

Prayer

SELECTED WRITINGS



BOOK I

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DEFINING PRAYER

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WHAT IS PRAYER?

To pray, in a religious sense of the term, is to ask favors of God. But the term, prayer, may be considered a general one, as it is often used to signify that important part of Divine worship which consists in adoration, invocation, deprecation, confession, supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving. We adore God as an infinite and eternal Spirit, possessed of all possible perfection, as the Creator of all things, and the author and preserver of our being. We invoke his aid, without which we cannot think or speak aright. We deprecate his displeasure, because we have sinned against him. We confess our transgressions, with an humble, penitent, and believing heart, from the hope of obtaining pardon. We supplicate his mercy for ourselves, and intercede for others; and, while doing this, if we pray as we ought, we thank him for all the blessings which we have received, and do enjoy, from his munificent hand. Prayer, in this sense, may be considered as a continual sacrifice, like that of praise, to be offered to God daily, either by ourselves, in our closets, or in and with our families. It is also a part of that public sacrifice which we, with our fellow-creatures, are to offer unto God in his house - that holy place, which, in the sacred Scriptures, is called "a house of prayer for all nations." Prayer by some seems to be regarded as the act of holding intercourse with God, as a means of grace, in the proper use of which we secure to ourselves those blessings which he has, in the covenant of his grace, promised to bestow. And so solemn and sacred an exercise has this been considered, that certain benefit is sure to be derived, whether we obtain the special object of our request immediately or not. "It is important," says one, "to bear in mind the reason why God did not bless Jacob till the breaking of the day, and why our petitions are (sometimes) not granted till the last moment. In prayer the means are in these instances more valuable than the end. The spirit of prayer, and the frequent exercise of it, is a greater blessing than the attainment of any other short of heaven itself." We should be careful, however, that we do not rest in the means, regardless of the end; for, as Mr. Watson, in his note on Luke 11:8,9, remarks, "The whole (parable or discourse) tends to impress us with the

necessity of obtaining the fulfillment of our petitions, and thus to guard against a common and fatal evil, that of resting in prayer as an end, without regarding it as the means of obtaining the petitions we present. How many rest here! They have done a duty, that is enough! which is a fatal infatuation." But when we speak of prayer in the light of intercession, or the continual daily sacrifice of Christians, it should be offered with clean hands and a pure heart; or, as the Apostle expresses it, when he says, "I will therefore that men (Christians) pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Prayer, then, in order to be pleasing to God, and profitable to ourselves, should be humble and reverential; for that which has in it the least particle of pride, or vain glory, whether it arise from a consciousness of superiority of gifts, in intellect or language, or voice or utterance, must be abhorred by Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. It should also be perfectly sincere without the least dissimulation, or hypocrisy, or anything like an affectation of any state or frame of mind which we do not really feel, or the use of such language, or tone of voice, or gesture, as are not the true and honest index of our hearts. It should also be frequent; for a duty of this kind performed only once, especially if performed carelessly, can never prevail with God. Anything like indifference, or coldness, should be avoided equally with boisterousness and levity. God is a holy being, and jealous of his glory; humility and lowliness of mind, self-abasement and child-like simplicity, godly sincerity and reverential awe joined with fervency of spirit and Christian confidence should ever mark our addresses to the throne of his heavenly grace. Prayer is unquestionably the appointed means of obtaining help in every time of need. God has commanded us to pray, and therefore prayer is a duty. At our best estate we are weak, ignorant, and dependent creatures, and as such it is fitting we should pray; prayer is therefore a reasonable service. God has promised to hear and answer prayer; nay, more, he has promised to "pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication;" and there is no surer indication of an approaching revival of religion than a general prevalence of the "spirit of interceding grace." But we must ask, as above prescribed, and in faith, nothing doubting, or it will be said of us, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." Perhaps at no time since the beginning of Christianity has there ever been a greater number of praying souls in the church than now. All good Christians pray all the world over, whatever may be their name, or denomination. Some pray especially for the awakening and conversion of

sinners; some for the spread of the gospel at home and abroad; some for the downfall of antichrist and of Mahomedanism; some more particularly for the Jews and for the heathen; some for universal peace, and some for the glorious millennium; some with a form, and others as the Spirit gives them utterance, or as the Spirit moves them; and yet that plain and simple prayer which Christ taught to his disciples, "Thy kingdom come," or that registered by the Psalmist a thousand years before the coming of Christ, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations," has not yet been answered, even though we live in the nineteenth century of the Christian era.

This is an alarming consideration, and more especially so when we consider how ready God is to hear and answer "the effectual, (inwrought,) fervent prayer of every righteous man" upon earth. There may be some difficulty in apprehending how far others can be benefited by our prayers, seeing they are free moral agents; but this difficulty can form no good argument against the practice, since it is evident that God has made it our duty to pray for all men, even for those that persecute and despitefully use us. The examples of Abraham praying for Abimelech, of Moses and Samuel for the Israelites, of Job for his friends, of Daniel for his people, of Christ for his murderers and of Stephen for those that rose up against him to put him to death, are a sufficient warrant for us, and for the whole church to continue instant in prayer - to pray without ceasing. But perhaps there are some who may read these lines who have not yet begun to pray at all, neither for themselves nor for others. Alas for these! How many blessings they have lost it is impossible to tell. O fly then to the Friend of sinners and ask for pardon, not only for all that you have done amiss, but especially for your negligence of this most important and most profitable duty. Begin to-day, lest, the "clement, mediatorial hour" pass by, never to be recalled.

TRUE PRAYER

What is prayer, in its primary religious sense? It does not consist essentially in words and sentences of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession, offered to God in the name of Jesus Christ. These are aids to prayer, but not its essential elements. They are wings to bear the desires of the heart upward to the throne of grace. They may all be framed into language so fervent, so appropriate, so edifying, as to please every ear and excite devout emotions in

every pious heart, and yet from the lips that utter the gracious words it may be the mere form of prayer, without any of the power.

This was exactly the case with backsliding Israel, in the days of the prophets. Thus by the mouth of Isaiah the Lord said, "Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, therefore I will proceed to do a marvelous work," etc. And by Ezekiel, "They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before me as my people; with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness."

So it has been in every age. There has been a great deal more lip service than heart service. Not that what is called the gift of prayer, meaning by it the choice of the most appropriate words to express the desires of the soul, is to be counted of no importance, provided the heart is right. In social and public prayer, it is right to "covet earnestly the best gifts" in this regard. But what we mean is, that the words of prayer, however devout, coming from no deeper source than the understanding, are mere breath. In the ear of God, they may be the mockery of a solemn sound upon a thoughtless tongue.

On the other hand, there may be effectual, fervent prayer where no words are used. There may be, and often is, the fervent ejaculation of praise, of confession, of petition, coming up in silence from the depths of the soul, which in the sight of God are of great price. The Spirit may and does, in our great extremities, "make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

What, then, is true prayer? Whether written, oral, or ejaculatory, it is "offering up of our desires to God, in the name of Christ, for things agreeable to his will." Prayer is the medium through which blessings are sought and obtained that none but God can bestow. It is the hand which takes hold of the promises, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find." It is the only channel of communication between earth and heaven. It is the only ligament that retains any hold upon the throne of God; and but for which this apostate world, with all its countless millions, would drift away into the blackness of darkness for ever. Nothing else could hold it to its precarious moorings through a single storm. To keep up the figure, if there were no praying pilots and passengers on

board, it would rush madly on a mighty wreck, and founder where there is no bottom.

Prayer, like the great law of physical attraction, is a secret, invisible power, which nothing can resist. Moses prayed, and, as it were, quenched the wrath which was ready to consume the rebellious tribes in a moment. Elijah prayed, and there was a terrible famine of three years and six months. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain. Hezekiah prayed, and, smitten by an invisible hand, the mightiest army that ever besieged Jerusalem, perished in the trenches. The bloody Mary is reported to have said that she was more afraid of John Knox's prayers than of ten thousand of the rebel army; and well she might be, as those who held up his hands were so many Aarons and Hurs in that army.

There are no assignable limits to the power of prayer, as there are to all the powers of earth and hell; and the reason is, it takes hold on the Infinite. It is a power which has never yet been put forth in its full reliance upon God's promise. Whenever that time comes, there will not be a few short revivals here and there under the preaching of the Gospel, but they will be greatly multiplied in number and in power. The prayer of faith will be the same as now; but there will be a great deal more of it, and it will take stronger hold of the promises. I will not let thee go, said Jacob, except thou bless me. He was a mighty wrestler, and he prevailed. And when the number of such wrestlers shall be greatly increased, what shall hinder the more copious effusion of the Spirit in Christian lands and the far more rapid spread of the Gospel throughout the earth? "According to your faith so shall it be unto you." "According to the strength of your faith. What a promise! What but unbelief, what but the weakness of faith in the church, can hinder the speedy fulfilment of all that the prophets have spoken concerning the glory of the latter day? I know of nothing else, and who does? The grand adversary can resist everything but prayer. It is a power with God which has always been too much for him, and always will be; oh, how "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

PRIVATE PRAYER

IT is the will of God to dwell in our hearts by his Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Rom. 3:6. Now it cannot be said that the Spirit of God dwelleth in that man who enjoys it but seldom.

No wonder that the peace, the joy, and imperishable treasures of heaven look dim to those who are not familiar with the operations of the Spirit of God upon the heart. For says the Apostle, "But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." 1Cor. 2:9,10. But not only does the Spirit of God make intercession for us, but Jesus our Great High Priest ever liveth to intercede for us. His first gift after his ascension upon high, was that of the Holy Spirit.

Let us for a moment look at the wonderful plan of redemption. "Man was afar off from God, guilty, and under the penalty of that sentence, the soul that sinneth it shall die. How was the mercy of God to be displayed, and his justice remain unsullied? By the death of the holy Jesus, the Son of God, his justice is satisfied, and engaged on the sinner's side; so that his mercy may flow to sinners in copious and uninterrupted streams. The divine love has its brightest displays, in being manifested towards the unworthy; and the Almighty arm is now stretched forth to save, and not to destroy the sinful. All the perfections of God being engaged on the sinner's side, the intercession of Him who has accomplished this, will evidently prevail. Here, then, and here only, is the true ground of encouragement for us to draw near with confidence to the holy God."

Consider the character of our Intercessor: "He is the beloved Son of God, the elect in whom his soul delighteth. Isa. 42:1. He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.' Heb.7:6. And with all this, he is full of compassion, tenderness, and love. 'We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.' Heb.4:15. He is one who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

"Consider, further, THE NATURE OF HIS INTERCESSION. John seems to give us an emblematic view of this. (Rev.8:3,4.) 'And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.' Even

the prayers of saints are so defective, that they need the incense of our Redeemer's merit to make them acceptable unto God.

"Jesus Christ intercedes BY PERSONALLY APPEARING FOR US BEFORE GOD." In the heavenly Sanctuary he now appears in the presence of God for us. "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.' Heb. 10:12. 'By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place.' Heb.9:12. The virtue, merit and power of that blood still remain. How sure may we be, then, that he will obtain what he asks, when he pleads that he died to procure it. He ascended into heaven with that body in which he suffered; and we may imagine, when he makes intercession, the prints of the nails in his feet, and in his hands, and of the spear in his side, silently and yet powerfully urge his pleas in our behalf."

Having made the above remarks on the subject of prayer, and spoken of the necessary aid of the Holy Spirit, and the intercession of our great High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary, we pass to notice the different kinds of prayer. And first, we shall speak of

PRIVATE PRAYER. No duty is more clearly pointed out in the Scriptures than secret prayer; and none tendeth to greater prosperity in the service of our heavenly Master. Here in our helpless condition, we come to spread out our wants, and to implore the blessings of heaven, encouraged by the promise of a reward "openly." Says Jesus, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Matt. 6:5-7.

A writer, speaking of some of the advantages of secret prayer over social and public worship, says, "By praying in secret we give God the glory of his being every where present, and seeing and knowing all things. We acknowledge not only his general providence, as taking care of communities, but his particular providence, as watching over us individually. We express our faith in his presence, his power, and his love.

"The christian can also in secret give free vent to every desire; vary his requests according to the present state of his mind; or the present necessities of the day, or hour, in which he is living; he can dwell on his personal wants; and, in short, give full scope to his feelings, and pour out his whole soul before God."

"It is observed by Dr. Owen, that 'if a man of a carnal mind be brought into a large company, he will have much to do; if into a company of christians, he will feel little interest; if into a still smaller, engaged in religious exercises, he will feel still less; but if taken into a closet, and forced to meditate on God and eternity, this will be insupportable to him.' Man is evidently by nature averse to all communion with God. There is an enmity to be removed. Rom. 8:7. And hence arises the necessity of a change of mind: of obtaining a spiritual mind, without which, spiritual truths and exercises can neither engage nor influence the heart. The man who possesses a spiritual mind, does, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, often find that closet retirement, which Dr. Owen states to be insupportable to the carnal mind, a real privilege.

Says one, "Prayer in secret is also considered by our Lord as forming a line of distinction between the Christian and the mere professor. When we are constant in secret prayer, not as an act of self-righteousness, but from a feeling of necessity, and of its being both our duty and privilege, we may hope well of our sincerity and of our state before God. The effects of Christian retirement, will appear in the sweet composure of the passions, the evenness and affability of the behavior, the charitableness of the temper, and the purity and tranquility of the life. The retired violet, which hides itself in the shade, gives one of the sweetest scents; and the lowly Christian, who is constant in secret prayer, diffuses a holy feeling, a heavenly atmosphere around him.

"This blessed intercourse in secret raises the christian above anxiety about temporal things. A holy familiarity with his Maker, gives him a fixedness and serenity which nothing else can bestow, and hardly anything can discompose. It prepares him for all events, and fills him with a noble contempt for all the sinful pleasures and pursuits of a world lying in wickedness. It is like a sure anchor, which is unseen indeed above, but is safely fixed in solid ground, and though out of sight, keeps the vessel steadfast and secure amid the tumultuous waves and the stormy tempest.

"It makes us fruitful in every good work. 'I reckon it,' says Bennett, 'matter of common experience among good men, that they find themselves more or less disposed, and fit for their respective duties and services according as their diligence, constancy and seriousness in secret prayer, is more or less.' The root that produces the beautiful and flourishing tree, with all its spreading branches, verdant leaves, and refreshing fruit, that which gains for it sap, life, vigor, and fruitfulness, is all unseen; and the farther and the deeper the roots spread beneath, the more the tree expands above."

O, then Christians, if you wish to enjoy the smiles of our heavenly Parent here, and desire an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord, be encouraged to faithfulness, remembering that every tear of godly sorrow shed in secret, will there be a brilliant gem in the crown of glory surrounding the brow of the overcomer. The Christian's reward comes from the Father of infinite power, riches, wisdom and love: and therefore cannot be a small reward, or an unsatisfactory position.

"But it must not be concealed, that there are PECULIAR DIFFICULTIES IN CONSTANT AND FERVENT SECRET PRAYER. We have many adversaries opposing us. We are by nature both reluctant to the duty, and utterly helpless and insufficient in ourselves. We can do nothing by our own strength; though we may do all things by Christ strengthening us. And besides the oppositions of a corrupt nature within, the temptations of the world without, continually draw and allure us from the practice of this duty. Our great enemy, Satan, also uses every temptation to keep us from secret prayer. Hence, though it is a most evident and needful, as well as profitable duty, yet it is one, which it is not easy with constancy and effect to fulfill. We do not find it so difficult to read the Bible, go to church, or hear sermons, as we do to persevere in constant, fervent and believing private prayer. 'It is easier,' says one, 'to hear a whole hour, than to pray a quarter of an hour.'"

But with the most profound reverence and holy awe, should we enter into audience with the Most High. "The consideration that the EYE OF GOD IS UPON US, that our heavenly Father is in secret, and there beholds us, should be continually on our minds as a motive for continual watchfulness, and a source of the greatest comfort. Thou God seest me, should be written on the walls of our closet, or, rather deeply engraven on our hearts. Before an earthly superior, we are careful and circumspect in all our expressions and actions;

how careful then should we be when we approach unto one, who, though he is our Father, is yet the King of kings, and the Lord of lords! If an angel in all his heavenly brightness were to be with us, surely our hearts would feel awed by his glorious presence. How much more then should it affect us, and fill us with a holy fear to think, I am with God: he is present in the room with me, that God is now about me whose glory stains and sullies the beauty, and extinguishes the light of angels.

"Rush not hastily, then, into the presence of God. Pause for a few moments. Meditate on his character. Consider his goodness, he is our Father: consider his greatness, he is in heaven.

"Recollect THE GLORIOUS MAJESTY OF THAT BEING WHOM YOU ADDRESS. He is in heaven, and we are upon earth. It is with reflections of this kind, that David begins many of his Psalms. Thus he says in the 104th Psalm, 'O Lord, my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with majesty and honor. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment, who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain, who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, who maketh the clouds his chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind.' These recollections of his majesty are calculated, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to bring your mind to a state of solemnity and devotional feeling. But lest this view of his awful grandeur should discourage you," Recollect his wonderful grace and mercy. His blessed promises should encourage us to the throne of grace. "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him." Matt.6:7-11.

"What child, in a proper state of mind, will not willingly run to the arms of a tender father inviting it to come to him? It is our want of faith and love that makes our prayers a task and a burden. How often God invites us to pray; how much he promises, in order to encourage us to come to him with a holy boldness and confidence, freely and unreservedly! We need not fear to ask, when God himself commands us to do so."

In conclusion under this head, we feel constrained to say a few words to the young, that are looking for immortality and eternal life at the appearing of Jesus. Do not feel that you can be excused from bearing responsibility in family worship. Do not feel that the obligation of this duty rests wholly upon the heads of the family.

It is lamentable that most of the young among us, feel no more on this subject than they do. Their repeated neglect to join with others in the performance of this important duty; and the coldness and indifference often manifested during family worship, indicate a strong lack of interest here. It should not be so. It must be otherwise, if the union and strength, and power to prevail with God exists as it should in every Christian family in these last days. May the Lord pity and spare the young in the church of God, is my prayer.

Having offered the above remarks on the different kinds of devotion, private, public, and family, which we desire the reader may attend to as duty demands, we observe that it is the privilege of every Christian to possess a spirit of devotion, and prayer to God continually. A few examples from the Scriptures we think justify us in this conclusion.

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Says David, "I give myself unto prayer." Ps. 109:4. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Eph. 6:18. "Pray without ceasing." 1Thess. 5:17. "Continuing instant in prayer." Rom. 7:12.

These directions are in some measure fulfilled by faithfulness in the kinds of prayer previously mentioned, but they have a more complete fulfillment in bringing our mind to a heavenly and prayerful frame and constantly watching thereunto. Truly, "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. 8:6.

In the language of another we say, "Such an habitually devout disposition of mind, will make every action of your life holy. You will learn to do nothing without connecting it by prayer with the presence and glory of God. You will see nothing, and hear nothing, without its raising your heart to him. What a

spiritual life may the Christian, improving everything by prayer, lead. This will consecrate every field, every wood, and every dwelling place. It will turn an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice. Making this heavenly use of earthly things, you will rapidly advance in conformity to the divine image, you will be strong in overcoming sin, and you will carry on schemes of good with a power which nothing can resist."

Again he remarks, "We do not sufficiently attend to the growth of a devout spirit. We are too much content with former attainments, and often even fall short of them. But let us labor not only to keep our ground, but to make daily progress. The Christian's devotion should be like the flowing tide, which gradually gaining point after point, the retiring waves again and again returning, filling up all the vacancies, advancing and still advancing, at length replenishes, in regular progress, the whole space. Let the spirit of devotion advance till it fill our whole souls "Indeed the truly advanced Christian is known by this mark, as much as by any other. The man after God's own heart, is the man of devotion; one who is always in prayer; who says in the morning, 'when I awake I am still with thee;' and in the evening, 'I will both lay me down in peace, and take my rest, for thou Lord only makest me to dwell in safety.' Ps. 25:5. In the midst of his business he is 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' Rom. 12:11. He can say, 'On thee do I wait all the day,' Ps. 25:5. 'He,' says Law, 'is the devout man, who considers God in every thing, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.'

"Men of this world, the covetous and the impure, the licentious and the gay, even when outwardly engaged in other things, have their minds full of their particular sins. Let the Christian's heart then be filled with that great work in which he is engaged. As they pollute all their sacred duties by worldly thoughts, so let him consecrate all his common actions, by the constant and heavenly breathings of his soul unto God.

"In conversing with others on religious subjects, in going to the poor and afflicted, in visiting your own friends, in coming to the house of God, in hearing his word, in these, and the various other circumstances of our lives, the heart of the devout Christian will be sending upward many a secret petition; he will be silently wrestling with God; and gaining that divine blessing on all in which he is engaged, which others lose by carelessness and indifference.

"This is the old religion; this is the good way; these are the old paths. Jer.vi,16. Thus Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and David walked with God; and those who walk thus now, find rest to their souls. In inviting the reader to this constant intercourse with God, we are inviting him to his highest privilege - friendship with his Creator; and to his richest enjoyment - delighting himself in communion with his Lord.

"Do you ask, how you are to obtain, and how you are to keep alive this spirit of prayer? You must seek it; you must cultivate it. The grace of God is sufficient."

It is the noble and exalted privilege of the real Christian to enjoy this blessed and saving communion with God, and to have his treasure, his heart and his conversation in heaven. Let this be his happy state of mind, and his affections will twine around the closing works of our great High Priest, with inexpressible fondness.

His heart ever flows with praise and gratitude to God. The service of our heavenly Master is most delightful. And as the unfolding signs indicate the near approach of the solemn moments when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked, the language of his heart is "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Prov. 18:10. O praise the Lord for this blessed reflection! for such a transporting prospect.

In conclusion I would say as I have written on this interesting subject, my heart has burned within me for a closer walk with God; for a more prayerful and watchful state of mind at all times. And it is my firm purpose by assisting grace, to be sober and WATCH UNTO PRAYER. And to all who may read this, suffers me to urge upon you the impressive exhortation of him whom my soul loveth. "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:36.

PRAY AND PRAISE MORE

By J. N. Andrews

- I Must Pray More
- I Must Praise More
- I Must Pray Differently

I MUST PRAY MORE

I habitually feel this necessity, but the other day the conviction came to my mind with strange power, and I said with greater emphasis than ever, I must pray more. It struck me with indescribable wonder that so little time should be employed, and so little energy expended in prayer, even by those who are prompt to acknowledge its dignity as a privilege, and its efficacy as a means of obtaining good. It is not now as it was in patriarchal times. We do not pray as Jacob did. He wrestled until the breaking of the day. Yes his praying was wrestling, and it lasted all night. We put forth no such power in prayer, and we do not allow the repose of our nights to be interrupted by it. It is not because our wants are all supplied that we are so feeble and brief in prayer - nor is it that God's bounty is exhausted. We are, as poor as creatures ever were, and He as rich, and as munificent as ever. His hand is not shortened, neither his ear heavy.

Only think how small a portion of each successive day is spent in prayer. I wonder if any Christian ever thought of it, without being so dissatisfied as to resolve that he would spend more time in prayer the next day. Just add together the minutes you daily occupy in supplication, and the kindred exercises of devotion, scriptural reading and meditation, and see to what it will amount. Will the sum total be one hour? What? less than an hour a day in devotion? - not one twenty-fourth part of time! And is this all which can be afforded? Let us see. How much time has business? Could not a little be saved from business for prayer? Do you not give an hour or two more to business every day than it absolutely requires? Then how much time has sleep, for the refreshment of the body? Might not some little time be redeemed from sleep and spent in prayer, with more profit to the whole man than if it were given to repose? Would not the soul thereby obtain a rest which would most favorably re-act on the body? I do not believe that the Psalmist suffered any thing in the day for the hours of night he spent in communing on his bed with his own heart and with God. I do not believe that even "tired nature" had any reason to

complain of that interruption of the repose due to her. I suspect he enjoyed as good health, and was as vigorous through the day as we, though he arose at midnight to give thanks unto God, and prevented the dawning of the morning with his prayer. Such interruptions of sleep are no loss even to the body. I am sure, and I think no one can doubt, that considerably more time might be afforded for prayer than is actually given to it. If we take none from business and none from sleep, yet could not some be spared from the table, or conversation, which is not always the most profitable? Perhaps some of us spend more time in barely receiving the body's nourishment, than we do in the entire care of the soul! But not to dwell to tediousness on this topic. You have only to look back on a day, to perceive how much of it might have been spent in prayer and devotion without interfering with anything which ought not to be interfered with.

Seeing then that we can pray more - that time can be afforded for it, I am amazed that we do not pray more. If prayer was nothing but a duty, we ought to pray more. We do not pray enough to discharge the mere obligation of prayer. We are commanded to pray more than we do, and to pray "without ceasing." But prayer, while it is a duty, is rather to be viewed by us in the light of a privilege. And O, it is such a privilege! What a favor that we may petition God and ask of him eternal life, with the confidence that we shall not ask in vain! How strange it is that we no more value and exercise this privilege of prayer! It is astonishing that the sense of want, or the desire of happiness, does not carry us oftener to a throne of grace, and that we should ever require to be incited to prayer by the stimulus of conscience. Oh! I wonder that we do not oftener go unto the King, whose gracious sceptre is ever extended toward us - I wonder we have not more frequent and longer interviews with our heavenly Father. It is strange we do not pray more, when prayer is the easiest way of obtaining good. What is so easy as to ask for what we want? How could we receive blessings on cheaper terms? Surely it is easier than to labor, and less expensive than to buy. It may be hard to the spirit to ask of men. To beg of them you may be ashamed. But no such feeling should keep you aloof from God. He giveth and upbraideth not.

But prayer is not merely the easiest way of obtaining good. It is the only way of obtaining the greatest of all good. The subordinate necessities of life we get by labor or purchase; but the things we most need are given in answer to prayer.

The one thing needful is a divine donation. We ask, and receive it. Now we labor much. Why do we not pray more? Do we seek a profitable employment? None is so profitable as prayer. No labor makes so large a return. If you have an unoccupied hour - and you have many, or might have by redeeming time, - you cannot employ it in any way that shall tell so favorably on your interests as by filling it up with petitions to God. Yet when we have such an hour, how apt we are to spend it in unprofitable intercourse with our fellows, rather than in communion with God. It is wonderful that we talk so much, when, "the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury," and pray so little, when prayer "brings a quick return of blessings in variety."

Is there anything attended by a purer pleasure than prayer? One who knew, said, "It is good for me to draw near to God" - and again, "It is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." All the exercises of devotion are as full of pleasure as they are abundant in profit.

But prayer is not only a means of getting good. It is such a means of doing good, that I wonder our benevolence does not lead us to pray more. We are commanded, "as we have opportunity," to do good unto all men. Now prayer affords us the opportunity of being universal benefactors. Through God we can reach all men. We can make ourselves felt by all the world, by moving the hand that moves it. In no other way can we reach all. Prayer makes us, in a sense, omnipresent and omnipotent. It prevails with Him who is both.

The world needs your intercessions. It lies in wickedness. Zion needs them. She languishes because few pray for her peace; few come to her solemn assemblies. Whose family needs not the prayers of its every member? Who has not kindred that are out of Christ? With such a call upon us for prayer so urgent, and from so many quarters, I wonder we pray no more.

I must pray more, for then I shall do more - more for God, and more for myself: for I find that when I pray most, I accomplish more in the briefer intervals between my devotions, than when I give all my time to labor or study. I am convinced there is nothing lost by prayer. I am sure nothing helps a student like prayer. His most felicitous hours - his hours of most successful application to study, are those which immediately follow his seasons of most fervent devotion. And no wonder. Shall the collision of created minds with each other produce in them a salutary excitement, and shall not the communion of those

minds with the infinite Intelligence much more excite them, and make them capable of wider thought and loftier conceptions?

I must pray more, because other Christians, whose biography I have read, have prayed more than I do.

God is disposed to hear more prayers from me than I offer; and Jesus, the Mediator, stands ready to present more for me.

If I pray more I shall sin less.

I will pray more. The Lord helps to fulfill this resolution.

Go to God as a sinner, if you question your right to go in any other character: he always received sinners.

I MUST PRAISE MORE

THE title of a recent article was, "I must pray more;" and in it I expressed wonder that we pray so little, and gave reason why we should pray more. But it strikes me that we ought to praise more as well as pray more. I do not know how it is with others, but I know that I have a great deal for which to be thankful and to praise God. I feel that it will not do for me to spend all my breath in prayer. I should thus, it is true, acknowledge my dependence on God; but where would be the acknowledgment of his benefits conferred upon me? I must spend a part of my breath in praise. O! to be animated from above with that life, whose alternate breath is prayer and praise! God has been very good to me. Yes, he has exercised goodness toward me in all its various forms of pity, forbearance, care, bounty, grace and mercy; or to express all in one word, "God is love," and he has been love to me. I do not know why he should have treated me so kindly. I have sought, but can find no reason out of himself. I conclude it is because he "delighteth in mercy." His nature being love, it is natural for him to love his creatures, and especially those whom he has called to be his children. O! the goodness of God! The thought of it sometimes comes over me with very great power, and I am overwhelmed in admiration. Nothing so easily breaks up the fountain of tears within me. Those drops, if I may judge from my own experience, were intended as much to express gratitude as grief. I think I shall be able, without weariness, to spend eternity on the topic of divine love and goodness.

Reader, can you not adopt my language as your own? Has not God been the same to you? And shall we not praise him? Shall all our devotion consist in prayer? Shall we be always thinking of our wants, and never of his benefits - always dwelling on what remains to be done, and never thinking of what has already been done for us - always uttering desire, and never expressing gratitude - expending all our voice in supplication, and none of it in song? Is this the way to treat a benefactor? No, indeed. It is not just, so to treat him; neither is it wise. It is very bad policy to praise no more than Christians in general do. They would have much more success in prayer, if one half the time they now spend in it were spent in praise. I do not mean that they pray too much, but that they praise too little. I suspect the reason why the Lord did such great things for the Psalmist was, that, while he was not by any means deficient in prayer, he abounded in praise. The Lord heard his psalms, and while he sung of mercy shown, showed him more. And it would be just so with us, if we abound more in praise and thanksgiving. It displeases God that we should be always dwelling on our wants, as if he had never supplied one of them. How do we know that God is not waiting for us to praise him for a benefit he has already conferred, before he will confer on us that other which we may be now so earnestly desiring of him? It is wonderful how much more prone we are to forget the benefit received, than the benefit wanted - in other words, how much more inclined we are to offer prayer than praise. For one who offers genuine praise, there may be found ten that pray. Ten lepers lifted up their voices together in the prayer, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," but only one of the ten "returned to give glory to God." The rest were satisfied with the benefit - this one only thought gratefully of the benefactor. His gratitude obtained for him, I doubt not, a greater blessing than ever his prayer had procured; and praise has often, I believe, in the experience of the people of God, been found more effectual for obtaining blessings than prayer. A person, being once cast upon a desolate island, spent a day in fasting and prayer for his deliverance, but no help came. It occurred to him then to keep a day of thanksgiving and praise, and he had no sooner done it than relief was brought to him. You see, as soon as he began to sing of mercy exercised, the exercise of mercy was renewed to him. The Lord heard the voice of his praise.

Christian reader, you complain perhaps that your prayer is not heard; suppose you try the efficacy of praise. Peradventure you will find that the way to obtain new favors is to praise the Lord for favors received. Perhaps if you consider his

goodness, he will consider your wants. It may be you are a parent, and one child is converted, but there is another concerning whom you say, "O that he might live before Thee!" Go now and bless the Lord for the conversion of the first, and it is very likely he will give thee occasion shortly to keep another day of thanksgiving for the salvation of the other. Some of us are sick. Perhaps it is because we did not praise the Lord for health. We forget that benefit. We do not forget our sickness. O no. Nor is there any lack of desire in us to get well. We pray for recovery. And so we should; but it strikes me that we might get well sooner were we to dwell with less grief and despondency on our loss of health, and to contemplate with cheerful and grateful admiration what God has done for our souls - the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins; and how he spared not his own Son, that he might spare us; and gives us now his Spirit, to be in us the earnest of heaven, our eternal home. If we were to think such thoughts, to the forgetfulness of our bodily ailments, I judge it would be better for the whole man, body and soul both, than any other course we can pursue. If the affliction should still continue, we should count it light, aye, should rejoice in it, because it is his will, and because he says he means to make it work our good.

There is nothing glorifies God like praise. "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me." Ps.1:23. Prayer expresses dependence and desire; but praise admiration and gratitude. By it men testify and tell all abroad that God is good, and thus others are persuaded to "taste and see that the Lord is good." Praise is altogether the superior exercise of the two. Prayer may be purely selfish in its origin, but praise is ingenuous. Praise is the employment of heaven. Angels praise. The spirits of the just made perfect will praise. We shall not always pray, but we shall ever praise. Let us anticipate the employment of heaven. Let us exercise ourselves unto praise.

Let us learn the song now, "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness." But above all, "let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds." I charge thee, my soul, to praise him, and he will never let thee want matter for praise. "While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

I MUST PRAY DIFFERENTLY

SOME time ago I felt strongly the necessity of praying more, and expressed that opinion in an article entitled, "I must pray more." Now I feel that I must not only pray more, but differently: and that my praying more will not answer any good purpose, unless I also pray differently. I find that quality is to be considered in praying, as well as quantity; and, indeed, the former more than the latter.

We learn from Isa.i, that it is possible to make many prayers, or to multiply prayer, as it is in the margin, and yet not be heard. The Scribes and Pharisees made long prayers; but their much praying availed them nothing, while the single short petition of the publican was effectual to change his entire prospects for eternity. It was because it was prayer of the right kind. It is a great error to suppose that we shall be heard for our much speaking. Let me, however, say, that while length is not by itself any recommendation of prayer, yet we have the highest and best authority for continuing a long time in prayer. We know who it was that, "rising up a great while before day," departed into a solitary place, and there prayed; and of whom it is recorded in another place, that he "continued all night in prayer to God." Certainly they should spend a great deal of time in prayer, who are instructed to pray without ceasing. It is in the social and public worship of God that long prayers are out of place.

But to return from this digression. I must pray differently; and I will tell you one thing that has led me to think so. I find that I do not pray effectually. It may be the experience of others as well as of myself. I do not obtain what I ask; and that, though I ask for the right sort of things. If I asked for temporal good and did not receive it, I should know how to account for it. I should conclude that I was denied in mercy; and that my prayer, although not answered in kind, was answered in better kind. But I pray for spiritual blessing - for what is inherently, and under all circumstances good, and do not obtain it. How is this? There is no fault in the hearer of prayer - no unfaithfulness in God. The fault must be in the offerer. I do not pray right. And since there is no use in asking without obtaining, the conclusion is that I must pray differently.

I find, moreover, that I do not pray as they did in old time, whose prayers were so signally answered. When I compare my prayers with those of the patriarchs, especially with that of Jacob - and with the prayers of the prophets, those, for instance, of Elijah and Daniel; when I compare my manner of making suit to the

Saviour, with the appeals made to him by the blind men, and by the woman of Canaan; and above all, when I lay my prayers along side of His who "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, I perceive such a dissimilarity, that I thence conclude that I must pray differently.

I find also that I do not urge my suits to God as I do those which I have sometimes occasion to make to men. I am wiser as a child of this world, than I am as one of the children of light. When I want to carry a point with a human power, I find that I take more pains, and am more intent upon it, and use greater vigilance and effort, than when I want to gain something of God. It is clear, then, that I must alter and reform my prayers. I must pray differently.

But in what respects? How differently?

1. I must not speak to God at a distance. I must draw near to him. Nor that alone. I must stir myself up to take hold of him. Isa.lxiv,7. Yea, I must take hold of his strength, that I may make peace with him. Isa.xxvii,5. I have been satisfied with approaching God. I must, as it were, apprehend him.

2. I must not only take hold of God in prayer, but I must hold fast to him, and not let him go except he bless me. So Jacob did. There were two important ingredients in his prayer - faith and perseverance. By the one he took hold of God; by the other he held fast to him till the blessing was obtained.

3. I must be more affected by the subjects about which I pray. I must join tears to my prayers. Prayers and tears used to go together much more than they do now. Hosea says that Jacob wept and made supplication." Hannah wept while she prayed. So did Nehemiah, and David, and Hezekiah; and God, in granting the request of the last mentioned, used this language: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears." But a greater than all these is here. Jesus offered up "prayers with strong crying and tears." Some think it unmanly to weep. I do not know how that may be; but I know it is not unchristian. It is thought by some that men must have been more addicted to tears than they are now: but it is my opinion that they felt more, and that is the reason they wept more. Now I must feel so as to weep; not by constraint, but in spite of myself. I must be so affected that God shall see my tears as well as hear my voice; and in order to being so affected, I must meditate. It was while David mused that the fire burned; and then he spake with his tongue in the language

of prayer. And we know that which melted his heart affected his eye, for in the same psalm, the 39th, he says, "Hold not thy peace at my tears."

4. There are other accompaniments of prayer which I must not omit. Nehemiah not only wept and prayed but also mourned and fasted, and made confession. Why should not I do the same?

5. I must plead as well as pray. My prayers must be more of the nature of arguments - and I must make greater use than I have ever done, of certain pleas. There is one derived from the character of God. "For thy name's sake pardon mine iniquity. Have mercy on me according to thy loving kindness." Another is derived from the promises of God. "hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Another is drawn from the past doings of God. "I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old." I must also plead Christ more in my prayers. The argument is drawn out to our hands by Paul: "He that spared not his own Son. how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

6. But again: I must cry unto the Lord. Crying expresses more than praying. It expresses earnest, fervent prayer. This is what they all used to do. They cried to God. The psalmist says: "I cried with my whole heart." I must cry with my whole heart - yea mightily, as even the Ninevites did, else those heathen will rise up in the judgment and condemn me.

7. I must seek the Lord in prayer, feeling as did Job, when he said, "O that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat!" And this I must do, as Judah is said once to have done, with my "whole desire." Yea I must search for him with all my heart. I must even pour out my heart before him, as the psalmist on one occasion exhorts. I must "keep not silence, and give him no rest," as Isaiah directs; "night and day praying exceedingly," as Paul says he did.

8. And I must pray in the Holy ghost, as Jude exhorts. We need the Spirit to help our infirmities, and to make intercession for us. Nor should we be satisfied with any prayer in which we have not seemed to have his help.

Finally, I must alter and alter my prayers till I get them right; and I must not think them right until I obtain the spiritual blessings which they ask. If I pray for more grace, and do not get it, I must pray differently for it till I do obtain it.

Oh, if Christians prayed differently, as well as more, what heavenly places our closets would be! What interesting meetings prayer-meetings would be! What revivals of religion we should have? How frequent, numerous, and pure! What a multitude of souls would be converted!

And because the Holy spirit is the Spirit of truth, the offering of a different kind of prayer for the Spirit would do more to put down error than all other means which can be resorted to. The preachers of truth cannot put it down without the aid of the Spirit of truth.

Let us then pray differently. Let us at least try. I am sure it is worth the effort. Let every one who reads this, resolve, "I will pray differently."

PRAYING IN HIS NAME

- Praying In His Name By Alonzo T. Jones
- Praying In The Name By Ellet J. Waggoner
- Praying In The Spirit By Ellet J. Waggoner

PRAYING IN HIS NAME

THIS word is spoken of the people of God at the time when the church is to be clothed with the "beautiful garments" of his righteousness and endued with his power (Isa. 52: 1); when she is entirely separated from the world and all worldliness; and when she is entirely loosed from the captive bonds of sin (verse 2); and when she is to know the full redemption of the Lord. Verse 3.

It is the time when, again, as in Egypt, his people will be "oppressed without cause" (verse 4); when "they that rule over them make them to howl," and themselves "continually every day blaspheme" the name of the Lord. Verse 5. It is at such a time as this, and "therefore" that the Lord declares, "My people shall know My name." Verse 6.

And that time is now. Those who obey Him now, as in Egypt, are oppressed without cause. There, they were oppressed for the keeping the Sabbath of the Lord, and here, they are oppressed for the same thing. And now God will be revealed in power as He was then. Now as then the Lord will make "bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Verse 10. "Therefore My people shall know My name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak; behold, it is I."

His name is "merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." To know His name is to know all this. It is not merely to know about it, but it is to know it. It is not to know of it by the hearing of the ear; it is to know it, by the "hearing of faith"—to know it with the heart. As His name expresses what He is, to know His name is to know Him—not merely to know about Him; but to know Him. His name expresses His nature, and to know His name is to know His nature.

He is merciful. This is His name; and to know His name is to know mercy. It is to know what it is always to manifest from the heart treatment better than they deserve to all offenders. It is only by knowing Him, the fountain of mercy that this can be done. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Luke 6:36.

He is gracious. This is His name; and to know His name is to know what it is to be extending favour always to all people. Not favour for favour; but pure favour. Not selfishness; but graciousness. He is long-suffering. His name, even as He says, is continually every day blasphemed; His law is trampled underfoot; His authority is defied; He Himself is abused and outraged; yet He suffers it long, He endures it long, and is still abundant in goodness and truth even toward all those who are doing all these evil things. He is long-suffering thus toward all, because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. This is His name; and to know His name is to know what it is wrongfully and unjustly to suffer contempt, injury, abuse, and outrage, to suffer these things long and still manifest abundance of goodness and truth to all, that if by any means they may be brought to repentance.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind." And "if I have not charity, I am nothing."
"Charity is the bond of perfectness."

And now that the time of suffering, of contempt, of oppression, of abuse, and of outrage, is upon us, how precious the promise that we shall know His name, so that His holy disposition and character shall be manifest on all occasions! And how important it is that everyone who has a name and place among His people, shall receive this promise in its fulness, that we may indeed know His name, and that the savour of His knowledge may be made manifest by us in every place!

He is forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. This is His name; and to know His name is to know the forgiveness of iniquity and transgression and sin. It is to know this, each one for himself in his own, individual case; and then because of this, manifesting it to all people always. "Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." Luke 6:37. It is not condemnation that men in this world need. They have that already in abundance. It is not condemnation but salvation that the people of this world need. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." And "as My Father sent Me, so send I you." He does not send us to condemn anybody; but that they may be saved. His name is "forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin," and His people are to know His name—they are to know what it is to be this to all.

God is love. This is His name; and to know His name is to know love—His love. It is to know Him as He is Himself. And "he that loveth not, knoweth not God."

PRAYING IN THE NAME

We are exhorted, "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Gal. 3:17. So we are to pray in His name, and the assurance is, "If ye shall ask anything In My name, I will do it." There are many unconscious forgers at the bank of heaven. How many there are who in their prayers use the expressions, "in Jesus' name," and, "for Jesus' sake," without a thought of what they mean. Thus they take the name in vain. They come with the name of the Lord without the Lord Himself.

When we truly bear the name of Jesus, we are sunk out of sight, for it is He who lives, and not we, and it is He in us asking that He may be delivered from the power of sin in our flesh. He is dwelling in our flesh, in order that He may cleanse us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. "In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death," He was heard. Heb. 5:7. He was saved from death, in that He was saved from sin. He "suffered in the flesh, being tempted," but He suffered not for Himself. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and it was the infirmities of our sinful flesh that oppressed His soul, He is still pleading in sinful flesh, presenting His life in our behalf, and longing to be relieved from the burden of sin with which we make Him serve.

How can a guilty sinner, already convicted of law-breaking, appear before the Lord, in the presence of that law that sends forth thunder and lightning, and a storm of indignation upon the wicked? He dare not; but he need not, for it is not he, but Christ. Knowing and confessing that Christ is come in the flesh, the sinner comes with boldness to the throne of grace, for he comes in the name-in the person-of Jesus. If he truly believes in the name of Jesus, it is Christ using his tongue to utter the petition; and when he knows this, he can always make his requests with thanksgiving, no matter with how strong crying and tears his supplications be made; for Christ in the days of His flesh obtained deliverance from those very sins.

So when I use that name, I must claim all that the name comprehends. Christ never offered a petition in vain. He said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; and I know that Thou hearest Me always." John 11:41, 42. Whatever we ask in His name indeed, will be granted. God will clear and hold guiltless every soul who takes that name for all that it means. Such an one will not take it in vain.

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

"And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." (See Hebrews 4:12, 13; Jer 17:10 I, the Lord search the heart)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and none can know it except God. Jer. 17:9, 10. That in itself is sufficient reason why we do not know what we should pray for. Moreover, we do not know the things that God has to give us; and even if we did, our lips could not describe them, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. 2:9-12.

God desires to give to us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Eph. 3:20. Of course a petition for such things can not be put into words. The next clause however says that it is "according to the power that worketh in us;" and the sixteenth verse tells us that the power that works in us is the Spirit. Thus we find the same thing that we read in the eighth of Romans and the second of 1 Corinthians.

"The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." Therefore the Spirit knows just what the Lord has for us. The deepest thoughts are too great for language, and so the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings that can not be uttered. But, although there is no articulate speech "he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The Lord knows that the Spirit asks for just the things that he has to bestow. He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that whatever is asked according to God's will is granted. 1 John 5:14, 15.

Now note how this statement in regard to prayer fits in with what goes before in the eighth of Romans. God has given us his Spirit to be in us, to lead us, and to direct our lives. The possession of the Spirit of God proves that we are the sons of God. Being sons, we can come to him to ask for things to supply our need, with all the confidence of a child to a parent. But while we have all confidence, our thoughts are as the earth is below the heaven. Isa. 45:8, 9. Not only are our thoughts feeble, but our language is still more so. We can not give proper expression even to the little that we do realize. But if we are the sons of God, we have in us his own representative, who helps our infirmity and who is able to take of the things of God to give to us. What wonderful confidence this should give us in praying to God; and especially should it give confidence to those who are particularly infirm in regard to language! It makes no difference if one has a very limited vocabulary, if he stammers, or even if he is dumb; if he prays in the Spirit, he is sure to receive all that he needs, and more than he can ask or think.

With these facts before us, how much more forcible becomes the exhortation of the apostle, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Eph. 6:18.

PRAYER MANAGED

- How Shall We Ask by M. M. Osgood
- Secret Prayer Successfully Managed by Lee

HOW SHALL WE ASK?

"ASK, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Luke 11:9.

We have here the word of him who is emphatically "The Truth." Those to whom these words apply may know they have the things for which they ask, for they will willingly comply with the conditions. To whom, then, are they addressed? By reading the first verse we find he is talking with his disciples, who asked him to teach them to pray. They were addressed to those who believed in, and followed, Jesus. It may now apply to all those who believe in, and fully follow, him. In Jesus' last prayer with his disciples he anticipates the wants of all those who should believe through their word, and asks for them, and the disciples present, like blessings. See John 17:11,20,21. We who believe them through their written word, may claim the promise if we fulfill the conditions. What are the conditions?

1. We must not, like the hypocrite, pray to be seen of men. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." Matt.6:5,6. All who have realized the blessedness of communion with god, know that the secret place, where no eye but his can see, no ear but his hear, is the dearest, sweetest spot on earth.
2. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have anything against any one. but if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Mark 11:25,26.
3. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt.5:23,24. Our altar is the altar of prayer. The gift or offering we are to bring as a sacrifice, is a broken and contrite heart. See Ps.2:17. If we come then to the altar of prayer, and remember that we have in any way, either by word or deed, injured a brother (or neighbor) we are to seek reconciliation first, by asking forgiveness of them. If we have spoken unkindly or falsely to them

alone, to them alone is confession due. If we have spoken these words to, or in the presence of, others, to them we must also acknowledge our fault, and counteract as far as may be, the wrong influence and impressions our words have caused. If we have been guilty of oppression, or fraud in the least degree, this also must be confessed, and as far as possible reparation be made to the injured. Zaccheus was ready to restore fourfold all that he had obtained unjustly; and when the Lord takes full possession of our hearts, we shall be anxious to make full restoration.

Thus much in regard to the duties required toward our fellow-creatures before we present our petitions. What does the Lord require in regard to himself?

1. Have faith in God. "For truly I say to you that whosoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatever he saith. Therefore I say to you, Whatever things ye ask when ye pray, believe that ye will receive, and ye shall have them." Mark 11:22-24. "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 anything of the Lord." James 1:5-7.

2. In order to have a ground for the exercise of faith, we must do those things that please God. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John 3:20-22.

3. We must ask according to his will; that is, ask only for those things which he in his word declares himself willing to give. Whatever would make us holier, more like our Pattern, or whatever would tend to God's glory, we may ask, either for ourselves or others. See 1John v,16. But whatever tends to foster pride, or increase our covetousness, or selfishness, would not be in accordance with his will, hence improper to pray for. "And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have

the petitions that we have asked from him." 1John 5:14,15. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3.

4. We must ask in Jesus' name. "Whatever things ye ask the Father in my name he will give you." John 15:23. If we rely on our own merits, or promises of future obedience, they will fail us. "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." To illustrate. A. and B. are partners in the mercantile business, each owning a share in the firm, consequently considered by each other as responsible persons. A stranger comes to A., seeking and obtaining employment. At the end of the week he asks his wages, wishing to purchase necessaries for his family. A. writes a line to B., requesting him to give this man goods to the amount of \$6, and signs his name to the line. Handing it to the stranger, he says, "Go to the store of A. and B., and take up \$6 worth, and I will be responsible." He goes, gets the goods, tells B. that he has been working for A., who sent him there to get that amount. But B. says, "I cannot let you take the goods unless A. sends an order to that effect. You are a stranger; I cannot take your word." The stranger then things of the line, and presents it to B., who upon seeing the writing and name of A., hesitates no longer, but delivers up the goods. Although we are not unknown to God, yet we are no more responsible than was this stranger, hence we need the name of one who is worthy, to present. And it must be genuine. If the stranger had forged the writing and presented it to B., he would have been detected at once by B.

We may profess to believe alone in the merits of Jesus, and when we offer our formal prayers, may say, "All we ask is in Jesus' name." But God cannot be deceived; he will not regard it. If we abide in Christ and bring forth fruit like him, the parent vine, we shall be his epistles, known and acknowledged by God whether by men or not. If Christ abides in us by his spirit, he will move us to ask just those things that are proper for us. "For we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Rom. 8:26,27.

Oh that we might realize our poverty, and unworthiness, and thus be enabled more fully to appreciate the matchless love of Jesus in giving us an order on the

bank of heaven, signed with his own dear, all-prevailing name. When we remember the wondrous price he paid to secure the blessings now offered to us without money and without price, may it melt our hearts with gratitude, and bind us living sacrifices, as with cords, to the altar.

SECRET PRAYER SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED, PART ONE

"But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. Matt.16:6.

WE have here our blessed Lord's instructions for the management of secret prayer, the crown and glory of a child of God.

I. The direction prescribed for our deportment in secret duty in three things: 1. Enter thy closet. This word signifies a secret or recluse habitation, and sometimes it is rendered a hiding place for treasure. 2. "Shut thy door," or lock, it as the word intimates. The Greek word furnishes the term "key," as appears by Rev.3:7, and 20:1,3, implying that we must bar or bolt it. 3. "Pray to thy Father which is in secret." "Father." Tertullian notes this name, as intimating both piety and power; "thy Father" denoting intimacy and propriety.

II. A gracious promise which may be branched into three parts: 1. For thy Father sees thee in secret, his eye is upon thee with a gracious aspect, when thou art withdrawn from all the world. 2. He will reward thee. The word used here is sometimes translated by, rendering, Matt. 22:21; Rom. 2:6, and 8:7; by delivering, Matt.27:58; Luke 9:42; by yielding or affording, Heb.12:11; Rev. 22:2. All which comes to this; he will return thy prayers or thy requests amply and abundantly into thy bosom. 3. He will do it openly, manifestly; before the world sometimes, and most plentifully and exuberantly before men and angels at the great day; secret prayers shall have open and public answers.

III. Here is a demonstration of sincerity, from the right performance of the duty set forth by the antithesis in the fifth verse. "But thou shalt not be as the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets that they may be seen of men." Enter not thy house only, or thy common chamber, but thy closet, the most secret and retired privacy, that others may neither discern thee nor rush in suddenly upon thee. God will answer thee and perform thy request as a gracious return to thy secret sincerity. God is pleased by promise to make himself a debtor to secret prayer.

It brings nothing to God but empty hands and naked hearts; to show that reward in scripture sense does not flow in on the streams of merit, but of grace. It is monkish divinity to assert otherwise; for what merit strictly taken can there be in prayer? The mere asking of mercy cannot merit it at the hands of God. Mal.2:3. Our most sincere petitions are impregnated with sinful mixtures. We halt, like Jacob, both in and after our choicest and strongest wrestlings. But such is the grace of our heavenly Father who spies that little sincerity of our hearts in secret, that he is pleased to accept us in his beloved, and to smell a sweet savor in the fragrant perfumes and odors of his intercession.

Though I might draw many notes hence, I shall treat of but one, containing the marrow and nerves of the text.

That secret prayer duly managed is the mark of a sincere heart and hath the promise of a gracious return.

Prayer is the soul's colloquy with God, and secret prayer is a conference with God upon admission into the privy chamber of heaven. When thou hast shut thine own closet, when God and thy soul are alone, with this key thou openest the chambers of paradise and enterest the closet of divine love. When thou art immured as in a curious labyrinth apart from the tumultuous world, and entered into that garden of Lebanon in the midst of thy closet, thy soul like a spiritual Daedalus, takes to itself the wings of faith and prayer and flies into the midst of heaven among the cherubims. I may serve secret prayer the invisible flight of the soul into the bosom of God. Out of this heavenly closet rises Jacob's ladder, whose rounds are all of light; its foot stands upon the basis of the covenant in thy heart, its top reaches the throne of grace. When thy reins have instructed thee in the night season with holy petitions, when thy soul hath desired him in the night, then with thy spirit within thee wilt thou seek him early. When the door of thy heart is shut, and the windows of thy eyes are sealed up from all vain and worldly objects, up thou mountest and hast a place given thee to walk among angels that stand by the throne of God. Zech. 3:7. In secret prayer the soul, like Moses is in the back side of the desert, and talks with the angel of the covenant in the fiery bush. Ex. 3:1. Here's Isaac in the field at eventide, meditating and praying to the God of his father Abraham. Gen. 24:63. Here's Elijah under the juniper tree at Rithma in the wilderness, and anon in the cave hearkening to the still small voice of God. 1Kings 19:4,12.

Here's Christ and the spouse alone in the wine cellar, and the banner of love over her, and she utters but half words, having drunk of the sober excess of the spirit. Eph. 5:18. Here we find Nathaniel under the fig-tree, though it may be at secret prayer, yet under a beam of the eye of Christ. John 1:48. There sits Austin in the garden alone sighing with the Psalmist, "How long, O Lord," and listening to the voice of God, take up the Bible and read. (Confessions, 1st book, 8th chapter). It is true hypocrites may pray and pray alone, and pray long, and receive their reward from such whose observations they desire, but a hypocrite takes no sincere delight in secret devotion, he has no spring of affection to God. But O my dove, says Christ, that art in the cleft of the rocks, let me hear thy voice, for the melody thereof is sweet. A weeping countenance and a wounded spirit are most beautiful prospects to the eye of heaven, when a broken heart pours out repentant tears like streams from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses' law in the hand of a mediator. O how amiable in the sight of God the cry, "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee;" which Chrysostom glosses thus, to "draw sighs from the furrows of the heart." Let thy prayer become a hidden mystery of divine secrets, like good Hezekiah upon the bed with his face to the wall, that none might observe him; or like our blessed Lord, that grand example, who retired into mountains and solitudes apart, and saw by night the illustrious face of his heavenly Father in prayer.

The reasons why secret prayer is the mark of a sincere heart are as follows: 1. Because a sincere heart busies itself about heart work, to mortify sin, to quicken grace, to observe and resist temptation, to secure and advance his evidences; therefore it is much conversant with secret prayer. The glory of the king's daughter shines within, arrayed with clothes of gold, but they are the spangled and glittering hangings of the closet of her heart when she entertains communion with her Lord. The more a saint converses with his own heart, the more he searches his spiritual wants, and feels his spiritual joys. 2. Because a sincere heart aims at the eye of God, he knows that God, being a spirit, loves to converse with our spirits, and to speak to the heart more than the outward ear; he labors to walk before God as being always in his sight, but especially when he presents himself at the footstool of mercy. An invisible God is delighted with invisible prayers, when no eye sees but his; he takes most pleasure in the secret glances of a holy heart. But no more of this; let us descend to the question deducible from the text, a question of no less importance than daily use, and of peculiar concernment to the growth of every Christian.

How to manage secret prayer that it may be prevalent with God to the comfort and satisfaction of the soul.

For method's sake, I shall divide it into two branches.

I. How to manage secret prayer that it may prevail with God.

II. How to discern and discover answers to secret prayer that the soul may acquiesce and be satisfied that it hath prevailed with God.

Before I handle these, I would briefly prove the duty and its usefulness, leaving some cases about its attendants and circumstances toward the close.

As to the DUTY itself the text is plain and distinct in the point; yet further observe in Solomon's prayer, that if any man besides the community of the people of Israel shall present his supplication to God, he there prays for a gracious and particular answer: and we know Solomon's prayer was answered by fire, and so we learn a promise given forth to personal prayer. 1Kings 8:38,39; 2Chron. 6:29,30; 2Chron. 7:1. Besides the many special and particular injunctions to individual persons, as Job 22:27, and 33:26; Psalm 32:6; Psalm 1:15. Wives as well as husbands are to pray apart. Zech.12:14; solitary, by themselves; James 5:13.

We may argue this point from the constant practice of the holy saints of God in all ages, but especially of our blessed Lord; and it is our wisdom to walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous, as Abraham, Eliezer, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, Hezekiah, David, Daniel. The time would fail me to bring in the cloud of witnesses. Our Lord we find sometimes in a desert, in a mountain, in a garden, at prayer; Cornelius in his house, and Peter upon the housetop, in secret supplication to God.

There is the experience of God's gracious presence and answers sent in upon secret prayer, as in the stories of Eliezer, Jabez, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Cornelius and Paul. For this cause, because David was heard, shall every one that is Godly pray unto him.

I might urge the usefulness, nay in some cases the necessities, of secret applications to God.

1. Are we not guilty of secret sins in the light of God's countenance, that cannot, ought not to be confessed before others, insomuch that near relations

are exhorted to secret and solitary duties? Zech.12:12; 1Cor. 7:4. 2. Are there not personal wants that we would prefer to God alone? 3. Are there not some special mercies and deliverances that concern our own persons more peculiarly, which should engage us to commune with our own hearts and offer the sacrifices of righteousness to God? 4. May there not be found some requests to be poured out more particularly in secret as to other persons, and as to the affairs of the church of God, which may not be commodiously insisted upon in common? 5. Do not sudden and urgent passions spring out of the soul in secret that would be unbecoming in social prayer? 6. To argue from the text, may not the soul's secret addresses about inward sorrows and joys be a sweet testimony of the sincerity and integrity of the heart, when the heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddles not with his joy? Perhaps a man has an Ishmael, an Absalom, a Rehoboam, to weep for, and therefore, gets into an inward chamber, where behold his witness is in heaven, and his record on high, and when others may scorn or pity, his eye poureth out tears unto God.

To end this, when a holy soul is close in secret, what complacency does it take when it has bolted out the world and retired to a place that none knows of, to be free from the disturbances and distractions that often violate family communion. When the soul is in the secret place of the Most High, and in the shadow of the Almighty, O how safe, how comfortable!

Nor can I insist upon secret prayer, under the variety of mental and vocal, nor enlarge upon it as sudden, occasional, or ejaculatory, referring somewhat of this toward the end.

I must remark that there are some things which aptly belong to secret prayer, yet being coincident with all prayer, public, social, and secret, it is proper to treat of those which are important to our present duty, and must therefore refer to a double head.

I. How shall we manage secret prayer, as it is coincident with prayer in general, so that it may prevail?

1. Use some preparation before it, rush not suddenly into the awful presence of God. Sanctuary preparation is necessary to sanctuary communion. Such suitable preparatory frames of mind come down from God. It was a good saying of one, "He never prays ardently that does not premeditate devoutly." It is said of Daniel, when he made that famous prayer, he set his face to seek the

Lord. Dan.9:3. Jehoshaphat also set himself to seek the Lord. 2Chron.20:3. The church in her soul desires the Lord in the night, and then in the morning she seeks him early. Desires blown by meditation are the sparks that set prayer in a light flame. The work of preparation may be cast under five heads, when we apply to solemn, set prayer.

1. The consideration of some attributes in God that are proper to the intended petitions. 2. A digestion of some peculiar and special promises that concern the affair. 3. Meditation on suitable arguments. 4. Ejaculations for assistance. 5. An engagement of the heart to a holy frame of reverence and keeping to the point in hand. That was good advice from Cyprian: "Let the soul think upon nothing but what it is to pray for," and he adds that therefore the ministers of old prepared the minds of the people with "let your hearts be above." For how can we expect to be heard of God when we do not hear ourselves, when the heart does not watch while the tongue utters? The tongue must be like the pen of a ready writer, to set down the good matter which the heart indites. Take heed of ramblings. To preach or tell pious stories, while praying to the great and holy God, is a branch of irreverence and a careless frame of spirit. Heb.12:8.

2. Humble confession of such sins as concern and refer principally to the work in hand. Our filthy garments must be put away when we appear before the Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem. Zech.3:4. "Look upon my afflictions," says David, and "forgive all my sins." There are certain sins that often relate to afflictions. First "Deliver me from transgression, then hear my prayer, O Lord." This is the heavenly method; he first forgiveth all our iniquities, and then healeth all our diseases. Psa.103:3. A forgiven soul is a healed soul. While a man is sick at heart with the qualms of sin unpardoned, it keeps the soul in dismay that it cannot cry strongly to God, and therefore in holy groans must discharge himself of particular sins. Thus did David in that great penitential psalm. Psalm li. Sin, like a thick cloud, hides the face of God, that our prayers cannot enter. Isa. 59:2. We must blush with Ezra, and our faces look red with the flushings of conscience if we expect any smiles of mercy. Ezra 9:6. Our crimson sins must dye our confessions, and the blood of our sacrifices must sprinkle the horns of the golden altar, before we receive an answer of peace from the golden mercy seat. When our persons are pardoned, our suits are accepted, and our petitions crowned with the olive branch of peace.

3. An arguing and pleading spirit in prayer. This is properly wrestling with God; humble yet earnest expostulations about his mind toward us. "Why hast thou cast us off forever? why doth thine anger smoke? Be not wroth very sore, O Lord; remember not iniquity forever; see, we beseech thee, we are thy people." Psa.74:1; Isa.64:9. If so, why is it thus? as affrighted Rebekah flies out into prayer. Gen. 25:22. An arguing frame in prayer, cures and appeases the frights of spirit and then inquires of God. The temple of prayer is called the soul's inquiring place. I must refer to Abraham, Jacob and Moses, Joshua, David and Daniel, how they used arguments with God. Sometimes from the multitudes of God's mercies. Psa. 5:7, and 4:4, and 31:16. From the experience of former answers. Psa. 4:1, and 6:9, and 22:4. From their trust and reliance upon him. Psa.9:10, and 16:1. From the equity of God. Psa. 17:1. From the shame and confusion of face that God will put his people to if not answered, and that others will be driven away from God. Psa.31:17, and 43:1. And lastly from the promise of peace. Psa.20:5, and 35:18. These and many like pleadings we find in scripture, for patterns in prayer, which being suggested by the Spirit, kindled from the altar, and perfumed with Christ's incense, rise up like memorial pillars before the oracle. Let us observe in one or two particular prayers, what instant arguments holy men have used and pressed in their perplexities. What a working prayer did Jehoshaphat make, taking pleas from God's covenant, dominion and powerful strength; from his gift of the land of Canaan, and driving out the old inhabitants; ancient mercies! from his sanctuary and promise to Solomon; from the ingratitude and ill requital of his enemies, with an appeal to God's equity in the case, and an humble confession of their own impotency; and yet that in their anxiety their eyes are fixed upon God. 2Chron.20:10, etc. You know how gloriously it prevailed when he set ambushments round about the court of heaven, and the Lord turned his arguments into ambushments against the children of Edom. Yes this is set as an instance how God will deal against the enemies of his church in the latter days. Joel 3:2. Another instance is that admirable prayer of the angel of the covenant to God for the restoration of Jerusalem [Zech. 1:12], wherein he pleads from the length of time and the duration of his indignation for threescore and ten years; from promised mercies and the expiration of prophecies; and behold an answer of good and comfortable words from the Lord; and pray observe that when arguments in prayer are very cogent upon a sanctified heart, such being drawn from the divine attributes, from precious promises and sweet

experiments of God's former love, it is a rare sign of prevailing prayer. It was an ingenious remark of Chrysostom concerning the woman of Canaan: The poor distressed creature was turned an acute philosopher with Christ and disputed the mercy from him. O 'tis a blessed thing to attain to this heavenly philosophy of prayer, to argue blessings out of the hand of God. Here is a spacious field. I have given but a small prospect, where the soul like Jacob enters the list with omnipotency, and by holy force obtains the blessing.

4. Ardent affections in prayer, betokening a heart deeply sensible, are greatly prevalent; a crying prayer pierces the depths of heaven. We read not a word that Moses spoke, but God was moved by his cry. Ex. 14:15. I mean not an obstreperous noise, but melting moans of heart. Yet sometimes the sore and pinching necessities and distresses of spirit extort even vocal cries not unpleasant to the ear of God. "I cried to the Lord with my voice and he heard me out of his holy hill." And this encourages David to a fresh onset. "Hearken to the voice of my cry, my King and my God; give ear to my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears." Another time he makes the cave echo with his cries: "I cried, attend to my cry, for I am brought very low." And what is the issue? Faith gets courage by crying; his tears watered his faith so that it grew into confidence; and so concludes: "Thou shalt deal bountifully with me, and the righteous shall crown me for conqueror." Psa.42:1,5,6,7. Plentiful tears bring bountiful mercies, and a crying suitor proves a triumphant praiser. Holy Jacob was just such another at the fords of Jabbok; he wept and made supplication and prevailed with the angel. The Lord told Hezekiah he had heard his prayer, for he had seen his tears. Such precedents may well encourage backsliding Ephraim to return and bemoan himself, and then the bowels of God are troubled for him. Nay, we have a holy woman also weeping sore before the Lord in Shiloh, and then rejoicing in his salvation. 1Sam. 1:10; 2:1. The cries of saints are like vocal music joined with the instrumental of prayer; they make heavenly melody in the ears of God. The bridegroom calls to his mourning dove, "Let me hear thy voice, for it is pleasant." What Gerson says of the sores of Lazarus, we may say of sighs, "As many wounds, so many tongues." Cries and groans in prayer are so many eloquent orators at the throne of God.

5. Importunity and assiduity in prayer are highly prevalent. Not that we should lengthen out our prayers with tedious and vain repetitions, as the heathen did of old, but we should be frequent and instant in prayer. As Christ bids us to

pray always, and the apostle Paul to pray without ceasing, we learn the duty of constancy in prayer. As the morning and evening sacrifice at the temple is called the continual burnt-offering [Num. 28:4,6]; as Mephibosheth is said to eat bread continually at David's temple, and Solomon's servants to stand continually before him, that is, at the set and appointed times, so it is required of us to be constant and assiduous at prayer, and to offer our prayers with perseverance. When the soul perseveres in prayer, it is a sign of persevering faith, and such may have what they will at the hand of God, when praying according to divine direction. John 16:23. Nay, urgent prayer is a token of a mercy at hand. When Elijah prayed seven times, one after another, for rain, the clouds presently march up out of the sea at the command of prayer. 1Kings 18:43. "Ask of me things to come, and concerning the works of my hands command ye me," saith the Lord. Isa.45:11. When we put forth our utmost strength in prayer, and will as it were receive no nay from heaven, our prayers must be like the continual blowing of the silver trumpets over the sacrifices, for a memorial before the Lord. Num. 10:10. Like the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem which never hold their peace day nor night, we are commanded not to keep silence, nor give him rest. Isa.62:6,7. Nay, God seems offended at another time that they did not lay hands on him, that they might not be consumed in their iniquities. Such prayers are as it were a holy molestation to the throne of grace. Isa.64:7. It is said of the man that rose at midnight to give out three loaves to his friend, that he did it not for friendship's sake, but because he was pressing, so importunate as to trouble him at such a season as twelve o'clock at night. Luke 11:8. Our Lord applies the parable to instant prayer. It was so with the success of the widow with the unjust judge, because she did vex and molest him with her solicitations. Luke 18:5. But of all, the pattern of the woman of Canaan is most admirable, when the disciples desired her to be dismissed because she troubled them by crying after them, and yet she persists. Matt.15:23. May I say it reverently, Christ delights in such a troublesome person. Augustine observes, by comparing both evangelists, that first she cried after Christ in the streets, but our Lord taking to a house, she follows him thither and falls down at his feet, but as yet he answered her not a word; then our Lord going out of the house again, she follows him with stronger importunity, and argues the mercy into her bosom, and Christ ascribes it to the greatness of her faith. To knock at midnight is deemed no incivility at the gate of heaven. An energetic prayer is likely to be an efficacious prayer.

Cold petitioners must have cold answers. If the matter of prayer be right, and the promise of God fervently urged, thou art likely to prevail like princely Israel, that held the angel and would not let him go until he had blessed him.

Query. But can God be moved by our arguments or affected with our troubles? He is the unchangeable God and dwells in the inaccessible light, and with him is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

I reply. These holy motions upon the hearts of saints in prayer are the fruits of his love to them, and the appointed ushers-in of mercy. God graciously determines to give a praying, arguing, warm, affectionate frame as the forerunner of a decreed mercy. That is the reason that carnal men can enjoy no such mercies, because they pour out no such prayers. The spirit of prayer prognosticates mercy near at hand. When the Lord by Jeremiah foretold the end of the captivity, he also predicts the prayers that should open the gates of Babylon. Cyrus was prophesied of, to do his work for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel his elect, but yet they must ask him concerning those things to come, and they should not seek him in vain. Isa.45:1,2,4; 19. The coming of Christ is promised by himself; but yet "the Spirit and bride say, Come; and he that heareth must say, Come," and when Christ says he will "come quickly," we must add, "even so, come Lord Jesus."

Divine grace kindles these ardent affections when the mercies promised are upon the wing. Prayer is that chain, as Dionysius calls it, that draws the soul up to God, and the mercy down to us; or like the cable that draws the ship to land, though the shore itself remains unmovable. Prayer has its kindling from heaven, like the ancient sacrifices, that were inflamed with celestial fire.

6. SUBMISSION to the all-wise and holy will of God. This is the great benefit of a saint's communion with the Spirit, that he maketh intercession for them according to the will of God. When we pray for holiness there is a concurrence with the divine will, for "this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

1Thess. 4:3. When we pray that our bodies may be presented a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, we then prove "what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12:1,2. In the covenant of grace, God does his part and ours too. As when God commands us to pray in one place, he promises in another place "to pour out upon us a spirit of grace and supplication." Zech.12:10. God commands us to repent and turn to him. Eze.14:6. In another place, Jer.31:18,

"Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God." And again, "turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned." Lament 5:21. And again, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." Eze.36:26,27. And Paul says, "For this cause I cease not to pray for you, that he would work in you that which is well pleasing in his sight." Col.1:9,10; Heb. 13:21. "Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you, to will, and to do of his good pleasure." Phil.2:12,13. Precepts, promises and prayer are connected like so many golden links to excite, encourage and assist the soul in spiritual duties. But in other cases, as to temporal and temporary mercies, let all thy desires in prayer be formed with submission, guided by his counsel and prostrate at his feet, and acted by a faith suited to the promises of outward blessings, and then it shall be unto thee even as thou wilt. Gerson said well: "Let all thy desires as to temporal turn upon the hinges of the divine good pleasure." That man shall have his own will that resolves to make God's will his. God will certainly bestow that which is for the good of his people.

One great point of our mortification lies in this: to have our wills melted into God's; and it is a great token of spiritual growth, when we are not only content, but joyful to see our wills crossed that his may be done. When our wills are sacrifices of holy prayer, we many times receive choicer things than we ask expressly. It was a good saying, "God many times grants not what we would in our present prayers, that he may bestow what we would rather have when we have the prayer more graciously answered than we petitioned." We know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit helps us out with groans that secretly hint a correction of our wills and spirits in prayer. In great anxieties and pinching troubles, nature dictates strong groans for relief, but sustaining grace and participation of divine holiness, mortification from earthly comforts, excitation of the soul to long for heaven, being gradually weaned from the wormwood breasts of their sublunary, transient and unsatisfying pleasures, and the timing of our hearts for the seasons wherein God will time his deliverances, are sweeter mercies than the immediate return of a prayer for an outward good. What truly holy person would lose that light of God's countenance which he enjoyed by glimpses in a cloudy day for a little corn and wine? Nay, in many cases open denials of prayer prove the most excellent answers, and God's not hearing us in the most signal audience. Therefore at the foot of every prayer subscribe "Thy will be done," and thou shalt enjoy

preventing mercies that thou never soughtest, and converting mercies to change all for the best, resting confident in this, that having asked according to his will he heareth thee.

7. And lastly. Present all into the hands of Christ. This was signified of old by praying toward the temple, because the golden mercy seat typifying Christ was there. 1Kings 8:33. Heb.8:3. He is ordained of God to offer gifts and sacrifices, and therefore it is of necessity that he should have something from us to offer, being the High Priest over the house of God. Heb.10:21. What does Christ on our behalf at the throne of grace? Put some petition into the hands of Christ; he waits for our offerings at the door of the oracle; leave the sighs and groans of thy heart with this compassionate intercessor, who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, who sympathizes with our weaknesses. He that lies in the Father's bosom, and hath expounded the will of God to us [John 1:18], adds much incense to the prayers of all saints before the throne of God, and explains our wills to God, so that our prayers perfumed by his are set forth as incense before him. Rev. 8:3; Psa.141:2. He is the day's-man, the heaven's-man betwixt God and us. Job 9:23. Whatever we ask in his name he puts into his golden censer, that the Father may give it to us. John 15:16, and 16:23. When the sweet smoke of the incense of Christ's prayer ascends before the Father, our prayers become sweet and amiable, and cause a savor of rest with God. This I take to be one reason why the prevalency of prayer is so often assigned to the time of the evening sacrifice, pointing at the death of Christ, about the ninth hour of the day, near the time of the evening oblation. Matt. 27:46; Acts 3:1; 10:30. Hence it was too, that Abraham's sacrifice received a gracious answer, being offered about the going down of the sun. Gen.15:12, and 24:63. Isaac went out to pray at even tide. Elijah, at mount Carmel prays and offers at the time of the evening sacrifice. 1Kings 18:36. Ezra fell upon his knees and spread out his hands at the time of the evening sacrifice. Ezra 9:5. David prays that his prayer may be virtual in the power of the evening sacrifice. Psa.141:2. Daniel at prayer was touched by the angel about the time of the evening sacrifice. Daniel 9:21. All to show the prevalency of our access to the throne of grace by the merit of the intercession of Christ the acceptable evening sacrifice. Yea, and therefore we are taught in our Lord's prayer to begin with the title of a Father; in him we are adopted to be children, and to use that prevalent relation as an argument in prayer.

There are some other particulars in respect to prayer in general, as it may be connected and coincident with secret prayer as stability of spirit; freedom from distraction by wandering thoughts; the acting of faith; the aids of the spirit; all of which I pass by and come to.

PART TWO

AND thus we arrive at the second question.

II. How to discover and discern answers to secret prayer, that the soul may be satisfied that it hath prevailed with God.

Let us now consider the condition to prayer in the text. He will return it into your bosoms; this so when the mercy sought for is speedily and particularly cast into your arms. *Psa.104:28; 147:9*. Like the irrational creatures in their natural cries seek their meat from God and gather what he gives them and are filled with God. When God openly returns to his children, there is no farther dispute; for the worst of men will acknowledge the divine bounty when he fills their hearts with food and gladness. *Acts 14:17*. But when cases are dubious,

1. Observe the frame and temper of thy spirit in prayer; how the heart works and steers its course in several particulars.

1st. A holy liberty of spirit is commonly an excellent sign of answers, a copious spirit of fluentness to pour out requests as out of a fountain. *2Cor.1:17*. As God shuts up opportunities, so he shuts up hearts when he is not inclined to hear. The heart is sometimes locked up that it cannot pray, or if it does, and will press on, it finds a straightness, as if the Lord had spoken as once to Moses, "Speak no more to me of this matter." *Deut.3:26*. Or as God spake to Ezekiel. *Eze.14:14; 7:2,11*. Though Noah, Daniel and Job should entreat for a nation, when the time of alarm is come, there is no salvation but for their souls. When God intends to take away near relations or any of his saints, it often happens that the church of God nor dear friends have apt reasons or hearts to enlarge. The bow of prayer does not abide in strength. God took away gracious Josiah suddenly. *2Chron.35:25*. The church had time to write a book of lamentations, and to make it an ordinance in Israel, but no time for deprecation of the divine displeasure in it; but in Hezekiah's case, there was both a reason and a heart enlarged in prayer, and the prophet crying for a sign of the mercy. *2Kings20:11*. Holy James might be quickly dispatched by the word of Herod Agrippa, but the church had time for supplication in behalf of Peter. *Acts 12:2,12*; When the

Lord is graciously pleased to grant space of time and enlargement of heart, 'tis a notable sign of success. "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress," says David, Psa. 4:1, though it be meant of deliverance, yet it may be applied to prayer as the holy prophet seems to do; yea, though the soul may be under some sense of displeasure and in extremities, yet lifts up a cr. Psa. 18:6. When conscience stops the mouths of hypocrites, they shun and fly the presence of God.

2nd. A blessed serenity and quiet calmness of spirit in time of prayer, especially when the soul comes troubled and clouded at first while it pours out its complaints before the Lord; but at length the sun shines forth brightly. It is said of Hannah, she was no more sad, her countenance was no longer in the old hue, cast down and sorrowful, because of her rival. Thus the Lord dealt with David, though not fully answered yet filled with holy fortitude of spirit, and revived in the midst of his trouble. 1Sam.1:18. Prayer dispels anxious solicitude, and chases away black thoughts from the heart. Psa.138:3,7. It eases conscience and fills the soul with the peace of God. Phil.4:6,7.

3rd. A joyful frame of spirit. God sometimes makes his people not only peaceful, but joyful in his house of prayer. Thus sped Hezekiah [Isa.56:7], when his crane-like chatterings were turned into swan-like songs and his mournful elegies into glorious praises upon ten-stringed instruments in the house of the Lord; the lips of Habakkuk quivered, and his belly trembled, but before he finished, his voice was voluble in holy songs, and his fingers nimble upon the harp. Hab.iii,16. Thus at Solomon's prayer; when the fire came down the people were warmed at worship, and went away glad and merry at heart. 2Chron.7:1,10. David's experience of this sent him often to the house of God for comfort, and thus chides his soul when cast down at any time; "I am going to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; why art thou disquieted within me. Psa.43:4,5. His old harp that had cured Saul of his malignant dumps, being played upon with temple songs, now cures his own spiritual sadness. When we look upon God with an eye of faith in prayer it enlightens our faces with heavenly joy; when Moses came out of the mount from communion with God; how illustrious was his face from that heavenly vision; wherefore prayer for divine mercy and comfort sometimes exhibits itself in this language: "Make thy face to shine upon us and we shall be saved." Psa. 83:3. And on this wise the priests of old were to bless the children of Israel: "The Lord make his face to

shine upon thee, and be gracious to thee." Num. 4:25. These and the like expressions in scripture import that sometimes the Lord was pleased to give forth a shining glory from the oracle, and thereby made known his presence unto his people, and filled them with awful impressions of his majesty and mercy. Ex.40:34; Lev.9:23. Num.16:19. This joyful light of God's countenance is like the sun rising upon the face of the earth. It chases away the dark fears and discouragements of the night; such heavenly joy shows the strength of faith in prayer, and the radiant appearances of God; yea, to this end all prayer should be directed, that our joy may be full. John 16:24.

4th. A sweetness of affection to God. When the soul has gracious sentiments of God in prayer, clouds of jealousy and suspicions of the divine mercy, as if God were a hard master, are marvelously unbecoming a soul that should go to God as a father; and hence from such unsuitable thoughts of infinite mercy, to restrain prayer is greatly provoking. Whereas the apprehension of God's excellent goodness should work the heart into lovely thoughts of God. Man, but especially a saint is an accumulated heap of divine favors, and the gifts of divine mercy should attract our hearts, and when the soul comes to perceive that all flows from the fountain of his eternal love, it makes prayer to be filled with holy delight and joy; the ecstasies of love often rise upon the soul in secret and such divine affection, that it carries the soul beyond itself. Let the profane world say what they will, when spiritual ardors like so many fragrant spices, flow out of the soul. "I love the Lord for he hath heard my supplication." Psa.116:1. As answers of prayer flow from the love of the Father, so suitable workings of holy affections flow from the hearts of children. John 16:27. When the soul is filled with gracious intimations, like those of the angelical voice to Daniel: "O Daniel, greatly beloved," or like that to the holy Virgin: "Hail, thou that art highly favored," how greatly does it inflame the heart to God. Dan. 10:11; Luke 1:28.

5th. Inward encouragements sometimes spring in upon the heart in prayer, from remembrance of former experiments, which mightily animate the soul with fervency. When Moses calls to mind that God had forgiven and delivered from Egypt until that immediately follows a sweet intimation of mercy. Num. 14:19,20. When the soul considers the days of old, the years of ancient times, and calls to remembrance its former songs in the night, he draws an argument

out of the quiver of experience; "will God be favorable no more? can he forget to be gracious? can he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" Psa.77:5,6,7,9,10.

6th. A ready heart for thankfulness and service. The heart is brimful and ready to flow over in grateful memorials of his mercy. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" Psa.116:12. As of old at temple sacrifices there was music, so it ought to be now while the mercy is praying for, the heart must be winding up and tuning for praise. Rev.5:8; Psa.117:1. The vials full of the odors of prayer are joined with harps for heavenly melody, when the heart is fixed or prepared, then follow songs and praise. This streams from a sense of divine love; and love is the fountain of thankfulness, and of all sprightly and vigorous services. That prayer that does not end in cheerful obedience is called by Cyprian "barren and unfruitful, naked and without ornament." And so we may glance upon the expression of James 5:16: "The effectual fervent prayer," a working prayer within will be working without, and demonstrate the labor of love.

2. Observe the principal subject matter of prayer; the while mark that the arrow of prayer is shot at the scope it aims at, there is usually some special sin unconquered, some untamed corruption, some defect, some pressing strait that drives the soul to prayer, and is the main burden of the spirit; take notice how such a sin withers, or such a grace flourishes, or such a need supplied upon the opening our hearts in prayer. Watch unto prayer, watch to perform it [1Pet.4:7], and then to expound the voice of the divine oracle, and to know that you are successful. Cry to thy soul by way of holy soliloquy, "Watchman what of the night?" Isa.21:11.

3. Observe ensuing providences. Set a vigilant eye upon succeeding circumstances, examine them as they pass before thee, set a wakeful sentinel at the ports of wisdom. "His name is near, his wondrous works declare." Ps.75:1. His name of truth, his glorious title of hearing prayer. When prayer is gone up by the help of the Spirit, mark how "all things work together for good [Rom.8:28], and note the connection there; the working of things together, follows the intercession of the Spirit for all saints. Rom.8:27. God is pleased often to speak so clearly by his works, as if he said, "Here I am, I will guide thee continually, and thou shalt be like a watered garden whose waters fail not." Isa.58:9,11. Secret promises animate prayer, and often providently expound it. Cyrus was promised to come against Babylon for the Church's sake.

Isa.45:4,11,19. But Israel must ask it of God, and they had a word for it that they should not ask his face in vain; and then follows Babylon's fall in the succeeding chapter. When we cry to the Lord in trouble he sends his word of command and heals us. Ps.107:19,20. There is a set time of mercy, a time of life. When Abraham had prayed for a son the Lord told him, "at the time appointed I will return." Gen.15:2; 18:14. In a great extremity after the solemn fast of three days by the Jews in Shushan, and the queen in her palace on the fourth day, at night the king could not sleep, and must hear the chronicles of Persia read, and then follows Haman's ruin. Est.4:16, and 6:1. Prayer has a strange virtue to give quiet sleep, sometimes to a David, and sometimes a waking pillow for the good of the church. Ps.3:4,5; Gen.24:15. When Jacob had done wrestling, and the angel gone at the springing of the morning, then the good man saw the angel of God's presence in the face of Esau. Sometimes providence is not so quick; the martyr's prayer, as to a complete answer, is deferred for a season. Rev.6:11. But long white robes are given to everyone, a triumphant frame of spirit, and told they should wait but a little season till divine justice should work out the issue of prayer; the thunder upon God's enemies comes out of the temple; the judgments roar out of Zion, the place of divine audience. Rev.11:19; Joel 3:16. But the means and methods and times of God's working are various, such as we little prethink. Submit all to his infinite wisdom; prescribe not, but observe the embroidery of Providence; it is difficult to spell its characters sometimes, but 'tis a rare employment. Isa.64:,5; Ps.111:2; Eccl.3:11. His works are searched into by such as delight in his providences, for all things are beautiful in his season.

4. Observe thy following communion with God. Inward answers make the soul vegetate and lively, like plants after the shining of the sun upon rain [2Sam.23:4], lift up their heads and shoot forth their flowers. A saint in favor does all with delight. Answer of prayer is like oil to the spirits, and beauty for ashes; the sackcloth of mournful fasting is turned to a wedding garment. He grows more free and yet humbly familiar with heaven. This is one I would wish you to pick acquaintance with, that can come and have what he will at court. John 16:23. As the Lord once told a king by night that Abraham was a prophet, and would pray for him, he was acquainted with the king of heaven. Gen.20:7. O blessed person! I hope there's many such among you, whose life is a perpetual prayer, as David that gave himself to prayer. Ps.109:4. (The Hebrew expression, "but I prayer," is very forcible); he is all over prayer, prays at rising,

and prays at lying down, prays as he walks, he is always ready for prayer; like a prime favorite at court that has the golden key to the privy stairs, and can wake his prince by night, there are such (whatever the besotted profane world dreams) who are ready for spiritual ascents, at all seasons, besides the frequency of set communions. His wings never weary, his willing spirit is flying continually, and makes God the rock of his dwelling, into which he may upon all assaults have holy retirements.

But enough, for the main question with its branches. There are many particular queries of some weight that may attend the subject. To such I shall briefly reply.

Query 1. What is the proper time for secret prayer?

Various providences, different temperaments and frames of spirit, motions from heaven, opportunities, dictate variously. Some find it best at evening, others in the night when all is silent, others at morning when the spirits are freshest. I think with respect to others, that conscientious prudence must guide in such cases, but it should be when others are retired, and the spirit in the best frame for communion.

Query 2. How often should we pray in secret?

If we consult scripture precedent, we find David at prayer in the morning. Ps.5:3. Our blessed Lord, early, before day, in the morning. Mark 1:35. Chrysostom advises, "wash thy soul before thy body, for as the face and hands are cleansed by water so is the soul by prayer." At another time our Lord went to secret prayer in the evening. Matt.14:23. And Isaac went out at eventide to meditate. Gen.24:63. David and Daniel prayed three times a day. Ps. 55:17; Dan.6:10. And once it is mentioned that David said, seven times a day will I praise thee; that is, "often will I do it." Ps.119:164. Such cases may happen that may require frequent accesses to the throne of grace in a day. But I humbly think we should go there at least once a day, which seems to be imported by that passage in our Lord's prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread," for after our Lord's appointment of secret prayer in the text, he gives this prayer as a pattern to his disciples.

Query 3. When persons are under temptations or disturbance by passions, is it expedient then to pray?

Since we are enjoined to "lift up holy hands without wrath" [1Tim.2:8], I judge it is not so proper to run immediately to prayer, but with some praying ejaculations for pardon and strength against such exorbitancy, and when in some measure cooled and composed, then speed to prayer, and take heed that the sun go not down upon your wrath, without holy purgation by prayer.

Eph. 4:26. Though I must confess that a Christian should always endeavor to keep his course and heart in such a frame as not to be unfit for prayer upon small warnings. The very consideration of our frequent communion with God should be a great bar to immoderate and exuberant passions.

Query 4. Whether we may pray in secret when others must needs take notice of our retirement?

I must confess, in a strait house, and when a person can many times find no seasons but such as will fall under observation, I think he ought not to neglect secret duty for fear of the notice of others; we must prevent it as much as may be, and especially watch our hearts against spiritual pride, and God may graciously turn it to a testimony and example to others.

Query 5. Whether we may be vocal in secret prayer if we can't so well raise or keep up affection, or preserve the heart from wandering without it?

No doubt; but yet there must be used a great deal of wise caution about extending the voice. Tertullian advises that both hands and countenance and voice should be ordered with great reverence and humility; and what else do we by discovering our prayers than if we prayed in public? Yet if we can obtain some very private place, or when others are away from home such may lawfully improve it to their private benefit.

Query 6. How to keep the heart from wandering thoughts in prayer?

Although it be exceedingly difficult to attain so excellent a frame, yet by frequent remembering and reflecting upon the eye of God in secret; by endeavoring to fix the heart with all possible watchfulness upon the main scope of the prayer in hand; by being very sensible of our wants and indigences, by not studying an impertinent length, but rather being more frequent and short, considering God is in heaven and we upon the earth, and by the exercise of holy communion, we may, through the implored assistance

of the Spirit, attain some sweetness and freedom, and also more fixedness of spirit in our addresses before the Lord.

Query 7. What if present answers seem not to correspond to our petitions?

We must not conclude it by and by to be a token of displeasure, and say with Job, "Wherefore dost thou contend with me?" [Job 10:2] but acknowledge the sovereignty of divine wisdom and love in things which seem contrary to us in petitions for temporal mercies, and submit to the counsel of Elihu, since he giveth no account of any of his matters. Job 33:13. Neither can we find out the unsearchable methods of his holy ways to any perfection.

There are other cases and scruples that might be treated of; as about prescribed forms of prayer in secret prayer, to which I need say but little, since such as are truly converted [Gal.4:6], have the promise of the Spirit of God to assist and enable them, and they need not drink of another man's bucket that have the fountain, nor use stilts and crutches that have spiritual strength; neither are words and phrases, but faith and holy groans the nerves of prayer. Rom.8: Zech.12:10; Acts 9:11. Yet for some help to young beginners, it is of use to observe the style of the Spirit, as well as the heavenly matter of several prayers in the holy Scriptures.

Neither need I press frequency to a holy heart that is fallen in love with spiritual communion, for he delights to be continually with God; the thoughts of God are so precious to him his soul is even sick of affection, and prays to be stayed with more of "the flaggons," and comforted with "the apples" in greater abundance. Cant.2:5. To some, but I fear very few, it may be needful to say how far it may be expedient to withdraw from prayer for the necessity of the frail body in this vale of tears. It may be said to such, the Lord is very pitiful and gracious to our frailties, that he had rather have mercy than sacrifice in some cases. Though I doubt these phenixes are very rare that are in danger of expiring in prayer as martyrs of holy love, as Gerson expresses it.

Having now finished with what brevity I could the foregoing queries, I should treat of short sudden occasional prayers, commonly called ejaculations; but indeed that requires a set discourse, yet because of a promise before recited I shall give a few hints and then conclude with some application.

THE SPIRIT HELPS US PRAY

- We Know Not What We Ought To Pray For
by Alonzo T. Jones
- Making Intercession For The Saints
by Ellet J. Waggoner
- The Spirit Helps by D. Hildreth

WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR

"WE know not what we should pray for as we ought." Not knowing what we should pray for as we ought, it is certain that we cannot receive as we ought even the thing for which we do pray. All such praying as that, therefore, must, in the nature of things, be vague and indefinite, and weakening instead of strengthening to faith. But the Lord does not desire that any prayer shall ever be vague or indefinite. He never intended that prayer should ever in any way have any tendency to weaken faith.

The Lord desires and intends that every prayer shall be so definite and so certainly directed that both in its presentation and in its answer it may be a positive and evident strengthening of the faith of the one who prays.

How then, can this be, when it stands true that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought"? Ah! the Father has not left us alone; "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." And the Holy Spirit does know, perfectly, what we should pray for as we ought.

The Holy Spirit searches the heart and the conscience of man and also "the deep things of God." He knows perfectly what we need. He knows perfectly what we should pray for. He knows precisely how we ought to pray for what we should pray. He knows how this should be presented to God in such a way that a direct and evident answer may be received. He knows how to present our prayers exactly "according to the will of God." And "this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Such praying as this is a perpetual strengthening of faith.

Without the Holy Spirit we cannot pray at all "as we ought." Without the Holy Spirit, our prayers cannot be definite in aim, cannot be certainly according to

the will of God, and therefore cannot strengthen faith. While, with the Holy Spirit, we can pray as we ought, our prayers will be definite in aim, will be according to the will of God, and therefore will perpetually strengthen faith, and will build up the believer in genuine faith.

The sum of all is, therefore, that we must not pray, we must not think of praying, without the Holy Spirit.

Wherefore, beloved, build up "yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost."

"The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us." "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

"This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Who shall say that that record is not correct? "This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." God is the witness. The testimony is therefore true. The record is correct. Eternal life, therefore, is a gift of God only in his Son.

God being the witness, the testimony therefore being true, and the record correct, who can possibly deny the conclusion, which, indeed, the Lord himself has drawn: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"?

Eternal life being the gift of God, only in his Son, it is absolutely impossible for any one to have eternal life, anywhere or in any way, who has not the Son of God.

In him, however, it can be had for the taking. For "verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

It is written: "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

God is known only in Christ, only as he is revealed through Christ. For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He is "God manifest in the flesh." He is "God with us."

MAKING INTERCESSION FOR THE SAINTS

Although Christ is not visibly present in the flesh, the Spirit as His representative is poured out upon all flesh; and thus it is really the same as though He had never left the earth, but had been multiplied indefinitely. Of the comforter who comes in His name, He says: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." John 14:17, 18.

Now we may know more fully what it is to pray in the name of Jesus. It is to consider ourselves dead, and Christ living in our place, reanimating our body, and speaking with our mouth. So when we ask for deliverance, we are asking it not for ourselves, but for Him; we ask for His sake, on His account. Or, better still, it is Christ asking through us as for Himself. Then, remembering that when He cried He was always heard, we know that not one of our petitions offered in His name can be neglected.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Rom. 8:26, 27.

The Spirit that so successfully made supplication in Christ still lives and makes intercession for us. Jesus has gone into the heavens "there to appear in the presence of God for us;" but by His Spirit He is still on earth dwelling with men. So by the Spirit in us we ourselves have access to the heavens, in the person of Jesus we ourselves are in the holiest, close by the throne of grace, boldly making our requests to God. And He has called us there for the express purpose of supplying all our need according to His riches in glory. Surely if we know this we shall never more go empty.

THE SPIRIT HELPS

HERE we are on the verge of the perils of the last days. A few more conflicts and all will be over. A few more struggles between the flesh and the Spirit, and the dividing line which separates the righteous from the wicked of Adam's race, will be finished, the last hour of probation passed, the goal reached, and the doom of every individual of a fallen race sealed forever. This being the case, the people of God who understand these things should be making all preparation to bid a final adieu to a sinful world, which has afforded them a sort of home

for the time being, they should be constantly absorbed in the theme of the coming of their glorious Redeemer, they should be cutting loose from the world and be fully awake.

We ought to avail ourselves of every portion of the word of God, and manifestation of his Spirit that will benefit us at this time. We are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. We must examine ourselves and prove our own selves. 2Cor. 8:5; Ps.26:2. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, says Jesus. Although this language is addressed particularly to the convicted sinner we can avail ourselves of it. Do we not labor and strive, watch and pray? Are we not sorely pressed by the powers of darkness? Do we not feel burdened many times? If so Jesus says to us, "Come to me." We then resolve anew to call on the Lord, and strive with all our powers. Day after day we wrestle and strive without much success. We go to the Lord in our distress, and ask, why is this? Perhaps the Lord then shows us that we have been relying too much on our own strength. We cannot do it all, neither will he do it all for us, and happy is that man who finds the exact place where he and the Spirit can labor harmoniously together, for the result will certainly be victory over every foe, and freedom in Christ. John 8:36.

We have now reached the place where we find ourselves poor and needy; in the greatest need of effectual and immediate aid. Now what shall we do, shall we cry mightily to God? Yes, but how, with our own strength? No; thank the Lord, a most precious promise here meets our case. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace, and of supplications." Zech. 12:10. The Lord even helps us to supplicate a throne of grace. What more can we ask? Paul speaks of this in Rom. 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us;" that is, the Spirit prays through us. This reflects upon the benevolence, love, and condescension of God in the highest degree. What more can be done than has been done for us. Isa. 5:4. But there is a principle which underlies the whole of this which must not be passed over, and that principle is faith. The church in the wilderness fell, through unbelief (Heb. 3:19), and this has always been its besetting sin. Chap.8:1. Three prominent virtues of the Christian are faith, hope, and love. Paul says the greatest of these is love. 1Cor.13:13. The superiority of love may be explained in this manner. Faith reaches up and

fastens upon a single object, that object being God. Love fastens with equal strength upon the same object, but at the same time runs out upon a thousand objects on the earth. Here it is superior. Again, faith commences about the time of conversion, reaches to the resurrection, and there ceases. Love commences with faith, runs parallel with it to the resurrection, and there instead of ceasing, expands and continues throughout eternity. Here again it is superior. But in the single relation the creature sustains to the Creator in the mortal state, which is greatest, love, or faith? Which is the greatest to love God with all the heart, or to remove mountains by faith? Hope is limited in duration the same as faith. Love was the favorite theme of the apostle John, but in his writings is the following remarkable expression, "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1John 5:4. Faith is the foundation upon which hope and love rest, for it is impossible to hope or love till we believe. Faith is the main pillar in the temple of love, and whenever a spiritual Samson succeeds in pulling it down, the edifice is in ruins. We must have faith then. Can we believe in our own strength? We cannot.

But some man will say faith is the act of the creature. So is prayer. We can do one in our own strength just as well as the other. The disciples prayed the Lord to increase their faith. Luke 17:5. Jesus says, "Without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5. As faith is an act it is comprehended in this saying of Christ. It is said to be the gift of God. Eph. 2:8. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Heb. 12:2. This is conclusive. Man is feeble and helpless and cannot take a single step in his own strength. If he could he would have whereof to glory. God forbid that we should take the glory that belongs to him and give it to the creature, for the glory all belongs to God. The Lord helps us to believe, helps us to love, helps us to hope, helps us to pray, and helps us to overcome. Praise his holy name; he has not left us to do anything alone, but helps us to do it all. Then let us pray to the Lord not only to increase our faith, but to pour upon us the spirit of grace and of supplications. See Jer. 31:9.

