

PART ONE OF

a treatise by

JOHN BUNYAN

entitled

PRAYER

**I WILL PRAY WITH THE SPIRIT
AND WITH UNDERSTANDING ALSO**

or,

**A DISCOURSE TOUCHING PRAYER;
WHEREIN IS DISCOVERED, SPIRITUALLY
ENLIGHTENED TO SEE THE PROMISES
AND TO BE ENCOURAGED**

*“I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the
understanding also...”*

—1 Corinthians 14:15

Introduction and Treatise Compiled & Edited by

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This treatise was written in 1662 and published in 1663, while John Bunyan was in prison. Our reading of this work, as well as the editor's advertisement, come from a three volume collection edited by George Offor, Esq., and entitled, *The Whole Works of John Bunyan*. George Offor's edition of Bunyan's works was published in Glasgow in 1862.



John Bunyan was born in Elstow, England, near Bedford, on November 28, 1628. After squandering much of his life away in worldly wantonness, Bunyan was converted to the Christian faith and soon afterward, became an excellent expositor of the Holy Scriptures. He was imprisoned in November 1660 for the crime of preaching without a license from the state church. He remained incarcerated for twelve years, with only a few, and brief occasions of liberty. Though he may have begun writing his famous *The Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison, Bunyan finished the work a few years after his release in 1672. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was published in 1678. Bunyan also wrote many other excellent works such as *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, *Some Gospel Truths Opened According to the Scriptures*, *A Vindication of Some Gospel Truths Opened* and *The Work of Jesus Christ as an Advocate Clearly Explained and Largely Improved For the Benefit of All Believers*. A contemporary with such men as John Owen, Thomas Goodwin, and Richard Baxter, John Bunyan is recognized as possibly one of the greatest of the Puritan writers. Bunyan died on August 31, 1688, after taking ill from traveling through inclement weather. He was buried at Bunhill Fields.

George Offor's "Advertisement By the Editor" is not in our audio reading of Mr. Bunyan's treatise on Prayer. It is, however, very worth the time to read. It is included below.

I have also included some footnotes that I thought might be helpful. Still, my desire is to use the footnotes very sparingly, so as not to disturb the flow of this work.

ADVERTISEMENT BY THE EDITOR

There is no subject of more solemn importance to human happiness than prayer. It is the only medium of intercourse with heaven. "It is that language wherein a creature holds correspondence with his Creator; and wherein the soul of a saint gets near to God, is entertained with great delight, and, as it were, dwells with his heavenly Father." God, when manifest in the flesh, hath given us a solemn, sweeping declaration, embracing all prayer-private, social, and public—at all times and seasons, from the creation to the final consummation of all things—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship him **MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**" (John 4:24).

The great enemy of souls, aided by the perverse state of the human mind, has exhausted his ingenuity and malice to prevent the exercise of this holy and delightful duty. His most successful effort has been to keep the soul in that fatal lethargy, or death unto holiness, and consequently unto prayer, into which it is plunged by Adam's transgression. Bunyan has some striking illustrations of Satan's devices to stifle prayer, in his history of the Holy War. When the troops of Emmanuel besiege Mansoul, their great effort was to gain "eargate" as a chief entrance to Mansoul, and at that important gate there were placed, by order of Diabolous, "the Lord Will-be-will, who made one old Mr. Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow, captain of that ward, and put under his power sixty men called Deafmen to keep it, "and these were arrayed in the most excellent armour of Diabolous, A DUMB AND PRAYERLESS SPIRIT."

Nothing but the irresistible power of Emmanuel could have overcome these obstacles. He conquers and reigns supreme, and Mansoul becomes happy; prayer without ceasing enables the new-born man to breathe the celestial atmosphere. At length Carnal Security interrupts and mars this happiness.

The Redeemer gradually withdraws.

Satan assaults the soul with armies of doubts, and, to prevent prayer, Diabolous "lands up Mouthgate with dirt." Various efforts are made to send petitions, but the messengers make no impression, until, in the extremity of the soul's distress, two acceptable messengers are found, not dwelling in palaces, but in "a very mean cottage," their names were "Desires Awake and Wet Eyes," illustrating the inspired words, "Thus saith the High and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell—with him—that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). By this we are taught the utter worthlessness of depending upon the prayers of saints on earth, or the glorified spirits of heaven. Our own prayers alone are availing. Our own "Desires-awake" and "Wet-eyes," our own aspirations after God, our own deep repentance and sense of utter helplessness drives us to the Saviour, through whom ALONE we can find access and adoption into the family of our Father who is in heaven.

The soul that communes with God attains an aptitude in prayer which no human learning can give; devotional expressions become familiar; the Spirit of adoption leads them with deep solemnity to approach the Infinite Eternal as a father. Private prayer is so essentially spiritual that it cannot be reduced to writing. "A man that truly prays one prayer, shall after that never be able to express with his mouth, or pen the unutterable desires, sense, affection, and longing that went to God in that prayer." Prayer leads to "pure religion and undefiled," "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and to preserve us "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Blessed indeed are those who enjoy an abiding sense of the Divine presence; the Christian's divine life may be measured by his being able to "pray without ceasing," to "seek God's face continually." "Men ought always to pray," and to "continue in prayer." This does not consist in perpetually repeating any form of prayer, but in that devotional frame of mind which enables the soul to say, "For me to live is Christ." When David was compassed about with the sorrows of hell, he at once ejaculates, "O Lord, I beseech thee deliver my soul." When the disciples were in danger they did not recite the Lord's Prayer, or any other form, but at once cried, "Lord, save us, we perish." Bunyan, speaking of private prayer, keenly inquires, will God not hear thee "except thou comest before him with some eloquent oration?" "It is not, as many take it to be, even a few babbling, prating, complimentary expressions, but a sensible feeling in the heart." Sincerity and a

dependence upon the mediatorial office of Christ is all that God requires. “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him—IN TRUTH” (Psalm 145:18). In all that related to the individual approach of the spirit to its heavenly Father, our pious author offended not; but having enjoyed communion with God, he was, as all Christians are, desirous of communion with the saints on earth, and in choosing the forms of public worship, he gave great offence to many by rejecting the Book of Common Prayer.

To compel or to bribe persons to attend religious services is unjustifiable, and naturally produces hypocrisy and persecution. So it was with the decree of King Darius (Daniel 6); and so it has ever been with any royal or parliamentary interference with Christian liberty. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth” (Romans 14:4). “EVERY ONE of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:12). All the solemnities of the day of judgment point not merely to the right, but to the necessity of private decision on all questions of faith, worship, and conduct, guided solely by the volume of inspiration. Mansoul, in its regenerate state, is the temple which the Creator has chosen for his worship; and it is infinitely more glorious than earthly edifices, which crumble into dust, while God’s temples will be ever glorious as eternity rolls on.

Bunyan, to the sixteenth year of his age, had, when he attended public worship, listened to the Book of Common Prayer. At that time an Act of Parliament prohibited its use under severe and unjust penalties, and ordered the services to be conducted by the rules of a directory. In this an outline is given of public thanksgivings, confessions, and petitions; but no form of prayer. In the preface the Puritans record their opinion, that the Liturgy of the Church of England, notwithstanding all the pains and religious intentions of its compilers, hath proved an offence; unprofitable ceremonies hath occasioned much mischief; its estimation hath been raised by prelates, as if there were no other way of worship; making it an idol to the ignorant and superstitious, a matter of endless strife, and of increasing an idle ministry. Bunyan had weighed these observations, and recollected his former ignorance and superstition, when he counted all things holy connected with the outward forms, and did “very devoutly say and sing as others did.”

But when he arose from the long and dread conflict with sin, and entered upon his Christian life, he decidedly preferred emancipation from forms of prayer, and treated them with great severity. He considered that the most essential qualification for the Christian ministry is the gift of prayer. Upon this subject learned and pious men have differed; but the opinions of one so eminently pious, and so well-taught in the Scriptures, are worthy of our careful investigation. Great allowances must be made for all that appears harsh in language, because urbanity was not the fashion of that day in religious controversy. He had been most cruelly imprisoned, with threats of transportation, and even an ignominious death, for refusing conformity to the Book of Common Prayer. Being conscientiously and prayerfully decided in his judgment, he set all these threats at defiance, and boldly, at the risk of his life, published this treatise, while yet a prisoner in Bedford jail; and it is a clear, concise, and scriptural discourse, setting forth his views upon this most important subject.

Any preconceived form would have fettered Bunyan’s free spirit; he was a giant in prayer, and commanded the deepest reverence while leading the public devotions of the largest congregations. The great question as to public prayer is whether the minister should, relying upon Divine assistance, offer up prayer to God in the Saviour’s name,

immediately conceived under a sense of His presence; or whether it is better, as it is certainly easier, to read a form of prayer, from time to time, skillfully arranged, and with every regard to beauty of language? Which of these modes is most in accordance with the directions of the Sacred Scriptures, and most likely to be attended with spiritual benefit to the assembled church? Surely this inquiry does not involve the charge of schism or heresy upon either party.

“Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Nor should such differences lead us to despise each other. Let our first inquiry be, whether the Saviour intended a fixed form of prayer? And if so, did he give His church any other than that most beautiful and comprehensive form called the Lord’s Prayer? And did he license any one, and if so, who, to alter, add to, or diminish from it? On the other hand, should we conclude that “We know not what we should pray for as we ought, only as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities,” then must we rely, as Bunyan did, upon the promised aid of that gracious Spirit. Blessed, indeed, are those whose intercourse with heaven sheds an influence on their whole conduct, gives them abundance of well-arranged words in praying with their families and with the sick or dejected, and— whose lives prove that they have been with Jesus, and are taught by him, or who, in Scripture language, “pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.”

GEO. OFFOR.

PRAYER

I WILL PRAY WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH UNDERSTANDING ALSO

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also”
—1 Corinthians 14:15

ON PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

PRAYER is an ORDINANCE of God, and that to be used both in public and private; yea, such an ordinance as brings those that have the spirit of supplication into great familiarity with God; and is also so prevalent in action, that it getteth of God, both for the person that prayeth, and for them that are prayed for, great things. It is the opener of the heart of God, and a means by which the soul, though empty, is filled. By prayer the Christian can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh testimony of God’s friendship to him. I might spend many words in distinguishing between public and private prayer; as also between that in the heart, and that with the vocal voice. Something also might be spoken to distinguish between the gifts and graces of prayer; but eschewing this method, my business shall be at this time only to show you the very heart of prayer, without which, all your lifting up, both of hands, and eyes, and voices, will be to no purpose at all. “I will pray with the Spirit.”

The method that I shall go on in at this time shall be, FIRST. To show you what true prayer is. SECOND. To show you what it is to pray with the Spirit. THIRD. What it is to pray with the Spirit and understanding also. And so, FOURTHLY. To make some short use and application of what shall be spoken.

WHAT PRAYER IS

FIRST, What [true] prayer is. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God hath promised, or according to the Word, for the good of the church, with submission, in faith, to the will of God.

In this description are these seven things. First, It is a sincere; Second, A sensible; Third, An affectionate, pouring out of the soul to God, through Christ; Fourth, By the strength or assistance of the Spirit; Fifth, For such things as God hath promised, or, according to his word; Sixth, For the good of the church; Seventh, With submission in faith to the will of God.

First. For the first of these, it is a SINCERE pouring out of the soul to God. Sincerity is such a grace as runs through all the graces of God in us, and through all the actings of a Christian, and hath the sway in them too, or else their actings are not any thing regarded of God, and so of and in prayer, of which particularly David speaks, when he mentions prayer. "I cried unto him," the Lord "with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" my prayer (Psalm 66:17-18). Part of the exercise of prayer is sincerity, without which God looks not upon it as prayer in a good sense (Psalm 16:1-4). Then "ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:12-13). The want of this made the Lord reject their prayers in Hosea 7:14, where he saith, "They have not cried unto me with their heart," that is, in sincerity, "when they howled upon their beds." But for a pretence, for a show in hypocrisy, to be seen of men, and applauded for the same, they prayed. Sincerity was that which Christ commended in Nathaniel, when he was under the fig tree. "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Probably this good man was pouring out of his soul to God in prayer under the fig tree, and that in a sincere and unfeigned spirit before the Lord. The prayer that hath this in it as one of the principal ingredients, is the prayer that God looks at. Thus, "The prayer of the upright is his delight" (Proverbs 15:8).

And why must sincerity be one of the essentials of prayer which is accepted of God, but because sincerity carries the soul in all simplicity to open its heart to God, and to tell him the case plainly, without equivocation; to condemn itself plainly, without dissembling; to cry to God heartily, without complimenting. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou has chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke" (Jeremiah 31:18). Sincerity is the same in a corner alone, as it is before the face of the world. It knows not how to wear two vizards,¹ one for an appearance before men, and another for a short snatch in a corner; but it must have God, and be with him in the duty of prayer. It is not lip-labour that it doth regard, for it is the heart that God looks at, and that which sincerity looks at, and that which prayer comes from, if it be that prayer which is accompanied with sincerity.

¹ A vizard is a mask; or when used as a verb, means "to mask."

Second. It is a sincere and SENSIBLE pouring out of the heart or soul. It is not, as many take it to be, even a few babbling, prating, complimentary expressions, but a sensible feeling there is in the heart. Prayer hath in it a sensibleness of diverse things; sometimes sense of sin, sometimes of mercy received, sometimes of the readiness of God to give mercy, &c.

1. A sense of the want of mercy, by reason of the danger of sin. The soul, I say, feels, and from feeling sighs, groans, and breaks at the heart. For right prayer bubbleth out of the heart when it is overpressed with grief and bitterness, as blood is forced out of the flesh by reason of some heavy burden that lieth upon it (1 Samuel 1:10; Psalm 69:3). David roars, cries, weeps, faints at heart, fails at the eyes, loseth his moisture, &c., (Psalm 38:8-10). Hezekiah mourns like a dove (Isaiah 38:14). Ephraim bemoans himself (Jeremiah 31:18). Peter weeps bitterly (Matthew 26:75). Christ hath strong cryings and tears (Hebrews 5:7). And all this from a sense of the justice of God, the guilt of sin, the pains of hell and destruction. “The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.” Then cried I unto the Lord (Psalm 116:3-4). And in another place, “My sore ran in the night” (Psalm 77:2). Again, “I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” (Psalm 38:6). In all these instances, and in hundreds more that might be named, you may see that prayer carrieth in it a sensible feeling disposition, and that first from a sense of sin.

2. Sometimes there is a sweet sense of mercy received; encouraging, comforting, strengthening, enlivening, enlightening mercy, &c. Thus David pours out his soul, to bless, and praise, and admire the great God for his loving-kindness to such poor vile wretches. “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s” (Psalm 103:1-5). And thus is the prayer of saints sometimes turned into praise and thanksgiving, and yet are prayers still. This is a mystery; God’s people pray with their praises, as it is written, “Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). A sensible thanksgiving, for mercies received, is a mighty prayer in the sight of God; it prevails with him unspeakably.

3. In prayer there is sometimes in the soul a sense of mercy to be received. This again sets the soul all on a flame. “Thou, O lord of hosts,” saith David, “hast revealed to thy servant, saying I will build thee an house; therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray—unto thee” (2 Samuel 7:27). This provoked Jacob, David, Daniel, with others—even a sense of mercies to be received—which caused them, not by fits and starts, nor yet in a foolish frothy way, to babble over a few words written in a paper; but mightily, fervently, and continually, to groan out their conditions before the Lord, as being sensible, sensible, I say, of their wants, their misery, and the willingness of God to show mercy (Genesis 32:10-11; Daniel 9:3-4).

A good sense of sin, and the wrath of God, with some encouragement from God to come unto him, is a better Common-prayer-book than that which is taken out of the Papistical mass-book, being the scraps and fragments of the devices of some popes, some friars, and I wot not what.

Third. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, and an AFFECTIONATE pouring out of the soul

to God. O! the heat, strength, life, vigour, and affection, that is in right prayer! “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God” (Psalm 42:1). “I have longed after thy precepts” (Psalm 119:40). “I have longed for thy salvation” (Psalm 119:174). “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Psalm 84:2). “My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times” (Psalm 119:20). Mark ye here, “My soul longeth,” it longeth, it longeth, &c. O what affection is here discovered in prayer! The like you have in Daniel. “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God” (Daniel 9:19). Every syllable carrieth a mighty vehemency in it. This is called the fervent, or the working prayer, by James. And so again, “And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly” (Luke 22:44). Or had his affections more and more drawn out after God for his helping hand. O! How wide are the most of men with their prayers from this prayer, that is, PRAYER in God’s account! Alas! The greatest part of men make no conscience at all of the duty; and as for them that do, it is to be feared that many of them are very great strangers to a sincere, sensible, and affectionate pouring out their hearts or souls to God; but even content themselves with a little lip-labour and bodily exercise, mumbling over a few imaginary prayers. When the affections are indeed engaged in prayer, then, then the whole man is engaged, and that in such sort, that the soul will spend itself to nothing, as it were, rather than it will go without that good desired, even communion and solace with Christ. And hence it is that the saints have spent their strengths, and lost their lives, rather than go without the blessing (Genesis 32:24-26; Psalm 38:9-10; 69:3).

All this is too, too evident by the ignorance, profaneness, and spirit of envy, that reign in the hearts of those men that are so hot for the forms, and not the power of praying. Scarce one of forty among them know what it is to be born again, to have communion with the Father through the Son; to feel the power of grace sanctifying their hearts: but for all their prayers, they still live cursed, drunken, whorish, and abominable lives, full of malice, envy, deceit, persecuting of the dear children of God. O what a dreadful after-clap is coming upon them! which all their hypocritical assembling themselves together, with all their prayers, shall never be able to help them against, or shelter them from.

Again, It is a pouring out of the heart or soul. There is in prayer an unbosoming of a man’s self, an opening of the heart to God, an affectionate pouring out of the soul in requests, sighs, and groans. “All my desire is before thee,” saith David, “and my groaning is not hid from thee” (Psalm 38:9). And again, “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me” (Psalm 42:2-4). Mark, “I pour out my soul.” It is an expression signifying, that in prayer there goeth the very life and whole strength to God. As in another place, “Trust in him at all times; ye people, —pour out your heart before him” (Psalm 62:8). This is the prayer to which the promise is made, for the delivering of a poor creature out of captivity and thralldom. “If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Again, It is a pouring out of the heart or soul TO GOD. This showeth also the excellency of the spirit of prayer. It is the great God to which it retires. “When shall I come and appear before God?” And it argueth, that the soul that thus prayeth indeed, sees an emptiness in all things under heaven; that in God alone there is rest and

satisfaction for the soul. “Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God” (1 Timothy 5:5). So saith David, “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear to me, and save me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: —for thou art my rock and my fortress; deliver me, O my God, —out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth” (Psalm 71:1-5). Many in a wording way speak of God; but right prayer makes God his hope, stay, and all. Right prayer sees nothing substantial, and worth the looking after, but God. And that, as I said before, it doth in a sincere, sensible, and affectionate way.

Again, It is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, THROUGH CHRIST. This through Christ must needs be added, or else it is to be questioned, whether it be prayer, though in appearance it be never so eminent or eloquent.

Christ is the way through whom the soul hath admittance to God, and without whom it is impossible that so much as one desire should come into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (John 14:6). “If ye shall ask anything in my name”; “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14). This was Daniel’s way in praying for the people of God; he did it in the name of Christ. “Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake” (Daniel 9:17). And so David, “For thy name’s sake,” that is, for thy Christ’s sake, “pardon mine iniquity, for it is great” (Psalm 25:11). But now, it is not every one that maketh mention of Christ’s name in prayer, that doth indeed, and in truth, effectually pray to God in the name of Christ, or through him. This coming to God through Christ is the hardest part that is found in prayer. A man may more easily be sensible of his works, ay, and sincerely too desire mercy, and yet not be able to come to God by Christ. That man that comes to God by Christ, he must first have the knowledge of him; “for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is” (Hebrews 11:6). And so he that comes to God through Christ, must be enabled to know Christ. Lord, saith Moses, “show me now thy way, that I may know thee” (Exodus 33:13).

This Christ, none but the Father can reveal (Matthew 11:27). And to come through Christ, is for the soul to be enabled of God to shroud itself under the shadow of the Lord Jesus, as a man shroudeth himself under a thing for safeguard (Matthew 16:16). Hence it is that David so often terms Christ his shield, buckler, tower, fortress, rock of defence, &c., (Psalm 18:2; 27:1; 28:1). Not only because by him he overcame his enemies, but because through him he found favour with God the Father. And so he saith to Abraham, “Fear not, I am thy shield,” &c., (Genesis 15:1). The man then that comes to God through Christ, must have faith, by which he puts on Christ, and in him appears before God. Now he that hath faith is born of God, born again, and so becomes one of the sons of God; by virtue of which he is joined to Christ, and made a member of him (John 1:12; 3:5-7). And therefore, secondly he, as a member of Christ, comes to God; I say, as a member of him, so that God looks on that man as a part of Christ, part of his body, flesh, and bones, united to him by election, conversion, illumination, the Spirit being conveyed into the heart of that poor man by God (Ephesians 5:30). So that now he comes to God in Christ’s merits, in his blood, righteousness, victory, intercession, and so stands before him, being “accepted in his Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). And because this

poor creature is thus a member of the Lord Jesus, and under this consideration hath admittance to come to God; therefore, by virtue of this union also, is the Holy Spirit conveyed into him, whereby he is able to pour out himself, to wit, his soul, before God, with his audience. And this leads me to the next, or fourth particular.

Fourth. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate, pouring out of the heart or soul to God through Christ, by the strength or ASSISTANCE OF THE SPIRIT. For these things do so depend one upon another, that it is impossible that it should be prayer, without there be a joint concurrence of them; for though it be never so famous, yet without these things, it is only such prayer as is rejected of God. For without a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart to God, it is but lip-labour; and if it be not through Christ, it falleth far short of ever sounding well in the ears of God. So also, if it be not in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, it is but like the sons of Aaron, offering with strange fire (Leviticus 10:1-2). But I shall speak more to this under the second head; and therefore in the meantime, that which is not petitioned through the teaching and assistance of the Spirit, it is not possible that it should be “according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

Fifth. Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart, or soul, to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Spirit, FOR SUCH THINGS AS GOD HATH PROMISED, &c., (Matthew 6:6-8). Prayer it is, when it is within the compass of God’s Word; and it is blasphemy, or at best vain babbling, when the petition is beside the book. David therefore still in his prayer kept his eye on the Word of God. “My soul,” saith he, “cleaveth to the dust; quicken me according to thy word.” And again, “My soul melteth for heaviness, strengthen thou me according unto thy word” (Psalm 119:25-28; see also Psalm 119:41, 42, 58, 65, 74, 81, 82, 107, 147, 154, 169, 170). And, “remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope” (Psalm 119:49). And indeed the Holy Ghost doth not immediately quicken and stir up the heart of the Christian without, but by, with, and through the Word, by bringing that to the heart, and by opening of that, whereby the man is provoked to go to the Lord, and to tell him how it is with him, and also to argue, and supplicate, according to the Word; thus it was with Daniel, that mighty prophet of the Lord. He understanding by books that the captivity of the children of Israel was hard at an end; then, according unto that word, he maketh his prayer to God. “I Daniel,” saith he, “understood by books,” viz., the writings of Jeremiah, “the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, —that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:2-3). So that I say, as the Spirit is the helper and the governor of the soul, when it prayeth according to the will of God; so it guideth by and according to, the Word of God and his promise. Hence it is that our Lord Jesus Christ himself did make a stop, although his life lay at stake for it. I could now pray to my Father, and he should “give me more than twelve legions of angels; but how then must the scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matthew 26:53-54). As who should say, Were there but a word for it in the scripture, I should soon be out of the hands of mine enemies, I should be helped by angels; but the scripture will not warrant this kind of praying, for that saith otherwise. It is a praying then according to the Word and promise. The Spirit by the Word must direct, as well in the manner, as in the matter of prayer. “I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Corinthians 14:15). But there is no understanding without the Word. For if they reject

the word of the Lord, “what wisdom is in them?” (Jeremiah 8:9).

Sixth. **FOR THE GOOD OF THE CHURCH.** This clause reacheth in whatsoever tendeth either to the honour of God, Christ’s advancement, or his people’s benefit. For God, and Christ, and his people are so linked together that if the good of the one be prayed for, to wit, the church, the glory of God, and advancement of Christ, must needs be included. For as Christ is in the Father, so the saints are in Christ; and he that toucheth the saints, toucheth the apple of God’s eye; and therefore pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and you pray for all that is required of you. For Jerusalem will never be in perfect peace until she be in heaven; and there is nothing that Christ doth more desire than to have her there. That also is the place that God through Christ hath given to her. He then that prayeth for the peace and good of Zion, or the church, doth ask that in prayer which Christ hath purchased with his blood; and also that which the Father hath given to him as the price thereof. Now he that prayeth for this, must pray for abundance of grace for the church, for help against all its temptations; that God would let nothing be too hard for it; and that all things might work together for its good, that God would keep them blameless and harmless, the sons of God, to his glory, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. And this is the substance of Christ’s own prayer in John 17. And all Paul’s prayers did run that way, as one of his prayers doth eminently show. “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God” (Philippians 1:9-11). But a short prayer, you see, and yet full of good desires for the church, from the beginning to the end; that it may stand and go on, and that in the most excellent frame of spirit, even without blame, sincere, and without offence, until the day of Christ, let its temptations or persecutions be what they will (Ephesians 1:16-21; 3:14-19; Colossians 1:9-13).

Seventh. And because, as I said, prayer doth **SUBMIT TO THE WILL OF GOD**, and say, Thy will be done, as Christ hath taught us (Matthew 6:10); therefore the people of the Lord in humility are to lay themselves and their prayers, and all that they have, at the foot of their God, to be disposed of by him as he in his heavenly wisdom seeth best. Yet not doubting but God will answer the desire of his people that way that shall be most for their advantage and his glory. When the saints therefore do pray with submission to the will of God, it doth not argue that they are to doubt or question God’s love and kindness to them. But because they at all times are not so wise, but that sometimes Satan may get that advantage of them, as to tempt them to pray for that which, if they had it, would neither prove to God’s glory nor his people’s good. “Yet this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him,” that is, we asking in the Spirit of grace and supplication (1 John 5:14-15). For, as I said before, that petition that is not put up in and through the Spirit, it is not to be answered, because it is beside the will of God. For the Spirit only knoweth that, and so consequently knoweth how to pray according to that will of God. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11). But more of this hereafter. Thus you see, first, what prayer is. Now to proceed.