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" A Life of Prayer, A Life of Peace.

Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.
Let your ^{modesty} ~~modesty~~ be known unto all men. The Lord
is at hand. Be ~~anxious~~ ^{nothing solicitous} for nothing; but in everything
by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let
your ^{petitions} ~~requests~~ be made known unto God. And the
peace of God, which ^{sur} passeth all understanding, ~~shall~~
keep your hearts and minds ⁱⁿ through Christ Jesus "

Philippians IV. 4, 5, 6

St. Paul, in these words, bids the Christians in Philippi
to carry all their sorrows and fears to the throne of Christ.
He specially bids them remember the nearness of our Lord,
and the freedom we may use in speaking with Him.
And in so doing he has taught us a great and blessed
truth, needful for all men, in all ages: I mean,
that a life of prayer is a life of peace. It is not in
times of persecution only, but at all times, that the
presence and fellowship of Christ are the peace and
consolation of the Church. We are borne into a world
of perturbations; we carry them in our own heart.
The world is the counterpart of man's fallen nature,
turbulent, restless and distracted. Every man gives
in his contribution of disquietude; and the life of
most men is made up of cares and doubts, perplexities
and forebodings, of fruitless regrets for follies past,
and of exaggerated thoughts of trials yet to come. All
men who live without God in the world these things press

sorely. They fret and wear them without alleviation.
 This is the "sorrow of the world" that "worketh death."
 It is a bitter, and embittering disquiet of heart.
 The plague of evil thoughts, inordinate cravings,
 disappointments and losses, vain hopes and weary
 fears, these are by nature the portion of us all.
 Even religious people have their yoke of cares. But
 there is this difference between them and others; they
 know where to carry the recital of their troubles,
 where to lay down their burden, and Who will
 bear their griefs and take away their sorrows.
 I St. Paul here tells us, first of all, that there is
 One, ever near us, who can fulfil all our desire,
 and over-rule all things in our behalf. "The Lord
 is at hand." How soon He may reveal Himself in
 person we know not; but soon or late, it is
 certain, that although unseen, He is ever near
 us. His presence departed not from the Church, when
 He ascended into heaven. He is withdrawn from the
 eyes of our flesh; but in the sight of our hearts.
 He is always visible. Though He be at the right
 hand of God yet He is in the Church, and in our
 secret chamber. Though He is the Lord of heaven
 and earth, yet He is ever in the midst of us, watching
 and guiding, disposing all things for the perfection
 of His Kingdom and, in it, of each one of us.
 He is both able and willing to fulfil all our hearts.

desires; and nothing is hid from His sight. He knows all; even our most unuttered thoughts, our most concealed desires; and with this assurance we might lay aside all our burdens. It might seem enough for us simply to cast all our care on Him, knowing that He careth for us; to refer ourselves to His love and wisdom, to His all-comprehending knowledge of our wishes and our wants. This would be a sure and sufficient pledge against all the evils we forbode and shrink from. But there is a relief in speaking out our wishes; and even this He does not deny us.

2 Therefore St. Paul tells us further, that we may make all our desires known unto God. We may speak with Him as a man speaks with ~~his~~^{his} friend. We all know the relief, as we say, of unburdening ourselves, and opening our hidden cares, even to our earthly companion. We seem to have laid off a weight when we have told our sorrow. When anyone we love shares our anxiety, and divides our forebodings with us, we seem to have either only half the burden, or a twofold strength to bear it. We feel this relief all the more, in the measure in which our friend is wise and compassionate, loved by us, and loves us in return. And yet there is a point beyond which we do not reveal ourselves to our fastest and nearest friend. There is something of imperfection

Still in them that makes us lay bare only our side,
 and lay open only our chamber of our heart. There
 is always something still concealed, some reserved
 infirmity, something over which we must needs
 draw a veil and silence; which we would not
 that any fellow-creature should discern; which
 we can only show to the world unseen, and to
 the eyes of Him "that searcheth the hearts, and
 trieth the reins." But with Him, not only is
 it impossible to conceal, but we do not desire
 to hide anything from His sight. Though He
 be the Holy One of God, and "His eyes as a flame
 of fire," so piercing and so pure, yet we do not
 shrink from making all known to Him: for
 though He be perfect in purity, He is likewise
 perfect in compassion: He is as pitiful as He
 is holy. We may come before Him, and say,
 "This have I done, and this have I left un-
 done. I am sinful and unhappy, beset
 by temptations, harassed by myself." We may
 make known the facts and particulars of our
 trial, its circumstances and details; and
 plead, as it were, against ourselves, praying
 to be delivered from the power of sin which
 still dwells in us, and draws us aside into
 darkness and transgression; overclouding our
 heart by imaginations and visions of evil.

We may say, "Thou knowest what I cannot speak,
 and why I cannot. Thou knowest all things"
 When we are overcome by a sense of what we are,
 and for shame or sorrow even fear to speak at all,
 we may place ourselves before Him, passively,
 and in silence, casting ourselves down under His feet,
 to be read, searched by His penetrating sight. Though
 unworthy to ask the least, yet we may make our
 requests known unto Him by silent humiliation,
 and by secret appeal to His perfect knowledge.
 Now, this is what St. Paul bids us to do. "Be
 careful for ^{solicitous} nothing, but in every thing by prayer
 and supplication with thanksgiving let your ^{requests} ~~requests~~
 be made known unto God." And the promise is,
 not that we shall have whatsoever we may ask,
 but that we shall have peace. "And the peace
 of God, which ^{sur-}passeth all understanding, shall
 keep your hearts and minds ⁱⁿ through Christ Jesus."
 We shall not, indeed, always have what we ask;
 but if we ask in faith, we shall always have peace.
 Of this we shall never fail.

I First, because whatsoever we ask which is truly
 for our good, that He will give us freely. No
 father so much delights to give the very thing
 his children ask for, as our Father in heaven.
 It is well-pleasing in His sight both that we should

know what to pray for as we ought, and that He should bestow the thing we ask. ^{"Assuredly, assuredly, Amen"} ~~of the Father~~ ^{of the Father} I say unto you, ~~Whatever~~ ^{Whatever} you shall ask the Father ^{in My name} He will give it you^r. But it is a high grace to know what things to ask in the name of Christ. Men make strange prayers to Heaven, and couple the Name at which every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, with foolish and unreasonable prayers. ^{Whatever} we desire that is in harmony with the Eternal will, with the love of our Redeemer, and with the mind of the Holy Ghost, those things we shall without fail receive. All good things; all good, eternal and created; all blessing, grace, and truth; all the benedictions of the Kingdom of God; all the promises of the Gospel, and all the pledged mercies of redemption; all these we may ask importunately, and shall assuredly receive. Even things of this life - peace and deliverance, the reversal of threatened chastisement, the restoration of blessings half withdrawn; these too, and a multitude of mercies infinite as the changes and chances of man's life, we may lawfully desire. It may be we shall also receive these very things we ask for. At all events, we may make "our ^{petitions} requests known unto God:" leaving with Him to open and to shut His hand as He shall see best for us.

2 For whatsoever we ask which is not for our good,
 He will keep it back from us. And surely in this
 there is no less of love than in the granting what
 we desire as we ought. "What man ^{is there among} you ~~that~~
^{you of whom} ~~is a father~~, if his son ask for bread, will he
^{reach} ~~give~~ him a stone? And if he ask for poison, will
 he not refuse it? Will not the same love which
 prompts you to give a good, prompt you to keep
 back an evil, thing? If, in our blindness, not
 knowing what to ask, we pray for things which should
 turn in our hands to sorrow and death, will not
 our Father, out of His very love, deny us? In this
 entangled twilight state of probation, where the
 Confusions of good and ill so nearly approach, and
 almost seem to intermingle, there needs a keen
 and strong spiritual eye to discern and know the
 nature and properties of all things which encompass
 us about. They allure us, and we desire them, and
 ask not knowing, for what. How awful, would be
 our lot, if our wishes should straightway pass into
 realities; if we were endowed with a power to bring
 about all that we desire; if the vicinations of our
 will were followed by fulfilment of our hasty
 wishes, and sudden longings were always granted.
 Such a power in an imperfect being, drawn aside,
 as we are, by the solicitations of evil from without,
 and hurried away by impulses of an imperfect and

variable heart within, would be an intolerable misery. And yet what but this would it be, if all our prayers were granted - if there were no all-wise, all-holy God to revise our imperfect choices, to sift out the poisonous, and to keep back the sorrows which we have ignorantly prayed for?

In the commonest things of this world how valuable is the Counsel of a wise and trusty friend, who revises and checks our aims and plans. From what unnumbered errors and falls are we preserved by taking Counsel of some tried and discerning adviser. How, on the retrospect of years, we see whole trains of evil consequences lying hid behind some act we were once vehemently bent on taking; from which we were hardly turned aside at the very moment of action. In like manner, what a current of happy and prosperous events has carried us along, as we now can see, since the day when some decision was made at the guidance of another, to whose advice we could hardly be brought, at that time, to consent. And what but this loving care, if it may be reverently spoken, is ever taken for us in heaven? Our vehement, blind, tumultuous hearts are continually sending up their wishes and prayers on high all mingled

and infected with our own Earthliness. In the golden censer of our great High Priest they are purged by the living fire of His love; the evil separated from the good, and our rash and wayward choices refined till they unite with the wisdom and will of our Eternal Father. Our day we shall bless Him, not more for what He has granted than for what He has denied. Though now we think our most needful requests are put aside, we shall then perceive the real meaning of what we asked, and the rashness of our prayer. Alas for us, if all our prayers should be given us; if the fretting out and tempering of our own lot were thus left in our own hands; if all we desired were made our own; if the windows of heaven were never shut against us. He gave them their desire, and "sent ^{richness} ~~richness~~ ~~withal~~ into their soul." Alas, if health, prosperity, prolonged enjoyment of the bright things of life, and freedom from sorrows and deprivations, were continued to us as long as we desire; if the wholesome sharpness of pain, bodily humiliation, the breaking up of hopes, and the overclouding of our happiness were kept back as long

as we should prescribe. Ours would be a
 fluid discipline of healing for sinful hearts.
 We should be poor physicians of our own
 maladies. And this is the reason why
 our Father in heaven uses a loving severity
 and at times confounds our wishes with
 the strokes of His hand. He denies us
 what we ask, and sends instead what
 we most recoil from. We ask for bright
 lights, and He sends us shadows; we
 pray for soft things, and He sends us
 hardness for our portion; we pray Him
 to take away our anxieties, and He turns
 them into present sorrows; we ask for the
 allaying of some instant pain, and He sends
 us a double share; we desire to be free
 from chastisement, and He besets us on
 all sides with His correction; we beseech
 Him to heal some friend over whom we
 watch in trembling, or to give back to us
 our that already hangs between life and
 death, and He seems to read all our
 prayers backward, and to answer us
 by contradictions. Yet in all this, what is
 there but the order and harmony of the
 wisdom and the will of God? The confusion
 and perplexity is all our own. It is not

that He contradicts our will, but we are
 contradicting His. We cross Him, not He us.
 We would be reigning in His Kingdom, and
 making His sway to follow our choice.
 We would be the granters of our own petitions,
 make our will the law of His dealings with
 us. But He has His own purpose in all
 refusals; a purpose deeper than we can reach.
 It was an Apostle and a martyr that said,
 "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice,
 that it might depart from me; and He said,
 "My grace is sufficient for thee; for ~~My~~ ^{My} strength
 is made perfect in ~~weakness~~ ^{infirmity}." And He who
 gave that answer was even the same who in
 the days of His flesh ^{with a strong cry and tears} offered up prayers and
 supplications with ~~strong crying and tears~~ ^{strong crying and tears}
 unto Him that was able to save Him from
 death, and was heard ^{for his reverence} ~~on that~~ He feared."
 "I ~~And~~ ^{whereas} ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~God~~ ^{God}
 though He ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~a~~ ^a ~~son~~ ^{son}, yet learned He
 obedience by the things which He suffered."
 There was a time when He, too, went apart
 from His disciples a stone's cast, "and fell
 on His face, ~~and~~ ^{and} praying, saying, ~~My~~
 Father, if it be possible, let this ~~cup~~ ^{chalice} pass
 from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but
 as Thou wilt;" and even "the third time He
 prayed, saying the ^{self} same words." And yet

¹ Heb. x. 7, 8.

² Matt. XXVI 39-44.

The cup did not pass from Him; the Father's will was not so. Nevertheless, "there appeared an Angel ~~xxxx~~ to Him from heaven, strengthening Him."³

3 But besides this, we know certainly that if He refuse us any thing, it is only to give us something better. It may be we ask amiss. We asked for something that would thwart His higher purposes of Mercy to us. We would have, it may be, the fair things of this life; but He has in store for us better things in His Kingdom. You desire to be as others, to have what they have, enjoy what they enjoy; but He has chosen you, perhaps, to be nearer to Himself; to sit at His feet and listen, while others go abroad into the mid-stream of life. For a time it may seem to be sadness and a cross; and you are not able to read its meaning, till some better thing begins to shadow itself out before your inward sight; and you see that what you would have chosen for yourselves would have been a less blessing, instead of a greater; a transitory, instead of an abiding consolation. Sometimes He upbraids our narrowness of heart by His refusals - It may be that we have not

asked enough; that we have asked scantily,
 when He was ready to give largely. When
 Solomon asked for wisdom, the Lord gave
 him also "riches, and wealth, and ~~honour~~ ^{glory}"^I
 If we ask the great things of His Kingdom, He
 will add unto us the less. If we ask of Him
 life eternal, He will provide for the life that
 now is. ^{"Be not therefore solicitous} ~~take no thought~~ ^{for to-morrow."}
 "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have
 need of ^{all} these things." "But seek ye ^{therefore} first
 the Kingdom of God and His ^{justice} ~~righteousness~~.
 Ask not for the right hand or the left hand
 in His Kingdom, but for a place, though it
 be the lowest place, beneath the feet of
 His Elect. Ask of Him a clean heart, that
 you may see God, that you may trace
 His hand in all the ways of life; and
 He will give you not only things of this life,
 but also your throne and crown in the manifesta-
 tion of the sons of God.

4 For, lastly, though He should seem to
 refuse all we ask, He will not refuse
 to give unto us Himself. The more you
 converse with God, the more He will
 manifest Himself to you. The very act of
 prayer will make you familiar with His

presence. Though He be pleased to take from you, one by one, as from his servant Job, all things you cleave to; yet as all other things are withdrawn, He will compass you about with a more sensible presence of His love. Even as at the last, when there was nothing more to be taken away from the man of many sufferings, the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind; so from the darkness and perplexity of His providence there come forth, to those whom God chastens, such tokens of His presence, that they are constrained to say, "I have heard² of Thee with the hearing of the ear; such was all my past knowledge, hearsay and a dream; but now mine eyes see Thee."¹ Now all is clear; all stands out before me in full outline and completeness. So shall it be with those that pray without fainting. By habitual converse with God, they are drawn within the veil through which His providence controls our mortal life. They rise above it; and their "life is hid with Christ in God."¹ Their "conversation is in heaven."² They begin to see into the hidden meaning of His government over the Church, and of His dealing

¹ Job XVII. 5. ² Col. III. 3. ² Phil. III. 20.

with themselves; into the secret of the secret; whereby "to principalities and powers in ^{the} heavenly places ~~is known~~ ^{through} by the Church ~~the~~ ~~manifest~~ ~~of~~ ~~God.~~"³ "Whosoever befalls them, they know to be better than they could choose; the best that can be chosen." "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be ~~content~~ ^{brought low}, and I know how to abound; Every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things ^{in Him who} through Christ ~~which~~ ^{strengtheneth} me."⁴ To those who are His, all things are not only easy to be borne, but even to be gladly chosen. All events and changes are the will of God in Christ Jesus. They are also the will of those who have fellowship with Christ; and through Him with God the Father. Their will is united to that will which moves heaven and earth, which gives laws to angels, and rules the courses of the world. It is a wonderful gift of God to man, of which we who know so little must needs speak little. To be at the centre of that motion, where is everlasting rest; to be sheltered in the peace of God; even now to dwell in heaven where all hearts are stayed

³ Ephes. III. 10.

⁴ Phil. IV. 11-13

and all hopes fulfilled. "~~Thou shalt keep~~
~~him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed~~
~~on Thee.~~"^I

"Thou wilt keep peace: peace, because we
 have hoped in Thee."^I