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SERMONIC.

SUPERNATURAL ANSWERS TO PRAYER.

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This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.—Ps. xxxiv: 6, 7.

Is prayer a positive power in man's relations with God? This question is, in some respects, the most vital, practical question, touching the religious life of our day. The age of miracles may be past; supernatural signs may be no longer wrought in the forms in which they once astonished mankind; there may be no more need of public and popular attestation and authentication of Christianity, such as was demanded at the outset for the perpetual establishment of its august claims. But if a human soul may have personal communion and contact with an unseen and spiritual God; if blessings and benefits may be obtained directly from our Heavenly Father, which no effort of our own can secure, and no mediation of our fellow-men can procure; if I may, unmistakably, discern divine in-

terposition in the affairs of my own life, and recognize the invisible hand by unerring tokens of God's guarding, guiding, governing presence—then I have a perpetual miracle in my own life—a permanent proof of the supernatural, which convinces and overwhelms my own mind. To others, my experience may not bring conviction, but it satisfies me; and as every praying soul may have the same essential testimony, there can be no excuse for abiding in the darkness.

The most dangerous doctrine concerning prayer is that current philosophy of the matter which presents a half truth only; allowing the subjective value, but denying all objective efficacy to prayer—i.e., admitting a benefit, as attached to a devout habit, but limiting the benefit to the working of natural results entirely within the suppliant.

For example, here is a man who becomes conscious of vicious tendencies, through his bodily appetites, toward intemperance and gluttony; through his carnal lusts, greed of gain or ambition; through his temper and disposition, being naturally impatient or irascible, mean or malicious. Feeling the

[The first several sermons are reported in full; the remainder are given in condensed form. Every care is taken to make these reports correct; yet our readers must not forget that it would be unfair to hold a speaker responsible for what may appear in a condensation, made by another, of his discourse.]

buoy within reach, but throw it from him and sink to the depths, so the author of "The Raven," in his hopelessness, had a single glimpse of the "Balm of Gilead," but in his "hallucination" he rejected it, and sank in despair.

CHRIST'S PITY FOR THE SINNER.

BY B. F. PALMER, D.D., IN FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW ORLEANS.

Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!—Matt. xxiii: 37.

THERE is a bursting tenderness in these words which puts formal exposition at defiance. Our Lord, in the consciousness of His relation to the Church as its Head, puts around the two Testaments both His arms. He remembers how this people had been chosen two thousand years before to be in covenant with God. He recalls the miracles of power and love which had been wrought in their behalf during a long and varied history. He brings to mind the divine patience with them in their frequent relapses into idolatry. And now, in the crisis of their fate, when the nation is plunging over the precipice to their fall, He weeps over their obduracy and ruin.

You remember that beautiful passage in Deuteronomy, where the divine protection in Israel is likened to that of an eagle over its brood: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." In like manner, we have here the suffering mercy of God likened to the solicitude of the domestic hen, according to the habit of all the parables of our Lord, in which the illustrations are drawn from objects which are the most familiar: "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets,

and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

The truth which lies in the text is CHRIST'S TENDER SYMPATHY AND GRIEF EVEN OVER THE SINFUL UNBELIEF WHICH REJECTS HIM.

Let us consider the reasons of this special sympathy.

I. Christ, as our Redeemer, knows the dreadfulness of sin, and therefore pities those to whom it clings.

II. He pities the sinner, knowing all that is involved in his final doom.

III. Christ is the exponent of God's infinite love to man.

IV. There is a ground for this compassion of Christ, growing out of His knowledge of the completeness of His salvation and the security of those who accept it.

V. The Savior's compassion is founded upon His knowledge of what this Gospel cost Him to achieve.

In view of this infinite pity of Christ for sinners whom He died to save, how pathetic is the charge that follows, "AND YE WOULD NOT!" The result of the failure is charged upon the sinner as his own fault.

But is not Christ as omnipotent in grace as He is in nature? If His power be boundless and His pity such as you describe, why does He not interfere and save us, anyhow?

The solution is in a nutshell: God deals with man as a being of intelligence and responsibility, as a free moral agent. If man, in the abuse of his freedom, fall under the curse, then it must be a law of grace that he shall be made willing in the day of God's power to accept the salvation provided. But this is wholly different from being saved in the exercise of a will that rejects the proffered salvation. This demands contradictories. Two facts establish this: 1. The blameworthiness that attaches to every sin as soon as it is recognized by the conscience. 2. The sense of appropriation in faith, which brings peace to the soul.

If these things be so, two conclusions follow:

1. That the loss of the soul is self-caused. The sinner alone is to blame. Oh, my hearers, I do not wonder that there will be silence at that bar, when the challenge goes forth why sentence should not be immediately passed. Not one of all those millions who are now so noisy in their accusations against God, will then have the courage to lift the tongue in any form of reply. To that challenge there will be only the silence of despair; broken at length by the fearful wail from millions of lips as they are cast out from the presence of God and the glory of His power.

2. How much is the sin of refusing this Gospel increased when it is committed against the pity and sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ!

LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED.

By REV. C. H. SPURGEON, IN METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, LONDON.

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the place ye know.—John xiv: 1-4.

We may well feel glad that God's people of old were men of like passions with ourselves. I have known many a poor sinner pluck up hope as he observed the struggles of those who were saved by grace; and I have known many of the heirs of heaven find consolation as they observed how imperfect beings like themselves have prevailed with God in prayer, and been delivered in their time of distress. It is not the will of God that His people should "be troubled" in heart; hence the blessed words of the text. Come close up to these words, dear friends; and may the Spirit of God be with us!

These words are, in themselves, much better than any sermon. What can our

discourse be but a dilution of the essential spirit of consolation contained in the words of the Lord Jesus. Let us first *taste of the bitter waters of heart trouble*, and, secondly, let us *drink deep of the sweet waters of divine consolation*.

I. Let us taste of the bitter waters. "Because I have said these things unto you sorrow hath filled your hearts."

1. Jesus was to die.

2. He was to go away from them. It had finally dawned on their minds that they were to be left like sheep without a shepherd, and they were inconsolable.

3. He was to be betrayed by one of their own number. This pierced the hearts of the faithful: "The Son of Man is betrayed"—betrayed for a paltry sum. Of this bitter water the faithful at this hour are also made to drink. Reputed ministers of the Gospel are busy in trying to undermine our holy faith. Under the banner of "advanced thought" they make war upon those eternal truths for which confessors contended and martyrs bled, and the saints in past ages have been sustained in their dying hours.

4. And then, Peter's denial of his Lord was to cause another pang to the faithful.

II. Under our second head, let us drink of the sweet waters, to refresh us. First, in this wonderful text, our Master indicates the true means of comfort under every sort of disquietude. See how He puts it: "Let not your heart be troubled; *believe*." Believe not only my doctrine, believe in *Me*—a personal, living, ever-present, omnipotent Savior.

2. He proceeds to say that, though He was going from them, He was only going to His Father's house.

3. He gave them also to understand, by implication, that a great many would follow Him to the Father's house.

4. "I go to prepare a place for you." I think He did not only refer to the "many mansions" for our spirits, but to the ultimate *place* of our risen bodies. Mark that now: *a place*. We are apt to entertain cloudy ideas of the ultimate inheritance of the saints. "Heaven