was unable to do so; and at last he has to make confession before Jehovah, “Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side?” Satan had tried to get at him, but by reason of the hedge he was unable to get at the person or substance of Job. It was only by the permission of Jehovah, and when this hedge was removed, that he was able to get at the substance of Job. And even still, the hedge was around the person of Job, and not until this hedge had been removed, was he able to touch the person of Job. Though we must never lose sight of the fact that on the

one hand Satan may be, and often is, powerful to hurt us, yet on the other hand, He that is with us is more powerful still, and Satan can do nothing without the permission of Jehovah.

“And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him.” He was delivered to sixteen soldiers—four little companies of four soldiers each, who were to be responsible for him; so that there might be two inside, and two outside, and so always some to take care of him. Thus it seemed to be utterly impossible that he could escape. “Intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.” It is called Easter here, but there was no such thing as Easter then. It was the feast of unleavened bread.

“Peter, therefore, was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” See we have prayer in church capacity. The saints at Jerusalem meeting together, and giving themselves to prayer, and from what we see afterwards, it was

“PRAYER WITHOUT CEASING”

There was always some little band at prayer—“prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

They did not say, Now we will send a petition to Herod to let him go. They might have sent in such a petition, for by this time there were thousands in Jerusalem who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were a formidable company by that time; and if they had all written down their names to this petition they might have succeeded. And if thus they did not succeed, they might have raised a large sum of money. They were very willing to give their substance, to sell their houses and lands for the poor of the church; and most certainly they would have willingly done so for the deliverance of Peter. They did not do this, though a most probable way of getting Peter delivered would have been to have bribed some of Herod’s courtiers. Even in this very chapter we find that when disunion had arisen in regard to the men of Tyre and Sidon, some individuals

bribed a courtier, the king's chamberlain, and thus made peace. Therefore it might possibly have succeeded if they had done so. But none of these things did they use; they gave themselves to prayer. And that, my beloved friends, is the best weapon they could have used. There is not a more blessed and powerful weapon for the children of God, than that they should give themselves to prayer. For thus they can have the power of God on their side—the almighty power of God. And by making use of this power, through the instrumentality of prayer in all things we need, we can have the infinite wisdom of God brought to work for us, and have God Himself at our side, as children of God. Therefore we should seek to make a far better use than ever we have done of prayer. And you, my beloved Christian friends, who are in the habit of meeting often at the noonday prayer meeting, expect great things at the hands of God; look out for wondrous blessings, and you will find, how ready He is to give those things which we ask for. This, then, these saints at Jerusalem did—they gave themselves to prayer without ceasing. That is, they believed that though Herod had apprehended him for the purpose of slaying him, and though this Herod was a notoriously wicked man, as we all know, yet God was able to deliver him from this bloodthirsty Herod. They believed that nothing was too hard for God to accomplish, and therefore they prayed without ceasing.

WAITING FOR THE ANSWER

Now, notice, we do not know how long Peter was in prison, but it is an obvious and natural inference that he had been apprehended before those days of unleavened bread; as after these days his execution was to take place, and, therefore, at least he was in prison seven days. Now, it was not on the first day that the prayer was answered. They met together and prayed,—prayed earnestly; but the first day, hour by hour, passed away, and yet Peter was in prison. The second day, and again they are found waiting on God in prayer. Still, hour by hour, the second day passed, and yet he was not delivered. And so the third, and fourth, and fifth days, passed away. They are still waiting on God; prayer is made

without ceasing; yet this holy man remained in prison; and there seemed to be no prospect of God answering their prayers.

And thus, beloved friends, you and I shall find again and again that the answer is delayed; and the question is, shall we give up praying, or shall we continue? The temptation is to cease praying, as though we had given up hope, and to say, "It is useless; we have already prayed so long that it is useless to continue." This is just what Satan would have us say; but let us persevere and go on steadily praying, and be assured that God is both able and willing to do it for us; and that it is the very joy and delight of His heart, for Christ's sake, to give to us all things which are for the glory of His name, and our good and profit. If we do so, He will give us our desire. As assuredly as we are the children of God, if we pray perseveringly, and in faith, the prayer will be answered. Thus let us learn from this precious instance regarding prayer, which the Holy Ghost has given for our encouragement.

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was Sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door." Mark, that the last night before his execution is now come, and yet Peter is asleep. Not carelessly and indifferently was he lying there, but calmly, quietly resting in the arms of Jesus, and leaning on the bosom of his Lord. He is bound with two chains, as the custom was, between two soldiers, one on the one side and one on the other side, that he might not escape.

GOD'S MANNER OF ANSWERING THE PRAYER

And now about the deliverance; we will see in what way God works.

"And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison." We should have said, this must be done in the dark, and as quietly as possible. But see, the light came into the prison. Humanly speaking, this would have wakened the soldiers; but not thus with

Jehovah; when He works, He can do His will, notwithstanding all these things.

The angel “smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly,” without any fear that in addressing Peter the soldiers should be wakened.

“And as he rose, the chains fell from off his hands.” Still there was no fear of arousing the soldiers.

“Gird thyself.” There is no need to hurry; he is to be taken out, but is to dress himself properly.

And now comes the strangest thing of all, “Bind on thy sandals.” These wooden shoes must be bound on the feet. We should have said, let him walk out without them, that no noise be made to awaken the sleeping soldiers. Not thus; it was God who wrought the deliverance, and when He works there is no need to fear, for who can withstand?

And so he did. And the angel saith unto him, “Cast thy garment about thee.” His outer garment is to be put on. Everything, therefore, is to be done in an orderly manner. It is as if Herod had sent a messenger to deliver him; he is to go quietly forth.

“When they were past the first and second ward.” The eyes of the keepers were miraculously shut.

But now they come to “the iron gate.” Many, many times do we come to some such iron gate. He was now out of the prison, and past the soldiers who were watching, but now he comes to this great iron gate. How shall he get out of prison after all? And so it is with you and me at times. Everything seems prepared, and difficulties have been removed; and yet, after all, there seems to be one great obstacle which is insurmountable. Can we escape? Yes; God is able to open the iron gate for you and for me, even as He caused the great iron gate of the prison to open of its own accord. Let us expect everything from God, and He will do it, if it is for His glory, and our good and profit.

THE UNCHANGEABLE POWER OF GOD

But can He do miraculous things in the latter part of the nineteenth century? Yes, as well as He could in the middle of the first century. Let us never say this was in the days of the Apostles, and we cannot expect such things now. Quite true, that God does not commonly work miracles; but He can if He will, and let us give glory to His name, that if He does not work miracles it is because He can and does do His will by ordinary means. He can accomplish His ends in many ways. Let us never lose heart in such circumstances; He has the same power as ever He had. Many think if they were living in the days of Elijah, or in the days of Elisha, or in the days of the Apostles, they would expect these things; but because they do not live in those days, but in the latter part of the nineteenth century, therefore they cannot expect to have such answers to prayer. This is wrong; remember, that God has the same power as in the days of the prophets of old, or of the Apostles of old; therefore let us only look for great blessings, and great blessings will be bestowed on us, my beloved friends in Christ.

“They passed through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him.” This contains an important spiritual truth—it is this, that God does not work miracles when they are not needed. The angel was sent to deliver Peter from prison; but Peter was now in the streets, and he knew very well the streets of Jerusalem. He had been living there, and he knew all about them; and it was not, therefore, necessary that the angel should lead him through the streets, and bring him to the house where he was going. Therefore as soon as he was outside the prison, and no more supernatural help was required, the angel departed from him.

THE DELIVERANCE EFFECTED

“And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel, and hath delivered me out of the

hands of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.” He wist not that it was true at first, and thought that it must be a vision, but now that he finds himself in the streets, he knows that God has indeed delivered him.

“And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.” Notice this, “many were gathered praying.” For what purpose? For Peter’s deliverance unquestionably; because prayer was made by the church on his behalf without ceasing. Though it was the night before his execution, they did not lose heart. It is to be next day; to the eye of man the case seems hopeless, but they still come together to pray. Therefore they had not only begun well, but they had also gone on well; they had continued in prayer.

“And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.” Her name is given. Why so? When this was written down, inquiry might be made as to the truth of the account. The damsel, probably, was then living, and thus opportunity for this inquiry was afforded. “And when she knew Peter’s voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood before the gate.”

Here we find a description to the very life. What shall we say? The damsel heard his voice and knew it; she knew they were praying for Peter’s deliverance; her heart was so glad that first of all she runs to tell that Peter stood at the door. She could not open the door. Now what do we expect to hear out of the mouths of those beloved brethren in Christ, those holy men who have been waiting upon God day after day? Surely it will be praise. “They said unto her, Thou art mad.”

FAILING FAITH

Ah! there it is which shows what we are. “Thou art mad.” I specially seek in bringing this before you this morning, that we may learn what we are naturally. They had begun well, and had gone on well, yet failed

completely in the end. They had faith at the first, and exercised faith, but had no faith in the end. Let us be warned, beloved friends; that is just what we must seek to avoid. It is comparatively easy for us to begin well and to go on well, day after day, week after week, month after month; but it is difficult to remain faithful to the end. Even thus it was, beloved Christian friends, regarding those of whom we are quite ready to say, "we are not worthy to unloose their shoes;" and if they failed, what of us? What say they? "Thou art mad." They are praying for the thing, and it comes; yet this is what they say. Those men had begun in faith, had gone on in faith, and yet it is gone. They had continued outwardly to wait upon God, but at last without expectation. If they had continued in faith, they would have said when they heard the tidings, "Blessed be God; let His holy name be praised!" It could not have been otherwise, if they had been waiting to the end for the blessing; and since it was not so, it is a plain proof that faith was gone. I am as certain of this as though an audible voice had told me from heaven. It would have been impossible for them to say to that dear, godly young woman, "Thou art mad," when she brought the news of Peter's deliverance, unless faith had been gone. This, however, is what we say naturally, "Thou art mad."

IF WE ASK LET US BE LOOKING FOR THE ANSWER

"But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished." Another proof that they were wanting in faith at that time, "they were astonished." True faith is thus known, that when we begin in faith, and continue in faith, we are not astonished when the answer comes. For instance, suppose any of you, my Christian friends, have beloved sons or daughters who are unconverted in America, or in Australia, or in New Zealand, for whom you have been praying long. At last you get a letter, stating that at such-and-such a time they have been brought to the Lord. The test, whether you have been praying in faith or not, is, if say when the letter comes, "The Lord be praised for it," and you receive the tidings gladly; then you have been

exercising faith. But if not, if you begin to question whether it is real, can it be the case? Then by this you know you have not been exercising faith; you have not been expecting your request to be granted. If I may use a phrase in the right sense, although one of the world's phrases, the world says of certain things, "We take it as a matter of course." So, in a spiritual sense, we should be so confident that God will bless, and that He will do for us in answer to prayer what we ask, that when it comes, we should still be so confident as to say, like the world, "we take it as a matter of course; it could not be otherwise; the thing must come, because God has pledged Himself, for Christ's sake, to give the blessing."

"But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James and to the brethren; and he departed, and went into another place."

Five Conditions of Prevailing Prayer

1. Entire dependence upon the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only ground of any claim for blessing.

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (John 15:16)

2. Separation from all known sin. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us, for it would be sanctioning sin.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Psalm 66:18).

3. Faith in God's word of promise as confirmed by His oath. Not to believe Him is to make Him both a liar and a perjurer.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

"For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:13-20).

4. Asking in accordance with His will. Our motives must be godly: we must not seek any gift of God to consume it upon our lusts.

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14).

"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (James 4:3).

5. Importunity in supplication. There must be waiting on God and waiting for God, as the husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest.

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain" (James 5:7).

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:1-8).

Hints on Praying

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Matt. 7:7,8

I have it laid on my heart to throw out some hints with reference to prayer. The first thing that I would observe is this: our heavenly Father knows how we are situated whilst passing through this present evil world. All the trials, the difficulties, the perplexing circumstances, and the temptations to which we are exposed, He is intimately acquainted with; and for that very reason His word is full of promises, so that we should be encouraged to roll our burdens on Him. For it is not His will that we should carry them in our own strength, but speak to Him about everything, walk with Him continually, and so roll all our burdens on Him. He not merely invites us to do this, but He advises us, He exhorts us, to do so; yea, I may say, He commands us to do so, in order that we may find ease and comfort in our trials and difficulties. And it is because we do not make a good use of our God that we so frequently find a trying state of things in this world. Were we habitually to roll our burdens on the Lord, our position would be a hundred times better than it is.

Dear brethren and sisters, are you in the habit of rolling all your burdens on the Lord? Just as trials come, do you bring them back to your heavenly Father? This is the reason why He lays them on you. And if you make the attempt to carry them in your own strength you will oblige your heavenly Father to increase the trial and burden, so that by the weight you may be at last forced to come to Him, and leave it with Him.

Then again, our precious Lord Jesus Christ has passed through this vale of tears, and “was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” All His temptations were from without, none from within, because

He was the spotless One. Nevertheless Christ was abundantly tried, difficulties befalling Him without number or measure. And He knew how it would fare with us who would be left in this world, and thus His love led Him to make this provision for us, that by prayer we should bring the burden back to Him.

Now let me affectionately ask you, my beloved brethren and sisters. Do you take the advice of our precious Lord Jesus Christ? And do you believe what He says when He speaks, as in these verses, "Ask, and it shall be given you and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Oh, let us take it to our hearts! I believe He means us to understand literally what these words convey to us. "For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

But wide, and broad, and deep though these promises be, they must be taken in connection with other portions of Scripture. We must compare Scripture with Scripture, because again and again we find that one part supplies another with what is wanting.

Asking According to God's Will

For instance, let us turn to 1 John 5:13-15. Here is the first condition to be attended to. If we desire our petitions to be answered, we have to ask God for the things which are according to His will. We have no warrant to expect an answer contrary to His will. And should we be little acquainted with the will of God about any matter, the first thing is to ask Him to teach us and instruct us. We may also ask the help of our elder brethren. But this point must be attended to, that we ask for things according to the will of God; for He loves us with an infinitely wise love, and not like foolish parents who give to their children all they ask for. He desires the true, real happiness and blessing for His children, and therefore only gives what would be for their blessing and profit.

Asking in Jesus' Name

But while this is one condition, it is not the only one. The Lord Jesus said we should ask in His name if we wish our petitions to be granted. (John. 14:13,14.)

Beloved elder brethren here all know what it means to ask in the name of the Lord Jesus, but, for the sake of the young believers present, I will say that it means this—we have to ask in union with Christ, as members of the body of which He is the Head. We stand before God in the righteousness of Christ; we are justified by faith in His name, and therefore we come before God as those who are one with Him. We—so to speak—put Christ forward, and ourselves we put in the background. We are in ourselves entirely unworthy of receiving one blessing of the hand of God. I do not question whether brethren agree with me in this or not; but I repeat, Ask God to show you that all you deserve is hell and torment. This is the one only thing that we have merited. Nothing else do we deserve; and therefore all we receive (out of hell) must come in the name of Christ.

And now this makes the matter so precious, that we are not only permitted, but commanded, to come in the name of Christ. I have been made clean by the power of the blood of Christ. I myself deserve nothing but punishment; but the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy to receive the choicest of the blessings which God has to give. Therefore, if I put myself in the background, and put Christ forward, and in His name ask the choicest of God's blessings, they are granted to me.

It is deeply important that we understand this. Do we habitually plead the worthiness of Christ when we come before God with our petitions?

Exercising Faith in the Power of God and His Willingness to Hear Us

But these two are not the only conditions that we need to remember in order that our petitions may be granted. There is another point, and that is, that we exercise faith in the power of God and in His willingness to hear us. (Mark 11:24.) We have therefore to exercise faith in the power of God, and in the love and willingness of God to grant us our requests. And this is made a condition in this passage. We must be looking out for the answer. There are few children of God who doubt His ability to give, but many doubt His willingness, forgetting that large word of the apostle, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things"? It was in the way of grace that He gave His Son for me; so is He, in the way of grace, willing to give me with Him everything that will be for my good. What more can we have than this?

We Must Walk in the Fear of the Lord

We Must Continue to Wait on God

Now suppose those three things are found in us with regard to prayer, and suppose there be another added, which is an important one, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." That is, if we walk in the fear of God, and do not allow anything contrary to the will of God in us, then there remains one thing more—that we continue to wait on God till the answer comes. But we so frequently break down. We begin well, but we do not go on. If month after month, and year after year, we have been praying, and if our petitions have not been granted, the thought comes, will God answer? Many break down because the petition is not granted as quickly as they expected. Parents pray for their children. They begin to do so; but we should never forget that what we have to do is just to continue, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, until the answer comes. For God knows the

best time for us, and He will in His own time give us our requests. It may be for the trial of our faith, or of our patience, or to see if we are in earnest, that He waits. For these and other reasons the petitions may not be answered so quickly as we desire.

Young evangelists ask God for the conversion of many souls. They go on praying and preaching, but do not get the answers. It may be that they are not prepared for the blessing. If their petitions were granted, it might be an injury to their souls. Therefore He waits till they are prepared to receive the blessing. So with those who teach our children in our churches. They ask God for good things for their children, yet do not receive the answer. Now let us go on, and patiently, quietly, wait on the Lord. The blessing most assuredly will come.

Now are we all in the habit of thus going on patiently, perseveringly, month after month, and year after year, waiting on God? Then let us set out afresh with renewed earnestness and faith. To all our petitions, as they have been according to the will of God, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, and believing in the willingness of God to give what we have asked, the answers must come. I have myself had to wait for a long time to get certain blessings. In many instances the answer has come instantaneously, or in the same hour, or the same day; yet other times I have had to wait years—ten years, fifteen years, twenty years, and upwards—yet invariably at the last the answer has come. And I say it to encourage my brethren and sisters in Christ, Go on waiting, waiting, waiting. Begin afresh to bring your petitions before God. He will hear you. For one thing I have been praying for thirty-nine years and nine months, and the answer has not yet come. Last evening I prayed for it, and the evening before last I prayed again. When traveling in India and in America, year after year I have been praying, and I am sure that in the end the answer will come. I have received tens of thousands of answers to prayer; but in this particular I have to wait. Many of you remember our departed brother Ricards. For his parents I prayed that they might be converted. At last the answer came, when the father was between eighty

and ninety years old. This very individual had cast off his son entirely; for years he did not allow him to come into his presence. At last he sent for him, and then would scarcely allow him to go out of his hands; yet for twenty years I had to pray for his conversion. So with the mother. She had lived a very moral life outwardly, very pharisaically; but at last she saw that nothing but Christ would do for her, and she was saved.

Therefore, beloved younger brethren and sisters, begin afresh with greater earnestness than ever, and you will receive the answers at the last. The Lord delights to bless His children, to give them everything that is for their blessing and comfort; and especially does He delight to bless parents in praying for their children. But if we have set them a bad example, should we have let them go on in a self-willed course? Then the first thing is to make honest confession of our sin and failure, that we deserve all these things that come upon us; and let us humble ourselves in the dust before God, yet pleading the merits of Jesus, and we shall find that God is ever ready in His pity and compassion to forgive us. Then with renewed earnestness let us begin to pray.

My universal remedy for every difficulty, for every trial, is prayer and faith. And in this way for fifty-five years I have been going on. For three and a half years after my conversion I did not do so, but for fifty-five years I have been walking in this way, and I desire on this very ground to encourage my beloved brethren and sisters in Christ who have not tried this universal remedy, and they will find, as I have, that it suits every difficulty and trial.

An Address by George Müller at the Wednesday evening meeting of Leominster Conference. August 20th, 1884.

The Secret of His Power in Prayer

By Andrew Murray

WHEN God wishes anew to teach His Church a truth that is not being understood or practiced, He mostly does so by raising some man to be in word and deed a living witness to its blessedness. And so God has raised up in this nineteenth century, among others, George Müller to be His witness that He is indeed the Hearer of prayer. I know of no way in which the principal truths of God's word in regard to prayer can be more effectually illustrated and established than a short review of his life and of what he tells of his prayer-experiences.

He was born in Prussia on 25th September 1805, and is thus now eighty years of age. His early life, even after having entered the University of Halle as a theological student, was wicked in the extreme. Led by a friend one evening, when just twenty years of age, to a prayer meeting, he was deeply impressed, and soon after brought to know the Saviour. Not long after he began reading missionary papers, and in course of time offered himself to the London Society for promoting Christianity to the Jews. He was accepted as a student, but soon found that he could not in all things submit to the rules of the Society, as leaving too little liberty for the leading of the Holy Spirit. The connection was dissolved in 1830 by mutual consent, and he became the pastor of a small congregation at Teignmouth. In 1832 he was led to Bristol, and it was as pastor of Bethesda Chapel that he was led to the Orphan Home and other work, in connection with which God has so remarkably led him to trust His word and to experience how God fulfills that word. A few extracts in regard to his spiritual life will prepare the way for what we specially wish to quote of his experiences in reference to prayer.

'In connection with this I would mention, that the Lord very graciously gave me, from the very commencement of my divine life, a

measure of simplicity and of childlike disposition in spiritual things, so that whilst I was exceedingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and was still from time to time overcome even by outward sins, yet I was enabled to carry most minute matters to the Lord in prayer. And I have found “godliness profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Though very weak and ignorant, yet I had now, by the grace of God, some desire to benefit others, and he who so faithfully had once served Satan, sought now to win souls for Christ.’ It was at Teignmouth that he was led to know how to use God’s word , and to trust the Holy Spirit as the Teacher given by God to make that word clear. He writes:—’God then began to show me that the word of God alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times. He is the Teacher of His people. The office of the Holy Spirit I had not experimentally understood before that time. ‘It was my beginning to understand this latter point in particular, which had a great effect on me; for the Lord enabled me to put it to the test of experience, by laying aside commentaries, and almost every other book and simply reading the word of God and studying it.

‘The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures, I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously. ‘But the particular difference was that I received real strength for my soul in so doing. I now began to try by the test of the Scriptures the things which I had learned and seen, and found that only those principles which stood the test were of real value.’Of obedience to the word of God, he writes as follows, in connection with his being baptized:—’It had pleased God, in His abundant mercy, to bring my mind into such a state, that I was willing to carry out into my life whatever I should find in the Scriptures. I could say, “I will do His will,” and it was on that account, I believe, that I saw which “doctrine is of God.”-And I would observe here, by the way, that the passage to which I have just alluded (John vii. 17) has been a most remarkable comment to me on many doctrines and precepts of our most holy faith. For instance:

“Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. v. 39-44). “Sell that ye have, and give alms”(Luke xii. 33). “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another”(Rom. xii. 8). It may be said, “Surely these passages cannot be taken literally, for how then would the people of God be able to pass through the world?” The state of mind enjoined in John vii. 17 will cause such objections to vanish. WHOSOEVER IS WILLING TO ACT OUT these commandments of the Lord LITERALLY, will, I believe, be led with me to see that to take them LITERALLY is the will of God.-Those who do so take them will doubtless often be brought into difficulties, hard to the flesh to bear, but these will have a tendency to make them constantly feel that they are strangers and pilgrims here, that this world is not their home, and thus to throw them more upon God, who will assuredly help us through any difficulty into which we may be brought by seeking to act in obedience to His word.’

This implicit surrender to God’s word led him to certain views and conduct in regard to money, which mightily influenced his future life. They had their root in the conviction that money was a Divine stewardship, and that all money had therefore to be received and dispensed in direct fellowship with God Himself. This led him to the adoption of the following four great rules: 1. Not to receive any fixed salary, both because in the collecting of it there was often much that was at variance with the freewill offering with which God’s service is to be maintained, and in the receiving of it a danger of placing more dependence on human sources of income than in the living God Himself. 2. Never to ask any human being for help, however great the need might be, but to make his wants known to the God who has promised to care for His servants and to hear their prayer. 3. To take this command (Luke

xii. 33) literally, 'Sell that thou hast and give alms,' and never to save up money, but to spend all God entrusted to him on God's poor, on the work of His kingdom. 4. Also to take Rom. xiii. 8, 'Owe no man anything,' literally, and never to buy on credit, or be in debt for anything, but to trust God to provide. This mode of living was not easy at first. But Müller testifies it was most blessed in bringing the soul to rest in God, and drawing it into closer union with Himself when inclined to backslide. 'For it will not do, it is not possible, to live in sin, and at the same time, by communion with God, to draw down from heaven everything one needs for the life that now is.'

Not long after his settlement at Bristol, 'THE SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTION FOR HOME AND ABROAD' was established for aiding in Day, Sunday School, Mission and Bible work. Of this Institution the Orphan Home work, by which Mr. Müller is best known, became a branch. It was in 1834 that his heart was touched by the case of an orphan brought to Christ in one of the schools, but who had to go to a poorhouse where its spiritual wants would not be cared for. Meeting shortly after with a life of Franke, he writes (Nov, 20, 1835): 'Today I have had it very much laid on my heart no longer merely to think about the establishment of an Orphan Home, but actually to set about it, and I have been very much in prayer respecting it, in order to ascertain the Lord's mind. May God make it plain.' And again, Nov. 25: 'I have been again much in prayer yesterday and today about the Orphan Home, and am more and more convinced that it is of God. May He in mercy guide me. The three chief reasons are-1. That God may be glorified, should He be pleased to furnish me with the means, in its being seen that it is not a vain thing to trust Him; and that thus the faith of His children may be strengthened. 2. The spiritual welfare of fatherless and motherless children. 3. Their temporal welfare.'

After some months of prayer and waiting on God, a house was rented, with room for thirty children, and in course of time three more, containing in all 120 children. The work was carried on in this way for

ten years, the supplies for the needs of the orphans being asked and received of God alone. It was often a time of sore need and much prayer, but a trial of faith more precious than of gold was found unto praise and honor and glory of God. The Lord was preparing His servant for greater things. By His providence and His Holy Spirit, Mr. Müller was led to desire, and to wait upon God till he received from Him, the sure promise of 15,000 for a Home to contain 300 children. This first Home was opened in 1849. In 1858, a second and third Home, for 950 more orphans, was opened, costing 35,000. And in 1869 and 1870, a fourth and a fifth Home, for 850 more, at an expense of 50,000, making the total number of the orphans 2100.

In addition to this work, God has given him almost as much as for the building of the Orphan Homes, and the maintenance of the orphans, for other work, the support of schools and missions, Bible and tract circulation. In all he has received from God, to be spent in His work, during these fifty years, more than one million pounds sterling. How little he knew, let us carefully notice, that when he gave up his little salary of 35 a year in obedience to the leading of God's word and the Holy Spirit, what God was preparing to give him as the reward of obedience and faith; and how wonderfully the word was to be fulfilled to him: 'Thou hast been faithful over few things; I will set thee over many things.' And these things have happened for an ensample to us. God calls us to be followers of George Müller, even as he is of Christ. His God is our God; the same promises are for us; the same service of love and faith in which he labored is calling for us on every side. Let us in connection with our lessons in the school of prayer study the way in which God gave George Müller such power as a man of prayer: we shall find in it the most remarkable illustration of some of the lessons which we have been studying with the blessed Master in the word. We shall specially have impressed upon us His first great lesson, that if we will come to Him in the way He has pointed out, with definite petitions, made known to us by the Spirit through the word as being according to the will of God, we may most confidently believe that whatsoever we ask it shall be done.

PRAYER AND THE WORD OF GOD

We have more than once seen that God's listening to our voice depends upon our listening to His voice. (See Lessons 22 and 23.) We must not only have a special promise to plead, when we make a special request, but our whole life must be under the supremacy of the word: the word must be dwelling in us. The testimony of George Müller on this point is most instructive. He tells us how the discovery of the true place of the word of God, and the teaching of the Spirit with it, was the commencement of a new era in his spiritual life. Of it he writes:—'Now the scriptural way of reasoning would have been: God Himself has condescended to become an author, and I am ignorant about that precious book which His Holy Spirit has caused to be written through the instrumentality of His servants, and it contains that which I ought to know, and the knowledge of which will lead me to true happiness; therefore I ought to read again and again this most precious book, this book of books, most earnestly, most prayerfully, and with much meditation; and in this practice I ought to continue all the days of my life. For I was aware, though I read it but little, that I knew scarcely anything of it. But instead of acting thus and being led by my ignorance of the word of God to study it more, my difficulty in understanding it, and the little enjoyment I had in it, made me careless of reading it (for much prayerful reading of the word gives not merely more knowledge, but increases the delight we have in reading it); and thus, like many believers, I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God. The consequence was that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace. In knowledge, I say; for all true knowledge must be derived, by the Spirit, from the word. And as I neglected the word, I was for nearly four years so ignorant, that I did not clearly know even the fundamental points of our holy faith. And this lack of knowledge most sadly kept me back from walking steadily in the ways of God. For when it pleased the Lord in

August 1829 to bring me really to the Scriptures, my life and walk became very different. And though ever since that I have very much fallen short of what I might and ought to be, yet by the grace of God I have been enabled to live much nearer to Him than before. If any believers read this who practically prefer other books to the Holy Scriptures, and who enjoy the writings of men much more than the word of God, may they be warned by my loss. I shall consider this book to have been the means of doing much good, should it please the Lord, through its instrumentality, to lead some of His people no longer to neglect the Holy Scriptures, but to give them that preference which they have hitherto bestowed on the writings of men.

‘Before I leave this subject, I would only add: If the reader understands very little of the word of God, he ought to read it very much; for the Spirit explains the word by the word. And if he enjoys the reading of the word little, that is just the reason why he should read it much; for the frequent reading of the Scriptures creates a delight in them, so that the more we read them, the more we desire to do so. ‘Above all, he should seek to have it settled in his own mind that God alone by His Spirit can teach him, and that therefore, as God will be inquired of for blessings, it becomes him to seek God’s blessing previous to reading, and also whilst reading.

‘He should have it, moreover, settled in his mind that although the Holy Spirit is the best and sufficient Teacher, yet that this Teacher does not always teach immediately when we desire it, and that therefore we may have to entreat Him again and again for the explanation of certain passages; but that He will surely teach us at last, if indeed we are seeking for light prayerfully, patiently, and with a view to the glory of God.’

We find in his journal frequent mention made of his spending two and three hours in prayer over the word for the feeding of his spiritual life. As the fruit of this, when he had need of strength and encouragement in

prayer, the individual promises were not to him so many arguments from a book to be used with God, but living words which he had heard the Father's living voice speak to him, and which he could now bring to the Father in living faith.

PRAYER AND THE WILL OF GOD

One of the greatest difficulties with young believers is to know how they can find out whether what they desire is according to God's will. I count it one of the most precious lessons God wants to teach through the experience of George Müller, that He is willing to make known, of things of which His word says nothing directly, that they are His will for us, and that we may ask them. The teaching of the Spirit, not without or against the word, but as something above and beyond it, in addition to it, without which we cannot see God's will, is the heritage of every believer. It is through THE WORD, AND THE WORD ALONE, that the Spirit teaches, applying the general principles or promises to our special need. And it is THE SPIRIT, AND THE SPIRIT ALONE, who can really make the word a light on our path, whether the path of duty in our daily walk, or the path of faith in our approach to God. Let us try and notice in what childlike simplicity and teachableness it was that the discovery of God's will was so surely and so clearly made known to His servant.

With regard to the building of the first Home and the assurance he had of its being God's will, he writes in May 1850, just after it had been opened, speaking of the great difficulties there were, and how little likely it appeared to nature that they would be removed: 'But while the prospect before me would have been overwhelming had I looked at it naturally, I was never even for once permitted to question how it would end. For as from the beginning I was sure it was the will of God that I should go to the work of building for Him this large Orphan Home, so

also from the beginning I was as certain that the whole would be finished as if the Home had been already filled.’

The way in which he found out what was God’s will, comes out with special clearness in his account of the building of the second Home; and I ask the reader to study with care the lesson the narrative conveys:—

’Dec. 5, 1850.-Under these circumstances I can only pray that the Lord in His tender mercy would not allow Satan to gain an advantage over me. By the grace of God my heart says: Lord, if I could be sure that it is Thy will that I should go forward in this matter, I would do so cheerfully; and, on the other hand, if I could be sure that these are vain, foolish, proud thoughts, that they are not from Thee, I would, by Thy grace, hate them, and entirely put them aside. ‘My hope is in God: He will help and teach me. Judging, however, from His former dealings with me, it would not be a strange thing to me, nor surprising, if He called me to labor yet still more largely in this way. ‘The thoughts about enlarging the Orphan work have not yet arisen on account of an abundance of money having lately come in; for I have had of late to wait for about seven weeks upon God, whilst little, very little comparatively, came in, i.e. about four times as much was going out as came in; and, had not the Lord previously sent me large sums, we should have been distressed indeed. ‘Lord! how can Thy servant know Thy will in this matter? Wilt Thou be pleased to teach him!

December 11.-During the last six days, since writing the above, I have been, day after day, waiting upon God concerning this matter. It has generally been more or less all the day on my heart. When I have been awake at night, it has not been far from my thoughts. Yet all this without the least excitement. I am perfectly calm and quiet respecting it. My soul would be rejoiced to go forward in this service, could I be sure that the Lord would have me to do so; for then, notwithstanding the numberless difficulties, all would be well; and His Name would be magnified.

‘On the other hand, were I assured that the Lord would have me to be satisfied with my present sphere of service, and that I should not pray about enlarging the work, by His grace I could, without an effort, cheerfully yield to it; for He has brought me into such a state of heart, that I only desire to please Him in this matter. Moreover, hitherto I have not spoken about this thing even to my beloved wife, the sharer of my joys, sorrows, and labors for more than twenty years; nor is it likely that I shall do so for some time to come: for I prefer quietly to wait on the Lord, without conversing on this subject, in order that thus I may be kept the more easily, by His blessing, from being influenced by things from without. The burden of my prayer concerning this matter is, that the Lord would not allow me to make a mistake, and that He would teach me to do His will.

‘December 26.-Fifteen days have elapsed since I wrote the preceding paragraph. Every day since then I have continued to pray about this matter, and that with a goodly measure of earnestness, by the help of God. There has passed scarcely an hour during these days, in which, whilst awake, this matter has not been more or less before me. But all without even a shadow of excitement. I converse with no one about it. Hitherto have I not even done so with my dear wife. For this I refrain still, and deal with God alone about the matter, in order that no outward influence and no outward excitement may keep me from attaining unto a clear discovery of His will. I have the fullest and most peaceful assurance that He will clearly show me His will. This evening I have had again an especial solemn season for prayer, to seek to know the will of God. But whilst I continue to entreat and beseech the Lord, that He would not allow me to be deluded in this business, I may say I have scarcely any doubt remaining on my mind as to what will be the issue, even that I should go forward in this matter. As this, however, is one of the most momentous steps that I have ever taken, I judge that I cannot go about this matter with too much caution, prayerfulness, and deliberation. I am in no hurry about it. I could wait for years, by God’s grace, were this His will, before even taking one single step toward this thing, or even speaking to anyone about it; and, on the other hand, I would set to

work tomorrow, were the Lord to bid me do so. This calmness of mind, this having no will of my own in the matter, this only wishing to please my Heavenly Father in it, this only seeking His and not my honor in it; this state of heart, I say, is the fullest assurance to me that my heart is not under a fleshly excitement, and that, if I am helped thus to go on, I shall know the will of God to the full. But, while I write this, I cannot but add at the same time, that I do crave the honor and the glorious privilege to be more and more used by the Lord.

‘I desire to be allowed to provide scriptural instruction for a thousand orphans, instead of doing so for 300. I desire to expound the Holy Scriptures regularly to a thousand orphans, instead of doing so to 300. I desire that it may be yet more abundantly manifest that God is still the Hearer and Answerer of prayer, and that He is the living God now as He ever was and ever will be, when He shall simply, in answer to prayer, have condescended to provide me with a house for 700 orphans and with means to support them. This last consideration is the most important point in my mind. The Lord’s honor is the principal point with me in this whole matter; and just because this is the case, if He would be more glorified by not going forward in this business, I should by His grace be perfectly content to give up all thoughts about another Orphan House. Surely in such a state of mind, obtained by the Holy Spirit, Thou, O my Heavenly Father, wilt not suffer Thy child to be mistaken, much less deluded. By the help of God I shall continue further day by day to wait upon Him in prayer, concerning this thing, till He shall bid me act.

‘Jan. 2, 1851.-A week ago I wrote the preceding paragraph. During this week I have still been helped day by day, and more than once every day, to seek the guidance of the Lord about another Orphan House. The burden of my prayer has still been, that He in His great mercy would keep me from making a mistake. During the last week the book of Proverbs has come in the course of my Scripture reading, and my heart has been refreshed in reference to this subject by the following passages: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own

understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. iii. 5, 6). By the grace of God I do acknowledge the Lord in all my ways, and in this thing in particular; I have therefore the comfortable assurance that He will direct my paths concerning this part of my service, as to whether I shall be occupied in it or not. Further: “The integrity of the upright shall preserve them” (Prov. xi. 3). By the grace of God I am upright in this business. My honest purpose is to get glory to God. Therefore I expect to be guided aright. Further: “Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Prov. xvi. 3). I do commit my works unto the Lord, and therefore expect that my thoughts will be established. My heart is more and more coming to a calm, quiet, and settled assurance, that the Lord will condescend to use me still further in the orphan work. Here Lord is Thy servant.’

When later he decided to build two additional houses, Nos. 4 and 5, he writes thus again:— ‘Twelve days have passed away since I wrote the last paragraph. I have still day by day been enabled to wait upon the Lord with reference to enlarging the Orphan work, and have been during the whole of this period also in perfect peace, which is the result of seeking in this thing only the Lord’s honor and the temporal and spiritual benefit of my fellow-men. Without an effort could I by His grace put aside all thoughts about this whole affair, if only assured that it is the will of God that I should do so; and, on the other hand, would at once go forward, if He would have it be so. I have still kept this matter entirely to myself. Though it be now about seven weeks, since day by day, more or less, my mind has been exercised about it, and since I have been daily praying about it, yet not one human being knows of it. As yet I have not even mentioned it to my dear wife in order that thus, by quietly waiting upon God, I might not be influenced by what might be said to me on the subject. This evening has been particularly set apart for prayer, beseeching the Lord once more not to allow me to be mistaken in this thing, and much less to be deluded by the devil. I have also sought to let all the reasons against building another Orphan House, and all the reasons for doing so pass before my mind: and now for the clearness and definiteness, write them down. . . .

‘Much, however, as the nine previous reasons weigh with me, yet they would not decide me were there not one more. It is this. After having for months pondered the matter, and having looked at it in all its bearings and with all its difficulties, and then having been finally led, after much prayer, to decide on this enlargement, my mind is at peace. The child who has again and again besought His Heavenly Father not to allow him to be deluded, nor even to make a mistake, is at peace, perfectly at peace concerning this decision; and has thus the assurance that the decision come to, after much prayer during weeks and months, is the leading of the Holy Spirit; and therefore purposes to go forward, assuredly believing that he will not be confounded, for he trusts in God. Many and great may be his difficulties; thousands and ten thousands of prayers may have ascended to God, before the full answer may be obtained; much exercise of faith and patience may be required; but in the end it will again be seen, that His servant, who trusts in Him, has not been confounded.’

PRAYER AND THE GLORY OF GOD

We have sought more than once to enforce the truth, that while we ordinarily seek the reasons of our prayers not being heard in the thing we ask not being according to the will of God, Scripture warns us to find the cause in ourselves, in our not being in the right state or not asking in the right spirit. The thing may be in full accordance with His will, but the asking, the spirit of the supplicant, not; then we are not heard. As the great root of all sin is self and self-seeking, so there is nothing that even in our more spiritual desires so effectually hinders God in answering as this: we pray for our own pleasure or glory. Prayer to have power and prevail must ask for the glory of God; and he can only do this as he is living for God’s glory.

In George Müller we have one of the most remarkable instances on record of God's Holy Spirit leading a man deliberately and systematically, at the outset of a course of prayer, to make the glorifying of God his first and only object. Let us ponder well what he says, and learn the lesson God would teach us through him:—'I had constantly cases brought before me, which proved that one of the especial things which the children of God needed in our day, was to have their faith strengthened.

'I longed, therefore, to have something to point my brethren to, as a visible proof that our God and Father is the same faithful God as ever He was; as willing as ever to PROVE Himself to be the LIVING GOD in our day as formerly, to all who put their trust in Him.'

'My spirit longed to be instrumental in strengthening their faith, by giving them not only instances from the word of God, of His willingness and ability to help all who rely upon Him, but to show them by proofs that He is the same in our day. I knew that the word of God ought to be enough, and it was by grace enough for me; but still I considered I ought to lend a helping hand to my brethren.

'I therefore judged myself bound to be the servant of the Church of Christ, in the particular point in which I had obtained mercy; namely, in being able to take God at His word and rely upon it. The first object of the work was, and is still: that God might be magnified by the fact that the orphans under my care are provided with all they need, only by prayer and faith, without any one being asked; thereby it may be seen that God is FAITHFUL STILL, AND HEARS PRAYER STILL.

'I have again these last days prayed much about the Orphan House, and have frequently examined my heart; that if it were at all my desire to establish it for the sake of gratifying myself, I might find it out. For as I

desire only the Lord's glory, I shall be glad to be instructed by the instrumentality of my brother, if the matter be not of Him.

‘When I began the Orphan work in 1835, my chief object was the glory of God, by giving a practical demonstration as to what could be accomplished simply through the instrumentality of prayer and faith, in order thus to benefit the Church at large, and to lead a careless world to see the reality of the things of God, by showing them in this work, that the living God is still, as 4000 years ago, the living God. This my aim has been abundantly honored. Multitudes of sinners have been thus converted, multitudes of the children of God in all parts of the world have been benefited by this work, even as I had anticipated. But the larger the work as grown, the greater has been the blessing, bestowed in the very way in which I looked for blessing: for the attention of hundreds of thousands has been drawn to the work; and many tens of thousands have come to see it. All this leads me to desire further and further to labor on in this way, in order to bring yet greater glory to the Name of the Lord. That He may be looked at, magnified, admired, trusted in, relied on at all times, is my aim in this service; and so particularly in this intended enlargement. That it may be seen how much one poor man, simply by trusting in God, can bring about by prayer; and that thus other children of God may be led to carry on the work of God in dependence upon Him; and that children of God may be led increasingly to trust in Him in their individual positions and circumstances, therefore I am led to this further enlargement.’

PRAYER AND TRUST IN GOD

There are other points on which I would be glad to point out what is to be found in Mr. Müller's narrative, but one more must suffice. It is the lesson of firm and unwavering trust in God's promise as the secret of persevering prayer. If once we have, in submission to the teaching of the Spirit in the word, taken hold of God's promise, and believed that the

Father has heard us, we must not allow ourselves by any delay or unfavorable appearances be shaken in our faith.

‘The full answer to my daily prayers was far from being realized; yet there was abundant encouragement granted by the Lord, to continue in prayer. But suppose, even, that far less had come in than was received, still, after having come to the conclusion, upon scriptural grounds, after much prayer and self-examination, I ought to have gone on without wavering, in the exercise of faith and patience concerning this object; and thus all the children of God, when once satisfied that anything which they bring before God in prayer, is according to His will, ought to continue in believing, expecting, persevering prayer until the blessing is granted. Thus am I myself now waiting upon God for certain blessings, for which I have daily besought Him for ten years and six months without one day’s intermission. Still the full answer is not yet given concerning the conversion of certain individuals, though in the meantime I have received many thousands of answers to prayer. I have also prayed daily without intermission for the conversion of other individuals about ten years, for others six or seven years, for others from three or two years; and still the answer is not yet granted concerning those persons, while in the meantime many thousands of my prayers have been answered, and also souls converted, for whom I had been praying. I lay particular stress on this for the benefit of those who may suppose that I need only to ask of God, and receive at once; or that I might pray concerning anything, and the answer would surely come. One can only expect to obtain answers to prayers which are according to the mind of God; and even then, patience and faith may be exercised for many years, even as mine are exercised, in the matter to which I have referred; and yet am I daily continuing in prayer, and expecting the answer, and so surely expecting the answer, that I have often thanked God that He will surely give it, though now for nineteen years faith and patience have thus been exercised. Be encouraged, dear Christians, with fresh earnestness to give yourselves to prayer, if you can only be sure that you ask things which are for the glory of God.

‘But the most remarkable point is this, that 6, 6s. 6d. from Scotland supplied me, as far as can be known now, with all the means necessary for fitting up and promoting the New Orphan Houses. Six years and eight months I have been day by day, and generally several times daily, asking the Lord to give me the needed means for this enlargement of the Orphan work, which, according to calculations made in the spring of 1861, appeared to be about fifty thousand pounds: the total of this amount I had now received. I praise and magnify the Lord for putting this enlargement of the work into my heart, and for giving me courage and faith for it; and above all, for sustaining my faith day by day without wavering. When the last portion of the money was received, I was no more assured concerning the whole, that I was at the time I had not received one single donation towards this large sum. I was at the beginning, after once having ascertained His mind, through most patient and heart-searching waiting upon God, as fully assured that He would bring it about, as if the two houses, with their hundreds of orphans occupying them, had been already before me. I make a few remarks here for the sake of young believers in connection with this subject: 1. Be slow to take new steps in the Lord’s service, or in your business, or in your families: weigh everything well; weigh all in the light of the Holy Scriptures and in the fear of God. 2. Seek to have no will of your own, in order to ascertain the mind of God, regarding any steps you propose taking, so that you can honestly say you are willing to do the will of God, if He will only please to instruct you. 3. But when you have found out what the will of God is, seek for His help, and seek it earnestly, perseveringly, patiently, believingly, expectantly; and you will surely in His own time and way obtain it.

‘To suppose that we have difficulty about money only would be a mistake: there occur hundreds of other wants and of other difficulties. It is a rare thing that a day occurs without some difficulty or some want; but often there are many difficulties and many wants to be met and overcome the same day. All these are met by prayer and faith, our universal remedy; and we have never been confounded. Patient, persevering, believing prayer, offered up to God, in the Name of the

Lord Jesus, has always, sooner or later, brought the blessing. I do not despair, by God's grace, of obtaining any blessing, provided I can be sure it would be for any real good, and for the glory of God.

The extracts are from a work in four volumes, *The Lord's Dealings with George Müller*. J. Nisbet & Co., London.

Preaching and Choosing the Text

That which I now considered the best mode of preparation for the public ministry of the Word, no longer adopted from necessity, on account of want of time, but from deep conviction, and from the experience of God's blessing upon it, both as it regards my own enjoyment, the benefit of the saints, and the conversion of sinners, is as follows:

Seeking the Lord for His Choice Text

1. I do not presume to know myself what is best for the hearers, and I therefore ask the Lord in the first place, that He would graciously be pleased to teach me on what subject I shall speak, or what portion of His word I shall expound. Now sometimes it happens, that previous to my asking Him, a subject or passage has been in my mind, on which it has appeared well for me to speak. In that case I ask the Lord, whether I should speak on this subject or passage. If, after prayer, I feel persuaded that I should I fix upon it, yet so, that I would desire to leave myself open to the Lord to change it, if He please.

Frequently, however, it occurs, that I have no text or subject in my mind, before I give myself to prayer for the sake of ascertaining the Lord's will concerning it. In this case I wait some time on my knees for an answer, trying to listen to the voice of the Spirit to direct me. If then a passage or subject, whilst I am on my knees, or after I have finished praying for a text, is brought to my mind, I again ask the Lord, and that sometimes repeatedly, especially if, humanly speaking, the subject or text should be a peculiar one, whether it be His will that I should speak on such a subject or passage. If after prayer my mind is peaceful about it, I take this to be the text, but still desire to leave myself open to the Lord for direction, should He please to alter it, or should I have been mistaken.

Frequently also, in the third place, it happens, that I not only have no text nor subject on my mind previous to my praying for guidance in this matter, but also I do not obtain one after once, or twice, or more times praying about it. I used formerly at times to be much perplexed, when this was the case, but for more than forty-five years it has pleased the Lord, in general at least, to keep me in peace about it. What I do is, to go on with my regular reading of the Scriptures, where I left off the last time, praying (whilst I read) for a text, now and then also laying aside my bible for prayer, till I get one. Thus it has happened, that I have had to read five, ten; yea twenty chapters, before it has pleased the Lord to give me a text: yea, many times I have even had to go to the place of meeting without one, and obtained it perhaps only a few minutes before I was going to speak; but I have never lacked the Lord's assistance at the time of preaching, provided I had earnestly sought it in private. The preacher cannot know the particular state of the various individuals who compose the congregation, nor what they require, but the Lord knows it; and if the preacher renounces his own wisdom, he will be assisted by the Lord; but if he will choose in his own wisdom, then let him not be surprised if he should see little benefit result from his labours.

Trust God for Our Text

Before I leave this part of the subject, I would just observe one temptation concerning the choice of a text. We may see a subject to be so very full, that it may strike us it would do for some other occasion. For instance, sometimes a text, brought to one's mind for a week-evening meeting, may appear more suitable for the Lord's day, because then there would be a greater number of hearers present. Now, in the first place, we do not know whether the Lord ever will allow us to preach on another Lord's day; and, in the second place, we know not whether that very subject may not be especially suitable for some or many individuals present just that week-evening. Thus I was once tempted, after I had been a short time at Teignmouth, to reserve a subject, which had been just

opened to me, for the next Lord's day. But being able, by the grace of God, to overcome the temptation by the above reasons, and preaching about it at once, it pleased the Lord to bless it to the conversion of a sinner, and that too an individual who meant to come but that once more to the chapel, and to whose case the subject was most remarkably suited.

Seeking the Lord for His Understanding of the Text

2. Now when the text has been obtained in the above way, whether it be one or two or more verses, or a whole chapter or more, I ask the Lord that He would graciously be pleased to teach me by His Holy Spirit, whilst meditating over it. Within the last fifty years, I have found it the most profitable plan to meditate with my pen in my hand, writing down the outlines, as the Word is opened to me. This I do, not for the sake of committing them to memory, nor as if I meant to say nothing else, but for the sake of clearness, as being a help to see how far I understand the passage. I also find it useful afterwards to refer to what I have thus written. I very seldom use any other help besides the little I understand of the original of the Scriptures, and some good translations in other languages.

Prayer, the Chief Help in Understanding the Text

My chief help is prayer. I have NEVER in my life begun to study one single part of divine truth, without gaining some light about it, when I have been able really to give myself to prayer and meditation over it. But that I have often found a difficult matter, partly on account of the weakness of the flesh, and partly also on account of bodily infirmities and multiplicity of engagements. This I most firmly believe, that no one ought to expect to see much good resulting from his labours in word and doctrine, if he is not much given to prayer and meditation.

Trusting God to Bring to Mind Additional Points While Preaching

3. Having prayed and meditated on the subject or text, I desire to leave myself entirely in the hands of the Lord. I ask Him to bring to my mind what I have seen in my room, concerning the subject I am going to speak on, which He generally most kindly does, and often teaches me much additionally, whilst I am preaching.

Living Out the Sermon in Daily Life

In connection with the above, I must, however, state, that it appears to me there is a preparation for the public ministry of the Word, which is even more excellent than the one spoken of. It is this: to live in such constant and real communion with the Lord, and to be so habitually and frequently in meditation over the truth, that without the above effort, so to speak, we have obtained food for others, and know the mind of the Lord as to the subject or the portion of the Word on which we should speak. But this I have only in a small measure experienced, though I desire to be brought into such a state, that habitually “out of my belly may flow rivers of living water.”

The Benefits of Expounding the Scriptures

That which I have found most beneficial in my experience for the last fifty-one years in the public ministry of the Word, is, expounding the Scriptures, and especially the going now and then through a whole gospel or epistle. This may be done in a two-fold way, either by entering minutely into the bearing of every point occurring in the portion, or by

giving the general outlines, and thus leading the hearers to see the meaning and connection of the whole.

1. The hearers are thus, with God's blessing, led to the Scriptures. They find, as it were, a practical use of them in the public meetings. This induces them to bring their bibles, and I have observed that those who at first did not bring them, have afterwards been induced to do so: so that in a short time few, of the believers at least, were in the habit of coming without them. This is no small matter; for every thing, which in our day will lead believers to value the Scriptures, is of importance.

2. The expounding of the Scriptures is in general more beneficial to the hearers than if, on a single verse, or half a verse, or two or three words of a verse some remarks are made, so that the portion of Scripture is scarcely anything but a motto for the subject; for few have grace to meditate much over the Word, and thus exposition may not merely be the means of opening up to them the Scriptures, but may also create in them a desire to meditate for themselves.

3. The expounding of the Scriptures leaves to the hearers a connecting link, so that the reading over again the portion of the Word, which has been expounded, brings to their remembrance what has been said; and thus, with God's blessing, leaves a more lasting impression on their minds. This is particularly of importance as it regards the illiterate, who sometimes have neither much strength of memory nor capacity of comprehension.

4. The expounding of large portions of the Word, as the whole of a gospel or an epistle, besides leading the hearer to see the connection of the whole, has also this particular benefit for the teacher, that it leads him, with God's blessing, to the consideration of portions of the Word, which otherwise he might not have considered, and keeps him from speaking too much on favourite subjects, and leaning too much to

particular parts of truth, which tendency must surely sooner or later injure both himself and his hearers.- Expounding the word of God brings little honour to the preacher from the unenlightened or careless hearer, but it tends much to the benefit of the hearers in general.

Simplicity in Expression

Simplicity in expression, whilst the truth is set forth, is, in connection with what has been said, of the utmost importance. It should be the aim of the teacher to speak so, that children, servants, and people who cannot read, may be able to understand him, so far as the natural mind can comprehend the things of God. It ought also to be remembered, that there is, perhaps, not a single congregation in which there are not persons of the above classes present, and that if they can understand, the well-educated or literary persons will understand likewise; but the reverse does not hold good. It ought further to be remembered that the expounder of the truth of God speaks for God, for eternity, and that it is not in the least likely that he will benefit the hearers, except he uses plainness of speech, which nevertheless needs not to be vulgar or rude. It should also be considered, that if the preacher strive to speak according to the rules of this world, he may please many, Particularly those who have a literary taste; but, in the same proportion, he is less likely to become an instrument in the hands of God for the conversion of sinners, or for the building up of the saints. For neither eloquence nor depth of thought make the truly great preacher, but such a life of prayer and meditation and spirituality, as may render him a vessel meet for the Master's use, and fit to be employed both in the conversion of sinners and in the edification of the saints.

How to Ascertain the Will of God

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

1. I SEEK at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

2.—Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling of simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

3.—I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

4.—Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

5.—I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

6.—THUS, THROUGH PRAYER to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so

after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly. In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective.

GEORGE MÜLLER

