

Chapter Thirty-Nine

How Shall We Pray?



shall we say: “Father, give me this!”—“Father, do for me that!”? Or shall we say: “Behold, I am perfect! Imperfection, sin and suffering are only errors of mortal mind!”?

Or shall we pray: “Father, give me of Thy strength that I may live in harmony with Thy law, for thus only will all good come to me!”?

The first way is to beg; the second, to steal; the third, to earn by honest effort.

“Father, give me this!”—“Father do for me that!” Thus prayed our fathers, not understanding the great Law of Compensation, the Law of Giving and Receiving, which demands that we give an equivalent for everything we receive. To receive without giving is to beg.

The lily, in return for the nourishment it receives from the soil and the sun, gives its beauty and fragrance. The birds of the air give a return for their sustenance by their songs, their beauty of plumage and by destroying worms and insects, the enemies of plants and men. Every living thing gives an equivalent for its existence in some way or other.

With Man, the fulfillment of the Law of Service and of Compensation becomes conscious and voluntary and his self-respect refuses to take without giving.

“Behold, I am perfect! Imperfection, sin and suffering are only errors of mortal mind!” Such is the prayer of certain metaphysical healers.

To assume the possession of goodness and perfection without an earnest effort to develop and to deserve these qualities means to

steal the glory of the only Perfect One. The assumption of present perfection precludes the necessity of striving and laboring for its attainment. If I am already all goodness, all love, all wisdom and all power, what remains for me to strive for?

Herein lies the danger of metaphysical idealism. While it may dispel pessimism, fear and anxiety, it inevitably weakens the will power and the capacity for self-help and personal effort.

The ideal of the metaphysician is the ideal of the animal. The animal does not worry about right or wrong, nor, with few exceptions, does it make provision for the future. Its care and forethought extend only to the next meal. But this perfect, ideal, passive trust in Nature's bounty causes the animal to remain animal and prevents its rising above the narrow limitations of habit and instinct.

The inherent faculties, capacities and powers of the human soul can be developed only by effort and use. The savage, living in the most favored regions of the earth, depending for his sustenance in perfect faith and trust on Nature's neverfailing bounty, has remained savage. Through ages he has risen but little above the level of the beasts that perish.

The great Law of Use ordains that those faculties and powers which we do not develop remain in abeyance and that those which we possess weaken and atrophy if we fail to exercise them.

The Master, Jesus, emphasized this Law of Use in many of his parables and sayings.

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.”

What does this mean? Those who have the desire and the will to work out their own salvation acquire greater knowledge and power in exact proportion to their well-directed efforts; but those who have neither the desire nor the will to help themselves, lose their natural endowments and the possibilities and opportunities which these would have conferred upon them.

The anatomy and physiology of the human brain reveal the fact that for every voluntary faculty, capacity and power of body, mind and soul which we wish to develop, we have to create new cells and centers in the brain. In this respect, Nature gives us no more and no less than we deserve and work for. If we try to cheat by usurping the

perfection and the power which we have not honestly earned and developed, then sometime, somewhere we shall have to square the balance.

The Right Way to Pray

After all, the only true prayer is personal effort and self-help. This does not mean that we should not invoke the help of the Higher Powers, of those who have gone before us, of the Great Friends and Invisible Helpers and of the Great Father, the giver of all life, all wisdom and all power. But **we should pray for strength to do our work, not to have it done for us.** The wise parent will not do for the child the home tasks assigned him at school. Neither will the powers on high or the Great Friends perform our allotted tasks for us.¹

This life is a school for personal effort. If it were not so, life would be meaningless. From the cradle to the grave, our days are one continuous effort to learn, to acquire and to overcome difficulties. Only in this way can we develop our latent faculties, capacities and powers. These cannot be developed by having our tasks done for us, nor by assuming that we already know and possess everything.

The athlete must do his own training. No one else can do it for him. The **assumption** of superiority over his opponent will not develop his suppleness of body and strength of muscle. To be sure, faith and courage are essential to victory, but they must be backed by careful and persistent training. Vainglorious boasting alone will not win the contest.

So in the battle of life, the more faith we have in God, in the Great Friends, and in our own powers, the wider do we open ourselves to the inflow of wisdom and strength from all that is good and true and powerful in the universe. But through persistent and well-directed effort alone can we control the powers and fashion the materials which Nature has so lavishly bestowed upon us.

The creative will, actuated by desire and enlightened by reason, brings order and harmony out of chaotic forces and materials. And yet certain metaphysicians tell us that we ourselves must do nothing to overcome weakness, sin and suffering, that we must depend entirely upon the efficiency of metaphysical formulas, that the Deity and the powers of Nature are jealous of our personal efforts, that we

¹ In the *Great Work* we call these "Great Friends" the "Hierarchies."

must not try to help ourselves lest we forfeit their good will.

Is it not blasphemous to assume that God would blame us and withhold His aid because we dared to use the faculties, capacities and powers with which He has endowed us? You say, "Nobody is foolish enough to claim such things." But this is the teaching of a powerful healing cult. Its members are forbidden, on penalty of expulsion, to use in the treatment of human ailments the most innocent natural remedies. The giving of an enema, or the commonsense regulation of diet are regarded as sufficient to nullify the power of their metaphysical formulas and to prevent the working of Nature's healing forces.

One of our patients who had been under such treatment until she was in a dying condition, told us afterwards that her bowels often did not move for a week, and that, when she complained to her "healer" about this condition and asked permission to take an enema, he answered her: "Pay no attention. The Lord is taking care of that in some other way."

The man who said this had been a prominent allopathic physician before he turned "healer." He, too, like so many others ignorant of Nature's simple laws, had swung from one extreme to the other, from allopathic overdoing to metaphysical underdoing. In this instance, the Lord took care of the patient's bowels until she was taken down with a severe attack of appendicitis and peritonitis.

Amidst all the extremes, Nature Cure points the commonsense middle way. Basing its teachings and its practices on a clear understanding of the laws of health, disease and cure, it refrains from suppressing acute diseases with poisonous drugs or the knife, realizing that they are in reality Nature's cleansing and healing efforts. Neither does it sit idly by and expect the Lord, or metaphysical formulas or the medicine bottle and the knife to do our work and to make good for our violations of Nature's laws.

Understanding the Law, Nature Cure believes in cooperating with the Law; in giving the Lord a helping hand. It teaches that "God helps him who helps himself," that He will not become angry and refuse His help if His children use rightly the reason, the will power and the self-control with which He has endowed them, so that they may achieve their own salvation.

Nature Cure from beginning to end is one grand, true prayer. It teaches The Law on all planes of being, the physical, the mental,

the moral and the spiritual; and it insists that the only way to attain perfect health of body, mind and soul is to comply with the Law to the best of our ability. **When we do that, we place ourselves in alignment with the constructive principle in Nature, and in exact proportion to our intelligent and voluntary cooperation with the laws of our being, all good things will come to us.**

Therefore we pray:

“Father, give me of Thy strength that I may live in harmony with Thy Law, for thus only will all good come to me.”



