
Chapter Seven

The Conditions of Power in Prayer

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us—1 John 3:22-24.

I HAVE OFTEN SPOKEN to my congregation on the importance of prayer, especially desiring to stir up the members to pray for me and for the Lord's work in our church. Truly, I do not think I have had a more weighty subject or one that weighs more upon my soul. If I were only allowed to offer one request from church members, it would be this: "Brethren, pray for us" (2 Thess. 3:1). Of what use can our ministry be without the divine blessing, and how can we expect the divine blessing unless it is sought for by the church of God? I would say it even with tears: "Brethren, pray for us." Do not restrain prayer. On the contrary, be abundant in intercession, for only through prayer can the prosperity of a church be increased or even maintained.

But then, the question occurs: What if there is something in the church that prevents our prayers from being successful? That is a

prerequisite question that must be considered most earnestly before the church is exhorted to intercession. The Word of God is clear that the prayers of unholy people will soon become abominations to God. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa. 1:15). Churches may fall into such a condition that their devotions will be an iniquity; "even the solemn meeting" will be a weariness to the Lord. There may be evils in the heart of any believer that may render it impossible for God, in consistency with His own character and attributes, to have any regard for our intercessions. If we regard iniquity in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. According to the text, there are some things that the people of God must possess or their prayers will fall short of the mark. The text tells us, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." We need to consider the essentials to power in prayer—what we must do, what we must be, what we must have, if we are to prevail habitually with God in prayer.

The Essentials of Power in Prayer

We must make a few distinctions at the outset. I maintain that there is a great difference between the prayer of a sinner who is seeking God's mercy and the prayer of a man who is saved. I say to every reader—whatever your character—if you sincerely seek the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, you shall have it. Whatever may have been your previous condition of life, if you penitently seek Jehovah's face through the appointed Mediator, you will find Him. If the Holy Spirit has taught you to pray, hesitate no longer, but hasten to the cross and there rest your guilty soul on Jesus. The only qualification I know of for the sinner's first prayer is sincerity.

But we must speak in a different manner to believers. The people of God are heard just as the sinner is heard and daily find the needful grace that every seeker receives in answer to prayer. Yet the child of God comes under a special discipline peculiar to the regenerated family. In that discipline, answers to prayer occupy a high position and are of a high importance. Believers are meant to enjoy many blessings over and above mere salvation. There are

mercies, blessings, comforts, and favors that render the believer's present life effective, happy, and honorable, but these are not given irrespective of his character. These blessings are not the essential matters with regard to salvation that the believer possesses unconditionally, for they are covenant blessings. But we now refer to the honors and special favors of God's house that are given or withheld according to our obedience as the Lord's children. If you neglect the conditions appended to them, your heavenly Father will withhold them from you.

The essential blessings of the covenant of grace stand unconditioned. The invitation to seek for mercy is addressed to those who have no qualifications whatsoever except their need. But come inside the divine family as saved men and women, and you will find that other choice blessings are given or withheld according to our attention to the Lord's rules in His family. To give a common illustration: if a hungry person were at your door and asked for bread, you would give it to him, regardless of his character. You will also give your child food, whatever his behavior may be. You will not deny your child anything that is necessary for life. You will never proceed in any course of discipline against him so as to deny him his needful food or clothing to shield him from the cold. But there are many other things that your child may desire that you will give him conditioned upon his obedience. I take it that this illustrates how far the paternal government of God will push this matter and where it will not go.

Understand that the text refers not so much to God's hearing a prayer of His servants, for that God will do even when His servants are not walking with Him and when He is hiding His face from them. But the power in prayer here intended is the continuous and absolute power with God described in the words of the text, "whatsoever we ask, we receive of him."

For this prayer there are certain prerequisites and essentials that should be noted, and the first is *childlike obedience*. "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments." If we lack this, the Lord may say to us as He did to His people Israel, "Yet have ye forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen" (Judg. 10:13-14). Any father will tell you that for him to grant the request of a disobedient child would be to encourage

rebellion in the family and render it impossible for him to rule in his own house. It is often incumbent upon the parent to say, "My child, you do not listen to my word, therefore, I cannot listen to yours." It is not that the father does not love but that he does love the child. Because of his love, the father feels bound to show his displeasure by refusing the request of his erring offspring. God acts with us as we should act toward our stubborn children, and if He sees that we will go into sin and transgress, it is a part of His kind paternal discipline to say, "I will not hear your prayer when you cry to Me. You shall be saved and have the bread and the water of life, but you shall have no more. The luxuries of My kingdom shall be denied you, and anything like special prevailing with Me in prayer you shall not possess."

That the Lord deals with His own people is clear: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. . . . He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee" (Ps. 81:13-14, 16). If the disobedient child of God had the promise put into his hands—"Whatsoever ye ask in prayer, ye shall receive"—he would be sure to ask for something that would support him in his rebellion. He would be asking for provisions for his own lust and aid for his personal rebellion. This can never be tolerated. Shall God be a supplier to our corruptions? Shall He fuel the flames of carnal passion? A self-willed heart hankers after greater liberty that it may be the more obstinate. A haughty spirit longs for greater elevation that it may be prouder still. A slothful spirit asks for greater ease that it may be yet more indolent. A domineering spirit asks for more power that it may have more opportunities of oppression. As is the man, such will his prayer be. Shall God listen to these prayers? It cannot be. He will give us what we ask *if we keep His commandments*, but if we become disobedient and reject His government, He will reject our prayers and say, "And if ye walk contrary unto me, . . . will I also walk contrary unto you" (Lev. 26:21, 24). Happy shall we be if through divine grace we can say with David, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD" (Ps. 26:6). This will never be perfect innocency, but it will at least be an innocence of the love of sin and of willful revolt from God.

Next to childlike obedience is another essential to victorious prayer: *childlike reverence*. Notice the next sentence in the text: We receive what we ask "because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." When a child is given a command from his father, we do not let the child question its propriety or wisdom. Obedience ends where questioning begins. A child's standard for obedience must not become the measure of the father's right to command. Good children say, "Father has told us to do this, and therefore we will do it, for we delight to please him always." The strongest reason for a loving child's action is the persuasion that it would please his parents, and the strongest thing that can be said to hold back a gracious child is to prove that such a course of action would displease his parents. It is precisely so with us toward God, who is a perfect parent. We may without fear always make His pleasure the rule of right, while the rule of wrong may safely remain that which would displease Him. Suppose any of us should be self-willed and say, "I shall not do what pleases God. I shall do what pleases myself." Then, observe, what would be the nature of our prayers? Our prayers might then be summed up in the request, "Let me have my own way." And can we expect God to consent to that? Are we to be not only lords over God's heritage but over God Himself? Would you have the Almighty resign the throne to place a proud mortal there? If you have a child in your house who has no respect whatever for his father, will you stoop when he says, "I want to have my own way in all things"? Will you allow him to dictate to you and forget the honor due to you as father? Will you say, "Yes, my dear child, I recognize your importance. You shall be lord in the house, and whatever you ask for you shall have"?

God's house is not run this way. God will not listen to His self-willed children, unless it is to hear them in anger and to answer them in wrath. Remember how He heard the prayer of Israel for flesh, and when the meat was yet in their mouths it became a curse to them (Num. 11:31-33). Many persons are disciplined by obtaining their own desires, even as backsliders are filled with their own devices. We must have a childlike reverence of God, so that we feel, "Lord, if what I ask for does not please You, neither would it please me. My desires are put into Your hands to be corrected. Strike the pen through every petition that I offer that is not right.

And put in whatever I have omitted, even though I might not have desired it had I considered it. Good Lord, if I should have desired it, hear me as if I had desired it. 'Not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' " Now I think you can see that this yielding spirit is essential to continual prevailing with God in prayer. A lack of submission is a sure obstacle to distinction in supplication. The Lord will be revered by those who are round about Him. They must have an eye to His pleasure in all that they do and ask, or He will not look upon them with favor.

The text also suggests the necessity of *childlike trust*. "And this is his commandment, that *we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.*" Everywhere in Scripture, faith in God is spoken of as necessary to successful prayer. We must "believe that [God] is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6), or else we have not prayed at all. In proportion to our faith will be the success of our prayer. It is a standing rule of the kingdom, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Remember how the Holy Spirit speaks by the pen of the Apostle James: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (James 1:5-7). The text speaks of faith in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, which I understand to mean faith in His declared character, faith in His gospel, faith in the truth concerning His substitution and salvation. Or it may mean faith in the authority of Christ, so that when I plead with God and say, "Do it in the name of Jesus," I mean, "Do for me as You would have done for Jesus, for I am authorized by Him to use His name. Do it for me as You would have done it for Him." He that can pray with faith in the name cannot fail, for the Lord Jesus has said, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it."

But there must be faith, and if there is no faith, we cannot expect to be heard. Do you not see that? Let us come back to our family illustration. Suppose a child in the house does not believe his father's word and is constantly saying that he finds his mind full of doubts as to his father's truthfulness. He is not at all ashamed that he should say such a thing, but he rather feels that he ought to be pitied, as if it were an infirmity that he could not avoid. He

declares that though he tries to believe his father's promise, yet he cannot. I think a father so distrusted would not be in a great hurry to grant such a son's request. Indeed, it is very probable that the mistrustful son's petitions would be such as could not be complied with, even if his father were willing to do so, since they would amount to a gratification of his own unbelief and a dishonor to his parent. For instance, suppose this child doubts whether his father would provide him with his daily food. He might then come to his father and say, "Father give me enough money to last until I am a man. Quiet my fears, for I am in great anxiety." The father replies, "My son, why should I do that?" And he gets for a reply, "I am very sorry to say it, dear Father, but I cannot trust you. I have such a weak faith in you and your love that I am afraid one of these days you will leave me to starve, and therefore I should like to have something sure in the bank." What father would listen to such a request? You would grieve that thoughts so dishonoring to yourself should pass through the mind of one of your own beloved ones, but you would not—and could not—give way to them.

Let me ask you to apply the parable to yourself. Did you never offer requests that were of much the same character? You have been unable to trust God to give you day by day your daily bread, and therefore you have been craving for what you call "some provision for the future." You want a more trustworthy provider than providence, a better security than God's promise. You are unable to trust your heavenly Father's Word and find a few bonds of some half-bankrupt business far more reliable! You can trust the barons of financial institutions but not the God of the whole earth! In a thousand ways we insult the Lord by imagining the things which are seen to be more substantial than His unseen omnipotence. We ask God to give us at this moment what we do not require at present and may never need at all. The reason for such desires may be found in a disgraceful distrust of Him that makes us imagine that great provisions are needful to ensure our being provided for. Are you not to blame here, and do you expect the Lord to aid your folly? Shall God encourage your distrust? Shall He give you a heap of gold and silver for thieves to steal and chests of garments to feed moths (Matt. 6:19)? Would you have the Lord act as if He admitted the correctness of your suspicions and confessed to unfaithfulness? God forbid! Expect not, therefore, to be heard when

your prayer is suggested by an unbelieving heart: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5).

The next essential to continued success in prayer is *childlike love*—"That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment." The great commandment after faith is love. As it is said of God, "God is love" (1 John 4:8), so may we say that "Christianity is love." If each of us were incarnations of love, we should have attained to the complete likeness of Christ. We should abound in love to God, love to Christ, love to the church, love to sinners, and love to men everywhere. When a man has no love to God, he is in the condition of a child without love to his father. Shall his father promise absolutely to fulfill all the desires of his unloving heart? Of if a child has no love for his brothers and sisters, shall the father trust him with an absolute promise and say, "Ask and it shall be given thee"? The unloving son would impoverish the whole family by his selfish demands. Regardless of all the rest of the household, the son would care only to indulge his own passions. Few Josephs can wear the garment of many colors and not become household tyrants. Who would allow a prodigal to run off with the estate? Who would be so unwise as to place a greedy, domineering brother in the seat of honor above his brethren?

It is obvious that selfishness cannot be trusted with power in prayer. Spirits that love neither God nor men cannot be trusted with great, broad, unlimited promises. If God is to hear us, we must love God and love our fellow men. When we love God, we shall not pray for anything that would not honor God and shall not wish to see anything happen to us that will not also bless our brethren. Our hearts will beat true to God and to His creatures, and we shall not be wrapped up in ourselves. You must get rid of selfishness before God can trust you with the keys of heaven. But when self is dead, God will enable you to unlock His treasures, and, as a prince, you shall have power with God and prevail.

We must have *childlike ways* as well. "He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him." It is one of a child's ways to love his home. The child to whose requests his father always listens, loves no place so much as the dear old house where his parents live. And he who loves and keeps God's commandments

is said to dwell in God. He has made the Lord his dwelling place and abides in holy familiarity with God. In him our Lord's words are fulfilled, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Faith and love, like two cherubic wings, have borne up the believer's soul above the world and carried him near to the throne of God. In that, the believer has become like God, his prayers are such as God can answer; but until he is thus conformed to the divine mind, there must be some limit to the potency of his pleadings. To dwell in God is essential to power with God.

Suppose one of you had a boy who said, "Father, I do not like my home, and I do not care for you or the restraints of family rule. I am leaving home, but I shall return every week and expect that you will give me whatever I ask from you." Will you not say, "My son, if you are so self-willed as to leave my house, can you expect that I will do your bidding? No, my son, if you will not remain with me as a father, I cannot promise you anything." And so is it with God. If we dwell with Him and commune with Him, He will give us all things. If we love Him as He should be loved and trust Him as He should be trusted, He will hear our requests. But if not, it is not reasonable to expect it. Indeed, it would be a slur upon the divine character for Him to fulfill unholy desires and gratify evil whims. "Delight thyself also in the LORD, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Ps. 37:4), but if you have no delight in God, He will not answer you. He may give you the bread and water of affliction and make your life bitter, but He certainly will not give you what your heart desires.

One thing more. It appears from the text that we must have a *childlike spirit*, for "*hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*" What is this but the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit who rules in all the children of God? The willful who think and feel and act differently from God must not expect that God will come round to their way of thinking and feeling and acting. The selfish who are motivated by the spirit of pride or the slothful who are motivated by the love of ease must not expect that God will indulge them. The Holy Spirit—if He rules in us—will subordinate our nature to His own sway, and then the prayers that spring out of our renewed hearts will be in keeping with the will of God, and such prayers will naturally be heard. The same

mind must be in us that was also in Christ Jesus, and then we shall be able to say, "I know that thou hearest me always" (John 11:42).

The Prevalence of These Essential Things

If we have *faith* in God, there is no question about God's hearing our prayer. If we can plead in faith the name and blood of Jesus, we must obtain answers of peace. But a thousand objections are suggested. Suppose these prayers concern the laws of nature, then the scientific men are against us. What of that? I do not know any prayer worth praying that does not come into contact with some natural law or other, and yet I believe in prayers being heard. It is said that God will not change the laws of nature for us, and I reply, "Whoever said He would!" The Lord has ways of answering our prayers irrespective of the working of miracles or suspending of laws. God knows how to accomplish His purposes and hear our prayers by I know not what secret means. Perhaps there are other forces and laws that He has arranged to bring into action just at times when prayer also acts—laws just as fixed and forces just as natural as those that our learned theorizers have been able to discover. The wisest men do not know all the laws that govern the universe. We believe that the prayers of Christians are a part of the machinery of providence, cogs in the great wheel of destiny. When God leads His children to pray, He has already set in motion a wheel that is to produce the result prayed for, and the prayers offered are moving as a part of the wheel. God's own order has established that when there is faith in God. God must hear prayer. The verse before the text says, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him" (1 John 3:21-22). He who has a clear conscience comes to God with confidence, and that confidence of faith insures the answer of his prayer.

Childlike confidence makes us pray as none else can. It causes a man to pray for great things that he would never have asked for if he had not learned this confidence. It also causes him to pray for little things that many people are afraid to ask for, because they have not yet felt toward God the confidence of children. I have often felt that it requires more confidence in God to pray to Him

about a little thing than about great things. We imagine that our great things are somehow worthy of God's attention, though in truth they are little enough to Him. And then we think that our little things must be so insignificant that it is an insult to bring them before Him. We need to realize that what is very important to a child may be very small to his parent, and yet the parent measures the thing not from his own point of view but from the child's. You heard your little boy the other day crying bitterly. The cause of the pain was a splinter in his finger. While you did not call in three surgeons to extract it, the splinter was a great thing to that little sufferer. Standing there with eyes all wet through tears of anguish, it never occurred to that boy that his pain was too small a thing for you to care about. What were mothers and fathers made for but to look after the small concerns of little children? And God our Father is a good father who pities us as fathers pity their children. He counts the stars and calls them all by name, yet He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds. The same God who kindles the sun has said, "I will not quench the smoking flax" (Matt. 12:20). If you have put your confidence in God, you will take your great things and little things to Him, knowing He will never belie your confidence. He has said that they that trust in Him "shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end" (Isa. 45:17). Faith must succeed.

Love must succeed, too, since we have already seen that the man who loves in the Christian sense lives in harmony with God. If you confine your love to your own family, you need to realize that God does not so limit His love, and prayers narrowed within your family circle He will disregard. If a man loves his own little self and hopes everybody's crop of wheat will fail so that his own crop will be worth a higher price, he certainly cannot expect the Lord to agree with such mean selfishness. If a man has a heart large enough to embrace all of God's creatures while he still prays specially for the household of faith, his prayers will be after the Divine mind. The man's love and God's goodness run side by side. Though God's love is like a mighty rolling river compared to the man's trickling brook, yet they both run in the same direction and will both come to the same end. God always hears the prayers of a loving man because those prayers are the shadows of His own decrees.

The man of *obedience* is the man whom God will hear. The man's obedient heart leads him to pray humbly and with submission, for he feels it to be his highest desire that the Lord's will should be done. The man of obedient heart prays like a prophet, and his prayers are prophecies. Is he not one with God? Does he not desire and ask for exactly what God intends? How can a prayer shot from such a bow ever fail to reach its target? If your soul is in harmony with God's soul, you will wish God's own wishes. The difficulty is that we do not stay in harmony with God; but if we did, then we should strike the same note as God strikes. And though God's note would sound like thunder and ours as a whisper, yet there would be a perfect unison—the note struck by prayer on earth would coincide with that which sounds forth from the decrees in heaven.

The man who lives in *fellowship with God* will assuredly succeed in prayer. If the man dwells in God, and God dwells in him, he will desire what God desires. The believer in communion with the Lord desires man's good, and so does God. He desires Christ's glory, and so does God. He desires the church's prosperity, and so does God. He desires his life to be an example of holiness, and God desires it, too. That man knows that he has desires that are not according to God's will, but he provides for this defect by always adding to the end of his prayer: "Lord, if I have asked for anything that is not according to Your mind, I ask You to disregard it. And if any wish that I have expressed to you—even though it is the desire that burns in my bosom above all other wishes—is a wish that is not right in Your sight, disregard it, my Father. But in Your infinite love and compassion, do something better for Your servant than Your servant knows how to ask." When a prayer is after that fashion, how can it fail? The Lord looks out of the windows of heaven and sees such a prayer coming to Him, just as Noah saw the dove returning to the ark, and He puts out His hand to that prayer. As Noah plucked the dove into the ark, so God plucks that prayer in and puts it into His own bosom, saying, "You came out of My bosom, and I welcome you back. My Spirit inspired you, therefore will I answer."

Keep in mind that our text speaks of the Christian as being *filled with God's Spirit*. "We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." Who knows the mind of a man but the

spirit of a man? So, who knows the things of God but the Spirit of God? And if the Spirit of God dwells in us, He tells us what God's mind is. He makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26). It is sometimes imagined that those who always prevail in prayer can pray for what they like, but I can assure you that is not so. You may call upon such a person and ask him to pray for you, but he cannot promise that he will. There are strange restraints placed upon such people of prayer. I heard it said, "I do not know how or why, but I cannot pray effectual fervent prayers in certain cases, though I desire to do so." Like Paul desiring to go into Bithynia and the Spirit restraining Him, so there are requests that we would naturally like to pray, but we are bound in spirit. On the surface, there may be nothing objectionable about the prayer, but the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He gives secret intimations when and where His chosen may hope to prevail. The Spirit gives you the promise that He will hear your believing prayer, but He does not at the same time give you faith about everything that everybody requests you to pray about. On the contrary, He gives you a discretion, a judgment, and a wisdom, and the Spirit makes intercession in the saints according to the will of God.

Practical Improvements for Prayer

We need to pray for God to send a great blessing on the church at large. Have we the essentials for success? Are we believing on the name of Jesus Christ? Are we full of love to God and one another? The double commandment is that we believe on the name of Jesus Christ and that we love one another. Do we love one another? Are we walking in love? I confess that I am far from perfect in that respect. How often have we done unloving things, thought unloving things, said unloving things, listened to unloving gossip, held back our hand unlovingly when we should have rendered help, and even put forth our hand unlovingly to push down a man who was falling? If in the church of God there is a lack of love, we cannot expect prayer to be heard, for God will say, "You ask for success. What for? To add more to a community that does not already love itself! You ask for conversions. What! To

bring in others to join an unloving community?" Do you expect God to save sinners whom you do not love and to convert souls whom you do not care a bit about? The Holy Spirit's great instrument for the conquest of the world is the love of His people for others. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is the master weapon, but next to that is the loving care and generous lifestyle of Christians toward others. How much love do we have, or shall I ask how little?

Are we doing that which is pleasing in God's sight? We cannot expect answers to prayer if we are not. Have you been doing what you would like Jesus Christ to see? Is your household ordered in such a way that it pleases God? Suppose Jesus Christ had visited your house this week, uninvited and unexpected: what would He have thought of what He observed? Unless the members of God's church do what is pleasing in God's sight, they bar the door against the success of the prayers of the church. Who wishes to stand in the way of the success of God's church through an inconsistent Christian life?

Do we dwell in God? The text says that if we keep His commandments, God dwells in us and we in Him. Is that how we live throughout the day? In our business are we still with God? A Christian is not to run to God in the morning and again at night, using Him as a shelter and a means to our own ends. We are to dwell in God and live in Him from the rising of the sun until the day's end, making God the center of our lives and walking as in His sight.

Does the Spirit of God motivate us, or is it another spirit? Do we wait upon God and say, "Lord, let Your Spirit tell me what to say and do in this situation. Be Lord of my judgment, subdue my passions, control my impulses, and let Your Spirit guide me. Lord, be soul and life to me, and in the triple kingdom of my spirit, soul, and body, be my supreme Master. In every province of my nature, may Your law be set up and Your will be done." We would have a mighty church if we are all of this mind. God save us as a church from losing His presence! God grant us grace to be strong enough to overcome the evil that surrounds our lives and, having done all, to stand to the praise of the glory of His grace.