



ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER | *A Sermon by Robert Lewis Dabney*

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And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry long unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. . . . Luke 18:7-8

Of the most of us it may probably be said that we are more deficient in a proper value for spiritual blessings, than in confidence in God's generosity and faithfulness. There is danger that we shall supinely recline on an indolent assurance of God's willingness to bless, while we seek his blessings with no true earnestness and desire. And perhaps, the language of rebuke would be more appropriate to the present state of the church, for its sinful indifference to spiritual good, than the language of encouragement. But kindness often touches the heart more than severity. It may be, that a consideration of the loving assurances which our Father has given us, of his willingness to answer prayer, may affect us with a tender and ingenuous compunction for our lack of faith and desire. Shame! That these have so straitened our spiritual gifts, while God has been so ready to communicate! Let us dwell for a time upon his assurances until we are filled with a generous contrition for the scantiness and languor of our prayers, and until we feel "boldness to come to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need."

The text contains the moral of the preceding parable; and its language is obviously formed upon that of the story. "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that man ought always to pray; and not to faint: Saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him saying: Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself: Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming, she weary me."

"And the Lord said: Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily."

It is clearly implied that the widow, by the phrase 'Avenge me of my adversary', intended not malicious revenge, but a claim for her just rights. We shall best apprehend our Savior's meaning, by looking only at this simple idea, that the widow had a suit to urge. Hence, when it is said, in drawing out the instruction of the parable in the text: "Shall not God avenge his own elect?" we are to find no more meaning in the words, than simply this: Shall he not grant their suit? To illustrate the strength of this gracious assurance, our Savior presents this picture. The petitioner is a widow, a name in Oriental society synonymous with that of a person friendless and unprotected. She could bring no social influence or patronage, to allure, or to overawe the judge. On the other hand, his character was at once so ruthless, and so godless, that nothing was to be

hoped from an appeal to his benevolence; his regard for reputation, or his religious fears. The poor, helpless applicant had nothing on which to rely, but pertinacity. And by the mere force of pertinacity, she was successful! How much more then, may not God's own, chosen people be assured of success, when they persevere day and night in prayer; seeing they come, not friendless, but with the powerful advocacy of Jesus Christ; and not to a ruthless judge, but to a faithful and pitying Father?

Such is the argument involved by our Redeemer, in this beautiful parable. Of course, we are not to wrest it to the preposterous and impious idea, that God, like this judge, will yield unwillingly to our prayers, from a selfish fear of being "wearied." We are to limit ourselves to the one idea: See here, the force of mere perseverance! And is it not a strange and touching thing, my Brethren, that it is God, the Giver, who here uses the importunity, which among men, is usually formed on the side of the beggar? It is evidence of inexpressible graciousness in God; of lamentable blindness and hardness in us! Let us pursue farther, the proofs of God's willingness to answer prayer.

But that our faith may be firm, it should be intelligent. Let us therefore understand how far God's warrant for prayer extends. When Christ says (Matt. 21:22) "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive;" or when similar promises are given elsewhere, we understand, of course, that there is a limitation – God has not bound himself to bestow literally every thing which a pious heart may ask, in the exercise of christian affections. For there are many things; many innocent things, even, which the christian might very piously desire; which would be disastrous to his welfare. If God had bound himself to give every such request, with literal exactness, he would have made his omnipotence the slave of our ignorance. The believer would be deprived of the advantages of having the Divine omniscience for his guide; and would have no better direction than his own pious, but often misjudging desires. If God had given such a promise, he would have given us the greatest curse. Accordingly; we had instances in Holy Writ, where the pious requests of pious men were refused by the Hearer of prayer – II. Saml., 12; We find that David earnestly besought God to spare the life of his child by Bathsheba; and yet the child died. This too, was after his penitence induced by the rebuke of Nathan, and recorded in the 51st Psalm; and we may therefore conclude, that the prayer was offered with the right spirit. In II Cor. 12. Paul tells us that, when a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was sent to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, "he besought the Lord for this thing thrice, that it might depart from him." But God's answer was: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness" – We cannot suspect that Paul's request, thrice repeated, was rejected because it was offered in an improper spirit.

There is therefore, a limitation implied in these promises. To see the extent of this limitation, we must draw a necessary distinction. There is a large class of objects, in themselves innocent and proper, concerning which we have no certainty whether they will be best for us or not. For all these, we must pray conditionally. Thus: we may submissively ask God to rescue us from temporal afflictions, or to exempt us from them in the future. But we do not know whether he may not see it best for us to afflict us farther; because we have no light by which to read the designs of his providence in this matter. And yet it may be lawful and right for us to offer this prayer. It is even made our *duty* to pray: "Give us day by day our daily bread." And yet we have no warrant that God may not see it to be best for us to suffer actual want. How many a poor saint, who has meekly offered this petition, has suffered for the lack of daily food? To the same class belong all such objects as health, competence, long life, good name, ease. We may ask for

these objects; but it must be with entire submission; and all must be suspended on the proviso; "If it be agreeable to thy will." And yet, even with regard to these, we have the explicit warrant to ask this, which is the most important concern respecting them; that, whether given or withheld, God will make them all subserve our highest good – Is not this enough for the meek soul?

But there is a higher and nobler class of objects concerning which we should pray with far different boldness and assurance. These may be described in general as being the gifts that pertain to redemption; or spiritual good things. Concerning all these we know, when we pray for them, that they are agreeable to God's will: for he has told us so – "This is the will of God; even our sanctification." When praying for any spiritual good, we may rely with undoubting confidence on God's literal engagement to give the answer. "This is the confidence that we have in him, (says the Apostle John,) that if we ask any thing *according to his will*, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we *have* the petition that we desired of him." The *when*, the *how* the *wherewith* of the answer, may be far other than we expected. The desired gift may be so long delayed that we begin to fear God has forgotten us; for the times and seasons are in his own hands. The blessing may come in a shape so different from our foolish expectations, that we scarcely recognize it. It may be brought to us by means which, to us, had seemed most unlikely. But we believe that for all objects of spiritual good, the words of the promises are literally and universally exact; that *every* scriptural prayer for such objects is answered.

But now, let us to the proofs. And first, is not evidence to be found that we may expect an answer to prayers for any of the gifts accompanying redemption, in God's very nature? He is intrinsically a holy being. He loves and delights in holiness with ineffable intensity. He delights in holy beings with an infinite delight. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "Such as are upright in their way are his delight." Now, the tendency of all these spiritual gifts is to make the soul holy; in other words, to make it that in which God delights. We may say, therefore, that the native inclinations of the Divine mind are on the side of such petitions. He who prays for any grace, prays that he may become just what God loves. In going to a fellow man, how strong an assurance of an affirmative answer would we feel, when we knew that we were inviting him to do something to which he was of himself inclined; and that we should have a warm prompter in his own breast, seconding our request? If there is not some external obstacle which forbids it, we feel certain that he will gratify himself and us at once, by assenting to our petition. In the case of God, all obstacles to the bestowal of grace, have been removed by the work of Christ. He may now lavish all the stores of redemption on any penitent and believing soul, without injury to his justice, majesty, or authority. And when our prayers fall in exactly with God's own inclinations, and no obstacle forbids him to indulge that inclination, may we not confidently expect a favorable answer?

Again we may say that God's own interests are too strongly on the side of an answer to all such prayers, to permit us to fear that they will be rejected. God is himself glorified in the redemption, and in all the graces and services of his children. And although he is independent and perfectly glorious and blessed in himself, and sufficient for himself, yet it is certain that the promotion of his own declarative glory in the acts and events of his creation, is a grand motive of his determinations. His purposes are formed by him, "to be to the praise of the glory of his grace." We believe that there is no event which occurs on this globe, which so glorifies God, as the redemption and perfection of a soul. There is no work by which so many of the divine attributes are so illustriously displayed. To form, out of a fallen, debased and rebel sinner, a glorified saint, a mate for angels, and a possessor of eternal glory, is a work more splendid than would be the

conversion of a clod into a star. Every acquisition of christians in holiness, and every good work, is also a tribute to God's glory. "So is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." "The fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, are unto the glory and praise of God." Will God begrudge the gifts of redemption, when they all redound to his own advantage? When the Christian prays for larger measures of the Spirit, for more wisdom, for more spiritual comfort, for victory over indwelling sin, for warmer zeal, or for stronger faith, he only prays for what will enable him to promote God's glory better. When the servant comes to the wise master, and asks for better implements, only in order that he may be able to earn more for that master, will he be refused? So, when the Christian prays for any spiritual good, what is it, but asking that he may be equipped for serving his God better? God's own self-interest and wisdom are on the side of the answer of such prayers.

There is a third fact which is yet more conclusive. All believing prayer for spiritual good is itself the fruit of the Holy Spirit. He himself has evoked it: therefore it is offered up. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the lips are from the Lord." "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." In man's natural heart, there is no good desire. Now, does the Spirit of truth prompt these desires for spiritual good, in order to disappoint them? Does he thus make a mock and sport of believing souls? It is impious to suppose it. When we feel a spiritual desire, why did he inspire it? It was a part of the eternal plan of his grace to us; that, through asking we might receive. He does not put petitions into our mouths and send us with them to his own footstool, in order that he may reject them. The fact that we feel a true and believing desire for any spiritual good is, therefore, the evidence and earnest of the Divine intention to bestow that good; in his own good time and way. Just so far as we are assured that our desires are sincere and pious, we may argue, with pleasing awe, and humble joy, that God himself has inspired them; inspired, because he intends to gratify them. We may spread the words of our requests before him, and urge that they are the Holy Spirit's own words. Thus the Spirit makes intercession for us. We may plead with God that he disappoint us not: because he himself hath taught us to hope.

There is, what may perhaps be called, another view of the same truth, derived from the doctrine of our *union with Christ*. He is the head of which Christians are the limbs, receiving spiritual sensation, vitality and volition from him. He is the vine stock, and they are the branches, blooming, and bearing fruit by his sap, which circulates in a common flow through him and them. Wherever a believer possesses gracious exercises or qualities, it is in virtue of this vital union to Christ. Our gracious affections are therefore to be all regarded as the evidences of the existence, in full glory and perfection, of similar graces and affections in Christ our Head. As the drop of sap trickling from the twig is evidence of the strong flow of the same sap throughout the generous vinestock, so the existence of a pious affection in the breast of a believer is evidence that the same affection is glowing, in full purity and perfection, in the breast of the Savior. As we pass along, with our eyes fixed upon the ground, we suddenly behold a flush of splendor which dazzles the sight, thrown from the surface of a pool, to whose margin we have come. Whence that blaze of light? Not from the pool, which is in its own nature rayless, and perhaps sordid! We know at once, that it is reflected light, descending first from the king of day, and that therefore he is now shining in his strength from the sky. So, every gracious desire in our poor hearts, is reflected from the heart of the Sun of Righteousness. In like manner, when we have a good desire to offer to God, we have the unspeakable encouragement of believing that the same desire burns, in far

superior strength, in the breast of him who is “our Advocate with the Father,” and “Head over all things to the church.” If Christ, into whose hand “all power in Heaven and in earth is given,” desires the same things which we desire; if this is so true, that the *reason why* we felt the desire, was, that he felt it first and communicated it to us, how can we be disappointed? Such gracious desires for spiritual good are as certain of an answer in Christ’s own time and way, as it is certain that Christ is King in Zion.

In our desires and zeal for Christ’s cause and church, especially, does not our forgetfulness of this sometimes amount to an impertinence towards Him? When we go, with ardent zeal for the revival of religion, to plead before Him, is not this the implied language of our temper and feeling: “that God and Christ are too cold and inattentive to the interest of Zion; and that we must arouse and warm them?” My brother; if that zeal is pure, which sends you to your knees, interceding for Zion, whence comes it, except from the infinitely purer and stronger zeal for the Church, which ever glows in the breast of him who gave his blood for it? Let us remember this for our rebuke: for what an impertinence is it, that when *our* remissness, and follies, and faults, have brought the cause of Christ into an evil case, (the only causes of the church’s reverses,) we should go querulously to him who loves the church with a perpetual and intense love, as though he were not zealous enough for his own cause? Let us remember it also for our encouragement. It is our privilege to pray always for Zion in the strain of Asaph, in the 74th Psalm. “Arise, Oh God, plead *thine own* cause.” If we feel that it is dear to us, herein we have the evidence that it is infinitely dearer to Christ. If the opposition of the wicked grieves our hearts, we know thereby that it grieves Christ far more. His care and concern for his cause are infinitely more tender than ours; for ours are only a faint reflection of his. And while we are living a life of purity, consistency, and faithful effort for Zion, we should offer all our intercessions for her, and commit all her concerns to her Head, with a blessed composure and peacefulness, which would fill our souls with heavenly assurance and courage, amidst all delays, discouragements and oppositions.

To be further strengthened in encouragement, let the Believer ask himself, for what purpose he has been redeemed, and what was the expense at which the work of his redemption has been set on foot. Both these questions are answered in Titus ii: 14. “Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.” Now, we have an assurance of God’s sincerity in intending our complete redemption, in the immense expense he has already incurred to begin the work: and it is the strongest of all inferences, that a wise Being, having gone to this expense, will not begrudge any thing else which is necessary to perfect the undertaking. When the Christian prays for any gift accompanying redemption; he prays for just the object for which God has already made this great expenditure. And when he prays for the largest measures of grace, he does not pray for more than is embraced in God’s object, for that object is his *perfect* sanctification.

But more; since Christ has been given for us, all other gifts are, to God, inexpressibly easy. Not only are they vastly less precious and costly than this first, great gift: but the giving of this has smoothed the way for the prompt and easy bestowal of all the rest. To God’s almighty power, it is, and always has been an effort perfectly easy to put forth any exertion of strength or wisdom, which may be needed for our complete redemption. How slight are the works of renewing our hearts, of conquering our indwelling sins, of foiling our enemies, human and spiritual, of enlightening our minds, and of moving the wheels of providence for our highest welfare, to that God whose understanding is infinite, whose word made the worlds, “who spake and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast?” The only obstacles which ever existed to our receiving all

spiritual blessings, were those arising from our guilt and God's truth, holiness, and justice. By the gift of Christ, these have been all so thoroughly removed, that God is actually more glorified in giving than in withholding. All the rest then, which pertains to our redemption, however precious and necessary to us, is to God, in comparison with his first gift, unspeakably easy and light. Is it conceivable that God, after having proved the earnestness and reality of his purpose to save us, by so great a gift, will begrudge the less? Would a wise man who had expended great treasures, to purchase a pearl of great price, then begrudge the additional expense of a trifling sum to secure the gem from being lost? Could there be any doubt, after Abraham – had bound his only son, the son of promise, as a sacrifice to God, whether this pastoral Prince would spare a lamb out of his countless flocks, as an offering to him? So argues, the Holy Spirit for our encouragement: "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?" Rom. viii:32. To taste the richness of these words, we must try to conceive something of the divine and eternal love for the coequal Son. We must remember how freely he was bestowed. We must consider *to what* he was surrendered for our redemption; to how cruel and bitter, and humiliating a destiny. Can a love so unspeakable as that which gave Christ to die for us, stint us in any of those slighter gifts which we now need? (slighter for God to give, though still invaluable to us.) If he so loved, must he not now delight to lavish these gifts of his grace upon his people?

But the Apostle Paul raises this argument to a delightful climax, when he says, Rom. v.8,10. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us: - For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This love, and this gift, so unspeakably great, were bestowed upon us while as yet we were in a state of heinous rebellion, and loathsome guilt. It is impossible for us to express or conceive the abhorrence and indignation, with which God regards the character of an impenitent sinner. He averts his eyes from him, as a loathsome object. "He is angry with the wicked every day." If we have been truly convinced of sin, we can recall the impressions of our own guilt and hatefulness which we then had; and we may remember that these were but a little glimpse of the character which we then bore in God's eyes. It was in that hateful condition, that he thus loved us, and gave this unspeakable gift for us. But now, we hope we are reconciled. We are, "accepted in the Beloved." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." All our sins are covered with the precious atonement, and the robe of Christ's obedience, so lovely in the Father's eyes, is thrown all around us. And although there is not and will not be, any thing, in our personal characters or conduct, meritorious in such a sense as to purchase the justification of a holy, perfect, and absolute law; yet there is a change here, which must render believers very different objects to God's eye. In place of obduracy there is repentance. In place of insolent rebellion, there is imperfect, but affectionate obedience. None of this personal change can be presented by us, to satisfy the law; for it is all imperfect, while the law is perfect; and it is all the inwrought gift of God to us. How can we offer to Him his own gift, as a price to purchase anything from Him of our own right? But the fact that all this conversion is God's work, surely does not render it less interesting in his eyes. Doubtless He is pleased with His own holy and excellent handiwork in us, although He still disapproves that evil which our indwelling sin mingles with it. Here then, is St. Paul's argument: if in our old estate of guilt and enmity, God loved so much, and did so much for us, will He not now, when we are reconciled, when we are clothed with Christ's glorious righteousness, when our souls begin to show some of

the results of His gracious handiwork, give us all that our souls need? How can words strengthen the blessed assurance?

The answer of prayer is further ensured to believers, by the Advocate who presents it. His merits are complete: He is the “beloved Son in whom God is well pleased.” His mediation has never been unsuccessful; he could say to his Father when asking of him that the bonds of death should be broken from the limbs of his friend, Lazarus, “I knew that thou hearest me always.” “He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him.” God the Father stands pledged to grant all his mediatorial petitions; having engaged: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.” Yea, he exercises the authority of a regal advocate; for “God hath set him at his own right hand in heavenly places,.... and hath put all things under his feet, and made him to be head over all things to the church.” This Christ is also, ever ready to undertake for believers. He declared: “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” Let us recall his tenderness, compassion, and liberality when upon earth, and remember that he is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever.” It is to be noted, that there is not a single instance, in all the biographies of Christ by the Evangelists, where any applicant was turned away with neglect or refusal. Even though it was but a corporeal evil which brought the petitioner to him, and the evidence was lacking of any true, gracious desire for the better gifts of redemption, even though it was the Canaanitish woman, daughter of an unclean and doomed race, none ever found an ear inattentive to their woe. The God-man wears the same tender heart upon the throne of the universe. Come, then, brethren, with all your wants and sorrows, to the mercy-seat, and you will not be disappointed.

To conclude the proof, let us recite a few of the promises so thickly strewn over the Bible. ¹“The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” ²“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” ³“I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.” ⁴“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” ⁵“Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Now, dear brethren, if we have little grace, or joy, or strength, or usefulness, whose is the fault? Our God proclaims to us; “Ye are not straitened in me.” He repudiates the blame of our leanness. It is we, who have straitened ourselves, with a suicidal folly and indolence. Let us not pervert the truth of the sovereignty of grace; and tacitly assign our shortcoming to God’s disposing purpose; for He has assured us that he purposes a full and liberal answer to our prayers. We deceive ourselves here: we argue that the higher measures of holiness and zeal are not within our power. When we compare our barren and sluggish lives with that of a Paul we say, “it is God who maketh us to differ.” True, such grace, the least true grace, is not within our natural power: but it is within the promises; those same promises which were given to the great Apostle. We are, indeed, not responsible that a disposing Providence has refused to us the genius, and the opportunity, of a Paul. But we are blameworthy if we fail to pray so that equal measures of love,

1Ps. 84:11.

2Isaiah 40:31.

3Isaiah 45:19.

4Psalm 81:10.

5John 16:24.

fidelity, faith, and zeal are granted to our more lowly capacities. It is our duty to ask great endowments of grace, and to labor for them, and to expect them.

But I am reminded that the christian heart is often vehemently concerned for other gifts than those pertaining to redemption, to which alone, as I have today taught you, the express and liberal warrant of answer extends. Many of these things, though not essential to your glorification as ransomed souls, are very dear, you say, to your affections; the life, the comfort of beloved ones at home, your health, your life, your good name. And especially is there one desire, belonging to this class, which lies near the heart of every christian patriot among us today – the deliverance of the bleeding country for which we contend. What are we entitled to claim, and to expect of God, concerning these dear objects? Perhaps, my brethren, it becomes us to conclude that one reason these precious interests are permitted to be jeopardized today, is, that our God sees our innocent attachments to them are becoming inordinate, and so are no longer innocent. Perhaps we have suffered them to intrude into that supreme place in our hearts which should be reserved for God and for heaven alone; and therefore he is constrained to cast the anxious shadow of fear across them, to remind us that they should not be our chief good.

With regard to this class of objects, the warrant of God's word may be expressed in these propositions: That if our petitions for them are offered in a believing, submissive spirit, they are graciously entertained by our Father, even though they cannot be expressly granted; That they will be granted, unless a loving omniscience sees that to refuse them is a truer kindness, in view of the whole interests of our immortality, and of his glory; And that in any event, all these things shall be made to work together for your truest good. Ought not this to suffice for a christian heart? Is it not sufficient for the servant, that he be as his master? When our Redeemer in Gethsemane cried, "Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," his holiness caused him to add; "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." And the cup did not pass! But a gift was bestowed, in answer to this earnest cry, (for, saith the Apostle, "he was heard in that he feared.") fuller of glory and blessing than immediate deliverance could have been; strength to endure, and thus, to achieve man's redemption and his own infinite exaltation. Look, then, unto Him, who is the "author and finisher of our faith:" there is your model at once, of importunity, and of submission.

It may be added, that the tender compassion of our Advocate and king prompt him to give every innocent gift which affects the happiness of his people, unless their higher good, or his higher glory, forbids. And perhaps, if we attempt to prognosticate whether a lawful secular object of our desire, such as the independence of our beloved country, will be found accordant with the higher spiritual interests; no safer rule can be given, to guide our surmises in so uncertain a question, than this: That we may probably encourage ourselves to expect its bestowal, if we find that the motives of our request are not only innocent, but godly. Why do we beseech God to crown our land with independence, liberty, and just civil government? Is it that pride and resentment, ambition and animosity may be gratified in such a triumph? If our hearts be so, then we certainly have little to encourage us in the hope that the King of Zion smiles on our prayer: and if the boon be given, we may fear that it will rather be in righteous anger, than in love. But if the church in these Confederate States can say, in the presence of the Searcher of Hearts, that its desire is prompted by zeal for righteousness, and the hope and purpose that all the fruits of our new prosperity shall be sanctified to the honor of Christ, then She may probably conclude that the wish was inspired by the Holy Ghost, the only author of holy aspirations in man: and is therefore to be fulfilled.

In conclusion, let me remind you of our Savior's description of the successful petitioner. He is one who "cries day and night unto him:" one who "prays always, and faints not." We must "ask in faith, nothing wavering." "For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

But I hear some anxious sinner, some feeble, doubting christian say: 'Ah me: this great and precious promise is for the elect: it is to them the Savior limits it. How shall I know whether I am of that mysterious number? This question, I answer, my brother, in the words of the Holy Spirit. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." And this you are instructed by the Apostle Peter to do, 'by believing on Christ; and then, "adding to your faith virtue." God's elect are those who truly go to him as the Publican went, saying "God be merciful to me a sinner." Are you willing to go thus? Then you, oh sinner, may claim and appropriate all the blessings of the throne of grace, as fully, as triumphantly, as a Paul. Are you unwilling to go thus? Then that is your own fault alone.