

Lecture Outlines
through
“A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer”
by
John Owen

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- These outlines accompany a series of [twelve audio lectures](#).

- To follow along in-print, see *The Works of John Owen 4* (1850–1853, repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 235–350. This can be purchased at [Amazon](#) or read online at [GoogleBooks](#).

- You are also encouraged to listen to Sinclair Ferguson’s lectures, [“John Owen on the Holy Spirit,”](#) and Carl Trueman’s [lectures on John Owen](#) as well as watch Carl Trueman’s 10-minute video on [John Owen](#).

Who Was John Owen and Why is He (Still) Important?

I. How Did I Discover John Owen?

II. Who Was John Owen?

A. Childhood

B. Education

C. Ministry

1. Chaplaincies (1637–1642)

2. Fordham (1643–1646)

3. Coggeshall (1646–1649)

4. Army Chaplain (July 1649–December 1650)

5. Christ Church College, Oxford (1651–1660)

6. Stadhampton (1660–1664)

7. London (1664–1683)

III. Why is He Important to Us?

A. The Depth of his Ministry

B. The Devotion of his Ministry

The Purpose, Principles, Problems, and Practice of Free Prayer

I. A Discourse of the Work of the Holy Spirit and Prayer

A. Overall Context

B. The Preface

II. Purpose

A. What his Purpose was Not

B. What his Purpose Was

C. Why this was his Purpose

III. Principles

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

IV. Problems

1)

2)

3)

4)

V. Practice

1)

2)

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6)

7)

8)

An Exposition of Zechariah 12:10

I. The Relation of the Holy Spirit's Work to Prayer

A. General Work

B. Particular Work

1) As Seen in the Light of Nature

2) As Seen in the Light of Scripture

II. The Relation of this *Discourse* to Controversy

A. A Controversy of the Last Days

B. A Controversy of Central Importance

C. A Controversy in Need of Clarity

III. The Manner of the Spirit's Administration

A.

B.

IV. The Recipients of the Spirit's Administration

A.

1)

2)

3)

B.

V. The Qualifications of the Spirit's Administration

A.

1)

2)

3)

B.

1)

2)

VI. An Objection

VII. Responses

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

a)

b)

VIII. Conclusion

“That God hath promised under the New Testament to give unto believers, in a plentiful manner or measure, the Spirit of grace and supplications, or his own Holy Spirit, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will” (264).

An Exposition of Galatians 4:6

I. The Subjects of the Holy Spirit's Work

A. Believers

B. The Son

1) Given to Christ as Head of the Church

2) Given to Us

1) Authoritatively

2) Formally

II. The Enabling of the Holy Spirit's Work

A. Romans 8:15, 17

B. 2 Timothy 1:7

1) Power

2) Love

3) Sound Mind

C. Romans 8:15

III. The Application of the Holy Spirit's Work

A. The Meaning of "Abba, Father"

B. How the Spirit Effects Prayer

1) By the Excitation of Graces and Gracious Affections

2) By Enabling these Graces in Vocal Prayer

3) The Graciousness of this Work

C. A Final Word About the Ability to Pray

An Exposition of Romans 8:26

I. A Definition of Prayer

“Prayer at present I take to be a gift, ability, or spiritual faculty of exercising faith, love, reverence, fear, delight, and other graces, in a way of vocal requests, supplications, and praises unto God” (Works 4, 271).

Compare Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 178:

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

II. Romans 8:26

Compare Westminster Larger Catechism, Q&A 182

Q. How doth the Spirit help us to pray?

A. We not knowing what to pray for as we ought, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, by enabling us to understand both for whom, and what, and how prayer is to be made; and by working and quickening in our hearts (although not in all persons, nor at all times, in the same measure) those apprehensions, affections, and graces which are requisite for the right performance of that duty.

III. Threefold Defect in Us

A. We Do Not Know Our Own Wants

1) Outward Wants

2) Internal Wants

3) Spiritual Wants

B. We Do Not Know the Promises of God

C. We Do Not Know the End of Prayer

The Matter of Prayer

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)

I. The Holy Spirit Gives us Understanding of our Needs

A. Faith and Unbelief

B. The Depravation of our Nature

II. The Holy Spirit Acquaints us with the Promises of God

A. Our Need to Know

B. The Means of Knowing

C. An Objection: "But Others Know and Have Given Us Prayers"

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

III. The Holy Spirit Guides us to Pray for the Right Ends

A. The Glory of God

B. The Improvement of Holiness

The Manner of Prayer

- I. The Spirit's Work in the Will and Affections**

- II. The Spirit's Work in the Discharge of Prayer**

- III. The Spirit's Work in Giving a Delight in God as the Object of Prayer**
 - A. God as on the Throne of Grace

 - B. God as Father

 - C. Our Boldness
 - 1) Enlarged Liberty

 - 2) Confidence of Acceptance

- IV. The Spirit's Work in Keeping the Soul Intent on Jesus Christ**

The Nature and Duty of Prayer

- I. The Relevance of Ephesians 6:18**
- II. “Improving” the Gift of Prayer**
- III. The Application to Forms of Prayer**
- IV. The Performance of Prayer**
 - A. Every man is to pray as able
 - B. The examples in Scripture were the effects of their abilities (304)
 - C. The commands to pray according to our abilities are the same as the commands to pray in general
 - D. We are to be diligent in the use of means that teach us to pray:
 - 1) A diligent searching of our hearts
 - 2) A diligent reading of Scripture
 - E. We are to use our natural abilities in prayer
 - F. Prayer is proven to be a spiritual gift by the following:
 - 1) It is an inseparable adjunct to the work of the Spirit
 - 2) The utterance of preaching *and* prayer are gifts of the Spirit
 - 3) The Holy Spirit enables us to perform all our duties

- 4) The benefits of the church's worship are so great that it is impious not to ascribe prayer to the work of the Holy Spirit

- 5) If prayer were not a gift of the Spirit then there would not be such a difference in performance by various ministers

Practical Duties of Prayer

I. Constant Returning of Glory Unto God

A. For the Privilege of the Spirit of Grace and Supplication

- 1) This is a Mercy Because we are Not Recipients of Wrath

- 2) This is a Mercy Because it is an Infallible Evidence of Saving Faith and Obedience

B. For the Ampliation (*ampliatio*—enlargement) of this Privilege in Under the Gospel

- 1) Intensively

- 2) Extensively

II. Constant Attendance Unto our Duties

A. Our Duty to Make Use of the Gift of the Spirit

- 1) Its Neglect by Not Valuing, Seeking, or Endeavoring

- 2) Its Neglect by Not Abounding in its Exercise

B. Our Duty to Cherish, Stir Up, and Improve the Gift of the Spirit

- 1) Constant Consideration and Observation of Ourselves

- 2) Constant Searching of the Scriptures

- 3) Due Meditation on God's Glorious Excellencies
 - a) To Ingenerate Reverence and Godly Fear

 - b) To Excite Faith and Confidence

4) Meditation on the Mediation and Intercession of Christ

5) Frequency in Exercise

6) Constant Fervency and Intension of Mind and Spirit

C. Our Duty to Use this Gift for the Ends it is Given

1) Given with Respect to Those Who Receive

2) Given with Respect to the Benefit of Others

D. Let Us Take Heed

1) That it this Gift is Not Solitary

2) That it Not be Acted Solitary