

An Approving Heart--Confidence in Prayer

by Charles Finney

Having a heart that does not condemn us gives us confidence in prayer, and God will grant us what we ask because of his goodness and love.

Scripture: 1 John 3:21

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Confidence in Prayer"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the significance of having an approving heart in relation to confidence in prayer. He explains that when our hearts do not condemn us, we can approach God with assurance, knowing that He accepts us and will grant our requests as we strive to keep His commandments. Finney highlights that true obedience and a sincere desire to please God remove obstacles to receiving blessings, and that God delights in answering the prayers of those who are in harmony with His will. He encourages believers to recognize their position as children of God, able to approach Him boldly and confidently, and to understand that past sins do not hinder their current relationship with God if they repent and seek His grace.

Transcript

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."--1 John 3:21, 22.

In resuming and pursuing this subject, I shall,

I. SHOW THAT IF OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE HAVE AND CANNOT BUT HAVE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD THAT HE ACCEPTS US.

II. THAT IF WE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT GOD WILL GRANT US WHAT WE ASK.

III. SHOW WHY THIS IS SO, AND WHY WE KNOW IT TO BE SO.

I. If our heart really does not condemn us, it is because we are conscious of being conformed to all the light we have, and of doing the whole will of God as far as we know it. While in this state it is impossible that with right views of God's character, we should conceive of him as condemning us. Our intelligence instantly rejects the supposition that he does or can condemn us, that is for our present state. We may be

most deeply conscious that we have done wrong heretofore, and we may feel ourselves to be most guilty for this, and may be sure that God disapproves those past sins of ours, and would condemn us for them even now, if the pardoning blood of Christ had not intervened. But where pardon for past sins has been sought and found through redeeming blood, "there is therefore no more condemnation" for the past. And in reference to the present, the obvious truth is that if our conscience fully approves of our state, and we are conscious of having acted according to the best light we have, it contradicts all our just ideas of God to suppose that He condemns us. He is a Father, and he cannot but smile on his obedient and trusting children.

Indeed, ourselves being in this state of mind, it is impossible for us not to suppose that God is well pleased with our present state. We cannot conceive of Him as being otherwise than pleased; for if he were displeased with a state of sincere and full obedience, he would act contrary to his own character; he would cease to be benevolent, holy, and just. We cannot therefore conceive of Him as refusing to accept us when we are conscious of obeying his will so far as we know it. Suppose the case of a soul appearing before God, fully conscious of seeking with all the heart to please God. In this case the soul must see that this is such a state as must please God.

Let us turn this subject over till we get it fully before our minds. For what is it that our conscience rightly condemns us? Plainly for not obeying God according to the best light we have. Suppose now we turn about and fully obey the dictates of conscience. Then its voice approves and ceases to condemn. Now all just views of the Deity require us to consider the voice of conscience in both cases as only the echo of his own. The God who condemns all disobedience must of necessity approve of obedience, and to conceive of him as disapproving our present state would be in the conviction of our own minds to condemn him.

It is therefore by no means presumption in us to assume that God accepts those who are conscious of really seeking supremely to please and obey him.

Again let it be noted that in this state with an approving conscience, we should have no self-righteousness. A man in this state would at this very moment ascribe all his obedience to the grace of God. From his inmost soul he would say--"By the grace of God, I am what I am;" and nothing could be farther from his heart than to take praise or glory to himself for anything good. Yet I have sometimes been exceedingly astonished to hear men and even ministers of the gospel speak with surprise and incredulity of such a state as our text presupposes--a state in which a man's conscience universally approves of his moral state.--But why be incredulous about such a state? Or why deem it a self-righteous and sinful state! A man in this state is as far as can be from ascribing glory to himself. No state can be farther from self-righteousness. So far is this from being a self-righteous state, that the fact is, every other state but this is self-righteous, and this alone is exempt from that sin. Mark how the man in this state ascribes all to the grace of God. The Apostle Paul when in this state of conscious uprightness most heartily ascribes all to grace. "I laboured, says he, more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me."

But, observe that while the Apostle was in that state, it was impossible that he should conceive of God as displeased with his state. Paul might greatly and justly condemn himself for his past life, and might feel assured that God disapproved and had condemned Saul, the proud persecutor, though he had since pardoned Saul, the praying penitent. But the moral state of Paul the believer, of Paul, the untiring labourer for Christ--of Paul whose whole heart and life divine grace has now moulded into its own image--this moral state Paul's conscience approves, and his views of God compel him to believe that God approves.

So of the Apostle John. Hear what he says.--"Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." But here rises up a man to rebuke the Apostle. What! he says, did you not know that your heart is corrupt, that you never can know all its latent wickedness, that you ought never to be so presumptuous as to suppose that you "do those things that please God?" Did you not know that no mere man does ever, even by any grace received in this life, really "keep the commandments of God so as to do those things that are pleasing in his sight?" No, says John, I did not know that. "What, rejoins his reprover, not know that sin is mixed with all you do, and that the least sin is displeasing to God!" Indeed, replies John, I knew I was sincerely trying to please God, and verily supposed I did please him and did keep his commandments, and that it was entirely proper to say so--all to the praise of upholding, sanctifying grace.

Again, when a man prays disinterestedly, and with a heart in full and deep sympathy with God, he may and should have confidence that God hears him.--When he can say in all honesty before the Lord--["]Now, Lord, thou knowest that through the grace of thy Spirit my soul is set on doing good to men for thy glory; I am grieved for the dishonour done to Thee, so that rivers of water run down my eyes, because men keep not thy law," then he cannot but know that his prayers are acceptable to God.

Indeed no one, having right views of God's character, can come to him in prayer in a disinterested state of mind, and feel otherwise than that God accepts such a state of mind. Now since our heart cannot condemn us when we are in a disinterested state of mind, but must condemn any other state, it follows that if our heart does not condemn us, we shall have, and cannot but have confidence that God hears our prayers and accepts our state as pleasing in his sight.

Again, when we are conscious of sympathizing with God himself, we may know that God will answer our prayers. There never was a prayer made in this state of sympathy with God, which He failed to answer.--God cannot fail to answer such a prayer without denying himself. The soul, being in sympathy with God, feels as God feels; so that for God to deny its prayers, is to deny his own feelings, and refuse to do the very thing he himself desires. Since God cannot do this, he cannot fail of hearing the prayer that is in sympathy with his own heart.

In the state we are now considering, the Christian is conscious of praying in the Spirit, and therefore must know that his prayer is accepted before God. I say, he is conscious of this fact. Do not some of you know this? Ye who thus live and walk with God, do you not know that the Spirit of God helps your infirmities and makes intercession for you according to the will of God? Are you not very conscious of these intercessions made for you, and in your very soul as it were, with groanings that cannot be uttered? Your heart within pants and cries out after God, and is lifted up continually before him as spontaneously as it is when your heart sings, pouring out its deep outgoings of praise. You know how sometimes your heart sings, though your lips move not and you utter no sound;--yet your heart is full of music, making melody to the Lord. Even so, your soul is sometimes in the mood of spontaneous prayer, and pours out its deep felt supplications into the ears of the Lord of Hosts just as naturally as you breathe. The silent and ceaseless echoing of your heart is, Thy kingdom come--Thy kingdom come; and although you may not utter these words, and perhaps not any words at all, yet these words are a fair expression of the overflowing desires of your heart.

And this deep praying of the heart goes on while the Christian is still pursuing the common vocations of life. The man perhaps is behind the counter, or in his workshop driving his plane, but his heart is communing or interceding with God. You may see him behind his plow--but his heart is deeply engrossed

with his Maker;--he follows on, and only now and then, starts up from the intense working of his mind and finds that his land is almost finished. The student has his book open to his lesson, but his deep musings upon God, or the irrepressible longings of his soul in prayer consume his mental energies, and his eye floats unconsciously over the unnoticed page. God fills his thoughts. He is more conscious of this deep communion with God than he is of the external world. The team he is driving or the book he professes to study is by no means so really and so vividly a matter of conscious recognition to him as is his communion of soul with his God.

In this state the soul is fully conscious of being perfectly submissive to God. Whether he uses these words or not, his heart would always say--"Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Hence he knows that God will grant the blessing he asks if he can do so without a greater evil to his kingdom than the resulting good of bestowing it. We cannot but know that the Lord delights to answer the prayers of a submissive child of his own.

Again, when the conscience sweetly and humbly approves, it seems impossible that we should feel so ashamed and confounded before God as to think that he cannot hear our prayer. The fact is, it is only those whose heart condemns them who come before God ashamed and confounded, and who cannot expect God to answer their prayers. These persons cannot expect to feel otherwise than confounded, until the sting of conscious guilt is taken away by repentance and faith in a Redeemer's blood.

Yet again, the soul in this state is not afraid to come with humble boldness to the throne, as God invites him to do, for he recognizes God as a real and most gracious Father, and sees in Jesus a most compassionate, and condescending high Priest. Of course he can look upon God only as being always ready to receive and welcome himself to his presence.

Nor is this a self-righteous state of mind. O, how often have I been amazed and agonized to hear it so represented! But how strange is this! Because you are conscious of being entirely honest before God, therefore it is maintained that you are self-righteous! You ascribe every good thing in yourself most heartily to divine grace, but yet you are (so some say) very self-righteous notwithstanding! How long will it take some people to learn what real self-righteousness is? Surely it does not consist in being full of the love and Spirit of God; nor does humility consist in being actually so full of sin and self-condemnation that you cannot feel otherwise than ashamed and confounded before both God and man.

II. We are next to consider this position, namely, that if our heart does not condemn us, we may have confidence that we shall receive the things we ask.

1. This must be so, because it is his Spirit working in us that excites these prayers. God himself prepares the heart to pray;--the Spirit of Christ leads this Christian to the throne of grace and keeps him there; then presents the objects of prayer, enkindles desire, draws the soul into deep sympathy with God; and now--all this being wrought by the grace and Spirit of God, will He not answer these prayers? Indeed He will. How can He ever fail to answer them?

2. It is a remarkable fact that all real prayer seems to be summed up in the Lord's prayer, and especially in those two most comprehensive petitions--"Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The mind in a praying frame runs right into these two petitions, and seems to centre here continually. Many other and various things may be specified; but they are all only parts and branches of this one great blessing--Let God's kingdom come, and bear sway on earth as it does in heaven. This is the sum of all true prayer.

Now let it be observed that God desires this result infinitely more than we do. When therefore, we desire it too, we are in harmony with the heart of God, and He cannot deny us. The blessing we crave is the very thing which of all others He most delights to bestow.

3. Yet let it be noted here that God may not answer every prayer according to its letter; but He surely will according to its spirit. The real spirit is evermore this--"Thy kingdom come--thy will be done;" and this, God will assuredly answer, because he has so abundantly promised to do this very thing in answer to prayer.

III. Why will God certainly answer such a prayer, and how can we know that He will?

1. The text affirms that "whatsoever we ask we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Now we might perhaps understand this to assign our obedience as the reason of God's giving the blessing sought in prayer. But if we should, we should greatly err. The fundamental reason always of God's bestowing blessings is his goodness--his love. Let this be never forgotten. All good flows down from the great fountain of infinite goodness. Our obedience is only the condition of God's bestowing it--never the fundamental reason or ground of its bestowment. It is very common for us in rather loose and popular language to speak of a condition as being a cause or fundamental reason. But on a point like the present, we ought to use language with more precision. The true meaning on this point undoubtedly is that obedience is the condition. This being fulfilled on our part, the Lord can let his infinite benevolence flow out upon us without restraint. Obedience takes away the obstacle;--then the mighty gushings of divine love break forth.--Obedience removes the obstacles;--never merits, or draws down the blessing.

2. If God were to give blessings upon any other condition, it would deceive multitudes, either respecting ourselves or himself. If he were to answer our prayers, we being in a wrong state of mind, it would deceive others very probably; for if they did not know us well, they would presume that we were in a right state, and might be led to consider those things in us right which are in fact wrong.

Or, if they knew that we were wrong, and yet knew that God answered our prayers, what must they think of God? They could not avoid the conclusion that He patronizes wrong doing, and lifts up the smiles of his love upon iniquity;--and how grievous must be the influence of such conclusions!

It should be borne in mind that God has a character to maintain. His reputation is a good to himself, and he must maintain it as an indispensable means of sustaining his moral government over other creatures. It could not be benevolent for Him to take a course which would peril his own reputation as a holy God and as a patron and friend of holiness and not of sin.

3. God is well pleased when we remove the obstacles out of the way of his benevolence. He is infinitely good, and lives to do good and for no other purpose--for no other end whatever except to pour forth blessings upon his creatures wherever He can without peril to the well being of other creatures under his care and love. He exists for ever in a state of entire consecration to this end. Such benevolence as this is infinitely right in God, and nothing less than this could be right for him.

Now, if it is his delight and his life to do good, how greatly must he rejoice when we remove all obstacles out of the way! How does his heart exult when another and yet another opportunity is afforded him of pouring out blessings in large and rich measure. Think of it, sinner, for it applies to you! Marvellous as you may think it, and most strange as it may seem--judged of by human rules and human examples, yet of God it cannot fail of being always true that He delights supremely in doing you good, and only waits till you

remove the obstacles;--then would his vast love break forth and pour its ocean tides of mercy and of grace all around about you. Go and bow before your injured Sovereign in deep submission and real penitence, with faith also in Jesus for pardon, and thus put this matter to a trial! See if you do not find that his mercies are high above the heavens! See if anything is too great for his love to do for you!

And let each Christian make a similar proof of this amazing love. Place yourself where mercy can reach you without violating the glorious principles of Jehovah's moral government; and then wait and see if you do not experience the most overwhelming demonstrations of his love! How greatly does your Father above delight to pour out his mighty tides of blessings! O, He is never so well pleased as when he finds the channel open and free for these great currents of blessings to flow forth upon his dear people!

A day or two since I received a letter from the man in whose behalf you will recollect that I requested your prayers at a late church prayer meeting. This letter was full of precious interest. The writer has long been a stranger to the blessedness of the gospel; but now he writes me--"I am sure you are praying for me, for within a week I have experienced a peace of mind that is new to me."

I mention this now as another proof of the wonderful readiness of our Father in heaven to hear and answer prayer. O what love is this! To what shall I compare it, and how shall I give you any adequate view of its amazing fullness and strength? Think of a vast body of water, pent up and suspended high above our heads, pressing and pressing at every crevice to find an outlet where it may gush forth. Suppose the bottom of the vast Pacific should heave and pour its ocean tides over all the continents of the earth. This might illustrate the vast overflowings of the love of God; how grace and love are mounting up far and infinitely above all the mountains of your sins. Yes, let the deep, broad Pacific ocean be elevated on high and there pent up, and then conceive of its pressure. How it would force its way and pour out its gushing floods wherever the least channel might be opened! And you would not need to fear that your little wants would drain it dry! O, No! you would understand how there might be enough and to spare,--how it might be said--"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it;" how the promises might read--"Bring ye all the tithes into my store house, and prove me now herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out blessings till there be not room enough to receive them." The great oceans of divine love are never drained dry. Let Christians but bring in their tithes and make ready their vessels to receive, and then, having fulfilled the conditions, they may "stand still and see the salvation of God." O how those mountain floods of mercy run over and pour themselves all abroad till every capacity of the soul is filled! O how your little vessels will run over and run over--as in the case of the prophet when the widow's vessels were all full and he cried out--O hasten, hasten--"is there not another vessel?" Still the oil flows on--is there not another vessel? No more, she says; all are full; then and only then was the flowing oil stayed. How often have I thought of this in seasons of great revival, when Christians really get into a praying frame, and God seems to give them every thing they ask for; until at length the prophet cries out--Is there not yet another vessel? O bring more vessels, more vessels yet, for still the oil is flowing and still runs over;--but ah, the church has reached the limit of her expectation--she has provided no more vessels;--and the heavenly current is stayed. Infinite love can bless no more; for faith is lacking to prepare for, and receive it.

REMARKS.

I. Many persons, being told that God answers prayer for Christ's sake, overlook the condition of obedience. They have so loose an idea of prayer and of our relations to God in it and of his relations to us and to his moral government, that they think they may be disobedient and yet prevail through Christ. How little do they understand the whole subject! Surely they must have quite neglected to study their Bible to

learn the truth about prayer. They might very easily have found it there declared, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination." "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." All this surely teaches us that if there be the least sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer. Nothing short of entire obedience for the time being is the condition of acceptance with God. There must be a sincere and honest heart--else how can you look up with humble confidence and say--My Father; else how can you use the name of Jesus, as your prevailing Mediator;--and else, how can God smile upon you before all the eyes of angels and of pure saints above!

When men come before God with their idols set up in their hearts, and the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face, the Lord says, "Should I be enquired of at all by them?" Read and see. (Ezekiel 14:3-5) The Lord commissions his prophet to declare unto all such:--"I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh thus, according to the multitude of his idols." Such prayers God will answer by sending not a divine fullness, but a wasting leanness; not grace and mercy and peace, but barrenness and cursings and death.

Do not some of you know what this is? You have found in your own experience that the more you pray, the harder your heart is. And what do you suppose the reason of this can be? Plainly there can be no other reason for it than this;--you come up with the stumbling block of your iniquity before your face, and God answers you according--not to his great mercies, but to the multitude of your idols.

Should you not take heed how you pray?

2. Persons never need hesitate because of their past sins, to approach God with the fullest confidence. If they now repent, and are conscious of fully and honestly returning to God with all their heart, they have no reason to fear being repulsed from the footstool of mercy.

I have sometimes heard persons express great astonishment when God heard and answered their prayers, after they had been very great and vile sinners. But such astonishment indicates but little knowledge of the matchless grace and loving kindness of our God. Look at Saul of Tarsus. Once a bitter and mad persecutor, proud in his vain Pharisaism;--but now repenting, returning, and forgiven--mark, what power he has with God in prayer. In fact, after penitence, God pardons so fully that, as his word declares--he remembers their iniquities no more. Then the Lord places the pardoned soul on a footing where he can prevail with God as truly and as well as any angel in heaven can! So far as the Bible gives us light on this subject, we must conclude that all this is true. And why? Not because the pardoned Christian is more righteous than an angel; but because he is equally accepted with the purest angel, and has besides the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ,--all made available to him when he uses this all-prevalent name. Oh, there is a world of meaning in this so-little-thought-of arrangement for prayer in Jesus' name. The value of Christ's merits is all at your disposal. If Jesus Christ could obtain any blessing at the court of heaven, you may obtain the same by asking in his name--it being supposed of course that you fulfil the conditions of acceptable prayer. If you come and pray in the spirit of Christ; his Spirit making intercession with your spirit, and your faith taking hold of his all-meritorious name, you may have his intercessions before the throne in your behalf, and whatever Christ can obtain there, He will obtain for you. "Ask, therefore, now--so Christ Himself invites and promises--ask and receive, that your joy may be full."

O, what a vantage ground is this upon which God has placed Christians! O what a foundation on which to stand and plead with most prevailing power! How wonderful! First, God bestows pardon, takes away the sting of death; restores peace of conscience and joy in believing; then gives the benefit of Christ's

intercession; and then invites Christians to ask what they will! O, how mighty! how prevalent might every Christian become in prayer! Doubtless we may say that a church living with God, and fully meeting the conditions of acceptable prayer might have more power with God than so many angels. And shall we hear professed Christians talk of having no power with God! Alas, alas! Surely such surely know not their blessed birthright. They have not yet begun to know the gospel of the Son of God!

3. Many continue the forms of prayer when they are living in sin, and do not try to reform, and even have no sincere desire to reform. All such persons should know that they grievously provoke the Lord to answer their prayers with fearful judgments.

4. It is only those that live and walk with God whose prayers are of any avail to themselves, to the church, or to the world. Only those whose conscience does not condemn them, and who live in a state of conscious acceptance with God. They can pray. According to our text they receive whatever they ask because they keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight.

5. When those who have been the greatest sinners will turn to God, they may prevail as really as if they had never sinned at all. When God forgives through the blood of Jesus, it is real forgiveness and the pardoned penitent is welcomed as a child to the bosom of infinite love. For Jesus' sake God receives him without the least danger of its being inferred that Himself cares not for sin. Oh, He told the Universe once for all how utterly he hated sin. He made this point known when he caused his well-beloved Son to bear our sins in his own body on the tree, and it pleased the Father to bruise him and hide his face from even the Son of his love. O, what a beautiful, glorious thing this gospel system is! In it God has made such manifestations of his regard for his law that now He has nothing to fear in showing favour to any and every sinner who believes in Christ. If this believing sinner will also put away his sin--if he will only say--In the name of the Lord I put them all away--all--now--forever; let him do this with all his heart, and God will not fear to embrace him as a son;--this penitent need fear nothing so long as he hides himself in the open cleft of this blessed Rock of Ages.

Look at the case of the prodigal son. Famished, ragged, poor, ready to perish, he remembers his father's house and the plenty that abounds there; he comes to himself and hence looks upon things once more according to their reality. Now he says--"In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, but here I am perishing with hunger.["] But why is he ready to perish with hunger? Ah, he ran away from a bountiful and kind father, and spent all his substance in riotous living. But he comes to himself. There, see him drawing near his father's mansion--once his own dear home;--see;--the father rushes to embrace him; he hastens to make this penitent son most welcome to his home and to his heart. So God makes haste to show that He is not afraid to make the vilest sinner welcome if he only comes back a penitent and rests on the name of Jesus. O what a welcome is this!

Follow on that beautiful illustration of it which the Saviour has given us. Bring forth the best robe. Invite together all our friends and neighbours. Prepare the music. Spread the table, and kill the fatted calf. It is fit that we should make merry and be glad. Lead forward this long lost son and put on him my best robe. Let there be joy throughout my house over my returned and penitent son.

And what does all this show? One thing--that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, and joy in the very heart of God himself over one sinner that repenteth. O, I wonder sinners will not come home to their Father in heaven!

6. Sinner, if you will come back to the Lord, you may not only prevail for yourself, but for your associates and friends. I was once in a revival where a large company of young men banded themselves together under a mutual pledge that they would not be converted. Father Nash was with me in that revival season, and on one occasion while the young men alluded too were all present, he made a declaration which startled me, and almost shocked himself. Yet, as he said afterward, he dared not take it back for he did not know how he came to say it, and perhaps the hand of God might be in it. "Young men, said he, God will break your ranks within one week, or He will send some of you to hell."

It was an awful time. We feared that possibly it might not prove to be so, and that then the result would be exceeding bad upon the minds of that already hardened band. But it was spoken, and we could only cry unto God.

Time rolled along. About two or three days after this declaration was made, the leader of this band called to see me, all broken down and as mellow as he could be. As soon as he saw me, he cried out, What shall I do? What are you thinking about? said I. About my wicked companions, said he--all of them in the way to hell. Do you pray for them? I asked. Oh, yes, said he, I cannot help praying for them every moment. Well, then, said I, there is one thing more; go to them and entreat them in Christ's name to be reconciled to God.* He darted out of my room and began this work in earnest. Suffice it to say that before the week was closed almost all of that band of young men were converted.

And now let me say to the impenitent sinners in this assembly, If others do not labour to promote a revival, begin at once and do it yourself. Learn from such a case as I have just stated, what you can do. Don't you think you could do something of the greatest value to souls if you would seriously try? Who is there here--let me see--what young man or young woman is there here now impenitent;--do not you believe that if you would repent yourself, you might then go and pray and labour and secure the conversion of others, perhaps many others of your companions?

Sinners are usually disposed to throw all the responsibility of this labour and prayer upon Christians. I throw it back upon you. Do right yourselves and then you can pray. Do right, and then none can labour with more effect than yourselves in this great work of bringing back wandering prodigals to their father's house.

Christian hearer, is it not a dreadful thing for you to be in a state in which you cannot prevail with God? Let us look around;--how is it with you? Can you prevail with God; and you--and you? Who are they and how many are there in such a state that their prayers avail nothing, and who know before they pray and while they are praying that they are in no fit state to offer prevailing prayer? One of the brethren, you recollect said to us at a recent church meeting--"I have lost my power to prevail with God. I know I am not ready for this work." How many others are there, still in the same awful condition?

O how many have we here who are the salt of the earth, whose prayers and redeeming influence save the community from becoming perfectly putrid with moral corruption? I hope they will be found alive and at work in this trying hour. O we must have your prayers for the impenitent--for the anxious--for backsliders;--or if you cannot pray--at least come together and confess your sins;--tell your brethren and sisters you cannot pray and beg of them to pray for you that you may be brought back to the light and the peace and the penitence of real salvation.

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