The Secret Of Power In Prayer

By Charles H. Spurgeon

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

The gifts of divine grace are not enjoyed all at once by believers. Coming unto Christ, we are saved by a true union with Him. But it is by abiding in that union that we further receive the purity, the joy, the power, the blessedness which are stored up in Him for His people. See how our Lord states this when He speaks to the believing Jews – *"…If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples, indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31-32). We do not know all the truth of God at once – we learn it by abiding in Jesus.

There are these degrees of attainment among believers and the Savior here incites us to reach a high position by mentioning a certain privilege which is not for all who say that they are in Christ but for those only who are abiders in Him. Every believer should be an abider but many have hardly earned the name as yet. Jesus says, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* You have to live with Christ to know Him and the longer you live with Him the more will you admire and adore Him – yes, and the more you will receive from Him, even grace for grace.

Truly He is a blessed Christ to one who is but a month old in divine grace. But these babes can hardly tell what a precious Jesus He is to those whose acquaintance with Him covers well-near half a century! Jesus, in the esteem of abiding believers, grows sweeter and dearer, fairer and more lovely each day. Not that He improves in Himself, for He is perfect. But as we increase in our knowledge of Him, we appreciate more thoroughly His matchless excellences. How glowingly do His old acquaintances exclaim, "Yes, He is altogether lovely!" Oh, that we may continue to grow up in Him in all things who is our Head, that we thus may prize Him more and more!

The Blessing of Abiding Union

Let us read the verse again. Jesus says, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*

Observe that our Lord had been warning us that, severed from Him we can do nothing, and therefore we might naturally have expected that He would now show us how we can do all spiritual acts. But the text does not run as we should have expected it to run. The Lord Jesus does not say, "Without Me you can do nothing, but if you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall do all spiritual and gracious things." He does not now speak of what they should, themselves, be enabled to do but of what should be done unto them – *"it shall be done unto you."*

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He says not, "Strength shall be given you sufficient for all those holy doings of which you are incapable apart from Me." That would have been true enough, and it is the truth of God which we looked for here. But our most wise Lord improves upon all parallelisms of speech and improves upon all expectancies of heart and says something better, still. He does not say, "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall do spiritual things." But, *"ye shall ask."* By prayer you shall be enabled to do. But before all attempts to do, *"Ye shall ask."* The choice privilege here given is a mighty prevailing *prayerfulness*. Power in prayer is very much the gauge of our spiritual condition. And when that is secured to us in a high degree, we are favored as to all other matters.

The Exercise of Prayer

One of the first results, then, of our abiding union with Christ will be the certain *exercise* of prayer – *"Ye shall ask."* If others neither seek, nor knock, nor ask, you, at any rate, shall do so. Those who keep away from Jesus do not pray. Those in whom communion with Christ is suspended feel as if they could not pray. But Jesus says, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask."* Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus.

The Necessity of Prayer

You shall also feel most powerfully the *necessity* of prayer. Your great need of prayer will be vividly seen. Do I hear you say – "What? When we abide in Christ and His words abide in us, have we not already attained?" Far are we, then, from being satisfied with ourselves. It is then that we feel more than ever that we must ask for more divine grace. He that knows Christ best knows his own necessities best. He that is most conscious of life in Christ is also most convinced of his own death apart from Christ. He who most clearly discerns the perfect character of Jesus will be most urgent in prayer for divine grace to grow like Him. The more I seem to be in my Lord, the more I desire to obtain from Him since I know that all that is in Him is put there on purpose that I may receive it.

"Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). It is just in proportion as we are linked to Christ's fullness that we feel the necessity of drawing from it by constant prayer. Nobody needs to prove to an abider in Christ the doctrine of prayer, for we enjoy the thing itself. Prayer is now as much a necessity of our spiritual life as breath is of our natural life – we cannot live without asking favors of the Lord! *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask"* – and you shall not wish to cease from asking. He has said, *"Seek ye My face,"* and your heart will answer, *"Thy face, Lord, will I seek"* (Psa. 27:8).

Liberty in Prayer

Note next, that the fruit of our abiding is not only the exercise of prayer and a sense of the necessity of prayer, but it includes *liberty* in prayer – *"Ye shall ask what you will."* Have you not been on your knees at times without power to pray? Have you not felt that you could not plead as you desired? You wanted to pray but the waters were frozen up and would not flow. You said mournfully, "I am shut up and cannot come forth." The will was present but not the freedom to present that will in prayer. Do you, then, desire liberty in prayer so that you may speak with God as a man speaks with his friend? Here is the way to it – *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide*

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in you, ye shall ask what you will."

I do not mean that you will gain liberty as to mere fluency of utterance – for that is a very inferior gift. Fluency is a questionable endowment, especially when it is not attended with weight of thought and depth of feeling. Some brethren pray by the yard. But true prayer is measured by weight and not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. He that dwells with God in Christ Jesus – he is the man whose steps are enlarged in intercession. He comes boldly because he abides at the Throne. He sees the golden scepter stretched out and hears the King saying, *"Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*

It is the man who abides in conscious union with his Lord who has freedom of access in prayer. Well may he come to Christ readily, for he is in Christ, and abides in Him. Attempt not to seize this holy liberty by excitement, or presumption – there is but one way of really gaining it and here it is – *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what you will."* By this means alone shall you be enabled to open your mouth wide, that God may fill it. Thus shall you become Israels (Gen. 32:28), and as princes have power with God.

The Privilege of Successful Prayer

This is not all – the favored man has the privilege of *successful* prayer. *"Ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." You* may not do it, but it shall be done unto you. You long to bear fruit – ask and it shall be done unto you. Look at the vine branch. It simply remains in the vine and by remaining in the vine the fruit comes from it. It is done unto it. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the purpose of your being, its one object and design, is to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father – to gain this end you must abide in Christ, as the branch abides in the vine. This is the method by which your prayer for fruitfulness will become successful. *"It shall be done unto you."*

Concerning this matter, *"ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* You shall have wonderful prevalence with God in prayer, insomuch that before you call He will answer and while you are yet speaking He will hear. *"The desire of the righteous shall be granted"* (Prov. 10:24). To the same effect is the other text – *"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (Psa. 37:4). There is a great breadth in this text, *"Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* The Lord gives the abider carte blanche. He puts into his hand a signed check and permits him to fill it up as he wills.

Does the text mean what it says? I never knew my Lord to say anything He did not mean. I am sure that He may sometimes mean more than we understand Him to say, but He never means less. Mind you, He does not say to all men, "I will give you whatever you ask." Oh no, that would be an unkind kindness – but He speaks to His disciples and says, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* It is to a certain class of men who have already received great grace at His hands – it is to them He commits this marvelous power of prayer.

O my dear friends, if I may covet earnestly one thing above every other, it is this – that I may be able to ask what I will of the Lord and have it! The man who prevails in prayer is the man to

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preach successfully, for he may well prevail with man for God when he has already prevailed with God for men! This is the man to face the difficulties of business life. For what can baffle him when he can take all to God in prayer? One such man as this, or one such woman as this in a church is worth ten thousand of us common people. In these we find the peerage of the skies. In these are the men in whom is fulfilled God's purpose concerning man, whom He made to have dominion over all the works of His hands.

The stamp of sovereignty is on the brows of these men – they shape the history of nations, they guide the current events through their power on high. We see Jesus with all things put under Him by the divine purpose, and as we rise into that image, we also are clothed with dominion and are made kings and priests unto God. Behold Elijah, with the keys of the rain swinging at his girdle – he shuts or opens the windows of heaven! There are such men still alive. Aspire to be such men and women, I beseech you, that to you the text may be fulfilled, *"ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*

How Is This Privilege of Mighty Prayerfulness to Be Obtained?

The answer is, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you."* Here are the two feet by which we climb to power with God in prayer.

Beloved, the first line tells us that we are to abide in Christ Jesus our Lord. As believers we are to remain tenaciously clinging to Jesus, lovingly knit to Jesus. We are to abide in Him by always trusting Him, and Him only, with the same simple faith which joined us to Him at the first. We must never admit any other thing or person into our heart's confidence as our hope of salvation. We must rest alone in Jesus as we received Him at the first. His Godhead, His manhood, His life, His death, His resurrection, His glory at the right hand of the Father – in a word, Himself – must be our heart's sole reliance. This is absolutely essential. A temporary faith will not save – an abiding faith is necessary.

But abiding in the Lord Jesus does not only mean trusting in Him. It includes our yielding ourselves up to Him to receive His life and to let that life work out its results in us. We live in Him, by Him, for Him, to Him, when we abide in Him. We feel that all our separate life has gone – for *"ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ"* (Col. 3:3). We are nothing if we get away from Jesus – we would then be branches withered and fit only to be cast into the fire. We have no reason for existence except that which we find in Christ – and what a marvelous reason that is! The vine needs the branch as truly as the branch needs the vine. No vine ever bore any fruit except upon its branches. Truly it bears all the branches and so bears all the fruit.

But yet it is by the branch that the vine displays its fruitfulness. Thus are abiding believers necessary to the fulfillment of their Lord's design. Wonderful thing to say – that the saints are necessary to their Savior! The church is His body – the fullness of Him that fills all in all. I want you to recognize this, that you may see your blessed responsibility, your practical obligation to bring forth fruit that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in you. Abide in Him. Never diminish your consecration to His honor and glory. Never dream of being your own master. Be not the servant of men but abide in Christ. Let Him be the object, as well as the source, of your existence.

Yes, abide in Him as to your very life. Do not say, "I have been a Christian man now 20 or 30

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years, I can do without continued dependence upon Christ." No, you could not do without Him if you were as old as Methuselah! Your very being as a Christian depends upon your still clinging, still trusting, still depending on your Master – and this He must give you – for it all comes from Him and Him alone. To sum it all up, if you want that splendid power in prayer of which I spoke just now, you must remain in loving, living, lasting, conscious, practical, abiding union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you get to that by divine grace, then you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

But there is a second qualification mentioned in the text and you must not forget it – *"and My words abide in you."* How important, then, are Christ's words! He said in the fourth verse, *"Abide in Me and I in you,"* and now as a parallel to this it is, *"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you."* What, then? Are Christ's words and Himself identical? Yes, practically so. Some talk about Christ being the Master, but as to doctrine they do not care what His Word declares. So long as their hearts are right towards His Person they claim liberty of thought. Yes, but this is a mere subterfuge.

We cannot separate Christ from the Word. For, in the first place, He *is* the Word. And, in the next place, how dare we call Him Master and Lord and do not the things which He says and reject the truth of God which He teaches? We must obey His precepts or He will not accept us as disciples. Especially that precept of love which is the essence of all His words. We must love God and our brethren – yes, we must cherish love to all men and seek their good. Anger and malice must be far from us. We must walk even as He walked. If Christ's words abide not in you, both as to belief and practice, you are not in Christ. Christ and His Gospel and His commands are one.

If you will not have Christ and His words, neither will He have you nor your words. And you shall ask in vain – you shall by-and-by give up asking – you shall become as a withered branch. Beloved, I am persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Why This Privilege Should Be So Obtained

This extraordinary power of prayer – why is it given to those who abide in Christ? May what I have to say encourage you to make the glorious attempt to win this pearl of great price! Why is it, that by abiding in Christ and having His words abide in us, we get to this liberty and prevalence in prayer?

I answer, first, because of the fullness of Christ. You may very well ask what you will when you abide in Christ, because whatever you may require is already lodged in Him. Good Bishop Hall worked out this thought in a famous passage. I will give you the substance of it – Do you desire the grace of the Spirit? Go to your Lord's anointing. Do you seek holiness? Go to His example. Do you desire pardon of sin? Look to His blood. Do you need mortification of sin? Look to His crucifixion. Do you need to be buried to the world? Go to His tomb. Do you want to feel the fullness of a heavenly life? Behold His resurrection. Would you rise above the world? Mark His ascension. Would you contemplate heavenly things? Remember His sitting at the right hand of God and know that He *"hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places"* (Eph. 2:6).

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Beloved, *"it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell"* (Col. 1:19), and the good pleasure of the Father is our good pleasure, also – we are glad to draw everything from Jesus. We feel sure that, ask what we will, we shall have it, since He has it ready for us.

The next reason for this is the richness of the Word of God. Catch this thought, *"If...My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."* The best praying man is the man who is most believingly familiar with the promises of God. After all, prayer is nothing but taking God's promises to Him and saying to Him, "Do as You have said." Prayer is the promise utilized. A prayer which is not based on a promise has no true foundation. If I go to the bank without a check I need not expect to get money. It is the "order to pay" which is my power inside the bank and my warrant for expecting to receive.

O beloved, be filled with God's Word. Study what Jesus has said, what the Holy Spirit has left on record in this divinely-inspired Book and in proportion as you feed on the Word and are filled with the Word and retain the Word in your faith and obey the Word in your life – in that proportion you will be a master in the art of prayer!

A man will succeed in prayer when his faith is strong. And this is the case with those who abide in Jesus. It is faith that prevails in prayer. The real eloquence of prayer is a believing desire. *"All things are possible to him that believeth"* (Mark 9:23). A man abiding in Christ, with Christ's words abiding in him, is eminently a believer and consequently eminently successful in prayer. He has strong faith, indeed, for his faith has brought him into vital contact with Christ and he is, therefore, at the source of every blessing and may drink to his full at the well itself.

Such a man, once more, will also possess the indwelling of the Spirit of God. If we abide in Christ and His words abide in us, then the Holy Spirit has come and taken up His residence in us. And what better help in prayer can we have? Is it not a wonderful thing that the Holy Spirit, Himself, makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God? He *"maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Rom. 8:26). What man knows the mind of a man save the spirit of a man? The Spirit of God knows the mind of God and He works in us to will what God wills, so that a believing man's prayer is God's purpose reflected in the soul as in a mirror.

The eternal decrees of God project their shadows over the hearts of godly men in the form of prayer. What God intends to do He tells unto His servants by inclining them to ask Him to do what He Himself is resolved to do. God says, "I will do this and that." But then He adds, *"I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them"* (Ezek. 36:37). How clear it is that if we abide in Christ and His words abide in us we may ask what we will! For we shall only ask what the Spirit of God moves us to ask.

We Are Part of Christ

Beloved, do you not know that when we abide in Christ and His words abide in us, the Father looks upon us with the same eye with which He looks upon His dear Son? Christ is the vine and the vine includes the branches. The branches are a part of the vine. God, therefore, looks upon us as part of Christ – members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Such is the Father's love to Jesus that He denies Him nothing. He was obedient to death, even the death of the

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Cross. Therefore does His Father love Him as the God-Man Mediator and He will grant Him all His petitions. And is it so that when you and I are in real union to Christ, the Lord God looks upon us in the same way as He looks on Jesus and says to us, "I will deny you nothing; you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." So do I understand the text.

I call your attention to the verse, *"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you"* (John 15:9). The same love which God gives to His Son, the Son gives to us! And therefore we are dwellers in the love of the Father and of the Son. How can our prayers be rejected? Will not infinite love have respect unto our petitions? O dear brothers and sisters in Christ, if your prayers speed not to the Throne, suspect that there is some sin that hinders them – your Father's love sees a necessity for chastening you this way.

If you are willfully disobedient to any of His words, will not this account for failure in prayer? But abide in Christ and take fast hold upon His words and be altogether His disciple – then shall you be heard of Him. Sitting at Jesus' feet, hearing His words, you may lift up your eyes to His dear face and say, "My Lord, hear me now." And He will answer you graciously – He will say unto you, *"I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee"* (2 Cor. 6:2). *"Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:7). Oh for power at the Mercy Seat!

– Condensed from the sermon "The Secret Of Power In Prayer" by C.H. Spurgeon.

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