

**LECTURES ON  
PRAYER AND  
KINDRED SUBJECTS**

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Lectures on Prayer and Kindred Subjects by Joseph S. Sewell

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# LECTURES ON PRAYER,

AND

## KINDRED SUBJECTS.

BY

JOSEPH S. SEWELL.



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## P R E F A C E .

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THE following Lectures have been delivered in the Friends' Meeting Houses of some of our large towns; the first four have thus become known to many "Friends," and I have been on several occasions asked to publish them. Hitherto, one reason for refusing to do this, has been the hope that I might be able to read them myself in other places, to which I have been invited for that purpose. Now, as I am expecting in a few weeks to leave this country, on a mission of Christian love to the island of Madagascar, this reason for keeping them back has ceased to operate, and other objections which I have felt to bringing them and myself thus prominently forward, have been overcome by the desire to leave in the hands of my friends some memento of past seasons of pleasant and refreshing intercourse, and some record of the deep religious convictions and earnest desires, which are feebly set forth in the following pages.

Owing to a great pressure of engagements, I have been quite unable to give as much time and thought as I should have liked, to the preparation of these Lectures for the press. Their division into chapters was suggested to me by one on whose judgment in



such matters I could well rely; I trust, on the whole, it will prove to have been of advantage.

When treating subjects on which much party-feeling has in times past been evolved, I have greatly desired to avoid anything like sectarianism; if I have failed in doing this to the full, it has been unconsciously. I believe, however, that the mutual love and harmony of our different religious communities is not increased by our being always silent on the points on which we differ. I grant, we had much better be silent than, when we speak, meet as enemies expecting blows and ever on the watch to ward them off or retaliate: but if, instead of doing thus, we came together more frequently in brotherly confidence, confessing *our own* perplexities and failings, as well as our mistrust of the wisdom or correctness of the actions of *others*, our love to each other would be increased, and we should prove mutually helpful. It has long been one of my most earnest desires, that the parting prayer of our gracious Lord, for unity among His disciples, might be fulfilled far more largely than, since the first ages of the Church, it has ever yet been, "*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*"

*Hitchin, Second Month 4, 1867.*

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## LECTURE I.

### PRAYER.

#### INTRODUCTION.

PRAYER is the intercourse which takes place between our souls and the great Searcher of hearts. It does not consist in the mere uttering of words, or in any outward form; it is an act of the soul. We cannot pray aright unless we are taught of God. "Lord, teach us to pray," was the petition of the apostles, and we need continually to make the same request. Is it not then presumptuous in man to attempt such teaching? We should pause before doing so, for the question may well be asked. Yet He who said to Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Feed my sheep," still calls on one and another to do the same; and he who has received any such call cannot be silent on the subject of prayer.

It is a subject connected with so many questions affecting both the life of religion in the soul and the

outward practice of it, that it would be vain in one or two lectures to treat it with all the breadth and fulness it admits of. No such attempt has been made by me in these papers. I have confined my attention almost exclusively to those allusions to prayer which we find in the teaching of our Saviour, and my desire has been to bring before those who profess His name the leading features of this teaching, and to press upon their attention a few points which have been too much lost sight of in the present day.

As regards many who hear them, my words will only "put them in remembrance of these things, though they know them, and have been established in the truth of them:" but if, "by way of remembrance," they should help to "stir up the pure minds" of any; if they should arouse any to greater diligence in availing themselves of the blessed privilege of prayer; if they should give to any a deeper sense of its value, or a firmer confidence in its applicability to all the wants and conditions of fallen man; or if they should raise in the hearts of any a louder song of thanksgiving and praise to Him who has granted such a privilege to His people, they will not have been written in vain.

What a remarkable proof of God's love do we find in the fact that He has always permitted us