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AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Brother Russell, I write to ask your prayers for Mr. C., his wife, son and daughter. They are steeped in sin. Pray that they may be saved and become members of the Bride of Christ.

My dear brother, your request would be considered a very reasonable and proper one by most of christian people; but from our standpoint it would be the height of presumption. I can and do thank God that they and all others of our race ARE SAVED, *are redeemed*, and that in God's "*due time*" they will be entirely released from the bondage of sin and death, and during the next (Millennial) age will come to a full knowledge of their Redeemer, and have abundant opportunity to come to the condition of *perfect men and women* for "Jesus Christ, by the grace of God tasted death for every man," "Gave himself a ransom for all *to be TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME.*"

To ask God to convert by any other means than *the word* "which is able to make them wise (now) unto salvation," would be to ask Him to perform a miracle. If this be HIS WILL He can do so (as in Paul's case) without my asking Him; and would do so whether I ask or not. If not *God's will* to make an exception of Mr. C. and family, *who am I* that I should ask Him to change His plans to suit mine? Oh, no! rather reverse the order and change *my will* to suit His plans.

His plan is to give "Restitution" to the billions in the next age, but to select *now* during the Gospel age "a little flock" (from among the billions who are redeemed from death)—to take out a people for His name—to be "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" and bear *His name*. It is not our business to help the Lord decide who shall be of that selected company.

The key to many unanswered prayers is "ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss." To be sure of an answer we must ask in harmony with God's plan and word. Suppose now that I should ask the Lord that Mr. C. and family may be a part of Christ's bride, and suppose Mr. C. should not be the Lord's choice for that exalted position, one of two things would surely follow: either the Lord would take some one contrary to His will, or my prayer would go unanswered. And undoubtedly it would be the latter—an unanswered prayer.

Unacceptable prayers come from one of two causes: Either they are the desire of our old (human) nature or of the new spiritual nature uninstructed as to how to ask and what to ask for.

Now brother, your request was undoubtedly made by your spiritual nature.

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So far it was good; but our new nature or new mind can at present operate only through the *natural* body and may consequently make mistakes (therefore, “in this tabernacle we groan”—longing for our spiritual body, which will be fully in harmony with our *new nature*—our birth). It is because we are thus hampered by the imperfections of earthly conditions that “the Spirit helpeth our infirmities;” for we know not *what things* we should ask for as we ought, but “the Spirit maketh intercession for the *saints* according to the will of God.” (Rom. 8:26.) Therefore, sometimes God answers very improper prayers in a very gracious manner, though not according to the asking.

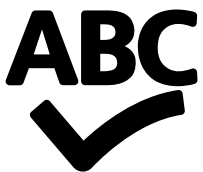
If we would ask and receive, we should study to ask aright. “Let the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.”

There is only one source from which we can learn “*what things* we should ask for,” and that is the Spirit’s text-book—the Bible. How important, then, it is for us to use our text-book and be well acquainted with *God’s plan* that we may ask in harmony with it and receive. How fully this point was covered by our Lord Jesus, when he said: “If ye abide in me (first condition) and my words abide in you (second condition), ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Truly, your brother in Christ.

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— March, 1881 —



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