
THE CHIEF END OF PRAYER IS THAT "THE FATHER MAY BE GLORIFIED"

by the Rev Andrew Murray

I go unto the Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.'-JOHN 14:13.

That the Father may be glorified in the Son: it is to this end that Jesus on His throne in glory will do all we ask in His Name. Every answer to prayer He gives will have this as its object: when there is no prospect of this object being obtained, He will not answer.

It follows as a matter of course that this must be with us, as with Jesus, the essential element in our petitions: the glory of the Father must be the aim and end, the very soul and life of our prayer.

It was so with Jesus when He was on earth. 'I seek not mine own honour: I seek the honour of Him that sent me;' in such words we have the keynote of His life. In the first words of the high-priestly prayer He gives utterance to it: Father! Glorify Thy son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. 'I have glorified Thee on earth; glorify me with Thyself.' The ground on which He asks to be taken up into the glory He had with the Father, is the twofold one: He has glorified Him on earth; He will still glorify Him in heaven.

What He asks is only to enable Him to glorify the Father more. It is as we enter into sympathy with Jesus on this point, and gratify Him by making the Father's glory our chief object in prayer too, that our prayer cannot fail of an answer. There is nothing of which the Beloved Son has said more distinctly that it will glorify the Father than this, His doing what we ask; He will not, therefore, let any opportunity slip of securing this object. Let us make His aim ours: let the glory of the Father be the link between our asking and His doing: such prayer must prevail.

This word of Jesus comes indeed as a sharp two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus in His prayers on earth, in His intercession in heaven, in His promise of an answer to our prayers from there, makes this His first object-the glory of His Father. Is it so with us too? Or are not, in large measure, self-interest and self-will the strongest motives urging us to pray? Or, if we cannot see that this is the case, have we not to acknowledge that the distinct, conscious longing for the glory of the Father is not what animates our prayers? And yet it must be so.

Not as if the believer does not at times desire it. But he has to mourn that he has so little attained. And he knows the reason of his failure too. It was, because the separation between the spirit of daily life and the spirit of the hour of prayer was too wide. We begin to see that the desire for the glory of the Father is not something that we can awake and present to our Lord when we prepare ourselves to pray. No! it is only when the whole life, in all its parts, is given up to God's glory, that we can really pray to His glory too. 'Do all to the glory of God,' and, 'Ask all to the glory of God,'-these twin commands are inseparable: obedience to the former is the secret of grace for the latter. A life to the glory of God is the condition of the prayers that Jesus can answer, 'that the Father may be glorified.'

This demand in connection with prevailing prayer-that it should be to the glory of God-is no more than right and natural. There is none glorious but the Lord: there is no glory but His, and what He layeth on His creatures. Creation exists to show forth His glory; all that is not for His glory is sin, and darkness, and death: it is only in the glorifying of God that the creatures can find glory. What the Son of Man did, to give Himself wholly, His whole life, to glorify the Father, is nothing but the simple duty of every redeemed one. And Christ's reward will be his too.

Because He gave Himself so entirely to the glory of the Father, the Father crowned Him with glory and honour, giving the kingdom into His hands, with the power to ask what He will, and, as Intercessor, to answer our prayers. And just as we become one with Christ in this, and as our prayer is part of a life utterly surrendered to God's glory, will the Saviour be able to glorify the Father to us by the fulfilment of the promise: 'Whatsoever ye shall ask, I will do it.'

To such a life, with God's glory our only aim, we cannot attain by any effort of our own. It is only in the man Christ Jesus that such a life is to be seen: in Him it is to be found for us. Yes blessed be God! His life is our life; He gave Himself for us; He Himself is now our life. The discovery, and the confession, and the denial, of self, as usurping the place of God, of self-seeking and self-trusting, is essential, and yet is what we cannot accomplish in our own strength.

It is the incoming and indwelling, the Presence and the Rule in the heart, of our Lord Jesus who glorified the Father on earth, and is now glorified with Him, that thence He might glorify Him in us;--it is Jesus Himself coming in, who can cast out all self-glorifying, and give us instead His own God-glorifying life and Spirit. It is Jesus, who longs to glorify the Father in hearing our prayers, who will teach us to live and to pray to the glory of God.

And what motive, what power is there that can urge our slothful hearts to yield themselves to our Lord to work this in us? Surely nothing more is needed than a sight of how glorious, how alone worthy of glory the Father is. Let our faith learn in adoring worship to bow before Him, to ascribe to Him alone the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, to yield ourselves to dwell in His light as the ever-blessed, ever-loving One.

Surely we shall be stirred to say, 'To Him alone be glory.' And we shall look to our Lord Jesus with new intensity of desire for a life that refuses to see or seek ought but the glory of God. When there is but little prayer that can be answered, the Father is not glorified. It is a duty, for the glory of God, to live and pray so that our prayer can be answered. For the sake of God's glory, let us learn to pray well.

What a humbling thought that so often there is earnest prayer for a child or a friend, for a work or a circle, in which the thought of our joy or our pleasure was far stronger than any yearnings for God's glory. No wonder that there are so many unanswered prayers: here we have the secret. God would not be glorified when that glory was not our object. He that would pray the prayer of faith, will have to give himself to live literally so that the Father in all things may be glorified in him. This must be his aim: without this there cannot be the prayer of faith. 'How can ye believe,' said Jesus, 'which receive glory of one another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?'

All seeking of our own glory with men makes faith impossible: it is the deep, intense self-sacrifice that gives up its own glory, and seeks the glory of God alone, that wakens in the soul that spiritual susceptibility of the Divine, which is faith. The surrender to God to seek His glory, and the expectation that He will show His glory in hearing us, are one at root: He that seeks God's glory will see it in the answer to his prayer, and he alone.

And how, we ask again, shall we attain to it? Let us begin with confession. How little has the glory of God been an all-absorbing passion; how little our lives and our prayers have been full of it. How little have we lived in the likeness of the Son, and in sympathy with Him-for God and His glory alone. Let us take time, until the Holy Spirit discover it to us, and we see how wanting we have been in this. True knowledge and confession of sin are the sure path to deliverance.

And then let us look to Jesus. In Him we can see by what death we can glorify God. In death He glorified Him; through death He was glorified with Him. It is by dying, being dead to self and living to God, that we can glorify Him. And this-this death to self, this life to the glory of God-is what Jesus gives and lives in each one who can trust Him for it.

Let nothing less than these—the desire, the decision to live only for the glory of the Father, even as Christ did; the acceptance of Him with His life and strength working it in us; the joyful assurance that we can live to the glory of God, because Christ lives in us;—let this be the spirit of our daily life. Jesus stands surety for our living thus; the Holy Spirit is given, and waiting to make it our experience, if we will only trust and let Him; O let us not hold back through unbelief, but confidently take as our watchword—All to the glory of God! The Father accepts the will, the sacrifice is well-pleasing; the Holy Spirit will seal us within with the consciousness, we are living for God and His glory.

And then what quiet peace and power there will be in our prayers, as we know ourselves through His grace, in perfect harmony with Him who says to us, when He promises to do what we ask: ‘That the Father may be glorified in the Son.’ With our whole being consciously yielded to the inspiration of the Word and Spirit, our desires will be no longer ours but His; their chief end the glory of God.

With increasing liberty we shall be able in prayer to say: Father! Thou knowest, we ask it only for Thy glory. And the condition of prayer—answers, instead of being as a mountain we cannot climb, will only give us the greater confidence that we shall be heard, because we have seen that prayer has no higher beauty or blessedness than this, that it glorifies the Father. And the precious privilege of prayer will become doubly precious because it brings us into perfect unison with the Beloved Son in the wonderful partnership He proposes: ‘You ask, and I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.’

‘LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.’

Blessed Lord Jesus! I come again to Thee. Every lesson Thou givest me convinces me more deeply how little I know to pray aright. But every lesson also inspires me with hope that Thou art going to teach me, that Thou art teaching me not only to know what prayer should be, but actually to pray as I ought. O my Lord! I look with courage to Thee, the Great Intercessor, who didst pray and dost hear prayer, only that the Father may be glorified, to teach me too to live and to pray to the glory of God.

Saviour! To this end I yield myself to Thee again. I would be nothing. I have given self, as already crucified with Thee, to the death. Through the Spirit its workings are mortified and made dead; Thy life and Thy love of the Father are taking possession of me. A new longing begins to fill my soul, that every day, every hour, that in every prayer the glory of the Father may be everything to me. O my Lord! I am in Thy school to learn this: teach Thou it me.

And do Thou, the God of glory, the Father of glory, my God and my Father, accept the desire of a child who has seen that Thy glory is indeed alone worth living for. O Lord! Show me Thy glory. Let it overshadow me. Let it fill the temple of my heart. Let me dwell in it as revealed in Christ. And do Thou Thyself fulfil in me Thine own good pleasure, that Thy child should find his glory in seeking the glory of his Father.

Amen.