And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee. -2 CHRON. xiv. 11.

THE prayers recorded in the Bible are almost all of them models in their place. Such is the prayer of the Jewish monarch in the text.

King Asa is in a great strait. To all human appearance, his throne and his life are in peril. His Ethiopian enemy is in battle array before him, with numbers in the proportion to his own of about two to one. His defeat is morally certain. He and his staff must have felt, in that valley of Ephratah, as they looked over the roods of glittering spears, as our own Washington felt in Valley Forge, in the most dismal winter of the Revolution. He seems to himself to have come to the place of extreme catastrophe. He he can only lie down and die.

Like the "Father of his Country," the Jewish king betakes himself to prayer. It is about all there is left for him to do, preliminary to the fatal

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morrow. His petition is very brief. In great emergencies our wants are summed up in few words. We have no heart for more. This is the model of prayer in an emergency. It is made up of four fragments, each of which teaches us a fundamental element in the spirit of prayer in such an exigency.

1. Prayer in emergencies should be founded on a strong faith in God's independence of human resources and methods of judgment. Hear the stricken monarch, as he kneels beneath the weight of a kingdom: "Lord, it is nothing to thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power." This goes to the heart of the case. Nothing else equals the situation. "True," we seem to hear him plucking up his own courage in the extremity, - "true, I am outnumbered. Every man of us must engage two to-morrow. The best military science of the age is pitted against us. These Ethiopian invaders are no mean folk. They are stalwart men, led by able generals, flushed with victories. They are doubtless laughing at our temerity, and glorying in our coming shame. And by all human calculations they are right. They are sure to win: we are doomed to fail. The laws of war bid us make the best terms of peace we can. Now is the time for a masterly retreat. But - No: not so, not so! What are numbers to the God of Judah? What are military tactics, and captains

of renown, and the pomp of conquest, — what are they all to the God of Israel? A small matter, — a very small matter. I remind me of the Red Sea. Our God is the living God. He made the heavens and the earth. The nations are as a drop in a bucket. He taketh up the islands as **a** very little thing. Yes, Lord, it is nothing to thee to help us in this emergency. It is like thee to give the battle to the weak. It is like thee to overthrow the many by the few."

Military history, in every age, is not destitute of similar occurrences. There have been Christian generals, who, to the world's eye, have seemed to have mysterious successes. They who watched the career of Gen. Havelock in India observed this feature in his history. His superiors used to put him upon service to which they dared not send other men. They said that he often succeeded, where, by the laws of war, he ought not to succeed. Whether due to his habits of prayer, or not, there was the fact.

In our own civil war, on one occasion, the general in command of certain forces broke out with the exclamation, on the eve of battle, "We have got them now, and they know it. God Almighty cannot save them." So he had "got them," by all human reckoning of the chances. His staff responded, "Yes, we are sure of them." But it happened, — how much it had to do with the fortunes of the day, we will not presume to say,

but it happened, — that the commander-in-chief on the other side was a praying man. He had that morning spent an hour in his tent, invoking divine interposition in the coming conflict. The close of the day found him again in his tent offering thanksgiving for a victory, while the presumptuous general who thought that "God Almighty could not defeat him" was in ignominious flight down the valley of the Shenandoah.

Why should it not be so? Such men command invisible allies. They invoke the onset of spiritual battalions. They lead their enemies into ambuscades of angelic legions. If our eyes were not holden, we might see that the very air is full of them.

Are there not, in the lives of us all, emergencies in which our deliverance may depend on our realizing to our faith the principle that God is independent of the resources which decide human judgment? In certain extreme hours, very much may depend on the depth of our faith in this. Our own courage may depend on it. Our power to energize others may depend on it. Our power with God may depend on it. We need to feel that prayer may command improbable results, because it commands supernatural resources.

Much is gained also when we appreciate the ease with which God achieves marvellous issues in response to prayer. "A God doing wonders" is one of his significant titles, — significant of the

usage of his dominion. To him there are no such things as emergencies. Prayer never finds him overwhelmed by surprises.

"To thee there's nothing old appears, — Great God, there's nothing new."

The magnitude of our requests never startles his composure. In his serene life, there are no extreme hours, no critical junctures, no unforeseen contingencies. He is never conscious of an hour when his resources run low, when his powers are put to the strain, when he is weary and would pause to rest. The affairs of the universe are never a burden to him.

Note the biblical way of describing the acts of God: "He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast. God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The serenity of the stars characterizes all his working. So calmly, so easily, with such assurance of reserved forces and unused energies, does he perform, in answer to prayer, achievements which overwhelm our puny thought by their magnitude. Armies in the shock of battle he sways as easily as the breathing of an infant.

A few years ago there appeared in our skies the most brilliant comet of the century. It was six millions of miles distant from our globe. Such was the speed of its movement, that, if it had been aimed hither in its march, it would have come

Unscriptural statement. Apparently the textbook author had adopted the false theory of Evolution.

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crashing upon us in less than two days, with the momentum of a hundred and fifty thousand miles an hour. Yet God held that blazing meteor in its appointed groove, worn by millions of years of travel, so that it glided gently across our world's orbit with motion imperceptible. It had the stillness of a painting. Our infant children looked out upon it, and bade it good-night, as a beautiful plaything in the sky, without so much as the closing of an eyelid at the eternal rush of its progress. So calm, so facile, so beautifully silent, are God's wonder-workings in answer to prayer. Mysteries so vast and so anomalous that astonished angels desire to look into them, occur with the ease of a summer twilight.

We need to believe this. With all our hearts we need to accept it as the natural way of God's procedure. We need to be uplifted on the wings of faith to the divine plane of things in our emergencies. Then we can look *down* upon them as aëronauts above the clouds look down upon thunder-storms and tornadoes, from a region of unutterable stillness and under an unclouded sun.

2. The example before us suggests, as a second element in believing prayer in emergencies, a profound sense of the inadequacy of all other sources of relief but God. We need to feel that we are shut in to God, and God only. "Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest in thee." This is the plea of the imperilled monarch. This is his argument for the

rescue of his tottering kingdom: "We are helpless. Our forces are outnumbered beyond the reach of human daring. We can die, but we can do no more. By all chances, as men count them, we are doomed. We do not know which way to turn. There is no turning for us. We march right on to death. We are shut up to the arm of God. Help, Lord, or we perish."

This familiar element in the spirit of prayer, emergencies force upon our thought. Often divine Providence seems to second the procedure of divine grace by leaving us in a great emergency till we feel this. Deliverance is slow in coming. Prayer is not answered in a breath. The trial gathers intensity. The crisis deepens. The fire waxes hot. The object seems to be to quicken in the soul the sense of God as a reality because he is felt to be a necessity. Ruin here, ruin there, ruin everywhere except in the one thought that there is a God. Intense conceptions of the reality of God come to some minds in no other way than through this secret alliance of providence and grace in the discipline. The needed convictions have to be burned in by fiery trial.

But when the end is gained, when God becomes an infinite fact, when we become content to go fearless into solitude with God, to cast every thing upon God, to rest in God, then believing prayer wells up sweet and fresh from the heart, and flows out in glad assurance from the lips. Then relief, success, conquest, is not far off.

In this spirit, not only the great exigencies of the Church need to be met, but the emergencies of individual life as well. Said Whitefield in one of the crises of his life, "I have thrown myself blindfold into His almighty arms." Said the late Rev. Dr. Griffin in a similar exigency, "I feel that God is all that is left to me."

Every human life lies through some such valleys of Ephratah, where the man seems to himself shut out from all human sources of support, and shut in to solitude with God. If such crises are met in the spirit of believing prayer, they are the precursors of triumph. Some conquest of opposing forces, or some self-conquest preparative to heaven, or some conquest over powers of darkness of which only God and angels are the witnesses, is in the near future.

3. Prayer in emergencies, as illustrated in the example before us, involves a third element. It is a profound identification with God. "In thy name we go against this multitude." That is, "The battle is not ours, but God's. Our interests are lost in God's interests. Selfish desire can have no place here. We are lifted and driven beyond all that. For God we pray; for God we fight."

So Luther felt in the great crisis of his life. "Here stand I for God: I can do no other." So the great leaders of the Church have marched to victory. Until the cause at stake is thus identified with God, prevailing prayer is impossible. In

a selfish prayer we beat the winds. Nothing is sure in this world but the purposes of God. No interests are safe but his. No cause is secure but his.

Until we can get our private individual concerns within the lines of his plans, we can be sure of nothing. This is the province of believing prayer in emergencies, — to lift us up and out from our petty selves, and so unite us with God that our interests are his because his interests have become ours. Our will is his because his will has been accepted as ours. Then prayer becomes but a prophecy of his decree. Its success is a foregone conclusion. While we are speaking, the answer is on our own lips. One design, doubtless, of great and crushing emergencies, is to help us up to this summit of identification with God, by driving us up the rocky steep that leads thither.

4. One other phase of prayer in such emergencies, suggested by the fragment of biography before us, is a hearty recognition of God's ownership of us. "O Lord, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee."

To Jewish thought the force of this language was intensified by comparison with pagan theories of Godhead. Every nation was believed to have its deity. Ethiopia had her god, and Judæa had hers. When a Jew therefore said, "Thou art our God," he meant to acknowledge God's ownership of him and all his belongings. That any other

nation should prevail against Judæa, meant to Jewish thought a victory of man over the living God.

This gave deep significance to Jewish prayer on the eve of battle. Not only was his cause God's cause, by his being identified with God, but he and all he had belonged to God. His success, therefore, was God's success, and his defeat was God's defeat. "Let not man prevail against *Thee!*"

This conception of prayer in critical exigencies fills up the Christian idea of it to the brim. We belong to God. Whatever concerns us concerns him. Our sorrow is his sorrow. Our joy is his joy. If it is best for us that we be delivered, it is as much to God as to us that he shall send deliverance. No wedge can be driven between, to separate him from us, his interests from ours. The sacredness and eternity of divine ownership are pledged to our success.

By the right of creation we belong to God. By the right of faithful and undying friendship we belong to God. By the right of eternal redemption we belong to God. By the right of purchase with the blood of Christ we belong to God. Will God desert his own with such rights as these?