

## IF IT BE THY WILL.

BY THE EDITOR.

It is a constant experience in our ministry to hear from the lips of Christians who are seeking the Lord for healing, the statement that they have always prayed to God for deliverance from pain and sickness with the proviso, "if it be Thy will." This is the cause in tens of thousands of cases why their suffering and disease is not removed, for such a prayer is not "the prayer of faith" and not in accordance with the-revealed will of God. When we state this, we are met by a number of statements in defense of this mode of prayer, which may be briefly summarized thus:

- 1. It is presumptuous to pray in any other way, since God's will in this matter is unknown.**
- 2. It may be for God's glory that we shall not be healed.**
- 3. This form of prayer is justified by the prayer of the leper, "Lord if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."**
- 4. It is justified by the prayer of our Lord, "Oh, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt. "**
- 5. It is justified by the Lord's prayer, or rather the prayer which the Lord taught His disciples to pray, "Thy will be done." We propose briefly and pointedly to answer the errors involved in all these five statements.**

**1.** It can never be presumptuous to pray with divine assurance for healing if all the conditions are fully complied with by the suppliant, since God has revealed Himself in every age as the Healer of His people, and it is His absolutely revealed will to heal all such as come in faith pleading His Covenant Name and Promises. It is presumptuous to doubt what God has said, or to ask in any other spirit than that of confident expectation for what He has promised. He has said, " I AM the Lord that healeth thee," (Ex. 15:26) and that is an eternal Covenant Name, the Covenant of Jehovah-Rophi, resting in which the believer may sing, ' ' Bless Jehovah, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. " Unchangeable as God Himself, that name reveals His nature as the Healer of his people, "for it is written by His fingers on the Imperishable Page of His Word. His promises are in perfect accord with this revelation of Himself.

Prophets and poets, evangelists and apostles, inspired by the Divine Spirit, repeat these promises in a thousand forms. The prophets tell of Jehovah manifest in the flesh, who would in the fullness of time come not only as the Saviour, but as the Healer and the Cleanser of His people. Isaiah 35th embodies this glorious three-fold blessing of salvation, healing and holiness. Salvation first: "He will come and save you." (verse 4.) Healing comes next: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing, " etc. (verses 5 and 6.) And then follows Holiness, which is the glorious Highway of the King in which the fully redeemed shall walk, ' ' The way of Holiness. "(verse 8.)

The evangelist reveals to our admiring gaze the glorious scene in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4) where our Immanuel unfolds His mission in the first recorded sermon after His baptism, His temptation, and His triumph; and there our Lord declares His mission to save and to heal. Throughout all His ministry the dual gospel of salvation and healing goes hand in hand, and again and again it is recorded, as in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, that He "went about teaching, preaching, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Truly we may cry with the prophet, "Surely He hath borne our griefs [Hebrew, 'sicknesses'] and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4), and with Matthew, as he closes the record of that wondrous night of healing in the streets of Capernaum. (Mat. 8:16, 17.) "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." Over and over again His willingness to heal all who come in faith is demonstrated, and that without exception. In no case did He ever say, "I will not," but His "I will," rings out in every page of the gospel.

Apostles, prophets, and teachers throughout all the early ages of the church repeat and demonstrate in the inspired epistles, and the other sacred records of the church's wondrous story, the same willingness of the Lord to heal, and that without exception, all who trust Him. Unless He is changed, and if that were possible, He would not be God, then He is still the Healer of His people. Let us rejoice that the Holy Spirit still breathes upon our hearts the inspiring words, "Jesus Christ is THE SAME yesterday, to-day and forever." Since that is so, then He is able, WILLING, longing, and present to heal, for He is not only an unchanged, but a present Lord, whose Word declares, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

**2.** It cannot be for God's glory that any of His children should be unhealed, since God is never glorified in our sickness any more than in our sin, for both sickness and sin are clearly Satan's work. He is glorified in delivering us from sickness, and nowhere is it written that He is glorified in sickness. The mistaken perversion of our Lord's words in John 11:4 has led many astray by giving them the false interpretation that God is glorified in our sickness. Jesus, when He received the message of Lazarus' sisters, "' Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," did not say that God was glorified in that sickness; He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." This glorious declaration was abundantly justified by the wondrous manifestation of His resurrection and healing power, and He was glorified, as the Son of God, in the delivering His loved one from the power of the devil, who is the author " of disease and death. Jesus did not say, God made him sick that I should be glorified in delivering him from sickness," but He said in effect that the glory of God in His own person should be manifested in delivering him from that evil one from whom sin and sickness and death and hell proceed, that is, from the devil. Christ did not go about healing those that were oppressed of God, for it is written (Act 10: 38), " God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Since, then, all forms of human sickness are Satan's work, these filthy diseases and painful infirmities can never be God's will, and if we believe that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil," (1 John 4:8 ) then we must believe that He came to destroy disease, and that God is ever glorified in the destruction of disease in His people.

How glorious it will be when from the four winds the breath of God breathes upon multitudes of God's children who are fainting, groaning, and dying, and are in their graves so far as practical usefulness is concerned. What a glorious power will be given to the Church of God when those who are now useless in the battle field will rise up at His command, filled with divine Life and glad with the indwelling consciousness of His healing power in every part of their spirit, soul, and body. What mighty blows will then be dealt in Jesus' name and in His strength to Satan's kingdom, and what multitudes will be set free by these triumphant hosts will go forth "an exceeding great army" to proclaim a perfect redemption not only for the spirit and the soul, but for the body also. This wondrous power rested on the Church in its glorious morning, and now that the night has come, the sure word of prophecy encourages us to believe that He who is coming to take out of the world His own will prepare them for that coming by "restoring health" to them. This health will be given for blessed service in the "little while" ere "he shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." It will not be from innumerable sick beds, groaning with cancers and rheumatisms and fevers that the "wise virgins" shall go forth with glad songs and joyful steps to meet their Lord, but they shall go forth to meet Him with the Oil filling their earthly vessels, for ere He comes He shall be glorified in their deliverance from the foul imprints of Satan's finger. On every page of the evangel and in the Acts of the Apostles we read that "they glorified the God of Israel" when they saw the mighty power of Jesus' name in the healing of the sick, and so it will be again. It is for God's glory that we should be healed.

**3.** The prayer of the leper can never justify the use of the word "If Thou wilt or it be Thy will," since we have the answer of the Lord to the prayer of the leper in the two glorious words, "I will." When the leper said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," he acknowledged, in the act of worship, first that Christ was His Lord and God in whom he trusted for salvation. Second, by the words, "If Thou canst," he expressed his faith in the power of the Lord to heal, but being ignorant as yet of the abounding willingness of Christ, who was only then unfolding His glorious will, he said, "If Thou wilt," and in speaking thus he expressed his doubtfulness as to the Lord's willingness. But when Jesus said "I Will," the leper no longer prayed "If Thou wilt;" to have done so would have been to sin. Now Christ's answer to the leper is His answer to every true believer, "I will," and to repeat the form of the leper's prayer, "If Thou wilt," is to doubt whether that is really the Lord's answer, and doubt is sin. Had the leper persisted in praying "If Thou wilt," after he had heard the Lord's answer, he would never have been healed, for he would have shrunk from the Lord's touch. This is what many Christians are doing now; they persist in praying, even when they have heard the Lord's answer, "Lord, if Thou wilt" and therefore they shrink from the Lord's touch.

To every true believer to-day bowed down with sickness Christ speaks as at Bethesda, (John 5:6) "Wilt thou be made whole?" and unless we are willing He cannot heal, for He demands that we shall believe in His willingness without an "if" or a "but" or any qualification whatever. The language of faith never includes a syllable of doubt, and the little word "if," though it be but a syllable, is an element of doubt so great that no prayer can be answered which contains it. Let the believer listen to the Lord's answer to the leper, "I will," and never

again repeat the leper's word of ignorance 'justifiable in him but not in us), that little pernicious word " if." When one came to Jesus with that word, saying " If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us, " the Lord's answer was distinct and clear, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. " (Mark 9: 23.) The "if" is never on God's part; His will is revealed, and there can never be any doubt as to His willingness to heal. Therefore it but rests with the Christian to throw away the "if" and to say, "LORD, I BELIEVE."

4. There can be no analogy between our prayer for Divine Healing and Christ's bitter cry in the hour of His agony and sore temptation in the garden, when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." As He Himself had said, it was impossible for that cup to pass from Him. This is proved by reference to His word in John 12:27, where He says, "Now Is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour; " and then it was that He, withdrawing that prayer, said, "Father, glorify Thy name, " and to that there came a voice from Heaven, saying, "I have both glorified It and will glorify it again. " It was only in thus fulfilling the eternal will and purpose of the eternal Trinity that it was possible for Him to become the Redeemer of men, and the "if" in that prayer was thus absolutely withdrawn and with glorious devotion for our salvation and healing and perfect redemption, He said, "as THOU wilt. " All we ever can desire any Christian to say, is " Not as I will, but as Thou wilt," only let us know clearly what that will is, and then pray that His revealed will shall be fulfilled in us.

5. There is no such prayer taught Christ's disciples as that which is so often quoted as justifying the retention of the doubting "IF;" viz. " Thy will be done." Christians have no right to insert a full stop where their Bibles do not even contain a comma. The prayer, as our Lord taught it to his disciples, is contained in Matthew 6:10, and is not "Thy will be done," but "Thy will be done in earth AS IT IS in Heaven," a very different prayer, with a larger scope than the abbreviated and distorted petition, " Thy will be done. " The prayer, as it is often quoted, is a prayer of resignation to the unknown will of God, but that is clearly not the intention of our Lord. As He inspires the prayer, it is a prayer beseeching divine intervention, and entreating that "Our Father in Heaven" shall now, on this earth, do His will in us exactly in the same way as that will is now done in Heaven. Resignation to the Divine Will is a lovely and beautiful grace, but when the prayer which our Lord has taught us is distorted and used by Christians as a reason for their resignation to disease and corruption which is the devil's will and work, the perversion of the prayer becomes a very serious matter. Satan, himself must have devised and maintained in Christian writings and hymns this miserable perversion of the prayer taught by our Lord, for it has been a most successful delusion in his hands to keep millions of God's children bound by his filthy chains in racking pain, and even leading them to glorify God for his (that is, Satan's) work.

The extent to which this has been done by Christians for many centuries is beyond all expression sad. Holy and consecrated in spirit, great numbers of lovely Christian characters have pressed their lips to the work of Satan's foul fingers on their bodies, and said, looking up

to God, "Father, Thy will be done. " Take, for illustration, the verses written by that excellent Christian lady, Frances Ridley Havergal, entitled, "A song in the Night." In a note to the little poem, she says that it was written in severe pain on Sunday after noon, Oct. 8, 1876, at the Pension Wengen, Alps. She says :—

*I take this pain. Lord Jesus, from Thine own hand;  
The strength to bear it bravely Thou wilt command.*

*I take this pain, Lord Jesus, as proof indeed  
That Thou art watching closely my truest need,  
That Thou, my Good Physician, art watching still,  
That all thine own good pleasure Thou wilt fulfil.*

*I take this pain, Lord Jesus; What Thou dost choose  
The soul that really loves Thee will not refuse.  
I take this pain, Lord Jesus as Thine own gift.  
And true, though tremulous praises I now uplift.*

*'Tis Thy dear hand, O Saviour, that presseth sore  
The hand that bears the nail-prints forevermore.  
And now beneath its shadow, hidden by Thee,  
The pressure only tells me Thou lovest me.*

It is sad to say it, and to say it of one whose memory is so justly held dear by the church of God, but said it must be, that this, and the thousands of other poems and writings like it, must give great joy to the devil, for these sentiments are an absolute insult to God. To declare that a sinful, horrible, filthy disease, corrupting and destroying a useful life, is implanted there by the hand of the Saviour and the Healer and the Cleanser, the incorruptible God, from whom nothing unclean can come, is to say that which is not true. It is no more true in Frances Ridley Havergal than it was in Job when he said "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye, my friends; for the hand of the Lord hath touched me," (Job 19: 21), when not one single filthy boil on Job's miserable body had ever been planted there by any other than by Satan's unclean hand, since it is written that "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown. " (Job 2:7.)

Let us look more closely at this prayer which our Lord has taught us, and we shall see how entirely opposite to its perversion the prayer really is. As we have said, it is a prayer for divine intervention, asking that our Father's will shall be done in us now, as it is done in Heaven.

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