

“AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH”

(Part two – Our Connection to God through Prayer)

by

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This is Part Two of the talk, “As in heaven, so on earth” delivered to the Nurses and Staff at Sunland Home Foundation, a Christian Science Nursing Facility, just north of San Diego and ten minutes south of The Gardens in Carlsbad, which provides loving care for senior Christian Scientists. As mentioned in Part One of our Fall Newsletter, Auriel spoke from notes so this is not a verbatim account of what was said and it has been expanded upon for this mailing. Parts Three and Four will be sent out in future mailings from The Gardens, Carlsbad.

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Our treasure hunt in Part One of this talk was successful in that we found and uncovered our buried treasure – *prayer*. Now a much larger work lies ahead of us. It’s one thing to return to the roots of prayer and realize that Mary Baker Eddy maintained the asking, the requesting and the petitions of prayer but it’s quite another thing to really “unearth” this treasure. Perhaps that’s why her chapter *Prayer in Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* contains the statement, “The world must grow to the spiritual understanding of prayer.” (P.10) One thing becomes very obvious as we look afresh at this chapter, – it’s all about asking. This is “the asking chapter” if we had to define it in one word, and mainly it cautions us how not to ask. The subject of sin is included, which makes good sense as prayer takes us to God while sin takes us away from God.

“To ask wisdom of God, is the beginning of wisdom,” writes Mrs. Eddy (Mis. 359). So if we can ask God, how does God communicate with us? In a heavenly manner. “Christ is the true idea voicing good, the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness” (S&H 332). This message may appear “on earth” in many ways. For instance, at one time I was praying about my next step when out walking and a bus turned a corner in front of me. In huge letters across the side of the bus was written: “You’re ready to write the next chapter.” Shortly afterwards I embarked on a new writing project. Messages do come in a way we can understand.

No matter how clear the messages are, we find that the spiritual understanding of prayer requires effort and practice. More digging on our treasure hunt is needed to totally unearth and inspect “this asking,” as Mrs. Eddy terms prayer (S&H 9). The term unearthing is metaphysically accurate, for prayer needs to be spiritually not earthly-based. And it could even have an air of mystery about it. Yes, we’ll be solving or resolving a few questions on this next leg of our adventure.

Our Connection to God through Prayer

A couple of years ago, I asked a woman what it would mean if she could only talk *about* her parents but never *with* them. Instantly she replied, “Well, that would be like death.” That’s how important it is to maintain the communication with our heavenly Parent. If our divine Principle, God, is truly alive to us then we can talk with God, ask questions regarding our welfare and how to bless others. In the 1960's some car bumper stickers proclaimed, “God is dead,” only to be met by the facetious bumper-sticker retort, “My God is alive, sorry about yours.” A vital sense of God, who is Life itself, necessarily demands a communication *with* and an unbreakable connection *to* God. How to attain this wonderful state of being through prayer is basic to our spiritual adventure.

As my husband Glen and I sailed this river of thought we found various landmarks which I’d like to share with you here. You’ll notice your own landmarks, things that stand out to you, and can be added to your adventure book. Here are some of ours:

How and why petition works

Mary Baker Eddy did not discover prayer. She discovered a “metaphysical system of treating disease.” In the process of this discovery, the subject of prayer was refined and elevated for all of Christendom. Even as Paul told the Athenians regarding God, “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you” (Acts 17:23), so Mrs. Eddy also declared the true nature of God. Gone was the punishing or corporeal concept of Deity and instead in its place stood revealed an unvarying divine Principle, Love. This would become not only the basis for her system of treating disease but also a rock-solid basis for prayer. We could have complete faith in and turn to this heavenly Principle of life for answers, to find blessings for ourselves and others, just as we would turn in full faith to the principle of mathematics for numerical answers. So enlightened faith took over from blind belief.

This placed prayer in a completely different light. Desire and petition were still there. Mrs. Eddy never removed those, but she changed the basis for our requests – this new basis being the acknowledgment that the good we are asking to see is actually already present. It has never been absent and never been lost. This fact of ever-present good lifts our petitions out of earthly doubts or “earth-born fear” (Poem “Love” by Mary Baker Eddy).

That is how petition works, but why is petition answered? On page 16 of her chapter, “Prayer,” Mrs. Eddy speaks of “heaven-born aspiration” (aspiration is an ardent desire especially for that which is noble or spiritual). So “heaven-born aspiration” is our clue! What is born of heaven is recognized by heaven. That is, when unselfish, ardent desire is directed to our heavenly Parent – when it returns to the source from which it came – then it is recognized by God. When God sees, or witnesses, His own idea (the heaven-born aspiration) returning to Him, He blesses it and calls it good. It is at this point, of God recognizing what He has sent forth, that the situation about which we are praying is resolved.

Asking better questions

Why can't I have the new car, the new job or even the new spouse that I'd like (and that I deserve – added under one's breath)? These are just a start on the wrong-question list. The options we face are usually limited by a human view of life. For instance, a young woman asking if she should marry Joe or Burt might have the wrong question, because she hasn't met Greg yet. Rather than zeroing in on the human need involved, she could ask for the joy in heaven, the companionship that's in the realm of harmony, to be made apparent on earth and in her life. Right here is a very important point and worth once again pausing on our journey. That for which we ask has to be in heaven first before we can ask to see it on earth. "As in heaven, so on earth." In other words, there has to be a spiritual fact behind what we ask for or it isn't in heaven. And if it isn't in heaven, we may as well forget it!

Questions to our divine Principle are answered. They just may not be the answers we expected or for which we hoped. They might be "Rephrase that question," or "No," or simply, "Wait!" Our desires will be "moulded and exalted," as the first page of our textbook declares. And the Bible calls wrong desires, "asking amiss." Asking for spiritual needs to be met always brings blessings because those who recognize they are "poor in spirit," – who know they are spiritually poor – receive the kingdom of heaven, the reign of harmony.

Since giving this talk, the October 2008 Christian Science Journal came out with a wonderful letter by Mrs. Eddy on page 16. It's to a pupil about the Lord's Prayer and has the word "ask" in it seven times. This letter is worth framing and keeping as a reminder of the fact that prayer is indeed "an asking" and that we should pray, first and foremost, for spiritual needs. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt 6:33).

Demonstrating our petitions

That's not usually how we think of the word "demonstration" is it? But if we always equate this word with healing or a certain good outcome then we'll miss the spiritual understanding of prayer and the following two statements won't make sense.

"The highest prayer is not one of faith merely; it is demonstration" (S&H 16). We may think we know what that means until we read the next sentence, "Such prayer heals sickness, and must destroy sin and death." So, in this instance, demonstration couldn't mean healing because healing is the result of this demonstration. Surely the demonstration referred to means putting into practice, showing, proving, living the good we have requested because: "Praying for humility with whatever fervency of expression does not always mean a desire for it" (S&H 8). That's why, "Self-forgetfulness, purity, and affection are constant prayers" (S&H 15). Living in that manner certainly demonstrates or proves one's desire for goodness. Having faith is a necessity, but living and demonstrating our prayer demands more and is the highest prayer. This enlarges our whole concept of demonstration as well as of prayer.

Years ago, I shared a practitioner office in Los Angeles. The building was tall and skinny, rather like a rocket, which may have prompted the elevator operator, when he found out what I did, to remark, “One more practitioner in here and the building will go straight up!” Well, whether the building went up or not, I was determined to go higher spiritually, so one day I was ardently praying for more humility. I don’t know if I expected it to descend on me like a shower of heavenly moonbeams causing me to fairly glow with that good attribute, but I certainly wasn’t expecting an immediate opportunity to demonstrate my prayer. A man whom I knew slightly, called and asked for Christian Science treatment adding, obviously tongue-in-cheek, “I would have asked this other person for help but she’s out of town so you’re second best, but that’s okay ‘cause second best tries harder.” I could laugh with him at his reference to a car rental commercial. How simple it would be if all our opportunities to practice the humility we ask for were as easy as that one!

Demonstrating our prayer usually requires a fair amount of self-searching and self-correcting which may account in large part for the resistance of the human mind. As *Science and Health* explains, “. . . the human mind is the sinner, disinclined to self-correction . . .” (218). Due to this we might assume that the petition “rule out of me all sin” (one of five in the Daily Prayer) is not a favorite of the human mind. So as we paddle on farther in our exploration boat it’s good to be alert to any thought currents trying to pull us off our goal. “Pray aright and demonstrate your prayer; sing in faith” (My 203). Singing helps!

Asking importunately

The Gospel of Luke, chapter 11, records the Lord’s Prayer. This is immediately followed by Jesus’ strong statements about asking repeatedly and importunately, illustrated by a parable in which he described someone asking for three loaves of bread from a friend and being given them due to his importunity (urgent request). This may pose a little mystery to students of Christian Science. We should ask with urgency? Why does Jesus say that?

Skipping entirely over these questions, the human mind comes up with the arguments, “We’re not supposed to plead with God” or “We’re not supposed to try to change God” and “God isn’t a human we’re trying to convince.” And so forth and so on. Actually, human thought would rather dismiss this whole subject, so to call it a mystery might be overstating, because one has to peruse a subject first before it can be classified as a mystery.

Here is one point on our adventure where we could easily be taken off our boat, spiritually kidnapped and held in a barren mental place unable to communicate with our heavenly Parent. So let’s resist the resistance and ponder why our Way-shower wants us to follow in this direction. Jesus obviously knew that God “is in one mind, and who can turn him” (Job 23:13), so changing that Mind would be impossible. Is this knowledge in conflict with an importunate or an earnest, urgent petition? Not at all. The urgency and frequency of the request show the petitioner’s sincere desire and eagerness, and has nothing to do with

God's willingness to bless His dear children. What if that man had made a lukewarm request, received the bread and then just stored it away and not used it. How sincere is that! In other words, we really, truly have to yearn for what we ask, intend to use it and use it well.

Along these lines, a woman I know sold her furnished home for a very reasonable price to family members. They then either painted, gave away or sold off some of the beautiful furniture that had been so carefully collected for many years. Finally, they suggested to her that she might like to buy the house back. She didn't! But the point is that their request didn't carry much weight or desire in the first place. There was no great value placed on what was being requested. So rather than questioning God's love and abundance, it's far better to question our own willingness to listen, obey and receive the good God constantly has for us. The questions we can ask ourselves would then be: What value do we place on this? Will we use what He gives us? Will we actually follow His guidance?

When Glen passed on in 1993 there seemed to be a deep, black pit in front of me and the only way to avoid it was to pray with importunity. With pressing urgency, I asked, "Dear Father, what should I do?" I was feeling so lost this seemed to be the only viable request. Instantly I heard, as if spoken out loud, "Publish the book!" Those three words changed my life and they changed the lives of many others also. I know this for sure because I have a box of letters from all over the world to prove it. This "book" was a manuscript my dad had been working on when he passed on fifteen years earlier and it wasn't even finished. So I wrote a Preface and Epilogue, learned the computer, then set up my own company to publish it.

The Ultimate Freedom by John H. Wyndham, CSB came out in June of 1994, just nine months after Glen had passed, and the rest as they say "is history." In four languages and on CD, this book is an ambassador introducing people all over the world to *Science and Health* and to a spiritual dimension many have only dreamed of. You might enjoy reading accounts of publishing this book, and the many surprising turns my life took afterwards, in my book *Quiet Answers*. So, does importunate prayer work? Oh yes, definitely, yes!

No wonder Mrs. Eddy earnestly requests us to follow Jesus by praying importunately and daily for ourselves. Now, here is quite an amazing conclusion one can reach by following the reasoning of page 127 in *Miscellaneous Writings*. If we are not overjoyed at the good another receives, it's because we haven't prayed enough for ourselves! That sounds almost strange. "Take care of yourself first before another," it seems to say. But perhaps it is akin to Mrs. Eddy's own prayer – "how to gather" and "how to sow," then "how to feed Thy sheep." We learn to gather the understanding, how to plant the seeds and how to feed others.

The result of asking importunately to be fed with the bread of heaven, of health and of holiness, is this: ". . . great growth in Christian Science will follow, – even that joy which finds its own in another's good" (Mis. 127). At this point, it's not even necessary to work at being happy for others. One just can't help feeling that way. It bubbles over!

Knowing and asking

We may wonder: Isn't it enough just to know the facts or truths that exist in the divine realm and declare and affirm them? Evidently not. We're urged by our Way-shower and our Leader to pray for the truth to be made manifest on earth and in our lives. So, let's consider some "as in heaven" knowing and what might be some corresponding "so on earth" asking. Just to remind us, our theme is taken from the Lord's Prayer and *Science and Health*, p.16:

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Enable us to know, – as in heaven, so on earth, – God is omnipotent, supreme.

The knowing: The perfect man — governed by God, his perfect Principle — is sinless and eternal" (S&H 304).

The asking: ". . . rule out of me all sin . . ." (Daily Prayer, Church Manual 41).

The knowing: "Love inspires, illumines, designates, and leads the way" (S&H 454).

The asking: "Shepherd, show me how to go O'er the hillside steep, How to gather, how to sow,— How to feed Thy sheep" (Poem, "Feed My Sheep" by Mary Baker Eddy).

The knowing: "Spirit is God, and man is His image and likeness" (S&H 468).

The asking: "Then, in speechless prayer, ask God to enable you to reflect God, to become His own image and likeness, even the calm, clear, radiant reflection of Christ's glory, healing the sick, bringing the sinner to repentance, and raising the spiritually dead in trespasses and sins to life in God. Jesus said: 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you'" (My 150).

Now, we've been spending our unearthed gold of prayer on our own behalf for the sake of spiritual progress. And progress we must; it's the law of God. The more we spend the more we'll have for what waits round the next bend – the opportunity to help others. So, in preparation, let's pray in our Leader's words from her poem, "Christ My Refuge,"

"My prayer, some daily good to do
To Thine, for Thee;
An offering pure of Love, whereto God leadeth me."

To be continued in Spring, 2009. . . .

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All four parts of this talk will be published in a book "As in heaven, so on earth" and will be available for purchase in the summer of 2009. Please check this site for information: www.MountaintopPublishing.com or call 760-720-0000.

A most joyous Christmas to you all!