

1.—THE FOUNDATION OF PRAYER. The promises are His own Word, and how shall God say nay? Answers can be evoked by two. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father" (Matt. xviii. 19). Answers are as wide as the will of God. "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him" (1 John v. 14). Answers are only limited by faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark ix. 23). God is the sole manufacturer of opportunities; the only rescuer of the lost; the One alone inexhaustibly wealthy; the solitary occupant, in all the universe, of a throne of grace; not a standing reservoir, but a flowing river of blessing, "rich unto all that call" (Rom. x. 12):—*therefore pray*. "Shall He that planted the ear NOT HEAR?"

2.—THE POWER OF PRAYER. It is a Person. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do"; "if ye shall ask Me anything in My name, that will I do" (John xiv. 13, 14). Prayer that reaches God through Christ reaches Him as from Christ. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye there"

PRAYER.

Present Day Leaflets—5. [Sixteenth Thousand]

"THE VANGUARD" REPRINTS.—28.

THE NEW BIRTH

NICODEMUS—sincere, moral, upright, needing no reformation—meets Jesus: Jesus says,—*You need to be remade*. How much more an open sinner! For "verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). "A man"—*therefore it is true of all*. For man is (1) sightless: "he cannot see." He does not now see Christ *in his stead*, a perfect righteousness and a perfect sacrifice: *and he who has never seen the Blood can never see the Glory*. He is (2) lifeless: "except a man be *begotten*." Begetting is the imparting of life; and life is imparted to the dead, not to the living. Who ever saw a man who was *not born*? no more has anyone even seen a Christian who was not *born again*. Man enters no world except by birth: and we must be *born into* heaven if we are ever to enter it. He is (3) fatherless: "ye must be *born again*." A *second* birth implies *another* fatherhood: "*begotten of the Spirit*"—it is the *second* birth which produces sonship of God. Even Nicodemus—sincere, moral, upright, needing no reformation—is a sightless, lifeless, fatherless soul, who can be saved only by being remade.

"Ye must be born *afresh*": "if any man is in

fore" (Matt. xxviii. 18); and therefore come. "Nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matt. xvii. 20):—what a trumpeter-blast from the lips of the Son of God! Daniel's prayer was not finished (Dan. ix. 21) before the Angel touched him from the Throne. O Beloved pray!

3.—THE PREPARATION FOR PRAYER. "Prepare your prayers," said Mr. Spurgeon, "by preparing yourselves." I John iii. 22. We carry into the assembly the atmosphere we have made at home: we betray our lives when we open our mouths. Therefore, come from the Throne of Grace, ere you go to the Throne of Grace. Pray with holy hands; or God refuses His ear. Ps. lxxvi. 18. Pray without wrath; for God is silenced by injury to a brother. Mark xi. 25. Haunt the prayer-meeting. Be much with God and God will be much with you.

4.—THE FORM OF PRAYER. Pray briefly. Eccl. v. 2. One stone flung hard is better than a handful of loose gravel. Pray humbly. Luke xviii. 13. "Pride," says McChyne, "is Satan's wedge for splitting prayer-meetings to pieces." Pray pointedly. Phil. iv. 6. Every prayer should be full of pointed phrase and definite petition. Pray Scripturally. Luke xi. 1. To pray Scripture is a safe way to pray according to the will of God. Take pains to avoid a self-made liturgy. Prayers cease to leave the earth when they get caught in ruts. Pray behaviorally and gratefully. James i. 7. Faith and thankfulness (I Thess. v. 18) are the wings of prayer, which lift it readily to the Throne. Pray together. I Cor. xiv. 16. If the prayer of a righteous man avails much, shall not the prayer of a righteous

host avail more? The work of a church is done at the Throne: all other work is mere detail. "Apart from Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). Pray intensely. Deut. iv. 29. It has been said that Satan can build walls around us, but no roof overhead; but we may add that lethargy builds a ceiling to its own prayers. The whole man ought to become one burning prayer.

5.—THE HEART IN PRAYER. "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God" (Lam. iii. 41). As a doctor will lay his ear against the heart, to judge its beating, so does God; He inclines His ear, not to the lips, but to the heart. Matt. xv. 8. Keep praying throughout the meeting. Forget all others; cultivate a deep consciousness of the presence of God. Importunity is of the essence of prevailing prayer: never stop praying. Luke xviii. 17. At dawn, with David; at noon, with Daniel; at midnight, with Silas; in sorrow, as Hannah; in sickness, as Job; in joy, as Christ; in childhood, like Samuel; in youth, like Timothy; in manhood, like Paul; in hoar hairs, like Simeon; in dying, like Stephen. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Ps. xlii. 1). "At night my heart was so full, I could only pour it out in awful silence" (Whitfield).

6.—THE OBJECTS OF PRAYER. Praise is a short cut to the heart of God. Be catholic in your prayers: praying for all men (I Tim. ii. 1); for all saints (Eph. vi. 18); for the unity of all believers (John xvii. 21); for all things (Rom. viii. 32). Pray for Israel (Rom. x. 1); for the Gentiles (Luke x. 2); for rulers (I Tim. ii. 2); for ministers (Eph. vi. 19); for conversions (I Tim. ii. 1, 4);

Christ, he is a *new creature*: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become *new*" (2 Cor. v. 17). Many a sinner, bitter and broken, cries: "Oh, that I could begin life afresh!" That is exactly what Christ offers: "ye must be born afresh." "Ye must"—*therefore ye may*: ye may—*therefore ye must*. Regeneration is not so much an organic change, creating or extinguishing human powers, as a functional change, whereby our old powers take a new direction, move by a totally new life, and expand to the fulness of their created capacities. Man redeemed fulfils all, and more, than God planned in man created. But Nicodemus interposes. "How can" this be? Jesus now introduces baptism the more fully to unfold His meaning. "Except a man be born out of water"—not a second time of his mother—"he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The new begetting is regeneration: the new birth is baptism. Secret, viewless, mysterious is the begetting of the soul: open, visible, natural is the birth out of water which manifests life already begun. As an infant is *alive* before it is *born*, so within the water is a living soul, and out of the water issues a new birth. It is a *new man* that issues out of the water: not made new by the water, but by the Spirit before the birth. Therefore only the regenerate may be baptised. Regeneration is a renewal (Tit. iii. 5); a translation (Col. i. 13); a quickening (Col. ii. 13); a creation (Eph. iv. 24); a cure (I Pet. ii. 24); an emancipation (Gal. v. 1); a resurrection (Eph. ii. 6).

Our Lord now probes deeper: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh": *i.e.*, a second *fleshy* birth would be *useless*. A thousand re-births from the flesh would be—*flesh*: a new start indeed, but the millionth would be a start as polluted as the first. "It is not the children of the flesh that are children of God" (Rom. ix. 8). Our Lord rarely states total depravity: He always assumes it. Matt. vii. 11; Luke xviii. 19; Mark vii. 23. Total depravity is not that every man is as bad as he can be, but that the flesh—*i.e.*, every faculty of the natural man—has an unchanging bias to evil. The flesh may be braced with laws, and educated with culture, and moulded with religion, and chastised with the hair-shirt of the monk; but it remains that incurable thing which begets sin to endless generations. A re-introduction to the cradle, and the baby-face, and the mother's arms, would be a second birth into a life of deeper guilt. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Rom. viii. 7).

But the crowning marvel of regeneration remains. It is a re-birth: but with *whose* life? "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Animal paternity gives animal life; human paternity gives human life; divine paternity gives divine life: *it is possible to start life afresh with the life of God*. As the flesh is the seed-bed of all vices,

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fore pray more.
in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. vi. 6). There
Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth
24). (3) It will glorify the suppliant. "Pray to thy
shall receive, that your joy may be fulfilled" (John xvi.
with joy because of answers received. "Ask, and ye
enriches the suppliant. Our Lord wants us to overflow
else sinning will make a man leave off praying." (2) It
"praying will either make a man leave off sinning, or
saves by a Lamb, so He preserves by a cry; and
triple reaped. (1) It sanctifies the suppliant. As God
for the world. Gen. xxxii. 26. Prayer is a field which is
7.—THE FRUITS OF PRAYER. We must get answers:
he can give a richer.
is too poor to give this gift, and none is so wealthy that
(Eph. vi. 18). It is always safe to pray for others: none
the Spirit, and watching therunto in all perseverance"
supplication for all the saints, praying at all seasons in
what to pray. Rom. viii. 26. "With all prayer and
Luke xxi. 36. Pray that the Spirit may show you for
Rev. xxii. 20. Pray for your own share in rapture.
revelation. Rev. iii. 18. Pray for the return of Christ.
miraculous gift. I Cor. xii. 31. Pray for world-wide
recovery of sick disciples. Jas. v. 16. Cover the
pardon after known sin. I John i. 9. Pray for the
for personal enemies (Luke vi. 28). Pray at once for

so the new creation is a seed-bed of all the virtues
of Him who begat it: we are indeed put back into the
cradle, but out of that cradle spring the mighty
limbs, and the soaring soul, of a son of God. Chil-
dren are sometimes born crippled, or with limbs
missing: *there are no cripples from the second birth.*
The divine power has entered in a divine birth to
produce *on earth* a divine life: it is a birth *from*
above: and Heaven's gates swing back to the born
again, because their life, their nature, their creation
belong to Heaven. O Nicodemus, have you learnt
the lesson yet? But mark: *how shall the wind blow*
our way? We can no more control that Wind than
we can handle the hurricanes. Listen to the Gospel
which our Lord immediately adds. "As Moses
lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must
the Son of man be lifted up: *that whosoever believeth*
may in Him have eternal life." The price of the new
life is the old: the renunciation of sin is the birth-
travail: *but the moment of faith is the moment of re-*
generation. Accept Christ's work *for* you, and in-
stantly begins the Spirit's work *in* you. "Whoso-
ever BELIEVETH that Jesus is the Christ *is begotten*
of God" (I John v. 1).

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