A Life of Prayer, A Life of Peace.

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say, rejoice.

Let your supplications be made known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds 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 God. He specially bids them remember the peace of God, and the freedom we may use in speaking with Him. And in so doing, He has taught us a great and living 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 born into a world of perturbations; we carry them in our bare heart. The world is the counterpart of man's fallen nature, turbulent, restless, and distracted. Every man lives in his contribution of discontent; 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 these who live without God in the world these things press...
Torely. They fret and fear them without alleviation. This is the "sorrow of the world" that "corruptible death." It is a bitter, and embittering desquint of heart. The plague of evil thoughts, irritable moods, disappointments and losses, vain hopes and burning fears, these are by nature the portion of us all. Even religious people have their "grobe of cares." But there is this difference between these and others, they know where to carry the "veil" of their troubles, where to lay down their burden, and who will bear their griefs and take away their sorrows. 

St. Paul here tells us, first of all, that there is one, ever near us, who can fulfill all our desires, and super-ordinate all things for our behalf. "The Lord is at hand." How soon He may reveal Himself to a person he has not seen; but soon or late, it is certain, that although unseen, He is very near us. His presence departed not from the Church, where He ascended into heaven. He is withdrawn from the eyes of our flesh; but in the light of our hearts He is always visible.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, uniting all things under the Son, He is both able and willing to fulfill all our hearts.
desired, and nothing is hid from His sight. He
knows all; even all most unuttered thoughts, even
most secretest desires; and with this assurance
we might lay aside all our burdens. It might
seem enough for us simply to cast all our cares
on Him, knowing that He careth for us, to rely
ourselves to His love and wisdom, to His all-knowing,
keeping knowledge of our troubles and our wants.
This would be a sure and sufficient pledge
against all the trials we forbore, and shrink from.
But there is a relief in speaking out our wishes;
and seeing that the Lord doth not baffle 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 speaketh with his friend.
We all know the relief, as we say of unburdening
ourselves, and speaking our hidden cares, even
to an earthly companion. We seem to have cast
off a weight when we have told our sorrow.
When anyone we love shares our activity, and
discovers our forebodings with us, we seem to have
either only half the burden, or a twofold weight
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 unburden ourselves to our nearest
and dearest friend. There is something of inperfection
I'll in there that makes us lay bare only one side, and lay open only one chamber of our heart. There is always something still concealed, and veiled in mystery, something over which the most heads draw a veil and silence, which we would not that any fellow-creature should discern, while we can only show to the world outside, and to the eye of time that SARAHETTE the hearts, and THE HEARTS their "eyes." 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, "Lord, have I sinned? And this have I left undone, "sinned. I am sinful and unhappy; these temptations, harassed by myself." We may make known the facts and particulars of the 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 into darkness and transgression; overclouding our heart by incantations 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 have fear to speak at all, we may place ourselves before Him, palpably, and in silence, casting ourselves down under His feet to be read, searching by His penetrating light. Though unworthy to ask the least; yet we may make our request known unto Him by silent humiliation, and by secret appeal to His perfect knowledge.

Now, this is what St. Peter bids us to do. "Be careful for nothing, but in every thing pray and supplicate with thanksgiving. Let your requests be made known unto God." And the promise is, not that we shall have what we ask, but that we shall have peace. "And the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

We shall not, indeed, always have what we ask, but if we ask in faith, we shall always have peace. And this we shall never fail.

I first, because whatsoever we ask which is truly for our good, that He will give us freely. For a Father is much delighted to give the very thing his children ask for, as their Father in Heaven. It is well-pleasing in His sight both that we should
know what to pray for as we ought, and that the Father, 
should bestow the thing we ask. Lord, teach us to say, 
"Father, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from 
the evil one." But it is a high grace to know what things to ask in 
the name of Christ. Make strange prayers to heaven, and 
couple the name at which every 
need shall have of things in heaven and things in 
earth, with foolish and unreasonable prayers. 
Whatsoever 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 
shall without fail receive. All good things; 
all good, eternal and created; all blessings, grace, 
and truth; all the benedictions of the kingdom of 
God; all the promises of the gospel, and all the 
pledged mercies of eternity. Also these, we may 
ask, in confidence, and shall assuredly receive: 
some things of this life. Some temporal delivrance, the 
absolution of threatened chastisement, the restoration 
of blessings, which have been taken; these too, and a 
multiplicity of mercies infinite as the changes and 
chances of grace's life. We may carefully desire. 
It may be we shall also receive these very things we, 
ask for. At all events, we may make "But depart 
unto God, leaving unto Him to open and 
seal His hand as He shall be best for us.

St. John XVI. 23.
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 request. "What man of you, if his son ask for bread, will he give him a stone? And if he ask for fish, will he give him a serpent? If a son ask for a sword, will he give him a stone? Will not the same love which prompts you to give a good, prompt you to keep back an evil, thinking "If, in our blindness, not knowing what to ask, we pray for things which should here in our hands be sorrow and death, will not our Father, out of this very love, deny us?" In this entangled twilight state of probation, where the consecrations of good and ill so nearly approach, and almost seem to intermingle, here needs a keen and strong spiritual eye to discern and know the nature deep 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 thrust us bar into realities, if we were endowed with a power to bring about all that we desire; if the inclinations of our will were followed by fulfillment of our hasty wishes, and sudden longings were always granted. Such a power is an imperfect being, drawn aside, as we are, by the solicitations of evil from without, and hurried away by impulses of our 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 One to direct our unperfect choices, to sift out the poisons, and to keep back the sorrows which we have earnestly prayed for?

Do the commonest things of this world hold valuable in the Counsel of a wise and trusty friend, to preserve us from our errors and falls? Now that remembered errors and falls are we preserved by taking counsel of sound mind and discerning adviser. How, at the retrospect of years, we see whole trains of evil consequences lying hid behind some act we once beheld 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 looking back, if it may be reverently spoken, is ever taken for us in Heaven? For behemoth, then, those known hearts are continually finding up their wishes and prayers in high all mingled
and infected with our own earthliness. In the
golden center of our great High Priest. They are
purged by the living fire of God, and the soul
separation from the gross, and our task and
wayward choices defended till they unite with
the wisdom and will of our Eternal Father.
And by we shall bless them, not more for what
He has granted than for what He has denied.
Though we then to our most heartfelt requests
are just added, we shall then perceive the
real meaning of what we asked, and the
tenderness of our prayer. Alas for us, if all
our prayers should be granted; if the 
retarding and tempering of our worldly desires
were made our curse; if the windows of
heaven were never shut against us. If
were given the desires. And "let God
make himself known unto his 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
fields of pain, bodily humiliation, the
breaking up of hopes, and the outpouring
of our happiness were kept back, as long

1 Th. viii. 15
as we should prescribe. Ours would be a 
blind 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 seeming cruelty 
and at times confounds our wishes with 
the strokes of His hand. He desires us 
that we ask, and sends instead that 
we must recoil from. We ask for bright 
lights, and He sends us shadows. for 
grass for soft things, and He sends us 
hardeness for our portion. We pray Him 
to take away our affections, and He turns 
them into present torments; we ask for 
the allaying of some instant pain, and He 
leads us a double share, the desire to be free 
from chastisement, and the heats and 
all sides, with His correction, the stroke 
Him to heal some friend afar whom we 
watch in trembling, or to give back to us 
one that already hangs between life and 
death, and He leads 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 her own. It is not
That He contradicts our will, but we are contradicting His. We cross His will, not His will. We would be reigning in His kingdom, and making His way to follow our choice. We would be the grantees of our own petitions, that we will. The law of His dealings with us, but He has His own purposes in all affairs; a purpose keener than we can fathom.

It was an Apostle and a Martyr that said, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and the Lord said, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." And He who gave that answer was none the same Lord in whose strength I am safe, a Saviour, praying and bearing with me that was able to take away from death, and was heard so that He passed, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, and now the Lord, I am confident, shall shortly receive me into glory, by the things which He suffered." There was a time when He, too, would suffer, from His disciples a stone's cast, and fell on His face, and praying, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt," and there the third time He prayed, saying the same words." And yet

1 Heb. 11:8. 2 Matt. XXVI. 39-44.
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 He keep access. 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 thing it may issue 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. Nevertheless He upholds you notwithstanding of heart by His refusals - It may be that we have not
asked enough; that we have asked steadily, when He was ready to give largely. When Solomon asked for wisdom, the Lord gave him also " riches, and wealth, and honor;" if we ask the great things of His kingdom, He will add unto us the less. If we ask of His life, "speak we thought for to-morrow." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." "Seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness; not for the right hand or the left hand in His kingdom, but for a place, though it be the lowest place, beset with the feet of His feet. 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 manifest show of the loves 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 Strand. Yet all things you cleave to; yet as all other things are withdrawn, he will show 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, he stood answered not out of the whirlwind, but from the darkness and perplexity of his providence; there come forth to those whom God characterizes, such tokens of his presence that they are constrained to say, "I have heard of thee; with the hearing of the ear; such was all my past knowledge, hearsay, and a dream; but now mine eyes see thee." Now all is clear, all hands out before me in full outline, and completeness. I shall it be with those that pray without faulting. My habitual converse with God they are drawn within the book through which his providence controls our mortal life. They find above it; and their "life is hid with Christ in God." Their "conversation is in heaven." They begin to see, into the hidden meaning of his government over the church, and of his dealing.

1 Cor. XIII, 5. 2 Pet. III. 5. Phil. III. 20.
with themselves; into the secret of the secret, whereby to principali- ties and powers in heavenly places, as known by the Church by
manifestation of God. 3 Whatever befalls them, they know to be better than they cared choose; the best that can be chosen. I have learnt by what leisure state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be full, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I can instruct a body to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. 4 To those who are His, all things are not only easy to be known, but even to be gladly chosen. All such to reap changes are the will of God in Christ Jesus. They are also the way of those who have fellowship with Christ, and through their will with God the Father. Their will be united to that will which moves heaven and earth, which giveth laws to angels, and rules the courses of the world. It is a wonderful gift of God, which we take favor so little. 5 Must needs speak better. To be at the centre of that motion, where is everlasting rest; to be sheltered in the peace of God. 6 How to dwell in Heaven where all hearts are stayed.

5 Gal. III. 10. 4 Phil. IV. 11-15
and all hopes fulfilled. "Now, shall keep
him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed
on Thee." 1

"Those will keep peace, peace, because we
have hoped in Thee." 1

1 Isaiah xxvi. 3.