

Overcoming Christ

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that believers overcome Christ not by opposition but through loving, repentant, and trusting gazes that move His heart and draw His blessings.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 6:5, John 3:16, Romans 8:28, Psalm 34:19, Isaiah 43:2, Hebrews 12:29

Topics: "Christ's Love", "Faith and Repentance", "Prayer and Trust"

Description

In 'Overcoming Christ,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound spiritual truth that believers can 'overcome' Christ not by conflict but through the power of loving, repentant, and trusting gazes that move His heart. Drawing from the Song of Solomon and other Scriptures, Spurgeon illustrates how Christ's love for His church is so deep that the faithful eyes of His people bring Him joy and compel His blessings. This devotional sermon encourages believers to maintain continual repentance, faith, and prayer, assuring them of Christ's tender response and deliverance.

Transcript

"Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." Song of Solomon 6:5.

THIS is the language of the Heavenly Bridegroom to His spouse. In great condescension, He speaks to her and bids her take note that her eyes have overcome Him. This morning, [Sermon #1317, Volume 22—Overcome Evil with Good] our subject was overcoming evil with good. We have a very different subject this evening, for we are to talk about overcoming Him who is Goodness itself, the perfection of everything that is excellent! Saints first learn the art of overcoming evil and then they learn the way to overcome goodness, too. But how different, dear Friends, are the weapons employed in these two battles, for while, this morning, as we spoke of overcoming evil, we saw that there was much for us to do—and I think that we all felt it was more than we could do apart from Divine Grace—yet here there is nothing to be done but just to give a look! The Heavenly Bridegroom confesses Himself to be overcome by the very look of the eyes of His spouse. She has but to gaze steadily upon Him and His heart is vanquished by the glances of her eyes!

Now, it must not be supposed because of the language of the text that there is any opposition between Christ and His people which has to be overcome. He loves His bride far too well to allow any division of feeling to separate them in heart from one another. Nor is it to be imagined that the spouse had to gain some blessing from an unwilling hand and, therefore, pleaded with her eyes as well as with her lips. Oh, no! There is a holy discipline in Christ's house that sometimes withholds the coveted blessing till we have

learned to pray in downright earnest, but the power that wins the victory in prayer has its real basis in the love of Christ, Himself! It is because He loves us so much that He permits our prayers to conquer Him—it is not so much because we love Him as because He loves us that He permits the look of our eyes to overcome His heart. This, then, is the subject for our meditation—the way in which God's people overcome the heart of Jesus Christ and make Him say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me."

I. First, dear Friends, let us notice that LOOKING ON HIS CHURCH HAS ALREADY OVERCOME THE HEART OF OUR HEAVENLY BRIDEGROOM.

It was so in the far-distant past, not when she looked at Him, but when He looked at her, that she overcame Him. Ages upon ages ago, before the earth was, Christ had conceived in His heart the purpose to redeem from among men a people that should be precious in His sight forever and ever. Through the glass of Divine foreknowledge, He looked at His people, He recognized every single one of them, He saw them all ruined in the Fall, all stained with sin, all contaminated in nature by our first parents' disobedience and rebellion. As He looked at them with a steady resolve that He would rescue them, perfect them, lift them up to a level with Himself and make them into a race that would praise God forever in Heaven with hallelujahs and hosannas beyond all the harmonies of angels, His heart so moved towards them that He longed for the time when He would enter upon the great work of their redemption. Long ago, He said, "My delights were with the sons of men." His heart was always projecting itself forward in anticipation of that happy, yet dreadful day, when He would be called upon to redeem His people.

Every time He thought of them, He was overcome with the very recollection of His great love towards them. And when the long-expected day did, at last, come—

"Down from the shining seats above With joyful haste He fled,"

and was found as a Babe in Bethlehem's manger, lying among the oxen feeding in the stable of the village inn. Oh, marvelous mystery! that He, whom the Heaven of heavens could not contain, was not satisfied to be God Over All, blessed forever, but for our sakes He must also become Man! He was so overcome by the love He had for His chosen that He left His Father's Throne of Light to become one flesh with His people and to be made a Man, like ourselves, so that He might be next of kin to us. Ah, gracious Savior, Your Church's eyes did, indeed, overcome You when they brought You from amidst the royalties of Heaven down to the sins and sorrows of earth!

You know, too, when He lived down here among men, how often His inmost heart was stirred as He looked upon the people whom He loved. And especially do you remember the scene on that last night when their redemption price was about to be paid. He took the cup that He was to drink and sipped at it, but His holy soul revolted from it—and with the bloody sweat upon His face He cried, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Then He went back and looked upon His people. Truly, there was not much to see in them—He had taken three specially privileged Apostles to be the representatives of all His chosen—and those three were asleep when He was in His terrible agony! Yet, somehow, the sight of them seemed to strengthen Him for the awful ordeal that He was enduring. Back and forth, three times, He ran to gaze upon them and they so overcame Him that He turned back and said to His Father, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." And He went through with that tremendous work of laying down His life for His people—and drinking the cup of wrath that was their due. They had overcome Him as He had looked at them!

And, Beloved, now that our Lord is risen from the dead, He still feels the power of the sight of His redeemed. The great joy of Christ at this moment is found in gazing at His redeemed ones. Look at Him as Man, if you will, and what a wondrous Man He is! But remember, also, that God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name! And what does the glorified and exalted Christ think as He looks on the myriads in Heaven, all of whom would have been in Hell but for Him? Then He looks down to the saints on earth and sees the myriads who are all trusting in Him, all conquering sin by His might and all spared from going down to the Pit by the merit of His precious blood—and He seems, again, to say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me," as if Christ felt that a glance at His people brought almost too much joy to Him! What a day that will be when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God—when all His people, raised from the dead, or changed in the twinkling of an eye, shall admire Him—and He shall be admired in them!

And what will be the joy of His heart when the "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues"—all redeemed by His blood—shall be gathered to Christ, to be the delight of His heart forever and ever! That will be a joy sufficient, even, for the immensity of His infinite heart as He sees in them the reward of His awful agonies, the rich return for the shedding of His precious blood! His benevolence—that great mainspring of all that He has done—will be gratified and satisfied as He looks on each one of His redeemed and sees the fruit of His travail in every individual child of His Grace, in each sinner reclaimed, in each saint preserved and perfected! I can well conceive of Him saying in that day, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." The joy that Christ will feel in His own sight of His people and in the glances of the multitudes that He has saved, must be a delight beyond anything we can even imagine!

II. Now I must pass to a second point, which is this, that THE EYES OF CHRIST'S CHOSEN ONES STILL OVERCOME HIM. This is a practical point upon which we may profitably spend some little time—the eyes of Christ's chosen ones still overcome Him.

And, first, the eyes of His chosen overcome Him when they look up in deep repentance, glancing at Him hopefully through their tears. Let me try to give you a picture of such a case. Here is a poor soul, conscious of having sinned, and sinned deeply. Once sin was thought to be only a trifle. Now it is seen to be a horrible evil, to be trembled at and hated. Once God was judged to be too severe in sending men to Hell, but now the convicted one has nothing to say against God's Justice, for he is all taken up with speaking against himself and his sin. There stands this poor soul with red and weeping eyes, saying, "O God, I have sinned, and I am still sinning. And if You cast me into the abyss I dare not challenge Your Justice, yet have pity upon me, O Lord! God, be merciful to me a sinner!" When those tear-filled eyes are turned to the Lord Jesus and sin is confessed again and again with deep contrition and childlike repentance, it is not possible that He should long refuse to grant the pardon which we seek! He seems to say to the poor penitent, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I cannot bear to see you weeping and sorrowing so. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you, for I have loved you with an everlasting love. Go, and sin no more." There is a wondrous power in the penitent eye, in the full confession that makes a clean breast of every sin before the face of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that when we have once repented, we do not leave off repenting, for penitence is a Grace that is as long-lived as faith! And as long as we are capable of believing, we shall also necessarily need to repent, for we shall always be sinning. So, whenever the child of God feels that he has gone astray in any way, that, though he did live near to God, he has gone back and grown cold in

heart, he has only to come to Christ, again, and cry after Him—and confess his folly in having left Him and his ingratitude in having been so indifferent to Him—and Christ will receive him back again! You cannot long mourn His absence and seek to return to Him, and feel that you will die if you do not get back the realization of His sweet love again—you cannot be long in that state before He will be vanquished by your weeping eyes and He will say to you, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." And if a child of God who has not lost fellowship with his Lord, is, nevertheless, anxious lest he should do so—if his morning prayer is, "O my Lord, keep me from everything that would take me away from Your love." And if at night He looks back over His conduct during the day and says, "Cleanse me from every secret fault, for—

"I am anxious of my heart, Lest it should once from You depart"— if there is kept up this delightful tenderness of conscience towards Christ, so that our eyes, with weeping for very fear of sin, still look after Him, then shall we hold Him spellbound and the deep sorrow of our loving hearts shall vanquish Him! And He will bestow the blessing which our soul is seeking.

Another kind of glance that has great power with the Lord Jesus is when the soul looks to Christ for salvation. Then it is that the eyes vanquish the Savior. It is hard, at first, to look to Christ and believe that He can save you. I suppose some of you, dear Friends, have a distinct recollection of the first faith-glance you ever took at Christ. I well remember mine—it seemed so strangely simple and yet so sublime and wonderful, that I could scarcely think it true that there was life in a look at Him! I did but glance half furtively at first, as if I thought it could not mean that such a sinner as I was could receive mercy from Christ simply by looking at Him. Did He really mean me when He said, "Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"? I had long sought Him and I had prayed to Him—but I could not conquer Him, nor win mercy from Him by my seeking and my praying. But oh, when my eyes, already red with weeping, looked at Him with a steady glance which seemed to say—

"I do believe, I will believe, That you did die for me,"

then did He cry, "'Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.' 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.'"

Many times since then, you and I have looked to Jesus Christ when a sense of sin has been very heavy upon us. I suppose all of you who are really children of God sometimes get into that state in which you begin to ask, "Was I ever truly converted? Did my sins ever roll from my shoulders and disappear in the tomb of Christ?" When these questions arise within your heart, go and stand, once more, at the foot of the Cross, and look at your suffering Lord. I have looked, and looked, and looked again, until I have seemed to look Him all over, and at last I have begun to sing—

"Oh, 'tis sweet to view the flowing

Of my Savior's precious blood,

With Divine assurance knowing,

He has made my peace with God." While the eyes of faith are thus resting upon Jesus, He is overcome by them and He darts inexpressible joy into our hearts as He says to us, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." His heart is carried by storm by the faith-looks of His children!

We also give another overcoming glance when we look to the Lord Jesus Christ for all things. Worldlings do not understand the terms on which we are linked with Christ. To them Christ is a somebody who lived 1800 years ago and then died. But to us He is alive! He is our familiar Friend! We are intimately acquainted with Him. We are in the habit of taking all our troubles to Him and asking Him for all that we need—and He removes our sorrows and grants us the desires of our hearts. There are times with all of us when we get into trouble of one sort or another and, blessed be His name, He has taught us, when we are in trouble, to lift up our eyes to the hills from where comes our help. Now, perhaps,

dear Brothers and Sisters, you have, for a while, been looking to Christ and saying, "Lord, I believe You will help me. Did You die to save me from Hell and will You not supply me with bread and water while I am in the wilderness? Have you covered me with the robe of your perfect righteousness and will you not find me clothes to cover my nakedness and shield me from the weather? Have you done the greater, and will you not do the lesser?"

When another trouble comes, you keep on looking to Him! You will not believe that He can be unkind—you give Him credit for loving you, and caring for you, so look to Him—and as you look, submit to His will and say, "I will never distrust You, my Lord." If He sends yet another rough Providence, you continue looking to Him and only say, "Show me why You contend with me. Though You slay me, yet will I trust in You. I have known You too long to doubt You now, my blessed Lord. You have done too much for me in the past for me to turn away and say, "I will not trust You." My Lord and Master, You cannot make me believe that You do not love me, for I know You better. My inmost soul is assured that You do love me, so I look to You, still, and watch the movement of Your Countenance. And as I look, my heart says, "My Lord, I cannot tell why You strike Your servant again and again, yet, if it is Your love that makes You strike, strike on. Whatever is most for Your Glory, do with me as You will." When your eyes are like that, full of submission, full of hope, full of trust—it cannot be long before the Lord will, somehow or other, deliver you, for He will say, "I cannot hold out against you any longer. 'Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me.' I will bring you out of the furnace, for I only sit there as Refiner till I see My own image in you. And when I see My eyes in your eyes, and My heart in your heart, and My Character in your character, then will I bring you out of the furnace as gold seven times purified." Blessed Spirit, give us such eyes as these, which shall overcome even the heart of Christ!

Again, there are the eyes of prayer which often overcome the Lord Jesus Christ, and this victory comes, sometimes, when we are praying for ourselves. You know what it is in prayer, to come to Him and say, "Lord, I am in great straits, and You have, Yourself, brought me there. It has not been through my folly, but it is by Your own act and deed that I am where I am. Now, Lord, You have promised that in six troubles You will deliver us, and in seven there shall no evil touch us. You have said, 'Your shoes shall be iron and brass and, as your days, so shall your strength be.' Now, Lord, You are God and You cannot lie, therefore will You not keep Your promise? Here, Lord, You see my difficulty and my trial, and Your inspired Apostle has said that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Your servant David declared that 'many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.' Now, Lord, I look to You to do this for me."

It is one of the grandest things in all the world when a godly man, with the simplicity of a child, believes God and fully trusts Him for everything! It has come to be a matter of marvel, in this evil age, that a man can say that God grants him many mercies in answer to prayer. People hold up their hands and say, "Dear, dear, what a wonder!" A wonder that God hears prayer?! It would be a greater wonder if He did

nothear it! Beloved, to me prayer is a matter of fact. For me to go and take a promise to God and ask Him to fulfill it, and to get it fulfilled, is as common and as usual and as much a matter of fact as it is for you who are in business to take checks and pass them across the counter at the bank and receive the cash for them. Do you think that God is a fiction? If He is, then all our religion is a farce! But if God is real, then prayer is real, too. Many of us know that it is real, for we have tried it and still try it every day we live! In every time of trouble, we bring the trouble to God's feet and say, "Dear Lord, as You are true and faithful, You will help us through it." And we find that He does help us through it! We speak what we know and testify what we have seen many a time. When a child of God, in deep distress, believes in his Father, and steadily looks to Him for deliverance, those eyes of his have mighty power and God seems to say to him, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." You cannot look steadily to God and say, "Lord, I am sure about Your faithfulness, I am sure about Your promise and I cannot and will not doubt it," but before long you shall see the hand of the Lord made bare for your deliverance—and you, also, shall be among the happy number who have to bear witness that, verily, there is a God in Israel! Thus does prayer prevail with God when we present it for ourselves.

So does it also overcome Him when we pray on behalf of others. Moses, you know, prayed for others and prevailed. Do you, dear children of God, know what it is to wrestle with the Lord for the souls of others? I am sure that many of you do. There are your dear children, kinsfolk, friends and neighbors whom you bring before the Lord. I will tell you when you will win the day, mother, when, with tears you say, "O God, You have given me these children; now give them to me according to the spirit as well as according to the flesh." You will overcome the Lord, dear Father, when you spread your suit before Him and say, "Deny my children what You will, but save them—let them all be Yours in the day when You make up Your jewels." You will succeed when, rising from your knees, you set those children a Christian example and, having pleaded with God for them, you go and plead with them for God—and feel as if your heart would break if you did not see your boys and girls converted! When, like Hannah, you even come to be a woman of a sorrowful spirit because you feel that you must have your children brought to God, then the Lord Jesus will look at you till He will say to Himself, "I cannot let that poor soul cry and sigh in vain. It is not in My heart—the heart of One who was born of a woman—to let that pleading woman's prayer go without an answer." And to you He will say, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me. Be it to you even as you will."

And you, dear child of God, who are teaching in the Sunday school class, or you who are preaching in some small village station—when you get to feel inward grief of heart over those with whom you have to deal—when that grief increases till it comes to be a perfect agony and you cannot help crying out for anguish of soul. When you feel as if you must have them saved. When you feel as if you would give everything you had if they might but be brought to Christ. When you even wake at night to pray for them and, in the midst of your business cares you get distracted with the thought that some whom you love are perishing—at such times as that, your powerful eyes in prayer shall move the heart of Christ and overcome Him—and He shall give you those souls for your hire!

Brothers and Sisters, if we do not pray for sinners, for whom shall we pray? If we do not plead for the abandoned, if we do not offer supplications for those who are perverse in heart, we have omitted to pray for the very persons who most need our intercession! Let us bring these hard hearts beneath the almighty hammer! Let us, by prayer, bring these lepers beneath the healing touch of Him who, despite their loathsomeness, can say to them, "Be you clean!" Let no degree of natural or inherited depravity, or of depravity that has come from long continuance in sin, hinder us from praying for all the unsaved whom we

know! "O God, have mercy upon these guilty ones!"

I will not further enlarge upon this point, for it is settled beyond all question that those who love the souls of men will not be hindered from prayer for them on any account whatever. I entreat you, who have prayed for husbands or children, or friends, do not leave off pleading for them! If you have prayed for twenty years, and they are not converted, pray twenty years more! And if they have grown more wicked while you have pleaded, still pray on! And if Heaven and earth and Hell seem to combine together to bid you cease your supplications, still pray on. As long as you live, make intercession for transgressors—and as long as they live, let your cries go up to God on their behalf. So shall you "overcome Heaven by prayer" as you plead for the ungodly.

Once again, there is another time when the eyes of the Believer seem to overcome the heart of Christ, and that is when we have turned right away from the world and looked to Him alone. I have known it so, again and again. Have you not, too, Beloved? In this world, at present, our Lord is somewhat concealed. He does not fully reveal Himself to His people. Here He says to us as He said to Mary, "Touch Me not." He lets us wait till the veil shall be drawn up and then we shall see Him face to face, and shall be like He is. Here we have to live by faith rather than by sight, and it is expectation rather than enjoyment that makes up much of our present bliss. Yet, at times I have known my Lord come wonderfully near to His servants and lay bare His inmost heart to them. It seemed as if He could not help it—it has been at some such gathering as this, when we have gone right away from the world and have forgotten its cares and pleasures for a while—and we have sat down to think only of Him. Our soul has surveyed Him in His Godhead and His Manhood, as our Prophet, Priest, King and near Kinsman—living, dying, risen, ascended, soon to come—we have looked Him over and there has not been any part of His Character which we have not admired, nor one office in which we have not trusted Him, nor one deed for which we have not blessed Him! We have come to think, "He is altogether lovely," and while we have been admiring Him in a perfect rapture, there has been added to it this sweet thought—He is all goodness, and He is all mine—from the crown of His head to the soles of His feet. "My Beloved is mine and I am His."

We have not said much and we could not have said much just then. We have been quite quiet and alone with our Lord—and we have felt that silence was the only eloquence we could use as we looked at Him again, and again, and again. At such seasons, my soul has felt ready to swoon away in His Presence. You remember how John, in Patmos, when Jesus appeared to him, said, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead"? And well He might, for He had a brighter vision of His Lord than you and I can have at present. But even faith's view of Him is enough to transport us straight away into Heaven, itself! Well, Brothers and Sisters, whenever we are thus happily engaged in contemplation of our Lord, not only is He very near us, but He is greatly moved by our love and He says to us, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." And, meanwhile, to prove how overcome He is, He begins to reveal Himself more fully to us!

You may, perhaps, have read in the life of holy Mr. Flavell the extraordinary instance he records of the love of Christ being poured into his soul. He says that he was riding a horse, going to some engagement, and he had such a sense of the love of Christ that he completely lost himself for several hours. And when he came to himself, again, he found his horse standing quite still and discovered that he had been sitting on horseback all those hours, utterly lost to everything but a special revelation of the wonderful love of Jesus! You may also have heard of Mr. Tennant, the mighty American preacher and friend of George Whitefield, who was found, lost and absorbed, in a forest to which he had retired. His friends had to call him back, as it were, from the sweet fellowship he had been enjoying with Christ. You may remember, too,

John Welsh, the famous Scotch preacher who had to cry out, "Hold, Lord, hold! I am but an earthen vessel, and if I feel more of Your glorious love, I must even die! So stay Your hand a while."

There are such experiences as these. I will not enquire whether you have ever known them, but if you have, I will tell you one thing—all the infidels in the world and all the devils in Hell will never make you doubt the truth of the Scriptures if you have once been face to face with Christ and have spoken with your Master as a man speaks with His friend! Such things have happened to those whose cloud-piercing eyes have been so fixed upon Christ that He, at last, has felt the mighty fascination of their loving and believing glances and has revealed Himself in still greater measure to them and made them even more blest than they were before!

Last of all, sometimes the eyes of Christians have great power in overcoming Christ when they long for His appearing. Have you ever seen the saints lie dying with such language as this on their lips, "Why are His chariots so long in coming? Why does He tarry?—

"Hurry, my Beloved, fetch my soul Up to Your blessed abode! Fly, for my spirit longs to see My Savior and my God.

I have heard them say, with evident regret, "I thought to have been in Heaven long before now." I have seen them almost grieve when the doctor has said that they were better and that there was hope that they might last another month or two! They seemed to say, "Why should my banishment continue? Why should my release be postponed? These chains of clay which seem so hard to shake off, these fetters of brass—will they never drop from me? Must I still linger in this world of pain and sorrow, and sin and suffering? Why not let me go?" And they have been like a poor thrush which I have sometimes seen a boy try to keep upon a little bit of turf—it longed for the broad fields—and beat itself against the wires of its cage. So is it with our dear suffering friends, at times—yet they have learned patiently to wait till their change came. But often their eyes have been so fixed upon their Lord that they have said to Him, "Will You never come?" And, at last, Christ has looked out of Heaven so sweetly on those sick ones and He has said, "Your eyes have overcome Me. Come up higher." And they have leaped out of their body into His bosom and the pierced hands have received their blood-washed spirits—and they have been "forever with the Lord!"

I am looking forward, and I trust we who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are all looking forward to that day when God will let us languish into life! When we shall see the bars of the prison opened once and for all and we shall pass through them, and leave this dying world behind to go to the land of the living, the land of the hereafter, where we, too, shall be "forever with the Lord!" Keep your hearts always longing for that blessed hour! Keep your eyes always looking upward, Beloved. Set small store on anything here—and be always ready to depart and so, full often, shall Jesus say to you, as though He could no longer bear that you should gaze upon Him though, indeed, He loves it all the while, "Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me." God bless you all, Beloved, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: GENESIS 32:22-30; EXODUS 32:7-14; MARK 7:24-30.

We shall read three short portions of Scripture, all illustrative of the great Truth that God has sometimes given Grace to His people to overcome Himself—the Almighty has condescended to be vanquished by man! First, let us read the story of Jacob in the Book of Genesis, the 32nd Chapter, at the 22nd verse—

Genesis 32:22-24. And he rose up that night and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his 11 sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them and sent them over the brook, and sent over all that he had. And Jacob was left alone. He had made a quiet oratory for himself by sending everyone else of the company over to the other side of the brook—his own resolve being—

"With You all night I mean to stay, And wrestle till the break of day."

24, 25. And there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw—When the wrestling Man, the Angel of the Covenant, saw—

25, 26. That He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he said, I will not let You go, except You bless me. When we come nearest to God, we must have a deep sense of our own personal weakness. It must never be supposed, if our suit prevails with Heaven, that there is anything in us, or anything in our prayers to account for our prevalence. Whatever power we have, must come from God's Grace, alone, and, therefore, usually when we pray so as to prevail with the Lord there is at the same time a shrinking of the sinew, a consciousness of weakness, a sense of pain—yet it is just then that we are prevailing and, therefore, we may rest assured that our prayer will be answered. The Angel said, "Let Me go," at the very time when Jacob felt the shrinking of the sinew—"He said, Let Me go, for the day breaks. And he (Jacob) said, I will not let You go, except You bless me."

27-29. And He said to him, What is your name? And he said, Jacob. And He said, Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed. And Jacob asked Him, and said, Tell me, I pray You, Your name. And he said, Why is it that you ask about My name? Holy desires will be realized and believing prayers will be answered, but mere curiosity will not be gratified! Those who read the Scriptures with a view simply to find out novelties that may tickle their fancy, read in vain. The Covenant Angel will give you what you will if it is necessary for you, but He will not answer your idle questions. He said to Jacob, "Why is it that you ask about My name?"

29, 30. And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." Thus did Jacob the wrestler overcome his God! Now turn to the 32nd Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where we find a description of the sin of idolatry into which the Israelites fell while Moses was absent in communion with God upon the mountain. The people brought their golden earrings to Aaron and he made a calf, and they bowed before it, saying, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." While this wickedness was going on, Moses was on the mountaintop with God.

Exodus 32:7. And the LORD said to Moses, Go, get you down; for your people, which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves! See how Jehovah will not acknowledge these idolaters as His people? He says to Moses, "Your people which you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves."

8-10. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said to Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of you a great nation. What a great future was thus opened up before Moses! He might become another Abraham and in him should all the nations

of the earth be blessed! But Moses loves the people, even the people who have vexed and provoked him so many years. He still loves them so much that, even before he begins to pray for them, God says, "Let Me alone," as if He felt the force of Moses' coming prayer and would not have him offer it! O wondrous power of intercession, that by it even God's right hand is held back when it is lifted up to strike!

11. And Moses urged the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why does Your wrath wax hot against Your people, which You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Moses will not have it that they are his people, nor that he brought them out of the land of Egypt. But he declares that they are God's people, and that He brought them forth "with great power, and with a mighty hand."

12-14. Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom you swore by Your own Self, and said to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of Heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever. And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do to His people. So a second time the mighty power of prayer was proven and the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man! In the seventh Chapter of the Gospel according to Mark, beginning at the 24th verse, is another story which you know well, which tells how the Lord Jesus was overcome by a woman's mighty faith.

Mark 7:24-29. And from there He arose, and went to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she urged Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said to her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she answered and said to Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said to her, For this saying go your way; the devil is gone out of your daughter. Christ capitulated at once! He yielded to the strong arms of conquering prayer and faith—and so the pleading woman had her will!

30. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.

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