

## **The Upside-Downness of Prayer**

*by Norman Grubb*

Most of us have a basic misconception of the character of prayer. We regard it as the human upreach of the soul to God. Actually, it is the divine down-reach of God to the soul.

This definition of prayer is not just a play on words, or an attempt to talk about prayer in a different way. Apprehension of the reality of what I am saying can bring a vital difference to life, and put new meaning into prayer. How? First, let me clarify the relationship between the Divine and the human.

What we call the Christian life—in reality just life itself, or eternal life—only starts when the human personality is recognized as being the container of the Divine—*of God Himself*. The human self was never created for any other purpose than to manifest the divine Self.

A human being without God as the real Self within it is actually a sub-human being. He is in the condition that the Bible calls dead ("*dead while he lives*," as Paul described it in I Timothy). He has a false, self-centered existence derived from Satan, the spirit of self-centeredness who has possessed all men since the fall of Adam.

When a person comes to Christ, however, redemption severs the bond between the satanic spirit and the human spirit. At the Cross of Christ the old bond, or union, is replaced. A new union between the liberated human spirit and the Holy Spirit takes place as we partake in the resurrection. Man in Christ has become God-indwelt and has been restored by grace to the status of normal humanity—"*I will dwell in them and walk in them*"; "*It is God that works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure*"; "*I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me*." The Bible says it in a thousand other ways. Here, now, we have the groundwork for an understanding of prayer.

God, the Compassionate, the world Savior, the Self-Giver, never ceases to express Himself through His body. That is, through you and me. He sees, thinks, feels—and touches His world—through us.

Prayer, therefore, is an indication that God is stirring within us concerning some special need. God is the source of prayer in His people.

This is why the solution to dryness or deadness in the prayer life is not to try to pray more, but to give up praying. In place of the prayer of self-effort, relax back into the recognition of the Indwelling Person. See Him and flow along with Him in thankfulness, praise and love, for these also are the movings of His Spirit in us—in literal fact, God praising God, God loving God. As we do this, we shall soon find that He is sharing His outlook and concern with us, looking through our eyes; and we shall be feeling His concern for this or that need, or for this or that person.

This is the source of prayer—the Spirit making intercession for the saints, who know not what to pray for as they ought. This is "*praying in the Holy Spirit*."

But this response leads to something else of great importance. For if God shares with us a burden or need which is on His heart, does He not already intend to fulfill it? More than that, has He not already fulfilled it in His sight, where past and future are one?

The best evidence that He *has* already fulfilled our need is the statement that before there ever was sin and need, there was already the provision of the Savior (1 Pet. 1:20). That is God's upside-downness to our material sight—the supply provided before the need!

Paul says that Adam was “*the figure of Him that was to come*” (Rom. 5:14). How can the fallen Adam be a type, a figure, a pointer to a redeeming Adam? Because God is forever the Positive that swallows up the negative, just as mortality is swallowed up by Life. Wherever there is a negative on earth—a have-not, a need, a weakness, an unsolved problem, a sickness—His unchangeable character of perfect love *necessitates* His provision of the supply, strength, solution, health.

Love is always a debtor (Rom. 1:14). It *must* move in and pay its debts of self-giving service. Because God is love, the full supply is never in doubt.

“*Before they call, I will answer,*” was God’s word to Isaiah. His word is just the same today.

Why, then, do we have these problems, these needs at all? Because human redemption is mediated through human agency—first through God’s Son, and now through His sons. *So God puts us in tight spots to channel His creative faith through us.*

Our calling upon God in prayer is merely the evidence that He has stirred us into action. The answer is already there with Him, before we call. Now, as our calling moves on to the act of faith, God has His human agent in gear through whom He can channel the answer. It is never *our* solution. Both are His. We are merely the human agents through which supply can reach need.

One more matter. What about unanswered prayer—so often seen in cases of illness, or concerning the unsaved, and sometimes in the case of material things? The whole point is: whose prayer is it; the supplication of the Spirit through us, or our own?

Let us boldly acknowledge that it is *His* supplication. The whole revelation of our union through grace is what He thinks, what He wills and what He sees through us in our normal daily lives.

Well, then, when we pray, why not say, “Lord, I am boldly interpreting this need as an evidence that you have the supply already on the way. I believe it. I receive it. Thank you.”

Then, if the supply doesn’t come as we expect, whose business is it? Obviously His. Leave Him to mind His own business.

If God wishes to appear a failure to the natural eye, let Him do so! He did at Calvary. Don’t take back as your concern what you previously committed to Him. Don’t accept blame from the Accuser for apparent failure or for apparent unbelief. Lots of us get tangled up and condemned at that point. And don’t take back a great heavy burden as if the final answer depended on how much of it you carried.

Leave your burden with God. Give the praise that really counts with Him—not that which comes from the visible answer, but that which is based on naked faith. “*Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.*” As the poet said:

*On earth the broken arc,  
In Heaven the perfect round.*