

# Godly Prayer and Its Answers



# Godly Prayer and Its Answers

John Brown of Wamphray



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*Godly Prayer and Its Answers*  
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## Publisher's Preface

John Brown of Wamphray<sup>1</sup> was born in Kirkcudbrightshire in southern Scotland, probably around the years 1609 and 1610.<sup>2</sup> In 1630 he graduated with his master's degree from Edinburgh. His mother was a friend of Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), who served as the minister of Anwoth, Kirkcudbrightshire, from 1627 until his deprivation in 1636. In 1637 Rutherford wrote to Jean (or Jane) Brown about her son: “I

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1. This John Brown must be distinguished from other theological writers such as John Brown of Priesthill (c. 1627–1685); John Brown of Haddington (1722–1787); the latter's son, John Brown of Whitburn (1754–1832); John Brown of Edinburgh (1784–1858); and John Brown of Bedford (1830–1906). This preface is adapted from Joel R. Beeke, “John Calvin and John Brown of Wamphray on Justification,” in *Reformed Orthodoxy in Scotland: Essays on Scottish Theology, 1560–1775*, ed. Aaron C. Denlinger (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), chapter 11.

2. Sources on John Brown's life are few: Thomas Lockerby, *A Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown, Sometime Minister of the Gospel in Wamphray* (Edinburgh: Thornton & Collie, 1839); Ian B. Doyle, “John Brown of Wamphray: A Study of His Life, Work and Thought” (PhD Diss, University of Edinburgh, 1956). Some biographical information on Brown may also be found in William Crookshank, *The History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 2 vols. (Paisley: George Caldwell, 1789); Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford* (London: Oliphants, [1904]); William Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church*, Rotterdam (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1833); Robert Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 4 vols. (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1835); Hew Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, new ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1917), 2:224–25.

had always (as I said often to you) a great love to dear Mr. John Brown, because I thought I saw Christ in him more than in his brethren."<sup>3</sup> Sometime afterward, Brown was ordained as a minister of the Church of Scotland and settled in Wamphray, Dumfriesshire—a village of perhaps a few hundred people near the River Annan.

During his ministry there, Scotland and England entered into the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) to unify the kingdoms in Reformed religion. In Brown's view, "These lands did thus enter into covenant with the great God of heaven and earth."<sup>4</sup> The Westminster Assembly put hands and feet on the covenant by writing the Directory for the Public Worship of God, the Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

After the restoration of Charles II to the monarchy, Scottish Covenanters began to suffer for insisting that Britain hold to the directory, confessions, and catechisms to which its authorities had bound themselves by covenant.<sup>5</sup> On November 6, 1662, Brown was imprisoned in the Tolbooth for calling some ministers "perjured knaves and villains" for acknowledging the authority of Andrew Fairfoul, just installed as the first archbishop of Glasgow. William Crookshank wrote, "Great were the hardships he underwent in prison, for he was denied even the necessaries of life," to the point that "he was brought almost to the gates of death."<sup>6</sup> On December 11, the authorities granted his petition for release, but only on condition of banishment from Scotland.

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3. Samuel Rutherford to Jean Brown, March 13, 1637, in *Letters*, 159.

4. John Brown, *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland, Since August. 1660* (N.p., 1665), 63.

5. Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 74.

6. Crookshank, *History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 1:159.

Brown arrived in the Netherlands on March 12, 1663, where he spent the rest of his life. He assisted the minister of the Scots church in Rotterdam and devoted himself to theological and historical writing for the Covenanters' cause. His work evidently irritated the Scottish authorities, for in 1676 King Charles II wrote to the States-General of the United Netherlands requesting that the nation expel him from its territories; however, he remained. In 1677 he published *Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, a book being reprinted to this day.<sup>7</sup>

Brown was counted a blessing by many Reformed Christians among both the Scots and Dutchmen. One of his fellow Scottish exiles in Rotterdam, Robert MacWard, said that his sermons had a "pure gospel texture, breathing nothing but faith in Christ and communion with him."<sup>8</sup> He was highly respected by Dutch Further Reformation divines such as Wilhelmus à Brakel and Jacobus Koelman.<sup>9</sup> His writings supported the Covenanter view of church and state,<sup>10</sup> defended the Puritan view of the Sabbath and the moral law, opposed the teachings of the Quakers and Richard Baxter, and promoted experiential, Christ-centered Christianity. Copies of his scholastic defense of the Sabbath were in the New England library of Thomas Prince (1687–1758), minister of the Old South Church in Boston, and in the library of Yale in 1808.<sup>11</sup> It was also cited by the eccentric English theological writer John

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7. *Christ, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. Or, a Short Discourse. Pointing forth the way of making use of Christ for justification, and especially and more particularly, for Sanctification in all its parts, from Johan. XIV: Vers. VI* (Rotterdam: by H. G. for Iohn Cairns, 1677). This book has been reprinted recently, and a new Soli Deo Gloria edition is forthcoming in 2016.

8. Lockerby, *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown*, 177.

9. Steven, *History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam*, 72.

10. Iain B. Doyle, "The Doctrine of the Church in the Later Covenanting Period," in *Reformation and Revolution*, ed. Duncan Shaw (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1967), 212–36.

11. *Catalogue of the Library of Rev. Thomas Prince* (Boston: Crocker and

Hutchinson (1674–1737)<sup>12</sup> and Thomas Bell (1733–1802), minister in Glasgow, in his polemic against “popery.”<sup>13</sup>

One of his last public acts was the ordination of Richard Cameron in 1679, who perished back in Scotland a year later. Brown died in September 1679. His will indicated that one hundred guilders from the sale of his books should be donated to the church for the help of the poor.<sup>14</sup> Robert Wodrow (1679–1734) said in retrospect that Brown was “a man of very great learning, warm zeal, and remarkable piety.”<sup>15</sup>

Though John Brown is little known today, he held a prominent place in Scottish theology. James Walker wrote, “Brown of Wamphray was, without doubt, the most important theologian” in Scotland at his time.<sup>16</sup> John Macleod considered Brown to be perhaps “our greatest divine between Rutherford and Halyburton,” that is, in the latter part of seventeenth-century Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

Brown's book *Godly Prayer and Its Answers* was first published posthumously in 1720 (and reprinted in 1745) under the title *A Pious and Elaborate Treatise Concerning Prayer and the Answer of Prayer*.<sup>18</sup> The manuscript was reportedly written in the Neth-

Brewster, 1846), 8; *Catalogue of Books in the Library of Yale-College, New-Haven* (New Haven, Conn.: Oliver Steele, 1808), 52.

12. J[ohn] H[utchinson], *The Covenant in the Cherubim* (London: J. Hodges, 1749), 7:9.

13. Thomas Bell, *The Standard of the Spirit Lifted Up against the Enemy Coming in Like a Flood* (Glasgow: William Smith, 1780), 210.

14. Lockerby, *Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown*, 181.

15. Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 1:304.

16. James Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland, Chiefly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd rev. ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1888), 107.

17. John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History Since the Reformation* (1946; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 148.

18. John Brown, *A Pious and Elaborate Treatise Concerning Prayer and the Answer of Prayer* (Edinburgh: John Reid, 1720); *A Pious and Elaborate Treatise Concerning Prayer; and the Answer of Prayer* (Glasgow: John Robertson and Mrs. M'Lean, 1745).

erlands during the last years of his life and was prepared for publication by the author, but delayed until after his death.<sup>19</sup> The text is an extended meditation upon Christ's promise in John 14:13–14, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." However, in the process of touching upon everything stated and implied in the text, Brown produces a truly "elaborate," that is, full and complete, treatment of the doctrine of prayer in a manner calculated to promote the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ.

Many thanks to Ryan Hurd and Gary den Hollander for their editorial assistance and proofreading, respectively; to Paul Smalley for his research assistance on this preface; and to Linda den Hollander for her professional typesetting of this volume. If you glean as much from this work as I did in doing the final editorial pass, you will be richly rewarded!

—Joel R. Beeke

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19. "The Publishers to Reader," in *Pious and Elaborate Treatise* (1720), n.p.



## CHAPTER 1

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### *Their Words and Their Connection with What Precedes Cleared*

*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.*

—JOHN 14:13–14

Our Lord Jesus Christ, desiring to comfort His disciples who were much cast down and discouraged with the sad tidings of His departure from them, told them several things in the beginning of this chapter, aiming to encourage them. And, at length, on occasion of their questions, He came to clear up and insist on a very comforting and fundamental point of truth, namely, that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him. He thereby pointed to Him being one with the Father, as in essence, so in operations, and that the whole work of salvation was carried on with a wonderful harmony, agreement, and unanimity between the Father and Him. And so, that though as to His human nature, He was to be taken from them, yet He was the true and living God. And as God, He would always be with them—and that, as He had given frequent proof hereof in His many and great miracles and wonderful works that He did, namely, that He was God and in the Father, and the Father in Him, or that the work He was about was God's. So, for a further confirmation hereof and for

their further encouragement, He tells them in verse 12. This was so that they and others that would believe in Him would be endued with power to do such works and miracles as He Himself did, yea, and in some sense greater, and that because of Him going to and being glorified with the Father as the great Lord Redeemer that had finished the work of redemption that the Father had given Him to do.

Now, for further clearing and confirming of these particulars, He adds these words: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (vv. 13–14). The words having no remarkable difficulty in them, we need not here insist on the explanation of them. What will be necessary will be done as we go along. We will therefore here only take notice of the cohesion of these words with Christ's preceding discourse, and in order to this, remark these three things:

First, consider them as connected with and a confirmation of that which He had last been speaking of concerning the power that such as should believe in Him would be provided with to work miracles. And so the words have this sense: That whatever they would desire to be done by them for the confirmation of the truth which they were to preach and hold forth and for the confirmation of their commission and authority to preach that doctrine, they had no more to do, in order thereunto, but to send up a plea to the Father in the name of Christ, and it would be granted—yea, Christ Himself, when exalted, would do it by His power and Spirit.

Next, considering them as related to what He was speaking of regarding His being one with the Father: They will contribute to prove Him to be God equal with the Father and, in the work of redemption which He was about, perfectly one with the Father, so that all was carried on with oneness

of mind, will, and design. For, first, when He was to be taken from them and translated into glory, yet even then and there He would hear and know all their supplications and requests. Second, they did not need to question nor doubt of a good and speedy return, seeing He was there. Yea, thirdly, He Himself having all power in heaven and earth granted to Him as mediator in order to the carrying on of that one work and design—that He, with the Father, would work out the answer to their prayers Himself, yea, and do what they desired, as being entrusted with all of the Father. Fourthly, and all this must be so, because it will be to the glory of the Father as concurring and consenting or working the same in and by Him—whereby it is manifest that He and the Father are one, as in essence, so in this work of mediation.

Third, considering them as related to the scope and design of Christ here, which is to cheer up and comfort the hearts of His disciples now sorrowful because of the news of His departure: They will hold forth a ground of comfort on this account, that hereby He declares that, though as to His bodily presence He would be withdrawn from them, yet despite this there would be constant communication between them. They would be sending up their pleas to His name, and He would be sending down returns of their prayers—so that they would get all their desires answered just as well as when He was with them in His bodily presence.

We will shortly dispatch what may be taken notice of and observed from the words as they lie under this threefold relation.

As to the first relation or connection, we may observe that all the great works and miracles which the apostles—and others with and after them in the primitive church—did to confirm the doctrine of Christ as truly divine and as owned of God were not done by these instruments, but principally by

Christ Jesus Himself by His power and Spirit. What they asked of that kind, He would do it, even He Himself. The apostles Peter and John solemnly declared this when they had cured a man lame from his mother's womb: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" (Acts 3:12). Thus they renounced all interest that men would be ready to acknowledge as their due. And, on the contrary, they ascribed all to Christ, saying, "And his [i.e., Christ's] name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Yea, when the miracle was about to be done, Peter said, verse 6, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." From this, we should learn:

1. How to look on those miracles wrought by the apostles, even as demonstrations of the divine power and authority of Christ who wrought all these in and by those weak men, and as divine testimonies given to the truth of the doctrine of the gospel which they preached in commission from Christ—and thereupon to be induced to comply with and embrace that truth so attested and solemnly confirmed from heaven, knowing what the apostle says: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Heb. 2:3–4).
2. Whether in reference to these works and miracles or in reference to other more ordinary works done since

that dispensation of miracles is ceased by instruments whom the Lord thinks good to raise up and make use of for that end, we would learn to see the principal more than the instrument. For we are ready to dote on instruments and look on them as if they by their might and power did do these things. And this appears by, first, our overpraising and commending them. It is true, we should honor such as the Lord is pleased to honor. But we readily transcend due bounds and praise them too much, as if none else were to be seen besides them. Second, our trusting too much in them and so deifying them and expecting too much from them—as if they and they only were to do all. From this, it comes to pass that when these instruments are out of sight or taken away, we are cast down, as if there were no more hope, and as if they had been something more than instruments, or as if the residue of the spirits were not with the Lord, and He could not raise up others and had not been the principal worker of all Himself. This evil, I say, should be guarded against. Let instruments have place and due, but no more. Let Christ have His due and the glory of all. And this will appear by these evidences. First, when we keep the throne for Christ and give Him the glory of all that is done that is due to Him, then, whatever we see done by instruments, we will be so far from taking our eyes off Christ, that, on the contrary, it will lead us up more directly to Him and bring Christ nearer to our view—and there our eyes will be fixed. We will then say, “This is the hand of the Lord; this is the work of the Lord.” Second, we will be taught thereby to fix our faith and dependence more on Him, for we will say, “This and this has the Lord done. Who would not rest on Him?”

Who would not trust Him? Who can doubt His power and might?" Third, we would be stirred up thereby to express our sense and thankfulness on account of these great works of His. Fourth, if at any time we were disappointed in our expectations, then we would be in an adoring frame, stooping before the Lord, lying in silence, and observing His hand, working or not working as He sees good.

3. With regards to our own work of righteousness and obedience, we would hence learn to do them in Him, or to have Him working them in us. For it is God that worked in us both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13). It is God that works all and in all even as to common operations of gifts (1 Cor. 12:6, 11). It is His power that works in us (Eph. 3:20). And He wrought in Paul mightily (Col. 2:29). He wrought effectually in Peter and Paul (Gal. 1:8). He works in us what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:21). Seeing then that it is He who thus works His works in us, let us put the work in His hands, depend on Him therefore, acknowledge Him in all, and give Him the glory of all, and beware of sacrificing to our own net or of burning incense to our own drag on this account.

Next, we may hence observe that Christ would here have the apostles making use of prayer in order to their working instrumentally of miracles. And accordingly we find they did so (Acts 4:24–30). And this was for noble ends. First, to keep them humble in the sense of their own inability and insufficiency for these great things which they were to be employed in. Second, to teach them pure and single dependence on Him who was to work all these works in them and by them.

Third, to teach them to ascribe all the glory to Him to whom alone it was due.

For our use, we may here take notice of these two things:

1. We may see and observe what a sweet subordination and harmony there is between God's promises and purposes to work His great works and our prayers in reference thereunto. Our praying for and obtaining of a blessing by prayer should not cause us to think that God had no purpose or resolution to do that before our prayer. His purposes are all everlasting, and our prayers can make no change in Him or in His resolutions, or occasion any new purposes and intentions in Him. And again, His promises or purposes should not shut out or render our prayers useless. These harmoniously agree and are to be so looked on by us. After many promises made to the church of the Jews in the latter days, this is subjoined: "Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" (Ezek. 36:37).
2. We may here mark the wonderful goodness and condescension of God that will have us pray for that which He minds to give and work Himself. For thus, He first renews and confirms the proof of His faithfulness. Second, He makes the mercy a double mercy by giving of it freely and by giving of it in such a way as it were on our prayers and desires. Third, He thus allures and engages poor sinners to have fellowship and correspondence with Him by prayer. Fourth, He hereby makes the mercy sweeter and more desirable to us and more welcome when it comes when He has made us pray and wrestle for it in prayer. Fifth, He hereby keeps us in the fresh sense of our unworthiness. Sixth,

He hereby engages us more to see and acknowledge the true fountain and spring, or well head, of all those mercies and favors, namely, the free grace and love of God. Seventh, He hereby lays obligations on us to be more thankful for and sensible of His free and undeserved kindnesses.

As to the second relation that these words have, namely, as a further proof and confirmation of the Lord Mediator's being one in essence and operation with the Father, it gives ground to observe these three things:

1. That Christ's answering all the lawful and necessary desires and petitions of His people is a demonstration and confirmation of His being one with the Father, both as to essence and operation, and especially in the work of redemption.
2. That Christ's hearing and answering all our supplications should assure us of this fundamental truth: that He is God equal with the Father, and that He and the Father are one as to the carrying on of the wonderful work of redemption.
3. That we cannot rightly direct our prayers to Christ, or, to God through Christ, and expect His effectual granting and working the answer unless we be fixed in the faith of this: that He and the Father are one.

All these three lie wrapped up in the connection of the words with what went before. And they say to us:

1. That in order to approach God rightly in prayer, we should labor to be rooted in the faith of this: that our Lord Jesus is one with the Father in essence and

operation; that He is in the Father, and the Father in Him; and that, as to the work of redemption, they are perfectly one. We first may hereby be confirmed in our hope of being heard by Christ when we present our supplications. He being God, we need not question His being acquainted with all our necessities and His hearing the very inward desires of our soul. Second, we may hereby be encouraged to go with confidence to the Father through Him, for He and the Father being one, we need not question His expediency and power with the Father. What He wills, the Father wills also. Third, we may hereby be certain that our prayers put up to the Father through Christ will be accepted. And fourthly, we may rest confident that the answer and return of our prayers will be solid, real, safe, and seasonable—for He being God, and our savior and redeemer, will unquestionably perform the desires He has framed in us by His Spirit. And who can hinder Him from working who is God, and what can stand in the way of His carrying on and perfecting that work wherein He and the Father are one?

2. That every return and answer of our prayers should confirm us in the faith of this: that our Lord Jesus and the Father are one in essence and operation, and that the work of redemption is carried on by both in a wonderful oneness of mind.
3. That the advantages of believers are great who put up their supplications to God through God and have their returns from God through God, and that all their answers are confirmations of the mediator's being God and one with the Father, both as to essence and as to the work of redemption.

4. That the consideration hereof should wonderfully work on us to fall in love with and to delight in the noble exercise of prayer.

As to the third relation of these words, that is, the respect they have to the main scope and design of our Lord Jesus, namely, to comfort His sorrowfully hearted disciples, now troubled at the report of His going away from them as to His bodily presence, we may hence observe four things:

1. That Christ's bodily absence needs not hinder our prayers. Yea:
2. Christ's being now in glory and exalted as mediator should be a strong encouragement and inducement to this duty of prayer, seeing He will not suffer our prayers to miscarry, and He is in case<sup>1</sup> to an effectual return.
3. Christ, even while out of sight of His people, can and will procure their good as effectually as if He were present with them; no change of that kind altering His affection or rendering Him more unable.
4. Christ's care of the prayers of His people while He is now absent as to His bodily presence should make them digest well and be satisfied with His bodily absence. And the faith of this will prove a cordial to strengthen against the thoughts of that which may otherwise prove a heart-saddening and fainting consideration.

From this we see:

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1. *In case*: being prepared or in a fitting state to accomplish a work.

1. The happy condition of believers to whom all things work together for good and to whom Christ makes the saddest condition advantageous. Even Christ's bodily absence can be made up with advantage to them. O how are they made up, who have a true interest in and such a sure relation to such a lord, head, and husband as can and will carry on their profit and advantage, even by such dispensations as do (in their apprehensions) threaten no less than their utter undoing! What could be more saddening to the poor heartbroken disciples than the withdrawing and bodily absence of Christ? And what should they do now (might they think) with their desires and petitions, when their master, who was careful to answer and satisfy them in all their demands, is now removed from them? But Christ tells them that His bodily absence should not prove harmful to them as to that, for He would be as tender and careful of them as ever and would not fail to answer all their desires.
2. That believers should be far from questioning the love, tenderness, and kindness of Christ even when He is withdrawn and hides Himself or when He is at a distance from them in their apprehensions. Christ would have the disciples resting assured that even when He was to be taken from them and they were to enjoy His bodily presence no more, His affections would remain warm toward them. He would be as careful and tender of them in all their necessities as ever, and as observant of their desires in all points as ever. Whatever they should ask or desire, He would do it for them.

3. While Christ is now in glory at the Father's right hand as the ascended and exalted mediator, believers should be diligent in posting away their desires and improve with earnestness that rich advantage which now they have by Christ being there—and thereby give proof of their drawing encouragement from there. "Christ is now high at court," believers should say. "Therefore let us ply our time and hasten up all our desires and make known all our wants and necessities—seeing we may be sure they will find acceptance there, and we will not want a quick dispatch and satisfying return."
4. Believers should not be misbelievingly troubled or too much discouraged and cast down at Christ's necessary withdrawals. Nor should they particularly infer therefrom that their prayers shall be the less regarded. For as He can make up that seeming loss with real advantage, so their prayers and desires may succeed with better advantage thereby.
5. Believers should improve all the sweet and satisfying returns of prayer which they obtain to this end and advantage, among others, to confirm them in the faith of this: that the Lord Jesus is God, equal in power and glory with the Father, and that now He is one with the Father as to the work of redemption and is accepted of the Father and set down as high priest on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).
6. This should be an encouragement to strangers to acquaint themselves with this Lord Redeemer, who is one with the Father, if they desire ever to have it going

well with them here or hereafter and have their necessary wants supplied.

Having thus quickly dispatched these things observable in the connection of these words with the foregoing discourse, we will now come to a more particular search of what lies in the words themselves, which we see are conceived in general terms and so not to be restricted alone to their seeking of such helps and assistances for working of miracles as might serve to confirm their commission and the divine truth of their doctrine which they were to get a more full and ample commission to deliver after Christ's resurrection and ascension. Nor are we to look on these words as concerning only these disciples of Christ, but as concerning all the followers of Christ to the end of the world, though as to some things (as we hinted above) peculiar to the primitive dispensation of the gospel, in a special manner they relate to these and other extraordinary officers. For not only are the grounds foregoing, but all also that follow are of a universally useful nature through all the ages of the church and to all the followers of Christ, as is plain and obvious.

The words thus considered contain these particulars (the subject of our following discourse):

1. There is the duty of prayer mentioned in the word "asking."
2. The person to whom prayer is to be addressed, which is presupposed and to be gathered from the foregoing and following discourse, namely, the Father, or God, and Christ Himself.
3. The person through whom these prayers are to be presented, or, the manner of the performance of this duty, in these words: "in my name."

4. There is the matter of this prayer, and that is very large—"whatsoever ye shall ask."
5. There is the return or answer of this prayer, in these words: "I will do it."
6. There is the end of this return, in these words: "that the Father may be glorified in the Son."
7. And lastly, there is the doubling or repetition of this return, verse 14: "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

## CHAPTER 2

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### *The Prerequisites to the Duty of Prayer*

*W*e come to speak something in the first place regarding the duty of prayer, whereunto we have ground here in the words. For when Christ tells them that whatever they will ask in His name, He will do it, He presupposes such an exercise as asking, whereunto He encourages them by annexing this promise. Whence we have occasion to speak a word to these three things:

1. What the work and exercise of prayer or asking is.
2. That asking or praying is the necessary and unquestionable duty of the children of God, for it is here presupposed as such.
3. That nevertheless people stand in need of encouragements and excitements thereunto. For, as in reference to the main thing our Lord is here driving at by this whole complex encouragement, these words contain an encouragement. And so there is a tacit encouragement to the duty of prayer itself, in this saying: “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.”

In order to the clearing up of the first of these, we have two things to take notice of: first, what this duty and exercise

of asking or praying imports or presupposes; next, what the proper nature and essence thereof is.

As to that which prayer or this duty of asking imports or presupposes, it will be necessary that we speak to it in the first place that thereby way may be made to what is further to be spoken of this duty—for this is the ground thereof and a proper native excitement thereunto.

This asking then presupposes something on the Lord's part and something on our part. On the Lord's part, it presupposes three things:

1. That God, to whom prayer is to be made and of whom we are to ask, is all-sufficient, having in Him all fullness wherewith to supply all our wants and necessities and to answer all our askings—of whom we ask anything, we suppose Him able to bestow that on us or to satisfy us as to what we ask. Otherwise, we could not act rationally in troubling Him with our suits and desires. No man will seek the supply of a considerable sum of money from one whom he knows to be a mere beggar. Nor will he seek help of one who cannot help. Now the Lord, to whom we are to address ourselves in prayer, is God all-sufficient, an inexhaustible fountain of all good, only able to supply all our wants, according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19), and to make all grace to abound toward us, so that we, always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).
2. That God is ready and willing to communicate that good whereof He is the inexhaustible fountain. Men seek not where they know they will not be the better, ask as they will. When men are then called to ask and seek of the Lord what they want, it is presupposed that God will

give. He is liberal and a richly bountiful benefactor. He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil (Luke 6:35). He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45). The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord (Ps. 33:5). Yea, how great is His goodness (Zech. 9:17)! There is a riches of His goodness (Rom. 2:4).

3. That God has appointed prayer and asking as the way for us to receive His goodness and bounty. It is true, He gives freely our being and many favors before we can be in any capacity to seek. And many mercies and blessings He bestows on the wicked, who are so great enemies to their own happiness and welfare that they will not seek of Him what they stand in need of. Yet it is a statute of nature that, as we depend on the Lord, the fountain of our being, for our being and for all things that can contribute to our subsisting and well being, so we must testify and declare our dependence on Him for all these things by asking them of Him.

On our part, it presupposes and imports these things:

1. That we are poor indigent souls, standing in need of many things both for soul and body. We are full of imperfections, defects, and miseries, obnoxious to many and various changes, calamities, crosses, accidents, temptations, oppositions, assaults, overmasterings of corruptions, Satan, and the world, and other things of that nature. For he who wants, seeks, as we say.
2. That we cannot help ourselves or remedy these evils. We cannot prevent them, nor withstand them, nor repel them of ourselves. We cannot perform the duties

required, having no sufficiency thereunto. For we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves (2 Cor. 3:5). So that to help ourselves in all or in any of these wants, necessities, and distresses is not in our power, otherwise we would not go to another to seek for necessary supplies.

3. That we should be well acquainted with our own case and know our wants and necessities, spiritual as well as temporal. How else can we ask for that which is suitable to our case? When we do not know our necessities, we cannot tell what we would have. And when we cannot tell what we would have, or would do us good, we cannot seek suitable supplies and help to our necessities.
4. That not only we should know what our wants and necessities are, but also we should know how great they are. We should be touched and affected with and really sensible of our wants, so that our hearts, being suitably moved thereat, may ask and pray the more earnestly and heartily. For if our wants go not in and prick not our hearts, and if they be not rightly and sensibly touched therewith, our desires and askings will be accordingly—heartless, without life, edge, or seriousness—and be mere formal askings and suits for the fashion.
5. That we ought to see our evils and wants to be such as can only be remedied and supplied by the Lord. For we must be forced by inevitable necessity to go to Him, so averse and unwilling are we to go to Him other ways—for if we hope to be helped at another door, we will go thither before we go to God.

From these particulars, we may learn for our use:

First, to admire this wisdom and goodness of God who will thus have us know and experientially feel what we are—even creatures, poor, beggarly, indigent, miserable, and helpless as to ourselves. We know not, neither do we consider, what goodness lies wrapped up in our necessities, distresses, miseries, wants, and hardships. But we are ready to complain and quarrel with the Most High. We consider not how the Lord is thereby driving us to our thrift, giving us new proofs and documents of our being indigent creatures and new convictions of the necessity of constant living in dependence on the Lord our maker, and of hanging on Him and waiting at His door for constant supplies of all. And O, what a blessed life is this to be under this happy necessity of depending for all our wants, small and great, on God! What a rich trade is this, that we are made to drive with heaven and the all-sufficient and gracious heavenly benefactor, the God of the whole earth! How well might Paul on this account glory in his infirmities, seeing thereby he had so often occasion to experience that the power of Christ did rest on him (2 Cor. 12:9), and when he found that the strength of God was made perfect in his weakness? How should we, on this account, be satisfied with our necessities and infirmities, that we are driven thereby out of ourselves, as convinced of nothing but poverty, emptiness, and misery within us, and made to turn our course for supply heavenward and to look up thither, and thence receive new and fresh supplies of all our wants, new and fresh experiences of God's goodness, kindness, tenderness, faithfulness, and all-sufficient fullness, and also new confirmations of an absolute necessity of placing our confidence and hope only in God and not in ourselves!

Second, hence likewise we may understand something of the cause whence it comes to pass that so many so often restrain prayer before the Lord and either neglect this duty

altogether or go about it in a superficial, perfunctory manner. That is to say:

1. Because, first, they are too little at home or acquainted with themselves with their own case and necessity. Or, if they know something of it, they are not affected therewith. The sense of it does not reach their hearts. It is but a head and speculative knowledge they have of it—no heart or practical sense or touch thereof. They are not pinched therewith, nor pressed as convinced and sensible of ruin and utter undoing following if they be not helped. It is the poor who are pinched with poverty and with the sense of want that uses entreaties (Prov. 18:23). How often does David cry out, “I am poor and needy,” and this puts an edge on his prayers (see Ps. 70:5; 86:1).
2. They think their maladies and distempers are such as they know how to wrestle and through themselves and their own arm can bring salvation to them out of their distresses and necessities. Their wants are not such as they need go to heaven to get them supplied. And when they think they can sufficiently help themselves, they will not be beholden to God for their supplies. So that little acquaintance with their own inefficiency is another cause of the too little exercise of this duty.
3. They doubt God’s willingness to help them, and thence comes their despondency and fainting. And when they lose hope to come speed<sup>1</sup> by the duty, they lose all heart to it. Or, they question His power and ability to help them and thence infer their case desperate, and

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1. *Come speed*: come quickly or have effectiveness.

that it is in vain to call on the Lord. The want of right apprehensions of God as able and willing to help all poor souls that come to Him makes them lie by from coming. They listen too much to the devil, aggravating their sins and their former abuses of the Lord's loving kindness, that thereby he may cause them to question if it be possible that they can find mercy and doubt if ever the holy and righteous Lord will own them or look on them again, as if the door of mercy were quite shut and there were no more hope. And thus, in despondency and despair, they lay aside this duty as of no advantage for them.

Third, hence we may learn with what frame or spirit and posture of mind we ought to approach the Lord in prayer. We ought to have these prerequisites fixed in our souls to the end we may be put in a begging posture and have a beggar's disposition and heart.

1. We ought to have a deep impression of us being creatures absolutely depending on the Lord, as for our being, so for all that we need—for the continuation of our breath and being and for our well being, both as to soul and as to body. This duty fixed in our hearts would keep us always on our knees begging, and it would keep us humble in the sense of His greatness and of our nothingness. Great Abraham, when he resolved to speak to God, loathed himself as dust and ashes (Gen. 13:27).
2. We ought to be particularly acquainted with our condition so that we may know what we stand in need of and what we are to seek. Our case and condition is variable as God's dispensations vary, and Satan changes

weapons against us, or our corruptions work and boil up according to various occasions and temptations. Our adversaries may pinch and press us diverse ways, and according to the various exigencies, various and different duties may be required of us. So yesterday's particular supplication may not be so suitable and pertinent today as it was yesterday. Therefore, we should be well acquainted with our present condition and know what presently pinches us most, and what particular suit we would now pertinently put up, or what mercy or favor our condition now calls for—that by this means our desires may come the more kindly from our hearts, be more earnest, and look like the present petitions of our soul.

*Objection:* But then what will such do as cannot understand how it is particularly with them, cannot get sight of their particular necessities, all things lie so in confusion in their soul that they can speak nothing distinctly of themselves? Are not some even of the Lord's own people oftentimes in the dark? And will they, while wrestling with clouds of darkness, be dispensed from this duty of prayer? I answer that case of darkness and confusion is a particular case that should be set to prayer, and a sight of that should be so far from laying them aside from this duty that it should press them the more thereunto. Heman cried out of this, "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps" (Ps. 88:6). Their ignorance of their present case and necessity is a particular that should pinch them and press them to cry for light. Who sees and knows this cannot be said to want a particular whereupon to pray and make a suit to God.

3. We should labor to get our hearts affected with these evils to see them so as to be pierced and pinched and deeply affected therewith. So that our prayers and desires thereupon may become hearty and serious, we should think on our case till our heart affects our eye. And when our hearts fall bleeding, our prayers will have an edge and a piercing force. For this end it were necessary that we considered how desperate our case were and would be if the suitable relief and help did not come.

*Objection:* But what then can one do whose complaint is this: that their hearts can be affected and pierced with no such thing, and to whom this is the saddest part of their distemper? Have they been discharged from this duty?

*Answer:* They have no discharge from this duty. Yea, this very deadness and senselessness is a sad distemper, and if they be sensible thereof and affected with sorrow thereat, they may and must pray for help. And the more the sense of this senselessness touches them and affects their hearts, their cries for quickening will be the louder. And they will say with David, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word" (Ps. 119:25).

4. We should labor to get such a sight of our wants as that we may see them beyond our own power to help and remedy the matter and beyond the power of all flesh, and that they are such as God alone can satisfy. This is that hereby we may be brought cleanly off ourselves and made to trust no more in ourselves, nor depend on ourselves, nor yet on instruments. But that our eyes

may be wholly and fully on the Lord and say as Psalm 121:1–2 (as the words may be read), “Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills? From whence shall my help come? My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” And when our eye and hope and confidence is only on the Lord, our heart will be in better case to speak to Him and be more earnest with Him.

5. We should labor while addressing ourselves to prayer to have the faith of God’s all-sufficiency and omnipotency fixed deeply on the heart, so that there may be no hesitation in our heart concerning His ability to supply and make up our wants. One would readily think that there were no great necessity for this, seeing none are so ignorant or wicked as to deny this. But yet the want of the rooted faith of this causes many to pray so as to shoot short of the mark they aim at. Satan and their own wicked hearts can and do several times present to the minds of some so many, so great, and so insuperable difficulties in the way of their obtaining of what they would ask, that either they cannot ask it, or, if they do, it is not with that confidence and hope that is requisite. And will not some be bold to say that their iniquities are greater than that they can be forgiven? And what is this, but to doubt of, yea, deny the infinite power of His mercy and free grace?
6. We should labor to guard against jealousies of God and doubting of His good will to send help and relieve us, for this will faint our hearts and take away all courage and hope of coming speed in our addresses. When the Lord allows us to come with confidence, nothing doubting, we see what Christ says, “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye

pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). And Paul wills us, 1 Timothy 2:8, to pray without doubting. So James 1:5–7: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.” By which we see that if we would come rightly to this work of prayer, we should labor for large thoughts of the largeness of God’s heart, of His generous willingness and readiness to answer, despite our unworthiness, former provocations, present want of a suitable frame of spirit, misbelief, and abuse of His former mercies and favors. Only we would here remember that what we are to pray for be consonant to His revealed will, and that our prayers be with all due submission as to the particular we would ask or as to the time and season, and as to the manner of granting what we ask—for He is the Holy One of Israel, who must not be limited.

## CHAPTER 3

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### *The Nature of Prayer*

*H*aving mentioned the prerequisites to prayer presupposed and intimated by the word “asking,” here used for expressing of prayer, we come to speak a few words to clear up the nature of this exercise of prayer. And to this end, we need not explain the ordinary definition or description thereof, namely, that it is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ by the help of His Spirit with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies. For many of these particulars here mentioned will come to be spoken to afterward.

That therefore which we will do here, in order to outline what is the nature of this work and exercise, will be only to take notice of some of these terms or expressions under which it is pointed forth to us in Scripture. As for example:

1. It is termed here in the text an asking—“whatsoever ye shall ask.” So Matthew 8:8; 7:7; 21:22; Luke 11:13; John 15:16; 16:24; James 1:6; 4:2–3; 1 John 3:22; and 5:14–15. So also in the Old Testament: Zechariah 10:1–2; 2 Chronicles 20:4; and Isaiah 65:1. And this imports want and necessity in the seeker and a seeking with earnest supplications, as beggars used to do, and as the same

word is used where the poor cripple is said to beg alms (Acts 3:2). So it imports an earnest seeking or begging with humility, as inferiors do ask anything of their superiors (Acts 2:20). And the Hebrew word also usually signifies a seeking of anything by humble prayers, petitions, and entreaties, with earnestness—or, a begging. So that hence we may learn that prayer is really an earnest, humble begging of God for something we want and stand in need of. It presents our humble supplications to the Lord for something we would desire to have. It is a laying all our desires before the Lord, as David did (Ps. 38:9). And so it imports that the praying man should be in the beggar's posture before the Lord—sensible of his own low condition and of his wants and misery and under the due awe and reverence of that God with whom he has to do.

2. It is termed a seeking—Matthew 7:7: “Seek, and ye shall find.” Daniel set his heart to seek by prayer and supplication (Dan. 9:3). See Amos 5:4, 8; and Zephaniah 2:3. The word imports a seeking with study and care and vehement earnestness, as the devil is said to seek whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). And as Herod sought the young child Jesus to destroy Him (Matt. 2:13). And as the merchant man seeks goodly pearls (Matt. 13:45). And as the heart of him that has understanding seeks knowledge (Prov. 15:14). Job uses it (10:6), where we have it rendered, “Thou enquirest after.” So that hence we learn that prayer is an inquiring, searching, seeking, and hunting after something that is missing and which we must have. And so it imports a deep sense of the want and a setting of the soul and all at work to pursue after it, and that incessantly, till

it be found—as the man goes after the lost sheep till he find it; and the woman that lights the candle and sweeps the house and seeks diligently till she find the lost piece of silver (Luke 15:4, 8).

3. It is termed a knocking in that place cited before—Matthew 7:7. Knock and it will be opened to you, as one standing at a door, urged with some great necessity to be in. And being very earnest, he knocks to let those who are within hear that he has something to say, and that he wants to be in—as it is said of the five foolish virgins, who came when it was too late and knocked, saying, “Lord, Lord open unto us” (Luke 13:25; cf. Matt. 25:11). The word is supposed to come from a word signifying a horn of a beast, and so imports striking or knocking with force and vehemency, as a beast does with his horn. This says that the soul is sensible of a distance and of something standing in the way of his enjoying what he would have and is now seeking to have that removed with earnestness, constancy, and perseverance. So that now the poor soul, standing at the door of free grace, is with earnestness knocking to be let in, that free grace may shine on it—yea, and with importunity, as the man that came to seek of his friend, now in bed, three loaves (Luke 11:5, 6, 8). When dispensations would seem to say that when the poor soul cries and shouts, the Lord shuts out his prayer, as it is in Luke 3:8, and so, as it were, thrusts him and his prayer out of doors, yet prayer will stand and knock at the door and renew its desire and say with David, “Let my cry come near before thee” (Ps. 119:169). And verse 170: “Let my supplication come before thee.” He would have the door set open that his prayer may come

in before the Lord, as Heman desired (Ps. 88:2), and that the Lord would not turn away his prayer, or, as it were, thrust it out of doors. As the Lord was gracious to David (Ps. 66:20) and did not turn away his prayer, for which he blesses Him, saying, "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me." Prayer cries out to the Lord, as Psalm 27:9: "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger." When the Lord by His dispensations seems to say that He turns His back on the poor petitioner and turns away His face, prayer will knock again and stand knocking until it gets access and the Lord lifts up the light of His countenance on the petitioner.

4. It is expressed by lifting up the soul—Psalm 25:1; 86:4; and 143:8. Whereby we may understand that our heart and soul is naturally low and sinking toward the earth or clogged with the cares of this world and thereby is at a distance from God. And prayer hoists up the heavy and dull heart that it may come near to the Lord to the end the Lord may read there what is their condition, their wants, and their desires. Whence we learn that in right prayer the soul is lifted up as a heave-offering and as a sacrifice to the Lord and thereby consecrated and offered up to Him. As also, that when prayer is rightly gone about, the heart and soul of the man and all his faculties are turned spiritual and raised God-ward, lifted up above worldly cares, fears, corruptions, and distractions. It says the soul of man should be lifted up above doubts, fears, faintings, and discouragements that made it sink as in deep mire before, and that the soul should now be wrought up into a spiritual heavenly frame and brought near God

and delivered from a carnal, natural, dead, and formal worldly frame. Whence we may also see that the work, use, and end of prayer is to work on the heart and soul that what through inward corruption, what through outward temptations of Satan and the world is so heavy and lumpish, as a rock, that it cannot flee up Godward and heavenward, to the end that it may be brought nearer God and may approach to Him, even to His throne of grace (Gen. 18:23; Ps. 73:28; Jer. 30:21; Dan. 4:8; Heb. 7:19).

5. It is expressed by pouring out of the heart before Him (Ps. 62:8), to show that the heart is mainly to be employed in prayer, and that in prayer all should be laid open before God, and the heart should dissolve before Him, as metal when melted and poured forth. It also imports the good will, cheerfulness, and alacrity that the soul has, or should have, in this employment, that all may be laid open before the Lord, and nothing may be hid from Him.
6. It is expressed by a directing and looking up (Ps. 5:3), importing how earnestly the soul should be herein occupied to marshal and set itself and all its desires in order before the Lord, and in what posture the soul should be, watching and waiting in hope for an answer. The soul should be directed Godward and have its face thitherward, from whence alone help and salvation must come, and in a waiting and expecting posture must it stand.
7. So it is expressed by a talking or speaking with God—Job 15:4, in the margin, “Thou refrainest speech before God.” Abraham’s servant, speaking of his praying, says,

“Before I had done speaking in my heart” (Gen. 24:45), whereby is imported the freedom and familiarity that is allowed in prayer—that it is as one friend speaking to another. As also the composedness and calmness of the soul in prayer: They are not hurried in prayer, but in a composed and stayed manner speaking to God, as one friend to another. The same word that is used in Job 15:4 is also used in Psalm 55:17 and 64:1. So that prayer is the soul’s telling to God all its case and all its desires, with calmness and composedness of mind and with a friendly freedom and liberty.

8. It is expressed by a wrestling with God. There was one that wrestled with Jacob, and Jacob with Him (Gen. 32:24–25). But how did Jacob wrestle? See Hosea 12:4, where this wrestling and having power with God is expressed thus: “He had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him.” So Colossians 4:12 there is mention made of wrestling in prayer (cf. Rom. 15:30). The word is rendered fighting (John 18:36; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7) and striving (1 Cor. 9:25). And hence comes the word “agony” (Luke 22:24), importing great anxiety, fear, and affliction of mind when one is wrestling against some great difficulty. Whereby we are taught that as in prayer the soul is to meet with much opposition and resistance, partly from within—corruption and unbelief withholding, withdrawing, opposing, counteracting, and countermining the soul in its designs, desires, purposes, and resolutions, for the flesh is still lusting against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), and the law in the members wars against the law of the mind (Rom. 7:23)—and partly from without—Satan with his temptations from all

directions and mediums opposing, discouraging, and fainting the soul. Against him and his might must the praying man fight (Eph. 6:12). So he is to put to<sup>1</sup> all his might and use all earnestness and seriousness of heart and mind in the matter, knowing what opposition stands in his way and how he must set himself against all that without wearing, fainting, or giving up. He is to use the whole strength of his soul, all his graces, as knowing the importance and necessity of the work. And he is to use importunity, gripping the promises and all the grounds of encouragement with a firm resolution never to let the grip go, but to hold fast until he obtain what he would have. And for this end, great preparation is required that the person may be in case to wrestle—as such who were to wrestle and strive for the mastery in the Olympic Games did fit and prepare themselves thereunto, that they might be in case to withstand their adversary, to which the apostle has an eye: “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25).

9. It is expressed by a taking hold of God—Isaiah 64:7: “And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.” This is not unlike that which we have in Isaiah 27:5: “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.” This taking hold of God imports great importunity and the using of holy violence (as it were) and a refusing to let Him go when He threatens to be gone—to which is requisite a serious stirring up of ourselves, a shaking off

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1. *Put to*: to use.

of drowsiness, a laying forth all our strength in the action, and a stirring up ourselves to purpose. So that other phrase of taking hold of His strength imported the same, like one laying hold on the arm of one who comes, as it were, with a drawn sword to kill him and holding him from smiting with it. There is (as it were) a violence used in prayer when the praying person will not give over until he get the blessing or the answer he was desiring.

10. It is sometimes expressed by meditating. Isaac is said to have gone forth to meditate or pray (Gen. 24:63), and David says, "Consider my meditation," that is, my prayer (Ps. 5:1). This is to teach us to know that prayer consists not in words only (for we may pray with our heart when our lips move not much, nor is our voice heard), but mainly in the exercise of the heart. Prayer is a work of the soul, and a work of the soul fixed and composed, not wandering but present and intent on what is at hand. The heart in prayer must not be far away, for to draw near to God with the lips when the heart is far away is the proper work and carriage of hypocrites (Isa. 29:13). But the heart must mainly and chiefly be herein occupied, dwelling on the thoughts of their wants and the object to whom they are praying, the encouragements they have to draw near, and other things of that kind, and dwelling with fixedness and steadfastness thereupon.
11. Prayer is compared to odors and incense (Rev. 5:8) and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints. And in Psalm 141:2, David says, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." Whereby the preciousness and excellency of prayer is held forth

with its gracious acceptance with God when rightly performed, and how acceptable all praying persons are to Him, even as priests offering up this spiritual incense and thereby approaching the living God, sitting between the cherubims on the mercy seat. Hereby also is held forth of what costly well-prepared materials prayer should consist, as also with what a holy, zealous, burning, and heavenly frame of heart this duty should be gone about—and how it should be offered up in and through Jesus Christ, the true altar.

12. It is often termed an inquiring (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Deut. 11:30; Judg. 4:20; 1 Sam. 9:9). Whereby is imported our ignorance of something, our faith in God's omniscience, our confidence in being informed by Him, and our dependence on Him for light and direction in the particular, and a profession of our purpose to receive, believe, and follow His counsel and direction. As also supplicating, importing our wants and sense thereof, our faith in God's ability to supply our wants according to His riches in glory, our sense of His greatness and glory, and the humility of our hearts in approaching the great God with our desires. Likewise it is termed interceding, importing a friendly and humble approaching to God with our passions on behalf of ourselves and others, despite God's being justly provoked by our or their sins. So it is called an entreating (Ex. 8:8) to point out the earnestness of the soul in supplicating for favor.
13. It is likewise held forth by several expressions, pointing forth the posture and gesture of the body—such as spreading forth of the hands (Ex. 9:29); stretching out of the hands (Job 11:13); lifting up of the hands (Ex.

17:11; Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 1 Tim. 2:8); bowing the knee (Eph. 3:14); and falling down (Deut. 9:18)—mainly to point forth thereby the frame of the soul and of the whole man in prayer, namely, that we should approach in humility and self-loathing, prostrating ourselves before the Lord, and in faith, earnestness, single dependence, hope, etc.

14. It is also pointed forth by crying to the Lord (1 Sam. 7:8; 2 Chron. 20:9; Ps. 22:2; 27:7; 28:2; 34:17; 107:19); crying aloud (Job 19:7; Ps. 55:17); making a noise (Ps. 55:2); crying with the voice (Ps. 77:1; 142:1); as also by sighing, the sighing of the needy and of the prisoner, that is, their earnest broken prayers (Ps. 12:5; 79:11; Ezek. 9:4); by mourning (Ps. 55:2; Joel 1:9); by groaning (Ps. 6:6; 38:9; 102:5, 20; Rom. 8:26); by weeping (Esth. 4:3; Ps. 6:8; Jer. 5:21; 31:9; Joel 2:17); and by breathing (Lam. 3:56). This using the voice and crying to the Lord shows that as we should glorify God with our glory or tongue and make use thereof to express our desires to God, so we should be as earnest and serious as sensible of our hazard and of the greatness of the necessity we are in and of the danger of a delay. Sighing, mourning, weeping, and groaning show the deep sense of our misery and of the weight that is lying on us, and also the brokenness of heart whereby the soul is sometimes unable to express its mind in articulate petitions, and must therefore send forth emphatically significant sighs and groans and breathings, which are as a loud cry in the ears of the Lord.

## CHAPTER 4

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### *Some Considerations Hence Deduced*

*H*aving briefly in the foregoing chapter pointed forth something of the nature of this duty of prayer, so far as the various expressions and epithets whereby it is expressed and set forth in Scripture, we will now draw some consequences or conclusions therefrom in order to our instructions and useful improvement of what is said.

First, we may hence see cause of wondering at the great and merciful condescension of God, who will suffer sinners who have so rebelled against Him and provoked Him to wrath thus to draw near to Him and to come boldly to the throne of grace, as it is in Hebrews 4:16. O what mercy is here, that rebels may approach the King and come into the chamber of presence and get a kiss of the King's hand and commune with Him! What love is here, that God will suffer such unworthy wretches as we are, to draw near to the Holy One of Israel and to make known our suits and requests to Him! What condescending grace is here, that such as are heirs of hell by nature may come and talk with the Most High and lay out all their heart before Him and ask all they need—yea, and knock at His door and be importunate with Him for a satisfying return! See how Christ teaches us this and encourages us hereunto by these two parables. One is Luke 11:5–8: “And he said unto

them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." The other is Luke 18:1–8. In both places, there are other things held forth to this purpose: to encourage to prayer and to importunity and constancy in prayer, without fainting. Surely if we had right apprehensions of the matter, we could not but fall wondering at this free grace, love, and condescension in God, who sets His door open to such as we are that we may come even to His throne and tell Him all that is in our heart, make known to Him all our requests, seek His face and favor, cry to Him, weep before Him, and tell Him all our ails and necessities.

Second, we may hence see cause of wondering at our own folly who do not make more use of this high and glorious privilege. He would be a wonder for unworthy ingratitude among men who, having the prince's ear whenever he will and liberty to commune of all matters with him and to present all his suits and requests whenever he pleased and as often as he pleased, and yet would undervalue this privilege and rarely make use of this favor, notwithstanding of his many and daily renewed necessities. And may he not much more be looked on as a prodigy of folly and ingratitude who, not being able to subsist without God, yea, and lying under the sentence of His law and obnoxious to His wrath and curse, and having a patent way made through Jesus Christ of approaching God, and God's ear all ready to hear—and yet has so little heart or pleasure in this exercise? What a wonder is this, that we value

this honor so little and think so meanly of that which should be our glory? Will the Lord be content to hear all our heart's secrets and admit us to intimate familiarity to talk with Him, as one heart friend with another, to consult Him in all our necessities, to ask His counsel in all we have to do, to know His mind in His great works, even in the mysteries of state, of the state of glory, and to know His designs, secret purposes, and wise counsels and determinations—and will this be our burden? May we consult Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords about all our petty matters and go to Him whenever we will, were it at midnight, and the more we come, be made the more welcome—and will this be looked on as a yoke that we are weary of! O what would some shut up in close prison in their enemies' hand far from all friends and acquaintances give for liberty to speak with one of their near relations and dear friends! But behold He who is the nearest and greatest friend imaginable, stands at hand, and with Him may we commune of all things, and to Him may we with the greatest of freedom unbosom our whole soul. And to Him may we go, wherever we be—no prison doors or prison walls can hinder our fellowship with Him. And yet how unwilling are we to make use of this great privilege and advantage! How may that complaint of the Lord's break our hearts: "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel" (Isa. 43:22)! It was a weariness to them to use God as a friend and call for His help in their necessity. Nay, the Lord says, "When I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear" (Isa. 66:4). Not only would they not speak to Him, but when He urged kindness on them and would have communed with them and kept up correspondence with them, they would not give Him a hearing. They turned away the ear as abhorring His fellowship.

Third, we may see that in prayer the heart is to be mainly and mostly occupied and exercised. It is the heart that must seek God and speak to Him—yea, with all the heart (2 Chron. 15:12; 22:9; Ps. 119:2, 10, 145; Jer. 29:13). It is the heart that God seeks and with which He is pleased. The heart must be lifted up to God in prayer. When the heart speaks not, the man prays not, whatever fair flourishes of multiplied words he uses. The mouth in prayer must express the desires of the soul, the inward communings, motions, and meditations of the heart. Otherwise prayer is no prayer but a parcel of empty insignificant words and sounds. Words in prayer can signify nothing when they do not signify what the heart is saying and what the soul is busied about. So that when prayer proceeds rightly, the petitions are first framed in the heart, and then the mouth utters them as the petitions and desires of the heart. In right prayer, the heart is speaking to God by the mouth. Otherwise the work is but lip work, a drawing near to God with the lips when the heart is far away, which service the Lord abhors. See Matthew 15:8 and Mark 7:6, with Isaiah 29:13–14. Hence:

1. That is not to be considered the best prayer wherein are the finest words and the best flourishes of expressions. Yea, and it may be all of them Scripture expressions and sentences. But the best prayer is that wherein the heart is most exercised, most lifted up to God, most vented before Him, draws nearest to Him, and is most warmed in affection to Him.
2. Though we be obliged to glorify God with our glory and to speak out our prayers and praises to His glory when called thereunto, yet prayer may be made to the Most High when the voice is not heard. Nehemiah prayed to the God of heaven even when he was serving the king at the table (Neh. 2:4). So Hannah prayed

before the Lord, but her voice was not heard. Only her lips moved, for she spoke in her heart (1 Sam. 1:12–13). Nay, a person may pray when he cannot get an articulate word to say. His heart may speak to God in a groan, in a sigh, or in a tear. And when the heart speaks, God hears the cry of the heart. The Lord said to Moses, “Wherefore criest thou unto me?” (Ex. 14:15). And yet we hear nothing of his crying or speaking to God, but of his speaking to the children of Israel (vv. 13–14). But it is like his heart did then send up a loud cry to the Lord, as a swift post, crying, “Haste, haste.” So Christ said, “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me” (John 11:41). And yet we read not of His praying with audible words about that particular, till He spoke thus. But we hear of His groaning in Spirit and troubling Himself (v. 33), of His weeping (v. 35), and of His groaning again in Himself (v. 33). And all these were prayers to His Father.

3. To pray by book or after a prescribed form or with words learned by heart and spoken as a parrot praises is not the right way of prayer—for here, either the heart speaks not at all, or it follows the tongue and the eye, while in right prayer, the tongue should follow the heart, and the heart should first frame the desire and speak inwardly, and the tongue should follow and articulate what the heart has spoken. This is the right method and the natural method of uttering our minds in prayer to God. Christ’s teaching His disciples to pray was not to invert this order of nature and to affix them to the use of so many words, but to prescribe matter to their meditations and to instruct them in the right manner of addressing themselves to God by holding

forth to them in a few heads the sum and substance of all their necessities, and that in an instructive order. But we nowhere find that they used this as a prescribed form, but rather followed it as a directory. And it is observable that in that pattern of prayer He does not instruct them to ask in His name, as He did afterward in our text (John 14:13–14, 16, 23–24). As there were many other material and substantial points of truth which they understood not until afterward, the Lord accommodated Himself in instructing them to their capacities.

4. We may learn also hence that in prayer our special care should be to have the heart kept in a praying frame and posture. For that is what the Lord takes much notice of, and He accounts nothing prayer where the heart is dead and speechless. Seeing He estimates prayer according to the heart, we should have a special eye to it and be sure that it be speaking to Him, whether our lips move or not.
5. We see also hence that other work needs not hinder or obstruct all prayer, seeing the main thing in prayer is the heart speaking to God. A man may pray while walking in the way on the streets alone, or in company, or while he is about his ordinary employment and calling. For even then the heart may take a turn with God, and a letter may be dispatched to heaven, a hearty groan or sigh or thought and ejaculation may be dispatched to heaven and may there be welcomed as prayer—as Nehemiah’s heart prayed even when he was standing beside the king and serving him. Jacob, while he is making his testament, as it were, and speaking to his children (Gen. 49), quickly dispatches a letter

to heaven in a few words—verse 18: “I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.” He takes a word of God. In the meantime, many such ejaculations and apostrophes we find in the Scripture, clearing this truth.

6. We may be hence instructed that the best preparation to prayer is not to get a company of good words set in order, but to get our hearts in a right and praying frame, sensible of our wants and of the great necessity of the particulars we ask, of our own unworthiness, and of the greatness of that majesty with whom we have to do. And so our hearts and souls may be in case to speak to God and present our desires, without which a heap of words will signify nothing with the hearer of prayer.
7. When the heart prays, much will go in a few words. Yea, a groan and sigh to God will have the force of a long prayer. The soul’s breathing and crying only, “Abba, Father,” will be construed to be a great prayer like the last breathing of Christ on the cross (Luke 23:46), and saying, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit”; and Stephen saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” and, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:59–60). A few words when the soul and the heart of man is in them is a large prayer before God.

Fourth, we may hence understand that it is a greater difficulty to pray to God rightly than we ordinarily imagine. It is easy to pray if no more were therein required but the letting of some fine words together and saying these over. But when it is an earnest seeking, knocking at the Lord’s door, and a wrestling with Him for the blessing, a lifting up of the soul, a pouring out of the heart before God, and a taking hold of God—that says that there is no small difficulty to get it rightly

gone about. Partly, because our hearts are naturally so untractable and so averse from this exercise, and there are so many evils and corruptions in them, all opposed to this Christian exercise. Partly, because Satan with his inward suggestions and outward temptations does and will constantly stand in the way, either to keep us back from performing the duty or to discourage us and make us heartless in the performance.

Fifth, we may hence see both what cause we have to mourn over our prayers wherein we fail so much, as will be shown afterward, as also what need there is for divine help for the assistance of the Spirit to help our infirmities—for it is He only who is the Spirit of God's Son that can teach us to cry, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6), even He who is the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15). It will not be learning, readiness of speech, and the like abilities that will carry us through this duty acceptably. Though such things be requisite to the gift of prayer, yet to the grace of prayer they will make little help, nor will they contribute the least mite to acceptable prayer when the heart is not in a frame nor is principally speaking to God in the duty.

Sixth, hence we may discover several failings and faults in our prayers, some whereof we will here mention, as:

1. Our souls are not pressed with the sense and feeling of our wants, and we are not pinched with them, so that our petitions die in our mouth, as they are framed there, having never been framed in the heart, which frames no suits or supplications but felt need. Hunger made the prodigal return and desire to be among his father's hired servants. Sense and feeling made the blind men cry, "Son of David, have mercy on us." The man in the parable that came to seek three loaves from his friend had none at home to refresh his friend that was come from his journey. Felt need and pinching

necessity presses best to this duty of prayer. But when this is away, there is no heart speaking to God, no hearty desires nor thirsting of soul—and therefore, no prayer. Howbeit there may be a multitude of multiplied petitions, as to many lip desires and supplications.

2. We do not value rightly the mercies we are asking. We have not high and suitable thoughts of those great things. We frame worldly petitions about them, as not seeing the absolute necessity we stand in of those things. We do not see our life and soul lying at stake. The woman of Canaan knew her daughter was undone unless Christ helped, and therefore she petitioned and petitioned again. Hence:
3. Because we neither know the greatness of our loss and misery in the want of the blessings, nor our happiness and felicity in the enjoying of them, therefore we know not what it is to be serious and earnest in our prayers. We often pray as if we were indifferent whether we received what we ask or not. Yea, our prayers are often so cold-rise<sup>1</sup> that none that hear would think we had a mind indeed to the mercies we are seeking with our mouths. Where is our knocking? Where is our crying? Where is our wrestling? Where is our longing and thirsting for the living God? Where is our groaning and our breaking of heart? Where is our panting after Him, as Psalm 42:1?
4. Hence also proceeds our fainting and wearying of the duty. We soon sit up. We continue not crying and knocking, as such as would not take no for an answer,

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1. *Cold-rise*: ineffective.

and as the importunate widow (Luke 18). We are soon discouraged, as if it were in vain to seek any more. The woman of Canaan (Matt. 15) would not take no for an answer. Discouragement would not thrust her away. Christ's not answering at first did not put her from the door. But she knocked again. And when Christ seemed to tell her no and to call her a dog and that she must have none of the children's bread, yet she continued and wisely improved these seeming discouragements to her own advantage.

5. As also our formality and customariness in performing this duty. This is another evil in our prayers which is to be lamented. Often a custom or desire to stop the mouth of a natural conscience or to have a name or the like set us on to this duty, and not our own necessities, nor consciousness to a command that we may do homage to the Lord. Hence, as our principles are not sound, so our practices are but slight. As our end is to keep up a form, so our performance of the duty is but formal. Our heart is not in it, nor at it. As it comes not from the heart, so it goes without the heart and is nothing but all heartless, dead soul-less carcass, or a heap of words and syllables.
6. We may hence discover the lack of a spiritual, heavenly frame that should be in our prayers, for our hearts are not lifted up to the Lord, but lie sunk under sinful lusts and the cares of the world, and the like. If ever we would pray rightly, there must be at least a wrestling to be from under these mountains, and the soul in prayer must mount up in desires, and there must be a lifting at the heavy heart, a heaving it up, a restlessness until we get it going upward.

7. We are not base enough in our own eyes when we approach the holy Lord. We see not our own vileness and therefore cannot speak rightly to Him. The poor publican saw himself base and therefore stood afar off and smote his breast, not daring to lift up his eyes, as knowing both what he himself was and what a holy God he had to do with. And he said, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." We see also what humble thoughts the prodigal had of himself when he returned. Were we right in the duty of prayer, we would be covered with a holy blushing, as conscious of our own unworthiness. And so we would gladly prostrate ourselves at the Lord's feet. Abraham, when he was speaking to God (Gen. 18:27, 29), looked on himself as dust and ashes. A proud heart can never pray acceptably, for the Lord despises such and looks to them afar off. But a right petitioner at God's throne must be a humble, heart-broken sinner, for God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud (Prov. 5:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). Wherefore, such as pray rightly must in the sense of their own unworthiness fall down before the Lord in a most submissive, humble manner as unworthy of the least of God's favors.
8. We are great strangers to that holy freedom and boldness in our access that the Lord allows His children to have when they come before Him. We pray not to Him as a Father reconciled in Christ. We come not as having the way made clear to us by Jesus Christ. We know not what it is to talk and commune with the Lord. We use not that holy familiarity that God allows, which is very consistent with a humble frame of spirit. A child can come to his father with all due reverence, observing

the due distance and paying all due respect. And yet he may come with a filial boldness and confidence and lay forth all his necessities and open his heart to his father in hope of being accepted and heard. And so may we, and should we do, in approaching God.

9. We know not what it is to watch for and lay hold on the fit opportunity for prayer, as wrestlers will watch for and lay hold on any advantage they can have of him they wrestle with. The poor woman of Canaan, when wrestling with Christ for a mercy to her daughter, laid hold on Christ's comparing her to a dog and there-upon pleaded that at least she might have a dog's portion, a crumb, which would do her business. We know not what it is to take hold of the opportunity of wind and tide, when a fresh gale of the Spirit comes, or when the Lord draws near and by His dispensation is, as it were, saying, "This is a good day. Call now, and you will be heard." Thus did Moses (Ex. 33) when the Lord said to him, verse 17: "I will do this thing also which thou hast spoken." Then Moses, verse 18, said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And David, Psalm 27:8: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Nor know we how to improve a praying season when put into our hands, such as a time of trouble and affliction (Ex. 11:14; 32:10; Ps. 50:15; Jonah 5:4; James 5:15).
10. Another fault in our addresses to God is that we are not open-hearted enough. We pour not forth our hearts before Him. We lay not all our case plainly forth before Him. We use not full freedom in telling God all that is in our heart. We reserve and hide much. We make not a free and full confession of all our miscarriages and of

all the parts of our evil frame. And this is far from that plain-hearted dealing that God calls for, and that children should use with their father—especially we with Him, who needs not information from us, as knowing our case and all things that concern us better than we do ourselves, but desires and loves our ingenuity, sincerity, and plain dealing, and our evidencing our faith of Him being an all-seeing God, to whom nothing is or can be hid.

11. We know little of that holy importunity that ought to be used in prayer, because our hearts are little in them. We labor not, fight not, strive not with all our heart, strength, soul, might, and activity. We are not fighting as in an agony—as the word is, Colossians 4:12. We put not forth all our strength, stretching out all our members and joints of the new man. Our prayer should be without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17) and with instant continuance (Rom. 12:12). We see how David was early at this work when he spoke of preventing God (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 119:147), and Heman (Ps. 88:13). How earnest was David when he cried out, “How long?” (Ps. 13). So importunate was he that he could hardly bear a delay. And yet he did not in this limit the Holy One of Israel, but only expressed the vehement desire of his soul. Such as are indeed importunate are not seen discouraged, as the blind man (Mark 10:47–48). The more that many charged him to hold his peace, he cried out the more a great deal, “Thou son of David, have mercy on me.” Nay, their own desperate-like condition will not stop their mouth. David, though the waters were come into his soul, and he was sinking in deep mire and had no standing and was overflowed with

floods—yet he prayed (Ps. 2:3; 69:1). So did Jonah (ch. 2), when he was in the belly of hell, or the grave, when he was cast into the deep, in the midst of the seas, floods compassed him, and all God's billows and waves passed over him, when the weeds were wrapped about his head—yea, when his soul fainted within him.

12. From all these may this other great fault in our prayers be discovered, namely, lack of faith of being heard. Hence we faint. We despond. We give over. We knock not and are not instant in all manner of prayer and supplications. We renew not our desires, because we doubt if we will come speed. We have not faith in God as willing, able, and ready to grant what we ask. We have not faith in Christ as our intercessor and grand high priest. Nor is there that faith in the promises and grounds of hope, laid down in the Word for strengthening and confirming our confidence and assurance, that ought to be according to that, "And all things, whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22); and that, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:5–8).

## CHAPTER 5

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### *Prayer Cleared to Be a Duty*

*O*ur Lord, when He is here encouraging His disciples to pray, supposes that this is an unquestionable duty, as we hinted above. Now this comes next to be spoken to. And because few, I suppose, will have the face to question or deny it, we might here pass over it, were it not that the clearing up of this in a few particulars might help to discover the heinousness of the sin of those who neglect or lay aside this duty.

In order therefore to the manifesting of this to be a duty, I will only point at a few heads.

First, if we consider God the Father, we will see this duty enforced, for:

1. Prayer is enjoined by Him as the great law giver in the very law of nature. And it remains engraven so deeply in the heart of man that it cannot be quite obliterated and extinct. Hence, the very heathens and such as know little of the true and living God have an impression of calling on their false gods in a time of difficulty, so that they would rather pray to an idol that could neither hear nor see, than pray to no god. Hence:
2. Prayer is a piece of that natural worship that is due from us to God as our Creator and great Lord Sovereign.

He is the fountain of our being and our Lord. And therefore, we should worship Him according to that (Ps. 45:11). Now worship includes prayer and is often taken for it, as when Satan tempted Christ to fall down and worship him (Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:7), and elsewhere.

3. Prayer is an open, plain, and practical declaration of our manifold obligations to God and dependence on Him, and of our conviction and acknowledgment that we cannot live without Him. And it is certain that we do and must depend on the Lord and cannot live one moment without Him—for in Him we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). It must also be confessed to be our duty to acknowledge this to His glory and to pay Him thankfully this piece of homage.
4. God being the sole fountain of all the good we enjoy and of all the good we need, spiritual or temporal, for soul or for body, He must be acknowledged and honored as such by us going to Him in prayer to seek what we want and to return Him thanks for what we receive.
5. Our God being the true and living God, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, good, and gracious, etc.—we must by prayer solemnly acknowledge and declare that so He is indeed and in truth, and that we believe Him to be so, even a God that is privy to our condition, that is at hand to supply our wants and able to make all grace to abound and to grant us out of His free grace and goodness all we stand in need of.
6. He is a God that hears prayers (Ps. 65:2), and not like the deaf idol gods of the heathens that neither hear, nor see, nor can help, in less or in more. And we must

declare our faith of this by praying to Him. Or if we will not pray, we in effect say He is but an idol that cannot help and not God that hears prayers.

7. It is God only that forgives sins and bestows the blessings of the new covenant and performs the promises made to His people in Christ. And He should be acknowledged and openly owned as such by prayer to Him for these favors, and by thanksgivings therefore, that He may be glorified (see Ezek. 36:25–27, etc.; cf. v. 37).

Second, if we consider God the Son, we will also see ground for this duty, for:

1. Christ is the way to the Father, and no man comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). We are then called to come to the Father through Him and to approach to the Father in prayer with boldness and confidence, as having access made to us through Christ (Heb. 4:16). So Hebrews 10:19–22: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, though the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, etc.” Prayer, therefore, is an open declaration and proclamation of our faith in Christ being a high priest, and a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, and of our having access with boldness and confidence through Him, and a new and living way consecrated to us through His flesh. And prayer is the actual improvement of this great advantage, a drawing near through this High Priest and walking in a new and living way.

2. Christ is the great intercessor who ever lives to make intercession (Heb. 7:25). And He offered up incense in order to make the prayers of His people acceptable—Revelation 8:3–4: “And another angel [this is Christ] 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.”
3. He has wrought great work of redemption, having satisfied justice, paid down the redemption money, offered up Himself a satisfactory sacrifice for sins. And this by prayer and praises should be acknowledged. And therefore, He, being God, should be worshipped and called on.
4. He is the great prophet. And therefore we should come to Him by prayer and supplications that we may be taught and instructed and led in the way of God. We must cry after knowledge and lift up our voice for understanding. We must seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures (Prov. 2:4–5). This knowledge is the substantial wisdom of the Father, as we see (Prov. 8). And by prayer must we watch daily at His gates, waiting at the posts of His door (Prov. 8:34).
5. He is a great king and must be honored and served by prayer. He is our Lord, and therefore we must worship Him (Ps. 45:11). Prayer is a part of us kissing the Son (Ps. 2:12). It is a part of the song of the Lamb to say, “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God

Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:3–4).

6. Christ taught His disciples how to pray (Matt. 6; Luke 11), and frequently by parables (Luke 11; 18) did inculcate this duty and press constancy therein. And in His last discourse (as in the text here, and chs. 15–16) did encourage them to pray.
7. Christ held forth this duty to us by His own example (Matt. 14:28; 19:13; 26:39–45; Mark 6:46; 14:32, 35, 39; Luke 5; 6:12; 9:28–29; 12–16; 22:32; John 17). “In the days of his flesh...he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, etc.” (Heb. 5:7).

Third, if we consider God the Holy Ghost, we will see that prayer is a duty, for:

1. He is called the Spirit of prayer or of supplication and is promised in the latter days for this end: “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). If then we should deny this to be a duty, we should deny the Spirit to be a spirit of supplications.
2. He is given as the Spirit of adoption for this end: that we may cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). That is, He is sent to the soul of God’s children to clear up their interest in God and to assure them of their state of adoption, and thereby prompt them to cry to God as their Father.

3. Yea, Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit is sent into the hearts of God’s children, there to dwell. And among other works which He is to do there, He is to cry, “Abba, Father.” He is there crying or praying by framing their petitions and supplications to them. Consonant is this to what this same apostle says: “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” (Rom. 8:26).
4. By the Spirit, we have access to the Father through Christ (Eph. 2:18). Prayer must therefore be a duty, or this access by the Spirit is a vain, useless thing.
5. We are bidden to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). They must offend then against Him who will not own this for a duty.
6. All the graces whereby we are enabled and put in case to pray are of the Spirit, for they are His fruits (Gal. 5:21–22)—things such as faith, love, etc.

Fourth, the nature, state, calling, and profession of the saints manifest prayer to be a duty, for:

1. Their adoption and being brought into God’s family as His near children lays this obligation on them to cry to God and to pray to Him as their Father.
2. Their new nature sets them onto it, for it inclines them and determines their hearts Godward. When Saul is made a convert, he is brought to his knees and found

a praying man (Acts 9:11). The Lord said to Ananias, “Arise...and enquire...for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.” The new converts continued steadfastly in prayers (Acts 2:42).

3. The saints are a holy priesthood and must by office offer up spiritual sacrifice (1 Peter 2:5). And prayer is a chief part of their spiritual sacrifice, together with praises, whereby they show forth the praises or virtues of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (v. 7). They should offer to Him “the calves of [their] lips” (Hos. 14:2). And what are these? See Hebrews 13:15: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” We read of the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Ps. 116:17) and of the sacrifice of praise (Jer. 33:11).
4. It is the description of the wicked that they call not on God (Ps. 5:2, 4; 14:24, 10; 79:6; Jer. 10:25; Rom. 3:9). And on the other hand, it is the description of God’s children that they call on God (1 Cor. 1:2). Hence David says, “I am in prayer” (Ps. 109:4), as if he had been wholly devoted to and taken up with that work and duty, and nothing else.
5. Their relation to God as His servants carries this with it, as we see in Psalm 116:16, 17. “I am thy servant,” said David. And what follows? “I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.”

Fifth, the daily necessities of the saints confirm and enforce this duty, for:

1. Many a burden outward and inward they have lying on them—burdens of duties that they find themselves unable to stand under; burdens of afflictions and crosses that are like to crush them; burdens of sin and corruption prevailing over them and causing them to groan. And all the burdens must they cast on the Lord by prayer (Ps. 55:22). Strength and grace must be sought by prayer from the Lord so that they may be enabled to stand under these loads.
2. Many a time are they in the dark, surrounded with difficulties inward and outward, and know not what to do or what hand to turn to. And by prayer must light be sought from Him who is the fountain of light, that in His light they may see light. By prayer, they must seek understanding, guidance, direction, and leading, as others have done (Ps. 31:3; 1 Thess. 3:11; 2 Thess. 3:5; Ps. 119:27, 33–34).
3. As they must have from God their daily bread and all things necessary for their life and outward well being, so must their spiritual life be upheld, nourished, and strengthened with new and fresh influences, supplies, and communications of the Spirit of grace. And for all these must they be daily on their knees and petitioners at the throne of grace (Ps. 68:28; 119:28; Matt. 6; Heb. 4:16; 1 Peter 5:10). In everything must they make their requests known by prayer (Phil. 4:6).
4. Their failings and short-comings, omissions and transgressions are many. And pardon must be sought by prayer (Ex. 34:9; Num. 14:19; Ps. 19:12; 25:11, 18; 51; Matt. 6:12).

5. They have many enemies to wrestle against—and without a body of death, an evil heart of unbelief within and Satan and the world without, with their snares, allurements, threatenings, temptations, persecutions, and the like. And by prayer must they seek not to be led into temptation, but to be delivered from that evil one, as the Lord's Prayer instructs us. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." And therefore we must pray "always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, etc." (Eph. 6:12, 18).
6. They have many outward necessities concerning their outward callings, occupations, and station in the world. And in all these things they must acknowledge the Lord by prayer, according to Proverbs 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths," and Philippians 4:6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
7. They have visitations, chastisements, crosses, afflictions, and judgments from the hand of God, because of sin, to lay to heart and to chase them to God by prayer, that either they may be removed in mercy or sanctified to them (Ps. 50:15; James 5:13–14).
8. They have several good works on their hand, some of more public use, some of more private use. And hereunto is the blessing and assurance of God requisite, which must be sought by prayer—as Abraham's servant sought the Lord by prayer for a prosperous journey (Gen. 24). So did Paul (Rom. 1:10).

9. They have all the blessings of the new covenant grace and glory to seek by prayer (Ezek. 36:37; Matt. 6:33).

Sixth, it is the plain law and express command of God that we pray to Him. The law of nature (as we heard) enjoins it. And it is often commanded in the written law of God (Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33; 14:38; Luke 21:36; 22:40, 46; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; James 5:13–14, 16; Jude 20). The neglect of it is often charged as their great guilt (Isa. 43:22; Hos. 7:7) and confessed as a sin (Isa. 64:7; Dan. 9:13). The example of other saints registrate<sup>1</sup> in Scripture for our use and instruction lays bonds on us and has the force of a command. We might here cite the instances of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the saints, but it being so well known, we pass it.

Seventh, our relations to others in the world call for this duty. Hence the Lord teaches us to pray with and for others when He bids us say, “Our Father, etc.” So that we are:

1. To pray for magistrates and all in authority (1 Tim. 2:1–2).
2. For ministers in the discharge of their work (Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:19; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:2; Heb. 13:18).
3. For our brethren (Job 4:42; 8:10; James 5:16).
4. Superiors for inferiors, especially pastors for their flocks (1 Sam. 12:22; Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3). And fathers for their children (Job 1:5). Magistrates for subjects, as we see in Moses and David.
5. For friends and acquaintances and all men indefinitely (1 Tim. 2:1).

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1. *Registrare*: written or evident.

6. Yea, and for our enemies (Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

Eighth, not only are there commands for the duty itself, but also for the manner or way how the duty of prayer should be performed, as:

1. We must pray incessantly, without ceasing (Luke 18:1; Acts 12:5; Rom. 1:9; 12:12; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 3:10; 5:17; etc.).
2. Exceedingly with fervency and earnestness (1 Thess. 3:10).
3. Everywhere, without respect of places (1 Tim. 2:8).
4. With holy hands and without wrath (1 Tim. 2:8; James 4:8).
5. With faith (1 Tim. 2:8; James 1:6; 5:13).
6. With all manner of supplication (Eph. 6:18).
7. In the Spirit (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20).
8. With watching (Eph. 6:18).
9. Fervently, with zeal (Col. 4:12; James 5:16).
10. With reverence (Ps. 95:6; Dan. 6:10; Rev. 4:9–10).
11. With the whole heart (Ps. 119:145; Hos. 7).
12. Mightily (Jonah 3:8).

Ninth, herein stands in a great part our communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ in making all our requests known by prayer to Him through Christ, in laying before Him all our case, all our wants and our straits and difficulties, or in seeking counsel, strength, light, help, deliverance, and what

our case calls for, in communing and talking with Him as our friend, yea, as our Father, and in thankfully receiving His favor and mercies.

Tenth, yea, all the commanded duties that lie on us enforce this duty of prayer because of ourselves, as of ourselves we are not able to think anything, far less to do. But our sufficiency is of God (1 Cor. 3:5). Strength and ability for every commanded duty must be had from God, for He must work both to will and to do in us according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Now in His influences help and assistance must be had by prayer.

Eleventh, on behalf of Christ's kingdom in the world, prayer is a necessary duty—for it is said that prayer also will be made for Him continually (Ps. 72:15). And Christ taught us to pray daily, "Thy kingdom come," that is, that His enemies may be brought down, the kingdom of sin and Satan destroyed (Judg. 5:31; Ps. 68:1, 18; Rev. 12:10–11); that the Jews may be called and brought into Christ's kingdom (Rom. 10:1), according to what is foretold (Rom. 11:25–32; Rev. 16:12; 19:1; etc.); that gospel ambassadors may be sent forth (Matt. 9:38); the fullness of the Gentiles brought in (Ps. 67; Rom. 11:25–26); the gospel made successful (Col. 4:3; Eph. 6:19; 2 Thess. 3:1); the ordinances thereof being purely dispensed and made effectual through the blessing of the Lord, both for converting of such as are yet in nature, and for confirming, comforting, and building up in their most holy faith such as are brought in and converted (Acts 4:29–30; Rom. 15:29–31; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:16–17); as also, that the day of the solemnization of the marriage of the Lamb with the bride, the Lamb's wife, may be hastened: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.... Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:17, 20).

Twelfth, with regards to the honoring and glorifying of God in the world, prayer is prescribed and called for, for Christ taught us to say, "Hallowed be thy name." That is, we are to

pray that God would make us and others fit by His grace both to know and to acknowledge and highly to esteem of God of His titles, attributes, ordinances, word, works, and whatever He is pleased to make Himself known by (Ps. 67:2–3; 83:18; 86:10–15; 147:19–20; 130:19; 145; 2 Cor. 2:14–15). As also, that He would enable us to glorify Him in thought, word, and deed (Ps. 19:14; 103:1; Phil. 1:9, 11). Moreover, that He would prevent and remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaness, and whatever is dishonorable to Him (2 Kings 19:15–16; Ps. 67:1–4; 74:18, 22–23; 98:7; Eph. 1:17–18). And finally, that by His powerful and over-ruling providence, He would direct and dispose of all things to His own glory (1 Chron. 20:6, 10–12; Ps. 83; 140:4–5; Matt. 6:10).

Thirteenth, with regards to obedience to God's holy will, prayer is requisite, for we are taught to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Whereby we pray that God would remove all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, unwillingness, and perverseness of heart, whereby we neither can nor will obey Him (Eph. 1:17–18; 5:16; Matt. 26:40–41; Jer. 31:18–19). As also, that by His grace He would make us able and willing to know, to do, and to submit to His will in all things (Ps. 119:1, 8, 35–36), and that with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy as the angels do in heaven (2 Sam. 15:29; Job 1:28; Ps. 100:2; 103:20–21; 119:4–5, 18, 112; Isa. 6:2–3; 38:3; Mic. 6:8; Matt. 18:10; Acts 21:14; Rom. 12:11).

More of this kind might be added, but what is said is sufficient to manifest prayer to be an indispensable duty, which truth we will next make some improvement of.

## CHAPTER 6

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### *The Greatness of the Sin of Neglecting Prayer Manifested*

*I*n order to enforce the practice of this duty, we will here in the first place show the greatness of the sin of neglect thereof, on the grounds mentioned in the preceding chapter.

1. The neglect and laying aside of this duty is a sin condemned by the very light of nature. And such as are guilty thereof sin against their own natural conscience and are condemned therein by the very practice of heathens, who will rise up against them as witnesses to condemn and aggravate their ungodly practice or neglect in this. Shall heathens, who have stocks and stones and the work of their own hands for their gods, which neither hear, nor see, nor breath, nor can help (Ps. 115:4–7; 135:15–17), and pray notwithstanding to them; and will such as make profession of the true and living God, who can hear and help, refuse to do that to Him which idolaters do to their idols? And lay aside or slight this duty of praying to and of calling on Him? How will such answer it in the great day?
2. The neglect and laying aside of this duty is a pre-emptor and plain denial of that natural worship which is due to God from man as His creature and subject.

And consequently it is a practical declaration that we own Him not for the Lord, nor for our Lord, and that we acknowledge not ourselves to be His creatures obliged to worship and glorify Him. And if we refuse to give to God this piece of natural worship, what worship can we willingly perform to Him? And if we be not willing to worship God, what better are we than devils? To deny Him this natural worship is in effect to deny Him to be God or to refuse to acknowledge Him as such.

3. To neglect and forsake this duty of prayer is as much as to say, in plain terms, we have no dependence on the Lord. We are lords ourselves. We will come no more to Him. So that much horrid blasphemy is wrapped up in this evil. We hereby say we are not creatures. We have no dependency on God. We neither move, live, nor have our being in Him. We are not beholden to Him for anything we have, whether as to our being or as to our well being. And so we will not acknowledge Him therefore, nor pay Him the least piece of homage on that account. We can live well enough without God. Our life is our own, and we are full masters thereof and of all that concerns being or well being. O! How deep does this sin draw?
4. Hereby also we declare before angels and men, yea, and take the devils also as witness that we do not acknowledge God the author and fountain of any good we enjoy. We have all and expect all from some other hand, and for all we will not be beholden to some other than to God. Is not this a dreadful evil? And yet it is a manifest consequence of the neglect of this duty, for nature and common sense will tell us that He of whom we expect all should be sought for all,

and that He of whom we hold all should be thankfully therefore acknowledged and praised.

5. By the neglect and laying aside of this duty, we declare that we believe not God to be an omnipresent God, one near to us, not to be omniscient, acquainted with, and privy to our condition, nor almighty and able to help us in our necessities and to supply our wants. If we believed that God were at hand, dare we refuse to commune with Him or speak to Him with our souls? Did we believe that He knew all things that concerned us better than we do ourselves and were able to supply by His almighty power all our necessities, and that He alone were the omniscient, omnipresent, and almighty God, would we not ply Him more by prayer and supplication and look for all our supplies, helps, reliefs, deliverances, and up-makings from Him alone? What a heinous sin then must this be, which on the matter is a denying of God or a making of Him to be an idol, a blind, ignorant, and helpless thing? Such of those as lay aside or neglect this duty must be practical atheists and hereby avow themselves as such.
6. By the neglect of this duty of prayer, we solemnly declare that it is in vain to call on God, for He hears not. He is not a God that hears prayers. And then, I ask, what difference will we put between Him and the gods of the nations, which are no gods but dead stocks and stones, for they have ears, but hear not, as being dead lifeless things? Will we thus blaspheme the living God and be guiltless? Will we thus preach out to all that know us that either there is no God, or no God that can help us, nor that concerns Himself with what

is done on earth, and consequently He cannot be the true and living God?

7. By the neglect of this duty of prayer, either we say we have no need of or care not for the great blessings of the new covenant, or that we can have them and not be beholden to God for them, or that He will give them, though we think them not worth the asking or praying for. But all of these are gross and abominable to say. Who that has not sold himself to the devil and to all mischief will dare to say that he neither has need of nor cares for the blessings of the new covenant purchased by Christ? Who, that knows anything of the gospel, dares think to say that we can have any of these blessings and not be beholden to God for them? And who that believes God's Word will think or say that we may have them, though we account them not worth the asking? Has not the Lord told us that He must be inquired of for these things (Ezek. 36:37), and that we have not because we ask not (James 4:2)?
8. By the neglect of this duty of prayer, we either say that Christ has not consecrated a new and living way for sinners to draw near to God, that He has not died, or that His death was in vain to procure us this access, or that though He thought the matter so much worth as to lay down His life to purchase it, yet we put no value on it. So that it is all one to us, whether Christ died for that end, or not. We will not think it worth the using what He thought worth His death and sufferings to purchase to us. Who sees not of what a deep dye this sin is? We hereby undervalue all Christ's love. We say He was too prodigal of His life to purchase that to us which we have no esteem for, nay, look on as our

bondage and burden. Or we deny that He made any such purchase at all, contrary to all the gospel. Such therefore as deny this duty, deny the whole gospel.

9. Such as neglect or lay aside this duty deny Christ's being an intercessor to make the prayers of His people acceptable by presenting them with incense in His censer, or that He has taken on that office or employment in vain, for as for their part they mind not to employ Him or to have any of their prayers rendered acceptable through His incense. They will give God no prayer at all.
10. Such deny all the works of redemption performed by Christ or think it not worth the giving of Him thanks for and deny also His being God, for they will not worship Him nor pray to Him, nor pray to the Father through Him.
11. Such as neglect or lay aside this duty of prayer deny Christ to be the great prophet who must instruct us in the way of life. Or they say that they have no need of His instruction, or that they have no esteem for it and can be well enough without it. They will never cry for knowledge, nor lift up their voice for understanding. They will not seek for it as for silver, nor search for it as for hid treasures. They will not wait at the posts of His door for all that He can give. O! What undervaluers of spiritual favors and blessings are such as neglect this duty.
12. Those who neglect this duty of prayer do profess they will not own and acknowledge Christ for king, for they will not worship Him as their lord. They will not pay homage to Him as their king. They will have nothing from Him as king, nor will they acknowledge

their subjection to Him and dependence on Him as king. They will not join in the song of the Lamb, nor proclaim Him King of saints, nor live under His protection. Nay, they hereby declare themselves to be open enemies to Christ. For all must either be subject to Him or rebels against Him. And those who are subject to Him must seek His protection and live under it and own Him as such by paying Him homage. And those who will be enemies must resolve to hear that sad word at length: "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27).

13. Those who lay this duty aside as they undervalue Christ's authority in commanding and enjoining this duty, so they misregard all the encouragements which He has given to hearken us to this duty. They treat them either as not true or as unworthy of our consideration. And so they say, in effect, that either Christ spoke not truth or was not wise enough to make use of the best and most forcible arguments to enforce the practice of the duty. For, as for them, they will be moved with no such thing, and particularly, when the promise of being heard and of receiving what they ask, will not work them up to the duty of prayer. They plainly declare that they know nothing they stand in need of from God or that God can give them, which they value worth the wind of their mouth. And therefore to tell them that, if they will pray, they will be heard and receive what they ask is of no force with them; for they will receive nothing from Him. They value nothing He can give. And therefore they will never once move themselves to bow their knee or open their mouth to God.

14. Moreover, such as lay aside this duty lay no weight on the example of Christ, who Himself was so much in the duty of prayer in the days of His flesh. They say they have less need of God than Christ had. And therefore they will not cry to God as He did. O horrid!
15. Such as lay aside this duty proclaim they have nothing to do with the Spirit as a spirit of grace and supplication. Or they deny that He is given and sent or was promised for this end. No prayer can be made to God acceptably that is not framed in the heart by the Spirit and supplications. And such as lay aside this duty profess they will not have the Spirit for this end. And so they deny or renounce any interest in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and are content to live without all the three persons of the Trinity.
16. Hereby they declare they never had the Spirit dwelling in them as the Spirit of adoption. Neither are they desirous of Him for this end, to clear up and ascertain them of an interest in God through Christ. They are satisfied with their natural state and are content to live without God or without all sense of His love and favor. The Spirit is given for a spirit of adoption, and whoever is possessed of Him, as such, are made able and willing to cry to God as their Father and to go to Him as children with cheerfulness, delight, humility, and filial confidence and boldness. But such as lay aside this duty and neglect it do declare thereby that this Spirit is not in them or is not acting in them as the Spirit of adoption.
17. Those who neglect and lay aside this duty do willingly consent to the want of the help of the Spirit to

cause us to pray and to pray in us and cry in us, "Abba, Father." They make no account of this glorious assistance. They choose rather to be without it altogether. What contemnors and undervaluers of the Spirit of God must these be, who make so light of this matter. What desperate folly is it, willingly thus to refuse the assistance of the Spirit and to put and keep themselves wholly out of a capacity of receiving the sweet influences of the Spirit of prayer, or of having the Spirit actually helping their infirmities and making intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered.

18. Those who neglect and lay aside this duty of prayer contemn and undervalue the access to the Father, which the Spirit's work is to help us to. They look on that access to the Father as no worthy or desirable privilege. And therefore they reject it. They undervalue it and will have none of it. The Spirit is given to help the children of God to draw near to the Lord in prayer, for by Him through Jesus we have access. But all the neglectors of this duty declare they will have none of the Spirit's assistance for this end. The small value they put on the necessary means says they have little love or esteem for the end.
19. Such as neglect this duty not only declare themselves void of the graces of the Spirit of God, but also proclaim themselves unwilling to have these fruits of the Spirit in them to qualify, enable, and prompt them to the exercise of this duty.
20. Those who neglect or refuse to mind and to go about this duty of prayer plainly declare insofar that they have no relation to God as His children, nor are yet made

partakers of the privilege of adoption—for an adopted child of God cannot be an enemy to this duty which is the breathing of such a child and the pouring out of his heart in the bosom of his Father. The Lord gives to His children, because they are now adopted to be His children, the Spirit of His Son, whereby they cry, “Abba, Father.” Such therefore that are not reconciled to this duty cannot say they are the children of God and translated to the kingdom of His Son, because they have never received as yet the Spirit of His Son, which all do receive whose relation is changed and who are now brought into a state of sonship. Yea, such as wholly lay aside this duty declare and openly preach forth their undervaluing of this state of sonship.

21. As also, they who lay aside this duty and neglect prayer declare to all that they are strangers to that glorious change which grace makes and are yet in the old stock of nature, not transplanted into the kingdom of Christ nor made partakers of the new man or of the divine nature—for this would necessarily incline them to this duty of making their requests known to God in everything. This would turn their faces and their hearts God-ward and would cause them to speak out their desires to Him in cries, in sighs, in groans, or in breathings, if they could do no more.
22. By neglecting this duty, they declare themselves unworthy of that high honor and privilege of being priests to the Most High, being so unwilling to offer up the sacrifices of prayer and praise to the Lord and the calves of their lips. Seeing they are so averse from this duty which is called for at their hands who are become a kingdom of priests to God and made priests through

Christ (1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6)—how can they challenge an interest in this privilege or share of the honor thereof? Nay, hereby it would rather seem that they desire to abide priests to Satan and chief members of his kingdom and are willing to lay out themselves for his service.

23. Such as neglect this duty do plainly declare they are none of the people of God, as they lack the distinguishing note and character whereby they are known from others. The people of God are such as call on God. This is their work and special employment. Here are they to be found. This is their element. Here they live, and out of this they cannot live. But, on the contrary, they discover themselves to be of the number of those whose distinguishing mark is that they call not on God. This is the mark of the wicked—they will not seek God. Is this believed? And dare any who read this profess themselves to be among the number of the wicked by refusing to call on the name of God? Is there so much advantage to be had by being among them?
24. Such as neglect or lay aside this duty declare they neither are nor desire to be among the number of the servants of God—for this calling on God is a part of the service God requires of them. And those who refuse to perform this piece of service to Him do plainly declare that they love not His service nor desire they to be exercised therein. And they are so far from looking on it as their honor and rich advantage to be among His servants that they rather count it their burden. And so they plainly declare that they have more pleasure in the service of Satan, than in the service of God. O what a wretched disposition is this!

O what wickedness is wrapped up here, thus plainly to declare we are wearied of God and of His service, and therefore will not so much as call on Him!

25. Those who neglect and lay aside this duty say, in effect, they are lords and will come no more to God. They are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing, as was the church of Laodicea (Rev. 3). They know no wants, or they see not the hazard of lying under these wants. They are not careful to have them supplied, and therefore they will not come to God for this end. They are senseless and feel no burdens pressing them—no burdens of sin and corruption, no burden of an evil heart of unbelief that is always departing from the living God. They take no list of duties, and therefore they cry not for help. They have no difficulties, no dark steps in their way, for they are not desirous of light. And therefore they cry not to God to enlighten their eyes and to teach them in the way wherein they ought to walk and to lead them in sure paths that their footsteps slide not. They are not anxious about the matter nor careful how matters go. This is the language of their refusing to practice this duty.
26. Hereby they declare also that they will not be in God's common<sup>1</sup> for their daily bread. They will not seek it of Him, nor depend on Him for it. And thus they eat and drink and enjoy their life and things necessary thereunto as the beasts do—as little acknowledging God therefore as they do, yea, and as little depending on Him by faith and desiring grace to make a right use of what God is pleased to give and to employ it for His

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1. *Common*: community.

honor as if they were not rational creatures. Nay, the beasts in the way seek their daily food from God. The young lions seek their meat from God (Ps. 104:21). The beasts and the fish of the sea wait all on God that He may give them their meat in due season (v. 27; Ps. 145:15–16). What a shame is it then for man, made a more noble creature than the beasts that perish, that he does not or will not in his kind by prayer and supplications seek his food, nourishment, and what he needs for his outward life from God? And seeing Christ Himself taught us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” that is, that we, waiting on the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may of His free gift and as His fatherly wisdom will judge best enjoy a competent portion of them and have the same continued and blessed to us in our holy and comfortable use of them and contentment in them and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort (Gen. 43:12–14; 28:20; Prov. 30:8–9; 1 Tim. 4:2, 4, 5; 6:6–8; 2 Thess. 3:11–12; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 4:6)—how must such cross and contradict all this who lay aside the duty of prayer? How do they declare that they have not forfeited all right to these outward things notwithstanding of Adam’s transgression, and that they have not deserved to be deprived of them or to have them cursed to them, notwithstanding what the Scripture says (Gen. 2:17; 3:17; Deut. 23:15–25; Jer. 5:25; Rom. 7:20–22).

How do they declare that these outward things are able of themselves, even without God’s blessing, to uphold, nourish, and sustain us, contrary to Deuteronomy 8:5? How do they say that they are worthy of them and that God cannot in justice withhold them,

contrary to Genesis 32:10? And that they by their own industry are able to procure them, contrary to Deuteronomy 8:17–18? How do they declare that they are in no hazard of desiring, of getting, or of using them unlawfully, contrary to Jeremiah 6:13; Hosea 2:7; Matthew 7:21–22; and James 4:3?

27. Moreover, they declare that far less they will depend on God and wait on Him and seek from Him what is necessary for the life of their souls. And so they either suppose that they can have all that is necessary thereunto another way than from God, and therefore they need not pray to Him for them; or that they are indifferent whether they receive them or not, and therefore they will not be at so much pains as to seek them, as thinking them hardly worth so much labor and work!
28. When they neglect or lay aside this duty, they in like manner declare that either they are free of sin original and actual, or that they can fully satisfy God's justice for any offence they have done—contrary to Psalm 130:3–4; Matthew 18:24–25; Luke 17:10; and Romans 3:9–22; 5:12. And therefore they need not trouble themselves to seek pardon and forgiveness from God through Jesus Christ, contrary to Hosea 14:2; Jeremiah 14:7; Romans 3:24–26; Ephesians 1:6–7; Hebrews 9:22; and 2 Peter 1:2. And notwithstanding that Christ has taught us to pray daily, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.”
29. By neglecting and laying aside this duty of prayer, they declare that either they are in no hazard of being led aside and drawn away with the wickedness of their own hearts with the power of the flesh and body of death,

or with the deceit of Satan, or with the enticements and snares of the world, contrary to 1 Chronicles 9:2; 21:1; 2 Chronicles 18:3; 32:31; Matthew 26:31, 69–72; Mark 4:19; Luke 21:34; Galatians 2:1–15; 5:17; and James 1:14. Or they declare that they are able enough of themselves to resist all these temptations and overcome them, contrary to 1 Chronicles 21:1–4; 2 Chronicles 16:7–10; and Romans 7:23–24. For they will not pray that the Lord would not lead them into temptation, but deliver them from evil—that is, that He would so over-rule the world and all of it, so subdue the flesh and restrain Satan, and so order all things and strengthen and quicken them that they either may be kept from being tempted to sin or, if tempted, may be by His grace and Spirit supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation, or, when fallen, raised up again (Ps. 19:13; 51:10, 12; 119:133; Matt. 26:11; John 17:15; 1 Cor. 10:12–13; 2 Cor. 12:7–8; Eph. 3:14–17; 1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 13:20–21; Jude 24). Or they hereby declare that they account not the mercy of being delivered from temptations and from the power of Satan to be so great a good as once to bow their knee to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ therefore and beg by prayer and supplication that grace of Him through Jesus.

30. Such as lay aside the duty of prayer do in plain terms say that they have no need of God's help, light, counsel, and direction in any of their lawful concerns and affairs in the world, contrary to what we see in the servant of Abraham when he was going to seek a wife to Isaac; but are able enough of themselves to manage all sufficiently. Otherwise they would see themselves called to go to Him by prayer and make their requests known to

Him, to the end they might receive His blessing, countenance, direction, and gracious leading whereby they might be enabled to do all to His glory which they are called to do by virtue of their places, stations, callings, and relations in the world.

31. When they lay aside this duty, they declare that either God is not concerned in any affliction, distress, trouble, or cross, outward or inward, that lies on them, as having no hand therein; but that all things fall out by a chance and fortune. And so they deny God and His universal providence. Or they declare that they can wrestle against the evil of these and stand under them without His grace and help, and so can without God make a right and sanctified improvement of all. Otherwise, if they believed that God did over-rule and order all these exercises and disposed of them as He thought good, and that they without His grace and assistance could not stand under them, as became Christians to do, or make a right use of them, then they would be more on their knees in such a day and call more on God in the day of trouble, as believing that He only could remove the same or strengthen them under it and give the sanctified improvement of it.
32. When they lay aside this duty of prayer, they declare their open contempt and undervaluing of all great and special blessings of the new covenant purchased by Jesus Christ. For, as was cleared, these are given to praying persons, and for those will the Lord be inquired (Ezek. 36:37). He gives the Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke 11:13). They think not these worth the seeking. They are well without them, and they desire to remain so.

33. Such as neglect or lay aside this duty of prayer trample under foot the manifold commands of God and violate His express laws, given both in nature and in the Word—both His laws for the duty itself and for the right manner of going about it. All these are rejected with contempt. And the authority of the one supreme law giver, who alone is able to save and to destroy, is despised and trodden under foot. Such persons declare that they value not the law and frequently reiterated commands of God. They will follow their mind and do their own will, let God enjoin the contrary as He will. And thus they state themselves as open enemies and rebels to the Lord.
34. As likewise they lay no weight on all the registrate examples of other holy men of God who have minded this duty and have taken delight therein and experienced the good and rich advantage thereof. But, on the contrary, they condemn them for fools for troubling themselves about such needless work. This is besides the rejecting of the obligation that such examples set before us for imitation and encouragement do lay on us to follow them as followers of God and of Christ.
35. Those who neglect and lay aside prayer deny the common duty of nature and Christianity to all round about them. They declare themselves unworthy to live under magistrates and to enjoy the benefit of government, seeing they will not pray for all those in authority that they may lead a quiet and peaceable life under them in all godliness and honesty (1 Tim. 2:2). They show themselves unworthy of the benefit of the ministry, who will not pray for ministers. They neglect one piece of their duty to their masters of servants, or parents of

children and family, who will not pray for them. They carry undutifully and unbrotherly to their equals, who will not lend them a lift by prayer and help them by falling on their own knees before God for them. They deal ungratefully to the good, who forget not them in rewarding them thus, by refusing to pray for them. So they deal un-Christianly with their enemies, who will not at once pray for them or help them out of their misery with one supplication to God on their behalf.

36. Those who neglect and lay aside this duty of prayer renounce all communion with God and say that they are content to live in the world without God and without Christ, without all fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. O! What an honor and honorable advantage are they satisfied to live without, who can live without a communion with God? What a miserable case would we judge that man to be in, who had not one bosom friend in all the world to whom he might open all his heart and make known all his mind? But how much worse case must he be in, who has not God as his near friend—yea, who willfully and deliberately refuses fellowship with God and will not keep up correspondence with Him and open his heart before Him and make all his desires known to Him? Now such are they who lay aside prayer and will not call on God.
37. Such as lay aside this duty do openly declare they will not subject themselves to the holy will of God, in one thing or other. They will not study conformity to any of His commandments. Or they must suppose that, let God command what He will and enjoin never so spiritual and difficult duties, they are able to give obedience without any divine aid and assistance—for they will not

go to God by prayer to seek His helping hand. They will not pray to Him for grace and influence to enable them for the duty or to make them willing and ready to offer obedience—or for grace and strength to carry them through.

38. Such declare themselves to be rather enemies to the kingdom of Christ, than friends and well-wishers to the coming thereof, for they will not pray for the same. They will not pray for grace to themselves and others whereby they may be brought into the kingdom of Christ. They will not pray for Jews or Gentiles, nor pray for a blessing on the ordinances of Christ. They will not pray that Christ would take His great power to Him and reign, and that all His enemies may be made His foot stool, that the kingdom of Satan and of anti-christ, his lieutenant, may be brought down, and the work of reformation prosper through the world.
39. Such likewise declare openly that they are little concerned with the glory of God in the world, and that it is all one to them whether He be honored or dishonored, whether He get service or disservice, whether His name be hallowed or profaned—for they will not pray against these evils that dishonor the holy name of God. They will not pray that God would take them out of the way and order all matters so as He may be more known, feared, loved, served, trusted in, and worshipped in the world than He is. They will not pray that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord may fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9; Heb. 2:14).
40. Lastly, such as mind not this duty but wholly lay it aside declare themselves indifferent how God be served

in the world and how His will be done. Whether all remain rebels or become subjects to Him is all one to them, for they will not once pray that God's will may be done in earth as it is done by the angels in heaven.

By these particulars we may see what a heinous sin it is to neglect or lay aside this duty, and how guilty they are before the Lord who mind it not as a duty and make no conscience to perform the same. And by what is said, the practice of this duty is enforced. And what remains to be spoken to of the advantages thereof and encouragements thereunto will more conveniently fall under consideration afterward.

## *The Unregenerate Are Obligated to Pray*

**B**efore we proceed, we will speak a few words to some cases concerning the practice of this duty of prayer.

And first we will give an answer to this question: Whether such as are unregenerate, living in nature, are called to the practice of this duty of prayer. Some suppose that this is only the duty of children, and that therefore all others are free of the obligation. But this supposal is founded on loose and sandy grounds, as will be shown in the examination thereof.

We affirm that even unregenerate persons are under an obligation to pray, for which we give these reasons:

1. All men are obliged to perform natural worship to God and therefore are obliged to pray, which is a part of natural worship. The law of nature obliges such as are yet in nature to all the duties thereof. But prayer is enjoined by the very law of nature, as we saw above. Unregenerate persons are obliged to all the duties required in the moral law and particularly in the first precept thereof. And consequently they are obliged to know and acknowledge Him to be the only true God and to declare the same by praying to Him.

2. If they be not bound to glorify and worship God by prayer and supplication, then also it may be said they are not bound to think or meditate on God or esteem, honor, and adore Him, nor to choose, love, fear, or desire Him, nor to believe, delight, hope, trust, or rejoice in Him—for all these are parts of that natural homage which the moral and natural law requires of man, of one as well as of another. And if their unregenerate condition exempt them from one duty of nature, why will it not also exempt them from others, and from all? And if these duties be required, they will enforce the duty of prayer, as is manifest.
3. If the light of nature and a natural conscience teach heathens and impress this duty of prayer on them in a strait and, as it were, constrain them to call on God, as we see it did the sea men with whom Jonah sailed (Jonah 1:3) and as it is said in Psalm 107:28, then this duty must lie on all persons, even on the unregenerate as well as on others.
4. In all the commands of Scripture enjoining this duty, there is no exception made of unregenerate persons, as if they were not obliged as well as others. And where the law makes no exceptions, we ought to make none.
5. If prayer to God be not a duty required of natural and unregenerate persons, the omission and neglect thereof cannot be their sin, for sin is the transgression of a law, and where there is no law, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15; 1 John 3:4). Nor is sin imputed where there is no law (Rom. 5:13). Wherefore unregenerate persons, if not obliged by the law of God to pray, are not guilty for not praying, neither can that

sin be imputed to them, or they punished therefore. And yet we read of a sentence gone out against them: “Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name” (Ps. 79:6; Jer. 10:25).

6. It is laid to the charge of heathens without the church (and much more will it be charged on natural persons within the church, because of the greater light or information and of the more engagements and obligations) that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful (Rom. 1:21). Now this glorifying of God as God and being thankful includes prayer, as is manifest—and therefore the neglect of this was their guilt also.
7. Paul’s doctrine to the superstitious Athenians, who worshipped they knew not what, having an altar erected to the unknown God (Acts 17:26–27), confirms this. For he here tells them that God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell in all the face of the earth and had determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation. For what end was this? That (he says) they should seek the Lord, if perhaps they might feel after Him and find Him. This seeking of the Lord, if perhaps they might find him, was their duty, and that which the consideration of God’s works of creation and providence called them to. And none will question but this did include the duty of prayer.
8. All who are to acknowledge and profess God to be their creator and preserver, and that in Him alone they live, move, and have their being are bound to testify this by prayer to Him alone for their life, preservation, and

all the favors they need for upholding their life—as also to express their thankfulness to Him for favors received. But surely, unregenerate persons are to profess and acknowledge God alone to be their creator and preserver. Therefore, they are also bound to pray to Him.

9. Unregenerate persons are called to use means whereby they may be brought out of that natural state. And therefore they are to pray for the Spirit to convince them and convert them. Why else did the Lord say, after He had made large promises of the new heart and of the new Spirit (Ezek. 36:25–26), that yet He would be inquired of the house of Israel to do these things for them (v. 37).
10. If unregenerate persons may not pray for themselves, they may not join with others praying for them, whether in private or in public. And then they are not to join, whether in family or in a church or in any other company in prayer. And thus they will never hear prayer, but must remove out of the church, family, or company? When the rest are about to pray, the consequence, I suppose, is undeniable—for if they may not pray alone, how may they join with others in prayer?
11. All the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are such as lay, unregenerate persons may present them to God. They as well as others should wish and pray for the hallowing of God's name, that the Lord in all things whereby He makes Himself known may be glorified, praised, and exalted, that He would fit, qualify, and enable them and others to glorify the Lord in all their ways, words, and thoughts, and to deliver them from every course

that is dishonorable to God. They as well as others are concerned in the coming of God's kingdom and bound to pray that they and others may be delivered out of the kingdom of Satan; that the ordinances of life may be blessed for their own and others' benefit, etc. They as well as others are to desire that God's will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven; that they and others may be enabled by grace to do the will of God and to conform themselves to all His holy appointment and determinations and to acquiesce to all His wise and holy dispensations. They as well as others have need of their daily bread and therefore must depend on God for the same and seek it by prayer from Him. They as well as others sin daily against the Lord and have need of and must seek pardon thereof from God. They as well as others are subject to temptations and to the assaults of Satan and therefore must pray that either God would preserve them from these evils or keep them from being destroyed thereby. So that these heads of petitions concern them no less than others. And Christ does hereby manifestly say that all unregenerate persons are bound to present these petitions to God as well as others, seeing they concern them no less than others. And surely, if our Lord had thought that prayer was not a duty incumbent to unregenerate persons but was only called for from the hands of the regenerate, He would so have framed the petitions as that it might manifestly have appeared that they were petitions that none but the regenerate could present to God. But seeing He has been pleased to frame them so as to suit the case and condition of the unregenerate as well as of the regenerate, what needs further

debate concerning this matter? Besides, Christ taught Judas as well as the rest.

12. If unregenerate persons be not obliged to pray to God, they are not obliged to acknowledge God in all their ways or to seek to be guided of Him in ways approved of Him and be led in right paths. And if they be free of this obligation, they do not sin in living without God in the world, which cannot be said.
13. Sin does not loose our obligation to duties to which the law of nature did oblige us before sin entered into the world. Therefore, it does not loose us from the obligation to prayer, which was a natural duty required before the fall in testimony of man's creaturely state and dependence on God.
14. If unregenerate persons be not obliged to pray, then be their outward distress, affliction, misery, torment, poverty, etc., what they will, they must not once say, "Lord help and pity me," nor cry to God for relief, contrary to Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28.
15. If the Lord hear the prayers of unregenerate persons, then surely He encourages them to pray. And if He encourage them to pray, He allows them to pray. Now the Lord sometimes is pleased to hear the prayers of natural unregenerate persons, as in that text cited before—Psalm 107:6, 13–14, 19–20, 28–29. There is no ground to think that all these there spoken of were only regenerate persons, for it is said of them that they rebelled against the word of God and contemned the counsel of the Most High (v. 11), and that they were fools afflicted because of their transgression and

because of their iniquities (v. 17). Nor may we suppose that all that go down to the sea in ships are regenerate (v. 23; see Ex. 22:22–23, 27). It is said also that God heard the voice of the lad Ishmael (Gen. 21:17). Does not the Lord hear an unregenerate minister on behalf of the elect in the flock over which he is set (see Ex. 6:5; 2 Kings 13:4; Ps. 78:34, 36–37)?

16. Peter advised Simon Magus, though in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, to pray to God, if perhaps the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him (Acts 3:22)—which he never would have done if prayer were not the duty of unregenerate persons.
17. God’s threatenings and denunciations of wrath and judgment on unregenerate persons have the voice of a call in them to such to pray and to cry mightily to God—as we see the king of Nineveh understood the language of the threatenings of the ruin of the city by Jonah when he and his nobles made a decree and published it, ordaining all the inhabitants to fast and cry mightily to God (Jonah 3:7–8).
18. The Lord charges it home on a sinful people that they did not pray to Him, saying, “They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds” (Hos. 7:14). This was therefore without question their duty (see Job 27:10; Ps. 14:4; Jer. 10:21; Zeph. 1:6).
19. If unregenerate persons may not pray for themselves and neither may they pray for others, what then will unregenerate ministers do? We may not say that such are no ministers and all their ministerial acts are null. For if so, Christ had never employed Judas in the

ministry and had given certain infallible rules whereby to have discerned unregenerate persons from others so that none unregenerate might have been admitted to the office of the ministry.

20. This will make way for the torturing of the minds of God's own children, for if it be once laid down for a ground that no unregenerate person may pray, what will they do when in the dark as to their estate, when the Lord hides His face from them, Satan with his temptations assaults them, and they see no ground whereupon to enter? That they are in the state of grace? Must they in that case forbear prayer? Or must they pray, though they see nothing else than that they are unregenerate? How can they do this, if that ground stand that unregenerate persons should not pray?
21. Daniel confesses it as the sin of the people that they did not pray to God (Dan. 9:13). And he restricts not this to regenerate persons only, as if it had been the sin of none else. But he speaks of the body and bulk of the people.
22. It is mentioned as a stigma of the wicked, as a mark of them to their ignominy and disgrace, that they do not call on God (Ps. 10:4). The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts, or, in any of his thoughts, as the words may rather be read. They are said to eat up God's people as they eat bread (Ps. 14:4). And it is added that they call not on God. Hear how Job describes them: "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have,

if we pray unto him?” (Job 21:14–15). It must therefore be both their sin and shame that they speak and act thus, and, if so, the contrary must have been their duty.

23. Whatever talents or gifts the Lord bestow on any, these should be employed and made use of for Him and His glory (Matt. 25:30). But there is a gift of prayer as well as of other things, as is manifest. Therefore, this should be used for God and His glory, whether the person gifted herewith be a magistrate or minister or the master of a family or a private person.
24. If it were not a duty required of unregenerate persons to pray to God, why did the psalmist pray that God would so fill the faces of the enemies of the church with shame that they might seek God’s name (Ps. 83:16)?

These may serve for confirming this truth. Let us next see what can be said against it.

*Objection 1:* Christ, in that pattern of prayer, teaches us that prayer is only a duty required of them who can speak to God as their Father, when He teaches us to say, “Our Father.” But unregenerate persons, not being the adopted sons of God, cannot call God “Father” in truth.

*Answer:* When Christ prescribed this pattern to His disciples, He made no exceptions of Judas, though he was not made partaker of the Spirit of adoption. And therefore we may suppose that in some sense even Judas might have called God, “Father,” in truth, though not in that strict sense that the truly adopted may. As God was God to the whole body of the people of Israel and their God by covenant, though not in the strict sense as He was the God of the true Israel, so was He a Father to all that people. And on that account, they might

have called Him so and have prayed to Him as their Father by covenant relation. And so may unregenerate persons who are now within the visible church call God their Father and their God by virtue of that outward relation they have to Him, as externally in covenant with Him and as His avowed and professed subjects and servants, though not in that strict and most proper sense that the truly converted and regenerate may (see Mal. 4:6; Matt. 5:9, 14, 16, 45; 23:1, 9). And, moreover, as all are bound to believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, so they may call Him Father on account of creation, and their Father, being their creator and upholder, and pray to Him as such. And thus all heathens may and should do, for God is the Father of whom are all things (1 Cor. 8:6). He is one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:6).

*Objection 2:* It is expressly said that he that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination (Prov. 28:9).

*Answer:* So it is expressly said that the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8), and yet that both here and elsewhere (Prov. 21:27; Isa. 1:11; 66:3; Jer. 6:20; 7:22; Amos 3:22). The Lord shows how displeased He is with the hypocritical and insincere way of their offerings of sacrifice. Yet none will hence, I suppose, infer that it was not a commanded duty, laying even on unregenerate persons under the law to offer sacrifices. So it is as expressly said that the way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:9). Will it therefore follow that a wicked and unregenerate person may perform no duty of any relation he stands in, natural, civil, or political? May he perform no duty of a magistrate, husband, father, and master, or of a subject, wife, child, and servant? This would destroy all humanity and all society, yea, and all relations. Further, it is as expressly said that

the plowing of the wicked is sin (Prov. 21:4). Must we hence infer that therefore we must not till the ground or labor in their ordinary and lawful callings? Then may we also infer that they must not eat, drink, or sleep, because to the unbelieving nothing is pure (Titus 1:15)? But in all these things we must distinguish between the substance of the work and duty, which may be and is good, lawful, commanded, and necessary, and other things that are accidental, in the manner of performing the same—by reason of which, what is in itself necessary and useful may become to them sinful and abominable in the eyes of the Lord.

*Objection 3:* Seeing the Scripture enjoins that such as pray should pray in faith, how can they pray who have not faith?

*Answer:* If by faith here be meant the faith of being heard and of receiving an answer, many regenerate ones may many times judge themselves exempted from this duty, as not daring confidently to say they believe to be heard. And some unregenerate may believe, as did the nine lepers (Luke 17:12, 17). If by faith be meant a true and saving faith, it will as well follow that unregenerate persons may not hear the word preached or read, because that should also be done with faith. But if by faith here be meant a grounded assurance of their being about a lawful and commanded duty when praying, as the word seems to be taken (Rom 14:23), then unregenerate persons may pray thus in faith. But besides faith, we grant there are many other things required to the right and acceptable manner of performing this and other duties. Yet we say that the lack of such qualifications as are requisite to the acceptable manner of doing duties will not loose us from the obligation to the substance of the duty. We are to eat and drink to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). But hence it will not follow that we are not to eat at all, but when in case to do it to the glory of God. We

are both commanded to eat and to eat to the glory of God, and the disobedience given to the law, given in order to the manner, will not exempt from obedience to the law as to the substance of the command.

*Objection 4:* David prays that their prayers may become sin (Ps. 109:7).

*Answer:* True, yet hereby he supposes that such might and would pray. Otherwise he needed not to imprecate this to them, and that their prayer might become sin. And indeed as to all the enemies of Christ (of whom these and the like passages are principally to be understood), their prayers will become sin to them—that is, all their prayers will not avail them for obtaining mercy, but will rather aggravate their guilt. But hence we cannot infer that unregenerate persons are exempted from the duty of prayer altogether.

## CHAPTER 8

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### *The Necessity and Usefulness of Family Prayer Manifested*

*T*here are (as is known) various kinds of species of prayer, or there be diverse ways how this duty may and should be performed—as public prayers in the church or private and solitary prayers performed by each alone in their retirements and closets. And these are either more solemn, whether ordinary or extraordinary and occasional; or ejaculatory,<sup>1</sup> whether mental or vocal. Of all which little or no doubt is made either of the lawfulness or necessity of them, howbeit they be but too much neglected by one and other. But as to family prayer, that is, prayer performed by a family, as such, to God, as it is too, too much neglected and laid aside, so many are ready to plead the non-necessity thereof. They look on it as a piece of unnecessary, if not unrequired, devotion. Or they at least satisfy themselves with this: that, seeing it is not expressly required, they may safely omit it, and it may be looked on as a thing indifferent and so be performed or not performed, as they think good. In order therefore to the letting forward of this piece of religion, we will show that the same is a duty required in the law of God. And consequently, it is necessary

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1. *Ejaculatory*: spontaneous.

by reason of the command and cannot be ordinarily omitted without sin. And next we will mention something of its usefulness or of the profit that is to be had thereby and of the hurt and damage that attends the neglect thereof.

As to the first of these, many things might be mentioned to clear up the duty and to make it manifest to be commanded of the Lord. We will name a few, as:

1. All societies as such should be societies for God, intending His glory and honor and laying out themselves for celebrating His praises, that He may be exalted in the world and His name made great. Families, as such, are societies. And therefore they should, as families, advance the glory of God by prayer and praises. That God is to be worshipped by many together by companies of men and women and by societies, none will deny, seeing churches are societies, and seeing all societies, fixed or occasional, should be godly and holy societies, so that God may be glorified in and by them. None can with any show of reason say that this is not required of families, the first and most stated and fixed societies that are. God, having made man a sociable creature, requires service of him and honor of him, as such. And man in that capacity is bound to glorify his creator and to worship Him and serve Him in all companies and societies he comes into. And much more must he do this in family society, which is not an uncertain or occasional society, but fixed and stated. And therein he has more fit occasion and opportunity, and that more frequently, even daily to celebrate the praises of God and to keep fellowship and communion with Him by prayer and supplication.

2. If members of distinct families occasionally meeting together and acting by a principle of godliness have thought it their duty to celebrate the praises of God and to acknowledge their dependence on Him by prayer, as occasion required (as we see by their practice they did [Matt. 18:28; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:31; 12:12; 20:36; James 5:15–16]), then certainly the members of one and the same family, having always more ready occasions to meet together and having the same moving causes or occasions calling for prayer and the same obligations to celebrate God's praises and to acknowledge their dependence on God alone for all they need, should much more think it their duty and concern to mind this work—whether it be on a more public or on a more private occasion, especially seeing they can get it done with more convenience and less distraction.
3. If we consider what relation families have to God, we will see and cannot but read their engagement to this duty. The Lord is supreme Lord, author, and instituter of families, or of family societies. He is their preserver, nourisher, and protector, for all are of Him (Rom. 11:36). And all blessings are from Him (James 1:17). He is the Father of all (Eph. 4:6). And, if so, does not reason and nature require that this should be acknowledged by families as such by praise and thanksgiving, and that they should live as professing their owning of Him for their Lord, their supreme governor, their preserver, yea, and their Father by worshipping Him and praying to Him (Mal. 4:6)?
4. Seeing God has made all things for His own glory and disposes of all things for the same, and seeing He has appointed families, family societies, and relations so

that He may be glorified thereby, and seeing flocks of birds and beasts do preach forth the glory of God's wisdom and goodness, in their kind—then why should not flocks of men, who are rational creatures, created to gather in the rent from all the world and to sing and set forth the praises of the Lord in a more articulate and rational manner, praise the Lord after their kind? And why should not families as little flocks more constantly associated together, having their hearts and affections more united and all things more on than others, set up the worship of God that they may sing His praises together and learn of the birds, which sing more cheerfully when together than when scattered asunder.

5. The dim light of nature taught heathens to think on this duty. Wherefore, they in their idolatrous and superstitious manner had their household gods, their lares and penates,<sup>2</sup> and their household services and sacrifices, as knowing that as God was to preserve and do good to families, and as families stood in need of favor and blessings from God, so should they as families knit together in that relation pay Him due homage and openly acknowledge their subjection to and dependence on Him. And will the light of nature teach the blind heathens this, and will they in their superstitious way follow it, and will Christians who have the light of the Word and thereby all their duty laid out before them in plain and distinct terms and enforced with more pungent and perspicuous reasons, be strangers to this duty? How will heathens rise up in judgment and

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2. *Lares and penates*: Roman mythological household deities believed to protect the household and ensure that the family did not die.

condemn such ungodly families who carry toward God as if He were not the God of their family, nor bestowed favors on it, nor did not concern Himself with what was done in families, and as if their families could subsist without Him and do not recognize His sovereignty, His power, His goodness, and dominion over them, do perform no homage or token of subjection to Him, nor do pay Him service as their King and Lord?

6. The very light and law of nature teaches that everyone is obliged in his station and relation in the world, according to his power, to set forth the glory of God, to celebrate His name and attributes, to proclaim Him to be God over all the earth and to be their God, even as standing in such a relation and in such a station in the world. The light of nature taught the king of Nineveh to put his family and whole city to that duty which the present dispensation, the sad and terrible threatening of ruin, did call for—that is, to fasting and prayer and to cry mightily to God if possibly they might be spared. And will not the same light, now more clearly shining forth in the Scriptures, teach fathers and masters of families to lay out themselves in their stations and capacities for advancing God's glory, according to the power that they have, and so to call all under them or within the family together to cry to the Lord with one mouth, heart, and voice, both at ordinary and at extraordinary seasons, and to bless Him for mercies and favors received, and so to set up family-prayers and family-praises (see Mal. 1:6)?
7. Does not Christianity teach that masters of families should devote their families to God, consecrate them for His service, go before them for this end in a good

example, and call them together for concurring in the more solemn service of God, so that all of them together might offer themselves to God and to His service, and for this end seek His counsel and advice, His blessing and acceptance, His helping and leading hand, so that they may serve Him acceptably in all holiness and fear and walk before Him in His fear and love? What else is imported by the Lord's appointing His people under the law to dedicate their houses (Deut. 20:5), according to which we have David's prayer at the dedication of his house (Ps. 30, title)?

8. The neglect of this duty of family worship is inconsistent with that love to God and to His glory which is called for from the hands of one and other. How can parents or masters of families evidence that they love the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength, when they do not lay forth themselves in their domestic capacity to bring all under them with them that they may exalt the Lord together? We find the psalmist zealously inviting all, even inanimate creatures, to concur with him in setting forth the praises of God, as Psalm 69:34; 106:1, 48; 111:1; 112:1; 113:1, 9; 115:18; 116:19; 117:2; 135:1; 140:1, 10; 147:20; 148:2-4; and elsewhere—thereby manifesting the great and vehement desire he had to have the name of the Lord made great. And therefore, seeing how excellent the Lord was and how little all that he could do would signify to the exalting of Him who was above all praises, he sought help of angels and men, yea, and of birds and beasts, of sea and dry land—of all creatures rational and irrational, animate and inanimate. But now, where is their zeal for the Lord of hosts and their

ardent affection for Him and strong desire to have Him set on high, who will not call their own children and their own family to help them or to concur with them in celebrating the virtues and praises of God? How ashamed must such be of their neglect when they read such apostrophes, such invitations and calls to all creatures to concur in this work?

9. We find the Lord careful by His instructions and commands to have families kept in a godly order and walk, each in reference to other, in their mutual relations and duties. Therefore are the duties of the husband in reference to his wife; and of the wife in reference to her husband; the duties of the parents in reference to their children; and of children again in reference to their parents; the duties of masters in reference to their servants; and of servants again in reference to their masters—all so particularly and so frequently inculcated, as we see in Paul's epistles, besides the special command, Deuteronomy 6:6–7. Now what should all this import, but that the Lord would have families as temples for Him to dwell in or as churches fit for glorifying of Him, so that He might delight to dwell among them. And should not all His temples or churches be houses of praises and prayers to Him? And further, do not all these family and mutual duties call for divine help and grace for the right discharge of them? And should not family prayer be made use of for this end? Is not family prayer a suitable means to get grace for performance of family duties? And seeing the duties lie on all the members of the family in order to one another, reason requires that all should concur in one body for lifting up a prayer for grace and assistance, so

that each may be helped to perform his duty to other, they to others, and others to God—so that God may be glorified by all.

10. In the primitive time of the world until the days of Enos (Gen. 4), all the public and solemn worship that God received was in families. And after that, men began in a more solemn and public way to call on the name of the Lord, as is there said. We have no ground to think that this primitive domestic worship was quite laid aside by the holy patriarchs, for we find several plain vestiges thereof remaining, as in Enoch's family—for of him it is said, "[He] walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:22). And this walking with God, as matter of a family worship, cannot well consist with the neglect of family worship, which is a special point of walking and of keeping communion with God. So of Noah it is said that he was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God (Gen. 6:9). And this when all the rest of the world had corrupted their ways, and the imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually (v. 5). Will we then suppose that Noah's family was as void of worship as all the rest of the families of the world? How is this consistent with his being a just man and a perfect man, and, as Peter says, a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5)? Of Abraham, we hear that he was the friend of God and so no doubt kept family familiarity with him. And when he went with his son Isaac toward the mount pointed forth to him by the Lord, he told his servants that he and the lad would go and worship (Gen. 22:5)—intimating that his worshipping with

his family or with part of them was no strange thing to him. Otherwise his servants should not well have understood what he meant. So the Lord said of him, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they will keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, etc." (Gen. 18:19)—pointing forth what a godly master of a family he was and would be. And will we think that all this instruction and injunction would be without prayer? Was not this a part of the way of the Lord wherein they were to be instructed how to pray, so that they may be enabled with grace to do justice and judgment? And would he not in this go before them himself and give them good example and instruct them by his own practice? We read also of his building an altar and calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8)—and that where he pitched his tent or where his habitation or family was, so likewise when he removed from Bethel toward Hebron and pitched his tent there (Gen 13:18). Thus also did Isaac (Gen. 26:25) and Jacob (Gen. 33:20; 35:1). And it is observable (which may fully clear the import of Abraham and Isaac building altars) that, when God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God" (Gen. 35:1), Jacob immediately labored to prepare his whole family for the worship of God, saying "unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God" (v. 2–3). Whence we see that these altars which these patriarchs built were not for themselves alone, but for them and their families. And therefore Jacob's family

must be sanctified and prepared for the worship of God by putting away the strange gods and changing of their garments.

11. So under the law, families were solemnly to worship God. Their eating of the Passover at the beginning within their doors was a solemn piece of worship. And when afterward they were to go up to Jerusalem to that feast, yet their families did eat it apart. And parents were enjoined to instruct their families (Deut. 4:10; 6:7–8; 11:18–19) and to feast with their families before the Lord in the place which He was to choose for them (Deut. 12:18–19). And, moreover, the words of the fourth commandment are clear for families sanctifying the Sabbath as families, within their posts—for all the members thereof are distinctly and particularly mentioned, and the very stranger that dwells there for the time is not omitted. And the charge is in a special manner laid on the master of the family in order to all the rest, so that all of them as in the family and as related to the father of the family, either as their father, or master, etc., and he with them, are to sanctify that day as a family. Otherwise if this had not been required, why should the master of the family have been spoken to, and that in reference to all the particular members of the family? If the Lord had only said, “Remember thou to sanctify the Sabbath day,” as in the other commands, this would have reached all persons, young and old, in superior and inferior, as we see other commands do. Therefore, when here particular mention is made of all the members of a family, something else must be imported, even the observation of this commandment by a family as a

family—that is, the sanctifying of the day of the Lord by family worship as well as by public and solitary worship. And surely, something else is required in this command of a master of a family, in order to his family and to the members thereof, than in order to the members of another family. And what can this be, but their conjunct worship of God as such a family, in order to the sanctifying of that day?

12. All reasons require that a manifest difference ought to be put between the carriage of Christian families and the carriage of the families of Muslims and pagans, which commonly know nothing of this worship, as also between the families of the godly and the families of the profane and wicked. Therefore, all Christian families and particularly godly families should evidence their being devoted to God and taking pleasure in His worship and delighting in drawing near to Him and in calling on His name.
13. It is observable that the apostle Paul, writing to the Colossians (ch. 3–4), after he had exhorted them to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord (3:16)—which most commodiously can be performed by families as such—and after he had further exhorted them (v. 17) that whatever they did in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him—which also can be performed publicly by families together—it is then he comes in the following verses and in the beginning of the next chapter to press on them the mutual duties which all of them as members

of a family owe to each other. This was to teach us that in order of the right performance of the previously Christian duties, each in their family relations must mind the special duties required of them in reference to other. And whereby also he signifies that the duties of mutual instruction of singing and of thanksgiving were to be performed by them, particularly in families. And, moreover, after mentioning of duties of all the family relations, he closes that purpose: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us" (4:2-3). Thereby he is clearly manifesting that as he would have had the previously mentioned duties (3:16-17) performed by families as such, and not only by each particular person in their particular station, so in order to right performance of all the mutual duties in their family relations, he presses them to prayer and to continuing and watching in the same. And this he presses on all the previously mentioned family members: husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants. And thus he manifestly presses prayer on them as a family. So the same apostle, writing to the Ephesians, after he had pressed on them the duties required in their family relations, he in closing urges them to mind the duty of prayer, saying, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (6:18). This must include family prayer, which is one way and manner of praying. And he who must pray always at all times and seasons must not neglect family seasons and times, this being especially accommodated to the performance of family duties and a special means and help thereunto—as also to family wrestling against the wiles of the devil, who knows how

to carry on his wicked designs by family disorders, family scandal, and the like.

14. So we find family duties urged in order to the carrying on of prayer, which must be family prayer. Peter says, “Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them [i.e., with their wives] according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). The neglect of mutual duties between man and wife hinders their prayers as man and wife. And this cannot be of their separate prayers or solitary prayers only, but chiefly of their family prayers. So Paul says, “Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, etc.” (1 Cor. 7:5). Hereby he orders their mutual duties as man and wife in order to extraordinary duties of fasting and prayer, which must be together as man and wife in their family relation. And this would by parity hold good, in reference to ordinary family prayer.
15. It is recorded that godly masters of families have been careful of their families to keep them fixed to God in worship. Of Joshua it is said, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15). He engages not only for himself but for his whole household also in order to the public serving of God, and that in opposition to those who would serve other gods, which was also done and might in time coming be done by families as such, as well as by singular persons. Or by more numerous and public assemblies, as we see Gideon’s father had an altar for Baal (Judg. 6:25). And though the men of the city did also

worship that idol and were careful of keeping of it (v. 28–30), yet it is particularly called the altar which Gideon’s father had. And when Gideon broke it down, it is said, “He feared his father’s household, and the men of the city” (v. 27). Whereby we see that his father and his father’s household were particularly engaged in this idolatrous worship. So we see what care David resolved to take in ordering of his family (1 Sam. 6; Ps. 101). After he had blessed the whole congregation (v. 18), it is said of him that he returned to bless his own house (v. 20). So in the New Testament, we read of Cornelius, who feared God with all his house and prayed always (Acts 10:2), which must include praying with his house. And it is likely that Daniel prayed with his family (Dan. 6:10), both in regard that such was more easy to be observed by his adversaries than his closet praying would have been, and in regard that hereby his testimony against that sinful decree was the more public, which zeal for God had now prompted him to. See Job’s practice (Job 1:5).

16. It is prophesied and promised as a special blessing in the day of the Lord’s returning to His people the Jews with mercy and kindness, that a spirit of grace and supplication will be poured forth on families as such. This is so that each family or families (as it is in the original) should mourn apart (Zech. 12:10, 12–13). This therefore must be a special duty.
17. So wrath is threatened against families that neglect this duty (Jer. 10:25). “Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name” (Ps. 79:6). And though families here may signify tribes or nations

made up of so many households and families, yet the grounds will be good by consequence—for if larger families should be thus punished for neglect of this duty, why should lesser families think to escape when guilty of the same crime? And how can this be charged on a nation, if the particular families be not to be charged therewith?

18. We find whole families devoted solemnly to Christ by baptism (Acts 10:48; 11:14; 16:13, 31–33; 18:8; 2 Cor. 1:16). And will we suppose that these served God no way thereafter as families and did not walk as families devoted to the fear and service of God? We read also of churches in families (Rom. 16:5; 2 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2). Yea, every Christian family should be a little Christian church in order to the solemn worship of God.
19. Christian communion does in a special manner call for this at the hands of Christians living so commodiously together and having so many advantages, occasions, helps, and encouragements to go about and keep up this work—as such have who are members of one family. If Christians occasionally meeting together should be ready to worship the Lord, according to the present exigent, whether by prayer or praises, much more should families or such who are statedly and fixedly constituent members of one economical body be ready and willing in a more stated and fixed manner to celebrate the praises of God, especially seeing they may more readily partake of the plagues which others of the company procure by their sins, as we see (Gen. 12:17; 20:7, 17–18; Josh. 7:24–25; 1 Sam. 21:22–23; 1 Kings 13:10–11; 2 Chron. 21:14).

20. It cannot be denied but families as such are capable of mercies and favors at the hand of God—as also of judgments and plagues because of sin. Wherefore, it is most certain that as favors bestowed on private persons call for a suitable acknowledgement thereof at their hands (Col. 3:16; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17, 13), and as the like favors bestowed on nations or countrysides or on cities and churches call for thanksgiving at their hands in the same capacities wherein they receive these good things—to the like bestowed on families call for a suitable acknowledgement in their capacities and a return of thanks at their hands, as families. And on the other hand, as judgments threatened, imminent, impending, or executed on kingdoms or churches or cities, yea, or on single persons call for mourning and humiliations at their hands in these respective capacities, so when families are met with the like dispensations, they in that capacity are called to a suitable deportment, as nature and religion will reach. So also, because they have need of many favors and blessings out of the hands of God, both temporal and spiritual, nature and religion will say that they as families should ask these of God through Jesus Christ. For all things are sanctified by prayer (1 Tim. 4:5).
21. The general commands of praying everywhere (1 Tim. 2:8) and without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:15, 17–18) and the like (Eph. 6:18; Col. 3:16–17; 4:2) do manifestly enforce this, for here are singular advantages, occasions, and opportunities.
22. The neglect of this is a rejecting of the mercy, love, and kindness of God offered them in their access to God as a family.

23. Families must seek God's blessing to and give thanks for their meat (1 Tim. 4:3–5). If thanks for their meat, then therefore, for other favors also.
24. Masters of families must teach their families. Therefore, they must pray with them.

These reasons may suffice to prove that family prayer is a duty. And as to the advantage thereof, we will content ourselves with naming a few by which also we may understand the hurt and disadvantages that families lie open to who neglect—all which will also enforce the duty.

1. What an honorable and advantageous thing is it to have God shining in love on a family and dwelling in it as His temple and habitation, and when families are as churches and sanctuaries to the Lord by offering up to Him daily the sacrifices of praise and the calves of the lips. When the apostle (2 Cor. 6:14) is pressing the Corinthians not to be unequally yoked—that is, with infidels—he uses these arguments in the following verses, “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people, etc.” (vv. 14–16). Whereby we see that when families are consisting of Christians, and they are demeaning<sup>3</sup> themselves

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3. *Demeaning*: conducting.

as becomes Christians, they are the temple of God wherein dwells righteousness and light and Christ. God dwells in them and walks in them and becomes their God when they carry as His people. And when they touch no unclean thing, He becomes a father to them, and they, His sons and daughters.

2. When families are thus carrying as Christian families, devoting themselves to God and worshipping Him, they are fair to receive rich blessings from God and lie open to His influences of love and mercy. When Jacob purged his family and erected an altar to the Lord at Luz or Bethel (Gen. 35), God appeared to him and blessed him and gave him the name Israel and renewed the promises made to Abraham and to Isaac (vv. 10–12).
3. God who hears prayers will hear family prayers and give a return in mercy when He is sought and served in due manner. He is called the hearer of prayers indefinitely, without restriction to individual persons or to churches. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears open unto their cry” (Ps. 54:15). So His eyes are on righteous families, and His ears open to their cry, as the opposition in the next verse will demonstrate—for there, He says, “The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” Now this cutting off their remembrance is a stroke against their families and posterity. When families are wicked, God’s face is against them to destroy them. But when families are righteous, the Lord’s eyes are on them to bless them, to preserve their memorial and remembrance, and to multiply them. Besides that righteous families may meet with trouble and so, when

they cry, “[The] LORD heareth, and delivered them out of all their troubles” (v. 17). O! What a rich and noble advantage is this that they have God’s ear! We see what a rich blessing came on Cornelius’s family, which was a family of prayer. Their prayer was heard and fully answered (Acts 10:4–5, etc.). How blessed must that family be that has God so near to them in all that they need, dwelling in the midst of them, hearkening to their supplications, taking all their petitions out of their hands. When a family becomes the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their offspring with them, as it is Isaiah 65:23, then it comes to pass as it is in the following verse: “That before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” And who can imagine what the worth of this advantage is?

4. As families receive outward favors from the hand of God as well as particular persons, so when these come to them by the means of prayer, how sweet and singular do these favors become? How do they smell of heaven and of love of free grace? When families are fearing the Lord and hoping in His mercy and evidencing the same in their instant prayer to Him, then His keeping them alive in famine and becoming their help and their shield—as it is in Psalm 33:18–19—has a peculiar sweetness and relish of fatherly care and protection. It is said, “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing” (Ps. 34:7–10). And as

this holds good of particular saints, so also of families—for the angel of the Lord encamps about families that fear Him, as we see He did encamp about Jacob's family so that their neighbors did not pursue after them when Simeon and Levi had committed that bloody act on the Shechemites (Gen. 35:5). When families fear the Lord and draw near Him in fear, they need not fear want, for they that seek the Lord, be they nations, cities, churches, families, or persons, will not want any good thing. And when praying families receive all their good thus, what a peculiar heavenly smell must they have. When they flow from free grace through a promise after prayer and dependence on Him by prayer, they cannot be common favors, but special tokens of love, care, kindness, and faithfulness.

5. Prayer is the means to obtain the sanctified blessing to family mercies. The family must have food and raiment and other things of that nature necessary for its sustentation and preservation. Now all these things are sanctified by prayer: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4–5).
6. There may be in the family some young or old, one or other or more who have need of the pouring out of the Spirit for their conviction and conversion, who stand in need of clean water to be poured on them and of the Spirit to sanctify and purge them. There may be one or other carried away with corruption and under the power thereof, under the power of some lust. And much sin may be lying on the family. Now, in order to the obtaining of the Spirit of God, in order to

the delivery from these evils, prayer is requisite—for as to all these things promised in the new covenant, the Lord will be inquired of by the house of Israel (Ezek. 8:6, 47), and consequently by every family and the house of Israel. Job was careful to sanctify his family and to offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all, for he said, “It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.” And this was Job’s daily work (Job 1:5).

7. It is pleasant and comely to see families walking in the fear of God, each minding their duty to other in a Christian manner and all walking in their places and stations in an edifying and holy way. Husbands and wives carrying to other as is fitting; masters and servants minding their mutual duties to one another; and parents and children walking each in their station in the fear of God. While as, when all things are out of course, mutual duties laid aside, the fear of God cast off, and all things turned upside down, yea, or when any one person in the family is out of order, what a discord is caused, where a sweet harmony ought to be! And how does the family become worse than a prison! Now, by continuing in prayer is this great good had, for it is a means to keep all the respective members of the family in their due places and to keep them at their several respective duties, as we cleared above from Colossians 3 and 4.
8. What a comely, pleasant, and desirable sight is it to a spiritual soul to see a family assembling together and daily devoting themselves to God, to be for Him all the day, to be led by His counsel, to be guided by His Spirit in all Christian obedience, to be devoted to His

fear and service as wholly for Him and His glory in the world, and subordinating all things that concern them to Him and His interest. And again, returning at evening, giving due thanks to the Lord for favors received and consecrating the gain of all to Him. Now all this is done by prayer, rightly gone about in the family. There, all with one voice offer up themselves and present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, even their reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). And all again with one voice offer Him the calves of their lips and return Him thanks for His goodness and mercy. How desirable a thing is this to see families like temples wherein was daily the morning and evening sacrifice offered up on the altar.

9. When any visitation, ordinary or extraordinary, is on the family, any rod on any member thereof, any cross or sad dispensation on the whole or on any part, young or old, what a great advantage have such families as have been and are making conscience exercise of this duty? For they have no ground to look on that plague as a fruit of that wrath which God pours forth on the families that call not on His name, in regard that they have been in some measure aiming and minting at the duty. They have access to God through Jesus Christ for seeking of His blessing to that dispensation and the sanctified improvement thereof. Every creature of God (and crosses may be reckoned among His creatures) is sanctified by prayer.
10. This moreover is a great advantage that they are not in such hazard (ordinarily) of Satan's wiles, who daily watches opportunity to ensnare and has his baits and temptations shaped for families as well as for private

persons. And families must wrestle against these principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against wicked spirits, as well as others. And therefore they must be armed with the whole armor of God. And they must pray always with all prayer and supplication (Eph. 6:11–12, 18). Now such families as are thus praying always with all prayer and supplication and are delivering themselves over to the protection of God so that they may be kept from the snares of that fowler have a great advantage of others who, laying aside this duty, lie open to the arrows of that wicked one. How soon can Satan sow discord in a family, whether between man and wife, or between master and servant, or between parents and children, to the disturbance of the whole! And what peace can such families have when it is so with them and that as the fruit of their neglect of this duty? Or what ground of hope can any family have of being protected herefrom which neglects this means of safety?

11. Where families are making conference of this duty, they are all in a better case to serve God acceptably in the more public assemblies of His people than otherwise. When churches are made up of churches, and every family is a small church, and when God is worshipped in those smaller churches carefully and religiously, then the public worship in the assemblies of the saints must be carried on with greater beauty, unanimity, cheerfulness, and heavenly concord. But on the contrary, where this is neglected, and families assemble together without this previous preparation, how little spiritual harmony can there be expected? When hearts are out of tune, the sound must be jarring.

12. Families have hereby their communion kept with God and thus are kept in the suburbs of heaven. Hereby they tell Him all their wants and make known to Him all their desires, cast all their care and burdens on Him, consult Him in all difficult cases, and get their resolutions from Him. Thus they get help, reliance, strength, support, light, and what their case calls for. O! What a satisfying, pleasant, and delectable life must this be!

By these things we may see what an advantageous duty this is, and how much good it is to be expected thereby, and how hurtful the neglect of it must needs be, whereby all such as are concerned should consider the encouragements they have hereby to this duty, which should be as so many arguments.

But it will be inquired, who in the family should go before in this duty of family prayer?

*Answer.* Doubtless, the duty lies on the master of the family, for he is the head of the wife and a head to his children and servants and so is head to the whole family. The charge of the whole family lies mainly on him. And in the fourth command, he is spoken to as having charge of and authority over the whole family.

But what in case the head of the family has not the gift of prayer, and so is not in case to carry on the work with any tolerable decorum, as a part of the worship of God?

*Answer.* Yet the duty lying chiefly on him, he is to pray and all the rest also in private for him that the Lord may be pleased to pour on him His Spirit, enabling him for the duty in some measure. And if there were a willing mind and due means used with dependence in singleness on God, there is ground of hope that in due time his gift may grow and he be

made more able to carry on the work handsomely. Yet if the wife be more fit for the work, she may help forward the work. Nay, before the work be neglected, it were better that a servant being thereunto fitted of the Lord should discharge the work. Yet so, as the head of the family, he should not judge himself exonerated and so lay aside all endeavors after abilities to discharge his duty. Yea, a stranger may at some occasions do it.

When is the fittest season for this?

*Answer.* Nature seems to have determined morning and evening, at least, for this work—the morning, before the family be engaged in their daily work, that thanking the Lord for the mercies of that morning they may seek His favor and blessing for the whole day; and the evening, that, having returned thanks for the mercies of the day, they may roll themselves over to God’s protection for the night. But as to the particular time or season in the morning or evening or at midday, each family can best judge of their own circumstances and so determine the season wherein they will best be in case to discharge the duty and have fewest distractions or difficulties to meet with, or when the family can be best assembled and attend the work without distraction. There being here no positive determination made by the Lord, Christian prudence is to direct so as the duty may be best performed and thereby God most glorified and all concerned most edified.

But some will say their necessary and sore work will not allow them so much time as is requisite to spend in family duty.

*Answer.* If the work be necessary and sore, they have the more need of God’s help and blessing, knowing that “except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.” And it is in vain for them to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—“for so he giveth his beloved sleep”

(Ps. 127:1–2). God’s blessing can reach far and make little do much. And when a family is careful to give God His due honor and homage and to leave all their concerns to Him, He will think Himself concerned to care for them, according as He sees fit. I grant withal that when something occurs in providence that could not be foreseen or prevented which will make that time, which usually was spent in that work, less commodious for the same, that the Lord allows us not to be superstitiously bound to any set hours, but to use our Christian liberty, as long as His work be not wholly deferred nor His service postponed to our private concerns.

What if there be some members of the family dissolute and disorderly that will but mock, instead of concurring cheerfully in the duty?

*Answer.* If that disorderly person be under authority as a servant or son, they should be kept by authority in order. And a servant that will mock should not dwell in the family. The master of the family should use his authority to keep his house undefiled, after David’s example (Ps. 101). And a son should be rebuked. And if he continue rebellious and cannot be restrained from his wickedness by all that the parents can do, he should be delivered into the magistrate’s hand according to the law (Deut. 21:18–21). The duty should not because of this be neglected, it being a means to rectify these evils and to bring the blessing of God, even in spiritual things, on the family. If either the husband or the wife be the guilty person here, I grant the difficulty is even greater. But yet there are means appointed of the Lord to rectify this. If after all private means employed are in vain, church discipline be duly executed on the guilty person, much evil might be remedied in disorderly families.

But is it not enough that every member of the family seek God in secret?

*Answer.* No, for, as we have cleared above, this is a duty required of families as such. Every family apart as well as every person apart should call on the Lord and mourn before Him. And as this secret prayer ought not to prejudge the public worship of God in churches, so neither ought it to shut out this family worship. Nay, where prayer in private is made conscience of by every member of the family, as they are in greater fitness for the performance of this family duty, so there will be a greater real readiness to go about it, as the wise man says, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination” (Prov. 28:9)—that is, he who neglects the public worship will find his private less acceptable. So he who neglects this more public worship of God in the family will find less acceptance in his more private and solitary devotions. His secret prayers will be an abomination to the Lord if he despise family worship and think it needless or withdraw his presence therefrom under pretext of serving God in private.

But (it will be said) how can so much time be had from our ordinary and necessary employments in our calling, as is requisite both for our private prayers and for this family duty?

*Answer.* Where there is an unwilling heart to or a heart wearying of the service of God, everything will prove a lion in the way and a strong impediment and objection. But a willing and ready mind will easily find out a satisfying answer to all. The soul being more precious than the body, and our care of God’s honor being preferable to our care of our own and our family’s outward welfare—whatever be neglected, God and our own souls should not be forgotten. But the Lord desires not that we should wholly neglect families, having said, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house [or kindred], he hath denied the faith, and is

worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Only He wills us to do all with a due subordination and wills us to use spiritual wisdom in order to the redeeming of the time and to ordering of all our affairs so as there be no interfering of the one duty with the other, but both may be duly and rightly performed to the glory of God and to our own spiritual advantage. The righteous man will guide his affairs with discretion (Ps. 112:5). As others know how to manage their time in a market day to the best advantage, so should the godly man know how to manage his time and opportunity best in this spiritual trade to most spiritual advantage (Eph. 5:15–16; Col. 4:5).

## CHAPTER 9

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### *Whence Comes So Much Averseness to Prayer*

*H*aving thus spoken something of the duty of prayer, it will not be amiss that the practice of this duty be a little pressed, which brings us to the third thing considerable in the first part of the text, namely, that howbeit prayer be an unquestionable duty, yet people are averse therefrom and therefore need so many motives, increments, and encouragements to set them onto the duty. From this we have ground, first, to inquire after the causes of this unwillingness to and aversion of heart from the performance of this duty; and, secondly, to mention some of these motives that may serve to animate, encourage, and set us on the cheerful and ready going about of the same.

As to the first, in reference to such as are strangers to God, we need not much inquire after the causes of their unwillingness to this work, seeing the proper, kindly, and natural language of their heart is that which Job mentioned: "They say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (21:14–15). They hate God and all His ways, and therefore they have no love to be communing with Him, no delight to be speaking to Him, nor desire to be keeping up correspondence with Him.

They have no knowledge of God nor of themselves—want of understanding and not seeking after God go together (Rom. 3:11). They are set on wicked courses against God and His people. They eat up God's people as they eat bread and call not on the Lord (Ps. 14:4). They are like Laodicea, ignorant of their own blindness, nakedness, and poverty. And therefore they seek not after eye salve, clothing, or tried gold. Or if at any time they go about the duty, fear or a natural conscience may set them on and not love to God, or self-love and vanity, that they may have a name among professors—as we see in the Pharisees, who not only prayed but made long prayers, and yet all was but to be seen of men. So that it is little wonder to find such averse from prayer.

But it may seem more strange that God's own children should at any time need spurs to this duty, seeing not only they are made partakers of the divine nature, but have also received the Spirit of Christ whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." A spirit of prayer is poured out on them, and the new nature which they had gotten inclines them Godward and causes them delight in converse with God. Whence then comes it that sometimes they need incitements and motives to this duty? I answer: We may as to this dismal effect take notice of three general causes bringing it about:

First, there is the supreme overruling hand of God considerable in this matter, which is always holy, pure, and just. For He, for holy and wise ends, whether for instruction or correction, may and does withdraw or withhold His Spirit, which He is pleased to bestow freely and therefore is called a free spirit (Ps. 51:12). And when the influences of heaven are withheld and the springs and fountains of the depths are closed up or stopped, the earth must be dry and barren. So when the Lord withholds or withdraws the influence of His grace whereby life, spirit, and activity is conveyed into the

spiritually principled soul, the principle of life decays. The soul's strength and activity wears away, and the Christian life becomes sick and weak, and the man is like one fainting and swooning, unable to speak or do anything. And thus the Lord may in His holy providence order matters, either as provoked thereunto by their sinful miscarriages, as we see in David when he committed that heinous transgression; or by their not improving diligently and carefully the sweet seasons of grace, but turning negligent in not trading with the talent that God out of His free grace has bestowed; or as minding to manifest His sovereignty and the freedom of His grace—to the end they may be instructed to know that all is of free grace and undeserved, and therefore they are called to be humble and to carry as tenants at will and to walk dependently, submissively, thankfully, and circumspectly, with a care to improve all the advantages and opportunities of grace and all the warm and quickening breathings of the Spirit.

Second, the hand of Satan is herein to be observed also. For he is a restless, malicious enemy and goes about daily as a roaring lion, seeking to devour and swallow up the children of God. And when he cannot get that done, he is using all diligence to raise all the forces of opposition against them he can, so that at least he may retard their progress or make them march slowly and heartlessly. He raises clouds and darkness in their minds and so jumbles and perplexes them so that they know not what to do. He makes their chariots move slowly and thereby discourages them and causes them to faint in the way. And thus, piece and piece, he increases their prejudice at the duty and at length prevails, through the holy and righteous permission of God, by his entanglements, surmises, temptations, and difficulties cast into the way, to cause them either to neglect the duty altogether or to set about it heartlessly and faintingly, so that they soon weary and at length are easily

brought to lay it aside as an uneasy burden under which they can no longer stand. He can raise prejudices in their minds against the duty on many accounts and take occasions from every occurrence to fortify and confirm them in these prejudices and thereby alienate their hearts more and more from the careful and conscionable discharge of the duty. He can blow at the coal of their corruptions and make that kindle into a flame whereby they will be hurried into many distempers and utterly unhinged and indisposed for the work, and at length made unwilling to go about it.

Third, the remnant of corruption that is yet in the best as tinder wherein Satan can cast sparks of fire to kindle a new flame is considerable here as a cause hereof. And this being a culpable cause in us, both provoking the Lord to withdraw His influences and to give up to this evil in His righteous judgment, and opening the door of advantage to Satan or proving fit matter for him to work on or play his wicked game by, is therefore most particularly to be taken notice of by us. I will therefore name some few of these evils which do sinfully occasion and bring on this averseness to the duty of prayer.

1. When some lust or other has got advantage and has not been carefully withstood and resisted but too much countenanced and yielded to, then, as the heart is thereby deteriorated and made more unfit for any Christian work, so in particular the man is out of all frame for a holy and humble approaching to God, who is a holy God and will be sanctified of all them that draw near Him. When the heart is under the power of any lust and is carried away therewith, the man is a captive, held in fetters, and cannot go with freedom and liberty to God, as he was wont to do. And if he keep up the form of the duty, yet it is but superficially

performed without that delectation and complacency of soul that he had formerly. And thus the duty becomes at length a cumbersome burden which on every occasion is readily laid aside. When David was under the power of that corruption and carried headlong with the swing thereof, he was not his own man. Nor can it be thought that the duty of prayer was either so conscionably performed as formerly or with such pleasure and delight.

2. When after the committing of some sin or giving way to some corruption, the conscience is awakened, and sin in its dreadful guilt is presented and held before the man's eyes, then he is afraid to draw near to God. Guilt stares him in the face, and he is thereby driven back and dares not approach the holy and righteous God. Satan can in that case prompt conscience to say it is in vain to seek the Lord, for He has no respect for the sacrifice of fools. He will not hear a sinner. And thus there can be no hearty and cheerful drawing near to God, so long as guilt is thus charged home and the blood of Christ not applied by faith to wash away that iniquity. This duty by faith to wash away that iniquity, this duty becomes terrible; and the man trembles to think of approaching God, lest he be consumed. Thus, the poor man is fettered and bound hand and foot with the cords of his own sin and held off, so that he neither can nor dare draw near, until the Lord be pleased to open the door of grace and show the freedom of the covenant and lead the soul to the fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

3. Deep apprehension of their own unworthiness, vileness, and inward abominableness of heart by nature may cause some, when forgetful of or not minding the rich condescensions of free grace in the new covenant through Jesus Christ, to fear at this duty and think with themselves, "Shall or dare such a vile wretch as I am presume to open my mouth to God?" Dare such a one who sees so much of the villainy and wickedness of his own heart, so much atheism and rebellion against Him, draw near to Him who is of purer eyes than that He can behold evil (Hab. 1:13)? Dare such as are conscious to themselves of so much hellish perverseness as they are think of praying to God, who is a consuming fire and hates all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5; Heb 12:29)? Thus, as Peter in the like case said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8), so they say, "We must not draw nigh to God, for we are sinful men." Though the reason be bad, yet it may too much prevail with weak souls to keep them from this duty.
4. So may deep apprehensions of the greatness, holiness, purity, justice, and glory of God have the same effect, especially when accompanied with the previously mentioned apprehensions of themselves and when aggravated by Satan, preying on a melancholy humor.
5. When they on one occasion or other give way to the neglect of this duty, their praying frame wears off. The Lord is provoked to withdraw His influences, and Satan lays hold on the opportunity to keep them going or running downward. And thus their neglect continues. More difficulties stand up in the way. And thus at length their neglect turns to a listlessness and

want of pleasure or delight in the duty. And from this they come to an aversion and unwillingness to set about it until the Lord sends some alarm to awaken them. When Peter and the other disciples that were with Christ in the garden neglected the duty at the first call of Christ when He bid them watch and pray, they became the longer the more unfit afterward, so that reiterated insituations had no force.

6. When persons do not take care to watch over their heart in prayer and to guard against carnality and formality in performing it, all edge and seriousness wears away. And the duty being but superficially and for a fashion only performed, it soon becomes an unnecessary task. And Satan, improving the opportunity through the holy permission of God, can quickly make that become a heavy burden which is already become an unnecessary task. And when the soul is carried this length to judge the duty of prayer a burden, it can very easily be induced to neglect it or lay it aside for some time, if conscience (which the Lord in His justice and wisdom may cause to be silent) do not in the meantime challenge. And from this the man may very readily be brought to a longer neglect and to an unwillingness to set about it. And the longer the duty be neglected, the heart is still more and more unfit for it and unwilling to go about it.
7. Carnality and worldly mindedness, as it is a real enemy to all religious duties, so in particular it is a great enemy to prayer and a praying frame. As the cares of the world choke the word so that it cannot grow up in the soul (Matt. 13), so it utterly indisposes to watchfulness—and a praying frame and a watching frame

go together (Luke 21:36). And when the heart is overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life (v. 54), the soul cannot watch and pray. Hence we find the apostle joining these together: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

8. Excessive grief and sorrow on any outward account may so unhinge, discompose, and disframe the soul that the man cannot mind the duty of prayer or set about it with heartiness and cheerfulness, as he was wont to do. This is given as one reason why the disciples could not pray in the garden, despite the great urgency of that extraordinary exigent (Matt. 26:43; Luke 22:45). Their eyes were heavy, and they were sleeping for sorrow.
9. When there is not a watching to prayer by taking hold of all opportunities thereunto and of all the free and gracious motions of the Spirit, the Spirit is provoked to withdraw. And when He withdraws, deadness follows. And the soul's activity for the duty is gone, so that either the duty is laid aside, or the man goes heavily under it, as under an insupportable load. Hence we find the apostle joining these two together: "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks.... Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:17–19). This shows us that if we would be kept in a praying frame or in a case to pray always, we must be careful not to quench the Spirit.
10. This evil may also flow from pride and pettiness. When the person has been praying some considerable time for some special mercy or other and finds no return, or no return to satisfaction, then corruption may boil

up in the heart. And Satan may suggest that it is a vain exercise thus to be praying. There is no profit to be had by calling to the Almighty. And the soul may listen hereunto, and, out of a discontented, displeased humor, resolve to trouble itself no more with prayer, but lay it aside altogether, as being weary of the Lord, as it is Isaiah 43:12.

11. When there is an erroneous opinion drunk in concerning prayer, as that we are not obliged to pray except when we are sensible of the Spirit's moving us thereunto and setting us going, and till this come, we think we are exonerated from the duty—in this case, the Lord may be provoked to let them live many months if not years without such free graces as they would have in order to their setting about the duty. And hence may come a long neglect of this duty. And this may be followed with an inward aversion of heart from it. Or if at any time they be moved to the duty, He may suffer their own spirit instead of His to set them on. And this will never beget a spiritual delight in the duty, and the present tickling satisfaction that they may have therein will not be permanent nor oil the wheels of the soul to go on equably at a constant Christian pace.
12. When a spirit of laziness siezes a person, and he gives way thereunto, folding his hands willingly with the sluggard and giving himself over to rest, and he does not rouse and stir up himself to call on the Lord and to take hold of Him, as it is in Isaiah 64:7—then this distemper grows. And as he becomes daily more and more unfit for the duty, so he becomes more unwilling to set about it—for as it is said of the slothful man, that

he “hideth his hand in his bosom; [and] it grieveth him [or he is weary] to bring it again to his mouth,” and it is very burdensome for him to bring his hand out of his bosom to his mouth (Prov. 26:15), so here the man on whom this spiritual sloth seizes finds it a grief and a weariness to do that which otherwise was a most easy thing.

13. When persons leaning more to a gift of prayer than to Jesus for present influences and supplies set about the duty, then the Lord in His righteousness may withdraw the ordinary influences of His Spirit and leave them to wrestle with the duty there alone. And they hereby, not finding the help they have once experienced, may come to perceive that the duty will not go with them as formerly. And this may cause inward grief, though not on account of the provocations that did procure it, and create a prejudice at the duty. And hence corruption working in the soul and Satan improving the occasion, the duty may piece by piece be laid aside, and at length the person may become averse from setting about it, what through inward discontentment, what through pride, because they see the duty will not now go with them, as once it did. And they are now ashamed especially as to prayer before others.

## CHAPTER 10

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### *Some Encouragements to Prayer Mentioned*

Seeing by what is said, it is manifest that even in God's own children there is sometimes an unwillingness to go about this duty of prayer to be remarked. And it is also undeniable that the wicked have no pleasure or delight in it except on corrupt principles and for corrupt ends, as we read of the Pharisees in the gospel and of these mentioned in Isaiah 58:2. And seeing our Lord is encouraging His disciples here to mind the duty of prayer, we may speak a little to the many encouragements the Lord has given in His Word for the conscientious and diligent discharge of this necessary duty and mention a few.

1. It should be no small encouragement to this duty that the Lord would allow us to call on His name, that He suffers the door of His grace to stand open to sinners, considering what we have been and done and what we yet are. We have rebelled against Him and are by nature outlaws and remain rebellious in our hearts. We are heirs of His wrath and curse and are under the sentence of condemnation by nature. And O, what grace and favor is it that He has not passed an irremediable sentence, and that the sentence is not already executed! What more encouragement would

a condemned malefactor require to cry for pardon than to hear it said that so long as the sentence is not executed, the door of the king's mercy stands open, and he will not be offended that condemned malefactors cry to him for pardon and mercy? Should it not then be encouragement enough to all to cry who know what a miserable condition they are in, how they lie under the sentence of the law, and how there is no remedy, relief, or escape, but by the free grace and mercy of that offended God? The fallen angels nor the souls now in prison have not this encouragement. The door is forever and ever closed on them. There is no hope at all for them. They are irrecoverably gone, so that though they should cry, it would not avail them. But with us, so long as we are living, it is not so desperate. There is hope for a living man. And therefore there is encouragement enough to mind this duty.

2. Not only does the door of God's mercy and free grace stand open, but the Lord calls to this duty and commands us to go about it under the pain of His displeasure. He has written the duty on the heart of man so that none who has any apprehension of a god can deny this obligation to call to Him. Though the corruption of nature be great, yet it cannot delete the sense of this duty—for heathens, who are strangers to the true and living God, will call upon their stocks and idols in their straits. And, there are frequent commands hereunto in the Word, as might be at large rehearsed if it were not unquestionable. And this cannot but be a large encouragement and powerful. A condemned malefactor, hearing that the king had sent him word and told him that he should cry for mercy, would

conceive hope and look on it as a mighty encouragement to supplicating of his prince for pardon. How much more if he knew that his not supplicating would provoke the king to more anger against him and be cause enough to procure a new sentence of death? What an encouragement was it to blind Bartimeus to come to Jesus to seek his sight, when it was said to him, “Be of good comfort, rise; he calleth thee” (Mark 10:49)! How quickly did he then cast away his garment, rise, and come away to Jesus (v. 50)!

3. Yea, the Lord challenges people for the neglect of this duty and charges it home on them as their sin—so displeased is He with such as lay it aside. See Isaiah 43:22 and Hosea 7:7, 14. And what would we seek more for an encouragement to this duty than to have it told us that the neglect of it will be charged upon us as our sin? Will not such think this motive strong enough who are already sensible of their provocations and afraid of the anger of God because of them? Will not such as are already groaning under a burden of sin and guilt be encouraged to cry when they hear that their not crying to the Lord will make their burden of guilt so much the heavier? Sure, such will have reason to say, “My guilt is great enough already. Why should I make it greater by neglecting this duty!”
4. Yea, the Lord takes special pleasure and delight in the prayers of His people. Hence we read in the Proverbs of Solomon that the prayer of the upright is His delight (15:8). So in the Song of Solomon 2:14. Christ speaks to His bride and says, “O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is

thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” And, “Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue” (4:11), meaning hereby her speaking to Him by prayer. The Lord cares not for all the sacrifices of His people where this is away—Psalm 50: “I will not reprove thee,” He says (v. 8, 9, 13) “for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt-offerings, etc.” What then would the Lord have? Verses 14–15: “Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high. And call upon me in the day of trouble, etc.” So Isaiah 66:3: “He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man, etc.” What then has the Lord respect to? See verse 2: “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” And such are praying persons.

5. There is now a fair and wide door opened for their access to God through Jesus Christ. And this is a great encouragement, for when they think with themselves, “How dare we approach to the holy Lord, who cannot behold evil, when we are such vile and abominable sinners? How can we think of standing before such a one as hates all the workers of iniquity?”—this may comfort them and encourage them: that Christ is now become master usher to all His poor followers. He has opened the door of mercy and holds it open, for He is the way to the Father (John 14:6). In Christ Jesus we are made near by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13). And through Him we have access (v. 18), and in Him we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him (Eph. 3:12). What can now hinder or fear a poor sinner from coming to God by prayer when he has Christ to take him by the hand and to bring him in

to the Father? "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.... Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14, 16). Wherefore no sight or apprehension of our own vileness and unworthiness can justly prove a dissuasive to our approaching or stand as an impediment in our way, seeing this High Priest lives forever and has made way for us and has consecrated to us a new and living way through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Nay, we have hereby boldness and liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19–20).

6. Not only has Christ thus made the door open to us and given grounds of great boldness in access to God, but as high priest He presents the prayers and desires of His people in His censer and offers them up to God as an acceptable sacrifice: "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" (Rev. 8:3). As we are made acceptable in the beloved (Eph. 1:6), so this duty of prayer is a part of that living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service (Rom. 12:1). Hence supplications, prayers, and intercessions for all men are good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior (1 Tim. 2:3). This is part of our spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 5). How may this consideration give heart to a poor sinner to call on God, however worthless and sinful he apprehend his prayers to be, seeing they come not in before

God alone or on account of their own intrinsic worth, but as perfumed with Christ's incense and as offered up by Him in His censer, and they are accepted in Him? And besides, this being Christ's work as high priest to offer up the reasonable service and prayers of His people that they might be accepted in Him, how delightful and pleasant should it be to us to be giving Christ much employment in His priestly office! And how should we be encouraged to pray much on this account that thereby Christ gets work!

7. The Lord's taking on Him the relation of a father in a special manner and not in a general and common notion only as being our creator and preservator, in which respect He is a father to all His creatures, but in a more special and spiritual manner adopting us to be His children—this is and ought to be a strong inducement to this duty. What will encourage a child to come to and seek what he wants from such a person, if this do not: that that person is his father and owns him for his son? Children need no more but this to set them to work at this duty. And seeing the Lord has advanced His people to this great honor and dignity to be His sons and daughters in a peculiar manner, ought not this so encourage them to this duty? Should not this hearten them to come to and to call on their Father? All His rational creatures are obliged to come to Him who gave them their being and maintains and preserves them in it—for in Him they live, move, and have their being and may be encouraged hereunto even on this ground. How much more should those whom He has taken out of the common state of mankind and has brought closer to Himself, having honored them with

this glorious privilege of adoption to be His and heirs with Him, be encouraged to draw near to this God who is become their Father in a singular manner!

8. The Lord's granting to such as He has adopted a new spirit, a new frame, and disposition inclines them to God, which is called the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15). Whereby they not only have access to the throne of grace with boldness (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 3:12), but also have a spiritual bias Godward and a new propensity of heart to approach to God to make known all their desires to Him, to seek all supplies from Him, and to communicate all their mind to Him. By this new Spirit, they cry, "Abba, Father." The Lord's granting (I say) this Spirit, this new change, new frame, disposition, and inclination is and cannot but be an encouragement to this duty. The Lord's putting a strong inclination in the young child to use the breast of the mother says that the child may and should seek the breast and weep for the mother's milk. This natural instinct in the beasts is a forcible law that cannot be infringed. What should then discourage a poor saint from this duty in whom this new spiritual inclination is wrought? Would the Lord give this new Spirit to torment them? Would He work them up to this new and strong inclination and not withal allow them to follow the same and to act accordingly? Would He give them this new nature powerfully moving and inclining them to cry, "Abba, Father," and withal lay inhibitions on them that they should not do what they are so strongly inclined to? What dissuasives can prevail with a young lamb not to seek the dame? What can restrain a young child from desiring and seeking after the breast? What should

then prevail with a child of God to forbear to act suitably to this new nature? I think surely whatever discouragements appear to the child of God to keep him from this duty of prayer, they should all be overcome with this one consideration: God has implanted in me a new nature and has granted to me a new spirit of adoption whereby I find myself as kindly, natively, and really moved to seek to God as the newborn babe is inclined to seek after the breast. And what dissuasives should I hearken to? What should prevail with me to keep me back?

9. Moreover, if they should pretend want of skill and ability to pray, is not this encouragement enough that the Lord has granted to them the Spirit of adoption to cry, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6), to be a spirit of prayer and supplication in them and to help their infirmities, to make intercessions for them with groanings that cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26). What can now in reason prevail with them to lay aside this duty to which they have this strong inducement—the Spirit given to them—to draw up and pen their supplications? Can they imagine that God will not allow them to pray to Him, when His own Spirit is given to them for this very end to help them in going about the duty? Should anything discourage such from prayer as have the Spirit graciously bestowed on them to frame their petitions in their hand? Should they be content to suffer this Spirit to lie dormant in them and not to do the work He is sent to do? Should not this consideration loose all their objections?
10. Further, the Spirit is given to help us in our access and approach to God. We have access by the Spirit to the

Father (Eph. 2:13). This is likewise the work of the Spirit. And this being the work of the Spirit, it cannot but be a strong inducement to the duty. Who would not approach the king, who had such a gracious courtier to make way and to bring them in before him in his arms? Who would not be encouraged to draw near to God, when the Spirit of God is ready to take them by the hand, to lead them, or rather to carry them in His bosom before the Father? And who can think of being averse and unwilling to this duty when therewithal they must needs declare themselves unwilling of the help of the Spirit? Can they pretend inability, who have such help at hand?

11. Is it not encouragement enough to this duty of prayer, that hereby they have occasion daily to pour out their heart before God, as to a bosom friend? We used to take encouragement from a person being intimate with us, and a friend that cleaves closer to us than a brother, to unfold our whole heart to him and to hide nothing from him. And if the person be considerably great and above us, yet this does hearten us to the using of freedom with him, so that we find we are friendly entertained, and he takes it well, and that we use freedom with him, and that he sees. We confide in him as in a sure friend that will not fail us nor deceive us. And should not this encourage us also to prayer: that we know God will make us welcome and take it well from us, that we dare confide in Him as in a sure friend that will not fail us nor deceive us? And should not this encourage us also to prayer, that we know God will make us welcome and take it well from us that we dare confide in Him and trust Him as a bosom friend?

And should not the advantage of having such a bosom friend to go to in our strait who can help, be our case what it will, be encouragement enough to set us on? Sure, if we considered the honor that we are thereby advanced to, besides the rich advantage, we could not but look on it as an argument sufficient to overcome all dissuasives to the contrary. What courtier would not think it encouragement enough to speak to his prince to know that his prince will allow him to be free and intimate with him in every particular?

12. This is also a mighty encouragement: that we can never come unseasonably to God, come when we will. His ear is open, and He is ready to embrace us and to take our supplications off our hand. The most willing prince to hear a courtier, that is, may sometimes be out of case to speak to. Our friend may be in bed and unwilling to be troubled at midnight to rise and give what we desire. But we can never come unseasonably to God. He is never out of case to be spoken to. Come we when we will, He will not refuse us an ear as coming out of time or as troubling Him when He is otherwise occupied and has some other thing to do.
13. As no time is unseasonable, so no case we can be in will prejudice us of His ear, if we be willing to come and do come in sincerity and uprightness of heart. It is true, sin and prevailing of corruptions may indispose us and render us unfit for communion with God if we harbor these evils and delight in them. But if they be a burden to us and our grief, we need not think that they will prejudice us of this privilege or give us ground to think that we need not approach God because He will not accept of us nor regard our prayers. Nay, these

burdens of temptations, corruptions, and guilt should incite us rather to go to Him by prayer that we may cast these burdens on Him according to His command. O, what great encouragement is this! That souls, in whatever condition they be, need not infer from this that they are not allowed of God to approach Him—that no indisposition, no weakness, no deadness, no faintings, no failings or shortcomings in duty, and no provocations will loose them from this duty or excuse them from going about it. Nay, nor will anything render their going about it unprofitable if they be but willing to come and to be delivered from these evils—nay, the worst condition they can be in should rather prove a strong encouragement than be looked on as discouragement. The Lord will not be the worse to be spoken to that people's necessities are the greater which drive them to Him, if they come as they ought to do. Nay, the greater their necessity be, the more welcome they will be to Him, if they come unfeignedly (James 1:5). Should not this then encourage us to pray—that we have to do with Him who will make us welcome when we return, had we played the harlot with never so many lovers?

14. This should also encourage us to pray—to consider that we have to do with a God that can help us, be our condition never so desperate in our own eyes. He can raise the dead and say to the dead bones live. It is a great encouragement that we pray not to a God who is far off and cannot help us, but to one that can command salvation, be our condition what it will. The poor man is encouraged to go to the rich man's door because he knows he can easily relieve him and

supply his present necessities. Why should not this also encourage us to pray to God in our necessities—that He can easily answer all our desires and satisfy us to the full, that we can seek nothing that He will account too great or above His strength? One may come to his friend and seek help, but though that friend be willing enough, yet he may be unable to help him at present. But we can never charge God amiss or come to Him when He is not in case to relieve us.

15. Yea, the more enlarged the desires of our heart be to seek great things, if suitable to our case and good for us, He is the more ready to hear and help. And this, sure, should be a strong encouragement to this duty. We may go to our dearest friend in the world and may be too indiscreet in our askings and thereupon may be told no—while as had we been more sober in our requests, we might possibly have come speedily. But He with whom we have to do in prayer will make us the more welcome, the greater the things be we ask. As He will make us welcome when we come to ask of Him what our subsistence in this world requires, so when we come to seek spiritual blessings and the great favors of the covenant, His countenance and His Spirit and all the spiritual and celestial benefits. He will make us the more welcome and more readily grant us these desires. When He said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33), He gave us to understand so much that we should rather seek of Him these great things, than what we should eat, or what we should drink, or wherewith we should be clothed—and that if

we sought these great things in the first place He would give us them in the first place, and the rest as to casts.<sup>1</sup>

16. This should encourage us also that we have to do with Him who will not regard our worth in granting the thing we ask. If indeed it were so that He would hear us no other wise than according as we deserve, we had little encouragement ever to come to Him or ever to set about this duty. But seeing He grants all for His own name's sake and for Christ's sake and not for any worth considered in us, how should this animate us to apply ourselves to Him by prayer? In approaching Him, we are not called to plead our own worth or usefulness or any such thing as a ground of encouragement to be heard. If we have to do with men, we may suppose the usefulness of these arguments and there-upon ground our hope of coming speed. But poverty and nakedness, indigency and unprofitableness are our best arguments in pleading with God, and thence rather may we draw out encouragements. Who would not then be encouraged to set about this duty, who are sensible of their necessities, of their unworthiness and inability to do any good? He grants all good for His own name's sake and not for our sakes. He blesses us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3).
17. This is also a considerable encouragement to this duty of prayer—that we cannot come to God therein too often. We cannot (so to speak), He says. Nay, the more often we come, the more welcome He will make us, for He calls us to pray evermore, or, without ceasing

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1. *Casts*: here, referring to things which are thrown out automatically or simply expected to happen.

(1 Thess. 5:17). He would have us always in a praying frame, standing and begging at His door and at His door only. Is not this a great encouragement, that how much so ever He has granted us today, we will not fare the worse if we go again tomorrow—nay, every hour He will make us welcome. He will take twenty suits off our hand in one hour. O! Who would not then take pleasure in prayer! We may weary men and trouble the best of our friends too often and be a burden to them. And the more often a poor beggar comes to one man's door, he is not the better served but rather the worse. But God's beggars have a happy life. They will never get that answer from Him, "You were answered lately, and you must not be so answered always." But, by the contrary, He will say to them, "Got you your alms lately? And are you come again for a new alms? Well, you will not be told no. The more often you come to Me, the more welcome you will be."

18. The Lord will take it well off our hand that we be importunate with Him, that we give Him no rest till He grants the blessing we seek, all due distance, reverence, and submission being observed. And this is no small encouragement to this duty. The Lord Himself has taught us to be thus importunate with Him. And He told us that this is the best way to come speed with Him by that parable of the man that gave his neighbor three loaves because of his importunity (Luke 11:8), and of the unjust judge, who was content at length to satisfy the importunate widow, lest she should trouble him and by continual coming weary him (Luke 18:5; cf. Isa. 62:7). What should then discourage us from prayer? His delaying to answer is no ground of

discouragement, for that should rather put an edge on our earnestness and cause us to double our suits and requests. And we need not fear that He will account us troublesome or refuse us because of our earnestness and importunity.

19. It is no small encouragement to this duty that the Lord will accept of our worthless way of going about the same, when the heart is at the work, as service to Him and as a piece of acceptable obedience which He will take well off our hand, though He be a great king and ought to have great and suitable honor and service performed to Him. When we are sincerely endeavoring to serve Him thus with our spirits, He will accept it as service. It is said of Anna that she served God “with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37). The three children told the king they would not serve his gods (Dan. 3:18), that is, they would not fall down and worship them or pray to them. O, how wonderful is this, that the Lord should look on our falling down before Him, asking what we need from Him, laying all our wants, necessities, desires, and our whole case before Him, standing and begging at His door—He counts it as service done to Him! How desirous would that beggar be to stand continually begging at a great person’s door, if it were told him that therein he were doing great and considerable service to that great person? How fain and glad would he be, and with what delight and complacency would he go about and continue in that work! And what could fall out that could discourage him from that work? And what should discourage us to continue instant in prayer? What should make us weary thereof or desirous to lay it aside? Is it good that we should

weary of God's service? Should we not take delight in serving Him, night and day? And if we profess any pleasure in doing Him service, why will we refuse to give Him this service? Why will we refuse to call on Him and tell Him we cannot serve Him unless He help us with His grace to serve Him, seeing He will ever accept of that as service done to Him?

20. The Lord looks on prayer as a special part of worship that is due to Him. And this is a considerable encouragement to it. Yea, such a high account does the Lord make of it that it is sometimes taken for all worship (Zech. 8:21–22). Hence we find the house or temple that was appointed for the worship of God called a house of prayer (Isa. 56:7; Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:46). How wonderful is this, that the Lord should put such a high value on such a worthless work and should account the humble begging of poor and indigent beggars a worshipping of Him! Who that has anything of the fear and knowledge of God in him would not desire to be about the worship of God? Who that considers the work does not see a great reward in the very work of worshipping such a king as is the Lord of hosts? And who that has their eyes in their head sees not enough in the very worshipping of this Lord God to encourage them and to carry them over many discouragements to the dutiful performance thereof? And who then even on this account would not be encouraged to this duty of prayer? Who would not serve and worship the true and living God? And who would not therefore mind this duty of prayer? If we neglect this, we cannot worship God acceptably, and the right going about this duty will be a noble means

to help us to the right performance of other acts of worship. And this should be sufficient to encourage us hereunto.

21. The many promises of being heard and of receiving what we ask (of which we will speak more particularly afterward) are a great ground of encouragement and are held forth for that very end to encourage to this duty of prayer, both in our text and elsewhere frequently. Would a poor indigent beggar desire greater encouragement than to hear that he will come speed by asking and will receive all that he desires? And what will encourage us to this duty of prayer, if this do it not? When we have God's often reiterated word of promise that our prayers will not be in vain, but that we will receive all we ask, or as good, or better—ought we not to take courage? And when the Lord has spoken this for this end to encourage us, ought we not to improve it and consider these frequent promises to excite and stir us up to this duty?
22. We see it has been the constant exercise of all the saints in all generations. They have been praying persons. Old saints and young saints have minded this duty. And this should also be looked on as an encouragement, for we are not here to walk in an untrodden path. We are not commanded to do that which none ever did before us, but are set to walk in the common road of all saints. This should therefore be an encouragement to us—that all the saints have gone that way before us, and all of them have found satisfaction therein and have left a good commendation of the exercise behind them. It would be tedious here to give instances, the Scripture being so full. Only we would remember that

when we read of others going about this duty, it should excite us to follow their example. When we read of their improving opportunities, it should remind us of the same duty. When we read of their prospering by prayer, we should remember what is the voice of the Lord to us thereby, and that all these things say to us to mind this duty and go about it diligently—for you see it is no vain work to seek the Lord. No man seeks His face in vain.

23. If we consider how the Lord has sometimes heard the prayers and desires of carnal persons, such as are regenerate children of God cannot but think with themselves that they have great encouragement to mind this duty. Will the Lord hear strangers, yea, and wicked persons and enemies to Him, and will He not hear and have respect to the desires of His own people? We see how sometimes He has heard the prayers of such as were but heart strangers to Him (Ps. 78:34–38; 107:27–28), of which, and of other instances of this kind, we spoke before. And may not this be a strong encouragement to God’s own children to go about this duty? If a child see his father giving some good thing to another man’s child, will it not hearten him to go and seek from his father what he needs? He sees that his father suffers strangers, beggars, yea, and the children of his enemies and ill-wishers to speak to him and to seek from him what they would have, and that he gives and does not upbraid. And may he not think with himself, “Surely then, my father will make me welcome. He will not be angry at my coming. Nay, though I have transgressed his commandments and

have not carried as a dutiful child, yet I may hence take encouragement and come forward.”

24. Yea, which is yet more, the Lord, hearing the cries of dumb beasts and senseless creatures and granting them what they need, is and should be looked on as a very great encouragement to His children to come and cry to Him (Ps. 145:9, 15, 16). It is said that the Lord is good to all, and that the eyes of all wait on Him, and He gives them their meat in due season. He opens His hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing. And will He not then hear the cries and prayers of His own people? No doubt He will, for it is added, “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them” (vv. 18–19). If a child see his father feeding his beasts and giving meat to his dogs and satisfied when they come about him and paw him for a crumb, will he not think that surely his father will not be angry at him if he come and tell him what he would have and seek from him what he wants?
25. We find that the Lord has such an esteem for prayer that He will have respect to it, even though it be but (as it were) half-prayer, and the outward part, whereby He might be glorified with our tongue, or our glory is away, and the prayer or desire is half (as it were) smothered within and comes not freely forth—as when it is said that He hears the prisoners’ groans (Ps. 102:20); the sighs of the needy (Ps. 12:5); the voices of tears (Ps. 6:8). Yea, He heard Hezekiah (Isa. 38) when his prayers were but like the chattering of a crane or of a swallow or like the mourning of a dove (v. 14). A short sentence

has been as welcome to Him as a long prayer—as when the thief on the cross said, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). And the poor publican said, “God be merciful to me, a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Yea, when the poor oppressed sinners could not so much as speak a short sentence to God, nor groan or sigh, He has read a prayer out of their very looks. “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Ps. 34:5). Jonah looked toward His holy temple (2:4). And may not this be a strong encouragement to us to cry and call on God?

26. So gracious is the Lord to praying persons that He has often heard their desires when they have been accompanied not only with weakness and infirmities, but with corruption and sin—as when He heard that nobleman’s desire on behalf of his son, though He said to him, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe” (John 4:47–50). And when He condescended to Thomas when he said in plain terms, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25). And when He heard David’s prayer, even when he changed his behavior before Abimelech or Achish, wherein much corruption and unbelief appeared (Ps. 34). And as when Moses vented much pettedness<sup>2</sup> and mal contentment in his prayer, yet the Lord heard him, as Exodus 5:22–23, when he said, “Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh

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2. *Pettedness*: being petulant.

to speak in thy name, he hath done evil unto this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." Yet we see how graciously the Lord heard this (6:1). And again, when he had expressed much dissatisfaction with the Lord's way of dealing with him, saying, "Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people?... Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?... If thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand...and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. 11:11–15). And yet despite all this corruption, the Lord graciously condescended to satisfy his desires (vv. 16–17). Other instances of this kind might be given, but these are sufficient to show what kindness God has for prayer, though attended with much corruption. And surely this must be looked on as a strong motive to the duty. Will not this encourage us to it to know that God will pass by and overlook much weakness and many failings in the performance thereof?

27. It may also forcibly move us and mightily invite us to this duty to consider how not only the Lord is ready to grant the desires which are put up to Him, but will even grant more than is asked, for He is able to do exceeding abundantly "above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). The Lord proposes this encouragement Himself (Isa. 55:6, 8, 9). "Seek ye," He says, "the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." And what is the inducement or encouragement? Verse 7: "For he will abundantly pardon." And again, verses 8–9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts...."

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Who then would not call to Him? Who would not pray to Him who will not measure His returns according to our shallow petitions but according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19)?

28. It may likewise be an encouragement to this duty to hear that not only the Lord will hear such as call on Him, but will anticipate their desires. So ready is He to do them good, that before their petitions be well out of their mouth, He will grant a return—yea, even before they have presented their suits to Him, He is ready to hear and has prevented them with goodness and mercy. See Isaiah 65:24: “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (cf. Gen. 24:45; Dan. 9:23). They must needs be very averse from and unwilling to go about prayer whom this would not encourage.
29. So great an account does the Lord make the prayers of His people, that when He has no mind to grant the particular which they would ask, He will discharge them from the duty and inhibit them from speaking any more to Him in that matter—as we see He said several times to Jeremiah, “Pray not for this people” (7:16; 11:14; 14:11). So when Moses was entreating the Lord that He would suffer him to go over Jordan and see the promised land, “the Lord said unto [him], Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter” (Deut. 3:26). Whereby the Lord would give us to understand that to speak so, He does not find in His heart to tell His people no. And therefore He would have them forbear to importune Him in particular, which

He sees not consistent with His glory to grant—as if He could not hear them cry for that which He might not give. This is a wonderful expression which the Lord has to Moses (Ex. 32:10), and that even before he had begun to pray: “Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them.” So Deuteronomy 9:14. It is as if (so to speak) prayer were able to bind God’s hands or so hinder Him from doing what other ways He would do. Should not this encourage our hearts to fall in love with this duty?

30. If we would consider what great things have been brought to pass by the means of prayer, we could not but see notable encouragement thereunto. It would be long to rehearse all the great exploits of prayer. A few instances may serve for this end, and these we will only mention. By prayer, hidden mysteries that could not otherwise be made known have been revealed (Gen. 25:22; Dan. 2:18–19). By prayer, great and strong armies have been defeated (Ex. 17:11; 1 Sam. 7:8; 2 Chron. 20:4, etc.; 32:8, etc.). Prayer will prevent the ruin of a people (Deut. 9:18, 29; Num. 14; 16; 2 Kings 19:4). Prayer has opened the womb that was shut (Gen. 30:6, 13, 22; 1 Sam. 1:13, 20) and wrought miracles (1 Kings 13:6). Prayer brought Jonah out of the whale’s belly (Jonah 1:6, 14; 3:8) and opened the prison door to Peter (Acts 12:5, etc.). By prayer, pardon has been obtained (Num. 14:20), yea, miraculous supplies (Judg. 15:18–19). As also issues from death (2 Kings 4:32, 35; 20:5–6). And deliverance from enemies (Judg. 3:9; 2 Kings 13:4; 19:20; 1 Chron. 5:20; 20:9; Neh. 9:27–28). Yea, and out of all trouble (Ps. 34:4–6; 40:1; 50:15; 107:28; 118:5, 21; 120:1). By prayer, not only are outward blessings had

(Gen. 35:3; 1 Chron. 4:10; 2 Chron. 6:26; 7:13–14), but also spiritual blessings, strength to the soul (Ps. 138:5), laborers in the gospel (Matt. 9:38) and their success therein (1 Cor. 16:8–9; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1) and deliverance from the devil (Matt. 15:28; 17:21)—all had by prayer. And what needs more encouragement?

## *The Object of Worship in Prayer*

*W*e come in the next place to the second part of the text, which is the person who is here to be prayed to. It is true, this is not expressly mentioned in the words before us. But it is presupposed and hinted in the words and may be gathered both from what proceeds and from what follows—namely, that the person to be prayed to is God, here denominated the Father, of whom Christ has been speaking in the previous words. And the end of Christ's answering their prayers is said to be that the Father may be glorified in the Son. It is He also to whom Christ will pray (v. 16). And He mentioned their asking the Father in His name (15:16; 16:24), as He mentions their asking Himself (v. 23).

For clearing up of this object of worship in prayer, or of the person to whom prayer is to be made, we will mention these particulars shortly.

First, God alone is the object of all divine worship, and to Him alone prayer should be made. For:

1. God alone has these divine attributes and excellencies which are requisite in the object of divine worship, and whereby He is to be looked on and owned as the only adorable majesty, so that His adorability results from

these divine essential attributes which are peculiar to God and are incommunicable to any creature whatsoever. He alone is Jehovah, and therefore we should come before His presence (Ps. 95:1–2). This Jehovah is a great God and a great king above all gods, and all the creation is His. Therefore, the psalmist infers, “O come let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God, etc.” (vv. 6–7). Prayer is a piece of that natural worship that is due to God alone. Therefore, when Satan tempted our Lord to fall down and worship him, He repelled him with this: “It is written,” namely, in Deut. 6:13; 10:20, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10).

2. God alone knows all our wants and is privy to our hearts and to the inward motions and desires thereof. He knows the heart of all men (Acts 1:24). He searches the hearts and knows what is the mind of the spirit (Rom. 8:27). He, even He only, knows the hearts of all the children of men (1 Kings 8:39).
3. He alone is God all-sufficient and so able to answer all our prayers and to satisfy all our desires—“for he is God almighty” (Gen. 17:1). Therefore, we should make our supplication to the Almighty (Job 8:5; 13:3). He only is able to satisfy the desires of all flesh (Ps. 145:18–19).
4. He alone is to be believed and confided in and rested on, based on the previously mentioned grounds; for no man can call on a God in whom they have not believed, as the apostle signifies, saying, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?”

(Rom. 10:14). Whereby he gives us to understand that believing in the person we pray to is necessarily prerequisite to praying; and, consequently, that we must pray to none in whom we are not bound to believe. And therefore, seeing we must believe and confide in none but in God, we must pray to none but to Him.

5. He alone is our Father in Christ, and therefore to Him only can we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). And of Him we have all we enjoy, for in Him we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). And He being on this account not far from us, we ought to seek Him by prayer (v. 27).
6. He alone is the hearer of prayer. And therefore to Him should all flesh come (Ps. 65:2). This is His royal prerogative, and we should not rob Him hereof by praying to any other.
7. He alone can pardon sins, which is a main matter of prayer (Mic. 7:18). And therefore He only should be sought by prayer.

Second, as God, the only object of worship, is one, so this divine worship (whereof prayer is a special part, being a calling on the name of the Lord) is one and of one kind. As the object is supreme, so this worship is supreme and competent only to this supreme and infinite majesty. And therefore prayer must be given to none else.

Third, though God, the only object of divine worship, be one essentially, yet the Scriptures hold forth three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—distinguished really from each other by their personal and peculiar properties, neither of them being the other: the Father not

being the Son, nor the Holy Ghost; nor the Son, the Father; nor the Holy Ghost being either Father or Son. The Father alone begat the Son (Heb. 1:5–7). The Son alone is begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18). The Holy Ghost alone proceeds from the Father and from the Son (John 15:26; Gal. 4:6). See, moreover, for this difference and distinction of persons in the Godhead, Matthew 3:16–17; 28:19; John 10:30; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 5:7; and Revelation 1:1–2, 4–6.

Fourth, though these three persons be distinct as to their personal properties mentioned, yet all of them having the same infinite divine and indivisible essence and also being equal in power, glory, and eternity—the Son and the Holy Ghost being God equal with the Father, as having in Scripture ascribed to them such names, attributes, works, and worship as are proper to God only, as these and the like Scripture evidence (Isa. 6:2, 5, 8; cf. Gen. 2:12; Isa. 9:6; Matt. 28:19; John 1:1; 2:24–25; 12:47; Acts 5:3–4; 28:25; Col. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:10–11; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 5:20)—yet notwithstanding hereof, there are not three gods, but one. This is because each of these three persons are the same as to essence, even the same one God, coequal and coessential all of them, and each of them have the same divine nature or essence and that eternally, equally, and perfectly, none of them being more or less God than the other.

Fifth, each of these three persons being essentially the one true and living God are to be worshipped with divine worship and invocated by prayer. As the Father is to be prayed to, so is the Son and the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19; Acts 7:59; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:14). Yet they are not three distinct objects of divine worship, but the object of worship is only one; for they have but one and the same essence and so are one and the same infinite God eternally and essentially with the Father and partake of the same essential divine attributes, such as eternity, infiniteness, immensity, omnipotence, etc. And it is

God, having these essential divine attributes, that is to be invocated. The deity, which is one, is the only object of worship.

Sixth, hence, whoever of the persons of the Trinity be named in prayer, the same one God is prayed to. And when all these three are mentioned, the same one deity is worshipped. When one of the persons is mentioned, we may not think that the other is less, even than worshipped or called on, because always the same deity in which are three persons is invocated, and not that person, as distinguished by His personal properties, but as having the same divine essence. When one of the persons is first mentioned, then another, and then the third, we must not suppose that the object of adoration, worship, and invocation is thereby varied or changed because the same divine essence or deity is always adored and invocated, and so the same one object of adoration and invocation remains unvaried. And when all the three are mentioned, they are not to be considered as three distinct objects of worship, but as one—for the same one divine essence is common to all. And this one divine essence, this one deity is the only object of worship and invocation.

Seventh, Christ the mediator is to be invocated.<sup>1</sup> Christ, I say, the mediator, is to be invocated and prayed to because He is God and has the same divine essence with the Father and the same essential attributes of infiniteness, eternity, immensity, omnipotency, ubiquity, adorability, etc., as we see (Gen.

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1. We meddle not here with that debate whether Christ is to be invocated as mediator or under that reduplication, properly and strictly so taken, because we conceive this is not necessary to the matter of practice and the difference may consist more in the different terms used or in their different sense and explication than in the matter and true meaning of the discordant parties, so that a safe accommodation and reconciliation of the difference might be made by a right explication of the terms used in this debate, as has been manifested by the judicious and worthy Mr. [James] Durham on the Revelation [commentary], p. 15.

48:16; Luke 23:42–43; Acts 7:59). That angel there mentioned is Christ or the second person in the Trinity. So was that person mentioned—Genesis 33:24, etc., and Hosea 12:3–4. So Psalm 102:1, 24, 25–27, compared with Hebrews 1:10–12. We are to believe in Him (John 14:1). And therefore we are to pray to Him (Rom. 10:14). See Romans 15:12, compared with Isaiah 11:10. And here in the text, Christ promises to do what we ask. And therefore He is to be prayed to that He may do the same.

Eighth, this invoking and worshipping of the Son who is mediator is not altered by our considering of Him in our praying and approaching as the mediator, or naming or mentioning Him by titles agreeing to Him only as mediator. For notwithstanding hereof, it is God that is worshipped, and that person so named or considered is God equal with the Father, having the same divine essence and divine essential attributes. And this worship is the same divine worship that is given to the Father, for it is given to the same deity, which is one and the same in the mediator as in the Father. And there are not two divine sorts of worship, but one. We cannot imagine one divine worship inferior and another superior, for there are not two distinct deities inferior and another superior. Nor are there two distinct objects of divine worship, one inferior and another superior. And therefore the mediator is to be worshipped with the same divine worship with which the Father is to be worshipped and not with an inferior; for His mediatorial office makes Him not less God than He was before or from all eternity. Nor does His taking on of man's nature lessen His Godhead, for even when man and the Son of David, He is the only begotten of the Father and equal to Him in power and glory. Nor is He as man worshipped with one divine worship, and as God, with another. But He as to His person being God, and the person being worshipped, He, who is man, is worshipped with divine worship—because He,

who is man, is the true and living God. And so the person of Christ who is now God-man is worshipped as the Father is worshipped. And this person is one and the same, however He be named and conceived of by us when we worship.

Ninth, this worshipping of the mediator with the same divine worship with which the Father is worshipped does not take away our making use of Christ as the way to the Father, through whom alone we have access to the Father, and by whom, as mediator, we worship God and pray to Him, and as the only ground on which we have access and right to expect acceptance in our addresses and prayers. For His mediatorship, or His taking on that office to make way for us to God, does not take away or diminish His Godhead. Nor does His being God take away His office and work or loose us from a suitable making use of Him. We pray then to the mediator who is God, and as being God. And yet with all, we approach to God through the mediator. Though the person be both God and the mediator, yet when we pray to Him as God, we make use of Him as mediator and as the way to God. As He is the object of worship, He is considered as having the same divine essence with the Father. As He is the medium, He is considered as clothed with that new relation of mediator and with that new office, in which respect He is said to be inferior to the Father and the Father's servant and our high priest, advocate, intercessor, etc.

Tenth, as there is an order of subsisting among the three persons of the deity among themselves, and an order of operation in their works without and as to us, so as the Father is the first person, the Son, the second person, and the Holy Ghost, the third person—so, though the object of worship being the deity, which is common to all, but one and the same, yet this does not hinder but that we may in our approaching to this one God in three persons have suitable apprehensions of

this order in their substance and operation. And so we may direct our prayers first to the Father, as being first in order, not excluding the Son and the Holy Ghost, but taking them in also in their order; nor yet as conceiving the Father to be chief in honor and dignity and above the other two in the matter of worship—seeing all are equal as to essence and essential attributes, and seeing, because of this, all are equally the object of divine worship, and none more or less to be worshipped because none has more or less of the one indivisible divine essence or deity, the object of worship. Hence we find them named in order (Matt. 28:19; 1 John 5:7). So is the Father frequently mentioned before the Son (1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1–2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3), though not always (2 Cor. 13:14). And the Spirit is named before the Son (1 Cor. 12:4–6; Rev. 1:4–5), lest we should imagine some priority in honor and dignity or some inequality as to what belongs to their essence and the one object of worship.

Eleventh, as the worshipping or praying to the mediator, the second person in the Trinity, as to the Father does not hinder our making use by faith of Christ's mediation in our approaching to God, as was shown above, so nor does our worshipping of the Holy Ghost, the third person in the Trinity, with the same divine worship with which we worship Father and Son, hinder us from making use of the Spirit in our approaching to God, according as He is promised and held forth in the gospel. So that in prayer, we are to come to the Father or to God through the mediation of the Son by the help of the Spirit, for through Christ we have access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18), according as the blessings bestowed on us of the Father come to us through Christ and by the Spirit (Eph. 3:16; cf. 1:3–5, 7, 11, 13–14). See 1 Corinthians 12:4, 11.

Last, the person prayed to, here and elsewhere, and particularly in the pattern taught by our Lord, is styled "Father." This is not as if the first person of the Trinity, or the Father, personally understood, were the only object of divine worship or the only person to be prayed to, for the Father is rather here to be understood essentially than personally. He is taken for God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Only it denotes a heart-warming relation that God is to be considered as now standing in, namely, the relation of a father to his own children, in a more special sense they being now made partakers of the privilege of adoption through Christ and by the Spirit. And regarding the head, in a more general sense, He is being taken as their creator, preserver, provider, etc., and they His creatures and rational members of His kingdom and great household. And with all this denomination of a Father points forth the frame of spirit that praying persons ought to have when approaching to this God, who is related to them as a father, of which more will be said afterward.

Thus have we endeavored to clear up the object of worship and who He is to whom we are to pray, for so far as may help us in the right practice of this duty. What may be hence deduced in order to our right and acceptable discharge of this duty will be spoken to in the next place.

*Some Mistakes in the Mind Pointed  
at Which Should Be Guarded against  
in Us Praying to God*

**F**rom what has been said in the previous chapter concerning the object of invocation, or the person to whom we ought to pray, several inferences may be drawn in order to our information and instruction about this duty.

First, we would hence be instructed to guard against mistaking thoughts and imaginations in our mind of this object of invocation. For when we are about the duty of prayer, we are ready to entertain wrong thoughts of this God and to conceive of Him amiss and thereby provoke the eyes of His jealousy who is a consuming fire and a jealous God (Deut. 4:24; Heb. 12:29). Therefore, we should carefully keep our hearts and our heads, lest mistaking the object, the duty be unprofitably discharged. For this cause, we would beware in our addresses to God by prayer:

1. To think that we can comprehend in our minds this object which we invoke, or that we could get a full view or discovery of His glorious majesty, which is altogether unsearchable and incomprehensible. If we too boldly dive into this mystery, we may readily become vain in our imaginations, as did the heathens (Rom. 1:20–21). We are not able to search out the Almighty to

perfection. He is higher than heaven—what can we do? And He is deeper than hell—what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. As said Zophar, “Shall we, who are born like a wild ass’s colt, think to be wise, by understanding and fully comprehending this mystery?” (Job 11:12; cf. v. 8–9). It were safer for us to satisfy ourselves with a view of His back parts and with a sight of Him in His glorious attributes, whereby He has revealed Himself, in order to our understanding what He is, in a saving and profitable manner. And instead of seeking after His hid glory and essence, we should be taking hold of His name, styles, and titles, and such expressions of Himself as He has laid before us in His Word, and therewith resting satisfied. When Moses, that great man of God with whom God spoke face to face and with whom He revealed His mind in a more plain and familiar manner than to the prophets (Ex. 33:11; Num. 12:6–8; Deut. 34:10)—when this Moses, I say, desired to see God’s glory, His invisible being and majesty, he was told that he could not see this and live. Such a discovery as he desired would rather kill than satisfy him. And therefore he is bidden be content with a sight of God’s back parts and with hearing a proclamation of God’s goodness and glorious attributes (Ex. 33:18–20, 25; cf. Ex. 34:5–6). So should we forbear to ask or inquire after that which is hid, as was said to Manoah (Judg. 13:17–18). And Jacob was tacitly rebuked for the like inquiry (Gen. 32:29). Therefore, as we should not inquire after these hidden secrets further than they are revealed to us, so we would beware to suffer our minds to wade too curiously into this ocean, lest we create to ourselves confusion, darkness, and distraction. And

thereby instead of being helped to the right discharge of the duty of prayer which is possibly intended in this prying and diving, we would be more distracted in our minds and unhinged and discomposed for the duty.

2. We would beware to think that, howbeit one God in three persons be the object of our invocation, we can come to a full discovery of this great mystery, or that such a full and clear discovery hereof is necessary to our approaching acceptably to God by prayer. It should satisfy us to know that in the Godhead there are three persons, and that this Godhead, which is in three distinct persons, is the object of our invocation, so as when we pray to God, we pray to one God and to three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—although we cannot by our dark and terrene understanding conceive this unsearchable mystery, or take up how it can be that there is but one only God and yet three persons, or have full comprehensions of this sublime and mysterious object which we invoke. If we attain to sure thoughts hereof as work up our souls into a holy awe, fear, reverence, admiration, and to a holy frame becoming such as worship such an unsearchable one as is this God whom we are called to adore and invoke—then it should satisfy. And if we win to the heart-affecting and soul-captivating faith of this revealed mystery, we should be satisfied, though we have not these particular notions, comprehensions, or conceptions of this matter that our curious prying spirits would possibly fain be at—seeing it is manifest enough that our endeavoring after this will but create to us more perturbation of mind, whereby, by reason

of our confusion, we will be less in case to speak to this God than otherwise we might be.

3. We should beware of forming or framing ideas, representations, shapes, and resemblances of this God or of the three persons in the Godhead in our heads or hearts, in order to our better conceiving and understanding. Or, taking up of this object which we pray to, we should beware to conceive of this one God and three persons under any such shape or idea, because He is an object purely spiritual and invisible. And therefore all such mental representations framed by ourselves in our minds cannot but derogate them His glory, and instead of helping us to suitable thoughts and uptakings of Him, fix in our souls low, base, and unfuturate<sup>1</sup> apprehensions of His majesty—yea, and take us off the worshipping of the true and living God and put us on the invoking of a likeness to Him of our own making, which would be spiritual idolatry. It is remarkable that when God of old was giving laws and rules for worship to the people of the Jews by live voice from Mount Sinai, He let them see no similitude of Himself. And Moses takes notice of this and reminds the Israelites thereof (Deut. 4:12), saying, “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude.” And he teaches them to improve this instructing dispensation, particularly to infer there from that the Lord will not be worshipped by the similitudes or likenesses (vv. 15–19). “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the

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1. *Unfuturate*: here, likely “uninformed.”

day the Lord spake to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, etc.” So verses 23 to 25: “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee”—adding this reason: “For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” We should learn from this to abandon such inward imaginations, lest we provoke this jealous God to anger, who is a consuming fire, instead of worshipping Him acceptably. The Lord Himself says, “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?” And again: “To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One” (Isa. 40:18, 25). Will we then frame likenesses and similitudes in our minds of Him who cannot be resembled? What can we imagine the Godhead to be like (Acts 17:29)? See we not how this course brought in all idolatry into the world (Rom. 1:19–23, 25)? They were not satisfied with a discovery of the invisible things of God, His eternal power and Godhead, that might have been had by the things that were made. But they fell on their own imaginations, and therein they became vain. And thereby, instead of more light, their foolish hearts became darkened, and they became fools. And there they came at length to change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made “like to corruptible man, and to birds, etc.”—and whence came all this? They changed the glory of God into a lie. And what are all the imaginations and similitudes of God that we can frame in our

minds, but so many lies, seeing they cannot represent the invisible, true, and living God.

4. As we should beware to fix our hearts too much to any particular apprehension or conception of God under one notion or other, lest we miss thereby that awful frame of heart which more general apprehensions of Him, mixed with faith (as that He is, and that He is an incomprehensible, invisible, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent Lord; that He is holy, just, and righteous, etc., even though we cannot understand or comprehend how He is so), would help us to. So we should beware to limit this immense and incomprehensible being to any notion, which we at one time or other may have of Him. Alas! How shallow are the deepest of our apprehensions! How low are the highest of our speculations! Can that which is infinite be fully comprehended by what is finite, yea, and imperfect and corrupt? Can imperfection comprehend perfection itself? As soon may we think to comprehend the whole ocean in the hollow of our hand, as think to comprehend this infinite perfection by our shallow, crazy, and worthless brains. Thus, we should not attain to suitable thoughts of Him to whom we pray, seeing He is infinitely above all our thoughts. David had noble thoughts of Him when he was praying to Him: "Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all, etc." (1 Chron. 29:11–12). When the saints would declare their thoughts of God as far surmounting their apprehensions and as transcending their shallow reachings,

they use these and the like expressions: “Thou dwellest in the heavens” (Ps. 123:1); “Our God is in the heavens” (Ps. 115:3); “The heavens cannot contain thee” (1 Kings 8:27); “His excellency mounts to the heavens” (Job 20:6); “His mercy is great to the heavens” (Ps. 57:10; 108:4); and, “He rideth on the heavens” (Ps. 68:4, 33).

5. We would beware even in our thoughts and imaginations to divide the object of our worship and invocation. Though there be three persons in this one Godhead which we adore, yet we must not think that there are three distinct objects of invocation—for thus we should not worship and pray to the true and living God, who is one and but one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And whether we name one or more of the persons in the Trinity in our prayers, yet still we must remember that the object is the same one God. And far less must we imagine that the divine person, suppose the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost, which we name and mention in our prayers is alone or chiefly prayed to, and that the persons not named are either not at all prayed to, or not so much. This were to make real distinct objects of divine worship and not to worship the one God.
6. So would we beware to think that one and the same kind of worship is not due to all the persons in the Trinity, and that they are not alike to be worshipped and prayed to. For all the three persons in the Godhead, being one God or having the same Godhead essentially, are to be worshipped with the same divine, supreme worship, which is but of one kind, even such as becomes the infinite majesty of God. And we must remember that all our prayers must be made to the

one God who is the object of divine worship, and that therefore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, being this one God, are all prayed to and alike prayed to when we are praying to God.

7. Particularly, we would beware to imagine that when we are praying to the mediator, we are only giving to Him a peculiar and middle kind of worship, inferior to that which is due to God and not the same. Then we should necessarily grant that He were not the true and living God, or that His work as king on the relation and work of a mediator did degrade Him as to His deity, which were impious and false. Wherefore, our mediator being the true God and having the same divine essence and attributes with the Father, He is to be worshipped with the same divine worship with which the Father is to be worshipped, despite His becoming mediator and being now true man, or God and man in one person. This is because it is the person we pray to, and this person is God—though in Him the human nature is inseparably united to the divine nature, yet the human nature does not subsist of itself, but in the Godhead of the Son, to which it is now hypostatically united so that the person is but one. And therefore that person being God, the worship performed to the mediator who is the Son of God, the second person in the blessed Trinity, must be divine worship. Hence even the Son of David is prayed to and worshipped with divine worship. And that man who is the Son of David, being also the Son of God, partaker of His whole divine essence eternally, and the manhood subsisting in the Godhead, and the person being God—He is to be worshipped with divine worship.

8. Therefore, because Christ who is true man is true God, and as to His person is God, we would beware in our worshipping of Him to make any precision or abstraction in our minds of His human nature from His divine nature, as if one nature were to be worshipped and not the other. Our worship must be directed to the person, and this person is one and is God. And here we can make no abstractions or precisions as to the object worshipped, but must consider Christ as one person, though consisting of two natures. And we must consider this one person as God, because so it is, and the human nature consists in and by the Godhead and not of itself—and therefore makes no alteration in the person, the object of worship.
9. This praying to Christ the mediator should not divert our thoughts and hearts from making use of Him as mediator and as the way to God, or from making use by faith of His mediation and intercession, and so hinder us from coming to God in, through, or by Him. Nor should our eyeing of His meditation by faith and making use of Him as our peacemaker and way to the Father so abstract our thoughts as at the same time we should not look on Him as the object of the same divine worship and worship Him accordingly who is God. For these two are well consistent and need not mar each other. Even while He as God is prayed to, the soul may and should improve Him as mediator or His intercession for attaining of what is prayed for. And when the soul is by faith improving His intercession, He may and should be prayed to as God, so that our praying to Him as God needs not hinder our consideration of Him as the way to the Father or to Himself

as God. Nor needs this consideration of His office and improving of it by faith hinder our respecting His person in our worship and praying to Him as God. Our considering of Him as the Son of God, having the same essence with the Father in which respect He is the object of divine worship, is consistent with considering Him at the same time as mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5) and as He by whom we come to God (Heb 9:7, 25). And neither of these should be prejudicial to the other.

10. As most usually we should, in prayer, pitch on the Father by name, yet we would beware to think that He alone were prayed to, or whatever person we had occasion to name, that He and none other were indeed prayed to. And though any of the persons may occasionally be named, yet we would beware to fix our minds so on the person named as to exclude the rest, or so as not to be withal led to or diverted from the consideration of the rest. This would not be a worshipping of the true God, who is one as to essence and three as to persons or subsistences. And we cannot look rightly on one of these persons, but withal we must be led to eye the other. Hence he who sees the Son, sees the Father, for the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father, and the Holy Ghost in both. As in prayer we are to conceive God to be one in essence, yet so, as conceiving withal, that this God who is one in essence is three in persons—that so in prayer we may worship the Trinity in unity, and the unity in Trinity. So whatever of the persons we pitch on and mention, our prayer must be to this unity of essence in Trinity of persons.

11. While we pray to Christ, we would carefully take heed that we imagine not in our minds that hereby we address ourselves to Him as mediator and then through Him address ourselves to the Father. For hereby we make two addresses in place of one, and each address has its peculiar object, whereby neither are the addresses one, nor the object one, but both are different—contrary to the nature of divine worship and to the oneness of the object of divine worship. While as we pray to Himself, as God, one in essence with the Father, while we pray to the Father in His name, so that the address is and should be but one—to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in and through Christ as mediator. As when we pray to the Spirit and make use by faith of His aid and assistance in approaching to God, we ought not to conceive two addresses, first to the Spirit as He by whom we have access to the Father; and then upon God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As in and through the mediator, so by the Spirit, aiding and assisting. And thus, as the address is one, so the object of worship is still one and the same. And this is the thing we should carefully heed.
12. In our mentioning of Christ in prayer, we would beware of thinking that He were more easy to be spoken to than the Father and less severe and rigid. For when we pray to Christ, we pray to God, and the same divine essence with the essential properties are in the Son and in the Father. And therefore, considering Christ as God (as He must be considered when worshipped with divine worship), He is no easier to be spoken to in prayer than is the Father, nor the Father more rigid than He. For God is one, and it is God, Father, Son,

and Holy Ghost, that was offended by sin. And it is this God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that is reconciled through the mediation and satisfaction of Christ. So that if this reconciliation had not been made, we could have approached to none of the persons with acceptance. But now access is made to all alike, because access is made to God, or to the divine nature, which is the same in all the three persons.

13. In approaching God by prayer, we must beware of conceiving of God absolutely, or as out of Christ—for He is now to be conceived and looked on as in Christ, which may be imported in His taking on the relation of Father. And we ought to come to Him, as to a Father. Hence Christ is called the propitiation (Rom. 3:15), as being truly that which was typified by the mercy seat which was placed above the ark (Ex. 25:21; Heb. 9:5). Now as here in the type, God was to meet with Moses and commune with him, even from above the mercy seat (Ex. 25:22), and the priests were to offer incense every morning and evening on the altar which was put before the veil by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that was over the testimony (Ex. 30:1, 6–8). So in the verity, it is in Christ as mediator that God will speak with us. And it is in Him that we must offer up the incense of prayer to God, or with our eye toward Him, for we must come to God by Christ (Heb. 7:25), and so must seek and find God in Christ. Besides, the Godhead, considered in itself, is an infinite, incomprehensible, yea, and inconceivable thing. Our capacities are finite and cannot comprehend what is simply infinite. And therefore the Lord has out of wonderful love and condescension approached us in His Son and

made Himself more accessible to sinners in Christ, who is therefore God and man in one person, so that coming to Him, we come to God who is there as in His accessible throne and in His trysting place—for the fullness of the Godhead is in Christ and dwells in Christ bodily (Col. 2:9). Wherefore, those who see Christ, see the Father, because He is in the Father, and the Father in Him (John 10:38; 14:9–11; 17:21).

To keep us from these mistakes, we would do well:

1. To have the truths revealed in the Word concerning God and the mystery of the Trinity fixed in our hearts and deeply impressed there, that hereby our hearts, being cast into the mold (as it were) of these truths and, having imbibed the same, may keep fast the impression thereof and give a suitable expression in approaching God or carry a suitable frame and be habitually hearted rightly in this duty. The lack of right apprehensions, according to the word of truth, of this object of divine worship cannot but be prejudicial to a suitable frame of heart and deportment of soul in this exercise.
2. Right apprehensions of the condescensions of love and free grace in the gospel dispensations and of Christ the mediator in His person and office would be a great help to us hereunto.
3. If the heart were rightly ballasted with the sense of God's greatness, majesty, and glory and were accordingly impressed with fear, awe, and reverence, then we would be kept from many vain imaginations and would not readily make extravagant or unsuitable thoughts welcome when they came into our heads.

Nor would we give them any warm entertainment, but would rather extrude them as unwelcome guests.

4. If these three things were practically believed and the heart impressed with them, we would be preserved from many vain imaginations and mistakes: first, that God alone is the object of divine worship, and that we must pray to this God who is one in essence and is three in persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Secondly, that Christ as mediator, as God-man, the peacemaker, intercessor, and advocate is to be made use of by faith as the ground of our access, the way to God, through and by whom we must approach the living God and be accepted in our approaching and so come and ask of God what we would have in the name of Christ. Thirdly, that the Holy Spirit, as purchased by Christ and promised and sent by the Father and the Son to help our infirmities, be made use of by faith as our helper and strengthener, so that by His assistance we may come to God through Christ. All which is plainly and shortly held forth by the apostle, “For through him [i.e., Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). So that we must go to the Father (that is, to God, who is now become to us a Father in Christ) through Christ by the Spirit.

*The Right Manner of Prayer Enforced from  
That It Is God to Whom We Pray*

*F*rom what was said in chapter 11 of this only object of invocation, where it was shown that God only is to be prayed to, we will now draw a second inference, namely, that seeing prayer must be performed to God alone, we should be careful in our praying to or invoking of God that the duty be so discharged as may be some way answerable to such an object. We should endeavor to pray so as remembering we are praying to God, so that hence we may be put in mind of several things required to the right manner of prayer, which we will briefly mention, as:

1. Seeing it is God who is to be invocated and to whom we are to pray, our prayers should be gone rather about in a humble manner. He is a great and holy God, and we are but sinful dust and ashes. And therefore we should approach Him as sensible thereof and as knowing what a great distance we ought to keep. It is the desire of the humble which the Lord hears (Ps. 10:7). We know how the prodigal carried himself when he returned and spoke to his father (Luke 1:5), and how the poor publican stood afar off and dared not so much as lift up his eyes (Luke 18:13). These parables teach us

how humble we ought to be when approaching God. Abraham did count himself but dust and ashes when he was speaking to God (Gen. 18:27). And the woman of Canaan was content to be counted a dog, if so be she might get a dog's portion (Matt. 15:26–27). The Lord has respect to the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off (Ps. 13:8, 6). The humble man is only in case to wait at the posts of God's door with patience and to welcome what God is willing to give, were it but a crumb. And he is also to improve and make good use of all that He grants and to be very thankful for it. The humble person is most ready to honor God and to put a value and a high price on the grace and mercy of God. When beggars come before great persons, they keep a due distance and carry with a suitable humility. How much more ought we to be humble before the Lord, who are not only base and lowly worms, but have highly provoked Him to anger, and not only have not deserved any good at His hands, but we have disoblged Him, abused His love and favors, and have deserved to be cut off in His displeasure.

Now this humility consists in these particulars. First, in counting ourselves really and unworthy to get leave to stand before God and so speak to Him, as being sinners—and so such as dare not so much as lift up our eyes to heaven or to draw near to God, being but dust and ashes and worms and no men, as Psalm 22:6 (see Ezra 9:6). Second, in counting ourselves unworthy of the smallest mite of mercy that ever a sinful creature got, as knowing ourselves to have deserved hell fire and the curse of God. Third, in willing and ready amplifying of our own vileness and unworthiness, to the end we may be more ashamed before the Lord,

as the prodigal did, and in aggravating our guilt and miscarriages, as did penitent Ephraim (Jer. 31:18–19). Fourth, in expecting all from God *gratis*, of His free grace and mercy and for nothing in us, and pleading nothing before Him but our own worthlessness, indigency, necessity, and miserable condition (Jer. 14:7; Ps. 25:11; 39:12–13; Dan. 9:3–4, 17, 19; Ezra 9). Fifth, in sorrow and brokenness of heart for what we have done and for the wretched condition we have brought ourselves into through our own folly. The humble man is a man of a broken and contrite spirit (Ps. 51:17). Sixth, in being far from limiting the Lord, either as to the time of granting what we would have or as to the measure thereof. Humble persons will put a blank check in God's hand and give Him a latitude, as all reason requires. Seventh, in bearing with all discouragements, checks, challenges, rebukes, upbraidings, or what else we may meet with in going to God. The woman of Canaan was not petted when she was counted a dog. And the Israelites were not discouraged from the duty by the Lord's upbraiding them with their former miscarriages and abuses of His mercies and threatenings to deliver them no more (Judg. 10:11–12, 23). Eighth, in waiting with patience and without wearying till the Lord be pleased to grant us the light of His countenance. A humble person will not run away because he is not answered at the first, but will wait for his alms. Ninth, in welcoming heartily and cheerfully anything, how small so ever, that God is pleased to give, without grudging or repining. Humble persons and beggars, as they will not carve out their own alms, so they will not quarrel if they get but little. The prodigal would have been content if his father had made him like one

of his hired servants, though he had not made him a son. And the woman of Canaan would have been satisfied with a crumb. Tenth, in being very thankful for the smallest mercies and humble even after the prayer is heard. When David was heard (Ps. 34:4), he became not the more proud, but counted himself a poor man (v. 6). So was penitent Ephraim after he got grace to return more humble (Jer. 31:19). Eleventh, in prizing above all God's mercy, pardon of sins, reconciliation with God, and His acceptance. The poor, humble publican had no more to say, but, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." Twelfth, in exalting God's free grace and rich mercy for any favor received, how small so ever. Humble souls will cry out, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the Lord be glory." See how humble David admired God's goodness to him (2 Sam. 7:17, etc.; 1 Chron. 24:11, 16).

2. Seeing it is God that we are to pray to, we should pray lifting up holy hands (1 Tim. 2:5). Such as draw near to God should cleanse their hands and purify their hearts (James 4:8). For that was a received and uncontroverted maxim and principle, which the man who had been born blind and had now his eyes opened by Christ alleged when he was questioned concerning Christ by the Pharisees (John 9:13). Now we know that God hears not sinners, but if any man be a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears. That God to whom we pray is a holy God and hates all the workers of iniquity (Ps. 5:5). He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness (v. 4). He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on iniquity (Hab. 1:13). This holiness required of such as approach to God in prayer

says not that such as are not free of all sin may not approach to God, nor that such as are conscious of their own guiltiness may not pray—for they are to pray for remission of their sins daily—nor that their holiness may be their ground of expecting the answer or made use of as an argument to prevail with God for that expression (Ps. 86:2). “Preserve my soul, for I am holy” has but this true import: “Preserve my soul, for I am one whom Thou of free grace beareth a favor to.” But this holiness required of such as approach in prayer to the holy God takes in these particulars: first, such would beware of entertaining, harboring, and liking known sin or being resolved to hold it fast, for we see what the Lord says of such, “Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols” (Ezek. 14:3–4, 7). So the palmist tells us, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Ps. 66:18; see Isa. 1:13; Matt. 5:24). Such sinners as love their idol-sins and will not quit them and such as go on in their wickedness with pleasure and delight are the sinners that God will not hear. Second, such as come to God by prayer should labor to have their hearts averse from sin and endeavor to be delivered both from the filth and from the power of it. This purity should be studied and minded. And thus should they labor to cleanse their hands and

purify their hearts. Their purpose and honest resolution should be, through the grace of the Lord, to strive against every known sin and to have their consciences sprinkled in the blood of Jesus. Third, the apprehensions of the holiness of that God with whom they have to do should impress their heart with a kindly desire after a holy frame, when they are coming before the Holy One of Israel. Fourth, there should be a care to observe whatever God has appointed for His worship and service in prayer. Otherwise, we will profane His holy name. Fifth, there should be a design to promote holiness by our prayers. And therefore we should not pray for fostering of our lusts, as James 4:3. Sixth, we must lay by all passion inordinate and such like distempers, and so lift up holy hands without wrath (1 Tim. 2:8) and without carnal fire (Luke 9:54–55). Seventh, we must also empty our heads of excessive carnal care, which will put us out of a holy suitable frame.

3. Seeing it is God to whom we pray, our prayers should be gone about with a suitable seriousness and earnestness, not in a trivial, trifling, and superficial manner, as if we were indifferent whether He heard us or not, and whether He would grant us what we ask or not. This would be as a real mocking of the Lord. A king would think himself mocked if a poor man came to seek something from him only for a fashion and showed by his countenance and carriage that he were not very earnest in the matter nor very desirous to have the thing he asked. So the Lord will not look on it as right prayer when our heart is not in our petition. Nor will He regard our suits when they are but lip desires and are not the desires of the whole heart. David cried with

his whole heart (Ps. 119:145). The Lord took notice that the heart was away from the prayers of Ephraim when they howled on their beds (Hos. 7).

4. This is clearly imported in the apostle's expression: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication" (Eph. 6:18). There must be prayer and supplication, and all prayer and supplication, and prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and a watching unto all prayer and supplication, and that with perseverance, yea, and with all perseverance. This is so that every word here holds forth emphatically this seriousness and earnestness. So like the expression, "Laboring fervently for you in prayers" (Col. 4:12), or striving and fighting, as in an agony, for you, in prayers—here is no trifling, but the most of seriousness, as is used by those who fight and wrestle for the mastery who use all their strength, skill, and dexterity to obtain the victory and fight for the life. This same is imported by that expression, "Night and day praying exceedingly," or, we could say, "more and more abundantly" (1 Thess. 3:10), as also by the frequent injunctions we have to pray without ceasing, and always (Luke 18:1, etc.; Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 3:10; 5:17). And we will be convinced of a necessity for this if we consider, first, that it is God who is serious in all His ways with and toward us with whom we have to do. He does not trifle with us, and why should we trifle with Him in invoking Him and in the matter of His worship? Second, He is serious in His calling and commanding us to call on Him. And why should not our obedience be answerable? Third, do we ever find that such as have trifled with the Lord

in their prayers have prospered in their way? Nay, have not such courses brought on the wrath and displeasure of God? And has not God counted Himself as mocked? And how should we think to escape His wrath and to obtain what we desire that way? Fourth, do we not on the contrary find that serious, unfortunate wrestlers have obtained the blessing? And should not this encourage us to be serious and earnest also? Fifth, the matters we are to ask in prayer are great, necessary, and such as conduce to our eternal felicity and so cannot be wanted, or we must needs become miserable. How unsuitable, yea, how fearful a thing is it to be indifferent, cold-rise, and superficial in our asking of these things? Sixth, hereby, instead of a blessing, we bring on a curse on ourselves, because we offer a corrupt thing (Mal. 1:8, 14). Seventh, so we do hereby bring on an evil frame on our spirit, for hence comes it that we turn indifferent, superficial, and lukewarm in all God's matters; we create hereby a formal, lazy, and hypocritical frame at heart which is a far step to atheism and all profanity.

Now, as to this seriousness in prayer, we would know wherein it consists and how it will be known. For clearing of which, we will mention these particulars. First, where this seriousness is, there is a pressing of this work to all others and a postponing of other work to it. What we are serious about, we seek it chiefly and in the first place. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). David was early at this work when he prevented the dawning of the morning (Ps. 119:147), and Heman when he said he would prevent God (Ps. 88:13). Second, there is a frequency in the duty. The earnest soul renews his suits, as Paul

did (2 Cor. 12:7–8) and David (Ps. 55:17). Seriousness is attended with constancy and continuance in the duty (Rom. 1:9). Third, where this is, there is a stretching out of the soul and of the desires in the prayer, as Acts 12:5: They prayed there “without ceasing,” or, (as the word is) intensely, with intense or fervent prayer, as the word is rendered (1 Peter 4:2). So Acts 26:7: intensely, or with intenseness. This is imported in wrestling in prayer and fighting as in an agony (Col. 4:12). Fourth, where seriousness is, the whole strength is employed, as in wrestling in the Olympic Games, and so serious prayer is with the whole soul and heart (Ps. 119:145). Fifth, so is there a continuance in it, “a continuing instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). A pursuing incessantly, as dogs following the scent, with full strength, purpose, and fixed resolution. Sixth, this is accompanied with a vehement desire after the good thing sought and with a holy impatience of delay (Ps. 143:7). And hence the soul cries out, “How long? How long?” (Ps. 13; 80:4). Seventh, and, therefore, where this seriousness is, they will not be content with noes or delays as the widow did importunate the unjust judge (Luke 18); and the man, his neighbor who was in bed (Luke 11:7). Jacob would not let the angel go until he blessed him (Gen. 32:26–28). Moses would not let God alone (Ex. 32:11–13). Eighth, nor will the soul be put off with difficulties in the way and discouragements, as the blind man cried the more that he was forbidden or charged by many to hold his peace (Mark 10:47–48), and the woman of Canaan gave not over for all the discouragements she met with (Matt. 15), but still renewed her suit. Ninth, if at any time they find their spirits grow flat and begin to weary, and they faint, then they set to again and stir

up themselves, as the word is (Isa. 64:9). They shake off their drowsiness and laziness and renew their cries and fall to work afresh. Tenth, they are careful to avoid and guard against everything that may prove an impediment to them, such as too earnest pursuit after other carnal things which steals the heart away; doubting God's answer and misgiving apprehensions in the matter, which faints and makes careless (John 21:15); suffering the heart to wander, rove, and grow wild while we are about prayer; and the like. These bring us off our scent or retard our motion or weaken us in the pursuit. Eleventh, such as are earnest in this business—observe their success and catch at every word that may encourage and give hope, as the servant of Benhadad did diligently observe whether anything would come from Ahab and did hastily catch it (1 Kings 20:33). So did the woman of Canaan catch at Christ's calling her a dog and sought on that her crumb (Matt. 15). The soul in this case is hearkening to hear what God will speak (Ps. 85:8). Twelfth, where this earnestness is, there will be a plying of all arguments to press on the desires and to strengthen their expectation of an answer. This we see in Moses (Deut. 9:25–29), in Daniel (ch. 9), and frequently in Psalms. Thirteenth, so there will be a plying of the time well and a laying hold on all occasions and promising opportunities wherein they may hope to come speedily, as the blind men did (Matt. 20:30, 32–33). Where this earnestness is, there will be a seeking of God when He is to be found (Ps. 32:6) and is near (Isa. 55:6), as when God is calling to cry and is saying, as it were, "What would you have?" (1 Kings 3:5, 9). Or when He fixes, fits, and prepares the heart to the work (Ps. 10:17). Or when

He brings home a word of promise (2 Sam. 7:27). Or when He pinches with straits (Ps. 50:15; James 5:15). Or when He warms the heart and brings the soul near to Him (Jer. 30:21). Fourteenth, where this earnestness is, it will be the man's work. And he will set himself to it, as Daniel set his face to the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication (9:3). Fifteenth, so there will be a laying hold on all encouragements, to set them on and hold them on, such as their own experience and the example of others and the like.

Yet we should know that this earnestness takes not away nor impedes that holy, sweet submission of soul that ought to be—of which we will speak a word in the next place.

4. Seeing it is God we have to do with in prayer, we ought not to be sinfully bold and importunate, nor too pre-emptory with this absolute and great sovereign. But we should be patient and submissive to His holy will and pleasure, as we see in Christ when He prayed that He might be delivered from that hour, and that the cup might pass from Him. He withal submitted to the holy will of God, saying, "Not my will, but thy will be done." We ought, I say, to exercise patience and submission, both, first, in reference to the particular we ask, leaving Him a latitude to give it, or what He thinks to be as good or better. When God told Paul that His grace was sufficient for him, he urged no more the particular he was asking (2 Cor. 12). And secondly, as to the measure and quantity of the favor, the woman of Canaan was content with a crumb. And the prodigal was content to be handled as a hired servant. And thirdly, as to the time and season of granting the answer, seeing He will

hasten it in His time (Isa. 60:22). He gives in due season (Ps. 104:27; 145:15). He exalts in due time (1 Peter 5:6), and we will receive in due season (Gal. 6:9).

This manner of way we should the more carefully observe, because, first, we know not many a time what spirit we are of, as Christ said to James and John (Luke 9:55) when they would have been praying for fire to come down from heaven to consume that village of the Samaritans which would not receive Christ. Second, we know not what is best for us and are often ready to seek that which, if granted, would prove hurtful to us. Many a time we know not what we are seeking, as James and John at another time did not know what they asked when they asked that they might sit, the one on Christ's right hand and the other on His left hand in His glory (Mark 10:38). Third, we can plead for nothing on the ground of justice, having deserved nothing but the curse of God. And so all He gives is of His own free grace and mercy, without and beyond our deservings. And therefore we may not think to command Him. Fourth, many times we ask amiss and for corrupt ends that we may ware and spend what we ask and would have on our lusts (James 4:3). Fifth, oftentimes we are selfish, more minding our own particular and personal satisfaction than the public good or what nearly concerns the glory of God—as when the disciples in the Mount desired to stay there and build tabernacles (Matt. 7:4). Sixth, He is a great and absolute God and does all things according to His own mind and will fulfill all of His own counsel. And He must not be limited by His own creatures, who must be at His disposal in all things.

These and the like reasons should move us to be very submissive to God and to guard against this limiting preremptory humor which will, first, prompt us to seek what is not suitable to our condition—as when the two disciples sought to sit on Christ’s right and left hand, and when the young son who proved a prodigal sought his share of his father’s goods (Luke 15:12–13). Second, and to seek before we advise well what we are doing, as these in the wilderness who waited not for God’s counsel but fell a lusting (Ps. 106:13–14). Third, and to be urgent for the particular we would have with a willingness to comport with what is worse in the enjoying of that particular—as when the people in that wilderness were so lusting after meat, that to have their fill thereof, they would willingly have comported with all the bondage of Egypt and as though people in Samuel’s days were so earnest for a king, that to have him they cared not to lose all their liberty and became slaves (1 Sam. 11:11–19; cf. 8:10; 19, etc.). Fourth, yea, to be so bent on it as to think nothing of all they got besides—as the people in the wilderness despised and loathed the manna, which yet was called angels’ food, so importunate were they for flesh (Num. 11:4, 6). As Abraham said, “Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?” (Gen. 15:2), so they will be satisfied with nothing, if they get not that particular. Fifth, this sinful importunity will turn folks brutish and unreasonable. What else did Rachel’s speech to Jacob, saying, “Give me children, or else I die” (Gen. 30:1), import than such a transport as was not rational? Could Jacob give her children? Knew she not that the key of the womb was in God’s hand? Sixth, it will also urge and drive to the use of unlawful means that they may

get their ends attained, as when the same Rachel had such a desire to children that she would not wait God's time, but gave her maid to her husband and pressed him to go in to her (Gen. 30:3), as Sarah did before (Gen. 16:2). Seventh, it will press them to desire things unseasonably—as the Israelites, who, in a fit, would go to Canaan when the Lord had said the contrary and would fight against their enemies so that they might take possession, can never pray as one partaker of the spirit of supplication when the Lord was not among them (Num. 14:40–41, 44). Eighth, it makes them so earnest that they fall to quarrelling boldly with God when they are not answered at the first, especially if their seeking be more than ordinary. As these who said as intending a process against God, “Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our souls, and thou takest no knowledge?” (Isa. 58:3). Ninth, so importunate will they become that, if they be not answered, they lay aside the duty and cry out with that king, “This evil is of the Lord, what should I wait for the Lord any longer?” (2 Kings 6:33), and so sing the same song with the profane atheists, “What profit should we have if we pray unto him?” (John 21:15). Tenth, when this humor prevails, it will make them fire hot for that particular, though it be not necessary and very cold-rise and indifferent in seeking more necessary matters.

5. Seeing it is God who is a spirit to whom we pray, our prayers ought to be spiritual. He is a spirit and will be worshipped in spirit (John 4:24). And therefore we are to pray in the Spirit (Eph. 6:18). This includes these particulars. First, that we be renewed in the spirit of

our minds (Eph. 4:23) and be built up a spiritual house, to the end we may be a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). For until this be, we cannot perform spiritual devotion acceptable to God, who is a spirit. The carnally minded man, or, the natural man who is not made partaker of this Spirit of grace, for this Spirit will be a spirit of grace, before He be a spirit of supplications. Second, that we have a spiritual frame and disposition while we go about prayer. A saint may be in a very carnal frame and rather drunk with wine or her carnal delights, than filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). And while they are so, they cannot be spiritual in their prayers, for their prayers will smell of their frame and carry with them a tincture of their present carnal disposition. Third, that our petitions be framed by the Spirit, who helps our infirmities (Rom. 8:26) and makes within us intercession for us. Our prayers when spiritual are wrought within by the Spirit—as that word in James 5:16 rendered effectual servant is but one in the original and would import a prayer possessed with the Spirit, for the word is usually used of such as are possessed with a spirit. And so it would denote a prayer having the Spirit within it, wholly possessing it, or a prayer wrought by the Holy Spirit wholly possessing the man, a prayer wrought within as the Lord is said to work in us (Phil. 2:13). Fourth, that they be active, lively, and piercing, and not dead and lumpish. A spirit is a lively, active thing, and so is a spiritual prayer, and so should the prayer be that is performed to the Lord who is a spirit and not a dead lump without life that always sinks to the ground and cannot mount up. Hence we should be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord

(Rom. 12:11). Fifth, that our soul should be at work in prayer and not our body only, otherwise it will be but fleshly and not spiritual. Bodily service and not soul or spiritual service. We should glorify God not only in our bodies, but in our spirits (1 Cor. 6:20). And we should be holy both in body and spirit, as is said of the virgin (1 Cor. 7:34), and sanctified wholly. And our spirit, soul, and body should be blameless (1 Thess. 5:23). Prayer being the work of the whole man, the soul and spirit, which is the chief part, should not be wanting in prayer, otherwise we will not be in case to worship Him, who is a spirit. Sixth, that we must approach to God in prayer by the Spirit as carried in His arms, for our access to this God who is a spirit is by the Spirit (Eph. 2:18). Seventh, that most of our desires or the most earnest of our suits should be for spiritual things. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Eighth, that when we are seeking temporal things (which is also lawful in its due place, as the Lord has taught us to seek this day our daily bread), it should be in its due subordinate place and with a spiritual frame of heart, as intending to employ these temporal things for God's glory. Ninth, that our end and design in all should be spiritual so that God's name may be glorified, His kingdom may come, and He may be obeyed and exalted, and we put in case to serve Him acceptably. Tenth, that our motives to prayer or to the putting up of particular petitions be spiritual and heavenly, not carnal, low, and selfish.

6. Seeing it is God that we pray to, we should beware to pray so as thinking that by our prayers and petitions we could really change God's mind and move Him to

alter His purpose and resolution or make Him willing to give or do that which otherwise or before He was unwilling to give or to do—for our God is the true God and therefore is unchangeable in Himself and in all His purposes and resolutions. He is in one mind, and who can turn Him (Job 23:13)? He does whatever He pleases (Ps. 115:3; 135:6). When we are speaking to men, we may really by motives and arguments move them and work them up to that which they were not inclined to and so may alter their judgments and inclinations. But it is not so with God, who is every way perfect and immutable (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17) and does all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will (Eph. 1:11). Therefore, our prayers must flow from another principle than from such a false and unworthy supposition as this is. And they must be looked on and gone about as a commanded duty and as a means appointed of the Lord whereby such and such mercies and favors are to be obtained, and whereby we ourselves are wrought up to a more confident dependence on God and to humility, and our hopes and desires are increased and so we be put into a posture of receiving the good things we seek, more to God's glory and to our own spiritual advantage.

7. Seeing it is God to whom we pray, therefore our prayers should be in truth and in sincerity. He is a spirit and will be worshipped in truth (John 4:25). He desires truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6). He hates hypocrisy and double dealing, being a God of truth. And besides, the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, and that man need not think that he will receive anything

of the Lord (James 1:7–8). Our prayers should not come out of feigned lips (Ps. 17:1). On this account should all our prayers be performed in uprightness, truth, and sincerity. And therefore, first, we should hide nothing from God but pour out our hearts (Ps. 62:8) and declare all our ways (Ps. 119:26), as David desired God to search him and discover himself to himself (Ps. 139:23–24). Second, our lips should not go against or without our hearts, that is, we should not pray for that mercy which our heart desires not to have, nor to be delivered from that sin which we desire to hold fast. This were to mock God, as if He knew no more than an idol what abomination we harbored in our hearts. Third, we should harbor nothing wittingly and willingly in our hearts that may hinder our return of prayer or our acceptance, for if we regard iniquity in our heart, God will not hear (Ps. 66:18; cf. Job 11:13–15; Matt. 5:23). Fourth, we should be ready to use all other means lawful and commanded to come by what we desire in prayer. If we pray for grace and against sin, our lives should declare that we desire grace and hate sin, that we strive against sin and labor for grace. For if we set up our idols in our hearts and put the stumbling blocks of our iniquity before our face, our prayer to God will be in vain (Ezek. 14:3–4, 6–8). Fifth, we should beware of all affect[at]ion in prayer. Hypocrisy makes prayer become really a stage play. The mouths of such as deal herein hypocritically speak great swelling words, as Judges 1:16. When there is nothing in the heart suitable thereunto or correspondent therewith, we should not think to complement with God and give Him goodly words and think to please Him with rhetorical flourishes, pleasant cadencies,

and ingeminations<sup>1</sup>—for such expressions are in the Lord’s eyes nothing but vain repetitions (Matt. 6:6–7). The lips of the saints are like threads of scarlet: pure, single, and fine (Cant. 4:3). Sixth, we should singly aim at the glory of God, confess our sins that He may be justified when He speaks and clear when He judges (Ps. 51:3–4). And thus we should pray that He may be exalted with our tongue (Ps. 66:17), and not that we may sound forth our own praises and commendations, as did the Pharisee (Luke 18:10–12). Our end should be single and sincere, and not that we may be seen of men, as they did. Though we may intend our own good or our own salvation, yet not principally nor with exclusion of God’s glory, but in conjunction therewith and in subordination thereunto—namely, that He in our salvation may be glorified, we should seek remission of sins not merely that we may be free of the terrors of conscience and the like, but principally that we may have access to His favor and that He may be glorified therein. We should seek grace not that we may be satisfied, but that we may be in case to serve and glorify Him. Seventh, our affections should be moved and wrought on suitably to our petitions. If we pray against sin, we should detest it and loathe it. If we pray for grace, we should love and prize it at a high rate. If we pray for others, we should have a kindly sympathy with them in their afflictions and so pray as bound with them in bonds and as suffering with them. If we pray for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, we should have a great liking thereunto and prefer Zion to our chief joy.

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1. *Ingeminations*: repetitions.

Eighth, thus we should pray with our whole soul, spirit, and mind, with judgment and understanding, with will and affections; for a hypocrite is a divided man! But the sincere man is wholly what he is. Thus, the sincere saints seek the Lord with their whole soul (Ps. 119:58; Isa. 26:6). Ninth, our whole strength should be at this work. What we do herein, we should do with our might (Eccl. 9:10), without reserve. Prayer should not be as a by-work, but gone about really and toward a good end and purpose, as serving the Lord with our spirits (Rom. 1:9). Tenth, we should not labor to express or signify more with our words than is really within. This straining to speak more than is or otherwise than it is indeed in the present frame of our hearts is not sincere and single dealings. Our expressions should not be such as import more sense and feeling, more grief and fear, more love and desire than indeed there is. A heap of words without corresponding motions of the heart expressed thereby are no sincere prayer. David opened his mouth and panted in prayer, because he longed for God's commandment (Ps. 119:131).

8. Seeing we speak to God in prayer, we ought to be present in our minds. They should not be in the meantime with the eyes of the fool at the ends of the earth. It is an unseemly thing for one, while speaking to a king or great person, to be gazing on everything around him. So it is unseemly for us, while speaking to God in prayer, to have our minds roving after vanity or sinful objects, yea, or after lawful objects, because then unseasonable, and then they prove but diversions to draw away our hearts through the slight and cunning of Satan who is busy at that time to cast in distracting, diverting, or

jumbling thoughts to the end our heart and intention may be drawn away and divided and we brought off the scent we were on and so made more remiss and formal in our prayers. Therefore, we should guard against the wandering of our hearts by remembering what we are about; what a one He is before whom we are; how Satan thereby gains advantage against us; how hereby we lose our earnest frame, and our prayer dies in our mouth; how our hearts are diverted, and so our lips and tongues speak words, but our hearts speak not.

9. Because it is God we are praying to, therefore we should be fervent in prayer and zealous, as serving such a great king therein, and should not turn formal and superficial. This fervency should be true spiritual fervency, and it will appear by these things. First, our hunger and desire will be greater after spiritual things than after carnal things. It will be more for graces than for gifts—more for blessings that will fit us for God’s service and be for His glory than for what may commend us to others (Ps. 4:6; Matt. 6:33). Second, this true fervor will set us as much (if not more) on secret and private prayers as on public before others. But when a spirit of formality prevails, we love to be seen. And therefore we desire mainly to pray before others where we may be commended. Third, where true fervor is, it will appear in secret as much, if not more, than in more public prayers. If we seem fervent in public while praying before others, but flat and formal, dead and lazy in private, then our zeal and fervor is not good. Fourth, if our zeal be for God and His glory, we will be fervent in our prayers for our very enemies, that they may be converted, and thus the power of Christ may be exalted,

the riches of the freedom of grace preached forth, the kingdom of Christ enlarged, and Satan spoiled. Fifth, where this true zeal in prayer is, there will be more care to have the heart kept warm, the affections boiling, and the desires inward flaming, than to have expressions high and raised. And when the flaming of the heart ceases, there will be rather a cutting of prayer short, than a keeping up the form with empty and lifeless words. Sixth, there will be a care to shake off all sluggishness or what may make us move and run in this exercise slowly—all sleepiness and drowsiness that make us pray as if we were not praying. And therefore the first thing that such will aim at in prayer will be to get their heart awakened and roused up and so put in case to speak with life and fervor.

10. Because we speak to God who is a great, holy, and jealous God and will not have His name profaned or taken in vain, therefore, we should not be rash, inconsiderate, or hasty in rushing in before the Lord's presence. But we should have our hearts composed and our spirits right so that we may approach with due deliberation and circumspection. We see what advice the wise man gives us in this matter: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything [or any word] before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). Hence we are commanded to watch unto prayer (Eph. 6:18; 1 Peter 4:7) and to watch and pray (Matt. 26:40–41). Now for this cause we should labor, first, to have our spirits wakened. A praying man must be a waking man, for a sleepy man can hardly speak sense or know well what he says. We must be vigilant and sober and

so watch unto prayer (1 Peter 4:7). Second, we should labor to have our hearts freed from the hurry of the things of this world. A man cannot speak composedly and deliberately in a crowd and noise of people. Nor can we pray to God if our hearts be surrounded with the noise and cries of the cares of this world, for they will so distract us that we will hardly know what we are saying. Third, we should be composed, as laying aside other cares, even of lawful things, knowing in whose presence we come. It is not seemly to see a man all defiled with his ordinary work rushing into the presence of a great king. No more is it seemly for us (in solemn prayer of which we here speak, for in ejaculatory prayers we may send these post to heaven in the midst of our work, yet with the heart sleeping from our work for that instant), while our work is scarce out of our hands, to rush into the presence of the great king. When our hearts are fixed and prepared, then are we in best case as to praise (Ps. 57:7; 108:1) and so to pray (Ps. 10:17). Fourth, we should be sure to observe the frame of our spirit to see if it be in any lively, fit, and suitable frame. See if all within us be in tune that there be no jarring, no lust, nor distemper, nor faithless doubting or heartlessness that will make us run in vain. Fifth, particularly, we should see what spirit we are of so that there be not any perturbing affection, inordinate motion of heart, or unlawful desires riveted in the soul. For if that be, we cannot pray acceptably. If our hearts be preoccupied with the excessive cares of the world, with inordinate desires after any lawful thing or with affection to any lust, then we are in no fit posture to speak to God in prayer. Sixth, we should see that our hearts be in some measure under the suitable apprehensions of His great

and glorious majesty with whom we have to do and of our own wants and necessities. Otherwise we will not be in case to speak to God as humble supplicants. Seventh, we should have our eye on all inviting occasions so that we let not such slip away. When the Lord by His dispensations is calling and inviting, we should yield and so carry as such as are standing at some great person's door used to do, who, whenever the door is opened or half-opened, or they can get their eye on the person, are ready to put the petition in his hand.

11. Seeing we are speaking to God in prayer, we should be careful and watchful while we are about prayer, lest instead of obtaining a blessing, we procure a curse. We are commanded to continue in prayer and to watch in the same (Col. 4:2), and that because He is a holy, pure, and heavenly God with whom we have to do and will not be mocked. And He is of purer eyes than to behold evil. And therefore we should be careful, lest by our miscarriage we provoke Him to anger, instead of getting the light of His countenance and favor, as we see in Psalm 78:18, 21. Second, Satan is ready and busy then to distract, distemper, divert, and trouble us with sinful thoughts and suggestions so that we may be discomposed and out of a suitable praying frame and so may sin against God and wrong our own souls. He goes always about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. And therefore we should be on our guard. Third, our hearts are naturally tricky, false, and deceitful, and prone to step out of the way and forget a praying frame. How quickly may vain thoughts get lodging and so distract us! How quickly may unbelief get entry and so faint us and discourage us! How hard

is it to keep the heart fixed to praying dispositions! Fourth, by neglect of this watchfulness, we prejudge ourselves much, for then we cannot lay hold on and improve such assistances as the Spirit will give in prayer. He suggests in prayer many suitable and seasonable particulars to be presented to God. But when we watch not, we necessarily suffer these to pass. So He suggests and presents spiritual motives and encouragements to renew our suits, or whereupon we may conceive hope and have our faith strengthened—all which we must miss by neglecting this watchfulness, not to mention the items of returns which He is pleased to give sometimes in prayer. Fifth, if we be not careful to watch in prayer, we may quickly turn dead, formal, and superficial in our service and so perform heartless, lifeless, and dead service to Him who will not accept the blind and lame at our hands or a female, when we should offer a faultless male.

Now, this watching in prayer or careful observing of ourselves then includes these things: first, that we be careful to keep our hearts in a spiritual, lively, sincere, and zealous frame, and that we should rather be rising higher in these dispositions than waxing more remiss and slack—that the sense of our need and our desire after the blessings we ask, etc., rather become stronger than weaker. Second, that when anything is wrong in the soul, we foster it not, but instantly labor to remedy it by putting it over on God to help. Third, that we suffer not wandering thoughts to lodge there, but presently on the first observation hush them to the door and call our soul to advert and to be present. Fourth, that we suffer not unbeseeming, irreverent, unbelieving apprehensions when suggested or anything of

that kind that Satan will cast in to put us out of frame to get any welcome or house room with us. Fifth, that we be careful that heart and tongue go together and keep a harmony—that is, that we express not what our heart thinks not. We seek not what our heart desires not. And that there be no more of life, sense, affection, and desire in the expressions than are in the heart, lest the service be cast as hypocritical. Sixth, as also, that what we utter with our tongues be suitable to His majesty and not offensive so that we have no unsavory or impertinent speeches. David was sensible of this when he prayed that God would set a watch before his mouth and keep the door of his lips (Ps. 141:3). Seventh, that the heart be kept in an open, receiving, and welcoming posture, that is, in readiness to entertain thankfully all the supplies, assistances, and suggestions of the Spirit of God crying in us, “Abba, Father,” and helping our infirmities. As also, to welcome and improve all the encouragements to hope and believe a return, and all the suggested motives and grounds to renew and press our suits. Eighth, that the heart be kept in a humble, waiting, and hearkening posture to see what God the Lord will say and what return He gives, for sometimes He will think good to insinuate with a satisfying sweetness His acceptance of the desire and His purpose to give a satisfying answer in due time.

12. Because it is the Lord with whom we have to do in prayer, therefore, we should pray with understanding and a well-grounded knowledge so that what we ask in prayer be agreeable to the revealed will of God, for the real good of ourselves and others, and for the glory of God. Otherwise we can expect no return but what

will be contrary to our sinful, rash, and inconsiderate desires. It is a fearful thing to seek of God to fulfill our sinful and wicked desires and to do the devil's work. Therefore, first, we should be well acquainted with the will of the Lord revealed in His Word. Second, we should be sound in our judgments, not entertaining any error or mistake, for according to these will our prayers be. Third, we should labor to be free of any carnal interest, for that will bias us, and our prayers will incline toward that bias. Fourth, so would we labor to be kept from sinful passions, for these will quickly blind our judgment and so pervert and corrupt our prayers, as when James and John would have prayed for fire from heaven upon that city of the Samaritans that refused Christ lodging.

13. Because it is to God that we pray, therefore, we should have right apprehensions of Him and faith in His nature and attributes—for he that comes to God must believe that He is, etc. (Heb. 11:6). If we have unbelieving or unsuitable apprehensions of God, we cannot pray to Him rightly because we have no confidence to find our supplies in Him, nor can we keep a due distance. Nor can our suits be presented with any grounded hope of coming speed. And therefore should we have the faith of God fixed in glorious and encouraging titles and attributes, such as, first, His being the true and living God and the fountain of life and so a God that can hear and help, not like the dead idols (Ps. 15:3–8; 135:15–18). David took Him thus up and thirsted in his prayers for Him (Ps. 42:2; 84:2). Thus did Jeremiah take Him up when he was praying to Him (Jer. 10:6–7, 10) and on this account looked on

Him as the only object of divine worship, in opposition to all the false gods in the world which were the workmanship of man's hands. Second, His being infinite and incomprehensible. Thus did David take Him up in that song of praise: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable" (Ps. 145:3). So Psalm 147:5: "Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite." This would keep us at due distance and from entertaining base, low, unsuitable, and unseemly thoughts or ideas of Him in our minds. Third, His omnipresence, filling all places, as did Solomon (1 Kings 8:27). This will encourage us to pray everywhere (1 Tim. 2:8), when separate from all flesh, when shut up in dungeons, when in the midst of the sea and in the belly of hell, as it is Jonah 2:2. As also to fear wherever we are and to be in a suitable frame, knowing that God's eye is on us, and that nowhere we can be hid from His presence (Ps. 139:7-12). And likewise it will much encourage us to pray to remember we are praying to a present God. Fourth, His omniscience, as one that tries the heart and reins (1 Chron. 29:17; Jer. 32:19) and to whom nothing is hid, not our groanings (Ps. 38:9), nor our sins (Ps. 69:5). This will incline us to plain and open-hearted dealing with God. It is encouraging to know that we have to do with an all-seeing God, who sees even in secret (Matt. 6:6). And what enemies practice in secret against the church and them, and see how false the aspersions are which are laid on by enemies. Fifth, His unchangeableness, as being the same from everlasting. Habakkuk eyed this: "Whose purpose fail not, but his thoughts take place

in all generations” (Hab. 1:12).<sup>2</sup> David takes this view of Him: “The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Ps. 33:11). This is a most strengthening thing (Ps. 102:24, 27; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 46:10) and a useful consideration to guard from sinister thoughts of God, as one that can be moved or changed in His mind, purposes, and determinations by what we say or do. Sixth, His all-sufficiency whereby He can supply all our needs according to His riches in glory (Phil. 4:19) and be all things to us that we want and stand in need of. This is a great encouragement to come to God: to know that He can answer all our desires and be all to us that our case calls for. Seventh, His omnipotency whereby nothing is too hard for Him. Thus did Jehoshaphat eye Him when he was seeking His help against a potent enemy (2 Chron. 20:6). So did Jeremiah (32:16–17). So did Asa when a thousand, thousand Ethiopians came against him. He eyed Him, saying, “LORD, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power” (2 Chron. 14:11). This gives great encouragement in great difficulties and in desperate cases when human probability fails. Eighth, His sovereignty, whereby He does what He wills, follows what methods He pleases, and transcends our thoughts and hopes. This Moses eyed when God had told him that He would smite the people and disinherit them (Num. 14:11–12). He eyed the power and the majestic sovereignty of God, saying, “Let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, etc.” (vv. 17–18). Ninth, His riches in grace

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2. Brown here is misquoting, but seems to have in mind Psalm 33:11. However, Habakkuk 1:12 does support his overall point.

and mercy. This did the psalmist eye (Ps. 103:8–13, 17; 116:4–5; 145:8). This gave Nehemiah encouragement (Neh. 9:17, 31). It is a noble encouragement, when sense of sin and provocation presses hard (Mic. 7:18–19). Tenth, His truth and faithfulness as a God that keeps covenant forever. Nehemiah eyed this (Neh. 1:5; 9:32) and Daniel (Dan. 9:4) and David (Ps. 36:5; 92:2; 119:99; 143:1). This encourages to hope and patience and gives confidence of a return. Eleventh, His holiness, purity, and righteousness. Habakkuk took a view of this when praying against enemies (Hab. 1:12–13, 17). Twelfth, His wisdom. Isaiah saw this (Isa. 31:2) and David (Ps. 104:24; 136:5) and Jeremiah (Jer. 10:12; 51:15) and Daniel (Dan. 2:20). A sight of this is good in intricate cases and difficulties and when we observe the subtlety and craftiness of adversaries and our own wistlessness and folly.

*The Right Way of Prayer Further Cleared  
from God Being a Father*

*W*e have in the previous chapter pointed forth something of the right manner of prayer, so far as the consideration of the object thereof, or person prayed to, God, gave ground. Now for the further clearing up of the right manner of prayer, let us consider the object of our invocation—God as standing under the relation of a father, for as such He is here mentioned. And thence see what way we ought to pray to God, now considered as a father.

We hinted above how God was to be looked on and considered a father to all the world in a more general sense with regards to His creating, preserving, and providing for all, as the Father of the great family of heaven and earth; and how on that account, even wicked, graceless persons were obliged to pray to Him and call on Him as Father. But we will here speak of God as a father in a more spiritual, restricted sense, as being a father to His own adopted ones, which does presuppose and include all the more general grounds. And thence consider what way we should pray to Him:

1. We should now approach God in prayer with a filial, sweet, and heartsome boldness and confidence—not as malefactors come before a judge, trembling all for

fear; but as children to their father, or as one intimate and dear friend to another, and not as prisoners or captives to their enemies. God in the gospel is holding Himself forth as reconciling sinners to Himself by Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:18–19). And in this work of redemption, God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ owns Him and calls on Him as His Father, for He sent Him and authorized Him for that work, on which account He is often called the Father's servant. Now this consideration should animate poor sinners to draw near to God as a father, having put on fatherly affections and bowels of mercies, and as standing ready to embrace poor sinners with His arms stretched forth and His bosom open—as we see the father of the prodigal son did, who, while his son was yet a great way off, saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him (Luke 15:20). Now this boldness and confidence is not such as should hinder and mar their humility and humble acknowledgment of their sins and their blushing and being ashamed before God because of their former sins. For we see the prodigal, though he was encouraged to return home on the account that he was returning to his father, and to come with confidence; yet he came with humility, confessing he had sinned against heaven and in his father's sight and was no more worthy to be called his son (v. 21). But this confidence is, first, in opposition to that sinful predomina[nt] and prevailing discouragement that causes a despondency and a hopeless fainting and despairing of coming speed by their praying, whereby persons are either kept from praying at all or from any measure of hope or expectation of being the better—all because of their sins, against

which they conceive God is so angry and offended that it is in vain for them to approach to Him with a supplication, and that instead of a good answer, they will hasten His wrath on themselves. As also, second, in opposition to slavish fear that keeps the soul back from God as an enemy that bears them no good will but hates them and is waiting an occasion to be avenged on them. And, third, in opposition to groundless suspicious and jealousies of God, as if He would not be so good, gentle, and gracious as He has declared Himself to be, nor would not be so ready to welcome and embrace poor sinners as His Word shows Him to be.

2. We should approach to God in prayer with faith in His gracious nature, whereby He is inclined and ready to receive coming and praying sinners, and with faith in His gracious promises and in His gracious passages of providence, giving ground of hope and encouragement. Filial confidence is accompanied with this faith. The prodigal, when he returned to his father, called him “father.” And so he laid hold on him as his father and thereby believed his fatherly disposition and grounded his hope on that and on the promises and engagements that lay in the bosom of that, confirmed by his former and continued fatherly actings. Thus, though sin and unworthiness stare them in the face and the sense of the former abuse of God’s gracious condescensions and favors, yet the faith of God’s being a father and the faith of His former gracious proofs of His fatherly affection and the faith of His promises—these encourage them to come forward. David expresses all this clearly, saying, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentiful in mercy”

(Ps. 103:8). Here is His gracious nature taken up. Then he says, “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (v. 10)—there His former fatherly actings. And then he says, “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (v. 13). There is faith in His fatherly disposition. When the Lord is calling on backsliding Israel to return by Jeremiah, He puts this in their mouth: “Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth?” (Jer. 3:4). He will have them laying hold on Him as their Father and call to mind His former fatherly dealings with them. See likewise how Isaiah thus carried in name of the church (64:8).

3. This says that we should approach God not only with hope of acceptance and of a hearty welcome, but with hope of getting what we ask or as good. Hear what Christ says, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father; will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:11–13). The faith of His fatherly and tender affection and disposition will bring along with it this faith of receiving what we ask that is necessary and good for us.
4. Hence we learn that we should come to God by prayer in a humble, self-abasing manner. For though we be children and He our Father, yet being unworthy and sinful children, we cannot plead for anything on our own worth or merits, but must expect all freely,

as flowing from His free grace and fatherly condescension. The child will not come to the father as a merchant coming to buy, with money in his hand. But he will only plead his interest in and relation to his father and expect what he asks from free fatherly pity and compassion. We see the prodigal had low thoughts of himself. He thought not himself worthy to be called a son and was content to be as one of his father's hired servants (Luke 15:19, 21).

5. As also this teaches us to draw near to God with holy fear and reverence, as children should approach their father, knowing their own state and condition by nature, as being children born and brought out of the loins of their father, and as keeping all due distance, remembering that honor, reverence, and respect they owe to their father—so ought the children of God approach Him with all due reverence and fear. A son (says the Lord, Mal. 1:6) honors his father—"If then I be a father, where is mine honor?" Now this reverence consists, first, in having all high and respectful thoughts of God. Second, in having humble and low thoughts of themselves. Third, in carrying in all their deportment very submissively and circumspectly, lest by anything they say or do they provoke the eyes of His jealousy. Now this filial fear and reverence is well consistent with the childlike boldness and confidence that they are allowed to have.
6. This teaches us to approach with a holy importunity when pressed to speak what is necessary and useful for us. The child will be importunate with the parent for meat when he is hungry, and for drink when he is thirsty, and for clothes when he is naked. And he will

not be put off with his saying no and other discouragements, based on the consideration of the standing relation and of the strong and suitable affection which he has to his children. So the child of God will importune the Lord for what he wants and finds necessary for him, on the account of this relation—notwithstanding the many discouragements they have from their own sinful frame. Thus did the church carry: “Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou O Lord art our Father” (Isa. 63:16). It is as if she had said, “Though we be so far degenerated that our covenanted progenitors Abraham and Israel should disown us and no more look on us as their covenanted posterity, yet Thou art our Father.” And thereupon they plead with Him in the following words.

7. So it teaches us to approach with affections warmed toward God, with love and delight in Him and with a desire to please Him. All due reverence is accompanied with love and so is distinguished from base fear. And children approaching their father should not come as to their enemy whom they hate, but as to their father whom they love. “I will love thee, O LORD,” said David (Ps. 18:1). And then follows: “I will call upon the LORD” (v. 3). So should the children of God come and pray to Him with a childlike affection, free of jealousy or prejudices in their mind, because they should come to Him as to their Father with whom they are fast glued in their affection, and of whom they fear not to receive anything to their prejudice, having not the least suspicion of evil from Him. And they must come with a purpose to cleave to Him, let His dispensations

be never so low or sharp. They must love a frowning father, because He is a father still. Yea, though He should shut them out of doors, yet will they cry to Him as their Father whom they love.

8. This teaches us to come with filial submission, not limiting or prescribing to the Holy One of Israel. A child must not think to be wiser than his father and to prescribe all to him that he must give. He must be at his father's disposal and be well contented to take what he gives, though it be not the particular he would have wanted to have had. So the children of God should come in prayer with that resolution to submit to Him in all particulars, whether as concerning the time of the Lord's answering, or as concerning the manner how the answer will come, or as concerning the measure of the mercy they are asking—yea, or concerning the particular itself. They must in all these leave the Lord a latitude and not be petted if their humors and desires be not fully satisfied, because He is a father who knows better than they what is good for them. And He will do for them that which is good. And this should satisfy, and with this should they acquiesce.

*In Whose Name Prayer Is to Be Made*

Now follows the third particular in the text to be spoken, namely, the person in and through whom we are to ask or pray. And this is Christ, for it is Christ that here says, “If ye ask anything in my name.” As Christ is God, He is the object of worship or the person to be prayed to, as we cleared above. But here, when He is mentioned as the way to the Father, or, when we are to pray in His name or to make use of Him thus in our approaching God, He is to be considered as mediator, as God-man, clothed with the mediatorial offices. For understanding of which, we would know:

1. That man by his sin and rebellion against God has put himself out of the favor of God and out of His warm embraces. Sin has separated between God and man (Isa. 59:2). And it has made up a great gulf so that there is no free access as formerly—God being a consuming fire, and man being through sin become dry stubble, fuel for the fire of God’s indignation. Nay, not only has man put himself into this deplorable state of distance so that he may not nor cannot approach to God, but also through sin, he is become a rebel to and a hater of God (John 15:23–25; Rom. 1:30). Man now

by nature is an enemy to God, standing in need of a reconciliation (Eph. 2:15–16; Col. 1:21).

2. That the Lord of His grace and free love has condescended to take away this enmity and distance, so that they who were strangers and foreigners and enemies by their wicked works may come near and enjoy His fellowship and become His citizens and members of His household. This device never came of us, nor neither could men or angels have devised it or found it out. But the Lord Himself, to magnify the riches of His love and grace to all eternity, has. And to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward man, as the apostle speaks (Eph. 2:7), has found out this way, without which man had been forever in the same state, with devils and apostate angels.
3. That this way is through His Son, the Son of His love, His only begotten Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things and by whom He made the worlds (Heb. 1:2). He is the way, and no man comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). Through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18). In Him we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him (Eph. 3:12). He is the middle-man. He is the one mediator between God and man, even the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). We must come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25).
4. That this mediator is God-man, God and man in one person, so that those who see and enjoy Him, see and enjoy the Father (John 10:38; 14:9–10). He is in the Father, and the Father in Him (John 17:21). He is the trysting place where poor sinners may meet with God.

God is to be found and spoken with in Him. God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18–19). He is the true mercy seat, typified by the mercy seat above the ark and between the cherubims where God was to be spoken to, and where He was pleased to make His mind known. He is the true temple, typified by the temple of old to which His people were to look by faith.

5. The mediator, to the end that the enmity might be taken away and access granted to rebel man, has satisfied justice by His sufferings and death and has taken away the enmity, so that now in Christ Jesus we who once were afar off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, having abolished in His flesh the enmity. He has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby (Eph. 2:13–16). He has made peace through the blood of His cross and by Him has reconciled us to Himself—even us who were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death (Col. 1:20–21). We have now boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh (Heb. 10:19–20).
6. This mediator has taken on suitable offices to work on this access and to perfect the same and also to encourage us to make use of Him for this end. He is a high priest over the house of God so that we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:21–22). He is a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God, so that

we may come boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14, 16). He is a high priest for us and made higher than the heavens, made such by the word of the oath, and so is consecrated forevermore and lives forever to make intercession for us, having an unchangeable priesthood. And therefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:24–26, 28). Yea, we have such a high priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man (Heb. 8:1–2). This Jesus Christ the righteous is our advocate with the Father. And He is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1–2). And, being an advocate, He pleaded the sinner's cause in a legal and judicial way. So is He called an intercessor and said to make intercession for us (Rom. 3:4), and that at the right hand of God, because He interposes to deprecate God's wrath and to intercede for His favor to us. So is He said to appear before God for us (Heb. 9:24). For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figure of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. And thereby He is become our constant agent and solicitor at heaven's court to do our business, to plead our cause, to keep the door of access open, and to encourage us to come forward. Hence He is said to have a golden censer with much incense so that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints on the golden altar which was before the throne—the smoke of which incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, is said to ascend up before God out of His hand (Rev. 8:3–4).

7. This mediator, being true man, was found in fashion as a man, though being in the form of God, He thought it no robbery to be equal with God. Yet He made Himself of no reputation, but took on Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death (Phil. 2:6–8). And why did He thus become a partaker of flesh and blood? And why did He take on Him, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham? And why was He thus made like unto His brethren in all things? Even (as the apostle says) that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17–18). For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted. And therefore the holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, should consider the apostle and high priest of their profession, Christ Jesus (Heb. 3:1). We have not a high priest (says the same apostle) which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but He was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:15–16).
8. Hence this high priest of our profession and mediator, being man still, has a real, human, perfect, and sinless sympathy with His people in their necessities and distresses. He is one that can be and is natively and kindly and in a human manner, yet in a holy and heavenly way, suitable to Him who is God and man in one person, touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

And so He has a human heart that can be stirred, moved, and affected in a holy and sinless manner as well as our own with our infirmities, and as well as the bowels of a mother with the pain and misery of her beloved child—but in a more excellent and transcendent manner, because His bowels are the bowels of human nature now exalted in glory, and of a human nature which is personally united to the Godhead. Jesus Christ, now in glory, is real and true man and has all the real and true properties of human nature. And thereby He is capable to be affected with our griefs, miseries, and afflictions. And besides, while on earth He had the experience of such evils, being tempted in all things without sin and being a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—and that to this end (among others): that He might more with sympathy succor such as are in like case.

9. For all this work, this Lord Jesus is employed and sent of the Father. He comes with His authority and commission. And He is therefore called the Father's servant (Isa. 42:1; 49:36; 52:13; 53:11). In which respect He is inferior to His Father (John 10:29; 14:28). He was appointed or made for this (Heb. 3:4). Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He was called of God and made high priest by Him who said to him, "Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee" (Heb. 5:4–5). He was given of the Father (John 3:6). He was hereunto foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 2:20). The Father has ordained Him (John 6:37) and sent Him on this errand (John 3:17, 34; Acts 3:26; Gal. 4:4; John 5:21; 1 John 4:9). Christ looks on Himself as sent of God (John 6:29; 7:28–29;

8:16, 29, 42). And as He had authority and commission, so had He furniture and abilities granted of God for carrying on and finishing this work—for He received the Spirit above measure (Ps. 45:7; John 3:34). And the Father hid in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). Yea, it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell (Col. 1:19). He was full of all grace and truth (John 1:14). The Spirit of the Lord God was on Him, because the Lord had anointed Him to preach good tidings to the meek, etc. (Isa. 61:1–3; Luke 4:18). He has got all power in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18) and a name above every name, that at His name every knee should bow (Phil. 2:9–10). And He is exalted far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. And God has put all things under His feet and given Him to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:21–22; 1 Peter 3:22).

10. In this mediator who is God and man in one person, the Godhead, which is infinite in itself and inconceivable by us, condescends to be some way accessible by us when we are to approach to Him in Christ in whom this Godhead dwells bodily. Here, so to speak, we come to God by coming to one who is one and our brother—so this man is God also. And being man, He cannot but be a strong encouragement to us to come to God by Him with boldness, confidence, and love.

This is He, the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the blessed Trinity, and now God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever, who is the person through whom we must approach to God and in whose name we must ask what we ask. By Him

must we offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15). By Him must we give thanks by His name (Eph. 5:20). Yea, whatever we do in word or in deed, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:17). He is the beloved in whom we are accepted (Eph. 1:6). Daniel asked what he prayed for, for the Lord's sake (Dan. 5:17). And David, for his servant's sake (1 Chron. 11:19). So of old, when praying in faith, they had their eye toward the temple, which was a type of Christ, who was the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, and that greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (1 Kings 8:29–30, 35, 38; Jonah 2:4; Heb. 8:2). It is He who is the way to the Father (John 14:6) and the door (Job 10:7).

O what a wonder of love and condescension is this in God! That He, first, should ever suffer sinners who were under the sentence of condemnation and in whose destruction He might have received the glory of His justice forever and ever, to return to Him to speak and present their suits to Him. Second, that He Himself should find out and appoint a way how they may approach to Him and present their supplications. Third, that the way is in and through such a person—the eternal Son of God. Fourth, that for this end this eternal Son of God must condescend so low as to become a man and take on the form of a servant and experience the griefs and dolours of men. Fifth, that we should thereby have such encouragement and heart-strengthening considerations to make use of this mediator in presenting our supplications to the Lord. Sixth, that God would have us to make use of this way only in coming to Himself, and thus come to Him with Christ in our arms, or rather, in the arms of

Christ—whatever suits or desires we have to present to the Lord!

Likewise, how should this commend and endear prayer to us, that we have such a new and living way, such a glorious and exalted intercessor through whom to present all our desires! And how should this encourage us to come when all things would discourage us and faint us! Yea, how should this give us confidence of coming speed with God, that it is God Himself, now become man, and God and man in one person forever, and that for this end through whom we have access to God. Through the Son who is God over all, blessed forever, do we approach the Father and have access to Him for all we need. What mysteries of wisdom, love, grace, lovingkindness, and mercy are here!

## CHAPTER 16

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### *What It Is to Pray in Christ's Name*

*T*he next thing to be cleared here is what it is to ask in the name of Christ. This is to be cleared in order to our understanding the way of making use of the mediator Jesus Christ, God-man, in our addresses to God.

For answer therefore to this question of what it is to ask in the name of Christ, we would take notice of these particulars as prerequisite:

First, that the praying person must be convinced and persuaded of his sinfulness, vileness, and distance from God by reason of sin, wickedness, and rebellion, so as to see and to be sensible of this: that of himself he cannot think to approach with acceptance to God, having nothing to commend him to God, and God being a consuming fire to all who are lying in their sins and are not yet reconciled to Him through the mediator. And therefore he must look on himself as necessarily standing in need of a middle person to reconcile him to God and to make his addresses acceptable. For without this, both he himself and all his performances must be an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8, 29; 21:27; 28:9). And he must remain in a state of alienation and enmity without Christ, a stranger from the covenants of promise, and having no hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). This conviction must be fixed in

the heart of the praying person that would ask in the name of Christ, to the end he may fixedly renounce all within himself as not grounds or any part of the grounds of his access to God, as no grounds of the least of his hope of acceptance.

Second, the person that would ask in Christ's name must have the faith and knowledge of Christ as mediator. And he must know that He alone and none else in heaven or in earth is appointed to this office, or is qualified, fitted, and furnished thereunto, according to what was said above in the preceding chapter.

Third, the person that would distinctly ask in the name of Christ should know what Christ has done in order to make peace and to open a door of access for him to the Father; as also what ground of boldness and confidence in our access to God and to the throne of grace there is in His peculiar office of being a priest, offering a sacrifice of reconciliation to atone God and to reconcile us to Him, and daily interceding on the satisfaction offered and accepted, and presenting Himself in heaven for us, there also to plead and advocate our cause; as also what ground of confidence and hope there is in His being man and so particularly and experientially acquainted with our straits, temptations, hardships, difficulties, and infirmities. They must know His name that would ask in His name.

Fourth, it is necessary that the person that would ask in the name of Christ be reconciled to God through Him, and that he has made use of Him as mediator in order to His obtaining of peace and reconciliation, having fled to Him as the only city of refuge and peacemaker, and laid hold on Him by faith. For our persons must first be accepted before our service will be accepted. And they can never make right use of Christ in a particular who have not made use of Him for the main. Nor will he ever lean to Christ in reference to a particular suit, who has not laid the weight of his whole soul on Him.

Fifth, it is also requisite that the praying person pray for nothing that is not agreeable to the mind of Christ and for which he has not His warrant and allowance. For sure, Christ will not allow us to take His name in vain, but we should unquestionably take His name in vain if we should ask anything in His name which He would not approve us in or is contrary to His law and command.

Sixth, it is also necessary that such as ask in the name of Christ believe that such is the way of their finding access in their prayers to make use of His name thereunto, and that through Him and through His name they will be accepted in their addresses, and their prayers will find place before God. For we should take this way in faith, that is, as believing that it is the way of God and that it is the way to come speed, and that if we follow this way rightly, we will come speed. If our hearts hesitate and doubt here concerning this, we cannot ask rightly in the name of Christ, because we cannot ask with confidence that our asking in His name will not be in vain, nor believing firmly that Christ spoke truth here when He said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it." There cannot be a following of this way with confidence of His gracious word of promise which was spoken for our encouragement and to give us confidence that our prayers put up in His name will certainly receive a gracious return, both here in the text and John 16:24.

These things premised are prerequisite, and as here presupposed, we will now show therein what this asking in the name of Christ does consist:

1. In drawing all our encouragement to prayer from Christ alone or from what He has done in making access for us. Through Him is the throne of God become to us a throne of grace and mercy. And He being such a

high priest as He is for us, we should on this ground be encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace for help in time of need (Heb. 4:14–16). He has made the door patent and reconciled us to the Father by His blood and purchased mercy, pardon, and grace to us by His death and sufferings. He stands before the throne as our intercessor and advocate, there to procure favor for us and to plead our cause and to make our prayers acceptable through His incense. These things should be the sole ground of encouragement to us in our approaching with our suits to God. These should hearten us over the belly of many difficulties. For, what though we see many things, yea, all things wrong in us, and such as may discourage or dishearten us from drawing near to God, yet this glorious name of Christ, wherein these mediatorial works of His are to be read and seen, and His mediatorial office is a part of this encouragement to allure and force us forward over the belly of all discouragements. When the consideration of Christ's being our mediator and high priest who has entered the heavens for us, there to appear before God on our behalf, and for our good to advocate our cause and to intercede for us, does encourage and embolden us to draw near to God over the belly of all discouragements from all hands, and nothing else in ourselves—then do we ask in the name of Christ. When we oppose this consideration of Christ's office and work, of Christ becoming man and taking on our nature and coming in the likeness of sinful flesh and becoming a high priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, to the thoughts of our sinfulness and unworthiness, and to whatever else Satan or our own hearts would

propose to hold us back—and thereupon take heed and venture to come to God through Him who is a propitiation with the Father for our sin.

2. In drawing all the grounds of our confidence and boldness in prayer from Christ alone. There is a boldness and confidence opposite to fears, fainting, and doubting which the Lord allows to His people in their approaching Him. And the ground of this should be Christ, His name, His offices and work. Because of what Christ has done to usher our way to the Father, we should approach in a rejoicing, exulting frame, free of carnal or slavish estrangement of heart, diffidence, or drooping heartlessness—as children approach their father or mother with a filial confidence and boldness, different than they would do to a stranger. The apostle would have us coming boldly to the throne of grace, that is, with a purpose to tell all our mind freely, not fearing any (as the word imports, Acts 4:13), with openness of heart, without straitening, or hiding, or covering anything (as the word imports, 2 Cor. 3:2), and openly, plainly, and publicly (as the word imports, John 7:4, 26; 11:42; Mark 8:31). This boldness and confidence with which the apostle would have us approaching (Heb. 4:16) is the boldness and confidence of a child that comes to the father and tells all that is in his heart, concealing nothing and without fear or shame, whoever be present. And this must be founded on Christ alone and on what He has done to procure this to us. The apostle bases this on Christ being a great high priest that is passed into the heavens and on Him being a high priest that can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities and was in all points

tempted like as we are, without sin (Heb. 4:14–15). So Hebrews 10:19–22: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh. And having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw nigh, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, etc.” So that we approach in the name of Christ, when, because of Him consecrating for us a new and living way and making (as it were) a bridge of His body over which we might go to God, and because of Him being a high priest over the house of God, we come with a childlike confidence, being assured we have God’s allowance and full liberty to come and have free access through Him in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him (Eph. 3:12; 2:18). Thus, when we found our boldness and confidence in drawing near to God only on Christ, and when many things would hold us back, yet we come forward with heartiness, gladness, cheerfulness, and confidence, then we ask in the name of Christ.

3. In drawing all the hope of our being accepted of God in this piece of service only from Christ, our persons must be accepted, or our service will not be accepted. Now in order to the acceptance of our persons who are sinners, we must have something to lean to, or we cannot think to come speed by our suits or to be heard. And therefore, when we ask in Christ’s name, we must roll ourselves as sinners on Him and come to God in His arms so that He may make us acceptable (for we must be accepted in the beloved). And that the

enmity being taken away and wrath out of the gate, our petitions may have free access to the throne of grace.

4. In going about the duty of prayer in Christ and in His strength, not in our own. Then do we ask in His name when we draw up our petitions in Him or by His Spirit in us, and when we advance with them in Him, as going to God in the hand of Christ, by the Spirit, and so roll all our difficulties and encumbrances on Him, or whatever stands in our way, either to hinder us from coming or to retard us or discourage us in us going. Then do we pray in His name, when leaning to His promises of strength and through bearing, we adventure over the belly of all discouragements and of felt weakness and unworthiness.
5. In laying all the weight of the ground of our acceptance in that duty only on Christ and His merits. For He is the one mediator and the only peacemaker. He only makes ourselves and all our service acceptable to the Father. And therefore, when we ask in His name, we put our petitions in His hand so that He may present them to the Father and offer them up with incense out of His censer (Rev. 8:3). Then we expect an answer only for His sake and on account of His merits and *moyen*<sup>1</sup> with the Father, and not for anything in ourselves, or on any other account whatsoever. And when we are thus asking in the name of Christ, confiding in Him and expecting a return in His name and on His account, our hopes will not fail us, nor will we conclude the matter desperate, even if we discover much guilt and unworthiness in ourselves,

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1. *Moyen*: way or method of doing something.

and what would brangle<sup>2</sup> our hopes and cause us to despond—because this ground abides fast and is the same whatever we be. Christ's merits abide fresh with the Father, however it be with us.

6. In being quieted in our minds concerning the event, when we have thus laid the stress of all on Christ and put our supplications in His hand. For thus we remain fixed on the rock of acceptance and are kept from staggering through unbelief. This is to believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5:13–14). When we ask in His name, we are fixed here that Christ is our high priest and intercessor, and thereupon we rest confident that our prayers will go into the throne of grace through Him who is our advocate with the Father. And all our hopes lean on Him, and here we rest and are quiet.

Hence we may see how and after what manner we should ask in the name of Christ or address ourselves to God through Him, or what we ought to do who would make a right use of Christ in our approachings to God, or what is requisite hereunto, namely:

1. That we remember and carry constantly on us an impression of what we are by nature, namely, sinners, and worthless sinners, at a distance from God, having nothing to commend us to God except misery and poverty. Nor do we have any ground in ourselves whereupon to expect admission to God or His favor

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2. *Brangle*: wrangle.

and acceptance. But we must be beholden to another for it or be undone forever.

2. That this is Christ's office and work to bring sinners into the Father and to make their persons accepted, yea, and to present their suits and agent their cause in heaven. Hereunto is He appointed of the Father, and He will be true to His trust, for He is faithful to Him that appointed Him. And He is a faithful high priest and will faithfully perform His work.
3. That Jesus Christ has a great delight and complacency herein, being man and having the true and kindly bowels of a man, and while in His state of humiliation, being tempted and experiencing in Himself the pain, pressure, grief, and pungent necessity that we suffer, though without sin—as the working bowels of the mother causes her to run to help her beloved child in trouble with delight, readiness, and alacrity.
4. That the Father, having appointed Him to this work to be high priest, intercessor, and advocate, will certainly be well pleased with Him in the discharge of these offices. And He will accept of all such as come to Him thus and make them and their supplications welcome. That He has moyen with the Father and will prevail at the court of heaven for all He speaks for, and therefore that all the suits which He presents will be heard in due time.
5. That therefore we should close with Him as the mediator and accept of Him as sent, sealed, and offered of the Father on His own terms. We should embrace Him in His offices and make use of Him for all the ends

thereof. And particularly, that we should make use of Him as ushering our way to the Father, and, on the ground of what He has done, to purchase freedom of access to us to approach with confidence as resting on Him and confiding in His merits.

6. That we should eye Him as a tender-hearted, compassionate, sympathizing high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And on this ground we should approach with warmed affections, confidence, freedom of spirit, cheerfulness, and alacrity, making all our requests known through Him.
7. That we rest persuaded that Christ will not forget His offices and work, whatever we be. But He will act the part of a tender-hearted, loving, and sympathizing high priest, intercessor, and advocate. And therefore He will cheerfully make us welcome, as waiting to receive our prayers to put in His censer and to be employed by us in these His offices.
8. That therefore we should have confidence and hope through Him, despite what appears from within or from without to discourage us and to faint us—yea, and quietness and peace under challenges because our prayers are to come into His censer and to be presented with His incense, and therefore made acceptable. And so we need not be up or down in our hopes and expectations of acceptance, according as we find ourselves in good or in bad case, lively, or dead, better or worse prepared, at freedom, or bound up in our spirits—because the ground of our acceptance would always remain the same, for that is not in ourselves, but in Him with whom the Father is well pleased.

9. That we wholly acquiesce in His merits and rest thereupon, expecting what we desire and seek only on His account who has purchased and procured all to us that we need, whatever we may observe in ourselves which would brangle our hope and weaken our expectation, yea, or make us despair of receiving a good answer.
10. That thus abstracting wholly from ourselves and laying our whole weight on Christ and on His merits, and there acquiescing, we act in faith as to the particular we ask. And thus we leave ourselves and our suits wholly on Christ, putting them in His hand and confiding in Him who is a faithful high priest and tender of all the concerns of His people. And we wait in confidence and hope for a good return in God's own time, only in and through Jesus Christ.

Thus we see that to ask in the name of Christ is some far other thing than barely to name His name in prayer, as to say, "Grant us, Lord, this or that for Christ's sake," wherewith many may be satisfied and think that when they have barely made mention of His name, they have done enough.

*How We Often Ask in Prayer, and  
Not in the Name of Christ*

*F*rom what is said concerning the making use of Christ in prayer or the asking in His name, we may clearly see how far short we come in this duty in several particulars, or how we ask in prayer, but not in the name of Christ. In order to the discovery of this for our conviction and humiliation, we will clear it in some particulars.

First, when we do not draw all our encouragement to prayer from Christ alone but from other things besides Him, we ask not in His name. And we draw our encouragement to prayer from other things besides Christ when:

1. We are encouraged to draw near to God in prayer because we find ourselves in some good, present disposition and frame, as having our heart well fixed and prepared. I grant that we should labor to have our hearts in good case, fixed and prepared, when we approach the living God, so that we may say with David, "Our heart is fixed, we will sing, and give praise" (Ps. 57:7; 108:1). I grant likewise that when we find our hearts in a good frame, we may hope that the duty will be more pleasantly and with less difficulty discharged. Yet this fixedness of heart and preparedness should not be the

ground from which we draw our encouragement to go about this duty, as if we had no encouragement to set about this duty besides this fixedness or might lay hold on no encouragement when we found our hearts out of frame. Thus indeed, we should put our preparation in the room of Christ, and so ask in our own name, or in the name of our good frame and preparedness of heart.

2. When we are encouraged to go about this duty because of inward peace, freedom from challenges of guilt, gross outbreakings, or of guile and hypocrisy, as not regarding iniquity in our hearts. I grant when one has this inward testimony of his own sincerity and uprightness, he may take it as a subordinate encouragement, insofar as to look to it and assert it in opposition to the contrary groundless allegiance of the devil, tempting the honest man to conclude himself a hypocrite or one that regards iniquity in his heart and therefore must not dare to approach God or think to find access to or acceptance with Him. But yet this must not be made the ground of our encouragement. Nor must we lean to it as such or think that because it is so or so with us, that therefore we may come boldly to the throne of grace and obtain mercy and find grace for help in time of need. For this were to put our honesty and good disposition in the room of Christ, our great high priest.
3. When we draw our encouragement to this duty mainly from the dispensations of the Lord seeming to smile on us and to favor us. This dispensation of the Lord, it is true, may in its own place have the force of an argument to induce us to set about this duty and to wrestle over other discouragements. Yet it must not rob Christ

of His due or take His room and place. Our principle and chief ground of access to God must be Christ's exercising the office of high priest on our behalf, for through Him alone we have access. And when Christ keeps His own place with us, we will thence take encouragement to draw near to God through Him, even though we miss these outward encouragements—that is, even though we want the smilings and shinations of God's countenance, and His dispensations look angry toward us, and that because of our sins and shortcomings. How often have the saints taken encouragement to go to God by prayer from the mercy of God (which is only in and through Christ, the great high priest) when tried with sad and sharp dispensations! So did David (Ps. 6:1–2; 51:1).

4. When we draw our main encouragement to prayer from this: that we see and have clear apprehensions of our interest in God through Christ, and that we are now reconciled, and that the enmity is taken away. It is true, when temptations would scare us from this duty on the account that we are not reconciled to God, a soul may warrantably reflect on this and take notice of it to resell this temptation. Yet it must not challenge the principal place which is due to Christ. And this principal place, which is only Christ's due, is given to it when we will not come to God in prayer, but when we see distinctly and can read our interest, and when we are thinking ourselves exonerated from the duty so long as we are in the dark as to that matter. Alas! If so, where is our high priest? And where is faith in Him? And where is our approaching in Him by that new and

living way, which He has consecrated to us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh?

Second, we ask not in the name of Christ when we approach not with boldness and confidence on the account of His being our mediator, high priest, advocate, and intercessor. And this lack of boldness and confidence appears:

1. When we are soon dashed and discouraged in the duty with the sense and apprehension of our own unworthiness, sinfulness, and unsuitable carriage. It is true, the sense of these things should humble us and cause us to approach with godly fear and trembling, knowing what we are and with whom we have to do. But yet all this should not dash us, nor put us from the duty, nor cause us to go heartlessly and discouragedly about it—because this would say that we took all the ground of our boldness and confidence in approaching from ourselves, and therefore, when we miss that ground in ourselves, which we would be satisfied with, we have no confidence. Alas! If it be so with us, where is the high priest of our profession? Where is our boldness on account of Christ's intercession?
2. When our approaching is accompanied with a bastardly and sinful fear and despondency, so as we are like a malefactor coming before his judge to receive his sentence, rather than like a son coming to his father. Sure, when it is thus with us, we have not that boldness in Christ that is called for and that our right making use of the name of Christ and of His offices and work would help us and prompt us to.

3. When there is not an open-heartedness in telling God all that plagues us, but there is a hurtful and sinful bashfulness, so as we cannot lay out our case in freedom, plainness, and openness of heart. Then there is not that boldness used that we are allowed to use through Christ, our mediator and high priest. For where this is, the soul will make all its case known and tell God both the worst and best, as a child will conceal nothing from the father, but will use all freedom of spirit.
4. When our prayers are accompanied with much fainting, hesitating, and doubting whether we will be made welcome when we come or not, or whether all our labor will not be in vain. From this proceeds deadness or cold-risedness in our addresses and a heartless despondency. We pray as if we prayed not because we want earnestness, zeal, and fervency, and we cannot be fervent or zealous in prayer, nor can we strive in prayer as combatants in their set Olympic Games did, so long as we are under the power of this fainting or doubting. And while it is thus with us, we cannot use boldness in and through Christ, our high priest and advocate.

Third, we do not make use of the name of Christ as we ought to do in prayer when our hope of acceptance in the performance of that duty is drawn from other things than from Christ alone—as:

1. From our freedom from an accusing or challenging conscience for former sins and misimprovements of former mercies. It is good and refreshing, I grant, when our hearts do not condemn us, for then we may have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21), namely, in Christ. But this immunity must not be laid as the

ground of our acceptance, nor must we lean on it or rest on it for that end, because it is not Christ. For it is Christ, and Christ only, who is our mediator. It is He alone who has made our peace and in whom we must look for acceptance. And when we look for our acceptance from anything else, we depart from our rock and lay Christ aside.

2. From our freedom from wandering thoughts or such like miscarriages in prayer. Alas! Though it be good and commendable to be kept from these evils, yet we must not place that in Christ's room or ask anything from God in prayer on the account thereof. For that is not the name of Christ, and in His name must we ask, that is, leaning on Him and His merits alone in order to be accepted in our persons and services. It is true also that we may suppose, according to truth, prayer gone about without such miscarriages is more acceptable to God than prayer accompanied with them. Yet we must not think that we or our performances are accepted of the Lord on any such account. Nor must we think with words how our persons are accepted of the Lord, and we may be sure our prayer will have access, and we will get a good return, because we have gotten the duty performed now in a right manner.
3. From our freedom and liberty from bonds in prayer. It is true, when the Lord does thus loose the bonds of the soul and enlarges the heart to seek and receive, He usually opens His hand to give. When He thus fixes and prepares the heart, He useth to bow down His ear to hear (Ps. 10:17). And so this liberty and enlargement of heart may be a good sign and token that there is a good return at hand. Yet it must not be made the

ground and basis of our acceptance, not leaned to as the ground of our assurance that we have access—as if a prayer could not be accepted of the Lord wherein the heart was honest, though much straitened and bound up.

4. From the warmness of frame that we find ourselves in while about this duty of prayer. It is, I grant, very commendable to find the heart warming toward God, and to His interests and people, while we are about this duty. Yet this kindling and warming of affections, though it may be a good token of good success, cannot for all that be owned as the ground of our hope of acceptance with God. Nor can it be owned as the ground of the Lord's accepting of us in that duty, for that is not our peacemaker. That is not our mediator nor intercessor. On Him alone and on nothing else must our acceptance as to our persons and as to all our performances be founded, if we intend to ask in His name.

Fourth, we do not make use of the name of Christ rightly in prayer when we lay the weight of the merit or of the ground on which we expect a return and a good answer on any other thing besides Him and His mediation, as:

1. When we expect an answer and a hearing because of our present good frame. It is true, a bad frame and disposition may mar and hinder our being heard and may obstruct the good answers that otherwise might possibly be had, because we are out of case either to receive them thankfully or to improve them when received. Yet our good frame can deserve nothing at the hands of God, nor must we have any respect to it on that account. Christ's merits alone must procure all

to us, and we must ask and receive all only for His sake (Dan. 9:17) and on account of His merits and intercession, who is our redeemer and advocate and has purchased all to us by His death and blood, which He offered up as our great high priest.

2. When we look for our answer on account of some victory over some evil, some corruption or temptation, or something else which we possess after some wrestling. Though we will not be so bold and shameless as to speak any such thing openly in a blunt manner, yet our hearts may deceive us. And when we are least adverting may incline to this wrong hand, making us willing, and to conceive good hope that now we will come speed, because it is not now with us as it was lately. We are not freed from that yoke of bondage and tyranny under which we were lately made to groan. We know not how false and treacherous the heart is, and therefore we should look carefully at it.
3. When we look for our answer because of our good vows, purposes, and resolutions, or the like. These I grant cannot be condemned in themselves. Yea, it may be duty sometimes to take on these. But yet these and all other duties should keep their own place and should not entrench on Christ and His due. And when we, because of them, conceive more hope of being heard and of getting a satisfactory return to our prayers, we do plainly dethrone Christ and pray not in the name of Christ, but in the name of these our good purposes, vows, and resolutions.

Fifth, we do not make use of the name of Christ rightly when in prayer we do not make use of Christ's strength and grace to help us to pray—that is, when:

1. We pray from a custom which we have or from a gift or a habit without any new stirring up of the grace of God or waiting for fresh influences to carry us through the duty.
2. And when we act not [by] faith on the gracious promises of help and assistances of the Spirit through Christ, in whom all the promises are “yea and amen” (2 Cor. 1:20), nor have an eye to Christ by faith to fulfill His promise and to send the Spirit to help our infirmities.
3. When we are not, in the conviction of the weight of the duty, of our unfitness and inability for it, and of the hazard of miscarrying in it, and of provoking God thereby, laying all by faith on Christ, committing ourselves, when out of conscience to His command, setting about the duty, wholly to His manutenety,<sup>1</sup> conduct, and through bearing.

Sixth, we make no right use of the name of Christ in prayer when we do not put our prayers in Christ's hand that they may be accepted through the perfume of His incense. And this appears when:

1. We are tickled and willing when we find the duty has gone well with us, and we have been helped to discharge it to our satisfaction and have not found a languishing in prayer nor observed confusion and indistinctness in the same or other evils of that kind.

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1. *Manutenety*: a Latin transliteration meaning “strong hand.”

And, on the other hand, when we are saddened and cast down when we have observed such weaknesses and failings in the discharge of the duty. This being up or down, according as we find the duty well or ill discharged to our mind, would say that we have our eye more on our manner of going about the duty than on the incense of Christ, which must perfume them and carry them in before the Father.

2. When sense of provocations mars all our hopes and causes us to conclude that it is in vain to wait for a return. Hereby we declare that if all were well with us, and we were free of challenges and of the sense of such provocations, we would not think we stood in great need of Christ's blood to wash our prayers or of His incense to make them acceptable to the Lord. And hence it is apparent that we put not our prayers in the hand of Christ—for if we were walking according to this principle, we would see ourselves constrained hereunto the more we saw our own unworthiness and the defects of our performances. And thus, in this respect, we would have more hope that our weak and sinful addresses would be accepted through Jesus Christ, because we would have nothing, neither in ourselves nor in the performance of the duty, that would draw our eyes off Christ or entice us to give a wry look.

Seventh, we do not make right use of the name of Christ in prayer when we are not quieting ourselves as to the event of the duty on Christ's merits and intercession—and that when we are most called thereunto, as:

1. When the devil raises new storms in the soul after prayer and says, "Take this for the answer of your

prayer. Will you still go on in prayer, when this is all the fruit thereof?" Then, if we would be found making right use of the name of Christ, we would mainly repose ourselves on Christ and roll the duty on Him, and, having done so, to leave it there and not hearken to these delusory and distracting inferences of the devil to unhinge and disquiet us.

2. When challenges of old sins and late sins arise in the soul, and especially when challenges about failings in prayer—such as wandering of heart, want of faith, and the like—come in and trouble us. For in that case, we should answer all with this: "We have laid the weight of all on Christ, and we quiet ourselves on His being our high priest and on His intercession. And there we rest, knowing well and freely acknowledging all our own failings and shortcomings.
3. When we find the wheels of the soul drive heavily while we are about the duty, what through want of faith, what through other discouragements. Then should our soul especially be rolling the matter on Christ. But when it is not thus with us, then it would seem we would quiet ourselves and rest on some other thing than Christ.
4. When we get no intimation of God's favor in our addresses, nor sensible access as we expected. Then should it appear that we have cast the burden of all on Christ in quieting ourselves in Christ's being our high priest and intercessor with the Father, notwithstanding hereof, and in waiting, notwithstanding of what we are disappointed of, for a return in God's good time and way.

*Use of Trial, Whether We Ask in the  
Name of Christ or Not*

**F**rom what has been said in the two previous chapters, we may be helped to understand whether in prayer we ask rightly in the name of Christ or not, and, consequently, whether we go rightly about prayer or not. Therefore, we need not insist long on it here. We only mention a few things: first, before prayer; second, in prayer; and third, after prayer.

First, before prayer, we may know if we make a right use of Christ's name if the consideration of Christ's name, offices, and work—that is, His being a mediator, intercessor, and advocate for us and our high priest with the Father—be the only ground of our encouragement to draw near to God and emboldens us to come forward to the throne of grace. It may not be the consideration of anything done by us or of any quality or good frame in us or anything else whatever within us or without us. If the faith of Christ's mediation and intercession warms our hearts and draws and encourages us to the duty and emboldens us to come forward:

1. Notwithstanding that old guilt stands in the way, and convictions of former transgressions, as Psalm 25:7: "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me, for

thy goodness sake.” Here, old sins came in his view, yet he was encouraged to go on in his duty on the consideration of God’s goodness which is now manifested in Christ. And therefore he adds, “For thy name’s sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great” (v. 11; cf. Ps. 79:8–9). Satan will endeavor to drive us from this duty and to discourage us from going about it by telling us that thus and thus we have sinned against Him. And how can we then think of approaching Him? But if we make any right use of Christ’s name, the consideration of what Christ has done to make way for us to the Father will make us take courage and come forward, whatever our sins have been.

2. Notwithstanding that present guilt stares us in the face—as Jerermiah 14:7: “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou, for thy name’s sake.” If Satan cannot prevail to keep us from this duty by presenting former transgressions to our view, he will labor to do it by reminding us of our present unrepented of sins and evil frame. But if we make a right use of the name of Christ, all that will not scare us, for we will see encouragement enough there and ground of confidence, whatever we have been or yet be. And that encouragement will prevail with us and draw us to the duty, over the belly of what would draw us back.
3. Notwithstanding our present indisposition or lack of due preparation or of a suitable frame of heart requisite in such as draw near to God. It is true, the sight and sense of this may affect and afflict us and may sadden our hearts. But if we take such notice of this as to think that therefore and thereupon we are exonerated from the duty or have no ground to approach, then it is too

apparent that all our ground of encouragement and confidence is sought within ourselves, and that we would be at prayer in our own name and not in the name of Christ. For if we mind to pray and to ask in the name of Christ, we would draw our encouragement from that name of His, however it were with us at present. And this ground being always the same, we would not be up or down as to our encouragement and boldness, as it were well or ill with our present dispositions.

4. Notwithstanding the dispensations of the Lord speaking out anger and displeasure against us (as Ps. 79:5; 80:4; 85:5). This, it is true, proves a very saddening and discouraging consideration, for who dares think of approaching an angry God? Who dares to draw near to devouring fire? Who can stand before an angry God, contending in anger? Yet if we lean to the name of Christ and make a right use of it in prayer, we will draw encouragement from this and be encouraged even to draw near to an angry God, because Christ has satisfied justice, pacified an angry God, and is now interceding for sinners. And this consideration will make us say that whatever we be and however the Lord has just cause to be angry at us, yet He is well pleased with His own Son, the Son of His bosom. He has accepted His mediation. He has admitted Him to be intercessor. And therefore, on this account, and on this account only, do we come to God. And from this ground only we draw all our encouragements, namely, that Christ is the mediator and the only peacemaker, and that He is now made a high priest forever and lives forever to make intercession for sinners. In Him and through His merits and intercession do we approach.

Second, in prayer, we may know if we make right use of the name of Christ either, first, with reference to the discharging of the duty; or, second, with reference to our acceptance in it.

1. With reference to the performance of the duty and throw-bearing<sup>1</sup> in it, we may know if we make use of the name of Christ by this: that then there will be an eyeing by faith of Christ and of the promises of the Spirit for strength and assistance and a putting off our hearts, as it were, into the hand of Christ so that He may frame them rightly for the work or frame petitions in them and to put us in a praying posture and carry us on acceptably in the work. And when this is, there will not be a laying aside of the duty, though we see and be convinced of our utter indisposition and unfitness for the duty, through prevailing corruptions and the like, and though we perceive our hearts growing weak and fainting on one occasion or another. This is because we will then see that our strength and our help is not in ourselves, our stock of furniture—all is in Him in whom we are complete and through whom we are strong when we are weak (2 Cor. 12:9–10), and who gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, who increases strength (Isa. 40:29, 31–32).

Next, with reference to our acceptance in the duty, there will be a confiding and relying on this sole ground: that Christ is the intercessor and must present all our petitions to the Father and make them gracious with and acceptable to Him. And this ground will give comfort:

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1. *Throw-bearing*: laboring.

1. Notwithstanding that the matters we are seeking be great, and our unworthiness on the other hand seem great. The faith of Christ's merits and intercession as the only ground of our acceptance will quiet us here, for we seek nothing on account of our own worth, nor do we seek anything that Christ has not purchased or procured for us by His death and intercession.
2. Notwithstanding that many challenges arise in us to mar our confidence and to dash our hopes and ding us back—for the name of Christ, the sole ground of our hope of acceptance, remains firm and unchangeable. And His merits being the ground of our expectation of acceptance with God, when this ground is laid hold on, we will have hope of acceptance over all these challenges.
3. Notwithstanding that our faith begin to fail us, and we through discouragements begin to faint. Though this may sadden us, yet, when Christ's name is looked to as the ground of our acceptance in prayer, this will not cause us to give over hope and conclude that our prayers may not come up as incense before Him when presented and perfumed by Christ.

Third, after prayer, we may know if we pray rightly in Christ's name if we rest quieted on this ground: that Christ is the mediator and intercessor in whom and for whose sake alone we expect all our returns and answers, and so live in hope of a good issue in due time on this account. And that:

1. Notwithstanding that Satan and our own consciences can tell us of many misdemeanors, many failings, many abuses of former returns of prayers and the like. We

will have this answer: It was not on account of any good carriage in us formerly or any good improvement of former mercies and receipts that we present our supplications, or that we did or do expect any return now. But it is purely on account of the name of Christ, or of what He had done as mediator, or was yet doing as intercessor with the Father for us. And this ground may stand and yield hope, whatever we have done or have been formerly.

2. Notwithstanding that challenges come before us of our manifold miscarriages in prayer, as of our lack of faith, love, fixedness, liberty, and the like. For we may reply that it was not on a supposition of our having these qualifications or of our prayers being so or so put up that we may expect our answer. But our ground of hope is the name, office, and work of Christ. And this is the same rock and the same ground of hope, whatever we have in prayer and however we have miscarried. Nay, had we been helped never so well in the discharge of the duty, howbeit that had been comfortable and refreshing to us, yet we durst not, we would not have made it the ground of our hope and expectation of a good answer.
3. Notwithstanding that there be a little appearance of a good return, for this will bear up the head and give us hope that we have put our prayers in Christ's hand, who is a merciful and faithful high priest, and who has moyen with the Father and has purchased all for us that we need and will in His good time let us see what force His intercession with the Father has. Here we rest; here we quiet ourselves in hope.

4. Yea, despite that matters may seem worse after prayer than before; our bonds may appear to be made stronger; temptations may be multiplied; corruptions may be more violent; our darkness and confusion may grow, etc.—if our hearts be fixed on the name of Christ as our only rock and ground of hope, we will wait and not despond. For we will have this to encourage ourselves by: that we have laid our weight on Christ and put the whole matter over in the hands of our advocate and intercessor. And there we have left it and must wait for an answer in and through Him and let Him bring forth our answer when and as He thinks good.
  
5. Yea, despite that many things should concur to brangle our hopes of receiving any good through Christ and to cause us doubt whether Christ will own us or not, and whether He will take any notice of our matters—if we have cast our anchor on Christ and rest on His merits and intercession in order to receive an answer to our prayers, we will have ground whereupon to stand in the midst of these tossing waves. For by this we may answer all: Christ is faithful and a faithful and tender-hearted high priest. And so He will not forget our case. He is a sympathizing high priest and has the heart of a man and of a brother and will not neglect our cause. Though we cannot answer objections, yet here we have ground to stand. And here we will stand and wait in hope. Our matters and all our papers are in the hands of Christ our advocate, who not only by office is called to do for us, but also has the heart of a father and sympathizes with us, and so assuredly will help in due time.

*Encouragements to and in Prayer  
from Christ's Name*

*T*hat we have Christ's name to make use of in prayer is a great ground of encouragement to the minding of this duty of prayer, to the keeping of us fixed at it and in a patient waiting for an answer. We have many things to dishearten and discourage us from the duty, many things to make us faint in the duty, and many things to brangle our hope of advantage thereby. But a right taking up of the name of Christ—that is, of Christ's person, offices, and work as mediator, advocate, and intercessor—would prove heart-strengthening and encouraging to us in the midst of all these discouragements that Satan can muster up in our way. This we will now manifest by instancing a few particulars.

1. Satan will endeavor to keep poor people back from prayer or will faint their hearts while going about that duty with this: that it is in vain for them to seek the Lord. He will not hear or regard the prayers of sinners. We read that when Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan stood at his right hand to resist him as an adversary (Zech. 3:1). And how often does he do so with poor sinners? But the right consideration of the name of Christ, who is that Lord Jehovah

that said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee, etc." (v. 2)—this would take away this mountain out of the way and make it disappear. For though we be sinners, yet He is righteous, holy, harmless, and undefiled. He has satisfied justice. He has purchased all. The Father is well pleased in Him. We seek nothing on our own account, but all on His account and for His sake. And therefore, whatever we be and however unworthy we be, yet He is worthy. He has moyen with the Father. He is the Father's beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. And so on this account we may take boldness, despite all the convictions of our own unworthiness.

2. When conscious of our base, original, corrupt, and naughty nature, estrangement from Christ and from the covenants of promise, the sins of our youth and education, and the place where we live, and the like stare us in the face and would say, "It is in vain for us to call on the Lord; He will not hear"—it is then that this name of Christ may counter all this discouragement. When the poor woman of Canaan heard that she was called a dog and had no interest in the covenant nor right to the mercies of the covenant, but was an alien and a stranger and lived among dogs, yet she gave not over her suit. She was not put from duty, nor looked on the matter as altogether hopeless. For she was speaking to the Lord, the Son of David, and was begging mercy from Him. She was seeking nothing on the account of her own work, but was asking for mercy, having her eye and her heart on the Lord, the Son of David, that is the mediator between God and man, the promised Messiah.

3. Satan may raise storms in the soul and present to the eye of the sinner his former iniquities with all their aggravations and present him to his own eye as the vilest of sinners. And to this end he may muster up all his former abuses of mercy and kindnesses received so that he may drive the poor sinner away from this duty. But right taking hold of the name of Christ may encourage to go over this great mountain. Daniel took with all these challenges of sin and with all the aggravations thereof in his prayer, from Daniel 9:5 forward; and yet he urges his petitions, “For the Lord’s sake” (v. 17); and, “For his great mercy’s sake” (v. 18). The sense of former iniquities and provocations will not put us from the duty nor out of hope of profiting by the duty, if we get a right view of the name of Christ and consider well what is there.
4. Though conscience of guilt should stare us in the face when we are approaching, and, as it were, ding back our petitions into our throat and cause us to eat up our own words or conclude that we may utter words but will not be the better—yet suitable apprehensions of this name of Christ will encourage us to come forward and give us good ground of hope to cause us to say with Jeremiah: “O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name’s sake” (14:7), and with David, “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me; for thy goodness sake O LORD” (Ps. 25:7). And verse 11: “For thy name’s sake O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.” The name of Christ rightly considered and improved upon may soon remove that

difficulty and give ground to expect free grace and the out-flowings of free mercy despite our sins.

5. It is a discouraging dispensation when the Lord seems to refuse to hear, and the praying person is made to say, "O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not, etc." (Ps. 22:2). And when He seems to be angry at their prayers, as Psalm 80:4, and to shut out their prayer when they cry and shout, as Lamentations 3:8. Yet a right sight of the name of Christ will keep in life, for through Him they will see the Lord to be their portion, and that His compassions fail not but are new every morning (Lam. 3:22–24). And these will conclude that it is good that they should both hope and quietly wait for His salvation (v. 26), for the Lord is good to them that wait for Him and to the soul that seeks Him (v. 25). A sight of the man of God's right hand and of the Son of man, whom He has made strong for Himself (Ps. 80:17), will keep the soul in life and cause it to cry for the church and for itself: "Turn us again, O LORD God of Hosts, cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved" (v. 19).
6. It is a great discouragement when the Lord by His dispensations is seeming not only to say that He will not answer, but also is in a manner discharging to pray any more for that mercy—as when He said to Moses, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them" (Ex. 32:10). Yet a sight of this name, in and through which alone God shows mercy to sinners, will encourage us to cry with Moses, "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy, etc." (Num. 14:19).

7. It is also a great discouragement to coming to God when such as should set us forward and encourage us to come are standing in our way, holding us off, and discouraging us from coming forward—as when the multitude rebuked the two blind men who were crying after Christ (Matt. 30:31). Yet where Christ is rightly taken up and His name considered, this difficulty will be soon stepped over. There will be a stronger attractive force found therein, than to be resisted by such discouragements. The blind men would not be silent despite all that the multitude could say, because they fixed on Christ's name and cried to Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David. We see also what discouragements the spouse met with at the hands of the watchmen (Cant. 5:7). And yet she would not, for all that, give over her pursuit.
8. This name of Christ, if we take a right look at it, will encourage us to pray, whatever be our present frame and condition, though our hearts were overwhelmed, as Psalm 61:2, and the waters were come into our soul, and we were sinking in deep mire, where there is no standing, and were come into deep waters, where the floods overflow us, as Psalm 69:1–3. Because we will see Christ there, which will give us ground of footing and hope of an escape and give us ground to believe that our prayers will have access to the Lord, for Christ is the great intercessor and is always heard of His Father. He has great moyen in heaven. And He has a bleeding, loving, and sympathizing heart with poor sinners that cry to God through Him. He is full of pity and compassion and most ready to succor and help.

9. Yea, we will hence be encouraged to lie at the posts of wisdom's doors, though we should be tempted to think that all our pains will be in vain and that heaven's doors are shut and will not be opened—for right thoughts of the name of Christ, the great high priest and intercessor, will afford us ground to wait and cause us to say that Christ is the way and the door. He can open the treasures of heaven and rain down blessings on us. And thereupon we can see grounds to wait. Many a blessing He has procured for a poor sinner that had but small hopes to meet with. Many a preventing mercy He has bestowed, and many a time He has surprised poor people with mercies that they had little or no hope ever to see.
  
10. Moreover, right apprehensions of this name in which we are to pray will encourage us to hold on in our suits, even though the devil should suggest to us that we will thereby rather procure a curse than a blessing, and that God has decreed the contrary to what we ask. For as God's revealed will is our rule, so, if the thing we ask be for God's glory and for our good, we have ground to expect it in the name of Jesus, who is faithful in all His promises and faithful in the execution of His offices, and who has purchased all the sure mercies of David for us.

## *What We Are to Ask*

*W*e come in the next place to the fourth particular in the text, which is the matter of our petitions, contained in that word “whatsoever.” From this we may notice these things:

First, that believers have many errands to God. Thus the word “whatsoever” imports that they have more to seek than one particular—yea, that they have many. This needs no confirmation, seeing it is notour<sup>1</sup> and manifest.

Second, that through Christ and in His name believers are welcome to God with all their errands. Whatever they ask in His name, He will do it. Be their suits and desires what they will, if good and useful, if for God’s glory and for their own good, then they may come away with them to God.

Thus the state of believers here, being a state of grace, and they having ground to expect a welcome from God when coming with their wants, the saints must have a noble life, even a life of constant intercourse with God. Their necessity thus is turned to their noble advantage, for now they are under a rich and glorious necessity of drawing near to God and of abiding constantly at the posts of the door. And O! What a rich privilege is this, that they may make all their desires known to God

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1. *Notour*: notorious.

and pour forth all their soul into His bosom. O! Who would not serve such a master?

Third, that believers are allowed to come forward with their supplication whatever difficulties or seeming impossibilities may appear in their way. “Whatsoever” says that they may come forward with their desires even though they would imagine it almost impossible that these their desires should be granted, for they are to wrestle in prayer, as in an agony, and strive against much opposition, contradiction, difficulty, and whatever else of that kind that stands in the way—either as made use of by Satan, who will do all he can to hold us back, or by our own unbelieving heart, suggesting many grounds of fears and doubts to weaken our faith and confidence. And all these apparent difficulties and discouragements should be a bellows to blow at the fire of our desires and cause them to flame the more.

Fourth, that believers have a large field to go on in prayer. “Whatsoever ye shall ask”—this is the principle thing here to be noticed. And Scripture confirms it: “But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6); “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24); “What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: then hear thou in heaven, etc.” (1 Kings 8:38–39; cf. 2 Chron. 6:21–29, 40; John 16:23).

For the clearing of this, we would know that the meaning is not that believers are allowed to pray for everything that they please, for there are several things they must not pray for, such as:

1. They must not pray for anything, whether to themselves or to others, that is prohibited, unlawful, or not according to the revealed will of God. What we ask must be according to God's will (1 John 5:14).
2. They must not pray for anything that is not promised, either in general or in particular, for our prayers should be as the echo of His promises.
3. They should pray for nothing that tends to promote lust and sin in the soul, for this is to pray for the devil's kingdom and to ask amiss, when it is to consume it on our lust (James 4:3).
4. They should ask for nothing that is either unseasonable or unsuitable to their condition, whether outward or inward. This were to ask for what the Lord has not promised and what would do them harm and no good.

But next, the meaning of this "whatsoever" is that, as to these things which they are allowed of God to seek, they may ask them, even if:

1. They be never so great things in their eyes for them to ask. They need not scruple to seek great things of God if they be such things as are allowed. Not the half of His kingdom will He allow them to seek, but the whole—yea, Himself; and what could be more? The things they seek, if according to His revealed will, cannot be too great. This "whatsoever" takes in the greatest matters.
2. Even if the thing they would have be never so mean and worthless in their own eyes, and they may think that they cannot trouble God (as it were) with such petty matters. For this "whatsoever" will take in the

smallest thing we can desire or would have, whether for soul or body—were it but a bit of bread or a cup of cold water in our need, or the meanest thing imaginable that our present case calls for. He allows us to seek it of Him.

3. Even if the things they would have seem most improbable, unlikely, yea, and almost impossible. For this “whatsoever” comprehended even these things that have not many promising appearances or seem not very feasible or probable—but very improbable. When the Lord promised to Abraham that He would give him a son in his old age, though his own body and Sarah’s womb were dead, and so it was very unlikely and improbable that she would ever bear him a son, yet he was to believe and to pray for that in faith. Contrary and contradictory-like dispensations to the promised mercy should not stop our mouth nor brangle our faith, but rather set an edge on our desires and exercise our faith and patience.
4. Even if the suits and desires be many, and many times renewed. This “whatsoever” takes in all our lawful desires whenever and as often as ever we present them. The Lord will not be wearied with our frequent coming or with our many and multiplied supplications.
5. Even if the suits be for others as well as for ourselves. This “whatsoever” is not to be limited or restricted to particulars that concern ourselves, whether as to our bodies or as to our souls. But it comprehends our desires for others and for the whole church, when according to the will of God.

So that this “whatsoever” points forth the largeness of the matter of our suits and supplications, both as to the persons for whom and as to the particulars we ask.

As to the persons, not only are we to pray for ourselves, but also for our brethren (James 5:16); yea, for our enemies (Matt. 5:44) and for all sorts of persons living (1 Tim. 2:1–2) or that will live hereafter, according as Christ did (John 17:20); for the whole church of Christ upon earth (Ps. 28:9; 14:7; 72:15; Eph. 6:18); for magistrates (1 Tim. 2:2); and for ministers (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3). Only we must not pray for the dead (2 Sam. 12:21–23), nor for such as are known to have sinned the sin unto death (1 John 5:16).

As to the particulars, the Lord has given us the sum and heads of these in that pattern of prayer which He taught His disciples. From this, we see:

1. That we are to pray for God’s grace whereby we and others may be moved, inclined, enabled, and determined to glorify God in all His works, ways, appointments, and in whatever He is pleased to reveal Himself by and to make His name known (Ps. 67:1–3; 85:18; 86:11–12, 16–17). Thus we are to pray for everything that may help us and others to glorify this God in our thoughts, words, and actions (Ps. 103:1; 19:14; Phil. 1:9, 11). And we are to pray that God would prevent or remove atheism, ignorance, idolatry, profaneness, and whatever is dishonorable to Him out of the world (2 Kings 29:15–16; Ps. 67:1–4; 74:18, 22–23; 98:7; Eph. 1:17–18). As also we may pray that God by His overruling and all-disposing providence may so order, direct, and dispose of all things as He may be thereby exalted and glorified (1 Chron. 20:6, 10–12; Ps. 33; 140:4, 8).

2. That we are to pray for all things that may tend to the advancing and enlarging of the kingdom of Christ in the world, namely: that Satan's kingdom of sin may be destroyed (Ps. 68:1, 18; Rev. 2:10–11); that the gospel, the word of Christ's kingdom, may be preached and propagated throughout the world (2 Thess. 3:1); that the Jews may in due time be called in (Rom. 10:1); that the fullness of the Gentiles may be brought in (Ps. 67; John 17:9, 20; Rom. 11:25–26); that the church of Christ may be furnished with all gospel officers and ordinances (Matt. 9:18; 2 Thess. 3:1); that the church may be purged from corruption (Mal. 3:1, 11; Eph. 3:9) and maintained and countenanced by the civil magistrate (1 Tim. 2:13); that the ordinances of Christ may be purely dispensed without the admixture of men's devices, as also made effectual for the conversion of such as are not brought in, and for the confirming, comforting, and building-up of those that are already converted (Acts 4:29–30; Rom. 15:29–31; Eph. 6:18–20; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:16–17); that Christ would rule in our hearts here (Eph. 3:14–21); that He would hasten the time of His second coming and of our reigning with Him forever (Rev. 22:20); and, finally, that He would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of His power in all the world as may best conduce to promote these ends mentioned previously (Isa. 64:1–2; Rev. 4:8–11).
3. That we are to pray for all things that may fill and dispose us for doing God's will in all points and for complying with all His dispensations. And therefore, that He would by His Holy Spirit cure us of our blindness (Eph. 1:17–18), of our weakness (Eph. 3:16), of our indisposedness (Matt. 26:40–41), and of our

perverseness of heart (Jer. 31:18, 9), whereby we are unable and unwilling to know and to do the will of God (John 21:14; Rom. 7:18; 1 Cor. 2:14), and prone to rebel against His word (Rom. 8:7), to repine and murmur against His providence (Ex. 17:7; Num. 14:2), and are wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh and of the devil (Eph. 2:2). As also, that He would by His grace make us able and willing to know, to do, and to submit to His will in all things (Ps. 119:1, 8, 35, 36; Acts 21:14) and with humility (Mic. 6:8), with cheerfulness (2 Sam. 15:25–26; Ps. 100:2; John 1:21), faithfulness (Isa. 38:3), diligence (Ps. 119:4–5), zeal (Rom. 12:11), sincerity (Ps. 119:80), and constancy (Ps. 119:112), as the angels do in heaven (Ps. 103:20–21; Isa. 6:2–3; Matt. 18:10).

4. That we are to pray for our outward well being in the world with all due submission. That is, that we may have a competent portion of the outward blessings of this life, and the same continued with us and blessed to us (Gen. 43:12–14; 28:20; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 4:6; 2 Thess. 3:11–12; 1 Tim. 4:3–5). And that we may have contentment with what God carves out for us (1 Tim. 6:6–8). And that we may be preserved from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort (Prov. 30:8–9). Thus we are to pray for food and raiment and temporal preservations, according as God sees fit.
5. That we are to pray for the pardon of all our sins, original and actual—that is, that God of His free grace would, through the obedience and satisfaction of Christ apprehended and applied by faith, acquit us both from the guilt and punishment of sins (Rom. 3:9–22; cf. Ps. 51:1–5; Rom. 3:24–26; Heb. 9:22). And that He would accept us in Christ (Eph. 1:6–7), continue His favor

and grace to us (2 Peter 1:2), pardon our daily failings (Hos. 14:2), and fill us with peace and joy in giving us daily more and more assurance of pardon (Ps. 51:7–8, 10, 12; Rom. 15:13).

6. That we are to pray for preservation from snares and temptations (Matt. 26:21; Ps. 19:15); or, if tempted, that we be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation (Eph. 3:14–17; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 24); or, when fallen, that we may be raised and recovered out of it (Ps. 51:12) and have that dispensation sanctified to us to the end it may be rightly improved (1 Peter 5:8–10). And to which end we are to pray that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected (2 Cor. 13:7, 9), Satan may be trodden under foot (Zech. 3:2; Luke 22:31–32; Rom. 16:20), and that we may be fully freed from sin, temptation, and all evil forever (John 17:15; 1 Thess. 5:23).

Thus we see that believers have a large field to go on in their prayers and may pray for everything:

First, that tends to the glorifying of God, in themselves or others.

Second, that is particularly promised. Thus David presses the promise that God made to him and the word on which He made him to trust and hope (Ps. 119:49).

Third, that comes under the lap of a general promise, such as: “I will be thy God,” or, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Fourth, that affects and troubles our minds, how worthless and inconsiderable so ever it would seem to be in itself.

Fifth, that concerns our way and walk as men or as Christians.

Sixth, that is for our good, whether as to soul or body, here or hereafter. Only we mind these cautions:

1. That we must not use the same peremptoriness and importunity in all our desires, for, first, we may be more earnest in soul matters than in bodily things. Second, and in soul matters, we may be more peremptory and importunate in things absolutely necessary than in other things wherein we are called to more submission. And third, even in things necessary, we must give God a latitude as to the time when He will bestow them, the manner how, and the degree in which—for we must not set limits on the Holy One of Israel.
2. When we are uncertain whether the particular we desire or have a mind to be really good for us or not. We should be conditional in our prayers therefor and only seek it in prayer if the Lord sees that it is good for us.
3. What is more particularly promised may be more peremptorily hoped for and prayed for, yet with due submission as to the time, manner, and measure.
4. We must not pray for everything that is in itself good and desirable, but for that which we have some ground of hope to expect. Yet sometimes that which we have only a simple velleity<sup>2</sup> and desire for and no sure ground to expect may be expressed in prayer to God, but with due submission.
5. We must not exercise the like faith in all our prayers, for faith in prayer is to be regulated by the promise. And all things are not in the same manner promised, but some things absolutely, and other things if they be good for us and according as the Lord sees fit.

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2. *Velleity*: a wish not strong enough to lead to action.

## CHAPTER 21

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### *Some Uses Mentioned of the Previous Truth*

*T*he Lord's granting us such a large field to go on in prayer identifies several things to us which we should mind, such as:

First, hence we are called aloud to wonder at and admire the Lord's condescension of love that will have poor sinful creatures thus acknowledging Him by prayer and supplication in all their ways (Prov. 3:6) and committing all their ways to Him (Ps. 37:5). What wonderful condescension is this, that this great God should humble Himself to take notice of what we poor sinful worms stand in need of, and that He is concerned with all our petty particulars. How may we cry out with the psalmist, "The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth [or, as it may be read, "Who looketh down very far, in the heavens, and upon the earth"]. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill" (Ps. 113:4–7). How wonderful should it be to us that this great sovereign who is absolute Lord of heaven and earth should take such special and particular notice of us in all our straits and difficulties, and as a tender-hearted Father will have us laying all our desires before Him, consulting Him

in all our difficult cases and seeking all we stand in need of out of His hand? How willingly should we here acknowledge our own folly, misery, and ignorance, and profess our absolute dependence on the Lord for all things that concern both body and soul, and glory in this, that we must have all out of the hand of such a high and glorious king who is exalted above the heavens. And how should we esteem highly the meanest favor of mercy we receive by prayer, on this account: that it comes out of the hand of such a condescending king? And all this should be minded by us, to the end that we may more see and set forth, wonder at, and be ravished with the thoughts of this inconceivable and inexpressible love and condescension in God, who descends down from His high throne of glory to see what we want and what it is we would have, to put His ear (as it were) to our mouth, to hearken and hear what we are seeking, what our hearts are breathing after, so that He may grant it to us and do it for us.

Second, here we may take notice of and consider with joy and admiration the rich and glorious privilege and advantage of believers in that:

1. They are cared for and taken notice of by the great king of heaven in all their meanest particulars, in all their ways and concernments. Does not the Lord hereby declare that He keeps them in all their ways (Ps. 9:11), and that He honors them, as it is in verse 15. And that He sees their ways and counts their steps (Job 31:4), and that all their ways are before Him (Ps. 119:168), and that He is acquainted with them all (Ps. 139:3).
2. They are allowed to come to Him with all their particular concerns and to acquaint Him with all their wants and necessities, whether of soul or body. What a privilege would men account it to have free access to a great

king or prince on earth, with all their desires, with the smallest as well as with the greatest? And should not this be a privilege of a higher nature, that we poor sinful worms have allowance of the great God of heaven and earth to make all our requests known to Him, to lay all our wants before Him, and to acquaint Him with our meanest concerns? How may believers glory in this goodness of God that has so highly advanced them and given them free access to Him in whatever condition they are, and liberty to come to Him as to their bosom friend, yea, as to their Father, that they may pour out their hearts in His bosom!

3. They may by this means have constant and continual intercourse with heaven and be always standing with their supplications in their hand before His sight. They need never want an opportunity of coming to God and of speaking to Him, for being needy and indigent creatures. They have always fair matter and occasion, and God's door stands always open for them, so that in every hour of the day, they may come and tell God what troubles them and what they want and what they would have.

This high and honorable privilege would be more esteemed if we considered how, first, we had by our own treacherous and rebellious practice brought ourselves into an estate of banishment from God and from His glorious and favorable presence. Second, how we had deserved as well as others eternal separation and banishment from God, and that for our abuse of that familiarity and friendship which once we were admitted to. Third, how we had brought ourselves into this gulf of misery and indigency by our folly and wickedness. Fourth, how, notwithstanding of all this free grace and free

love in Christ Jesus, He had opened the door of mercy to us and does daily keep it open for us, notwithstanding our provocations both by slighting and contemning of this high and glorious privilege and by misimproving favors had thereby.

Third, hence we may see how inexcusable such are who do neglect this duty of prayer and go not to God with all their necessities, yea, who present few supplications to Him for all the rich field they have to go on and the great allowance they have of God to come to Him with all their wants. Let such make answer to these few following questions:

1. Are you not sensible of many wants, both for soul and body? Or do you think that you are perfect and stand in need of nothing?
2. Can you supply all these wants by your own industry and care? Or are they only such wants as you may well lack the supply of and suffer no great prejudice? And are you therefore indifferent whether you be helped or not?
3. Can you do anything without the concurrence, help, and assistance of God? Do you not live, move, and have your being in Him, both as men and as Christians? What can you think to do, either for soul or body, for yourselves or for others, without Him?
4. Is there anything, how mean so ever, that God's providence and care does not reach to? Does He not feed the ravens and clothe the lilies?
5. Is there not a peculiar, heavenly, and satisfying relish in the meanest favor that comes out of heaven from the hand of God? Will not a cup of cold water, sent out of heaven from the hand of a heavenly Father, have a

sweeter relish to a heavenly taste, than a glass of the best wine that comes from the vine?

6. Is it not then better to have all our water turned into wine, I mean, to have all our common mercies sent us out of heaven from the hand of a father and to receive them from His hand by prayer, than to take them as common calls of providence, whereof the irrational brutes are partakers?
7. Is it not better for a poor, weak, witless child to be under the tutory and care of its parents, where it may have all it needs for the asking? Is this not better than to be left to itself, to its own care and providing in the open fields among wild beasts?
8. Is not frequent access to God for what we need and would have a most honorable and desirable thing?
9. Is it not then a high contempt of this free grace, rich love, and admirable condescension of God, that when He has granted access with all suits, we will not, for all that, present our desires to God?
10. Do not such as neglect this duty say that either here they have no wants or they desire not to have them supplied, or they can supply all them without God, or that God takes no notice of their particulars, or that there is no particular worth or advantage in having all out of the hand of God, etc.? Must not this neglect be a great and grievous sin?

Fourth, we may hence see how we are called to improve this advantage and to mind this duty more of making all our necessities known to God, knowing:

1. How much this course will commend to us the free love and rich grace of God. O! The believer will get hereby many renewed proofs and demonstrations of the same, which will more and more endear God to his soul. Every time he goes to God with this and the other desire, he has a fresh occasion to think of and admire this grace and love of God, which will also sweeten the duty itself.
2. How much this will proclaim our absolute dependence on God and fix our hearts when we see that we cannot subsist one day or minute without Him, but must have all things from Him that can contribute to our welfare, either as to soul or body, and how we will hereby see our emptiness and nothingness, which will serve to keep us humble. And this indeed is no small advantage.
3. How hereby we will have sweet and familiar intercourse with heaven and communion with God. If we tell God all our wants, we must not fear that we will wear out of acquaintance, or that distance will grow between God and us. A child that is always seeking from the mother something or other cannot readily forget her, nor can the mother forget the child.
4. How hereby we keep up a noble and enriching trade with heaven, from whence we receive all our incomes, all our making up and enriching wares, even all our spiritual and temporal mercies—upon our sending up our bills or signifying by our commissions what we would have.
5. How hereby we are kept in a sweet spiritual frame, our heavenly mindedness grows, and we become more

and more dead and mortified to the low and base things of this world, for hereby we taste continually of God's goodness. All we receive has a heavenly relish because it is received as coming out of heaven from a heavenly father.

6. How hereby we are kept in the faith of the Lord's being God over all, omniscient, omnipresent, almighty, and the great orderer and dispensator of all things here below—because every new mercy is a fresh confirmation thereof to us, being received by prayer.
7. How hereby we receive many excellent, heart-confirming, soul-encouraging experiences and proofs of God's care, love, faithfulness, and truth; every answer or return of prayer having this engraven on it: "Behold the constant and renewed love, care, tenderness, and faithfulness of God."
8. What ease and refreshing it is to a Christian to have the bosom of God to go to and God a more hearty friend than any whatever to run to with all his cases, doubts, fears, pinching straits, difficulties, and necessities.

*The Answer of Prayer*

*T*he fifth particular in the text comes now to be spoken to, and that is the fruit of advantage which is to be had by prayer. It is no vain or idle, unprofitable exercise. There is a rich income attending this trade. What can a beggar desire more to make him up, than this: to have all granted to him that he asks? Now, our Lord tells His disciples here that whatever they ask in His name, He will do it. "I will do it"—wherein we have two things pointed forth: first, the answer itself. What they ask will be granted. It will be done what they desire to be done. And second, there is the manner of this answer, or, the way how it will be done. Christ says that He will do it. He Himself will do it. He will work and grant the answer and give them their heart's desire.

As to the first of these, we learn thereby that the prayers and desires of the saints are not words that vanish in the wind. They fall not to the ground. There is a return coming and an answer to be expected. All the lawful, good, useful, and expedient desires and requests will be granted in due time. This is a truth that needs not much confirmation, seeing the whole Scriptures of God and the experience of the saints in all generations bear testimony hereunto. Yet because it is little fixed in the heart and firmly believed, whence much wearying

of the duty and fainting in it proceeds, and only a little earnestness, courage, and confidence in going about it appears, it will be necessary to point at some grounds hereof whereby we may be confirmed in the faith of this and encouraged over the belly of many outward and inward difficulties to go on in this profitable and delightful exercise. Of these encouraging and confirming grounds, I will mention the following:

1. This is one of God's titles and names under which He is held forth and by which the believer apprehends and lays hold on Him. Psalm 65:2: "O thou that hearest prayer." The psalmist took a broad look at God under this name, the hearer of prayers. And by this he was encouraged to go to Him and lay forth all his desires before Him. And not only this, but he looks on it as the standing ground of encouragement for all people in all ages and generations, because he adds: "Unto thee shall all flesh come." Yea, this is laid down as a ground of the song of praise to the Lord in Zion and of vowing and performing their vows to Him mentioned in verse 1. So that as it is an unquestionable truth that God hears prayers, so it is a comfortable and encouraging truth and the ground of a song of praise.
2. By this the Lord proves Himself to be the true and living God, and not like Baal, as we see: "And I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, The word is good" (1 Kings 13:24). Thus the Lord, by hearing the prayer of the prophets when Baal could not hear or answer his prophets, did demonstrate in the sight of the king and all of them there present that He alone was Jehovah. The prophet prayed and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it

be known this day, that thou art God in Israel.... Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know, that thou art Jehovah" (vv. 36–37). And accordingly fire fell from the Lord and consumed the burnt sacrifice (v. 38). The effect whereof was that all the people fell on their faces and said, "Jehovah, he is God, Jehovah, he is God" (v. 39). So we find the psalmist saying, "In the day of my trouble, I will call upon thee" (Ps. 86:7). And why? "For," he says, "thou wilt answer me." But whereupon was this his confidence founded? The next verse shows, where he says, "Among the gods there is none like unto thee." This confirms his faith of God answering and hearing and that He was the true and living God and not like the gods of the nations that were but dead and dumb idols and could neither hear nor help. By this is the Lord truly differenced and distinguished from all the false and fictitious gods in the world—that He, even He alone, hears and can answer the desires of His people. And this is a noble ground of faith and encouragement that this is God's peculiar characteristic property. For be sure, as He will answer His name, so will He be careful to prove Himself to be Jehovah, the true and living God, that His people may know and find in experience that the God they worship and serve is indeed Jehovah.

3. He Himself has told us that He said not to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain" (Isa. 45:19). He is there confirming their faith of their return from captivity by showing them that He was Jehovah and none else, and withal by showing them that He never put His people to ask anything of Him in vain, and consequently, that He would not put them to seek a delivery in vain and

to no purpose. From this we see that there is ground of answer even in the very prayers themselves, for if God commands us to pray and to seek Him, in that very command there is a virtual promise of hearing and answering included, and that because the Lord Jehovah never bade His people seek Him in vain. This then must be a strong encouragement to the duty, that the very command to pray says that God will hear. He never set anyone about prayer in vain.

4. The frequent promises made of God's answering the prayers of His people do abundantly confirm this: "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). The same thing thrice upon the matter repeated to give the further and fuller confirmation: "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matt. 21:22). Though it primarily relate to their asking and believing by the faith of miracles, in order to the working of miracles as the previous verses evidence, yet it contains a general truth useful even after that dispensation of miracles was to cease—as other Scriptures clear particularly (Mark 11). Whereafter our Lord had said on the same occasion what that in Matthew was spoken: "Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (v. 24). And He subjoins that which cannot be restricted to any particular season but has place in all generations, saying: "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven

forgive your trespasses” (vv. 25–26). And so Luke 11, after that pattern of prayer which Christ taught His disciples is summarily mentioned, we are told how Christ proposed a parable, the evident tendency of which was to confirm them in the faith that their prayers would be heard and granted. “And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given 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” (vv. 5–8). And as if all this were not enough to give a full persuasion of faith in this matter, He adds that which might contribute to remove all ground of fear or scruple, saying, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father; will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (vv. 11–13). These passages not only hold a promise with a strong confirmation, but likewise have several particular and strong grounds of this truth: that God will answer the prayers and desires of His people, of which more afterward. Another promise we have: “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” (James 1:5). And though this be said in reference to a particular suit, namely, asking of wisdom, yet as this wisdom is a comprehensive thing, so the same promise will hold as to other particulars which are sought according to the will of God—according to that: “And this is the confidence that we have in him [or toward Him] that if we

ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we have the petitions that we desired of him” (1 John 5:14–15). Another promise we have: “He shall call upon me, and I will answer him” (Ps. 92:15). So Isaiah 58:9: “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I.” And: “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24). Hence it is that all the children of God, when asking anything according to His will, may press this promise and say with David, “Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness” (Ps. 143:1).

5. That place in Isaiah 65:24 last cited where the Lord says, “Before they call, I will answer,” gives a further ground of confirmation. For here we not only see that God is ready to hear the desires of His people and will grant them their suits and prayers, but moreover, that He will come with a speedy answer, and not only hear before their petitions be well out of their mouth, but even prevent, as it were, their supplications and answer them before they call. Thus He prevents them with the blessings of goodness, as it is in Psalm 21:3.
6. On this ground the Lord encourages His people to call on Him so that their crying will not be in vain: “Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Ps. 50:15). Here is a promise held forth of purpose to encourage to the duty. And surely when the Lord proposes special encouragement to the duty, there need no scruples remain in our minds concerning this hearing and answering in this

due time. We have the same thing in Psalm 81:10. The Lord would have His professing people renounce all strange gods and embrace Him who is Jehovah alone as their God. And to signify this, He would have them call on Him and enlarging their hearts in their desires with this encouraging promise that He would satisfy them: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." That is, "Let your heart be enlarged and spare not to cry to Me and seek great things of Me, and I will satisfy all your desires and grant you all you ask." There is the similar encouragement proposed to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee" (Jer. 33:3). This may serve to confirm us in the faith of this: that there is an answer and return of prayers to be believed and expected by His saints, when suiting for that which is according to God's will.

7. The wise man tells us that the desire of the righteous is only good (Prov. 11:23), that is, all the desires that the righteous, as such, have, or all that they as such pray for and look for is only good. And their desires and prayers being of this nature, they must have a satisfactory return from Him who is a good God and bountiful according to that other golden sentence: "The desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Prov. 10:24). This then may be looked on as another ground of confidence and faith in this matter: that the desires of the righteous being good, and only good, will be granted.
8. The old and constant love of the Father toward His children gives another sure ground for this truth that God will answer the cries and desires of His people, and Christ Himself lays down this ground for the encouragement of His disciples: "At that day ye shall ask in my

name; and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you; because ye have loved me” (John 16:26–27). It is as if He had said, “Whatever you ask in My name, the Father will give to you, and I need not in a manner pray for the Father or intercede with Him to give you what you ask, for He Himself bears an affection for you. And because He loves you, you need not fear that your supplications will not receive a speedy dispatch.”

9. Christ’s office and work in reference to this is another sure ground of our faith in this truth and may assure us that our supplications will be heard and answered. Whatever good the saints are to ask of God is purchased to them by the blood of Jesus. And will not the Father give what His beloved Son has purchased for the chosen and beloved ones? Second, and again, what prayers they put up for these purchased blessings are perfumed with Christ’s incense and presented in His censer so that they may be accepted of the Father. And again, third, Christ Himself as the great high priest appearing continually before God for us intercedes on the behalf of His people and pleads their cause. And as He presents their bills, so He backs them and supplicates in a manner suitable to His glorified state on their behalf. And each of these three grounds are sufficient to give full confirmation to this truth that the prayers of the saints will be answered—for neither will Christ’s purchase be in vain, nor Christ’s presenting of the supplications of His people for the good things purchased, nor yet His own intercessions on their behalf with the Father. For the Father hears Him always (John 11:41–42). How much more then

may we be assured of the truth, when we have these three sure grounds in one for confirmation of it?

10. The prayers and desires of the saints of God are the very desires of the Spirit of God, for they are framed in their hearts by His operation: “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). Here is the ground laid down and both cleared and confirmed. Even the saints know not what to pray for as they ought, but they have one to pen their supplications for them and to help their infirmities by framing inward groanings in the heart for what they would be at when they cannot get words to express their desires. Yea, the Spirit thus turns their agent and intercedes for them by framing their desires according to His own mind, though always suitable to their case. Now what needs any doubt of God’s hearing the petitions framed and penned by His own Spirit? Yet moreover, we see it is added that He that searches the hearts (that is, God, for this is a part of His royal prerogative—to search the heart and to try the reins) knows what is the mind of the Spirit—that is, He knows well enough what the supplications are which the Spirit has framed in the hearts of His children. And this knowing of the mind of the Spirit imports His gracious accepting of the supplications so penned and presented, and His answering of them, for it is added,

“Because according to the will of God, he maketh intercession for the saints.”

11. The experience of the saints gives another confirmation of this truth and lays before us another ground of encouragement that our seeking of God will not be in vain. Jacob did set his seal to this truth when he said, “Let us arise and go to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God who answered me in the day of my distress” (Gen. 35:3). Such a signal return got he that he could not forget it, and the remembrance of it set him to work to erect an altar to God at Bethel according to God’s command. Samuel found this true in his experience: “Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard and answered him” (1 Sam. 7:9). So Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20) and Daniel (ch. 9) and Jonah (2:2). Many proofs and experiences of the truth of this got David, as we see in Psalms, particularly 3:4; 6:8; 18:6; 28:6; and 116:1. See also what he says in Psalm 10:17: “Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.” From this general confirmation of the truth from previous experience, he concludes it will be so for time to come. See also Psalm 4:3: “The Lord will hear when I call unto him.”
12. As believers trust in the Lord for an answer according to His word and wait in hope for a return in God’s good time, so the Lord will not disappoint them of their hopes, knowing that hope, even deferred, makes the heart sick, but the desire coming is a tree of life (Prov. 13:12), and the desire accomplished is sweet to the soul (v. 19). For the Lord will not disappoint such as wait for Him. He will not let them be put to shame

(Ps. 25:3; 69:6). David was confident of this when he said, “For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God” (Ps. 38:15). He placed his hope and confidence in God. He waited for a good answer. And therefore he concluded that God would hear him and answer him. Similar confidence we find expressed by the church: “Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me” (Mic. 7:7). On this ground Isaiah 30:18–19 declares them blessed that wait for God, saying, “Blessed are all they that wait for him”—and why so? “For he will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.”

13. The consideration of God’s nature lays down a sure ground for this, as Christ Himself taught us in that place cited before—Luke 11:11–13. For if fathers know how to give good things to their children when they ask them, does not God also know how to satisfy the desires of His sons and daughters, seeing He is a father to them in a special manner, having adopted them to be His out of pure love and free grace? And if fathers on earth know how to satisfy the desires of their hungering children, how much more will God, who is a heavenly father and whose affections and ways are infinitely above man’s? And again, if fathers here who are evil and wicked will answer the desires of their needy children, how much more will God, who is essentially good and infinite and perfect in goodness, satisfy the earnest and hungry desires of His children? His mercy and His tender mercies will contribute hereunto. And therefore, seeing God will not deny Himself, we may

conclude that surely He will hear the desire of the humble and give His Holy Spirit to such as ask Him.

14. We heard above how God has heard sometimes the desires of carnal unbelievers, as is clear from Exodus 22:22–23; Job 34:28; and Psalm 107:15, 21, 28, 31. And this may yield ground of confidence that He will much more hear the cries and desires of His own worthies whom He loves so dearly.
15. Yea, we read that God satisfies the desire of every living thing: “The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15–16). And will we doubt of this truth that God will satisfy the desires of His own people? Let us rather conclude with the psalmist: “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfill the desires of them that fear him. He also will hear their cry, and will save them” (Ps. 145:18–19).

## *God's Answering of Prayers Cleared*

**I**n order to further clear up this comfortable point of truth that God hears and answers the prayers and desires of His people, so that doubts there concerning may be removed and objections prevented, we will lay down several propositions tending to clear up this matter.

*Proposition 1:* Though we are to regulate our prayers and desires according to His laws, whereby our duty is pointed forth to us and an obligation laid on us to walk in all our ways accordingly, yet His granting or not granting of the particulars we ask is regulated by His own decree and everlasting determination. For He works and does all things according to the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11). And nothing comes to pass but what He has determined and according as He has determined. Hence we are not to regulate our prayers according to this secret unseen will of His purpose and decree, which is not made known to us but by the event, except insofar as He has been pleased to signify the word or prophecy and prediction or promise without or with the confirmation of an oath (Heb. 6:17). His law and command is our rule in prayer. And we are to pray for such things as He has made it our duty to pray for—whether He has proposed and decreed to do that particular or not. David did his duty when he prayed for the

life of his sick child, though God had determined to take the child away. Hence, in our prayers, there ought to be much submission to this holy will of God, which must necessarily be fulfilled, because He is unchangeable. As Himself, so in His counsels and determinations, as Christ teaches us by His example, when He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—that is, if it can stand with Thy everlasting and unchangeable purpose. And again, "Nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done." There He submitted Himself to the holy will and determination of God. Hence, we may see that we must not infer that our prayers are not acceptable to God because the particular we asked is not granted, for their acceptance or not acceptance is to be tried and regulated not by His hid and eternal purposes, but by His expressed will and law—not by His will as the supreme disposer of all events, but by His will as the supreme law giver. And therefore, if our prayers for matter and manner be according to His law and commandment, they will be accepted by Him through Jesus Christ, though the particular possibly which we ask be such as He has determined not to do, as we see in Jeremiah's praying for Judah (Jer. 14–15) and in Samuel's praying for Saul (1 Sam. 16:1).

*Proposition 2:* As it is a great condescension in God to hear us poor miserable sinners at any time in any particular whatsoever, so we must not think that by His condescending thus to us He has wholly laid aside His sovereignty and absolute supremacy whereby He does whatever He will. He sees good, for the glory of His own name, to give open proofs and declarations of this His absolute sovereignty. And therefore sometimes He will do what He sees good, though contrary to the desire of His people, so that He may be seen and known to be God "who doth whatsoever he pleaseth, in heaven and in earth, and in the seas, and in all deep places" (Ps. 135:6). As a father, though He will not tell His child no in what He sees is good

and necessary for him, yet He will not gratify or answer him in all His yeses and noes, but will let him know that He will do only what pleases Him so that the child may learn to carry with all submission and due respect to his Father. And how should we else know that God were a great sovereign and an absolute and free dispenser of His favors, if He saw it not good sometimes to keep us standing long at His door, yea, sometimes refuse us altogether the thing which we ask? Know therefore, that despite His wonderful condescension out of love and free grace in and through Jesus Christ, yet He remains an absolute sovereign, an unlimited prince. And therefore He will show Himself a God who will not be turned away from His purposes, even by His own people, but will be whatever His soul desires (Job 23:13), that we may learn to be afraid of Him (v. 15) and to stoop before Him and acknowledge Him to be God. Whence we see that God may sometimes refuse to grant the particulars which His people seek, not as angry at their prayers, but as loving to show forth the majesty of His sovereignty.

*Proposition 3:* We should look on prayer as a means appointed of God for attaining the good things we ask and desire, as preaching and other like duties are. Now we know the Lord is pleased to give His blessing with preaching, as He sees good. And a minister is not to think that his labor is in vain before the Lord. Always, when he does not see the wished-for fruit following his pains, he should know that, when they carry faithfully in their duty, they are to God a sweet savor of Christ, even in them that perish, to whom they are the savor of death unto death (2 Cor. 2:15, 26). So it is in prayer. We may be accepted therein, though the Lord be not pleased so to bless the same, as to make it an effectual means for attaining of the particular we ask or would have. And we should go about it as a duty and a means, leaving the blessing and event to Him who is wiser than we are and knows what is best.

*Proposition 4:* We should look on prayer as a piece of that homage which is due to God from us, and as a solemn declaration and testimony of our acknowledging Him to be God over all, blessed forever, the great sovereign, and author of all good, and of our profession of dependence on Him in all things, and of submission to Him who is God. And therefore we should not think our labor lost in prayer, though we attain not to satisfaction as to the particulars we pray for. It is no small advantage if by and in prayer we get our hearts poured out before God and more impressed with the sense of our indigency and of the necessity of a constant adherence to and dependence on Him in all things, and of submission to Him and more fixed in resolution to wait on Him for all we want. Yea, it should be looked on as a great evidence of His acceptance and favorable condescension to us, if in prayer we be wrought up to a due apprehension of God's majesty and to a suitable and sensible frame of spirit to acknowledge Him the Lord of our life and all we enjoy and need, and to a willingness and readiness to celebrate His praises on that account.

*Proposition 5:* We must not think that every delay to give us a return to our prayers is a denial of an answer. God may think it good to delay our answer and yet give it at length. We are sometimes too peremptory and too ready to set limits to the Holy One of Israel and thus provoke Him to anger. And therefore the Lord may see it good to delay the answer which yet He is resolved to give at length—and that for wise and holy ends, as, first, to teach us all due submission and reverence and to know that He is an absolute God and gives all things freely and will not be stinted or limited to a time by us, but will give, as what He will, so in what time and season He will. Second, to teach us patience in waiting at the posts of His door. We are often hasty, and our impatience is ready to break forth to God's dishonor. And this is no suitable frame for supplicants.

Beggars should have much patience and wait until they get their alms. And it sets them not to say, "Either give me now my alms, or I will wait no longer for it." Third, to try our faith, if we can believe His word and rest on His promise and live in hope, though the fig tree does not blossom at present. Fourth, to stir up and awaken us to be more earnest and serious in our petitions. Delays will make us double our diligence and cause us to renew our suits with more zeal and fervor of spirit and be importunate. Fifth, to cause us to prize the mercy more and make it the more welcome when it comes—for what we look long for we will have a high esteem of and welcome with thankfulness when it comes. Sixth, to put us in case to remark more the faithfulness and goodness of God, when after a long delay He has made good His faithful promise. His faithfulness will then appear with a witness and have a glorious splendor with it. Seventh, to fit us more for the mercy that we are asking and to put us in better case to receive it and to improve it. Many times if we got the good things we asked at the very time when we asked them, we would be more in case to abuse them and dishonor God by them, than make any good improvement of them either for God's glory or for our own good. Eighth, He may delay to give the good things we ask until His own appointed time come, wherein He sees the granting of the mercy will be more for His own glory and give more occasion for setting forth of His praise. Ninth, He may delay until He have many petitions to answer at once—whether many of our own or the petitions of many others with ours. This is so that thus thanks may be given by many together for one and the same mercy, whether granted to persons (as 2 Cor. 1:11) or to a land. He may delay to grant the prayed-for reformation of a church until many children may be brought in, and they join together with the old Christians in prayer for this mercy, so that He may get a song of praise from all together. Tenth,

some mercies sought after may be more fit for the posterity than for the present generation, and therefore they must be delayed. Thus, when the Lord is pleased to delay an answer for these and similar weighty reasons, we must not thence infer that He will not hear at all, or that He is not hearing because He is not presently granting the thing that we are desiring.

*Proposition 6:* Hence we must distinguish between God answering prayers and Him answering them in our days who put them up. We must not think that He does not give an answer to our prayers because He does not give the answer in our own days. He may and often does answer the prayers of the fathers in the day of their posterity. When the old church prayed for the coming of the Messiah, their prayers were heard when the Messiah came in the fullness of time, though not in their days. As the prophets of old prophesied of the grace that should come in the New Testament days and inquired and searched diligently after it, so we may suppose they prayed for it. And as it was revealed to them that not to themselves but to us they did minister the things which are now reported (1 Peter 1:11–12), so they were to believe that their prayers would be answered in due time, though not in their own days.

*Proposition 7:* We must likewise distinguish between a begun answer and a complete answer. When the Lord gives an answer in part or gives the beginning thereof, we must not say that He does not answer, though the whole be not yet granted. Several years may pass before the begun mercy be completed. And many of our greatest desires will not be completely granted until the restitution of all things come and the end be that Christ will have delivered up the kingdom to the Father and the last enemy, death, be destroyed, and will be destroyed, and will be swallowed up in victory. And therefore we must be satisfied with the first fruits and beginnings and wait in faith until the full harvest comes.

*Proposition 8:* God may grant the particular which we ask and yet not grant it in the mode and way that we would have it in. When a people are praying for delivery, they may possibly expect that He should answer them with terrible things in His righteousness, as Psalm 65:5, and to deliver them and save them by bow or by sword or by battle, by horses, or by horsemen. And He may think it good not to save them that way, but by the Lord their God, as Hosea 1:7. It should satisfy us if He be pleased to give us the mercy we are asking, though He should be pleased to take another way than we would possibly have thought. We should not be like petted children that think they get nothing if they get not what they ask in the very manner and way that they would have it.

*Proposition 9:* We must distinguish between Him answering to our sense and feeling. We must not always say that He does not answer us because He makes us not sensible of the answer when it comes. What if the Lord see it good to hide our eyes from seeing what He has done to us or for us, according to our prayers? Must we question His faithfulness and truth because our senses are not satisfied? Many spiritual mercies may be granted, and they may be underground. And we are not able to perceive them until long thereafter that we see the effects thereof—as when we are seeking more grace and strength to serve the Lord, this desire may be granted, and we not perceive it until it appear afterward in its effects. And there are many returns of prayer that we must see only by faith in the promise of God, and therewith rest satisfied.

*Proposition 10:* We must distinguish between God answering our prayers and Him giving us the particular which we asked. We may not always say that God does not hear us because He does not for us the very particular we ask, for He may see it good for many reasons to withhold the particular favor from us that we would be at, as, first, because possibly that particular

would not be for our good and advantage but would do much harm than good. For we are often like unwise children, crying for that which is not good for us. And the Lord, as a wise and tender father, will not give but what He sees will do us good and not harm. Second, He will withhold the particular so that He may try and exercise our submission to Him in all these things and teach us to pray with all due submission, as sensible of our own folly and witlessness, and as believing His goodness and confiding therein to roll ourselves on Him and put a blank check in His hand, giving Him full liberty to grant or not grant that particular as He sees good. Third, so likewise He may withhold the particular to exercise our faith in His fidelity and care. It is no great a difficulty to believe that God is faithful in keeping promises when He is giving us all we ask, nor to believe that He is then tender and careful of us. But to believe this when God refuses to give the thing we would be at—there is the difficulty. And then is faith found to be faith, when in hope it can believe against hope. Fourth, He may withhold the particular when He is minding to give something better for us in its place. And how that is, we will hear. Seeing then that God may for wise and holy reasons refuse to give us the particular benefit we seek and yet not forget us or our supplications, we must not conclude that He does not hear us because He withholds the particular.

*Proposition 11:* We cannot say that God does not hear our prayers when, though He grant not the particular we ask, yet He gives instead thereof that which is really better for us. If He give us wine instead of water and a feast instead of a morsel of bread, cannot we but say He has heard our prayers? If we have been seeking a temporal blessing, and He instead thereof gives us a spiritual blessing, can we say that our prayers are rejected? Whatever folly and ignorance may make a child think and say, when instead of drink which he was asking in a

fever, his father gives some other thing fit for the distemper, though less pleasant to the taste—yet everyone that is wise will think the child has no cause to complain. No more have we when God, instead of the particular thing which we were desirous of, is pleased to give us what is more fit for our condition and more for our spiritual advantage. Many times we are more earnest for temporal favors, deliveries, and escapes than for spiritual. And if God, instead of the temporal mercy, give a spiritual blessing in the room thereof, we have great reason not only to be satisfied, but to bless Him.

*Proposition 12:* If God make up the refusal of a particular or a denial thereof with something that is as good or better for us all things considered, more for God's glory, then we cannot say in our prayers, "Now the Lord has many ways to make this up to us," as we see, first, when Paul was troubled with a tempting messenger of Satan that buffeted him, he besought the Lord thrice to be delivered herefrom, which did speak out his earnest desire to be delivered from this evil (2 Cor. 12:7–8). At that time the Lord did not grant him that particular as he desired, but made up that want another way that was for the glory of God—for it is said to him for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (v. 9). So that Paul had no cause to complain that his prayer was not heard when instead of delivery from the temptation, he got inward strength and grace to enable him to stand under it. Second, the Lord makes up this want abundantly when He answers submission of heart under it, so that the man is satisfied and acquiesces heartily in what God has done—as when David was praying for the life of the child, God would not grant him that particular desire, yet we see David as wrought up through God's grace to a sweet submission. For when he heard that the child was dead, he rose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his apparel and came into the house of the Lord

and worshipped (2 Sam. 12:18–20). Third, the Lord makes up this want when He gives grace to adore Him, to stoop before Him, and to justify and glorify Him in all His ways as just, holy, and righteous. So the psalmist said, “O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent” (Ps. 22:2). He cried night and day, but he did not receive the thing he cried for. What made up this want? See what he says: “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel” (v. 3). He gave glory to God as the holy and righteous one that could do him no wrong. Fourth, this want is richly made up when under it they can be encouraged to continue at the duty and not give it over for all that disappointment, as the psalmist in the places cited before in Psalm 22. Despite his not being heard, he will not give up but continues pressing his suits and confirming his faith of a good answer, from this ground, among others: that the fathers or others before him got a gracious answer from God. “Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and were not confounded” (vv. 4–5). So the church would not give over crying to God, howbeit He had for a long time seemed angry against the prayers of His people (Ps. 80:4). So we see in Heman (Ps. 88). He cried day and night (v. 1), and again he called daily on the Lord and stretched out his hands to Him (v. 9). Yet we see through the whole psalm that his trouble continued long. Yet despite this we find him resolving to persist in the duty: “But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee” (v. 13). Fifth, this want is also made up to them when the disappointments work savingly on them and cause them to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For the psalmist says, “I am a worm, and no man, etc.” (Ps. 22:6). Sixth, this want is made up and needs not be missed when hereby the soul is brought

to make sure work of its interest in God and is made to renew grips of Him—as in the places cited before: “O my God, I cry unto thee” (Ps. 22:2); “O Lord God of my salvation” (Ps. 88:1). Seventh, this want is made up when it fares with them as it did with David when he prayed and humbled himself for his enemies when they were sick (Ps. 35:13). His prayers returned to his own bosom. So when they have been praying for others and have not obtained their desire, if God return their prayers into their own bosom and give themselves that which they were seeking for others, they cannot say they are losers. So we see the Lord has many ways how to make up this want of the particular His people are asking. And so long as He gives us that which is as good or better for us, we have no cause to say that He hears us not.

*Proposition 13:* We cannot say that the Lord does not hear or answer the prayers of His people though they get not the particular they are asking, when they are answered according to the holy end, intention, and design which principally they had before their eyes and were moved by to seek these things—as, first, they intend when they pray for anything, as becomes the children of God, God’s glory chiefly and principally. Second, the common good of the church and people of God. And third, their own everlasting happiness. When any of their prayers are inconsistent with these or with any of these, they are not lawful prayers and should not be put up. But when they pray for particulars that either are not for promoting God’s glory or are more for their own particular good and self-ends than for the common good or for the church of God, or for particulars that will prove hurtful to their souls—then it is God’s goodness that He grants not these suits. And there being no promise of such things made, there is no ground to expect them by prayer. As also when we pray for such things as are lawful and seem convenient, and so carry in them no

repugnancy to these three great ends but stand in a subordination thereunto, the Lord may see it good not to grant these particulars. And yet we cannot say when He does not grant them that He answers not our prayers. For when these great ends are more attained by other means and particulars which the Lord gives than by these that we propose or desire, our principal desires are granted, God's glory is advanced, the church's good is promoted, and the work of God in our souls is carried on toward perfection—by more suitable and effectual means than such were that we projected. And what have we then to complain of?

*Proposition 14:* When the Lord at length will admit the soul into intimate and perpetual fellowship with Himself in glory and crown it with that everlasting crown of eternal and unchangable felicity, will there be any petitions left unanswered? Surely that incorruptible and undefiled inheritance that fades not away but is reserved in the heavens will richly make up all wants and cause the believer to sing and say, "Now all my desires are granted. All my prayers are heard. I have all my asking, and more than ever I did ask; for I knew not what this life was when I sought it. He has done exceeding abundantly above all that ever I could ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

*Proposition 15:* We must not think that God does not answer the prayers of His people because He does not answer every inordinate desire of theirs. We must distinguish between prayer lawful and commendable, both as to the matter and the manner, and unlawful and inordinate desires. It is prayers put up for things lawful to the will of God and presented in the right manner as was formerly shown that we speak of when we say that the Lord hears them and will return an answer to them in His own good time.

*Some Objections Answered*

*T*hrough by what we have said in the preceding chapter, we may see how all objections that moved against this comfortable truth (that God hears and answers the prayers of His people that are put up in a right manner and for things agreeable to His holy will) may be answered. Yet for further impressing of this truth, we will move an objection or two and answer the same on grounds mentioned and hence make it manifest how worthy of rebuke such are as do not firmly believe this truth but either question it or doubt there concerning, and that because they have not observed that God has answered their desires as to some particulars, for:

First, they will possibly object and say, “We have prayed long for the coming of the kingdom of Christ and for the prosperity of His people and for the overthrow of enemies, and we see no appearance of an answer. Yea, we see and observe the contrary. Where is then the truth of this assertion?”

But for answer, they should know:

1. That it is not said that God will not answer the prayers of His people immediately and presently after they are put up, or at the very time wherein they possibly expected an answer. He is God only wise and knows

the fittest seasons. And He is an absolute lord and has the times and seasons in His own hand and may freely give out His favors when and at what season He will. No man can set limits to the Holy One of Israel here.

2. Hence, for all this delay, God may and will grant a good and satisfactory return to these prayers in His own appointed and fit season, though many of those who have earnestly prayed for these favors should die before the answer come. God's delaying is not the same as saying no. And if the return come in the due and appointed season, who can say that God has not heard the prayers of His people, even though many of them be gone to their graves without a sight of the return except by faith, by which they were called to embrace the return afar off—as the ancient believers who received not the promise in its accomplishments, yet in faith saw them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them (Heb. 11:13)?
3. If they have been so foolish as to limit the Lord to a day or a year, must the Lord be unfaithful if He answer them not according to their foolish and sinful imaginations and prescriptions? Had they any promise that God would do these things before such a year or in their days? And if they had no promise, nor prophecy, nor grounds from God's Word to expect such changes in their day, then why did they limit the Holy One of Israel? Why did they in their rash, proud, and sinful imaginations set God a day? And why will they add a further sin to this—that is, quarrel with God or question His truth and fidelity because He follows not their humors in every punctilio?

4. What if they will yet see before they die some breaking up of the day that they are long looking for? That may come in a day which has not come in a year. Are not the Lord's mercies many times very surprising? Has He not come several times very surprising? Has He not come several times very unexpectedly? And what do they know what may be before they go off the stage? Are they not called to live by faith and keep up hope and possess their souls in patience?
5. What do they know, but the Lord is waiting to be gracious, as it is said (Isa. 30:18)? Are they assured that He will be favorable no more and that He will never own His interest again? And if they dare not say thus, why will they not give the Lord liberty to make choice of the fittest seasons wherein He may be most glorified in His faithfulness? Will it not be more fit for His glory to give a return to their prayers and to the prayers of others after them all at once? Will not the children and posterity see great cause of blessing the Lord, when at once or in one day, as it were, He will give them a full harvest of returns for which both they and their fathers have been laboring? What joy was it to the returning captives out of Babylon to consider how the Lord was bestowing on them the great favor and mercy that they and their fathers before them had been long praying for.
6. The saints of old did not question God's faithfulness because all the great promises whereupon they prayed were not actually performed in their days. But they died in the faith, as we heard from Hebrews 11:13. And why should not we do so now? When the great promise of the Messiah came to be fulfilled, the children of God

did not quarrel with Him that the performance came no sooner. But they blessed the Lord God of Israel for visiting and redeeming His people and raising up a horn of salvation for them, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that they should be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all that hate them in order to perform the mercy promised to their fathers and to remember His holy covenant (Luke 1:68–72, 75, etc.).

7. May it not satisfy us that God will make all good in the end and give a real being to all His great promises, whereby the same family and stock will find all verified, though every individual person of that family and stock will not see this in their days? If the Lord will have our generation to sow in tears and another to reap in joy, may not that satisfy us, that the same stock and family of God's children will enjoy it? If the laboring man pray for a blessing on the seed sown and die before the harvest come, is not his prayer heard when his wife and children in due time reap a plentiful harvest?
8. When in the end Christ will triumph over all His enemies and set all His children on His throne in glory and put them to judge their enemies, will they have any cause then to complain of God not making good His promise? Will not all the children then say that they are satisfied to the full and that all their prayers are answered, and more than answered?

Second, it may be possibly objected by some that they have been long seeking by prayer some particular for themselves and have no return.

For an answer, I will propose these questions, by which everyone who moves such an objection may know what way to stop their own mouths.

1. What if that particular has not been according to God's revealed will? The promise of hearing is only made to such prayers as are according to His will (1 John 5:14). Therefore this should be examined. And if it be found that such desires are not warranted by the Word, can they with any shade of reason question God's promise and faithfulness when He does not answer such desires? They ought to be glad that the Lord has not answered them according to their idols of their heart and given them in His displeasure what they sinfully desired—as He threatened to do and has done to some.
2. Suppose the thing asked by prayer was good and lawful, yet what if it was not expedient and profitable? Yea, what if it had proven really hurtful to us if we had gotten it at that time? We may in our folly and ignorance seek that which, though good in itself and useful at times, may prove very noxious to us at that instant. Wine may prove refreshing and strengthening sometimes, but to a person while in a fever, it would prove noxious and hurtful. And will we then quarrel with God because He has not given us what would really hurt and undo us? He has promised no such thing. And our foolish imagination is no rule to Him.
3. Suppose the thing asked were both good and profitable, yet what if they have not asked in faith but doubting? The promise is made to such as ask in faith (Matt. 21:22; James 1:6–7). And if any have asked and prejudged themselves of an answer by not asking in

faith according as they were called and obliged to do, will the Lord bear the blame of them not receiving what they did not believe to receive? Why will they rather quarrel with God and question His faithfulness than complain of their own sinful way of asking and of their own unbelieving hearts? Were it not more suitable for them to charge sin home to themselves than thus impute iniquity to their maker without all ground or any just occasion?

4. What if there has not been that seriousness and earnestness of fervency in their desires that ought to have been? Will God be blamed for not answering such prayers as are put with a great measure of indifference and carelessness, and in which prayer man's heart and soul is not? We are told that the fervent effectual prayer, or the prayer that is wrought, or is, as it were, possessed with the Spirit of God, avails much (James 5:16). And what can then be expected of such prayers as flow from no such principle or fervor, zeal, earnestness, desire, or spiritual hunger, but die in the very mouth and are not with carefulness leveled at any mark, but are shot forth at random? Will we blame God for not answering these prayers that we were indifferent whether we should get an answer to or not?
5. Suppose that there was some earnestness and seriousness in petitioning, yet what if all this zeal and earnestness was but wild fire? What if their designs and intentions were corrupt and carnal? Will we think that God has promised to answer any such prayers? See what James said: "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (4:3). Evil intentions may mar all our pains and labor.

And in this case, we should lay the blame of us not being heard on ourselves and not on the Lord.

6. Suppose that nothing of this either should be sensibly observed, yet what if there have been failings as to the right manner of praying in several other particulars—which may be searched and found by what was laid above in chapters 13–14 regarding the right manner of going about prayer? If we have come short of our duty, will we blame the Lord that we come not speed? Why do we not rather justify Him and condemn ourselves, seeing we are truly condemnable? If we would expect His answering of our prayers, we must labor to pray in a right manner according to His appointment.
7. Chiefly this is to be considered: What if the petitions have been put up, and not in the name of Christ or with that proper making use of Him that is requisite in prayer, and was declared above in chapters 15–16? Will we think that God is not as good as His word because He does not answer such petitions as have been presented and put up, not in the name of Christ, but in our own name—all when the promise here is expressly made to such askings as are in the name of Christ? “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will do it.”
8. Though the Lord has not yet granted that particular petition, yet may He not yet grant it hereafter? And if it be granted hereafter in such a time and season as He sees best, will He not be found faithful? What if He be waiting the best opportunity wherein to give it, even the opportunity wherein the giving of that mercy will be most to His own glory, to the declaring of Him to be faithful and true, and will also be most to their

spiritual good and advantage? And if it be thus, have we any cause to complain? Can we say He does not answer because He delays to answer? Is every delay the same as saying no?

9. What if they have been too peremptory with God in the matter? And what if God will let them know that He alone is sovereign and teach them to pray with more reverence and submission? May not the Lord give His favors as seems to Him to be good? And should beggars be choosers, and unmannerly in their desires? And when God will punish for this unsuitable behavior, will we blame Him? Should we be as peremptory and urgent with Him concerning particulars not absolutely promised nor having a necessary connection with our salvation, as in these more necessary things? And if the Lord will teach us to carry more suitably, will we call into question His truth and faithfulness?
10. What if God has granted in part the thing that was asked or has begun to answer, and they have taken no notice thereof—whether through grief, fainting of heart, and excessive sorrow because of some present sad dispensation, wherewith that begun mercy is accompanied, as when the Israelites could not hearken to Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage (Ex. 6:9) and so were not in case to take any notice of their begun delivery? Or if the Lord has begun to answer their desires? See the like in Job 9:16–17: “If I had called,” he says, “and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.” Or, whether because they see not the answer in all things answering their mind

and satisfying their desires? Will they in this case say that the Lord has forgotten to be gracious and that He takes no notice of their prayers and desires? How unreasonable is this?

11. What if God has given that which is as good or better, in lieu of that particular? Should He not be acknowledged in this His wisdom and goodness? Should we say He does not answer because He gives not the very particular we are asking, though in the meantime He gives that which is much better for us, which we would acknowledge to be so if we had spiritual eyes to see what indeed were for our good? If He has given us grace to stand under the temptation against which we were praying so that His power may be seen and observed in our weakness instead of delivering us wholly from the temptation (as He did to Paul, 2 Cor. 12), will we say He has not answered us? Or if He give grace to submit to Him and to His good pleasure so that we are made to say with Christ, "Not our will, but Thy will be done," then will we say He gives us nothing, or that He regards not our suits? Or if He give inward peace of mind and quietness to rest in hope and confidence that the full answer will come in due time—as He gives to Hannah when she went away, and her countenance was no more sad (1 Sam. 1:18)—will we say we get nothing? May not that satisfy us until more come? Or if He accepts our prayer off our hands and takes it for good service done to Him and share this with our souls, will He, notwithstanding of this, be looked on as stopping His ears from our supplications? Or if we fix a persuasion in the soul that all will be granted in due time and cause the heart to rest on His faithful

word and promise and wait in patience, then will we say that this is nothing? Or if He fix the soul, despite these delays or seeming refusals, in the love of Himself and in the resolution to abide by the duty and not to give it over—will this be nothing? Will we under these and the like receipts cry out that God does not hear nor regard our prayers?

12. What if the Lord be delaying to grant them their particular desire out of special desire and kindness to them? Will He in that case be thought to be regardless of their prayers? If the Lord delay to give the mercy until they be in a fit case to receive it and improve it, or until they be humbled more or made to acknowledge their dependence on Him the more and to value His mercy and goodness more, and so put in case to be more thankful for the mercy when it is granted—can they say at this that He regards not their prayers? Or have they any cause to complain?
13. What if they have gotten other petitions granted before and have not duly with thankfulness acknowledged the same? Will they blame the Lord now for not granting them at the first what they seek at the first, what they seek again? If by delaying to grant them their new suits He be calling them to mind this sin and to punish them therefor, should they not acknowledge their iniquity and bear His indignation because they have sinned against Him, rather than quarrel with Him on this account?

By these particulars we may see what might further be said in this case. And by what is said to these two objections we may see what may be said to others of the same kind that may be

proposed—which, for brevity's sake, we will not name. And from all that has been said, we may draw a noble encouragement to this duty of prayer. For who would not follow that trade by which they may expect such rich and profiting gain? Who would not pray when they hear hereby they will get all they desire or ask? What more security can we desire for this than the word and promise of Him who is truth itself? And has He not plainly and distinctly here said that whatever we will ask in His name, He will do it? And have we encouragement enough to continue instant in prayer and to persist in it, seeing we have ground to believe that our labor will not be in vain in the Lord—for though He delay sometimes to give an answer for holy and wise reasons, yet He will give a good answer in the end and satisfy all the desires of His people. The day is coming when they will say that they have received a full return to all their prayers, and they would not wish it had been otherwise with them than it was through His holy and wise dispensations.

*A Second Use Showing That We  
Should Look for Our Answer and  
the Evils of Neglecting This*

**I**n the next place, this truth points out the duty of praying persons even after they have prayed, to look up, as it is in Psalm 5:3, and to hear what God the Lord will speak, as it is in Psalm 85:8. As also, we see hence ground of rebuke to such as slight and neglect this duty of looking after their prayers and seeing what is become of them—the evil of which sin we will first discover in some particulars. And then we will point out some things to clear up this duty of looking for returns to our prayers.

How evil it is not to look after a return to our prayers may appear from these particulars, which will discover both the sin of it and the evil that attends it:

1. This evil says that we have been but praying for a fashion and not in earnest, that our hearts have not been in our requests, and that we have no value for the particulars we have been seeking. For if our prayers had been hearty and had flowed from a heart sensible of our great wants and necessities, then we could not but look after our suits to see what is become of them. If a man give in a petition or bill of complaint in any particular that did concern his life or estate to the king

or to magistrates that could help him, would he not inquire afterward what was done with his supplication and what became of it and what answer was made thereunto? Surely it would be a very worthless matter that he would not think worthy of this after inquiry.

2. This will provoke God to give no answer at all. If we cast our petitions thus at our heels, how can we think that God should answer them? When David was earnest with the Lord and would fain have had the thing he desired granted to him, as appears by his frequent reiterating of this his desire to be heard (Ps. 5:1–2), he tells the Lord (v. 3) that he would direct his prayer to God and would look up, that is, he would look what was become of it and what answer the Lord had given to it. Will a king grant the supplication of a poor man when he hears that he minds never to look after the same, nor inquire once what answer will be given to it?
3. If we look not thus after our prayers to see what answer God gives to them, then if He will be pleased for His own holy ends to grant what we have petitioned for, what right use can we make of that answer? Or how can we carry suitably to God's goodness manifested therein? Will we not in this case be necessarily in hazard of despising the goodness of the Lord and of contracting more sin on ourselves? Surely we cannot be engaged to the Lord in all thankfulness on the account of His favoring us with an answer to our desires, when we expect not a return of them, as Psalm 66:19. Nor can we on this account be engaged to love the Lord more, as David was when he said, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications" (Ps. 116:1). Nor can we on this account be engaged to

pray more and to double our suits, as David did on the same account in the psalm already cited: "Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him, as long as I live" (v. 2).

4. If we look not after our supplications to see what answer is given thereunto, we cannot carry suitably on God's delaying to answer. We will not know how to be suitably affected therewith or what to make of that dispensation. If Paul had not looked after his prayers, what could he have made of God's saving him, no, in the particular, for that time? Would he have doubled his diligence and put in the same bill again and the third time? Would he have known or experienced God's goodness in strengthening him with strength in his soul and in giving him sufficiency of grace to stand under the load of temptation? We cannot, on God's delaying to answer, be put to pray and to pray again. We cannot look on the dispensation as calling us to search our ways and to see if we be regarding iniquity in our heart, which will stop or put a demure to an answer (Ps. 66:18).
5. If we look not after our supplications, we cannot understand the language nor make a right use of the Lord denying us in the particular. We cannot inquire whether there be wrath written on it or mercy wrapped up in it. There is a time when God is angry at the prayers of His people, as Psalm 80:4. And so He will not answer because of a quarrel He has against their persons for their backslidings. And if this be our case, we cannot be sensible of His controversy against us evidenced thereby, and so cannot with the church there cry, "Turn us, and we shall be turned." Nor in

this case can we with the church make this a matter of lamentation, saying, “Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer” (Lam. 3:8). On the other hand, when in mercy He withholds the particular and gives something better for us in lieu thereof, we cannot express our thankfulness therefor nor read our engagements to God and His helping us to submission to His holy will in all time coming.

6. If we look not after our prayers, we profess ourselves as disregarding the promises. And we say they are not worthy to be believed, for our carriage has this language with it. Though we have promises that our prayers will be heard, and we have now prayed, yet we need not be at the pains to stand so long at God’s door waiting for an answer—for the promises are vain things and there is no truth in them. And therefore we will never look after our prayers to see the answer we get, for it is in vain. No answer will come. And what an indignity is hereby done to God, everyone may see. Or else we say that prayer is no means whereby the Lord is pleased to bring about the accomplishment of His word and promise, contrary to Ezekiel 36:37. For if we did believe this, we would use prayer as a means and so look after our prayers to see whether thereby the good things promised were conferred or not.
7. When we look not after our prayers, we profane God’s holy name in and by our prayers, for we look not on God as one that can hear, but as an idol. And we pray to Him as we would do to a stock, or as heathens do to their dumb, deaf, and dead idols. Otherwise our eyes would be fixed on Him as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters or as the eyes of a maiden to

the hand of her mistress (Ps. 122:2). And we would wait for the Lord and hope in His word more than they that watch for the morning (Ps. 130:5–6).

8. Yea, when we look not after our prayers to see what answer comes, we not only take His holy name in vain, but we even mock God to His face and affront Him by putting a supplication in before Him and running away as if we thought not the answer worth waiting for. Would not a great person or a judge think himself mocked if a poor man, having a cause depending before him, should give him a bill desiring his cause to be examined and discussed and in the meantime should go away and never once inquire what is become of his cause?
9. Yea, hereby also, we do a great affront to Jesus Christ, the great advocate and intercessor with the Father. For in prayer, we profess to employ Christ as the great intercessor and put our prayers in His hand so that He may present them and procure a good answer. And when we never look after them, what an affront do we to Him? If a beggar employed the king's son to present a petition to his father for him, and after he had done this, would go away and never inquire after his petition to see what the answer was, would not the king's son think himself miserably insulted? And if we look not after our prayers, how can we be thankful or acknowledge our obligations to Christ? And how can we be sensible of His special love?
10. We lose hereby many sweet and soul refreshing experiences of God, as, first, we lose the proofs and experiences of His faithfulness in keeping His

promises and making good His word to us (Ps. 143:1). Second, of His love and tenderness in having compassion on us and helping us in our straits. Third, of His constancy and graciousness, who will not deal with us according to our folly nor answer us according to the wickedness of our hands nor according to the idols of our heart. Fourth, and of His free grace and condescension, who descends so low as to take notice of us unworthy sinners and to answer our desires.

11. When we look not after our prayers to see what returns we get, we lose the experience of ourselves which otherwise we might have. If we were carefully observing what returns we got, we would thereby read God's displeasure at us and our service (see Mic. 3:5–7). Or being well pleased with us and with what we do through Jesus Christ (Isa. 58:9), when He hid His face from us or shut out our prayers, we would find ourselves called to inquire after our prayers to search and examine them, both as to the matter and as to the manner of performance, and to mourn over the sin of our holy things. We would find ourselves called likewise to search after the provoking and procuring causes of Him hiding His face, and thus we would be kept from the plague of deadness and security.
12. When we look not after our prayers, much comfort that we might meet with on the account that God's hearing our prayers says that He is reconciled to us in Jesus Christ, that in Him, He accepts us and our service, that though He be in heaven, yet He has regard to poor indigent sinners on earth and takes notice of their case and hears their desires—all which and the like cannot but yield matter of comfort to the honest heart.

So likewise we lose the sight of that ground of thanksgiving and praise which otherwise we might have, and of new and fresh engaging ourselves to the Lord to be His and to love and serve Him.

As to the next particular, the duty of looking after our prayers or of waiting for a return, in order to the discovery of what it is or of what it includes, let us take notice of these particulars:

1. Where the heart is looking for an answer, there will be faith relying on Him. The soul will conclude that an answer is coming, because God is faithful and true; and on this the soul relies and confides: “I will hear,” said the psalmist, “what God the Lord will speak” (Ps. 85:8). There he was looking for an answer, but what ground did he stand on? Or what was his soul doing? He was persuading himself of a good return—for he adds: “For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints.” He was sure a good, full, and satisfying answer would come.
2. On this confidence there is a resting in hope, according to Psalm 38:15: “For in thee, O Lord, do I hope; thou wilt hear, O Lord, my God.” So as discouragements will not make them faint and give over, whether the discouragements be caused by the consideration of their own unworthiness or of the evil manner of discharging the duty, or the like, for notwithstanding hereof there will be a hoping in His mercy and grace through Jesus Christ.
3. There will also be a patient waiting at God’s door until a return comes: “Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I

will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me” (Mic. 7:7).

4. There will be a careful observing of the least dawns of mercy or appearance of the Lord’s granting what was asked—as a beggar, standing at the door and seeking alms, will observe carefully when any are coming at the door to open it so that he may be ready to receive the alms he is seeking.
5. When the soul is looking out for an answer, there will be a welcoming with all thankfulness of the smallest mercy that comes from His hand and an embracing of it, as *arles*<sup>1</sup> of more. The day of small things will not be despised.
6. There will be also a care to keep from such sins as may provoke the Lord to deny or withhold the blessing that is asked. And there will also be a care to keep their souls in frame for receiving and improving rightly and to spiritual advantage the requested blessings, when they are given. And moreover, there will be a diligence in the use of all other allowed and commanded means for the attaining of the good things sought for. And where this care is not, there is no ground to imagine that persons are looking for an answer of their prayers.

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1. *Arles*: money given in payment for confirmation of a bargain.

*How Returns of Prayer May  
Be Observed and Rightly Improved*

*A*nother use may be made of this comfortable and useful point of truth that there is an answer awaiting the prayers of God's people that are put up to Him in Christ's name. And the use is that hence the Lord's people may see themselves called after prayer to observe what returns God gives to their prayers and next to make a right improvement of these returns.

1. If it be inquired how we will know if we get an answer of our prayers, then I answer: Sometimes the answer will speak for itself when the very particular which was asked is granted, and that so manifestly and sensibly as there is no place for doubting left—as when David prayed for deliverance from his enemies, and he was delivered out of their hands and brought out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and had his feet set on a rock and his goings established (Ps. 40:1–2). Then he had an answer with a witness. So also when Jonah, after his prayer, was delivered out of the belly of the fish and set on dry land. And when Hezekiah, as an answer of his prayer, was restored to health again and delivered from the jaws of death. Sometimes, I grant it is more

unclear, as when the mercy that was sought by prayer was a spiritual mercy, as growth in grace, victory over some sin and temptation, pardon of particular failings, and the like. Here the Lord may give an answer, and that answer not be observed, because it may be something equivalent or better, but not the very particular itself—as we see in Paul (1 Cor. 12). He was not delivered from the messenger of Satan, which he was asking. Yet he got confirming and strengthening grace to support him under the temptation. Sometimes the particular may be granted, and yet the same may lie unobserved through clouds covering the soul, or the Lord thinking it good to hide the mercy from their eyes in order to keep them humble and to hold them fast at the duty of prayer. And sometimes the Lord may give something in hand till the full return come. And if this were observed, the soul might infer therefrom that the prayer that was put up was not rejected or cast by without an answer.

2. It is to be inquired how it will be known that a return of prayer is had when the particular is not granted which was asked. I answer that this was in part spoken to before. And it may satisfy here to say that this may be understood by His granting the great end which was intended and designed by the person asking that particular—answered in another way by granting of some other particular, as when He gave grace to Paul to stand and withstand the messenger of Satan that was sent to buffet him. The main thing which Paul designed—namely, being kept from sin—was attained by the Lord's granting him His grace to enable and support him, though that particular was not granted.

So when the believer is seeking the subduing of some corruption to the end he may advance in holiness, if the Lord order matters so as he is made to lie humble before the Lord and to walk with Him in all humility, the end is attained—though the particular is not granted. And so it may be said in other similar cases.

3. If it be inquired how it will be known that our prayers are granted, or what can we look on as sufficient ground whence to infer that our prayers are accepted by which we may conclude that our desires are heard, though we have not yet received what we were praying for—then I answer, first: If the Lord grant inward calmness of mind and quiet of heart after much disquieting trouble before and in prayer and thereby make the soul sit down as filled with contentment and satisfaction in hope, as when Hannah went her way, and her countenance was changed and no more sad as it was before (1 Sam. 1:18). Second, if the Lord does inwardly by His Spirit signify to the believer that his prayer is heard and will be granted in due time by clearing up the promise amid strengthening his faith thereupon—as He did to David (as would appear) in Psalm 6:8–9. He was in a sad and disconsolate condition, having his soul vexed, yea, sore vexed, and being weary with groaning, and thereby making his bed to swim all night and watering his couch with tears, and withal having his eye consumed because of grief. And yet, all of a sudden, we hear him crying out immediately thereafter: “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer” (vv. 8–9). Third, if the Lord help

the believer to eye Him by faith and to grip Him as his God and thereupon to pray, he may infer that a good answer will come whereupon he may be quiet, as David (Ps. 3) eyed the Lord as a shield about him, as his glory, and the one who lifted up his head (v. 3). And then he cried to the Lord with his voice, and he concluded he was heard. And therefore he laid himself down and slept and would not be afraid of ten thousands of the people (vv. 4–6). Fourth, if in the meantime the Lord determine the heart to a patient waiting, then there is an answer coming, as Psalm 40:1: “I waited patiently,” says David, “for the Lord.” And what came of this? “He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, etc.” (v. 2). Fifth, if the heart be so fixed on the suit that no discouragement will put them off, but rather strengthen their suits, as in the Canaanitish woman.

4. If it be again inquired when we may in faith conclude that our prayers are or will be answered, then I answer: When we find ourselves in that frame that the promise of that necessary blessing is specifically made to—that is, if the praying person be a true believer, for the promise is properly made to them, as if he has prayed in faith in the name of Jesus and is waiting in faith and patience for the return and is not by his sin and folly marring the blessing or neglecting any means appointed for obtaining mercy. So several good things are promised to persons so and so disposed and qualified—as pardon to such, as pardon to others. Now when a believer is seeking pardon and finds this frame of heart in himself of a readiness and willingness to

forgive others, he may expect through Christ the pardon of sins.

5. If it be inquired how we will know that the particular which we asked is given in love and favor, and as a return of prayer, then I answer: When, first, it speaks for itself with regards to God's timing of it—as when the Lord granted so instantly the thing which Abraham's servant was asking of Him, and when Peter was delivered out of prison and presented safe into the hands of such as were praying for him (Acts 12). Second, when the mercy is begun to be given upon prayer, and prayer, as it were, carries it on to a perfection. Third, when the Lord gives more than was asked or something more with it—as when He gave Solomon much riches and glory, together with the excellency of wisdom, for which he asked. Fourth, when it comes laden with love with regards to the timing of it, as when the person is in best case to welcome the mercy and to make a good use of it. Fifth, when the heart is engaged more to love the Lord on account thereof (Ps. 116:1) and to pay the vows made (Ps. 66:13–15; cf. vv. 17–19) and to glorify Him (Ps. 50:15). Sixth, when the mercy has a peculiar sweetness and satisfying relish with it, so that when the desire comes, it is as a tree of life (Prov. 13:12), full of sap and refreshing sweetness. And it is not accompanied with that bitterness, inward discontentment, and dissatisfaction that it will be accompanied with when it is given in wrath.

In order to the second thing here proposed to be spoken to, so that it may be cleared, namely, how the answers given to our prayers ought to be improved, to which I will answer briefly in these particulars:

1. An answer is rightly improved upon when the thoughts thereof do encourage to seek Him again in new straits and impress in us a fixed resolution to renew our suits to Him; for this is pleasing to Him, and His mercies prepare the way for more and are arles of more. And so should they be improved. This use David frequently made of such favors: “In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and he heard me” (Ps. 120:1–2). And what does he do with that favor when a new difficulty comes? He is encouraged thereby to go to God again. And therefore he adds, “Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.” So Psalm 116:2: “Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him so long as I live.”
2. Our returns are not rightly improved upon when thereby we do not get an impression of God’s excellency and transcendent glory as being the only God worthy to be prayed to—as when David saw by faith that God would answer him, saying, “Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer, and attend to the voice of my supplication. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; for thou wilt answer me” (Ps. 86:6–7). Then he breaks out in high thoughts and expressions of God as the only non-such God: “Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works” (v. 8; see 2 Chron. 33:13).
3. Our returns are rightly improved upon when our hearts are thereby engaged even more to lay out ourselves for Him and His glory and to be inclined with cheerfulness to serve Him—as we see in Jacob: “And let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I wilt make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress,

and was with me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way, which I went” (Gen. 35:3). This was also David’s purpose and resolution on the account of the return of prayer which he got: “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth, etc.” (Ps. 138:2). And what set him on to this? See verse 3: “In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul” (see 2 Chron. 34:27, 29, etc.).

4. Our returns are rightly improved upon when our hearts are thereby engaged to love the Lord, and we are so taken with His expressions of kindness in hearing our suits that we would fain have others engaged also to love Him on the same account: “I love the Lord,” said David, “because he hath heard my voice and my supplication” (Ps. 116:1). So Psalm 34:4, where he had said, “I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” And then among other things, he draws this inference therefrom: “O taste and see that the Lord is good, etc.” (v. 8; cf. Ps. 31:22–23).
5. Likewise, the returns we get of prayer are rightly improved upon when our hearts are engaged to praise His name and to set Him on high so that He alone may be exalted (Ps. 66). When David had said, “Verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer” (v. 19), with the same breath he adds, “Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me” (v. 20). So Psalm 118:21: “I will praise thee, for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.” So Psalm 28:6: “Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication.” So Psalm 34:3–4: “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt

his name together.” And why? “I sought the Lord, and he heard me, etc.” He would have all the saints joining with him in his song (see Ps. 22:23–24).

6. Our answers to prayers are rightly made use of when our hearts are thereby engaged to trust alone in all our new straits. So David: “I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place” (Ps. 118:5). And what does he infer from thence? “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes” (vv. 8–9).
7. When our hearts are even more alienated thereby from the wicked and their wicked courses, then we make a right use of the Lord’s answering our prayers, after the example of David: “Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping” (Ps. 6:8).
8. As likewise we make a right use of God’s answering our prayers when that is made a ground of encouragement to us to pray again and a ground of hope and confidence to be heard. So the church made this use thereof: “I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry” (Lam. 3:55–56). So once hearing is laid down for a ground of a second hearing: “Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear” (Ps. 10:17). So Psalm 22:21: “Save me from the lion’s mouth, for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.”

*Some Further Improvement of This Truth  
Particularly Enforcing the Manner of Prayer*

**I**n the last place, we will mention this use of the point of truth named, namely, the consideration of this: that God will hear and answer the prayers and desires of His people should teach us of several things concerning the manner of going about the duty of prayer and should enforce the practice of the duty of prayer, together with several things requisite as to the manner of going about prayer, as:

1. Seeing the Lord has promised to hear our suits and to grant what we ask in prayer, we are therefore called to come to Him and call on Him in faith, believing His word and resting assured of the truth of His promise. And when we can call to mind no particular promise in reference to the particular which we are seeking, we may take this and the like general promise in our hand and go forward with that so that in confidence thereof we may approach and, believing the same, expect a good and seasonable return.
2. Seeing so great and rich love appears in casting the door of grace so far open to all that will come in, and making them, as it were, masters of all the riches thereof by promising them whatever they ask, we

ought certainly to approach not only sensible of and suitably affected with this wonderful love and condescension, but with a warmed heart and a heart in love with God who deals so lovingly and kindly with them. Seeing God's bosom stands so wide open in love to receive them and His heart ready to give them all they ask, how should their hearts come in love to be ready to receive and to ask in love?

3. Does the promise lie so open that they will have all that they ask? How should this animate and encourage them to seek great things of God! Even the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33); the one thing necessary (Ps. 27:4; Luke 10:42); the face and favor of God (Ps. 105:4); and Himself—seeing such as seek Him will find Him (2 Chron. 15:2; Prov. 8:7; Isa. 45:19; Jer. 29:13). They will not be confounded (Ps. 69:6), but their hearts will live (v. 32). They will rejoice (Ps. 70:4). We could be so wise for ourselves in things of the world, and why will we not do so in matters of everlasting moment? Will all the riches of heaven be, as it were, at our will, and will we satisfy ourselves with low, base, and carnal things? What a base and carnal spirit will this evidence? It is true, we are to seek the least things also from God, for we are to depend on Him for all we need, and He will be acknowledged in the least of our concerns, as well as in the greatest—which is a wonderful proof of His love and condescension. But when the promise lies so plain that whatever we seek, He will grant it—what an undervaluing of the great and incomprehensibly rich things of God must it be for us to sit down satisfied with dirt and dross and a

swine's portion, when kingdoms and crowns are to be had for the seeking?

4. The consideration of this promise should stir us up to make much of prayer and to go about it as our trade and constant work, seeing it is such an enriching occupation. What more enriching exercise than to ask and have, not up to half of God's kingdom, but to the whole of it, yea, to Himself and all that He is and has, so far as they are capable and in case to enjoy? What merchant would not constantly trade there, where he knew he would have rich gain with no loss or no hazard? Who would not turn beggars, if by begging they knew they would come to possess kingdoms and diadems? How great then must our sin be who will not follow this enriching trade of prayer, when by it we have ground to expect all things that we would have or can desire that our case calls for? How should this keep us always at our knees in a praying posture, seeing there is nothing that He will refuse to give except what would do us harm and be to our prejudice.
5. This should make us continue instant in prayer (Luke 18:1; Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:12) and to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), never to give over this trade and exercise. Have we a promise that we will have what we ask? And should we not, in the faith thereof, make all our requests known to the Lord and continue instant, standing at His door, believing Him to be faithful, and in confidence of His true and faithful word renew our suits and wait without fainting or wearying for a return? For He will make good His word. If any had this ground of confidence in dealing with a king, how little would they weary of waiting? If soldiers had assurance of

victory, how little would they regard disappointments at first? How freshly would they renew their charges and onsets? How would this encourage them to stand, as a brazen wall, against the assaults of the enemy? And will not God's promise to us that we will come speed at length and have all our asking animate us to constancy in this exercise and to a continuing instant in this duty, night and day, and never to give it over?

6. If this were believed that we should have what we ask, we would become in a holy manner importunate in our suit and labor fervently and earnestly therein (Col. 4:12). No denials of our request or delays would put us off and cause us to despond and give over. But we would renew our desires again and again, as we see Paul did thrice (2 Cor. 12) and the woman of Canaan (Matt. 15). No discouragement would ding us back. We see how Jacob wrestled (Gen. 32:26, etc.) and Moses (Ex. 32:11–13). We would press all difficulties that stood in our way. The faith of obtaining at length what we asked would make us resolute in our desires and to resolve never to give over till, according to His faithful promise, we had what we asked.
7. The faith of this should and would make us hearty and earnest in our prayers and to pray with our whole heart (Ps. 119:145). Did we believe to obtain our asking, we would not be so careless, dead, and indifferent in our prayers—for this often procedes from our doubting whether we will be the better or not and from fear that all our labor will be in vain. But were we confident of the truth of this and fixed in the faith thereof that our desires would be granted, then how hearty and how cheerful would we be in this exercise? How free of

anxious doubting, sinful fears, faithless questions, and the like that cause us to go heartlessly and discouragedly about the duty!

8. The faith of this would make us very submissive and far from quarreling when we did not get the particular we were asking, because we would have good ground to say that He is faithful and will make good His word. And therefore, if He give not the particular we are asking, He will hear, for all that, our prayers and give us what is as good for us or better than that which we would have been at. And thus our souls would be satisfied even though we should not obtain what we were seeking. And we would be so far from drawing wrong conclusions and from saying that in anger He had refused to grant our petitions that we would bless Him on the account thereof and acknowledge Him to be faithful, true, and gracious even in not answering us in the particular.
9. The consideration of this should move us to beware of drawing sinful conclusions either from His delaying to answer us according to our mind or hiding from us what returns He is pleased to give. And this would help us to sit down silently and believe His word and rest thereupon even when dispensations would seem to say that there is no answer to be expected from the Lord, and He will not hear. For the faith in His promise would secure us and furnish us with matter of a song, for we would then say, "Let dispensations and temptations say what they will, the Lord is faithful and true and cannot deny Himself. Whatever I be, He is the Lord unchangeable in His being and promises."

10. The faith of this would help us to pray with much submission and would keep us far from limiting Him as to the time when, manner how, or measure wherein He should bestow His favors. The faith of this that He will hear and answer would satisfy us. And it would make us say, "It is enough that He will answer us. Let Him take His own time wherein to do it, and let Him do it after what manner He sees best and dispense His own favors as He sees will most contribute to His own glory."
11. The faith of this would help us to patience in waiting for our answer and keep us from wearying or from saying, "Why should I wait any longer?"—a proud unbecoming and atheistical speech having this at the bottom: that God will not be so good as His word; it is in vain to wait for Him or His promise any longer. What profit will we have by calling on Him and by waiting at the posts of His door?
12. The faith of this would cause us to blame ourselves for our poverty and leanness, for we would see that He is ready to give if we would ask, and that the reason of our not having is because we ask not. Or, if we ask, we ask not rightly in faith and for a right end (James 4:2–3).

*How Christ Gives Out the Answers  
to Prayers Presented to God*

*I*n these words, “I will do it,” we said there were two things included: first, that the prayers of the saints put up in Christ’s name would be answered. And of this we have spoken. Second, that Christ Himself would give out these answers and returns of this we are now to speak, namely, the way how these answers that the saints get to their prayers come into their hands—how they are effectuated and granted. So that there is more here imported than if it had been simply said, “Whatever you shall ask, in my name, shall be granted”—for these words point out, moreover, what hand Christ has in giving forth these answers.

The Scripture gives us an account of several things that Christ does in order to the bringing about of the answers that the saints are to get to their prayers:

1. That by His death, merits, and blood, He has purchased all the good things promised and that we need, for in Him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3).
2. He sends the Spirit to pen and draw up our applications to us for such things as we need and are promised to us (Rom. 8:26–27).

3. He receives our prayers and puts them in His censer so that they may be presented before the Father with acceptance (Rev. 8:3).
4. He was constituted and appointed high priest, set now on the right hand of the throne of the majesty. And, having an unchangeable priesthood, He lives forever to make intercession for them and to plead on their behalf (Heb. 7:24–25). And:
5. He is by office become the saints' advocate with the Father to plead their cause and bring out their answers in point of law and justice (1 John 2:1–2).
6. He is now standing and appearing in the presence of God for the saints (Heb. 9:24), and thereby effectually procuring the answer to all their suits—for He is now high in court and in favor with God as mediator and so obtains on the ground of His sacrifice and purchase what He will.
7. He dispatches their answer to them when it is obtained and conveys it by the Spirit, as Zechariah 1:14–17 will inform us, for in the preceding verse 12 the angel of the new covenant, the mediator, intercedes with the Father on behalf of His people. And in verse 13, He gets a good answer. And here He dispatches this answer for the comfort of His people.

Thus we see the answer of His people's prayer graciously secured on all hands. But this phrase, "I will do it," imports yet something more: namely, that He Himself will give out the answer, as now entrusted with the great magazine of the purchased mercies and blessings, and as the chief Lord treasurer, having absolute power and authority to give out as

He sees good. And so it points forth these things to us: first, Christ's willingness to answer His people's prayers and desires; and, secondly, Christ's power and ability thereunto.

The first, namely, Christ's willingness to answer all the prayers of His people, would say these things to us:

1. That Christ Jesus, though now exalted to great glory and dignity and advanced to great honor, yet forgets not His poor friends here behind on earth. He has them engraved on the palms of His hands (Isa. 49:16) and so cannot forget them in their wrestling condition. Nay, He has them all written on His breast and on His heart, as being the true high priest, as the high priest under the law carried on his breast plate the names of the tribes engraved when he entered within the holy of holies (Ex. 28:9–12, 29).
2. That His love to His followers and members is strong and unchangeable love. Waters will not quench it; death will not alter it; nor will glory after death make any change in it. For whom He loves, He loves to the end (John 13:1). We know what love He expressed to His own while He was here on earth, and the same love He keeps still. Change of places makes no change of affections in Him. Yea, His affection rather grows extensively since His glorification, rather than diminishes.
3. That His care to His members and children is a constant care and no less now when He is in glory than when He was conversant among them here on earth in His state of humiliation. Then He was careful to answer all their desires and petitions, and so is He now. He will hear and will answer.

4. That He has the same tender bowels toward them that He had. His compassions endure. And He is affected with their straits and difficulties, for He keeps still the heart of a brother to His own, for He is a compassionate high priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And therefore He cannot let their prayers fall to the ground. His bowels move toward them in misery and distress.
5. That He takes interest in all their particulars and takes notice of all their concerns, knows all their straits, and lends an ear to all their cries, sighs, and groans.
6. That hence it comes to pass that His bodily absence does not prejudice His people, but their prayers speed no less now than when He was on earth.

Secondly, His power and ability to answer faith:

1. That He is privy to all their necessities, knowing all their straits, hearing all their sighs—for He is God as well as man. And therefore there is nothing hid from Him. He hears all their petitions and desires and knows what they would have and what is best for them. He knows all things (John 9:28; 16:30; 18:4).
2. That He has all the good things which they stand in need of in His own hand and at His disposal. He is master of that treasury. All things that the Father has are His (John 16:15). The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35). All things are delivered of Him to the Father (Matt. 11:27; cf. John 15:3).

3. That He has power and authority to dispose of these good things as it pleases Him, for all power in heaven and in earth is given to Him (Matt. 28:19). The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). And He has authority to execute judgment (John 5:27). He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36). Hence He is appointed heir of all things (Heb. 1:2). He possesses power over all flesh (John 17:2). He is the head of all principalities and powers (Col. 2:10). Angels, powers, and authorities are made subject to Him (1 Peter 3:22).
4. All this power and authority to dispense of these good things is given to Him as mediator, and especially as now having finished the work of redemption which He was given to do in His state of humiliation and as being now risen from the dead and exalted to glory. God, having now highly exalted Him, has given Him a name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9). Having raised Him from the dead, He set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named. And He has put all things under His feet and given Him to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:20–22). And so He has this as the glorious fruit of His great pains and sufferings in His state of humiliation.

From this we may see ourselves called to several duties, as:

First, to wonder at this wonderful condescendence of love and contrivance of wisdom in ordering all things thus so well for the comfort and stability of His people and to comply sweetly therewith, seeing it is so much for our joy and consolation—and that on several accounts, for:

1. May not all such as have fled to this anchor of hope have strong consolation in this: that He who is their brother, husband, head, advocate, and intercessor is Lord of all that they stand in need of? And He has all these good things under His own hand to give out as He sees fit.
2. May they not be encouraged under all their pinching straits and difficulties, knowing that, whatever their condition be, there is help for them in this Lord of the dead and of the living? He who is their dear and only friend has all power and authority and can command help and relief for them when He will. He can as supreme Lord command light, life, strength, victory, grace, and all that they would be at.
3. May they not be encouraged to cast the whole care and burden of the church and of themselves in particular on such a head who is so careful of His body and of all the members thereof? He is so mindful of them and so tender of them and so concerned in all their trials, distresses, and calamities—seeing besides this great and strong affection which He has toward them and compassion and sympathy with them, He is furnished with all things that their case can call for. He is the great dispenser of all the returns of prayer. And He has power and authority to give out whatever is good for them, as absolute Lord.
4. May they not hence be encouraged to go to Him with all their desires and promise themselves a good answer in due time, seeing He who has made a door patent to the Father for them, penned their supplications for them, presented them in His censer, interceded for

them, and stood for them before Him to plead their cause and bring forth their answer, has their answer in His own hand and has power to give it when and how He will? What should now make them fear or doubt of a good answer? They cannot doubt of Christ's love, tenderness, care, and faithfulness, nor have they ground to doubt His power and ability. How may this answer all difficulties? And how may it set to prayer over the belly of many discouragements?

5. May they not rejoice and be glad of their lot and say the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places, seeing they are related to and interested in such a head who can supply all their wants, give them all their desires, answer all their prayers, and do all for them that they need according to His riches in glory.
6. May not this be comfortable to them to know that, as all their prayers go through Christ's hand, so all their returns come through His hand? As He is the great master of requests, so He is the great Lord treasurer. And may not this give a particular relish to all returns, when they may say, "This answer is come from Christ my brother, my husband, my Lord, and my king"? May not this yield a peculiar satisfaction to see the hand of Christ, working out every answer and giving it out of His rich treasury by His power and authority?

Second, to challenge and rebuke ourselves for not believing nor rightly improving this great ground of consolation when the church or we in particular are in great straits, enemies are strong, all doors of help and hope of escape seems shut. For sure, if this were believed, we would not need to fear nor faint.

Third, to enforce a suitable heart in us toward Christ, answerable in some measure to His heart toward us, for:

1. Seeing He is now exalted in glory and yet cannot forget us or our condition, therefore be our condition what it will, we should not forget Him. If He now in glory has a good mind of us, then let us in earth have likewise good mind of Him and of all His concerns.
2. As His love continues toward us, so as change of place does not change affection in Him, so let our love continue and grow toward Him, however it be with us and whatever condition we be in.
3. He has special care of us in our various cases and changes. So let us walk answerably hereunto, having a tender care of His glory and of His interests in a world wherein He looks on Himself as concerned.
4. Has He bowels of compassion toward us in our affliction and misery? Let us therefore open our bowels to all His indigent members.
5. Is He interested with all our matters and concerns and is there any of His matters that we should not be interested in? Should not we take a list of them, as if they were our own?
6. Is He careful to fulfill all our desires to grant all our prayers and to do what we desire Him? So let us be careful to perform all His desires, to answer His requests—which is to be obedient to His laws wherein stands our own and everlasting salvation.

*How God Is Glorified in Christ  
Answering Prayers*

*W*e come now to the sixth particular to be considered, namely, the end of this dispensation of grace whereby Christ gives the answers to the prayers of the saints put up in His name, in these words: “that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” And from hence we may observe something in general and next, something in particular.

As for the observations more general that have here some ground, we will name these:

First, that God has wonderfully interwoven His own glory with our good in the contrivance of salvation and all the parts thereof through Jesus Christ. Hence that solemn song of angels at Christ’s nativity: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men” (Luke 2:14). It was to show that these were linked together in the Lord’s wonderful love and condescension. It is said that all the promises of God are in Him (i.e., Christ), “Yea,” and in Him, “Amen,” to the glory of God (2 Cor. 1:20). And the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God (Phil. 1:11). For God does all things to His own glory and has made all things for Himself (Prov. 16:4). As we are predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:5), so He has made us accepted in the beloved, to the praise of

the glory of His grace (v. 6). And He carries on the work of grace in souls so that they may be to the praise of His glory (v. 12). How comfortable should this conjunction be to us when He might, had He so pleased, have gotten glory to Himself in our perpetual condemnation and perdition! How should this make our salvation and every part thereof sweet to us—that it is a salvation wherein God is exceedingly glorified and is so contrived that every piece thereof preaches forth His glory! Yea, how should this press us to mind our own salvation even more, because God will get so much glory thereby! And what the Lord has thus graciously conjoined, we should never think to separate in our endeavors, but to join both and seek both, the one in due subordination to the other. We must seek our own salvation that God may be glorified therein.

Second, we may hence see that when the Son is glorified as mediator in and by what He does for saints, the Father is also glorified. Thus the Father is glorified in the Son. And the glorifying of the Son tends to the glorifying of the Father (John 11:4). “This sickness,” said Jesus, “is not unto death, but for the glory of God.” And how was this? So that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. So John 13:31: “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” Hence that word, John 5:22–23: “The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father: he that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that hath sent him.” How may we then wonder at this excellent, wise, and well-contrived frame? And how may we wonder at this condescension of love and free grace: that God should count Himself glorified by what Christ does for our good, and that Christ’s glory as mediator in working out our satisfaction and salvation should be glory to God the Father! Again, seeing Christ’s getting glory in perfecting our salvation will be so much the glory of the Father that it should press us

to give Christ much glory by putting much work in His hands. And on the other hand, we should beware of dishonoring the Son, because this tends to the dishonoring of the Father. And we dishonor the Son when we do not give Him our souls to save and do not employ Him in all things that concern our souls or give the glory of anything done to any below Him. Finally, O but our salvation must be a wonderfully glorious piece of work that is so much to the glory of both Father and Son! Is it any wonder that the angels pry into this mystery of glory (1 Peter 1:12)? Yea, is it not a wonder that we have such slender and common thoughts thereof and are not transported with admiration thereat?

Third, we may see that Christ in all of His mediatorial work had a special design to glorify the Father. Hence, He said, "I have glorified thee on earth." And now in glory, He is performing the rest of that work for the glory of the Father, according to that John 17:1: "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may also glorify thee." This should teach us after Christ's example to design with all singleness the glory of God in what we do, even in working our own salvation, and to delight in and be taken with that salvation whereby the Lord was and is so much glorified.

Next, more particularly, we may from these words observe these things. First, that as in all the acts of Christ's mediatorial administration, the Father was glorified, so likewise in Christ's effectual answering of the prayers of His people—for thereby is the veracity and goodness of God manifestly seen. This should teach us firmly to believe that there is an answer coming to the prayers of the children of God put up in the name of Christ, seeing God will not want His glory. As also, to be encouraged to pray much, seeing answers will come, and God will be glorified thereby. So this should teach us to improve what answers we get to the glory of God so that

thereby we may be coworkers with Christ in that matter, and in our places promote His design of glorifying the Father.

Second, that the particular manner of answering our prayers by Christ, now glorified and constituted supreme Lord dispensator, is peculiarly and signally contrived for the glory of the Father. For thereby the Father gets glory on many accounts, for:

1. He gets the glory of His truth and faithfulness in keeping His promise of hearing and answering the prayers of His people.
2. Of His faithfulness in giving testimony to His Son as an all-sufficient mediator, to whom we may confidently come and roll our whole soul on as one able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25). Hereby is it manifest that the Father's testimony of Christ was true, for He cannot but be an all-sufficient mediator who has the whole storehouse and magazine of heaven under His hand and at His disposal, and who has authority and power to give out thereof as He sees good. Now every return of prayer that Christ gives is a new confirmation of this supreme fullness of Christ.
3. Of His goodness in sending, fitting, and qualifying such a mediator—one chosen out from among the people (Ps. 89:19), one mighty and whom He upholds and strengthens with His arm (v. 21). Every answer of prayer that Christ gives out preaches this forth: that He is an all-sufficient mediator, thoroughly furnished to perfect their salvation to the glory of the goodness of God in providing and preparing such a one.

4. Of His justice likewise, for now Christ, being exalted to such dignity, power, and trust, justice must needs have been satisfied by Him so as no more could be asked. And thus God was glorified in Him (John 13:31).
5. Of His graciousness in condescending to such a satisfying way of answering our prayers by giving Christ our mediator all power to give out our answers. Is not this a lovely, desirable way, suitable to our frailty and weakness, when we may go to our brother, high priest, intercessor, husband, and advocate, and from Him get our answers? Is not this a clear demonstration of His love and gracious condescension of the Father? Thus consulting our good and satisfaction and contriving the way so as may yield us much comfort and encouragement.
6. Of His authority in sending and authorizing Christ for His work, wherein He was the Father's servant. Hence, it is said, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father, which hath sent him" (John 5:23), so that all these returns of prayer, coming through the hands of Christ, confirm Christ's authority and so tend to the glory of the Father who has sent Him and clothed Him with all authority and power.
7. Christ hereby is demonstrated to be God and Lord of the dead and of the living, having all power in heaven and in earth and being appointed heir of all things. And every answer of prayer, being a confirmation hereof to us, should work us up to a confessing of Him to be Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2:11).

8. Christ's power is hereby magnified, and He manifested to be as His name is: "Wonderful." And this is also to the glory of the Father (John 11:4).

All which should cause us to wonder and admire this singular and rare contrivance of wisdom, wherein so much of God's love, tenderness, compassion, faithfulness, and condescending grace and goodness may be seen and observed. And we should concur in carrying on the ends thereof, even the glory of God in Christ, by receiving and improving all our answers so as God may be glorified in Christ, and by being satisfied with Christ's answer both as to matter and manner—seeing He knows best how the Father will be glorified in and by His answering—and by being submissive to Him and far from limiting or prescribing to Him on the same account. This should also move us to mark and observe this end in all the Lord's answers and consider the answers given for this very end: that we may thereby see and observe something of that which is Christ's end in granting the answer, namely, of God's faithfulness, truth, goodness, and condescending grace. And so we should blame ourselves that do not more consider and mind this way of glorifying God in His Son.

Third, that Christ's granting the desires and prayers of His people which are put up in His name to the end the Father may be glorified. As it is a great encouragement to pray, so it gives ground of hope and confidence that our petitions will be heard and answered in due time. This not only may be a use of the previous truth and an inference therefrom, but moreover the scope of the words leads thereunto—for Christ is encouraging His disciples to pray to the Father, and He is assuring them that their prayers will come speed. And He does this by telling them that He Himself will do what they desire. And for further confirmation hereof, He adds the end which

He has before His eyes in granting these desires, namely: that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Wherefore, if Christ's answering the desires of His followers and their prayers put up to God in His name will tend so much to the glory of God, and if this is done by the Son on purpose, that the Father may be glorified in Him—then is it not a sure truth that such prayers will not lack an answer? And that therefore His people may be confident hereof and in the confidence of this may be encouraged to pray? The ground of this truth lies here: that God will not want His glory, and that the Son is very tender thereof. And therefore, as for the glory of the Father He went about all the work of redemption, so He will not fail in this piece of answering the prayers of His people, whereby the Father will also be glorified, and He intends the glorifying of the Father.

The faith and consideration of this should be a strong inducement to us to continue instant in prayer and wait in faith and hope for a return, seeing here is a sure and fast ground of faith and hope. God will be glorified in Christ by these answers, and Christ knows this and designs the glorifying of the Father in Himself thereby. And, seeing it is so, what need discourage us or make us despond or fear that no return will come? Will not Christ carry on the work to the glory of His Father? Will He fail in that and not mind His main design? And withal, seeing it is so, we may hereby stop mouths of all objections and wrestle over all discouragements and continue in hope, waiting for a good issue. And whatever the return be, we should be thankful and take it well, knowing that Christ answers so as may best contribute to the glorying of the Father in Himself, both the answer and as to the manner and time or season thereof.

*What Is Imported by Christ  
Repeating the Promise*

*T*he last particular in the text remains to be spoken to, and that is Christ's repeating and ingeminating the promise: "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (v. 14), which besides may be intended to remind them of the right manner of prayer in His name, if they would be sure of an answer. Therefore it is here, in the repeating, mentioned as a condition. If you will ask anything in My name—from which words, considered both ways, we will draw a few observations, and that briefly, and to close this matter.

1. It is no easy matter to get it believed that our prayers will indeed be answered. Therefore is this repetition of the promise made to confirm us in the faith of it. Our own unbelieving heart occasions this, and Satan can make use of many things to raise and foment our misbelief and doubtings, both from our own unworthiness, the evil way of going about the duty, and our either not observing or misimproving of former answers—and from other things of that nature.
2. It is no small difficulty to believe that Christ Himself will answer our prayers, for this is also ingeminated that He will do it. And this may proceed from our

ignorance of that noble economy that is condescended on by the persons of the Trinity in the work of our redemption, and particularly of the way agreed on between Jehovah and the mediator in the covenant of redemption—as also from the want of the rooted faith of Christ’s Godhead, or from our ignorance of our interest in Him, or from our jealousy of His love, faithfulness, and constancy.

3. Christ is desirous to have His followers believing assuredly that what petitions they put up in His name will be granted. This is imported by Him repeating this promise and inculcating it. For this being a great proof of the Father’s love to them in Him tends to the setting forth of the glory of His mediation. It has in it a great ground of comfort. And Christ would have them rejoicing in Him as being now high at court for their good. It is likewise a great incitement and encouragement to prayer, whereby Christ gets much employment, and this tends to His glory. And it is a great encouragement to wait for an answer, whereby Christ will be also glorified and exalted.
4. Christ is desirous to have all His followers firmly believing that He Himself will work out and give them all their answers, for He would never have them questioning His love, power, and faithfulness, whatever change of dispensations they meet with. This will also contribute to their glorifying of Him, when they look to Him as the great Lord treasurer and dispensator of the great promises and promised blessings, and cause them to look to Him, depend on Him, and take all from Him. This will also serve much to comfort them in all their distresses, seeing hereby they will perceive

that Christ, now though exalted in glory, yet has mind of them and a heart toward them and will do all their business. As also to give them confidence in all their approaches and assurance that their labor will not be in vain, for at length He Himself will satisfy all their desires and give a proof of His faithfulness to the glory of God. This should teach us to wonder at Christ's tenderness and care to have it not only well and sure with all His followers, but also to have them full of faith, comfort, and joy in them, be their case what it will. As also, sweetly and willingly to comply with this desire of Christ's and to give Him full faith so that we may have strong hope and consolation through Him.

5. Christ's repeating this promise says that to doubt of the truth of this that Christ will effectually answer prayers put up in His name is of great disadvantage to believers, for, first, it makes them weary in their addresses to God by prayer. Second, it makes them weary of waiting when they have no hope to be the better. Third, it makes them heartless and disconsolate in sad cases, for now they know not what to do, and the only means left, that is, prayer, is not very promising. Fourth, it occasions a carelessness and indifference in prayer and a laying aside of earnestness, importunity, and fervency. Fifth, it lays the soul open to Satan's suggestions, making them to question their interest in Christ, and to his temptations to put them from the duty. Sixth, it makes them weak for other duties, for the faith of this is a strengthening encouragement to any other duty. Seventh, it necessitates them to dishonor the Lord in not giving credit to His promises and trusting His faithfulness and to dishonor

Christ in not believing the worth, reality, and efficacy of His mediation, in not believing His exaltation and His credit with the Father, in not believing His riches, power, and authority, and in not believing the tenor of the covenant of redemption.

6. On the other hand, it says that the faith of this is great advantage. Were it not so, Christ would not thus ingeminate and inculcate it. And its advantage appears hence, that, first, it keeps fresh in the soul the faith of Christ's Godhead. And this is part of the general scope of these words. Second, it keeps fresh and lively also in the soul the faith of Christ's love, compassion, tenderness, and care of them, though now absent as to His bodily presence—which is also a part of the scope here. Third, it oils the wheels of the soul in prayer, and as it encourages to come, so also to wait and hope for an answer. Fourth, it adds a sweet refreshing relish to every mercy that comes when it is received as out of Christ's hand answering our prayer. Fifth, it gives great encouragement to pray, both for ourselves and for the church. Be ours or her case what it will be, Christ's having the answer in His own hand to give out will make all difficulties and discouragements vanish when it is believed. Sixth, it gives ground of glorying in their God and of holy boasting over all their enemies and of a resting, satisfied with their lot, as having such a one to be their head, husband, and lord, who has all the answers of prayers to give out. Seventh, it gives ground to be satisfied with all the answers that come and to believe that they are all good because they come all out of Christ's hands, and that they all tend to the glory of God and to the furthering of their salvation—for this is that which

He is intending and which He is carrying on, who gives out the promised answers.

But now, considering these words with regards to the change of expression that is observable in them and with regards to them being here mentioned as more clearly holding forth the condition of this promise of being heard and answered, namely, if they ask in Christ's name, we may observe:

1. That the promise of answering of prayers by Christ is made only to such prayers as are put up in His name. He stands engaged in reference to no other, these being the prayers that are put in His hand and that He looks on Himself (so to speak) as concerned with, that they may be accepted and receive an answer.
2. Christ's clearing this and declaring it expressly after He had intimated as much in the previous words says that it is useful and necessary for us to have the knowledge and faith of this truth fixed in our hearts, to the end we may be careful to mind the duty of putting up our suits in the name of Christ.
3. It speaks out the great desire that Christ has to us making use of Him and of His name in our prayers, when He thus in plain terms and expressly annexes the promise of being heard to praying and asking in His name.

All which may tell us how to pray if we would have an answer. And what may be one cause of our not receiving returns of our prayers, even this: that we employ not Christ as we ought in prayer. And how we ought to rest in hope and wait for an answer, when we know how by grace we have been helped to put up our petitions in the name of Christ.