

DIRECTION XI.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[HOW TO PERFORM THE DUTY COMMANDED—A DIRECTORY FOR PRAYER.]

‘Praying always with all prayer and supplication,’ &c. (Eph. 6:18).

Having despatched the duty of prayer in general, we now come to give an account of the several branches in the exhortation; which together make up an excellent DIRECTORY to the Christian for his better performing of this duty. Indeed, the apostle here not only teacheth the Christian how to pray, but the minister how to preach, in that he doth not nakedly tell them what is their duty—and so leave them to their own skill in the management of it; but that he may facilitate the duty unto them, he annexeth such directions, and so rules their copy for them, that they shall not easily miscarry in the performance thereof. That preacher that presseth a duty—though with never so much zeal—but doth not chalk out the way how it is to be done, is like one that brings a man to a door that is locked, and bids him go into the house; but gives him no key to open it. Or, that sends a company to sea, but lends them no chart by which they should steer their course. But to come to the directions. They are six. **FIRST.** The time for prayer—‘praying always.’ **SECOND.** The kinds or sorts of prayer—‘with all prayer and supplication.’ **THIRD.** The inward principle of prayer from which it may flow—‘in the Spirit.’ **FOURTH.** The guard to be set about the duty of prayer—‘watching thereunto.’ **FIFTH.** The unwearied constancy to be exercised in the duty—‘with all perseverance.’ **SIXTH.** The comprehensiveness of the duty or persons for whom we are to pray—‘for all saints.’

We shall begin with the first.

DIVISION FIRST.—THE TIME FOR PRAYER.

‘Praying always.’

We shall begin with the first direction, which points to the time of performing the duty of prayer—‘always.’ This word ‘always’ hath a threefold importance. **FIRST.** To pray ‘always’ is as much as if he had said, ‘pray in everything,’ according to that of the same apostle in another epistle—‘In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.’ **SECOND.** To pray ‘always’ may import as much as to pray in all conditions. **THIRD.** To pray ‘always’ is to pray daily.

[THREEFOLD IMPORT of the expression
‘praying always.’]

FIRST. To pray always is to pray in everything. Prayer is a catholic duty, with which, like a girdle, we are to compass in all our affairs. It is to be as bread and salt on our table; whatever else we have to our meal, these are not forgot to be set on: whatever we do, or would have, prayer is necessary, be it small or great. Not as the heathen, who prayed for some things to their gods, and not for other. If poor, they

prayed for riches; if sick, for health; but as for the good things of the mind, such as patience, contentment, and other virtues, they thought they could carve well enough in these for themselves, without troubling their gods to help them. The poet it seems was of this mind—

Hoc satis est orare Jovem, qui donat et aufert.
Det vitam, det opes; animum mî æquum ipse parabo—

It is enough,

To pray of Jove who gives and takes away
That he may give me life and wealth:
I will myself prepare the equal soul.

O how proud is ignorance! let God give the less,
and man will do the greater.

But their folly is not so much to wondered at, as the irreligion of many among ourselves, who profess to know the true God, and have the light of his word to direct them what worship to give him. Some are so brutish in their knowledge, that they hardly pray to God for anything others for everything. May be they look upon pardon of sin, and salvation of their souls—as fruit on the top branches of a tree—out of the reach of their own arm, and therefore now and then put up some slighty prayers to God for them. But as for temporals, which seem to hang lower, they think they can pluck them by their own industry, without setting up the ladder of prayer to come at them. They that should see some—how busy they are in laying their plots, and how seldom in prayer—could not but think they expected their safety from their own policy, and not God's providence. Or, should they observe how hard they work in their shop, and how seldom and lazy they are at prayer for God's blessing on their labour in their closet, they must conclude these men promise themselves their estates more from their own labour than the divine bounty.

In a word, it is some great occasion that must bring them upon their knees before God in prayer. May be, when they have an extraordinary enterprise in hand, wherein they look for strong opposition or great difficulty, in such a case God shall have them knocking at his door—for now they are at their wits' end and know not how to turn them; but the more ordinary and common actions of their lives they think they can please their master at their pleasures, and so pass by God's door without bespeaking his presence or assistance. Thus, one runs into his shop, and another into the field, and takes no notice that God is concerned in their employments. If to take a long journey by the sea or land, where eminent dangers and hazards present themselves unto their thoughts, then God hath their company; but if to stay at home, or walk to and fro in their ordinary employments, they bespeak not the providential wing of God to overshadow them. This is not to 'pray always.' If

thou wilt, therefore, be a Christian, do not thus part stakes with God, committing the greater transactions of thy life to him, and trusting thyself with the less: but 'acknowledge God in all thy ways, and lean not to thine own understanding' in any. By this thou shalt give him the glory of his universal providence, with which he encircles all his creatures and all their actions. As nothing is too great to be above his power, so nothing is too little to be beneath his care. He is the God of the valleys as well as of the mountains. The sparrow on the hedge and the hair on our head are cared for by him; and this is no more derogatory to his glorious majesty than it was to make them at first. Nay, thou shalt, by this, not only give God his glory, but secure thyself, for there is no passage in thy whole life so minute and inconsiderable, which—if God should withdraw his care and providence—might not be an occasion of a sin or danger to thee. And that which exposeth thee to these calls upon thee to engage God for thy defence.

First. The least passage in thy life may prove an occasion of sin to thee. At what a little wicket, many times, a great sin enters, we daily see. David's eye did but casually light on Bathsheba, and the good man's foot was presently in the devil's trap. Hast thou not then need to pray that God would set a guard about thy senses wherever thou goest? and to cry with him, 'Keep back mine eyes from beholding vanity?' Dinah went but to give her neighbours, 'the daughters of the land,' a visit—which was but an ordinary civility—and we may imagine that she little thought, when she went out, of playing the strumpet before she came home; yet, alas! we read how she was deflowered! What need then hast thou, before thou goest forth, to charge God with the keeping of thee, that so thou mayest be in his fear from morning till night!

Second. No passage of thy life so small wherein thou mayest not fall into some great danger. How many have been choked with their food at their own table?—received their deadly wound by a beam from their own house? Knowest thou what will be the end of any action when thou beginnest it? Joseph was sent by his father to see his brethren in the field, and neither of them thought of a longer journey; yet this proved the sad occasion of his captivity in a strange land. Job's servants were destroyed with lightning from heaven when they were abroad about their mas-

ter's business. Where canst thou be safe if heaven's eye be not on thee? A slip of thy foot as thou walkest, or a trip of thy horse as thou ridest, may break thy bones, yea thy neck. O what need, then, of a God to make thy path plain before thee! It is he that 'preserveth man and beast;' and canst thou have faith to expect his protection when thou hast not a heart to bespeak it in thy humble prayers at his hand? What reason hath God to care for thy safety, who carest no more for his honour?

SECOND. To pray always may import as much as to pray in all conditions; that is, in prosperity as well as in adversity. So Calvin takes it: *omni tempore perinde valet, atque tam prosperis quam adversis*—it holds at all times equally, and as much in prosperity as in adversity. Indeed, when God doth afflict, he puts an especial season for prayer into our hands; but when he enlargeth our state, he doth not discharge us of the duty, as if we might then lay it aside, as the traveller doth his cloak when the weather is warm. Prayer is not a winter garment. It is then to be worn indeed; but not to be left off in the summer of prosperity. If you would find some at prayer you must stay till it thunders and lightens; not go to them except it be in a storm or tempest. These are like some birds that are never heard to cry or make a noise but in or against foul weather. This is not to pray always; not to serve God, but to serve ourselves of God; to visit God, not as a friend for love of his company, but as a mere beggar for relief of our present necessity; using prayer as that pope is said to have used preaching, for a net to compass in some mercy we want, and when the fish is got then to throw away the duty. Well, Christian, take heed of this; thou hast ARGUMENTS enough to keep this duty always on its wheels, let thy condition be what it will.

[WHY we should pray IN ALL CONDITIONS.]

First. Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest speed when thou prayest in adversity. Own God now, that he may acknowledge thee then. Shall that friend be welcome to us that never gives us a visit but when he comes to borrow? This is a right beggar's trick, but not a friend's part.

Second. Pray in prosperity, to clear thyself that thou didst not pray in hypocrisy when thou wert af-

flicted. One prayer now will be a better evidence for thy sincerity than a whole bundle of duties performed in adversity. Colours are better discerned and distinguished by daylight than by the candle in the night. I am sure the truth and plainness of our hearts in duty will be best discovered in prosperity. In affliction, even gracious souls have scruples upon their spirits that they seek themselves. Smart and pain, they fear, makes them cry till they remember that their acquaintance with God did not begin in their affliction, but that they took delight in his company before these straits drove them to him.

Third. Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest not be ensnared by thy prosperity. Ephraim and Manasseh were brethren, and so are plenty and forgetfulness—the signification of their names. Prosperity is no friend to the memory; therefore we are cautioned so much to beware when we are full, lest then we forget God: *magnus vir est cui præsens fœlicitas si arrisit non irrisit* (Bern.)—he is a holy man indeed whose present prosperity doth not mock and abuse him when it smiles most pleasingly on him. O how hard it is to be pleased with it and not be ensnared by it! 'Wine,' Solomon saith, 'is a mocker;' it soon puts him that is too bold with it to shame. Prosperity doth the same. A little of it makes us drunk, and then we know not what we do. This hath proved often an hour of temptation to the best of men. You shall find in Scripture the saints have got their saddest falls on the evenest ground. Noah, who had seen the whole world drowned in water, no sooner was he almost come to safe shore but himself is drowned in wine. David's heart was fixed in the wilderness; but his wanton eye rouled and wandered when upon the terrace of his palace. Health, honour, riches, and pleasures, with the rest of this world's enjoyments, they are like luscious wine. We cannot drink little of them, they are so sweet to our carnal palate; and we cannot bear much of them, because they are strong and heady, fuming up in pride and carnal confidence. Now prayer is an excellent preservative against the evil of this state.

1. As it spiritualizes our joy into thankfulness. It is carnal joy that is dreggy, and therefore soon putrefies. Now, as prayer in affliction refines the Christian's sorrow by breathing it forth into holy groans to God, whereby he is kept from sinful complaints of

God and murmurings against him, thus here the Christian, by giving a spiritual vent to his joy in thanksgiving and praises to his God, is preserved from the degeneracy of carnal joy, that betrays the soul to many foul sins, if itself be not one. For this purpose it is that the apostle James cuts out this two-fold channel for this double affection to run in: 'Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms,' James 5:13. As if he should say, 'Let the afflicted soul pray, that he may not murmur. Let the joyous saint sing psalms, that his joy turns not sensual.' A carnal heart can easily be merry and jocund when he prospers; the saint alone is praiseful. The psalmist, speaking of the mariners delivered from storms at sea, which threatened their wreck, saith, 'Then are they glad because they be quiet,' Ps. 107:30. But this they may be and yet not thankful. Wherefore he adds his holy option, 'O that men would praise the Lord for his godness!'

2. By prayer the soul is led into the acquaintance of higher delights than are to be found in all his temporal enjoyments, and thereby is taken off from an inordinate valuation of them, because he knows where better are to be had. The true reason why men are puffed up with too high an opinion of worldly felicities is their ignorance of spiritual.

3. Prayer is God's ordinance to sanctify our creature-comforts. Everything is 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' I Tim. 4:5. Now, this obtained, the Christian may safely drink of these streams. The unicorn hath now put in his horn to heal them; Satan shall not have such power to corrupt him in the use of them as another that bespeaks not God's blessing on them. There is a vanity and flatulency in every creature, which, if not corrected by prayer, breeds indigested humours in him that feeds on it.

Fourth. In thy prosperity, Pray to show thy dependance on God for what thou enjoyest. Thou holdest all thy mercies in capite—he that gave thee thy life holds thy soul in life. 'Thou hidst thy face,' saith David, 'and I was troubled.' Truly it is time for God to withdraw his hand when thou goest about to cut off his title. That enjoyment comes but as a guest which is not entertained by prayer. Solomon tells us of wings that our temporal mercies have. Now if anything can clip these and keep them from fleeing away, it is prayer. God would often have destroyed Israel,

but Moses stood in the gap; their mercies were oft upon the wing, but that holy man's prayers stayed their flight. God's heart would not serve him to come over the back of his prayer and put that to shame. No; they shall live. But let them say, Moses' prayer begged their life. Now, if the prayer of a holy person could avail for others, and obtain a new lease for their lives, that were, many of them, none of the best; surely, then, the prayer of a saint may have great power with God for his own. Long life is promised to him that honours his earthly father. Prayer gives our heavenly Father the greatest honour. If, therefore, thou wouldst have thy life, or the life of any mercy, prolonged, forget not to pay him this tribute. Yea, would you transmit what God hath blessed you with to your posterity, the best way thou canst take is to lock thy estate up in God's hand by prayer. Whatever will thou makest, God is sure to be thy executor. Man may propose and purpose, but God disposeth. Engage him, and the care is taken for thy posterity.

Fifth. Pray now, that thou mayest outlive the loss of thy prosperity. When prayer cannot prevail to keep a temporal mercy alive with thee, yet it will have a powerful influence to keep thy heart alive when that dies. O it is sad when a man's estate and comfort are buried in the same grave together! None will bear the loss of an enjoyment so patiently as he that was exercised in prayer while he had it. When Job was in his flourishing estate, his children alive, and all his other enjoyments, then was he a great trader with God in this duty. He 'sanctified' his children every day. He did not bless himself in them, but sought the blessing of God for them; and see how comfortably he bears all: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' The more David prayed for his child while alive the fewer tears he shed for it when it was dead.

THIRD. To pray always is to pray daily. When the Christian keeps a constant daily exercise of this duty, prayer is not a holiday, but everyday work: 'Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever,' Ps. 145:2. This was typified by 'the daily sacrifice,' called therefore 'the continual burnt offering,' Ex. 29:38; whereby was signified our daily need of seeking mercy at God's hands through Christ. When our Lord taught his disciples to pray, he bade them not to ask bread for a week, no, not for a mor-

row, but for the present day: 'Give us this day our daily bread'—plainly signifying our duty to seek our bread every day of God. This surely was also the end why God gave the manna in such a portion as should not stuff their cupboards, and furnish them with a store for a month or a week, but be a just demensum—measure and sufficient allowance for a day, that so they might be kept in a daily dependence on God, and look up to him daily who carried the key of their pantry for them. And have not we the same necessities upon us with them? Our bodies are as weak as theirs, and cannot be preserved without a daily repast. Do we not depend on him for the bread of the day and the rest of the night? And he hath too good an opinion of his soul's constitution, who thinks it can live or thrive with yesterday's meal, without renewing his communion with God to-day. The mother would think her sucking child not well, if it should forsake the breast a whole day; so mayest thou conclude thy soul is not right, that can pass a day without craving any spiritual repast in prayer. If thy wants be not sufficient to keep the chariot of this duty on its wheels, yet the sins which thou daily renewest would drive thee every day to confess and beg pardon for them.

We are under a law not to let the sun go down upon our wrath against our brother. And dare we, who every day deserve God's wrath, let the sun go down before that controversy is taken up between God and us? In a word, every day hath its new mercies. 'His compassions fail not; they are new every morning,' Lam. 3:23. These new mercies contract a new debt, and God hath told us the way of payment, viz. a tribute of praise. Without this, we cannot expect a sanctified use of them. He is branded by all for a profane person that eats his meat and gives not thanks. And it would be thought a ridiculous excuse, should he say he gave thanks yesterday, and that should serve for this meal also. We have more mercies every day to bless God for than what is set on our tables. We wear mercies; we breathe mercies; we walk upon mercies; our whole life is but a passage from one mercy, to be entertained by another. As one cloth is drawn, another is laid for a new feast to be set on. Now, doth God every day anoint our head with fresh oil, and shall not we crown him with new praises? I will not enter into a discourse how oft a Christian should in a day pray. At least it must be

twice, i.e. morning and night. Prayer must be the key of the morning and lock of the night. We show not ourselves Christians, if we do not open our eyes with prayer when we rise, and shut them again with the same key when we lie down at night. This answers to the morning and evening sacrifice in the law, which yet was so commanded as to leave room for those other free-will offerings which their zeal might prompt them to. Pray as oft as you please besides, so that your devotions justle not with the necessary duties of your particular callings; the oftener the more welcome. We read of David's 'seven times a day.' But be sure thou dost not retrench and cut God short of thy stated hours. 'It is a good thing,' saith the psalmist, 'to give thanks unto the Lord, to shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,' Ps. 92:1, 2. God is alpha and omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with his mercy.

Well, Christian, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, doth not only rob God of his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing the blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closeth his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made. He is like a foolish captain in a garrison, who betakes himself to his rest before he hath set the watch for the city's safeguard. God is his people's keeper; but can he expect to be kept by him, that chargeth not the divine providence with his keeping? The angels, at his command, pitch their tents about his saints' dwellings. But as the drum calls the watch together, so God looks that, by humble prayer, we should beg of him their ministry and attendance about us. I shall shut up this discourse with one caution to be observed in your daily exercise of this duty.

Caution. Beware that thy constant daily performance of this duty doth not degenerate into a lifeless formality. What we do commonly, we are prone to be but ordinary and slighty in the doing. He is a rare Christian that keeps his course in prayer, and yet grows not customary to pray of mere course. The

power of religion cannot be preserved without an outward form and order observed in its exercises; and yet very hard it is not to grow formal in those duties which we are daily conversant with. Many that are very neat and nice when their holiday suit is on their back, are yet too slovenly in wearing their everyday apparel. Thus, at a fast or on a Sabbath, our hearts haply are stirred up to some solemnity and spirituality becoming the duty of prayer, as being awed with the sacredness of the time and extraordinary weight of the work; but alas! in our everyday duties we are too slighty and slovenly.

Now, set thyself, Christian, with all thy might, to keep up the life and vigour of thy spirit in thy daily approaches to God. Be as careful to set an edge on thy graces before thy prayer, as on thy stomach before thy meal. Labour to come as hungry to this duty, as to eat thy dinner and supper. Now no expedient for this like a holy watch set about thy heart in the whole

course of thy life. He that watcheth his heart all day, is most likely to find it at hand and in time for prayer at night. Whereas, loose walking breeds lazy praying. Be oft in the day putting thyself in mind what work waits for thee at night. Thou art to draw near unto thy God, and this will make thee afraid of doing anything in the day that will indispose thee, or make thee fear a chide from thy God, when thou appearest before him. That of the apostle is observable: 'If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,' 1 Peter 1:17. As if he had said, 'Do you mean to pray?' then look to the whole course of your walking, that it be in the fear of God, or else you will have little heart to go about that work, and as little hope that he will bid you welcome, for he judgeth all persons that pray, not only by their prayers, but by their works and walking.'

DIVISION SECOND.—THE KINDS OF PRAYER.

‘With all prayer and supplication.’

The second branch in the apostle’s directory for prayer follows, which hath respect to the kinds of prayer that are to be taken into the Christian’s exercise. As for the season, he must ‘pray always;’ so for the kinds of prayer, ‘with all prayer and supplication.’ Now, there is a double ‘all’ to be observed, as we shall make clear under two branches. **FIRST.** There is all manner of prayer. **SECOND.** There is all matter of prayer.

BRANCH FIRST.

[‘All prayer’ is viewed as to DIVERSITY IN MANNER.]

I shall begin with the first branch mentioned, viz. the *modus orandi*—the manner of praying; and that falls under several divisions, and distinctions. **FIRST.** Prayer is sudden and ejaculatory, or composed and fixed. **SECOND.** That which is composed, is either solitary, or social—performed jointly with others. **THIRD.** Social and joint prayer is either private in the family or public in the church. **FOURTH.** Solitary and social, private or public prayer, are either ordinary or extraordinary.

[Prayer distinguished as EJACULATORY OR COMPOSED.]

FIRST DISTINCTION. Prayer is sudden and ejaculatory, or composed and fixed.

First. Sudden or ejaculatory prayer, which is nothing else but the lifting up of the soul to God upon a sudden emerged occasion, with some short but lively expression of our desires to him. Sometimes it is vocal, sometimes only groaned forth from the secret workings of a secret heart. These darts may be shot to heaven without using the tongue’s bow. Such a kind of prayer that of Moses was, which rang so loud in God’s ear that he asked Moses, ‘Wherefore criest thou unto me?’ Ex. 14:15; whereas, we read of never a word that he spake. It was no season for Moses then to retire and betake himself to the duty of prayer, in a composed and settled way, as at other times he was wont, for the enemy was at his back, and the people of Israel flocking about him, murmuring and charging him with the guilt of blood, in that he had enticed them out of Egypt to fall into such a trap, wherein they expected no other than to lose their lives, either in the sea or by the Egyptians. This no doubt made

Moses presently despatch his desires to heaven by the hand of some short ejaculation, the surest and quickest post in the world, which brought him back a speedy and happy return, as you may see, ver. 16.

Thus, Nehemiah also, upon the occasion of the king’s speech to him, interposeth a short prayer to God between the king’s question and his answer to it: ‘Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king,’ &c., Neh. 2:4. So soon was this holy man at heaven and back again—even in a trice—without any breach of manners in making the king wait for his answer. Sometimes you have the saints forming their desires into a few smart and passionate words, which fly with a holy force from their lips to heaven, as an arrow out of a bow. Thus old Jacob, when he was despatching his sons back again to Egypt, and had with the greatest prudence provided for their journey, by furnishing them with double money, and a choice present in their hand to appease the governor of the land, that now he might engage heaven on their side, he breathes forth into this ejaculatory prayer, ‘God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin,’ Gen. 43:14. And David, when intelligence came that Ahithophel was of Absalom’s council, let fly that dart to heaven, ‘O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,’ II Sam. 15:31. This kind of praying David might mean when he saith, ‘Seven times a day do I praise thee,’ Ps. 119:164. Not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it, to countenance their seven canonical hours, but rather a definite number is here put for an indefinite. And so it amounts to no more than this—he did very often in a day praise God, his holy heart taking the hint of every providence to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.

Now, to despatch this kind of prayer, I shall only, first, show why the Christian, beside his stated hours for prayer, wherein he holds more solemn commerce with God, should also visit God occasionally, and step into his presence over and anon—whatever he is about—with these ejaculatory breathings of his heart; for this is a kind of prayer that needs not interrupt the Christian, nor break any squares in his other enjoyments. Is he on a journey? He may go to heaven in these short sallies of his soul, and make no less speed in his way for them. Is he in the field at work? His plough needs not stand still for this. As the meadow is not the worse for what the bee sucks from its flowers, so neither doth a man's worldly occasions suffer any loss from that spiritual improvement which a gracious soul thus makes of them.

[FOUR REASONS WHY the Christian
should use ejaculatory prayers.]

Reason 1. The first reason may be taken from God, who, to show his great delight in his children's prayers, lets his door stand always wide open, that whenever we have but a heart, and will be so kind as to step in to visit him with a prayer at what hour of the day or night soever it be, we shall be welcome. Nay, he doth not only give us a liberty, but he lays it as a law upon us, to let him hear from us as oft as possibly we can, and therefore commands us to 'pray without ceasing,' 1 Thes. 5:17, and 'whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him,' Col. 3:17. What do these and such like places signify, but that we should take every occasion that his Spirit and providence bring to our hand to the lifting our hearts up to him in prayer? And an we suppose that a prayer at our first setting forth in the morning, with never thinking of God any more till we come to our round for prayer at night again, will pass for a praying continually? When a father chargeth his son, that lives abroad, to let him as oft as may be hear from him, though he doth not expect a long epistle from him by every messenger that comes that way, yet he looks for some short remembrance of his duty by word of mouth, and that is accepted, till he hath more leisure to write his full mind. God bids pray continually. Now, he knows we cannot be always on our

knees in the solemn performance of this duty. But, therefore, he expects to hear the oftener from us in these occasional remembrances of him—hinted to us all along the day by emerging providences—which the Holy Spirit stands ready as our messenger to convey unto him.

Reason 2. The second reason may be taken from the excellent use of ejaculatory prayers in the Christian's whole course of life.

(1.) They are of excellent use to be set against those sudden injections of Satan, which he will be darting into our minds. It were strange if the best of saints should not find the devil busy with them in this kind. None so pure whose chastity of mind this foul spirit dares not to assault. And when his temptations have once coloured our imagination, it is hard wiping them off before they soak so deep as to leave some malignant tincture on our affections. Now, when any such dart from hell is shot in at thy window, no such way to wind out of the temptation as to shoot thy darts to heaven in some holy ejaculation. Our Saviour taught his disciples the use of this weapon: 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.' Now when thou canst not draw out the long sword of a solemn prayer, then go to the short dagger of ejaculatory prayer; and with this—if in the hand of faith—thou mayest stab thy enemy to the heart. He that at one short prayer of David could infatuate Ahithophel, an oracle for policy, can befool the devil himself, and will at thy prayer of faith. 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan,' said Christ. It is time now for Satan to be gone, when heaven takes the alarm; as when thieves are about a house to rob it, and they within beat a drum, or give a sudden shriek to call in help, presently they flee. And if God for thy trial should not come at first call, to rid thee of these unwelcome guests, yet thy very crying out—if affectionate and cordial—will clear thee from consenting to their villainy.

(2.) They are a sovereign means to allay the Christian's affections to the world—one of the worst enemies he hath in the field against him; for it chokes the soul, thickens the Christian's spirit, and changes his very complexion. Who but dying men smell of the earth and carry its colour in their countenance? Grace dieth apace where the heart savours much of the earth. Now, prayer, what is it, but the lifting of the soul from earth to heaven? Were we oftener in a

day sucking in, as it were, fresh air and new influences of grace from God, our spirits could not possibly be so much poisoned with worldly affections. When one was asked, 'Whether he did not admire the goodly structure of a stately house?' he answered, 'No. For,' saith he, 'I have been at Rome, where more magnificent fabrics are to be seen.' Thus, when Satan presents the world's pleasures or treasures to the Christian—that he may inveigle his affections to dote on them—a gracious soul can say, 'I have been at heaven; there is not an hour in the day wherein I enjoy not better than these in communion with my God.'

Reason 3. Ejaculatory prayers keep the Christian's heart in a holy disposition for the more solemn performance of his duty. He that is so heavenly in his earthly employments will be the less worldly in his heavenly. It was a sweet speech of a dying saint, 'That he was going to change his place but not his company.' A Christian that is frequent in these ejaculations, when he goes to pray more solemnly, he goes not from the world to God, but from God to God—from a transient view of him to a more fixed; whereas, another discontinues his acquaintance with God, after his morning visit, and comes not in his company till called in by his customary performance. O! how hard a business will such a one find it to pray with a heavenly heart! What you fill the vessel with, you must expect to draw thence. If water be put in, we cannot without a miracle think to draw wine. What! art thou all day filling thy heart with earth—God not in all thy thoughts—and dost thou look to draw heaven thence at night? If you would have fire for your evening sacrifice, expect not new from heaven to be dropped, but labour to keep what is already on thine altar from going out; which thou canst not better do than by feeding it with this fuel.

Reason 4. Ejaculatory prayers are of excellent use to alleviate any great affliction that lies heavy upon soul or body. While others sit disconsolate, grinding their souls and wasting their spirits with their own anxious thoughts; these are his wings with which he flieth above his troubles, and in an instant shoots his soul to heaven, out of the din and noise of his afflictions. How can he be long uncomfortable, who, when anything begins to disquiet him, lets it not lie boking and belking in his mind—as a thorn in the

flesh—but presently gives vent to it, by some heavenly meditation or heart-easing prayer to God? Those heavenly tidings which came to Job, one upon the neck of another, it was not possible for him to have stood under, had his thoughts been employed on no other subject than his affliction. But, being able to lift up his heart to God—"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—this one devout meditation or ejaculation gave him incomparable ease. Indeed, in afflictions that are very sharp and violent, it is no time for long discourses; the poor creature cannot hold out in a continued duty of prayer, as at another time. When the fight grows hot, and the army comes to grapple hand to hand with their enemy, they have not leisure to charge their great artillery, then their short swords do them most service. Truly thus it is in this case. The poor creature, may be, finds his body weak, and his spirit oppressed with temptations, which Satan pours like so much shot upon him, that all he can well do is to pray quick and short—now fetch a groan for the pain he feels, and then shoot a dart to heaven to call God in to his help. And blessed is the man who hath his quiver full of these arrows. We see Christ in his agony chose to pray oft, rather than long: 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.' This short ejaculation he sends to heaven thrice, with some little pause of time between prayer and prayer. 'And was heard in that he feared,' Heb. 5:7.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to those who either do not use ejaculatory prayer at all, or not rightly.]

Use First. A reproof to those that use not this kind of prayer, or do it in a profane manner; or that use this, but neglect other kinds of prayer.

1. For reproof of those that are wholly unacquainted with ejaculatory prayer—not such a dart to be found in all their quiver. Their heart is as a bow bent indeed, and their quiver full of arrows. But all are shot beside this mark. The world is their butt; at this they let fly all their thoughts. God is so great a stranger with them, that they hardly speak to or think

of him from morning to night, though they travel all day in his company. And is it not strange that God, who is so near his creature, should be so far from his thoughts? Where canst thou be, or what can thy eye light upon, that may not bring God to thy remembrance, and give thee a fair occasion to lift up thy heart to him? He is present with thee in every place and company. Thou canst use no creature, enjoy no mercy, feel no affliction, and put thy hand to no work, which will not prompt thee either to beg his counsel, seek his blessing, crave his protection, or give him praise for his gracious providence over thee. The very beast thou ridest on, could it speak—as once Balaam's ass did—would reprove thy atheism, who goest plodding on thy way, and takest no notice of him that preservest both man and beast. But God speaks once, yea twice, and brutish men perceive it not. Well may Solomon say, 'The heart of the wicked is of little worth,' when God is not in all his thoughts. What can that heart be worth, that is stuffed with that which is worth naught? at least within a while will be so? for within that moment wherein these poor wretches die, all their thoughts perish and come to nothing. Truly, though ye were so many kings and emperors, yet, if the stock of your thoughts be spent all the day long upon earthly projects—never flying so high as to lead you into communion with God—you are but like those vermin that are buried alive in some stinking dunghill. The food your souls live upon is low and base, and such must the temper of your souls also needs be.

O! how many are there in the world, whose backs are bravely clad with scarlet, while their souls embrace the dunghill—whose bellies are high fed and deliciously pampered, but their souls set at coarse fare! The body, which is the beggar, is mounted on horseback, and the soul, which is the prince, walks on foot—preferred to no higher employment than to hold her slave's stirrup—being made to bestow all his thoughts and care how to provide for that, an allowed nothing for itself. Yet these must be cried up for the only happy men in the world! Whereas, some poor creatures are to be found though their outward port and garb in the world renders them despicable—who enjoy more of heaven and true comfort, by the frequent commerce they have with God, as they are at their loom or wheel, in one day, than the other do in

all their lives, for all their pomp and fanciful felicities. What account will such give to God for the expense of their thoughts, the first-born of their souls? What pity is it that strangers should devour them,—the highest improvement whereof is to send them in embassies to heaven, and to converse with God! He who gave man a countenance erect, to walk—not creep on all four, as some other creatures, with their back upon heaven and mouth to the earth—never intended his soul should stoop so below itself, and lick the dust for its food; but rather, that it should look up to God, and enjoy himself in enjoying communion with him that is the Father of spirits. If it be so bad a spectacle to behold a man bowed down through the deformities or infirmities of his body, as to go like a beast on all four, hands and feet; much more, to see a soul so crippled with ignorance and sensual affections, that it cannot look up from the earth where it lies a roveling, to converse with God its Maker.

2. It reproves those who do indeed shoot now and then to heaven some of these darts of ejaculatory prayers, but in so profane a way as makes both God and gracious men to nauseate them. Did you never hear a vile wretch interlace his discourse with a strange medley of oaths and prayers?—rap out an oath, and then send out a vain prayer, in the midst of his carnal discourse? 'God forgive us!' 'God bless us!' 'God be merciful to us!' Such forms of speech many have got, and they come tumbling out when they do not mind what they say. Now, which do you think is like to get first to heaven—their oaths or their prayers? It is hard to say whether their swearing or their praying is the worst. What base and low thoughts have those wretches of the great God, to make so bold with his holy and reverent name, which should not be thought or spoken of without fear and trembling! 'The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools;' that is, it is uncomely. The name of God doth not fit a profane mouth; the discourse is not equal. One step in hell and another in heaven is too great a stride at once to be taken. To shoot one dart at God in an oath, and another to him in a prayer, what can you make of this but a toying with that which is sacred? Religion and the eye are too tender to be played with. Such prayers as these are shot out of the devil's bow, and are never to reach heaven, except it be to bring back

a curse for him that put them up.

3. A reproof to those who content themselves with this kind of prayer. They will now and then cast a transient glance upon God in a short ejaculation, but never set themselves to seek God in a more solemn way. And is this all thou canst afford? No more than to look in at God's door, and away presently! Dost thou not think that he expects thou shouldst sometimes come to stay longer with him in a more settled communion? It is true, these occasional visits, when joined with the conscientious performance of the other, is an excellent symptom of a heavenly heart, and speaks grace to be very lively when they are frequent. As when a man between his set meals is so hungry that he must have something to stay his stomach, and yet, when dinner when dinner or supper come, can feed as heartily as if he had eaten nothing—this shows indeed the man to be healthy and strong. But, if a bit by the by takes away his stomach, that he can eat little or nothing at his ordinary meal, this is not so good a sign. Thus here: if a Christian, between his set and solemn seeking of God morning and night, finds an inward hunger upon his spirit, so strongly craving communion with God that he cannot stay till his stated hour for prayer returns, but must ever and anon be refreshing himself with the beverage of ejaculatory prayer, and then comes sharp set to duty at his ordinary set time, this speaks grace to be in statu athletico—strong and thriving; but, on the contrary, it shows a slighty and naughty spirit to make these an excuse or plea for the neglect of the other. Thou tastest, sure, little sweetness, and findest little nourishment from these, or else they would excite thy soul to hunger for further communion with God. As soon as David opened his eyes in the morning, his heart was sallying forth to God—'When I awake I am still with thee.' And as he walked abroad in the day-time, every occasion led him into the presence with God: 'Seven times a day do I praise thee;' that is, often—as it is said, The righteous fall seven times in a day. But, did these short glances of David's heart steal from the more solemn performance of his duty? No; we find he had his set seasons also: 'Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud,' Ps. 55:17. Mr. Ainsworth interprets this place of solemn stated prayer; and it seems to have been the practice of more devout Jews to devote three seasons in a day

for that duty. I can no more believe him to be frequent and spiritual in ejaculatory prayer who neglects the season of solemn prayer, than I can believe that he keeps every day in the week a Sabbath who neglects to keep that one which God hath appointed.

[Exhortation to the believer's frequent use of ejaculatory prayer.]

Use Second. To the saints. Be ye excited to the frequent exercise of this duty of ejaculatory prayer. I know you are not altogether strangers to it—if you answer your name and be such as you go for; but it is a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with this kind of prayer that I would gladly lead you into. Such an art it is that, were we but skilful traders in it, we should find a blessed advance in our spiritual estate and soon have more money in our purse—grace and comfort, I mean, in our hearts—than now most Christians can show. We might, by a spiritual alchemy, turn all we touch into gold, extract heaven out of earth, and make wings of every creature and providence that meet us to help us in our flight to God. Our whole life would be—what I have read of a holy man—but one communion-day with Christ. Then neither friends nor foes, joys nor woes, callings nor recreations—or whatever else we have in this world to do with—should be able to interrupt our acquaintance with him. Whereas now, alas! everything interposeth, as an opaque body, to hide God and heaven from our eye. We who now walk—like travellers in some bottom or low swamp—with our thoughts of heaven so overtopped by the world, that we hardly get a sight of that glorious city to which we are going from morning to night—and thereby lose much of the pleasure of our journey—should then have it in a manner always before us, as a joyful prospect in our eye, to solace us in the difficulties of our pilgrimage, and make us gather up our feet more nimbly in the ways of holiness when we shall see whither they lead us. We count them pleasantly situated who live in a climate where the sun is seldom off their horizon. Truly, none have such a constant light of inward joy and peace shining upon their souls as those who are familiarly conversant with this duty. They are in sole positi—placed in the sun, as is said of the Rhodians; they stand at the best advantage of any other to have,

if not a continual, yet a frequent, intercourse with God, from whom both the influences of comfort and grace also do all come. And if those trees must needs have the fairest and sweetest which stand most in the sun, then, surely, they are most likely to excel others both in comfort and grace who are most with God. Every little that the bee brings to the hive—as she flies in and out, though she stays not long on any flower—adds to the stock. Though the soul makes no long stay with God in this kind of prayer, yet the frequent reiterations thereof conduce much to the increase of its grace. Light gain, with quick returns, makes a heavy purse. Little showers, often following one upon another, plump the corn and fill the bushels. So do these short spurts—sallies of the soul to heaven—enrich and increase grace in the heart exceedingly. Now, if thou shouldst ask how thou mayest make this kind of ejaculatory prayer more familiar unto thee, take these few words of counsel:—

[SOME HELPS to ejaculatory prayer.]

1. Help. Keep thy heart with all diligence—thy affections, I mean. The very reason why we sally out so seldom toward God in these occasional prayers is because the weight of our affections poise us another way. The bowl runs as its bias inclines, the stream flows as the fountain empties itself. If our affections be carnal, to earth we go, and God hath little of our company. Adam, it is said, 'begat a son in his own likeness,' Gen. 5:3, and so doth the heart of every man. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; as is the heavenly, such they also that be heavenly. Labour, therefore, to get and keep thy heart heavenly; especially look to these three affections—thy love, fear, and joy.

(1.) Thy Love. If this fire burn clear, the more of these sparks will from it mount up to God. Love is a great friend to memory. The adulterer is said to have his 'eyes full of the harlot,' and holy love will be as mindful of God. Such a soul will be often setting God in its view: 'I have set the Lord always before me,' Ps. 16:8. And by often thinking of God the heart will be enticed into desires after him. 'The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee,' Isa. 26:8. And see what follows, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit

within me will I seek thee early,' ver. 9. Love sets the soul on musing, and musing on praying. Meditation is prayer in bullion, prayer in the ore—soon melted and run into holy desires. The laden cloud soon drops into rain, the piece charged soon goes off when fire is put to it. A meditating soul is in proximâ potentiâ to prayer. 'While I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, Lord, make me to know mine end,' Ps. 39:3, 4. This was an ejaculatory prayer shot from his soul when in the company of the wicked.

(2.) Thy Fear. Even wicked men, thought they be great strangers to prayer, yet we shall hear them knocking at God's door in a fright; much more will a holy fear direct the Christian, upon all occasions, to lift up his heart to God. Art thou in thy calling? Fear a snare therein, and this will excite thee oft in a day to bespeak counsel of God how to behave thyself therein. Art thou in company? Fear lest thou shouldst do or receive hurt, and thou wilt be lifting up thy heart to him that can only keep thee from both. We cannot have a more faithful monitor to mind us of this duty than a holy fear. 'They that feared the Lord thought upon his name,' Mal. 3:16. 'At what time I am afraid,' saith David, 'I will trust in thee.' Fear makes us think where our safety lies, and leads us to our refuge. Had not Noah feared a storm the ark had not been built. Men fear no sin nor danger, and therefore God hears not of them all the day long; the ungodly world, who walk with their back upon heaven and look not up to God from morning to night. We may tell the reason—'The fear of God is not before their eyes.'

(3.) Thy joy and delight in God. O cherish this. As fear disposeth to pray, so joy to praise. Now, and not till now, the instrument of thy heart is in tune. One hint now from the providence of God, and touch from his Spirit, will set such a soul on work to bless God. Carnal men, when they are frolic and upon the merry pin, then they have their catches and songs as they sit in their house or ride on the way: how much more will the gracious soul, that walks in the sense of God's love, be often striking up his harp in holy praises to God? 'Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee,' Ps. 63:3. 'I will bless thee while I live,' ver. 4. And again, 'My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips,' ver. 5. See how he

goes over and over again the same note. Joy can no more be hid than ointment. As that betrayeth itself by its hot and sweet perfumes, so doth holy joy make its own report in the praises it sounds forth to God. It behooves thee therefore, Christian, to be as chary and choice of thy joy as thou wouldst be of the blood in thy veins; for in this runs the spirits of praise and thanksgiving. Now, would you nourish your joy? Do it by sucking the promises—those breasts of consolation. these are a food of pure juice and strong nourishment; they soon turn into blood—joy and peace, I mean—and with this a spirit of praise must needs also grow.

2. Help. Possess thy heart with strong apprehensions of God's overruling providence in all thy enterprises, great or small; that he doth what pleaseth him in heaven and earth, so that all thy labour and toil in any business is in vain while [until] this main wheel begins to stir—his providence gives countenance to the action. O, how would this raise thy heart up to God, and send thee with many an errand into his presence! Suppose a man was going about some important business, and had him in his company that alone {which} could help or hinder the despatch of it; were it not strange that he should travel all day with him and not apply himself to this person to make him his friend? This is thy very case, Christian. Thou and all thy affairs are at the absolute dispose of the great God, to bless or blast thee in every enterprise. If thou hast not his vote, thy business is stopped in the head. Now, this God is always in thy company, whether at home or abroad, in thy bed or at thy board. Surely thou didst believe this firmly, thou wouldst oft in a day turn thyself to him, and beg his good-will to favour thy undertaking and facilitate thy business for thee.

3. Help. Look thou comliest with the motions of the Holy Spirit. The Christian shall find him, as his remembrancer to mind him of the more solemn performance of this duty of prayer, so his monitor, to suggest many occasional meditations to his thoughts—even amidst worldly employments—as a hint that now it is a fit time to give God a visit in holy some ejaculation, by thus setting the door, as it were, open for him into God's presence. Sometimes he will be recalling a truth thou hast read or heard, a mercy thou hast received, or a sin thou hast committed.

And what means he by all these but to do thee a friendly office, that by these—thy affections being stirred—thou mayest be invited to dart thy soul up to God in some ejaculation suitable to his motion? Now, take the hint he gives, and thou shalt have more of his company and help in this kind. For, as the evil spirit, where he finds welcome to his wicked suggestions, grows bold to knock oftener at that door because it is so soon opened to him; so the Holy Spirit is invited, where his motions are kindly entertained, to be more frequent in these his approaches; where was thy neglect of them may cause him to withdraw and leave thee to thy own slothful spirit. When Christ had thrice made an attempt to take away his drowsy disciples by calling them up to watch and pray, and they fell to nodding again, truly then he bids them 'sleep on.'

[Composed prayer distinguished as
SECRET OR SOCIAL.]

SECOND DISTINCTION. What we have called composed prayer may be distinguished as either solitary, or social—performed jointly with others. It is designated composed, because the Christian composeth himself more solemnly to the work by setting some considerable time apart from his other occasions, for his more free and full communion with God in prayer. We begin with the first of these.

First. Secret Prayer. When the Christian retireth into some secret place, free from all company, and there pours out his soul into the bosom of God, none being witness to this trade he drives with heaven but God and himself. I shall here, 1. Prove this to be a duty incumbent upon us; and, 2. Give the reasons why.

[Secret prayer a duty, and the reasons why.]

1. I shall prove secret or closet prayer to be a duty incumbent upon us. That is it is the Christian's duty secretly and solitarily to hold intercourse with God in prayer, I believe will be granted of more than practise it. Even those that are strangers to the performance thereof carry in their own bosom that which will accuse them for their neglect, except by long looking on the light, and rebelling against the same,

their foolish minds be darkened and have lost all sight and sense of a deity. If any prayer be a duty, then secret prayer needs be one. This is to all the other as the carina or keel is to the ship—it bears up all the rest. If we look into the practice of Scripture saints, we shall find them all to have been great dealers with God in this trade of secret prayer. Abraham had his ‘grove,’ whither he retired to ‘call on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God,’ Gen. 21:33. Neither was Rebekah a stranger to this duty, who, upon the babes struggling in her womb, ‘went to inquire of the Lord,’ Gen. 25:22, which, saith Calvin, was to pray in secret. Jacob is famous for his wrestling, as it were hand to hand, with God in the night. Holy David’s life was little else, he ‘gave himself to prayer,’ Ps. 109:4. Allow but some time spent by him for nature’s refectation and the necessary occasions of his public employment—which yet came in but as a parenthesis—and you will find most of the rest laid out in meditation and prayer, as appears, Ps. 119. We have Elias at prayer under the juniper tree, Peter on the leads, Cornelius in a corner of his house; yea, our blessed Saviour—whose soul could have fasted longest without any inward impair through the want of this repast—yet none more frequent in it. Early in the morning he is praying alone, Mark 1:35, and late in the evening, Matt. 14:23. And this was his usual practice, as may be gathered from Luke 22:39 compared with Luke 21:37. Thus Christ sanctified this duty by his own example. Yea, we have a sweet promise to the due performance of it—and God doth not use to promise a reward for that work which he commandeth us not to do—but ‘when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly,’ Matt. 6:6. Where our Saviour takes it for granted that every child of God will be often praying to his heavenly Father; and therefore he rather encourageth them in the work he seeth them about, than commands them to it. ‘I know you cannot live without prayer.’ Now, when you would give God a visit, ‘enter into thy closet,’ &c. But why must the Christian maintain this secret intercourse with God?

2. I shall give the reasons why secret or closet prayer is incumbent upon us.

(1.) In regard of God. He hath an eye to see our

secret tears, and an ear to hear our secret groans; therefore we ought to pour them out to him in secret. It is a piece of gross superstition to bind this only to place or company: ‘I will,’ saith the apostle, ‘that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands,’ &c., I Tim. 2:8. God is everywhere to be found, at church and at home, with our family and our closet; and therefore we are to pray everywhere. O what a comfort it is to a gracious soul, that he can never be out of God’s sight or hearing, wherever he is thrown, and therefore never out of his care! for it is out of sight out of mind. This comforted holy David. His friends and kinsmen, they, alas! were afar off. He might lie upon his sick-bed, and cry till his heart ached, and not make them hear. But see how he pacifies himself in this solitude, ‘Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee,’ Ps. 38:9. Little thought Jacob that he had a son prisoner in Egypt, laden there with irons that entered into his soul. But he had a God that was nigh unto him all the time of his distress, and heard the cry of the poor prisoner, though his earthly father never dreamed of any such matter.

Great and rich are the returns which in Scripture we find to be sent from heaven upon the solitary adventure of the saints in this bottom. ‘This poor man cried,’ said David, ‘and the Lord...saved him out of all his troubles,’ Ps. 34:6. As if he had said, Haply you are afraid to be so bold to go alone and visit God in secret. Though you dare venture to join with others in prayer, and hope to find welcome when you go with such good company, yet you are ready to say, Will God look upon me, or my single prayer? Yes, behold me, saith David, who am newly come from his door, where I lay praying in as poor a condition, and as sad a plight, as ever beggar was at man’s—a poor exile, in the midst of enemies that thirsted for my blood. Yet I—and that when I betrayed so much dastardly unbelief as to scrabble on the wall like a madman—cried, and God heard. Who then need be afraid, either from his outward straits or inward infirmities, if sincere, to go with a humble boldness unto God? Nay, further, as God hath a pitiful eye to see when we pray in secret, so also an angry eye, that sees when we do not. I have read of a prince that would, in the evening, walk abroad in a disguise, and listen under his subjects’ windows, whether they talked of him, and what they said. To be sure God’s eye and ear

watcheth us, 'the Lord hearkened, and heard it,' Mal. 3:16. And he that hath a book of remembrance for his saints that fear him and think upon his name, hath also a black bill for their names who shut him out of their hearts and closets. 'The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.' Though his seat be in heaven, yet his eye is on earth; and what doth he observe but whether men 'understand and seek after God?'

(2.) In regard of ourselves—the more to prove our sincerity. I do not say that to pray in secret amounts to an infallible character of sincerity—for hypocrisy may creep into our closet when the door is shut closest, as the frogs did into Pharaoh's bed-chamber. Yet this is not the hypocrite's ordinary walk. And though his heart may be naught that frequently performs secret duty, yet, to be sure, his heart cannot be good whose devotion is all spent before men, and is a mere stranger to secret communion with God; or else our Saviour, in drawing the hypocrite's picture, would not have made this to be the very cast of his countenance, 'When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues,' &c. 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,' Matt. 6:5, 6. The command sends us as well to the closet as to the church; and he is a hypocrite that chooseth one and neglects the other; for thereby it appears he makes conscience of neither. He likes that which may gain him the name of religious in the opinion of men, and therefore puts on a religious habit abroad, but in the meantime lives like an atheist at home. Such a one may for a time be the world's saint, but God will at last uncase him, and present him before the eyes of all the world for a hypocrite. The true lover delights to visit his friend when he may find him alone, and enjoy privacy with him; and I have read of a devout person who, when the set time for his private devotions were come, would, whatever company he was in, break from them with this handsome speech, 'I have a friend that stays for me, farewell!' It is worth parting with our best friends on earth, to enjoy communion with the God of heaven. One called his friends thieves, because they stole time from him. None worse thieves than they who rob us of our praying seasons.

(3.) In regard of the duty itself, and the influence which the holy management of it would have upon the Christian's life. This duty is a main pillar to uphold the whole frame of our spiritual building. Without this the Christian's house—as Solomon saith of the sluggard's—will drop out at the windows. That which is most necessary to keep the house standing is underground—I mean the foundation. That which keeps the man alive is the heart in his breast, that is unseen. Cease your secret communion, and you undermine your house—you stab godliness to the heart. If the tree grow not in the root, it will ere long wither in the branch. He that declines this way, can be a gainer in no other. How zealous soever he may appear, all, without this, is but a distempered heat, as when the outward parts burn but the inward chill. Such a one may pray to the quickening and comforting of others, but he will get little of either himself. The truth is, this is the first step toward apostasy. Backsliders grow first out of acquaintance with God in secret. Their delight in this duty declines by little and little. Then are they less frequent in their visits. Upon which follows a casting off of the duty quite—and yet they may appear great sticklers and zealots in public ordinances. But, if they recover not what they have lost in their secret trade, they will ere long break here also.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[What communion with God in secret prayer, or the neglect of it, implies.]

Use First. Let us here admire the condescending love of God, in stooping to hold any communion with his poor creatures, while they are clad with rags of mortality, and those besmeared also with many sinful pollutions. It is not enough that in heaven, when we shall put on our robes of glory—befitting the attendance of so great a King—that then he will take us into his royal presence, and give us places with those that stand above him; but will he even now, while our garments smell of the prison, and before our grave-clothes be quite thrown off, admit us to be so near an accession? 'What manner of love is this,' that we should now be 'called the children of God,' and as

such have liberty to speak our gibberish and broken language, and that with delight to him who continually hath the praises of blessed angels and glorified saints sounding in his ears! Nay, yet more, this liberty to be indulged us, not only when we come together and make up a choir in our public worship, but in our solitary and secret addresses! That a poor creature, whenever himself hath but a heart to step aside, and give God a visit in any corner of his house, should find the arms of so great a majesty open to embrace him!—this is so stupendous that we may better admire than express it. Should we see a poor beggar speaking familiarly with a great king—who, while all his courtiers stand bare before him, takes him into his embraces, and lets him familiarly whisper in his ear—might it not draw forth our wonderment at such an act of grace from majesty to beggary? This is the glorious privilege of every saint on earth, who, when he prays, hath liberty to come up to the throne of God surrounded with glorious angels, and into his bosom to pour out his soul as freely as the child may speak to his indulgent father. O thank our good friend and brother, the Lord Jesus Christ, for this! It is he that brings us into the presence of God, and sets us before his face—as Joseph his brethren before Pharaoh. Whose face need a saint fear to look upon, that may thus boldly speak to God? Comfort thyself with this, Christian, when thou goest with thy petition to any great man on earth, and he will not be seen of thee—or such a rich kinsman, and he will not own thee—turn thy back of them both, and go to thy God, he will look on thee, and in his Son own thee for his child. Thou hast his ear that can command their heart and purse too. Jacob’s prayer altered his brother’s purposes, that he who meant to kill him falls on his neck to kiss him. Nehemiah had a boon to beg of the Persian king, and he goes—a carnal heart would think—the farthest way about to obtain it. He knocks first at heaven door: ‘Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man,’ Neh. 1:11. And now to court he goes, where, behold, he finds the door open before he knocks. For the king said unto him, ‘For what dost thou make request?’ ch. 2:4. We may, you see, open two doors with this one key. At the prayer of this holy man, God and man both give their gracious answer. The Christian surely cannot long be in want if he can but

pray. As one said, the pope would never want money so long as he could hold a pen in his hand. It is but praying in faith, and the thing is done which the Christian would have. Be careful for nothing; but... let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts,’ &c., Php. 4:6, 7. ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass,’ Ps. 37:5. the saints’ bills are received at first sight, whatever the sum is. Christ is our undertaker to see it paid; and his credit holds still in his Father’s bosom, and will, to procure welcome for all his saints, even to the least and last of them that shall be found on earth.

Use Second. This blots their names from among the number of saints that were never acquainted with this duty. What! a saint, and content with what thou hast of God, in joint communion with others, at church or family, so as never to desire any privacy between God and thyself! Canst find no errand to invite thee to speak with God alone? Thou bringest thy saintship into question. When a prince passeth by in the street, then all—even strangers themselves—will come in a throng to see him. But his child thinks not this enough, but goes home with him, must live with him, and be under his eye daily. Hypocrites and profane ones will crowd into public ordinances, but a gracious soul cannot live without more retired converse with him.

Use Third. Be exhorted, O ye saints, to hold up your secret acquaintance with God. ‘I am persuaded’—as Paul said to Festus in another case—that none of these things’ which I have spoken concerning this duty, ‘are hidden from thee,’ if a saint. ‘Believest thou’ that this is thy duty? ‘I know that thou believest.’ Dost thou pray in secret? I dare not question it; the Spirit of Christ which is in thee will not suffer thee to be wholly a stranger from it. But I would provoke thee to be more abounding therein. ‘These things have I written,’ saith John, ‘unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God,...that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God,’ I John 5:13—that is, that you may believe more. And these things do I now write to you that call upon the name of God in secret, that you may call oftener; and this you need, except you lived further from Satan’s quarters than the rest of your brethren do. No duty more

opposed by Satan or our own slothful hearts than this. The devil can allow you your church prayers, your family duties, and now and then a formal one in your closet too, and yet make his market of you. Therefore take along with you these three or four directions for your better managing thereof.

[Directions for secret prayer.]

1. Direction. Let it be your constant trade. Rolling stones gather no moss. Unstable and unconstant hearts will never excel in this or any other duty. The spirit of prayer is a grace infused, but advanced to further degrees by daily exercise. Frequency begets familiarity, and familiarity confidence. We go boldly into his house whom we often visit.

2. Direction. Let it be true secret prayer, and not have its name for naught. Take heed no noise be heard abroad of what thou dost in secret. 'Enter into thy closet,' said Christ, 'and when thou hast shut thy door, pray.' Be sure thou shuttest it so close that no wind of vainglory comes in. Rather than there should, shut the door of thy lips as well as of thy closet; God can hear though thy mouth delivers not the message. It is true, when Daniel prayed he 'opened his window,' but it was to show his faith, not his pride—that he might let the world know how little he feared their wrath, not that he coveted their praise. God curiously observes which way the eye turns, and it is a dishonour he will not bear that thou shouldst be pensioner to the world in expecting thy reward from man and not himself. Lose not God's euge—well done! for man's plaudite—applause. This is to change heaven for earth, and that is a bad bargain.

3. Direction. Be free and open. Come not to God in secret and keep thy secrets from him; speak thy very heart, and hide nothing from him. To be reserved and close is against the law of friendship. 'I have called you friends,' saith Christ, 'for all things which I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.' Is Christ so open-hearted not to conceal anything he knows for our good? and wouldst thou have any secret box in thy cabinet, that he—if thou couldst help it—should not see? Art thou confessing sins? Strip thy soul naked, and shuffle not with God. If thou dost, it speaks one of these two things—thou hast some secret design of sin for the future; or har-

bourest an ill opinion of God in thy breast concerning thy past sins, as if he would not be faithful to forgive what thou art free to confess; like some prodigal child who, though his father promiseth to pay all his debts, and forgive him also, yet because the sum is vast, dares not trust his father with the whole truth, but conceals some in his confession. The first of these is not the spot of God's children; but into the latter they sometimes fall, and, for a while, may be held by Satan's policy and their own unbelief. But consider, Christian, whatever thy sin is, and how great soever, yet the way to obtain pardon is by confessing, not concealing it. Neither is it concealed from God, though thou confess it not. But God likes a confession out of thy own mouth so well, that as soon as thou dost lay open thy own shame, he hath obliged himself faithfully to cover it with the mantle of pardoning mercy. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' 1 John 1:9. Again, art thou making thy requests to God? carry no burden away upon thy spirit, through a foolish modesty and fear of troubling God too much, or asking too deep, so long as the promise is on thy side. Christ never complained that his saints opened their mouths, or enlarged their desires, too wide in prayer; nay, he bids his disciples open them wider, and tells them, 'they had asked nothing;' that is, nothing proportionable to the large heart in his breast to give.

4. Direction. It must be seasonable. This gives everything its beauty. (1.) Take heed that it doth not justle with public worship. The devil takes great pleasure in setting the ordinances of God at variance one against another. Some he persuades to cry up public prayer, and neglect secret; and others he would fain bring out of love with the public, by applauding the other; whereas there is room enough for both in thy Christian course. Moses, though he killed the Egyptian, yet the two Israelites, when scuffling together, he laboured to reconcile. Beware of giving Satan such an advantage as to neglect the communion of saints in the public, under a pretence of praying in thy closet. This is to set one ordinance to fight with another. They are sister ordinances, set them not at variance. Deny thy presence in the public, and thou art sure to lose God's presence in thy closet: 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination,' Prov. 28:9. (2.) Look

that it interferes not with thy duty in thy particular calling. As thou art to shut thy closet door to pray, so open thy shop windows for following thy calling in the world. Go into thy closet before thy shop, or else thou art an atheist; but, when thou hast been with God there, attend thy shop and calling, or else thou art a hypocrite. Thou consistest of soul and body; God divides thy employment between both. He that is not diligent in the duty he owes God concerning both, is conscientious in neither. When every part in the body hath its due nourishment distributed to it health is preserved. So here. He is the sound Christian that divides his care wisely for his spiritual state and temporal also. Sleep not away thy time for prayer in the morning, and then think thou art sufficiently excused for omitting it because thy worldly business calls thee another way. Jade not thy body with over-labouring, nor overcharge thy mind with too heavy a load of worldly cares, in the day, and then think that the weariness of the one, and discomposure of the other, will discharge thee from praying again at night. This is to make a sin thy apology for neglecting a duty.

Second. Social Prayer—that which is performed in joint communion with others. It is double. Either it is private or public—family prayer or church prayer. To this, however, we assigned a separate distinction.

[Social prayer distinguished as
FAMILY PRAYER OF CHURCH PRAYER.]

THIRD DISTINCTION. Social and joint prayer is either private in the family or public in the church. I begin with the first—family prayer.

[Family prayer a duty incumbent
on the head of the family.]

First. Social or joint prayer may be private in the family. By a family I mean a society of certain persons in mutual relation each to other, natural or civil, who live together under the domestic government of husband, master, or parent. Wherever such a family is found, it is the duty of the governor of it to set up the worship of God there, and this part of worship in particular—prayer in the family. The Jews had their family sacrifice, Ex. 12:21, which the master

of the house performed at home with his family. There still remains a spiritual sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, which every master of a family is with his household to offer up to God. The private house is the Christian's 'chapel of ease,' to worship God in daily with his company. The church began in a family, and it is upheld still by the piety of private families. If the nursery be not preserved, the orchard must needs in time decay.

Question. But the question will be, how can it be proved that family prayer is a duty?

Answer. I hope none will require an set place of Scripture commanding this in terminis—in set terms, or else not believe it a duty incumbent upon them. This were the way not only to lose this part of God's worship, but other duties also. It will trouble us to find an express word commanding us totidem verbis, or, in plain terms, to keep the Christian Sabbath, or to baptize our infant children; yet, God forbid we should, with some, shake off the ordinances upon this account. That which by necessary consequence can be deduced from Scripture, is Scripture, as well as that which is laid down in express terms. And if this will content you—which I am sure should—I will hope to give you some satisfaction.

[How it can be proved that family prayer is a duty.]

1. That general command for prayer will bring this of family prayer within the compass of our duty: 'I will therefore that men pray every where,' 1 Tim. 2:8. If 'everywhere,' then surely, saith Mr. Perkins upon this place, in our families, where God hath set us in so near relation to one another. Paul salutes the church in Aquila and Priscilla's house, Rom. 16:5. And were they not a strange church who should live together without praying together?—had they deserved so high and honourable a name if they had thus shut God out of doors? This were to call them a church, as a grove is called lucus, à non lucendo—from not giving light. The Jews, when they built any of them a new house to dwell in, they were to dedicate it, Deut. 20:5; and the manner of dedicating their new-built houses was with prayer, as you may see by the title of Ps. 30, penned on this occasion: 'A Psalm and Song at the dedication of David's house.' This they did—
(1.) To express their thankfulness to God, who

had given them a habitation. Indeed, it is no small mercy to have a settled place for our abode—a convenient house for ourselves and relations peaceably to dwell in; it is more than those precious saints had ‘who wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth,’ Heb. 11:38; yea, than Christ himself had: ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. Matt. 8:20.

(2.) By this they were admonished to acknowledge themselves tenants to God, and that they held their houses of him, their great landlord, upon condition of doing him homage, by making their houses as so many sanctuaries for his worship while they lived in them. So Mollerus upon the place.

2. The trust which governors of families are charged with will evince it is their duty to set up prayer in their families. Every master of a family hath *curam animarum*—he hath the care of souls upon him as well as the minister. He is prophet, king, and priest in his own house, and from every one of these will appear this his duty.

(1.) He is a prophet, to teach and instruct his family. Wives are bid to learn at home of their husbands, I Cor. 14:34, 35. Then sure they are to teach them at home. Parents are commanded to instruct their children, ‘Ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house,’ Deut. 11:19. And, ‘To bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,’ Eph. 6:4. Now, there is a teaching and admonition by prayer to God and praising of God, as well as in catechising of them: ‘Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns,’ Col. 3:16. The master’s praying with his family will teach them how to pray when by themselves. The confessions he makes, petitions he puts up, and mercies he acknowledgeth in his family duty, are an excellent means to furnish them with matter for their devotions. How comes it to pass that many servants and children, when they come to be themselves heads of families, are unable to be their relations’ mouth to God in prayer—but because they have, in their minority, lived in prayerless families, and were kept in ignorance of this duty, whereby they have neither head nor heart, knowledge or affections, suitable for such a work?

(2.) He is a king in his house, to rule his family

in the fear of God. As the political magistrate’s duty is to set up the true worship of God in his kingdom, so he is to do it in his house. He is to say with Joshua, ‘I and my house, we will serve the Lord.’ Were it a sin in a prince, though he served God himself in his palace, yet if he did not set up the public worship of God in his kingdom? Surely then it is a sin the governor of a family not to set it up in his house, though he prays himself in his closet.

(3.) He is a priest in his own house, and where there is a priest there must be a sacrifice; and what sacrifice among Christians but the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving? Thus David, we find, went from public ordinances to private duty with his family, ‘Then David returned to bless his household,’ II Sam. 6:20; that is, saith one upon the place, he returned to worship God in private with them, and to crave a blessing from God upon them. And this hints a third particular.

3. The practice of saints in all ages hath been to have a religious care of their families. Good Joshua promised for himself and his house that they would serve the Lord. If he meant the inward worship of God, he promised more than he was able to perform in regard of his family, for he could not thrust grace into their hearts. We must therefore understand him that it should not be his fault if they did not, for he would use all means in his power to make them do so. He would set them a holy copy in his own example, and he would take care that they should not live without the worship of God in his family. We find Elisha praying with his servant, II Kings 4:33, master and man together—queen Esther and her maids keeping private fast in her family, Est. 4:16. Now it were uncharitable to think that she was a stranger to the ordinary exercise of this duty, who was so forward to perform the extraordinary, and put others also upon it. Surely this gracious woman did not begin her acquaintance with this duty now, and take it up only at a dead lift in her present strait. That were a gluttonous fast, indeed, that should devour the worship of God in her family for all the year after. Cornelius’ family religion is upon record, ‘A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always,’ Acts 10:2. Mark, he was ‘a devout man, and feared God with all his house.’ Fear is oft put for the

worship of God. God is called ‘the Fear of Isaac,’ Gen. 31:53; that is, the God whom Isaac worshipped. ‘Him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship;...neither shall ye fear other gods,’ II Kings 17:36, 37; that is, ye shall not worship or pray unto them. Thus we may conceive Cornelius was a devout man, and feared God with his house. Surely he that was merciful to the poor at his door, to refresh his pinched bowels with his alms, could not be so cruel to his relations’ souls within his house as to lock up his religion in a closet from them.

[Three objections to family prayer answered.]

Objection (a). But what necessity is there that a family must meet jointly to worship God together? will it not serve if every one prays for himself in his closet?

Answer. A family is a collective body. As such it owes a worship to God. It is he that ‘setteth the solitary in families,’ Ps. 68:6; and as their founder, will be vouched by them. ‘Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name,’ Jer. 10:25. It holds in domestic families as well as national; for he rears up the one as well as the other. There are family sins; and these are to be confessed by the family, as national sins by the nation. There are family wants, and they require the joint supplications of the family. There are family occasions and employments, and those call for the united force of the family, to pull down a blessing upon their joint labours for the good of the whole society. ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.’ And is it not fit that they who join in work should join in prayer for a blessing on their endeavour? There are family mercies that the whole society share in; and is it not meet that they which eat of the same feast should join in the same song of praise to the founder of it? In a word, there are judgments that may wrap up the whole family, and where all are concerned in the danger all should lend their help to prevent it—and many hands make light work. A rope twisted of many cords is stronger than those very cords would be if single; and so the prayer of many together more prevalent, because likely to be more fervent, than of the same persons severally employed in their closets—though I would not learn one to jostle with the other. There

is room for both; why should they fall out? Polanus (in his *Syntag. de Terræmotu*) tells us of a town in the territory of Berne in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, that was in the year 1584 destroyed by an earthquake, except the half of one house, where the master of the family was earnestly praying with his wife and children upon their bended knees to God.

Objection (b). O, but I have not abilities and gifts for such a work, and better left undone than spoiled in the doing.

Answer. No more hadst thou skill and ability for thy trade when thou wentest first to be an apprentice. Apply thy mind to the work; bind the duty upon thy conscience; search the scripture, where matter for prayer is laid up, and rules how to perform the duty. Study thy heart, and observe the state of thy family, till the sense of the sins, wants, and daily mercies thereof—which thou hast lodged in thy memory—be left warm upon thy spirit. In a word, exercise thyself frequently in secret prayer, be earnest there for his Spirit to enable thee in thy family service, and take heed of driving the Holy Spirit from thee, whose assistance thou prayest for, by sloth, worldliness, pride, or any other course of wickedness. Then, up and be doing, and thou mayest comfortably expect God will be with thee, both to assist and accept thee in the work. Moses was sick of his employment that God called him to, and fain would have put it off with this mannerly excuse, ‘I am not eloquent,...but I am of a slow speech.’ But this objection was soon answered: ‘And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,’ Ex. 4:11, 12. His call was extraordinary, and his assistance was such. Thy call to this duty, as the head of a family, is ordinary, and so thou mayest look for ordinary assistance. Haply thou shalt never have an ability, to such a degree, with a flow of words to express thyself as some others. But let not that discourage thee. God looks not at the pomp of words and variety of expressions, but sincerity and devotion of the heart. The key opens not the door because gilt, but because fitted to the wards of the lock. Let but the matter of thy prayer be according to God’s mind, holy and warrantable, and the temper of thy heart humble and fervent, and no fear but thou

shalt speed. Yea, let the prayer be old—pray to-day what thou didst yesterday; be but sure to bring new affections with the old prayer, and thou shalt be friendly received into God's presence, though thou canst not on a sudden put thy requests into a new shape. God will not shut his child out of doors because he comes not every day in a new-fashioned suit.

Objection (c). Others there are who object not their own weakness as the reason of their not praying in their families, but the wickedness of others in their family. They are confident enough of their own gifts, but question others' grace, and whether they may pray with such.

Answer. I will grant there are such in thy family. But is this a ground to lay aside the worship of God? Little thinkest thou whither this principle will lead. By this principle the worship of God should not only be laid aside in most private houses but in all our public congregations also. If thou mayest not pray in thy family because a wicked person is present, then not join in prayer with any public congregation, because thou canst never be assured that they are all godly; nor must the minister pray there, for fearsome wicked ones should be in the company; and so this part of divine worship must be thrown out of the church till we can find an assembly made up of all true saints; and where such a one ever was, or will be on this side of heaven, none I think is able to tell. Surely the saints in Scripture were not thus scrupulous. How oft did Christ himself pray with his disciples, though a Judas was among them! I have elsewhere, clearly I think, proved it is the duty of all, even of the wicked, to pray; and that God will never charge the act of prayer upon him as sin, but his obliquity therein; much less will he impute to thee another's sinful frame of heart with whom thou joimest in prayer. Pray thou in faith, and his unbelief shall not prejudice thy faith, nor his pride thy humility. Thou joimest with him in the duty, but hast no communion with his sin. You may as well say, if a cut-purse in the time of prayer should pick another's pocket, that all the company are guilty of his theft. How much better were it, Christian, to fear lest thou pray with a wicked heart in thy own bosom, than with a wicked person in thy family? Thou art like neither to hurt thy own soul by praying in his company, nor better his by omitting for his sake. May be, though he

be carnal, yet he is outwardly complying, and how knowest thou but thy prayer—especially in his presence—may pierce his heart, and give a lift towards his conversion? Such I have heard of who have had the first sensible impression made upon their hearts in this duty of prayer. If he be not only carnal, but a mocker at the worship of God, and a disturber of the duty, better thou shouldst, with Abraham, turn such an Ishmael out of doors, than for his sake turn God out of doors by denying him the worship due unto him.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to those who unnecessarily throw themselves to live in families that are prayerless.]

Use First. What we have said of family prayer gives reproof to those Christians who needlessly, and upon choice, throw themselves upon such families where the worship of God is not set up. Dost thou know whither thou goest? Thou art running with Jonah from the presence of the Lord, and mayest expect a storm to be sent after thee. Haply thou art a servant, who once didst live in a godly family, where thou hadst many sweet privileges and spiritual advantages—a table spread every day for thy soul as oft as for thy body, besides some exceedings now and then of extraordinary duties—and thereby didst enjoy a kind of heaven upon earth; but, for a little ease in thy work, or gain in thy wages, thou hast made this unhappy change, to put thyself under the roof of those who will sooner learn thee to curse and swear than to pray; and where, by the orders kept in the family, thou canst not know a Lord's-day from a week-day, or whether there be such a thing as religious worship and invocation due to thy Maker or no. Alas, poor creature! What! wert thou even now in so green a pasture, and now wandering upon the barren heath, where nothing is to be got for thy precious soul?—where, as on the mountains of Gilboa, none of those heavenly dews fall with which thy soul was wont to be wet and watered? Truly thou art gone out of God's blessing into the warm sun. Had God, indeed, cast thee by a necessary providence on such a place, thou mightest then have hoped to keep thy spiritual

plight, though wanting thy former repast; but, being thy own choice, it is to be feared thou wilt soon pine and languish in thy spiritual state. Leanness is like to shrivel up thy soul, while thou hast thy fat morsels in thy mouth. Thy spirit will grow light and poor, though thy purse may grow heavy. We shall have thee ere long complain, as Naomi, that thou ‘wentest out full, but comest home empty.’ How darest thou choose to dwell where God himself doth not by his gracious presence? He inhabits the praises of his people, and takes his abode in the house of prayer. And if the Holy Spirit dwells not, walks and breathes not in the house, it must needs be haunted with the evil one. Make thy stay there as short as may be. Leave the dead to dwell with the dead, atheist with atheist; thy safety will be to get among better company. Is the church so barren of godly families, that no such are to be found who will open their door to let thee in? Go inquire where such live, and offer to do the meanest office in that house, where thou mayest enjoy thy former privileges for thy soul, rather than stay where thou art. The very beasts groan to serve the wicked, whereas holy angels themselves disdain not to minister unto the saints.

But haply thou wilt say, it is not thy choice, but necessity. Thou art by thy parents put apprentice to a master that is wicked, or thou livest under thy own parents’ shadow, and thou canst not help it though they be profane; or with a husband whom thou didst hope, at thy choice of him, would prove a help meet to thy soul, but thou findest it otherwise; what would you have us in this case do?

1. Mourn under it as thy great affliction. Thus David did when he lived in Saul’s wicked family, whose court and family, for irreligion and profaneness, he compareth to the barbarous Arabians and profane Ishmaelites, lamenting he was cooped up with such, whom, by his relation, he could not well leave, and for their wickedness he could worse bear. ‘Woe is me that I sojourn in Meshech, and dwell in the tents of Kedar.’

2. Be the more in thy secret communion with God. If thou didst live with a niggard¹ who pinched thee for thy belly, wouldst thou not, though thou

hadst but a penny in thy purse, lay it out for bread rather than starve? Thou hadst need have a bit the more in a corner because thou art cut short of thy daily bread in the family. Thy soul cannot live without communion with God. Take that thyself which others will not be so kind to allow thee; and, that thou mayest do this, husband all thy ends of time the better. Thou shalt thus, by God’s blessing, (1.) Keep thy spiritual life and vigour; (2.) Be antidoted against the infection of that profane air thou breathest in; and, (3.) Have a vent to ease thy incumbered spirit of those griefs, reproaches, and trials thou canst not but meet with from such relations. Gracious Hannah had an adversary in the same family—Peninnah by name—who provoked her sorely, even to make her fret; but this sent her to God in prayer, and there she eased her soul of her burden.

3. Adorn thy piety to God by faithful performance of thy duty to thy relations, though they be not so good as thou desirest. Art thou a servant and thy master profane? Be thou submissive and humble, diligent and faithful. Let him see that thou darest not rob him of thy time by sloth, or wrong him in his estate by falseness—though he be a thief to thy soul by not providing for it—but dost, with thy utmost skill and strength, endeavour to discharge thy trust to him. We see too oft that the unfaithfulness and negligence of some professing servants, do set their carnal masters further off from the worship of God than before they were; yea, make them loathe the duties of religion, which otherwise they might have been won unto, till at last they come to think all profession and forwardness in the duties of piety towards God, to be but a hypocritical cloak to cover some unfaithfulness to men, and to say of their servants when they beg leave to go to a sermon, and wait on God in his ordinances, as Pharaoh of the Israelites, ‘Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord,’ Ex. 5:17. Thus, as the apostle tells us, the name of God and his doctrine comes to be blasphemed by the ill behaviour of professing servants, I Tim. 6:1.

Again, art thou a wife, and thy husband carnal, who lives without any care of his own soul, or those under his roof? Pray the more for him because he prays not with thee. Pray thou for thy family in thy closet, though he neglects it in the house. But, with this, be sure to commend thy piety to thy husband’s

1. Niggard: a stingy or miserly person. From Webster’s.

conscience, and make it as legible as may be to his eye, by thy meekness of wisdom in thy carriage to him, and whole conversation in thy family. A fair print invites to read the book. Religion fairly printed in thy meek and dutiful behaviour to him, and discretion in all thy affairs, how knowest thou but it may in time win him to the consideration of the excellency of religion, which makes thee so officious and faithful to him? He is an unwise angler that scares the fish he desires to take; and she an unwise Christian that, by her peevish and undutiful carriage, offends her husband, whose conversion she desires and prays for.

[Counsel to those that live in praying families.]

Use Second. A word of counsel to you whom God hath planted in religious families.

1. Bless God for casting thy lot in so pleasant a seat and fruitful a soil for thy soul, where thou mayest suck in the sweet air of God's Spirit that breathes from thy godly parents or other governors at the throne of grace from day to day; that thou art not wedged into some blind atheistical family, there to live with a godless crew, among whom thou mightest have passed thy days without any knowledge of thy Maker, and with them have been involved in that curse of God which is in the house of the wicked, and hangs like a black cloud in the threatening, ready to pour down upon the families that call not upon his name. Look round thy neighbourhood and see how many families there are who live like brutes, as in so many dark caves and dens, where none of that heavenly light is seen, from one end of the year to the other, which shines on thy face every day. What nurture and breeding should thy soul have had under the tutoring of such parents and masters, who themselves live 'without God in the world?' The queen of Sheba counted them happy that stood before Solomon, not so much that they might see his pomp, but hear his wisdom. O happy thou—if grace to know thy privilege—that thou ministerest unto a godly master, art under gracious parents, or yoked to a holy husband, from whose devout prayers, pious counsels, and Christian examples, thou mayest gain more than if they had the wealth, delicacies, and preferments of Solomon's court to confer upon thee.

2. Look you make improvement of this spiritual

advantage, or else it will go worse with you than others. Rebellious Israel is told, 'They shall know that they had a prophet among them.' The meaning is, they shall know it to their cost; and so shall those that have lived in families, under such governors who went before them, and, as it were, chalked out a way to heaven by their godly example, lamenting over their precious souls so oft with their prayers and tears. If such miscarry, they shall know to their terror what families they once live in but had not a heart to prize or improve the mercy. God forbid that any of you should find the way to hell out of such doors, and force your way to damnation through such means afforded to prevent it. What will Cain answer when his father that begat him shall bear witness against him, and say, 'Lord, this wicked child of mine never learned his atheism of me. I brought him to thy worship and taught him thy fear, but he liked it not, and first proved a murderer and then an apostate. First, he behaved himself wickedly in thy service, and then ran out of thy doors and cast it quite off.' What will then the flouting wife of David—who, though of a wicked stock, was privileged with so gracious a husband—say when she shall be accused for making him her laughing-stock for his zeal in the worship of God? Or how will the wicked children of the same holy man who walked with such uprightness in his house look their godly father on the face at the great day? You, my children, said dying Mr. Bolton, dare not, I believe, meet me at the day of judgment in an unregenerate state. The weight of such holy men's prayers and admonitions will then sink their ungodly relations deeper into hell than others who drop thither out of dark and blind families.

[A word to those heads of families that have not the worship of God in their houses.]

Use Third. Unto you that are heads of families, but yet have not had a heart to set up the worship of God in them. I am afraid God hath little from you in your closets who hath none in your families. It is no breach of charity to suspect your care for your own souls that show none for your relations. If ever thou hadst been acquainted with God thyself and tasted any sweetness in secret communion with him, couldst thou thus rob thy family of so great a blessing? Could

you find such a treasure, and hide it from them you love so well? Have they not souls as precious in their bosoms as thy own? Art thou not willing they should find the way to heaven as well as thyself? Yea, art thou not God's feoffee² in trust to take care of their souls as well as of their bodies? Dost thou owe no more to thy child and servant than to thy hog or horse? Their bodies are looked to, and wilt thou do no more for the other? How knowest thou but thy holy example in the duties of God's worship among them may leave such impressions on their hearts as shall never be worn off to their dying day? Did you never hear any, to the praise of God, acknowledge that the first turn towards heaven they ever had was by living in such a godly family, where, with the worship of God, a savour and secret sense of the things of God did secretly steal into their hearts? Certainly were our youth more acquainted with the duties of religion in private, the minister's work would be much facilitated in the public. By this the consciences of many would be preserved tender, and so become pliable to the counsels of the word preached; whereas now the devil hath a sad advantage—from the irreligion and atheism that is in most families—to harden their hearts to such a degree as renders them almost impenetrable. It is no wonder to see that tree thrives not which stands but little in the sun; and as little wonder to see them continue profane and wicked that but once in a week come under the beams of an ordinance, and then {neither} see nor hear any more of God till the Sabbath comes about again.

Alas! how is it like the spark should then be found alive which had all along the week nothing to keep it from dying? One well compareth the public ministry to the mason that builds the house, and family governors to them that make the brick. Now, if you, by neglecting your duty, bring clay instead of brick, you make the minister's work double. The truth is, the neglect of family worship opens a wide flood-gate to let in a deluge of profaneness into the church. Thou livest now without the worship of God in thy family, and haply in a few years from under thy one hive swarms many other families, children or servants, and it is most like they will follow thy copy.

Indeed, it were a wonder that they who are taught no better should do otherwise; and so irreligion is like to spread apace. When thy head is laid in the dust thy profaneness is not buried in thy grave with thee. No, thou leavest others behind to keep it alive. O how dismal is it to lay the foundation of a sin to many generations! The children unborn may rise up and curse such. If I had heard my father pray, may the child say in a dying hour, or had been led into the acquaintance of the worship of God by his example, then had not I lived like a heathen as I have done. Well, as you would not have your children and servants meet you in the other world with their mouths full of outcries and accusations—or if this, because it seems further off, dread you not, as you would not have them prove a plague and scourge to you in this world—let not your family government be irreligious. It is just that God should suffer thy servant to be unfaithful to thee in thy estate, who art so to his soul; that thy children when old should forget their duty to thee, that didst bring them up like heathens in their youth without learning them their duty to God.

[A word to those heads of families who do have the worship of God in their houses.]

Use Fourth. To you that have set up this duty in your families, a few words of counsel for the more holy management thereof.

1. Think it not enough to prove thee a saint that thou prayest in thy family; you may set up the worship of God in your house and not enthrone God in your hearts. God forbid that you should bless yourselves in this, and dub yourselves saints because of this. Alas! you are not as yet got so far as some hypocrites have gone. The duty is good, but the outward performance of it doth not demonstrate any to be so. There are many turning to hell nearer heaven than this. From the act therefore, look to the end thou proposest to thyself in it. He is a foolish archer that shoots his arrow before he hath taken his aim aright. The question God asks is, 'Dost thou at all pray to me, even to me?' Thou mayest possibly affect others with thy praying, yea, be instrumental to break their hearts by thy confessions, and refresh their spirits by the sweet expressions that flow from thee, thyself playing the hypocrite all the while. It behooves thee

2. Feoffee, one put in possession of anything. — ED.

therefore to consider what is the weight and spring which sets this duty agoing in thy family. Is it not to gain an opinion of being religious in others' thoughts? If so, thou playest at small game. Indeed, religion were a sorry thing if this were all to be got by it. When thou hast obtained this end it will not ease thee of one stitch of conscience, nor quench one spark of hell's tormenting fire for thee. But if this be it thou huntest after, it is a question whether thou believest there be such a place or no. These few principles well girded by faith about the loins of thy mind—that there is a God, and he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him; that heaven is prepared for the sincere, and hell gapes for the hypocrite—would be enough to set thy heart right in the duty. Though the traveller minds not much his way where he apprehends no danger, yet, when he comes to pass over a narrow bridge, where a wry step may hard his life by falling into a deep river that runs on each hand, he will surely watch his eye that is to guide his foot. This is thy case. Prayer is a solemn work as any thou canst go about in thy whole lifetime. A by-end in this may hazard thy soul as much as a wry look thy body in the other. We need do no more to lose our souls than to seek ourselves.

2. Take heed thou blottest not thy holy duties with an unholy life. If thou meanest to foul thy hands with sin's blackwork in the day, why dost thou wash them in the morning with prayer? It is to no purpose to begin with God and to keep the devil company all the day after. Religious orders in thy house and a disordered conversation ill agree. O! do not render the worship of God base to the thoughts of thy servants and family. Those that like the wine will yet nauseate it when brought in a cup that is nasty and unclean. The duties of God's worship command a reverence even from those that are carnal, but if performed by those that are loose and scandalous they grow fulsome. Eli's sons made the people loathe the Lord's sacrifices. By thy religious duties thou settest a fair copy. O do not write it in sinking paper. It is but a while thou art seen upon thy knees; and a little seeming zeal at thy devotion will not gild over a whole day's sinful miscarriage spent in passion, idleness, riot, or any other unholy course. It is said Christ preached with power and 'authority, not as the scribes,' Matt. 7:29. Not but that they had authority to

preach, for they sat in Moses' chair; but because they lost that reverence, by not walking suitably to their doctrine, which their place and work would have given them in the consciences of their hearers. 'They said and did not,' and thereby rendered their doctrine ineffectual. If thou wouldst pray with authority and power, enforce thy duties with purity of life.

3. Preserve peace and unity in thy family. A brawling family cannot be a praying family. The apostle exhorteth husband and wife to love and unity, lest their prayers be 'hindered,' 1 Peter 3:7. Contentions in a family, they both hinder the spirit of prayer, and also the answer to our prayers.

(1.) They hinder the spirit of prayer. The Spirit of God is a Spirit of peace and love, and therefore delights not to breathe in a troubled air. The ready way to send him going is to brawl and chide. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' saith the apostle, Eph. 4:30. And that we may not, hear what is his counsel: 'Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.' When these are gone, then (and not before) look for his sweet company. You may as well dwell comfortably together with your house on fire, as pray so together when you in the house are on fire.

(2.) Contentions hinder the answer to our prayers. If we pray in anger, God cannot be pleased. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' A loud wind beats down the smoke. Our prayers are compared to incense, but they will never ascend to heaven till this storm be laid. Go to pray in this plight, and God will bid you come when you are better agreed. The Spirit will not help in such prayers; and if the Spirit hath no hand in the inditing, Christ will have no hand in presenting the prayer. And if Christ present it not, to be sure the Father will not receive it, for 'through him we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father,' Eph. 2:18.

4. Be very choice whom thou makest a member of thy family. Get, if thou canst, such under thy roof as may give a lift with thee in thy family worship. Though it be not thy sin to pray with a wicked wife and servant; yet is it thy sin to make choice of such for thy relations, if otherwise thou canst help it. Yet, alas! how little is this considered, though the blessing and comfort of the family be deeply concerned therein! A little beauty, honour, or pelf do too oft blind

the eyes and bribe the judgments of those we may hope to be themselves gracious, that they can yoke themselves with such as are very unmeet to draw with them in heaven way and work. David knew that Michal came of a bad stock, but haply hoped to bring her over to comply with him in the service of God, and we see what a grievous cross she proved to him. Solomon tells us of some that trouble their own house, *Prov. 15:27*. He that for carnal respects takes a wicked wife into his bosom, or servant into his family, is the man that is sure to do this. Haply when he would pray and praise God, his wife, like Job's, will bid him curse. When he is at duty she will despise him in her heart, and make a mock of his zeal, as Michal did of David's. And so they who, for some natural abilities they see in a servant, venture on him, though wicked and ungodly, pay dearly for it. Such often bring with them that plague of profaneness which infects the rest; so that, what they earn their masters with their hands, they rob them of with their sins, which brings the curse of God to their family. Who that is wise would build a house with timber that is on fire? If the servant thou entertainest be wicked, fire is in him that will endanger thy house. Make it therefore thy care to plant a godly family. This was David's resolution—haply he saw the evil of his former choice: 'Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight,' *Psa. 101:6, 7*. Then the music will be sweet in thy family duties, when thou canst get a consort into thy house; such whose souls are in tune for those holy services thou art to join with them in.

5. Keep a diary of thy family sins and mercies, that so neither the one may escape thy confession and humiliation, nor the other thy grateful recognition. If this were observed, we should not come with such jejune and barren hearts to the work, as now, alas! most do. Take some time to affect thy heart with both of these. The brokenness of thy heart who prayest, will conduce much towards the same disposition in those that join with thee. Nothing melts metal sooner than to pour that on it which is melted. The drowsy speaker prays oft the rest asleep that join with him. Take heed, therefore, of formality; this is the

canker which eats out the very heart of religious duties. Remember thou art to thy family what the minister is to the public assembly. As the deadness of his heart in prayer and preaching hath a bad operation upon his people, to make them like himself, so hath thine on thy family. Thou dost not only suffer a personal loss to thyself, but wrongest the rest of thy company. As when thou wastest thy estate, thy wife, children, servants, and all fare the worse, and must pinch for it; so when thou chokest up thy heart with inordinate cares of the world, or any other way indisposeth thyself by thy sinful walking for the duty of prayer, thy whole family goes by the loss with thee.

6. Observe the fittest seasons for duty in thy family, when with most freedom and the least disturbance it may be performed. In the morning take the opportunity before a throng of worldly business crowds in upon thee. In some families, I have observed, where they are in great employments, that if duty be delayed till some worldly occasions be despatched, then, either it hath been shut out, or shut up in such straits of time that the slighty slovenly manner of performing it hath proved little better than the total neglect. To prevent this disorder, it is best to forestall the world's market, betimes in the morning to set upon the duty, and offer up to God the first-fruits of the day, before our thoughts meet with a diversion. We read that the Israelites gathered their manna early 'in the morning,' and 'when the sun waxed hot it melted,' *Ex. 16:21*. I would wish, especially, such who have multiplicity of worldly occasions, to take their time for communion with God early, while their thoughts are more compact, before they are hot in their worldly business, lest they then find their thoughts so diffused and scattered among other businesses, as will not easily be gathered into a close and united attendance upon God in the duty. Again, when night comes, delay not the work till ye are more fit to go to your pillow than to your cushion, to sleep than to pray. If the eye sleep, the soul cannot well wake. Especially consider your servants that labour hard in the day; O do not expose them to the temptation of drowsy prayers! If our hearts took delight in the work, we would plot and contrive which would be the best time for communion with God, even as lovers do how and when they may most privately meet together.

[Public or church prayer required by God,
and the reasons why.]

Second. Social or joint prayer may be public in the church. We mean by this, that prayer offered in and by the church assembled together for the worship of God. In handling of it I shall endeavour these five things, to show—1. That God requires a public worship of his people. 2. That prayer is a part of this public worship he commands. 3. Why God requires a public worship, and in particular, public prayer. 4. I shall resolve a question or two concerning public prayer. 5. I shall make some applicatory improvement of this head.

1. That God requires a public worship of his people. This word, *cultus*, or worship in general, is *obsequium alicui præstitum juxta excellentiam ejus*—worship is that honour and service which we give to anyone according to his excellency. And that is three-fold—civil, moral, or divine. Civil worship is the due honour and service we pay to a person in place and power over us, as prince, father, or master. Moral, is that due reverence and respect which we pay to a person that hath any excellency of virtue or place, without authority over us. Thus we give honour and veneration both to the saints living on earth with us, and to the saints and angels in heaven. Religious or divine worship is the honour and service we give to that Being who, we believe, is the author of our beings and fountain of our happiness. Now this Being is God, and he only. To him therefore, and him alone, is religious worship due. ‘Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods,’ Deut. 6:13, 14. This religious worship of the true God comes under divers distinctions, inward and outward, private and public. The public worship of God is the present subject of our discourse—that, I mean, which the congregation performs to him in their religious assemblies, called ‘the congregation of saints,’ Ps. 89:5; and, ‘the assembly of saints,’ ver. 7. The church of God on earth began in a family, and so did the worship of God. But when the number increased, the worship of God became more public: ‘Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord,’ Gen. 4:26; that is, they began publicly, saith Mercer. Seth and other of the religious seed began to have their holy assemblies for the serv-

ice of God (Willet, in locum). It is observable how God at the promulgation of the law on Sinai, when he first formed the Israelites into a polity, took special care for erecting a public worship to his name. That was the ‘day of their espousals,’ Jer. 2:2. And then he instituted a solemn form of public worship, with exact rules how it should be performed. The same care took our Lord Jesus for his gospel church, in appointing both church ordinances and officers to dispense the same.

2. Prayer is part of that religious worship which the church is to perform to God in her public assemblies, yea, a principal part, put therefore frequently for the whole, ‘The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord,’ Zech. 8:21, 22. It is a prophecy how believers in gospel times should zealously provoke one another to go to the assemblies of the church—of which Jerusalem was a type—there to pray and worship God together. ‘It is written,’ saith our Saviour, ‘My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer,’ Mark 11:17. This was partially performed when converts in the apostles’ days did flock to Jerusalem, there to worship God. *Sed perfectè impletum est illud in Christi ecclesia ex omnibus gentibus collectâ &c.*—it is more fully accomplished in the church of Christ, gathered out of all nations, that should keep up the worship of God in their assemblies. St. Luke forgets not to mention this of prayer amongst the other duties and offices of primitive Christians in their assemblies, ‘And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,’ Acts 2:42. By continuing stedfast ‘in the apostles’ doctrine,’ Mr. Perkins understands their attendance on the apostles’ sermons; by ‘fellowship,’ understands their contributions to the poor, which were gathered at their assemblies, a work very fit for that place, ‘for with such sacrifices God is well pleased,’ Heb. 13:16; by ‘breaking of bread,’ the celebration of the Lord’s supper; and by ‘prayers,’ those which they put up together in communion at their church meetings. Nor is this of prayer crowded last, because the least duty of the company, but rather because it hath a necessary influence to them all.

The word and sacraments, which God useth to sanctify his people by, are themselves sanctified to us by prayer. And St. Paul, when he hath shown, 1 Tim. 1, what doctrine ministers are to preach in the church, he, ch. 2, directs them what to insist chiefly on in their public prayers: 'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,' 1 Tim. 2:1, 2. This the church of Christ ever esteemed a principal part of their public worship. Tertullian, speaking of the assemblies of the church, saith, *coimus in cætum et congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manu facta precationibus ambiamus orantes, hæc vis Deo grata est*—we meet in the congregation that we may by our fervent prayers environ God, as an army doth a castle, and this holy fore with which we assault heaven please him. I proceed to the third head, to give some account.

3. Why God requires a public worship or a joint service of his people in communion together, and why this particular duty of prayer.

(1.) As a free and open acknowledgment of their dependence on and allegiance to God. It is most reasonable we should own the God we serve, even in the face of the world, and not, like Nicodemites, carry our religion in a dark lantern. He is unworthy of his master's service that is ashamed to wear his livery, and follow him in the street with it on his back. 'Thou hast avouched,' saith Moses to Israel, 'the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people,' Deut. 26:17, 18. Even heathens understand this much, that they owe a free profession and public service to the god they vouch: 'All people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever,' Micah 4:5. Now by walking in the name of God, they mean they will invoke his name, and vouch him by a public worship, as you may see by ver. 1, 2, of that chapter. And this is a gospel prophecy concerning the last days; where, by the way, we may take notice of the folly and pride of those that cast off public ordinances, and private also, from a pretence of their high

attainments, leaving these duties of religion as strings for those that are yet children to be led by. This is horrible pride and ignorance to have such a high opinion of themselves. But were they so perfect as they falsely imagine themselves, and needed not any further teaching, yet ought they still to vouch God by worshipping of him? The ground from which divine worship becomes due to God, is his own infinite perfections, and our dependence on him as the author of our beings and fountain of our bliss. Hence it is, that angels and saints in heaven worship him, though in a way suitable to their glorified state. Some ordinances, indeed, fitted to the church militant on earth, shall there cease. But a worship remains: yea, it is their constant employment. Saints on earth serve God always, but cannot always worship, therefore they have stated times appointed them. Now to cast off the worship of God is to renounce God himself, and communion with his church both on earth and in heaven. 'But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain,' Isa. 65:11. They did not give him his public worship, and he interprets this as a casting him off from being their God. Sometimes, I confess, the church doors are shut by persecutors, and, when this flood is up, the ways to Zion mourn; yet then we are to lament after the Lord and his ark. Holy David was no stranger to private devotions, yet could not but bewail his banishment from the public: 'My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary,' Ps. 63:1, 2.

(2.) To preserve love and unity in the church. God is one, and dearly loves oneness and unity among his people. The reason he gives why he would have the curtains of the tabernacle coupled together, that it might be 'one' tabernacle, Ex. 36:13-18. The fastening of these curtains so lovingly together for this end, that the tent might be one, signified the knitting and clasping together of the saints in love. Now, though this be effected principally by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, for he alone can knit souls and knead them into one lump; yet he useth their joint communion in ordinances as a happy means through which he may convey and derive his grace that fastens them in love together. These are the ligaments that tie one member to another in this mystical body. And do we not see that

Christians, like members of the natural body, take care for, and sympathize with, one another, so long as they are united in one communion? But when these ligaments are cut, communion in worship is broke; then we see one member drops from another, and little care for or love to each other is to be found among them. The apostle saw good reason to join both these in one exhortation: 'Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,' Heb. 10:24, 25. As if he had said, If you cannot agree to worship God one with another, you will have little love one for another. When the Jews' staff of 'beauty' was cut asunder, the staff of 'bands' did not last long unbroken, Zech. 11:10. Religion hath its name *â religando*—from binding back; it is a strong binder. Break the beautified order of church communion, and a people will soon fall all to pieces. It is observable how endearing conversation and communion is in things of an inferior nature. Scholars that go to school together, those that board in the same house, collactanei—that suck the same milk, twins that lie together in the same belly, they have a mutual endearment of affection each to another. How influential then must church communion needs be where all these meet?—when they shall consider they go to the same public school of the ministry, sit at the same table of the sacrament, suck the same breasts of the ordinances, and lie together in the bosom, yea womb, of the same church. This was admirably seen in the primitive Christians, who, by fellowship in ordinances, were inspired with such a wonderful love to one another, that they could hardly find their hearts in their own breasts: 'All that believed were together, and had all things common; and continuing with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,' Acts 2:44, 46. But when a breach was made in the church's communion, then love caught her cold, and grew upon Christians as divisions increased. Now one would think the cause of our disease, being so easily known, the cure should not be so hard, as, alas! at this day we find it.

(3.) For the saints' safety and defence against their enemies. Paul rejoiced at the order and steadfastness of the Colossian saints, Col. 2:5. Order is a military word, and denotes *cohortem ordine apto*

conglobatam—an army compact, and cast into a fit order that every part is helpful to each other for its defence. And such an army are the saints when they stand in communion together according to divine rule. Our blessed Saviour, when departing from earth to heaven, what course took he to leave his disciples in a defensive posture after he was gone? Doth he send them home to look every one to himself? No, but to Jerusalem, there to stand as it were in a body by joint communion, Acts 1. The drop is safe in the river, lost when severed from it; the soldier safe when marching with the army, but snapped when he straggles from it. Cain, looking upon himself as an excommunicated person from the church of God, expected some great evil, as well he might, would befall him. Therefore the gracious soul, meant by the spouse, is brought in asking where the assembly of the faithful is, that joining herself to it she may be protected in a time of danger: 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?' Song 1:7.

(4.) Because of the great delight he takes in the joint prayers and praises of his people. We need not detract from the excellency of private devotions, to magnify the public prayers of the church. Both are necessary, and highly pleasing to God. Yet it is no wrong to the private devotions of a particular saint, to give the precedency to the public prayers of the church. God himself tells us he 'loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob,' Ps. 87:2. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but, if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir—his saints' prayers in consort together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together: the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels and saints make but one consort. There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of his people. When Peter was in prison, the church meets and prays him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of

a whole city, which may be he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer, Matt. 18:20: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' Non dicit ero, non enim tardat vel cunctatur, sed sum jam illic, invenior præsens gratia et favore singulari, eo quod summopere me delectet hujusmodi concordia—he doth not say, I will, for he makes no delay or demur upon the business: but I am there—let them come as soon as they will—present by my special favour and grace, because this concord in prayer highly pleaseth me. It is the gloss of Lucas Brugens upon the place.

4. I come to answer a question or two concerning public prayer.

(1.) The first question is, Whether it be lawful that the public prayers of the church be performed in a language not understood by the people?

Answer. All the offices of the church, and duties performed in its worship, are to be done unto edification. This is an apostolical canon. Now, none can be edified by what he understands not, and therefore it must needs be, as Beza calls the popish Latin service, ludibrium Dei at hominis—a mocking of God and man, for to babble such prayers in the church which the people know not what they mean. 'If I pray,' saith the apostle, 'in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful,' I Cor. 14:14. He means, the congregation are not the wiser for his understanding the prayer he puts up, except he could make them understand it also. We can no more be edified by another's intellect than be saved by another's faith. When God intended to defeat that bold attempt of those sons of pride who would needs build a tower that should vie with the heavens for height, he did no more but confound their languages that they might not understand one another's speech, and it was done. Presently their work ceased. And as they could not build, so neither can he edify the people that understands not his speech in prayer. A dumb minister may serve the people's turn as well as he who by his speech is a barbarian to them. For the minister's voice is necessary in his public administrations, as Augustine saith, significandæ mentis suæ causâ, non ut Deus sed ut homines audiant, &c.,—to signify his meaning, not that God may hear, for he hears those prayers which the tongue is not employed

to express, but that the people may hear, and so join their votes with his to God. As the minister is to pray for them, so they to pray with him; which they are to testify by their hearty amen at the close. But this they cannot do, if we believe St. Paul, 'How shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?' I Cor. 14:16. 'The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth,' saith Solomon, Prov. 16:23; that is, he will not, as we say, suffer his tongue to run before his wit, but know what he shall speak before he sends his tongue on his errand. And surely, above all this, wisdom is to be shown in our prayers, wherein we speak not to man but God. To say amen to that prayer which we understand not—what is it but to offer the sacrifice of fools? Holy matter in prayer is the incense to be offered, the tongue is the censer; but the affections of the devout soul bring the fire to the incense before it can ascend as a sweet perfume into the nostrils of God. Now, if the intellect want light to understand what the matter of the prayer is, the affections must either be cold or wild; and wild fire is unfit to offer up the incense of prayer with. It is not enough that the praying soul be touched with some devout affections, but that these affections be suitable to the matter of the prayer, yea, arise from the sense it hath thereof.

(2.) The second question is, Whether a set form of prayer be lawful to be used in the church?

If it be unlawful, it is because, by the use of a set form in prayer, some command of God is transgressed; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

Now, it will trouble those who decry all set forms—how holy soever the matter of them be—to show any command upon Scripture record that forbids the praying by a set form, or that disallows its use either in express terms or by necessary consequence. It will be granted, yea must, that the Scripture is a perfect rule in this particular duty of God's worship, as well as in other. But among all the precepts and rules in the book of God, we find none that commands we should pray by a conceived form, and not by a set form. We are commanded who to pray to, to God, and none other, Ps. 44:20; in whose name we are to pray, I Tim. 2:5; Eph. 5:20; we are bound up to the matter of our prayer, what we are to ask, I John 5:14; and

lastly, in what manner we are to pray—we must pray ‘with understanding,’ John 4:22; I Cor. 14:16; Heb. 11:6; ‘in faith,’ James 1:6; Heb. 11:4, with sincere fervency, Jer. 29:12; in a word, which comprehends all in one, we are to pray ‘in the Spirit,’ Eph. 6:18; in the Holy Ghost,’ Jude 20. Now he that can do all this need not fear but he prays lawfully, and consequently acceptably. And we confess this may be done by one that prayeth with a set form, or else we must very boldly charge many eminent saints in scripture for praying unlawfully. Who dares say that Solomon praised God unlawfully when he used the very form which David his father had penned? or, that Moses did not pray in the Spirit, because he prayed in a constant form at the setting forward of the ark, and at its being set down again? Thus you have seen what God hath prescribed to our praying acceptably; and if it had been of such dangerous consequence to have prayed by a set form, as to make our prayers abominable, would God have omitted to warn his people of it, especially when he foresaw that his churches generally in their assemblies would make use of them, as they have done for thirteen or fourteen hundred years? But may we not rather, yea undoubtedly we ought to conclude, that seeing the Lord in his word descends not to prescribe what the outward frame and order of our words in prayer should be, whether conceived extempore, or cast into a form beforehand—only gives general rules that all things should be done decently, that we be not rash with our mouth, or our heart hasty to utter anything before God, and such like that are applicable to both—I say we should conclude both are lawful and warrantable, the Scripture having determined neither the one way nor the other. And therefore to put religion in one, so as to condemn the other as unlawful, looks—as a learned holy pen hath it—too like superstition, seeing God himself hath laid no bond upon the conscience either way.

As for the excellency of conceived prayer, wherein the devout Christian, out of the abundance of his heart, pours out his requests to God, none but a profane spirit dares open his mouth against it. But is there no way to magnify the excellency of that but by vilifying and imputing sin to the other? Alas! the evil is not in a form, but in formality; and that is a disease that may be found in him that prays with a conceived prayer. A man may pray without a form and yet not

pray without formality. Though I confess he that binds himself constantly to a set form—especially in his private addresses—seems to me to be more in danger of the two, to fall under the power of that lazy distemper. But to hasten the despatch of this question—for I intend not a full discourse of this point, but would top a few heads only, which you may find more largely insisted on in many worthy treatises on this subject—I would desire those that scruple the lawfulness of all set forms, to look wishly upon those set forms of blessing, prayers, and thanksgiving that are upon scripture record, and were used by the servants of God with his approbation, and then consider whether God would prescribe or accept what is unlawful. The priests had a form of blessing the people, Num. 6:24. Moses used, as I hinted, a form of prayer at the remove of the ark, ‘Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee;’ and when it was set down another form, ‘Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel,’ Num. 10:36, which very form was continued and used by David, Ps. 68:1. Asaph and his brethren had set forms of thanksgiving given them to use in their public service, ‘Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord into the hand of Asaph and his brethren,’ I Chr. 16:7. This was the first appointed to be sung in the public service; the several parts thereof were afterwards much enlarged, as you may see by comparing Ps. 105 with the former part of the song in the place fore-quoted, and Ps. 96, with the latter part of it. At the dedication of the temple, Solomon used the very form of words in praising God which his father had penned, II Chr. 7:6. Good Hezekiah commands the Levites ‘to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David,’ II Chr. 29:30. This holy man no doubt was able to have poured forth extemporary praises, as it is thought he did in that prayer which he on the sudden, put up on the occasion of that railing letter sent him, II Kings 19:14; yet did not think it unlawful to use a form in his public administration. Yea, our blessed Saviour—an instance beyond all instances—both gave a form of prayer to his disciples, and himself disdained not to pray three several times one after another the very same form of words, ‘He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words,’ Matt. 26:44. And that hymn which he sang with his disciples

is conceived by the learned to be that portion of psalms which the Jews used at the celebration of the passover. (See Beza and Gerhard, Harmo, in locum.)

5. I come now to the fifth thing propounded in prosecution of this head of public prayer, and that is some applicatory improvement of this head.

(1.) This shows what reason the people of God, wherever they live, have to pray for good magistrates, especially kings and princes. *Regna sunt hospitia ecclesiæ*—as the inn is to the traveller, so kingdoms are to the church in its pilgrimage here on earth. As they are, such is its usage in the world, and entertainment that it finds. ‘Pray for kings,’ saith the apostle, ‘and all in authority; that we may lead quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,’ 1 Tim. 2:2. By godliness he means in an especial manner the free profession of the truth and public exercise of God’s pure worship. No magistrate may hinder the saints living godly as to the embracing of the truth in their hearts and secret performance of prayer. Daniel would and could pray, do Nebuchadnezzar his worst. But princes carry the keys of the church doors at their girdles, and can shut or open them. When faithful magistrates sway the sceptre, then the ways of Zion are easy and open. When enemies to the ways and worship of God bear rule, then they mourn; church doors are shut and prison doors opened to the servants of Christ. Then the woman flees into the wilderness, and the church into private chambers, as we find in the apostles’ days, when the church was met with the door shut to pray for Peter. O, pray for kings and princes; for, as they carry the keys of the church doors, so God carries the key that opens the doors of their hearts at his pleasure.

(2.) It reproves those that turn their backs off the public worship. Now they are of two sorts—the profane atheist, the scrupulous separatist.

(a) The irreligious atheist—such who, out of a profane spirit, turn their back off the public worship of God. The Jews have a saying of one of their rabbis much in their mouths, *quisquis incolit civitatem in quâ extat synagoga, et inibi non peccatur, is est qui meritò dicitur vicinus malus*—he that dwells in a city where there is a synagogue, and comes not to prayers there, he is a person that deserves the name of a bad neighbour. How many bad neighbours do we, alas! live among, who are seldom seen in the public assem-

bly from one end of the year to the other? Many live as if they had rent the bond that was sealed at their baptism, and renounced all homage to their Maker, and would tell the world they owe him no worship. Worse brutes these are than the hog in their sty, or horse in their stable. They were made for our use, and accordingly serve us. Man was intended for the service of his Maker—a creature made for religion—by which some would define and distinguish the human nature from that of brutes, rather than by his rational faculty. Indeed, in some brutes there is a sagacity that looks something like man’s discursive faculty. But religion is a thing their nature is wholly incapable of, and therefore nothing makes man so truly a brute as irreligion. The Jewish Talmud propounds this question, *Why God made man vesperâ Sabbathi?*—on the evening before the Sabbath? and gives this as one reason, *ut protinus intraret in præceptum*—that is, God made man on the evening just before the Sabbath, that he might forthwith enter upon the observation of the command to sanctify the Sabbath, and begin his life as it were with the worship of God, which is the chief end why it was given him. May we not therefore wonder at the patience of God in suffering these ungodly wretches to live, that by casting this horrid contempt upon his worship, walk contrary to the very end of their creation? If the bells which call us to the worship of God were to give them notice of a wrestling, foot-ball, or drunken wake, O how soon should we have them flock together! But prayers and sermons they care not for. What shall we impute this irreligion and atheism of multitudes among us to? Surely it proceeds from a criminous conscience. It is said of Cain, ‘He went out from the presence of the Lord,’ Gen. 4:16; that is, say some interpreters, from the place where God had his church and worship, there God is especially present.

Guilt indeed makes men afraid of God. This makes them {do} what they can to wear off the thoughts of a Deity that are so troublesome to their flagitious consciences. Now, to do this, they have no other way than to shun those duties which will bring God and their sins to their remembrance. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off that head whose tongue was so bold to tell him his faults; and profane hearts are easily drawn to cast off those duties which will gall and rub hard upon their sore consciences. But that

man is in a miserable case that knows no way to get ease but by throwing away the plaster that must heal his wound. Ah, poor wretches! this will not serve your turn. What though the prisoner stops his ears, and will not hear the judge pronounce the sentence against him, will that save him from the gallows? Surely no; but rather procure his being sent thither the sooner for his contempt of the court, who, had he carried himself better, and humbly begged his life at the judge's hand, might possibly have got the sentence reversed. Whether sinners will hear the word or no, come to his worship or no, God will proceed in his work. Flouting against God, and turning thy back on his worship, is not the way to prevent but hasten divine vengeance. How much better were it to make thy humble supplication to thy judge, and wait at the posts of wisdom! While men, though bad, wait on ordinances, there is hope, for they are under the means. But when they cast them off, then their ruin hastens.

(b) The scrupulous separatist—such who do not absent from the public worship out of a profane atheistical spirit, as the former, but from scruples whether they may lawfully be present at the prayers there put up, because there are some maladministrations in the performance of it, or at least {that} which they think to be such. At these they are distasted, and so withdraw. May be it is because the duty of prayer is performed with a set form, which they conceive unlawful. This I shall waive, having spoken already to it. Or, may be it is not a form, but some passages in the form used, that offends them, and therefore they dare not be present. So that the question will be—

Question. Whether it be lawful to be present at that service, or those prayers in the congregation, that have something faulty in them?

To the answering of this question, we must first distinguish of faults, all are not of a size. There are faults in a matter, and faults in the form and method, of a prayer. And faults in the matter may be either fundamental or of a less nature—such as are not fundamental or bordering thereupon; and those less faults may be generally dispersed through the prayer, that it is soured throughout with them, or only in some particular passages.

Again, we must distinguish between approving of the faults, defects, and corruptions that are in a prayer, and being present at the service of God where

some things are done faultily. Now I answer, that it is lawful for a Christian to be present at those prayers wherein some things may be supposed to be faulty for outward form, yea, and also in matter, in things not fundamental nor bordering thereupon, and these not dispersed through the whole body of the prayers, but in some passages only. We may be present where God is present by his grace and favour. We may follow the Lamb safely wherever he goes. Now God doth not, for corruptions of doctrine that are remote from the foundation, or of worship in things ritual and of an inferior nature, cast off a church, and withdraw his presence from it; neither ought we. Indeed, if the foundation of doctrine be destroyed, and the worship becomes idolatrous, in that case God goes before us, and calls all the faithful after him to come out from the communion of such a church. But, where corruptions in a church are of the former nature, and such laws be not imposed by the church in their communion with it as being a necessity of approving things unlawful, the sin is not in holding communion with it, but in withdrawing from it, and that no little one either. Many things must be tolerated for maintaining peace and unity, and enjoying the worship of God, when it is not in our power to redress them. Neither doth our presence at the ordinance carry interpretatively a consent with it of all that is there done. It is one thing to tolerate and another to approve. Whoever said that all who are present in an assembly by it show their consent to every impertinent phrase in the minister's prayer, corrupt gloss, or false interpretation he makes of any text quoted in his sermon? If this were true, our Saviour led the people into a snare when he bade them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees' doctrine, yet bade them hear them preach, Matt. 23:3.

(3.) Of exhortation.

(a) Make conscience of joining with the church in her public worship. Do not think thou art left to thy liberty whether thou wilt or not, but bind it upon thy conscience as a duty, for so indeed it is. You think it is the minister's duty to dispense ordinances. Surely then it is your duty to attend on them. He might as well pray for you at home as come to church and not find his people there. Is there a woe to him if he doth not provide food for your souls, and none for you if you come not to partake of it? How can

you reasonably think so? And when you come, think not you are time enough there if you get to the sermon, though you miss the prayers, which should prepare you for the word and sanctify the word to you. It is not the way to profit by one ordinance to neglect another. The minister may preach, but God must teach thee to profit. If God opens not thy understanding to conceive of, and thy heart to conceive by, the word thou hearest, no fruit will come of it. Now prayer is the key to open God's heart, as his Spirit the key to open thine.

(b) Take heed how thou comest to, and behavest thyself, as in other parts of public worship, so especially in prayer. [1.] How thou comest to public worship: take heed thou comest not in thy filthiness, I mean, that thou regard not iniquity in thy heart. Wash and then pray. So David resolves, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar,"—alluding to the priests, that went to the laver before they approached with their sacrifice to the altar, Ex. 40. It was counted a great presumption in one that durst come near his prince with a stinking breath. O what a bold act then is it to draw near to the great God with any sin upon thee! This is sure to make thy breath in prayer stink, and render thee for it abominable to him. [2.] How thou behavest thyself in the duty; be sure it be with a holy reverence—with an inward reverence and also an outward reverence.

We are to believe in the duty of worship with an inward reverence. God is called 'the Fear' of his people, because he is revered by them in their approaches to him. 'Fear' is put for the whole worship of God, because no part of it is to be done without a holy trembling. This, as the quaver to the music, gives a grace and acceptableness both to our prayers and praises also: 'Serve the Lord with fear, rejoice with trembling.' Now, to fill thee with awful³ thoughts of God, labour to set up a right notion of God in thy mind as infinitely glorious in holiness, majesty, and power. Irreverence is the product of low thoughts we have of a person, which makes it impossible that an ignorant soul should truly reverence God

—how humble soever his outward posture is—because he knows not what God is. A prince in a disguise is not known, and therefore not entertained, when he comes, as when he appears in his royal majesty. The saints use to awe their hearts into a reverence of God in prayer by revolving his titles of majesty in their thoughts, Ps. 89.6, 7.

We are to believe in the duty of worship with an outward reverence. God is a Spirit, yet will have the reverence of our body as well as spirit, for both are his, and especially in the public. A prince would not like a rude behaviour from his servant in his bed-chamber where none besides himself is witness to it, but much less will he bear it in his presence-chamber, as he sits on his throne before many of his subjects. Now, the fittest gesture of body in public prayer to express our reverence is kneeling; 'Come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord,' Ps. 95:6. So Paul, taking his leave of the elders of Ephesus, kneeled and prayed with them all, Acts 20:36. And all the Christians at Tyrus, accompanying Paul to the ship with their wives and children, 'kneeled down on the shore, and prayed,' Acts 21:5. Where that cannot be done, they should stand—if debility of nature hinder not. As for sitting we do not find it commended in Scripture as a praying posture; neither have the churches of Christ judged it so: *sedentem orare extra disciplinam est*, saith Tertullian—to pray sitting is not according to the church's order. As for that, II Sam. 7:18, David 'sat before the Lord,' it may be read, he abode or stayed before the Lord. So the word in other places is taken; as Gen. 27:44; Lev. 14:8; I Sam. 1:22.

Again, in the duty of worship we are to exercise attention and intention of mind, that we may go along with the minister by our devout affections, and witness our consent to the prayers put up with our hearty amen at the end of them, I Chr. 16:36; Neh. 8:6; I Cor. 14:16. Else indeed, we are as a broken string in a consort, that speaks not with the rest, and thereby discomposeth the harmony.

[The several kinds of prayer distinguished
as ORDINARY OR EXTRAORDINARY.]

FOURTH DISTINCTION. Solitary and social, private and public prayer, are either ordinary or extra-

3. Used in this context, awful means to inspire awe, or filled with awe and respect; and not the more common and purely colloquial: terrible, bad, or objectionable.

— SDB

ordinary. For the development of this distinction I shall endeavour to answer these five questions:—First. What extraordinary prayer is. Second. By whom it is to be performed. Third. What are the special seasons wherein we are to take it up. Fourth. Why extraordinary prayer is superadded to ordinary. Fifth. What counsel or direction may be given for the acceptable and successful performance of this duty.

[THE NATURE of extraordinary prayer.]

Question First. What is extraordinary prayer?

Answer. Prayer may be called extraordinary in a double respect: 1. In regard of the time set apart for the performance of it. 2. In regard of its adjunct.

1. Prayer may be called extraordinary in regard of the time set apart for the performance of it. Then it is extraordinary when some more than ordinary portion of time is set apart and devoted to this work. Thus we find Jacob wrestling till break of day, Gen. 32, and Joshua with the elders of Israel till eventide; the one probably spending the night, the other the day, in this duty. And Israel, in their war with Benjamin, ‘wept and sat there before the Lord that day till even,’ Judges 20:26. We find Daniel many days together in prayer, Dan. 10:12.

2. Prayer may be called extraordinary in regard of its adjunct. Then prayer is extraordinary when fasting is joined to the duty of prayer. Now, fasting is a religious abstinence, whereby we forbear the use of all earthly comforts in the time set apart for this duty—so far as necessity and decency will permit—the more to afflict our souls and enforce our prayers; as,

(1.) A forbearing of food, whether meat or drink, Est. 4:16; Jonah 3:7. From this the whole action is called a fast, which imports not a sober use of food—for this we are at all times bound to observe—but a total abstinence, if necessity of nature, through some debility and infirmity, doth not require otherwise. For, in this case, the less duty must yield to the greater—the end of fasting being to help us in prayer, which it doth not when nature faints under it; for the soul cannot fly if the wings of our bodily spirits flag.

(2.) All costly apparel and ornaments of the body. Gaudy rich clothes on a fast-day do no better than a light trimming on a mourning suit: ‘They mourned: and no man did put on him his oma-

ments,’ Ex. 33:4. And this was by God’s own command; ‘for the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel,’ that they ‘put off their ornaments,’ ver. 5. In a word, all carnal mirth, music, perfumes, and whatever might recreate and delight the senses, are to be forborne upon this extraordinary occasion. See Dan. 6:18; 10:2, 3. For, though abstinence from food, with the other severities imposed on the outward man, be not in themselves acts of worship, nor intrinsic to the nature of prayer, yet are they required in the extraordinary performance of this duty by way of adjuvancy to it, and they have a reference to spiritual ends.

(a) By this abstinence we acknowledge our unworthiness to enjoy such comforts, and that God may justly take from us what for a time we voluntarily deny ourselves of.

(b) We express by our outward abstinence and fasting, the strength and vehemency of those inward affections which are to be exerted in extraordinary prayer. Men use to signify the violent passions of their soul by forbearing the repast and delights of the body. Is it a passion of grief one is oppressed with? you will see him oft forsake his food. Thus David: ‘My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread,’ Ps. 102:4. Is it fear that possesseth the heart with the apprehension of some great danger impending and approaching? you will have such a one refuse his wonted repast. So the mariners did in the sea-storm, Acts 27. Is it anger that vexeth a man? Ahab was deep in his passion upon the denial of Naboth’s vineyard, and he throws himself on his bed and will not eat, I Kings 21. Is it desire of compassing any great design that the head and heart is taken up and transported with? such a one will not allow himself time for his meal. ‘Cursed be the man,’ saith Saul, ‘that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies,’ I Sam. 14:24. We find the smith, in the prophet, so earnest in his idolatrous work, that he pincheth himself with hunger, and he will not eat though his strength faileth, nor drink though he be ready to faint, Isa. 44:12. Now, in extraordinary prayer the Christian is to have all these affections in a spiritual and holy manner wound up to the highest key possible. He is to have a deep sorrow for sin, fear and trembling at the judgments of God feared to come for them; a holy anger and indignation

against sin, with a vehement desire to be revenged on it for the dishonour it hath cast upon God; and, in a word, a longing desire to make his peace with God and recover his favour, which sin hath unhappily deprived him of. Now, because the excess of natural passions discovers itself this way, even to afflict their very bodies, and makes them deny themselves that which nature most craves, therefore God will have his people in their extraordinary humiliations do the same, that nature may not put grace to shame.

(c) By this abstinence, especially from food, we tame and subdue our wanton flesh, and so come to have a greater advantage for mortifying those sensual lusts that receive the fuel which feeds and inflames them from the flesh. A full body is a mellow soil for such lusts to grow rank in. Cum carne nutriuntur vita carnis—the lusts of the flesh are nourished when the body is pampered. If the body be kept high, carnal lusts will not easily be kept low. What else made Paul to beat down his body by fasting and watching, in which he was often, but that he might have the fuller blow at those lusts that received strength from it? *Nostrum est lasciviens jumentum frænis inediæ subjugare, ut sessorem Spiritum sanctum moderato et composito portet incessu* (Hieronymus, Epist. 9)—indeed a pampered horse is most like to cast his rider; and the Holy Spirit, using the body as well as soul in the work, this bridle of fasting is of excellent use to curb it.

(d) This abstinence from food is required to sharpen our spirits, and enliven the powers of the soul in this duty, which are pressed down and thickened, as I may so say, with the charge of the stomach. A full body makes a heavy eye and drowsy spirits; and what can then be expected but yawning prayers, especially when we are to continue longer than ordinary at the work?

[BY WHOM extraordinary prayer is to be performed.]

Question Second. Who are they that are called to the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answer. The command comprehends all that by age are enabled to understand the nature of this duty when any extraordinary occasion occurs for the performance of the same. We find it required of a church and nation. It is the magistrate's duty, when

there is a national cause, to call his subjects to the public practice of this duty, Joel 2:15; Neh. 9:1; and he that refuseth his call thereunto makes himself an offender both to God and man, Lev. 23:29. It reacheth to private families. Esther and her maidens keep a religious fast together Est. 4:16. Yea, it is a duty bound upon single persons, and reacheth to the secret closet, 'But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret,' Matt. 6:17, 18. The circumstances of the place show it is meant of a secret fast in the closet. We have them all together in one place, 'The land shall mourn;' there is a national fast: every family apart, the family of the house of David, and the house of Nathan apart,' &c.; there is domestical: 'and their wives apart;' Zech. 12:12; there is a personal secret fast in the closet.

Objection. But is not this extraordinary prayer and fasting too austere and rigid a duty for gospel times? Where doth Christ command his people in gospel times to macerate their bodies with such severities as these? Joy and praise better becomes the freedom and liberty of the gospel.

Objection met. Such wild stuff hath been vented by some in our late loose times. These are a new sort of saints, which the world hath hardly been acquainted with before these unhappy days of ours; they would be in heaven before their time, and leave no tears on their cheeks for Christ at death to wipe away. If any of these could live without sin and suffering they would have some colour for their plea; though even then, being yet 'in the body,' they should owe those tears to their brethren which they need not drop for themselves. The apostle I am sure bids us 'weep with those that weep,' and mourn with those that mourn, Rom. 12:15. Thus did Nehemiah fast for his afflicted brethren in Jerusalem when his own affairs were prosperous enough—being surrounded with the beams of the Persian emperor's favour. But there are none in mortal flesh free from sin or exempted from sorrow; and therefore a mourning habit may sometimes become the best of saints on earth. 'They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses,' Matt. 11:8.

Glorified saints, who dwell in the King of heaven's court, are always clad with joy, but this on earth is the saint's holiday suit. As he hath now and then his rejoicing days, so he wants not his days for mourn-

ing. 'The days will come,' saith our Saviour of his disciples, 'when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast,' Matt. 9:15—and surely they lived in gospel times. If these merry professors had been by Paul to see him how he beat down his body and chastised himself with fasting, they surely would have chid him for his pains, and thought him ignorant of his Christian liberty. The worst I wish these poor deluded souls is, that they who are so much for joy here meet with no mourning in another world. It is but an ill sign when men quarrel with a duty for its strictness, and slip the yoke off their necks because the wanton flesh saith it is uneasy. These are like Ephraim, whom the prophet compares to a heifer 'that loveth to tread out the corn,' but not to plough. That is hard hungry work. A thanksgiving day, that brings a feast with it. This they like, and are content it should pass for a gospel duty. But a day of prayer and fasting, wherein they are to pinch their carcass a little, this will not go down. But is there no feast except that it goes down the throat and fills the belly? Certainly this blessed duty deserves not the ill name it hath given unto it by men of sensual spirits. It is indeed to carnal wretches a heavy yoke, a tedious work. As the milk kine carried the ark went bellowing for their calves that were taken from them, so do these in a fast-day after their employments and enjoyments of the world, from which they are for that time restrained. Alas! poor creatures, as the ark was nothing but a burden to the kine, so the duty is no other to them. But the true saint, that knows what ease his poor heart feels in exonerating his conscience by humble confession of sin, what sweet satisfaction his soul meets with in communion with God, and what faith and inward peace he carries away with him from the duty, will give you another character of this ordinance than so. He will tell you he had rather be fasting with God than feasting at a king's table. What saint had not rather be fasting on the mount with Moses, than eating and playing with the carnal Israelites below the hill? Who would not miss a meal for his body, to satiate his soul with those delights that the presence of God in such an ordinance affords? Who would not take pleasure in mourning and weeping for sin, to have the tears he shed dried up with kisses from his Saviour's mouth? It is indeed to him that stands sucking of the bush—I mean the external part

of the duty—a dry sapless service; but to him that is taken into the wine-cellar, and there drinks full draughts of the love of God, it is a most sweet soul-ravishing ordinance. The lower exterior part of the duty, like the bottom of Jacob's ladder, stands on the earth, and leaves the creature on the earth also where it found him—for 'bodily exercise profiteth little;' but the top and spiritual part of it reacheth to heaven, and mounts the gracious soul thither, even unto bosom communion with God. There is as much difference between a saint and a hypocrite or carnal soul in this duty, as there is between a thief locked up with his keeper in a prison, and a scholar locking up himself in his study to read some book that he is greatly delighted with; to the one it is a grievous burden, to the other an incomparable pleasure.

[THE SEASONS for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Third. What are the special seasons wherein the Christian is to take up the practice of this duty of extraordinary prayer?

Answer. I answer, in general, any extraordinary occasion, as it emergeth in the course of providence in the Christian's life. This kind of prayer is not of constant use, as ordinary prayer is; this is food, that physic. And it were absurd to be taking physic all the year long; which shows the folly of the Papists in their fasts, which are holden at set times, whether affairs be prosperous or not prosperous, ordinary or extraordinary. I would not be thought here to speak against set fasts; we have had our monthly fasts, but the extraordinary cause for which they were appointed continued. But to instance in a few special seasons wherein the Christian hath a fit occasion to make use of this extraordinary duty.

Season 1. When the Christian is to set upon any more than ordinary enterprise, wherein he may meet with great difficulty or danger, and the issue whereof will be a great mercy or affliction. Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty, as an excellent means whereby all mountains of intervening difficulties may be levelled, and his undertaking be crowned with happy success. Thus Esther, before she adventured upon that heroic attempt of going uncalled into the king's presence to beg the life of her people, given to the butchery and slaughter by the

king's seal at bloody Haman's request—an action that carried death and danger on the face of it—she first goes to God by fasting and prayer, and gets all the auxiliary forces of others' prayers she can, and, attended with this convoy, she, against the Persian law, presents herself before the king, and speeds; for instead of losing her own life, which was forfeited by the law for this attempt, she reverseth the unjust judgment passed upon the life of her people, and recoils it upon the head of him that laid the plot. Prayer had so unlocked and opened the king's heart that she hath but what she asks at the king's hands.

No such engine to facilitate and carry on any great design to its desired end as this of extraordinary prayer. Who could have believed that Ezra and his company of pilgrims should all get safe from Babylon to Jerusalem, being so generally hated everywhere? Now what stratagem doth this leader of his people use to secure his passage and escape the fury of his enemies? Doth he desire a band of the Persian king to be their guard? No; he hath gloried so much of that God they served, that he is ashamed the king should think now he was not willing to cast himself upon his protection; but he goes to fasting and prayer, *Ezra 8:21*. Then they take their march, and find the way all along cleared before them, *ver. 31*. Our blessed Saviour hath sanctified this duty for this end in his own holy example, who, when to choose and send forth the twelve to preach the gospel, that they may speed the better in their embassy, he sends them forth under the conduct of prayer, and to that end spends the preceding night himself in prayer, *Luke 6:12, 13*. Now, though every Christian is not called forth, or likely to be in all his life, to such great and public enterprises as some others are, yet if he will observe the several passages of his more private employments and turns of providence in the course of his life, he shall find many such actions occur as give him a fair hint to make use of this duty. Haply thou art to enter upon a calling, or, in the calling thou art, meetest with many difficulties and temptations. Thou hast a long journey or dangerous voyage to take; thou hast to do with a subtle potent adversary, though thy cause be good, yet like to outwitted or overborne. Here is a fair errand put into thy mouth to go before the Lord for counsel, assistance, and protection. May be thou hast children, and these are to be disposed of into

callings or new relations; and is not this a great undertaking wherein thou hast a great adventure going in their bottom? Will not the issue that depends on this great change of their condition lay the foundation of much grief or joy to thee? Yet how slighty are many herein, as if it were of little more importance to marry a child than it is to put off a horse or cow at a fair! Few matches are, alas! thus made in heaven—I mean by solemn prayer engaging God in the business. Abraham's servant puts many parents to shame—he hard at prayer for success in his journey when sent to take a wife for his master's son, and not they for their children. But I wonder not that they who propound low and carnal ends to themselves in such enterprises, should forget by prayer both to ask his counsel in the match, or invite him to offer his blessing at the wedding.

Season 2. When the Christian is in the dark concerning any truth, and cannot satisfy his judgment by humble and diligent inquiry he hath made after it. Now is a fit season to take up this extraordinary duty as an excellent means to be led into the knowledge of the mind of God therein. Prayer is the proper key to unlock God's heart, and he alone can open our understandings and satisfy our scruples. This course Daniel took, and got more understanding by his fasting and prayer than by all his study, for a messenger is sent from heaven to 'give him skill and understanding,' *Dan. 9:20-23*, and again, *ch. 10:12*. In both he sped. And the angel is careful to let him know that it was his extraordinary praying that procured this extraordinary favour, and also how acceptable his motion was, by the easy access and quick despatch it found with God; and therefore tells him in both, that he had no sooner set upon this course of afflicting his soul but he was heard, and the messenger ordered to give him an answer to his prayer. Surely prayer hath not lost its credit in heaven, but is now as welcome to God as ever; and though an angel be not the messenger to bring the saint an answer, yet he shall have it by as sure and more honourable hand—even the Holy Spirit, whose office is to lead his people into truth. Thus Cornelius, *Acts 10*, came to be instructed in the mystery of the gospel, upon his extraordinary seeking of God by fasting and prayer. It is very probable this good man in those divided times, wherein he saw many zealous for the old way of Jewish worship,

and others preach up an new way, stood in some doubt what to do; and this might stir him up by fasting and prayer to ask counsel, and beg further light, of God, to direct him in the way of truth, as may seem by the tenor of the message sent him from God in the vision while he was at prayer, which bade him send to Joppa ‘for one Simon, whose surname is Peter,...and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do,’ ver. 5, 6. And certainly, in our divided times, wherein there is so much difference in judgment, had there been less wrangling among ourselves, and more wrestling with God for his teaching Spirit, we had been in a fairer way to find the door of truth, which so many are yet groping for. The way of controversies, and contentious disputes raise this dust, and blow it most into their eyes that gallop fastest in it, so that they miss the truth, which humble souls find upon their knees at the throne of grace. When the apostles were quarrelling, then they got nothing from Christ but a chiding, Luke 22:24, &c.; but when they were praying together earnestly, then he sent the Spirit to teach them, Acts 2.

Season 3. When the Christian is under any great affliction. Now is a fit season if he be able for the work. ‘Is any among you afflicted? let him pray,’ James 5:13. That is, let him then be more than ordinary in this duty; for he must, yea will, if a Christian, pray where he is not afflicted as well as when he is. But the meaning is, he must now pray after an extraordinary manner; he must now pray with more vehemency; for, though in all our addresses to God, we are to express the lively workings of our hearts to him, without which our prayers are unsavoury (cold prayers ever find cold welcome); yet God expects, and it always hath been the care of, holy men in their extraordinary applications to this duty of prayer, to wind up their affections to a pitch higher than ordinary, having the advantage of some special occasion to help them thereunto. Look upon them in some great strait and affliction, and you shall find them exceeding themselves, and put upon them a prince-like spirit. So Jacob behaved himself in prayer, Gen. 32:28. As a prince fighting in the field for his crown and kingdom, he wrestled with the angel, who was no other than God himself; that is, he strained as it were, every vein in his heart, and put forth his whole might in prayer, as a wrestler would do that grapples with a

potent adversary. Moses is so transported in zeal for Israel, when a dismal cloud of wrath impended them for their idolatry, that he offers rather to die upon the place, than to go down the mount and not carry the joyful news of a pardon with him, Ex. 32:32. And Nehemiah, when he had been afflicting his soul and praying before the Lord, it was with such vehemency that the anguish of his spirit looked out at his eyes, and left a mark of sorrow upon his very countenance, which his prince could observe as he waited on him.

Again, in affliction we are called to pray, as more intensively, so more extensively; I mean longer and oftener. Thus I find that ἐκτενεστερον προσηύξατο of our Saviour, rendered by Lucas Brungensis and others, prolixius orabat—he prayed longer, that is, he spent more time than ordinary in it. Thrice one after another we find him at it, Matt. 26:44. His agony was great and the waves of his affliction violent, and therefore he doubles, yea trebles, his prayer with deep sighs and strong cries to his Father. Nature never strains so to its utmost, as when it is oppressed; then temples work, lungs heave, and heart pants; so in affliction the spirit of prayer should be increased and intended.

Season 4. When the Christian is buffeted with any temptation, or overpowered with a corruption, and cannot, with the use of ordinary means, quench the one or master and mortify the other. If the short dagger of ordinary prayer will not reach the heart of a lust, then it is time to draw out this long sword of extraordinary prayer upon it. There is a ‘kind’ of devils, our Saviour tells us, that ‘goes not out but by prayer and fasting,’ Matt. 17:21. You know the occasion of this speech was that complaint of one concerning his lunatic son, ‘I brought him to thy disciples and they could not cure him.’ Thus some poor souls complain they have come to the word preached so long, in their daily prayers begged power over such a lust, resolved against it many a time, and none of these means could cure it; what can they now do more? Here thou art told. Bring thy condition to Christ in this solemn ordinance of prayer and fasting; this hath at last been the happy means to strengthen many a poor Christian to be avenged on those spiritual enemies which have outbraved all the former, and like Samson to pull down the devil’s house upon his head.

Season 5. When sin doth abound more than ordinary in the times and places we live in. Sinning times have ever been the saints' praying times. This sent Ezra with a heavy heart to confess the sin of his people, and to bewail their abominations before the Lord, *Ezra* 9. And Jeremiah tells the wicked rout of his degenerate age that his 'should weep in secret places for their pride,' *Jer.* 13:17. Indeed sometimes sin comes to such a height and insolence, that this is almost all the godly can do, to get into a corner and bewail the general pollutions of the present age; as he told Luther, *abi, frater, in cellam et dic miserere Domine—go, brother, into a cell and bewail.* 'If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?' *Ps.* 11:3. Such dismal days of national confusion our eyes have seen, when foundations of government were destroyed, and all hurled into a military confusion. When it is thus with a people, what can the righteous do? Yes, this they may, and should do, 'fast and pray.' There is yet a God in heaven to be sought to, when a people's deliverance is thrown beyond the help of human policy or power. Now is the fit time to make their appeal to God, as the words following hint, 'The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven,' *ver.* 4; in which words God is presented sitting in heaven as a temple, for their encouragement, I conceive, in such a desperate state of affairs, to direct their prayers thither for deliverance. And certainly this hath been the engine that hath been above any instrumental to screw up this poor nation again, and set it upon the foundation of that lawful government from which it was so dangerously slid.

Season 6. To name no more, times of great expectation are times for extraordinary prayer. When the people of God have been big with expectation of great mercies approaching, then have they been more abounding in prayer. As the cocks crow thickest towards break of day, so the saints, the nearer they have apprehended the accomplishment of promises made to his church, the more instant they use to be in prayer. When a woman with child her reckoning is near out, then she desires her midwife to be at hand. And prayer hath had the name of old for its excellent usefulness to obstetricate mercies. 'The children are come to the birth,' saith good Hezekiah; and then he desires the help of the prophet's prayer for the fair

delivery of it: 'Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left,' *Isa.* 37:3, 4. When Daniel the prophet had learned by study that the happy period of the seventy years' captivity, bound upon the Jews' neck for their sin, was now at hand, *Dan.* 9:1, then in an extraordinary manner he sets himself to pray and afflict his soul before the Lord. And we have reason to hope that spiritual Babylon—Rome, I mean—is not long-lived; it is high time therefore that the saints should fall more earnestly than ever to dig her grave for her by their prayers.

[THE REASONS for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Fourth. But why is extraordinary prayer to be superadded by the Christian to his ordinary exercise of it in his daily course?

Answer 1. Extraordinary prayer is superadded in obedience to the command of God. He commands not only that we should 'pray always,' but 'with all prayer' also, and extraordinary prayer is one kind among the rest. And let none of us say it is not enough to pray once or twice every day, but we must upon some occasions devote a whole day also, to the damage of calling and family? O what niggards would some be towards God, were they left free to devote what time they thought fit for his worship? This cavil sounds too like that of Judas: 'To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor,' *Matt.* 26:8, 9. 'But this he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief.' Truly so, when I hear some carnal wretches cry out against this waste of time in praying and fasting—'how much might the improvement of that time, if laid out in their callings, have advantaged their families, wives, and children'—I am ready to think it is not because they have such a care of their relations as they pretend (for they who grudge a day for prayer can throw, some of them, many away at the ale-house or in idleness), but they carry thievish hearts in their bosoms, which love to rob God of his due, and care not how little service they put him off with. Is he a loyal subject that pays the ordinary tribute to his prince, but, if occasion of state requires a subsidy, refuseth this, or doth it grudgingly? God's commands are none of them, no not this which carries some outward severity on it, so grievous, that any

should need to groan or grumble under them. Those yokes—duties and commands, I mean—whose outside seem most hard have the softest lining within. What seem harder than suffering? and yet when are the saints fuller of heaven's joy? What duty more austere than this of fasting and afflicting our souls? and yet in the breast of this lion, that scares sensual wretches, the Christian finds the sweetest honey-comb of inward comforts. Temple-work is sure to be well paid if well done; though it be never so little work in his house, God will not have it done gratis. None shall kindle a fire on his altar for naught. And therefore he takes it in great disdain at their hands who durst say, 'What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Mal. 3:14. Whereas the fault was not in the duty, but in themselves, that they got no more by it. As if a naughty servant should bring himself by his riot and excess to poverty, and then give out a hard master hath undone him.

Answer 2. It is superadded to comport with the providence of God, by a suitable return of duty to his actings and dispensations towards us. When God is extraordinary in his providence, he expects his people should be more than ordinary in seeking of him. What else means that of the prophet? 'Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel,' Amos 4:12. Here God alarms them by his extraordinary proceedings intended against them, to take the hint of this warning, and apply themselves speedily to the solemn practice of repentance and humbling their souls, as a suitable posture to meet God in, and keep off the storm of his wrath now gathering against them. Is it not high time for a nation to betake them to their defensive arms when a mighty host is marching against them? So, Isa. 26:20, 21, 'Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee,' &c. Here he sends his people to their chambers and closets, that they may, by afflicting their souls and fervent prayers, find a hiding in the day of his indignation. And why must they do thus? 'For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity,' ver. 21. The rising of God out of his place imports some notable enterprise he is about to do; and when the master riseth, it is not manners for the servant to

sit still, but to rise also and prepare to follow him where he goes. God takes special notice how we behave ourselves and comport with is dispensations of judgment or mercy, 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning;' Isa. 22:12, that is, he called them by the voice of his providence as well as his prophets, the nature of which was such, that had not their lusts bunged up their ears and made them deaf, they could not but hear and understand that now was the time, if ever, that God expected to see them in sackcloth and tears humbling their souls before him. Now see how heinously he takes their security and profane slighting of his providence, 'And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord of hosts,' ver. 14. Few sins more provoke God than this. 'Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up,' Ps. 28:5. So, 'And thou...O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this,' Dan. 5:22. This lost him his life and kingdom, as the contrary saved Ahab's for a time, though it was not so sincere as it ought. A temporal humiliation got him a temporal benefit.

Answer 3. It is superadded for the great influence that this extraordinary duty solemnly performed would have upon our whole life and course of godliness. To keep the body healthful requires not only daily food, but now and the physic also; for in the soundest constitution, and that advantaged with the best care and temperance, there will, in time, such a quantity of superfluous humours gather, that nature without help cannot digest. And truly the temper of the soul is as infirm and needs as much tending as the body. Ordinary prayer is the saint's food. He can as little miss the constant returns of it as his usual meals. But extraordinary is his physic, to clear and discharge his soul of those distempers which it contracts, and cannot conquer by the use of ordinary means; as also to advance and heighten the Christian's graces unto a further degree of strength and activity. As God hath, in his wise providence, ordered one star of great influence to be at a certain season of the year in conjunction with the sun, for the more effectual ripening of the harvest in these colder parts of the world; so hath he, in the same wisdom, appointed

for the Christian's spiritual advantage and help in this cold climate of the world, that this solemn duty should now and then be taken into conjunction with our ordinary exercise of devotion; for want of which it is that many ripen slower both in their graces and comforts than some of their fellow-saints who sit often under the influences of this powerful quickening ordinance.

[DIRECTIONS for extraordinary prayer.]

Question Fifth. What counsel or direction may be given to the acceptable and successful performance of this solemn duty?

Answer. I come now to shut up my discourse on this point, in answering this last question. A serious necessary one it is, for indeed it is an edge-tool of excellent use, but dangerous in his hand that knows not how to use it. Like some physic, if it doth not purge it poisons. In the same fat soil where the corn is best the weeds also are rankest. Neither grace nor sin grow to such a height anywhere as in those that converse much with this solemn ordinance. And therefore, as they who are in a ship upon a swift stream had need the more look to the steerage of it, because they will be carried amain either to their port or wreck; so have they to be reason to be very careful in the managery of this service, the issue whereof cannot be ordinary because the duty is extraordinary. Now the counsel or direction to be given must necessarily be divided into these three general heads. 1. Some preparatory direction before the duty. 2. Something to be observed in the performance of the duty. 3. Something after the despatch of it. The city cannot be safe unless the whole line be kept. It is all one whether the enemy breaks in at the front flank or rear of an army; or whether the ship be taken at sea, or sink in the haven when the voyage is over.

[What is needful BEFORE extraordinary prayer.]

1. Requisite. Some preparatory direction before the duty. Now there is a double preparation requisite—the one more remote, the other immediate; or, if you please, habitual preparation and actual.

(1.) There is a remote and habitual preparation, of great use to the performance of this solemn duty of

extraordinary prayer. It lies in this, to look, Christian, that thou showest a conscionable care in thy daily walking, and the constant exercise of this duty in thy ordinary daily offices of devotion, or else thou art like to make but bad work when thou comest to engage in the extraordinary.

(a) Thy neglect in the ordinary duty will exceedingly indispose thee for the extraordinary. Who would take a foggy horse out of the pasture to run a race? In extraordinary prayer the soul is to be put on her full speed, all her powers to strained to their utmost ability, and to continue long in the work also. Is he fit for so swift and long a race, whose soul is not kept in breath by the daily exercise of ordinary prayer, but lets his graces, if he hath any, to be choked up with sloth or formality? The more any member is used, the stronger it is. The right hand, which is our working hand, hath more activity than the left, that is used less. A weakness will certainly invade the powers of thy lazy soul, which, though thou perceivest not as thou sittest in thy chair of sloth, will appear when thou risest, and thinkest to go forth in any solemn duty, as thou wert wont to do; then thou wilt find, with Samson, that thou hast lost thy strength in the lap of sloth and negligence. As fasting is too strong for new bottles, so it is too sweet wine for to be put into fusty and mouldy ones. Now the only way to keep a bottle or cask sweet, is to not let it stand long empty without any liquor in it.

(b) As it will indispose thee for this solemn duty, so it is a bad symptom concerning thy spiritual state itself, which is worse than the former. Grace works uniformly, and discovers a comely proportion in its actings. Haply you may see the son of a prince on some high day in richer and more glorious apparel than on another day that is ordinary; but you shall never find him in sordid, ragged, and beggarly clothes. Still he will be clad as becomes a king's son. Possibly, yea, it is likely, that you may see the Christian come forth, in an extraordinary day and duty, with more enlargement of affections in prayer, and all his graces raised to a higher glory in their actings, than ordinary, but you shall never find him with his robe of grace laid aside. Still the true saint will declare his high birth by his everyday course. He will not live in the neglect of ordinary duties, and cast off communion with God, in his daily walking. O, it is the brand of a

hypocrite to have his devotion come by fits, and, like a drift of snow, to lie thick in one place and none in another; to seem for zeal like angels at a time and live like atheists many weeks after. Surely grace acts more evenly and is never so unlike itself. It is ill living in that miser's house who hath never any good meat on his table but when he makes a feast, and that is very seldom; or with him that upon an occasion hath a day of prayer, but starves himself and family, or pinches them in their daily fare. Well, never think of meddling with this extraordinary duty till thou inurest thyself to the ordinary exercise of prayer, and takest more care in thy daily walking with God.

(2.) There is more close and immediate preparation required, and this I call actual preparation. It is true, indeed, he that is conscientious and careful in the ordinary exercises of religion, hath a great advantage of him that either neglects them or is loose in them, for his heart must needs stand in a nearer disposition to this extraordinary service than the other—as he that is up and hath his clothes on, is more ready to go on his master's errand than he that is asleep in his bed. Yet, besides this care in our daily walking, there needs some further pains to be taken with his heart to raise it unto such a frame as may comport with this solemn service. The neat housewife, though she endeavours to keep her house clean, yet, against some good time, as they call it, she is more than ordinary curious in washing her rooms, and scouring her vessels, that they might not only be clean but bright; and so should the Christian. Now is the time for thee to scour off the dust thou contractest in thy daily course, and to brighten thy graces unto a further glory that appears in thy everyday walking, to do which will cost pains and require time.

The Christian is like some heavy birds, as the bustard and others, that cannot get upon the wing without a run of a furlong or two; or a great bell that takes some time to the raising of it. Now, meditation is the great instrument thou art to use in this preparatory work. Allow thyself some considerable portion of time, before the day of extraordinary prayer, for thy retirement, wherein thou mayest converse most privately with thy own heart. This cannot be done in a crowd, neither must it be left to the time of engaging in the extraordinary duty. We cannot do both duties together. The husbandman cannot whet

his scythe and cut grass at once. Betake thyself therefore to thy closet, and in the first place call thy thoughts off the world, and as much as is possible clear thy soul of all that is foreign to the work thou art about; this is the wiping of the table-book before we can write anything well on it. Now the more effectually to gather in thy heart to a holy seriousness, and compact thy thoughts together, it were expedient for thee at first to lay before thee the grand importance of the approaching service. Thou art going to stand before the great God, and that very near in an extraordinary duty, wherein thou wilt either sanctify or profane his reverend in a high degree, and accordingly art to expect his love or wrath in some choice blessing or dreadful curse, to be the issue and result of thy undertaking! Gird the loins of thy mind with some such awful apprehensions as these. As natural fear makes the spirits retire from the outward parts of the body to the heart, so this holy fear of miscarrying in so solemn a duty would be a means to call thy thoughts from all exterior carnal objects, and fix them upon the duty in hand; 'In thy fear will I worship,' Ps. 5:7. Such will the print on the wax be as the sculpture is on the seal. If the fear of God be deeply engraven on thy heart, there is no doubt but it will make a suitable impression on the duty thou performest. Well, now the court is set and silence commanded, a few particulars I shall propound for thy thoughts to go upon in this preparatory work.

[Three PREPARATORY directions.]

First. Examine thy soul, what end thou propoudest to thyself in the intended service of extraordinary prayer. None but a child or a fool will run before he knows what is his errand. The end is that which a wise man looks to before he sets his hand to any work, and the more weighty the enterprise is the more necessary this is.

1. Consider, if the end thou propoudest be evil, the duty cannot be good, because thy heart is not sincere in it. The sincerity of the heart discovers itself in the mark it sets up and end it aims at in a duty, not in the external performance of it. The thief and the honest traveller may be found riding in the same road, but they have different aims therein, and this distinguisheth them. Thus the saint and hypocrite

join in the same duty, shoot as it were the same bow, but their eye takes not the same aim, and therefore the arrows meet not in the same butt. The prayers of one are rejected as abominable, and the other graciously accepted. Who more seemingly devout than the captive Jews that kept up a fast for seventy years together? yet God gives them but little thanks for their pains, because their end was not right: 'When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?' Zech. 7:5. The faster a man gallops, if he be out of his way, it is the worse. Zeal is the best or worst thing in a duty. If the end be right, O it is excellent! but if wrong, stark naught. And it is no easy thing to propound a right end. The eye must be set right in the head before it can look right. If the piece be wrong made it will never carry the bullet straight to the mark. A false heart—and every carnal heart is such—cannot have a true end.

2. Consider that your endeavour in the duty will bear proportion, and be commensurate, to the end you propound therein. If your end be low, your endeavour will be no more than to reach that end; as he that intends to build a little cottage contents himself with ordinary stuff, clay and thatch; but he that designs some stately palace provides more precious materials. Thus David was very curious in the materials he laid aside for the temple: 'For the palace,' saith he, 'is not for man, but for the Lord God.' Therefore he 'prepared with all his might gold and silver,' &c., I Chr. 29:1-3. The hypocrite's ends in a fast are low and base—his credit with men, carnal profit, and the like. Accordingly, his endeavour is laid out on the external duty—a demure countenance, devout posture, and such expressions in prayer as may most take with those that hear him, and this is all he looks at. But the gracious soul saith with David, This palace I build, this duty I perform, 'is not for man, but for the Lord God,' and therefore his chief care is to provide more precious materials—a broken heart for sin in his confessions, faith and fervency in his petitions, love and thankfulness in his acknowledgments of mercies received.

Question. But when is an evil end propounded in this duty?

Answer. The end we propound may be evil, either intrinsically, when the thing we aim at is evil in

its own nature, or else from some irregularity in placing it too high or low in our aim.

(1.) The ends that are intrinsically evil. To name two,

(a) When a person or a people shall fast and pray to cover and more sleightly carry on any wicked enterprise. This is a horrid evil, a monstrous abomination. What is this but to hang out the sign of an angel at the door, that they may play the devil within the less suspected? Yet, such deep hypocrisy hath the heart of man discovered, that it dare come and lay its cockatrice egg under the very wing of God, and make use of this solemn ordinance as an expedient to hatch their wicked designs. The fox, they say, when hard put to it, will, to save himself, fall in among the dogs, and hunt among them as one of their company. Thus the hypocrite, the better to conceal his wicked projects, will run among the saints, and make as loud a cry in this duty and others as the best of them all. It is the devil's old trick, and he hath learned it his instruments, to wrap up wicked plots in the gilded covers of God's ordinances. What plotting and counterplotting was there between Shechem the son of Hamor and Simeon and Levi? and the expedient both used to accomplish their designs was an ordinance of God. The one hopes by submitting to it to hook into his hands the whole estate of Jacob's family—'shall not their substance be ours?' and the other persuades them to it that when they were sore they might butcher them without resistance. Absalom, that he might better play the traitor against his father, begs leave to pay his vow at Hebron. Jezebel sets her trap for Naboth, and that he may the more surely fall into her clutches, she croucheth and humbleth herself even before God in a fast. And the demure Pharisee, who bragged so much of his fasting, our Saviour was bold to tell him it was to 'devour the widows' houses.' But, as the father hath it, manducant in terris quod apud inferos digerunt—they devour on earth those morsels that will lie heavy on their stomachs in hell to be digesting to eternity. Thus the hypocrite, like anti-christ, sits in the temple of God, and there commits his execrable abominations, turning a house of prayer into a den of thieves. O tremble at this great wickedness! It gives a crimson tincture to a sin when it is committed under the disguise of religion.

(b) When a person thinks by fasting and prayer

to satisfy God for his sin, or merit any favour at the hands of God. This is wicked and abominable, and as contrary to the nature of prayer as buying is to begging. ‘The poor,’ saith Solomon, ‘useth entreaties,’ Prov. 18:23. ‘Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge,’ Job 9:15. We cannot have the benefit of the throne of grace till we quit our legal plea. Christ indeed pleads as righteous, and therefore desires what he asks for us as just, because he hath paid for it; but we pray as sinners, and therefore crave all as mercy, yea, though we plead Christ’s merit, because he is the greatest and freest gift of all other. Yet, such is the pride of man’s heart, that he had rather play the merchant, and truck his duties for God’s blessings, than be thought to receive them gratis. This was the temper of the carnal Jews. They thought to pacify God for their sin, as Jacob his angry brother, with the droves and flocks of duties which they presented him with, and thought their services undervalued when they were not accepted for good payment. Hence their bold expostulating the case with the Lord, ‘Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?’ Isa. 58:3. Such a high opinion they had of themselves. O take heed of this: pride turns an ordinance into an idol. God accepts our fasts and prayers when used for humiliation, but abhors them when we bring them for our justification. The Pharisee lost himself by his proud brags how oft he fasted, while the poor publican got the prize by a humble confession of his sin, Luke 18. He that thinks to wash his face with puddle water, instead of making it clean will leave it fouler. Truly our best tears are not over clean, and can they make us clean that need themselves to be washed? Holy Job durst not rely on his purity: ‘If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment,’ Job 9:30-32.

(2.) The end may be, though not intrinsically evil, yet evil from some irregularity in misplacing it; as when we make that our ultimate end which should only be our subordinate end in the duty. That which would be lawful standing in its proper place, becomes

sinful when the ultimate end is crowded down to make room for that. The glory of God is to be the ultimate end, not only in every duty of worship, but in all our common actions also, even to eating and drinking. Those low actions are to be elevated to this high end, 1 Cor. 10:31. And good reason he should be our utmost end from whom we received our beginning. All things are of him, and therefore fit they should be to him. The river-water empties itself into the bosom of the sea from whence it flows. Now, if we are to have so high an end in our lowest actions, then surely in our highest; and such are acts of worship, in which we have immediately to do with God, and are thence called priests, ‘to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,’ 1 Peter 2:5. There is indeed another end also for which ordinances are appointed, viz. to conduit-pipes for conveying all kind of blessings from God unto us; but this is an inferior end, and to be subordinated to the former, or else we make the glory of God an underling to our particular good, which God will not endure. Possibly we are in some great affliction. This sets us to prayer for deliverance. Thus far we keep our way. But then we turn aside when our deliverance is more regarded by us than his glory. This is to set the subject in his prince’s chair; *uti Deo ut fruamur mundo*—to make use of God that we may enjoy the creature. Beware of this. Whatever we prefer in our desires above the glory of God is an idol-worship by us. The heart can engrave as well as the hand, and an idol in the heart is as bad as one set up in the house.

Question. But how may I find whether the glory of God, or the particular good thing I pray for, be that which I make my chief end in duty?

Answer. It may be discovered two ways: (a) By thy carriage in prayer. (b) By thy carriage after prayer.

(a) By the carriage of thy heart in prayer. If the glory of God be chiefly aimed at by thee, this will give a tincture to the whole duty, and be influential into every part of it; thou wilt suit thy requests to this end. For, as there is a secret force from the arm that draws the bow impressed on the arrow which carries it to the mark aimed at by the shooter, so there is a secret power which carries the soul out in duty to act suitably to the end he chiefly propounds and desires to obtain; for no man would willingly obstruct and hin-

der what above all he wisheth for. We will suppose pardon of sin is the mercy thou prayest for. Now if thou desirest sincerely the glory of God as well as this mercy, yea, above it, this will direct thee in thy confession of sin to afflict thy soul more for the dishonour thou hast by it reflected on God than the wrath thou hast incurred thyself. So in thy petition, thou darest not beg thy pardon on terms that were dishonourable for God to give it on, but will desire the mercy in such a way as his glory may be both secured and advanced. Now God cannot pardon the sin of an impenitent wretch that holds still the love and liking of his lust without infinite wrong to his glorious name. And therefore, if his glory be so high in thy eye as thou sayest, thou wilt cry as earnestly for his sanctifying grace as for pardoning mercy, and not merely because thou canst not have pardon without it—as a sick man desires a bitter potion to save his life, not that he loves it—but because by it thou shalt be fitted to glorify him.

(b) It may be discovered by thy carriage after duty, and that in two particulars: when the thing prayed for is obtained, and also when denied.

When the mercy prayed for is obtained. If thou didst chiefly aim at the glory of God in begging it, thy chief care will be to lay it out for his glory now thou hast it; whereas he that aimed at himself in praying for it, will as little regard God in the using of it as he did in begging it. It is natural for things to resolve into their principles. The child that Hannah obtained of God she dedicates unto the Lord—and why? but because this was her end in praying for him, 1 Sam. 1:11 compared with ver. 28. When David's prayer is heard, and he delivered, mark what his resolve from this is, 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living,' Ps. 116:9. And again, 'O Lord, truly I am thy servant, ... thou hast loosed my bonds,' ver. 16. He returns the mercy to God by improving it for him in a holy life. How can we think he aimed at the glory of God in praying for health that runs away from God as soon as he is set upon his legs? or, in praying for wealth, that lays it out upon his lusts?

Again, when the thing prayed for is denied. He that aims sincerely at God's glory in prayer for a mercy—I speak now of such mercies as are but conditionally promised—he will cheerfully submit to the will of God in a denial thereof, because God can in

such petitions glorify himself by denying as well as granting them. David prayed and fasted for the life of his sick child. It dies notwithstanding. Now, does this denial make him fall out with God? is he clamorous and discontent? No, it raiseth no storm in his heart or lowering weather in his countenance to hinder him in the service of God. He washeth his tears from his blubbered cheeks, changes his apparel, and goes cheerfully into the house of God and worshippeth, 11 Sam. 12:20, so powerfully did the will of God determine his will. Thus, as the heavenly bodies are by the *primum mobile* carried contrary to their particular inclination, so grace in a saint overrules his natural affection, and carries him into a compliance with the will of God when it crosseth his own. Our blessed Saviour had natural affections, which made him pray the bitter cup of his passion might, if possible, pass from him; yet not so but he was willing to take a denial, and therefore desires his Father to glorify himself, though it were by taking away his life, John 12:27, 28.

Second. The second thing thou art to do, having fixed thy end right, is to make a private search into thy heart and life, whereby thou mayest be enabled more fully and feelingly to lay open thy condition before the Lord. Now there are three heads of inquiry thou art to go upon: 1. For the sins thou hast committed. 2. For the mercies thou hast received. 3. For the wants thou liest under.

[Three heads of inquiry in searching
into our heart and life.]

1. For the sins thou hast committed. The great business of a fast lies in the practice of repentance, and this cannot be done without a narrow scrutiny of the heart: 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord,' Lam. 3:40. The thief must be found before he can be tried, and tried before he is condemned and executed. Some sins no doubt may be taken and apprehended with little pains; but if thou beest true to God and thy own soul, thou wouldst not willingly let any of the company escape. How canst thou expect pardon for any that desirest not justice on all? and how canst thou say thou desirest justice on those sins which thou endeavourest not to apprehend? That constable that having a hue and cry

brought him for a pack of thieves, and lets any get away rather than he will rise to search for them, shows his zeal to justice is little. I do not say thou wilt be able to find all. It is enough if by thy diligence thou givest proof of thy sincerity that thou wouldst not conceal any. Set thyself, therefore, in good earnest to the work. Beset thy heart and life round, as men would do a wood where murderers are lodged. Hunt back to the several stages of thy life, youth, and riper years all the capacities and relations thou hast stood in, thy calling general and particular—every place where thou hast lived, and thy behaviour in them. Bid memory bring in its old records, and read over what passages are there written. Call conscience in to depose what it knows concerning thee, and encourage it to speak freely without mincing the matter: and take heed thou dost not snib this witness, as some corrupt judges use when they would favour a bad cause, or give it secret instructions—as David did Joab—to deal gently with thee. Be willing to have thy condition opened fully and all thy coverings turned up. For many times foul designs are hid with fair pretences, as the barrels of powder in the parliament cellar under coals and billets. Now, when thou hast gone as far as thou canst, begging Heaven's help in the thing, to search and try thee whether there be any further wickedness that thou hast not found out, then burden thy soul, judge thyself for them with all the brokenness of heart thou canst get, justifying God in the sentence denounced against thee for them. God will have thee lay thy neck on the block, though he means not to give the stroke. In a word, labour in thy meditations to give every sin its due accent, and suffer thy thoughts to dwell on them till thou findest the fire of thy indignation kindle in thy heart against them, yea, flame forth into such a holy zeal against them as makes thee put thyself under an oath to endeavour their utter ruin and destruction. Then thou art fit to beg thy own life when thou hast vowed the death of thy sins.

2. For the mercies thou hast received. Thou hast these—at least the most signal instances of them—upon the file, unless thou beest a very bad husband for thy soul. If God thinks fit to bottle his saints' tears, they should surely not forget to book his mercies. Now there are some special seasons wherein the saint should take down this chronicle of God's mer-

cies to read in it; and this is one, when he is to engage in this extraordinary duty.

(1.) As the most effectual means to melt his heart for sin. Mercy gives the greatest aggravation to sin, and therefore must needs be the most powerful instrument to break the heart for sin. With this God doth reproach sinning Israel, 'Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?' Deut. 32:6. They could not have been evil to such a height if God had not been so good to them. When God would break the sore of his people's sin, he compounds a poultice with his choicest mercies and lays this warm to their hearts. David had sat many months under the lectures of the law, unhumiliated for his bloody complicated sin; but Nathan is sent to preach a rehearsal sermon to him of the many mercies that God had graced him with, and while these coals are pouring on his head his heart dissolves presently, II Sam. 12. The frost seldom is quite out of the earth till the sun hath got some power in the spring to dissolve its bands; but then it sets it going. Neither will the hardness of the heart be to any purpose removed until the soul be thoroughly warmed with the sense of God's mercies. 'And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight,' Eze. 20:43. Where is that 'there' but amidst the thoughts of his mercies, as by the context is manifest? A pardon from the prince hath made some weep whom the sight of the block and axe could not move. Sight of wrath inflames the conscience, but sense of mercy kindly melts the heart and overcomes the will.

(2.) As a necessary ingredient in all our prayers. 'With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,' Php. 4:6. This spice must be in all our offerings. He that prays for mercy he wants, and is not thankful for mercies received, may seem mindful of himself, but he is forgetful of God, and so takes the right course to shut his prayers out of doors. God will not put his mercies into a rent purse, and such is an unthankful heart, for it drops them soon out of his memory.

3. For the wants thou liest under. Before the tradesman goes to the fair he looks over his shop that he may know what commodity he most lacks. Thou goest to this duty to furnish thyself with the graces and mercies thou needest, is it not necessary then to

see what thy present store is? what thy personal and what thy relational needs are?—not forgetting the public, in whose peace and happiness thou art so much concerned; for, if this ship sink, thou canst not be safe in thy private cabin. To leave all these to occur and overtake thee, without charging thy thoughts with them by previous meditation, is too high a presumption for a sober Christian to take up. Besides, thy affections need help as well as thy memory. Nay, we may sooner bring our sins and wants to mind than lay them to heart. It is easier to know them, than knowing them to be deeply affected with them: and we do not come in prayer to tell God a bare story of these things, but feelingly and affectionately to make our moan and complaint with deep sighs and groans to him that can pardon the one and relieve us in the other.

Third. When thou hast upon this scrutiny kindled thy affections with the bellows of meditation into a deep sense of these things, then furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith when strengthened will make thee fervent, and such and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer. ‘The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,’ James 5:16. Words in prayer are but as powder; the promise is the bullet that doth the execution, faith the grace that chargeth the soul with it, and fervency that gives fire, and dischargeth it into God's bosom with such a force that the Almighty cannot deny it entrance, because indeed he will not. Now, as he is an impudent soldier that leaves his bullets to be cast or fitted to the bore of his piece till he comes into the field; so he an unwise Christian that doth not provide and sort promises suitable to his condition and request before he engageth in so solemn a service. Daniel first searcheth out the promise—what God had engaged himself to do for his people, as also when the date of this promise expired; and when by meditation and study upon it he had raised his heart to a firm belief thereof, then he sets upon God with a holy violence in prayer, and presseth him close, not only as a merciful God, but righteous also, to remember them now the bond of his promise was coming out: ‘O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and

thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem,’ &c., Dan. 9:16. The mightier any is in the word, the more mighty he will be in prayer. Having despatched the preparatory directions, I now come to those that are to be observed in the duty itself.

[What is needful IN extraordinary prayer.]

2. Requisite. That necessary to be observed in the performance of the duty of extraordinary prayer. Because those directions will serve here which are given in another place for the duty of prayer in general, I shall name but a few, and those briefly.

(1.) When the time to engage thyself in this extraordinary duty is come, beware thou settest not upon it in the confidence of thy preparation, whatever thy care success therein hath been. What a worthy doctor directed ministers {to do} as to their preaching, is applicable to Christians as to their praying—he bade them study for their sermons as if they expected no divine assistance in the pulpit, and when they came in the pulpit to cast themselves upon divine assistance as if they had not studied at all. Thus prepare before thou comest to fast and pray, as if thou wert to meet with no further assistance in the duty; but when thou comest to the performance of the duty, cast thyself wholly upon divine assistance as if thou hadst not at all prepared. I know not which of the two doth worst, he that presumes upon God's assistance in this great work without preparation, or he that presumes on his preparation, and relies not after he hath done his best endeavour on the gracious assistance of God. The first shows he hath but mean thoughts of this solemn ordinance, yea, low and unworthy thoughts of the great God with whom he hath to do in it; and the other too high thoughts of himself.

What though now, Christian, thou marchest in goodly array and thy heart in order; how soon, alas! may all that preparation be routed, and thy chariot-wheels, which thou hast taken so much pains to oil, be set fast or knocked off! Now thy thoughts are united, thou thinkest; dost thou know where they will be a few minutes hence, if thy God help thee not to keep them together? Thou canst as easily hold the four winds in a bag, as keep the thoughts of thy fluid mind from gadding. Now thy affections are wound up to some height, but canst thou hold the pegs from slip-

ping? Cannot God wither thy hand while thou stretchest it out in prayer; make thy tongue falter when thou wouldst make use of it; yea, suffer a sudden damp to fall on thy spirit that shall chill all thy affections and leave thy heart as cold as a stone in thy bosom? 'Surely man at his best estate is vanity.' And this in regard of the temper of his spirit as well as in the constitution of his body and other {of} his worldly advantages. How oft do we see the gifts of his mind and the vivacity of his graces fade and wither in one duty, which at another, when the Spirit of God vouchsafed his gentle breath to quicken them, did flourish and send forth their fragrant spices in abundance! O do not then applaud thyself in thy gourd, which may so soon be smitten, neither commit so great an adventure as the success of this duty is in the leaking bottom of thy own preparation.

(2.) Pray often rather than very long at a time. It is hard to be very long in prayer and not slacken in our affections. Those watches which are made to go longer than ordinary at one winding do commonly lose towards the end. The flesh is weak; and if the spirits of the body tire, the soul that rideth on this beast must needs be cast behind. Our Saviour, when he prayed for his life, we find him praying rather often than long at once. He who, in a long journey, lights often to let his beast take breath, and then mounts upon him again, will get to his journey's end may be sooner than he that puts him beyond his strength. Especially observe this in social prayers. For, when we pray in company we must consider them that travail with us in the duty; as Jacob said, 'I will lead on softly,...as the children are able to endure.' Yet I speak not this that you should give any check to the Spirit of God in his assistances, which sometime come so strong that the Christian is, as it were, carried with a full fore-wind, and hath the labour of tugging at the oar saved him. The ship of the soul goes with most facility when with most speed. Such assistances lift both the person praying and those that join with him—if gracious, and under the same quickenings—in a manner above all weariness. The Spirit brings spirits—affections, I mean—with him. Such a soul is like a vessel that runs full and fresh—what pours from him is quick and spiritfult; whereas at another time, when the Spirit of God denies these assistances, his prayer tastes flat to his own

palate, if not to others'.

(3.) Be very careful to approve thyself faithful in the soul-humbling work of the day. Let thy confessions be free and full, the sense thou hast of thy sins be deep, and thy sorrow for them be sincere and evangelical, for as thou quittest thyself in this, so thou wilt be in all the other parts of the duty. If thou confessest thy sin feelingly, thou wilt pray against it fervently. If thy sorrow be deep and reach to thy very heart and spirit, then thy petitions for pardoning mercy and purging grace will also come from the heart, be cordial, warm, and vehement. Whereas he that melts not in confession of sin will freeze in his prayers that he puts up against it; if his tears be false and whorish—*lachrymæ mentiri doctæ*, his desires cannot be true. Why do men ask in their petitions that grace which they do not in their hearts desire, but because they do not feel the smart, and are not loathed with the evil, of their sins that they confess? thus many confess their sins as beggars sometimes show their sores, which they are not willing to have cured. Again, as thou art in thy confession of sin, so thou wilt be in thy acknowledgments of mercy. The lower thou fallest in the abasement of thyself for thy sins, the higher thou wilt mount in thy praises for his mercies. The rebound of the ball is suitable to the force with which it is thrown down. The deeper the base is in confession, the shriller will the treble of thy praises be, for these mutually aggravate one another. the greater our mercies are, the greater are our sins; and the greater our sins, the greater are the mercies which, notwithstanding them, our good God vouchsafeth to us. So that the sense we have of one must needs be in proportion to the other; as we are afflicted for sin so will we be affected with mercy.

(4.) Improve the intervals of prayer with seasonable and suitable meditations, that thou mayest be fitted to return to the work with more life and vigour. Meditation is prayer's handmaid to wait on it both before and after the performance. It is as the plough before the sower, to prepare the heart for the duty of prayer, and the harrow to cover the seed when it is sown. As the hopper feeds the mill with grist, so doth meditation the heart with matter for prayer. Now, if it be necessary that thou shouldst consider before duty what thou art to pray, then surely after duty to make reflection on thyself how thou didst pray. The

mill may go and yet no corn be ground. Thus thou mayest confess many sins, and yet thy heart be broken and ground with sorrow for none of them all. Thou mayest pray for many graces, and exercise little or no grace in thy praying for them—thy heart being lazy, and putting no weight to the work—without which these spices are not broken, and so send not forth their sweet savour. Look therefore back upon the past duty, and observe narrowly what the behaviour of thy heart was in it. If thou findest it to have been lazy, and drew loose in its gears, or played the truant by gadding from the work with impertinent thoughts—in a word, if under the power of any sinful distemper, be sure at thy return to the duty of prayer that thou chargest this home upon thyself with shame and sorrow. This is the only way to stay God's hand and stop him from commencing a suit against thee: 'If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,' 1 Cor. 11:31. *Ubi desinit justitia incipit judicium*—where justice takes end judgment begins. If we do not justice on ourselves, then God will right himself as well as he can. Indeed thou canst not in faith pray for pardon of these sins till thou hast shown thyself on God's side by entering thy protest against them. Moses took the right method—he expressed his zeal first for God against Israel's sin of the golden calf, and then fell hard to the work of prayer to God for the pardon of it. He durst not open his lips for them to God till he had vented his zeal for God, Ex. 32:26 compared with ver. 30, 31. And if he took this course when to intercede for others, much more then shouldst thou when to pray for the pardon of thy own sin.

Again, if upon this review of thy prayer thou findest thy heart was warm in the work, that thy affections flowed out to God, and his reciprocated loves again by unbosoming himself to thee, take heed that no secret pride robs thee of thy new got treasure; be humble and thankful, remembering they were not thy own wings on which thou wert carried. And also, be careful to improve these divine favours given to encourage thee in the work, as the handfuls of ears of corn let fall for Ruth in the field of Boaz. God would not that they should stop thy mouth, but open it wider when thou comest again to pray. Did thy heart begin to melt in thy bosom? O now cry for more brokenness of heart. Did thy God cast a kind look on

thee? let it set thee a longing for fuller discoveries of his love. When the beggar sees the rich man putting his hand to his purse he cries more earnestly. God is now on the giving hand, and this should embolden thee to ask; as Abraham, who, as God yielded, made his approaches closer, improving the ground which he got by inches for a further advantage to gain more, Gen. 18:27.

[What is needful AFTER extraordinary prayer.]

3. Requisite. That which is necessary after extraordinary prayer. The third word of direction is to the Christian, how he should carry himself when the day for extraordinary prayer is over, and this lies in a holy watch that he is to set upon himself. He that prays and watcheth not, is like him that sows a field with precious seed, but leaves the gate open for hogs to come and root it up; or him that takes great pains to get money, but no care to lay it up safely when he hath it. If Satan cannot beat thee in the field, yet he hopes to have thee at an advantage when thou hast disbanded thy forces, the duty be past, and thou liest in a careless posture. Esau promised himself an opportunity of avenging himself on Jacob: 'The days of mourning,' saith he, 'for my father are at hand; then will I slay him,' Gen. 27:41. Thus saith Satan: The days of mourning and fasting will soon be over; he will not be always upon his knees praying, not always beating down his body with fasting, and then I will fall upon him. Now one of these two ways thy danger is like to come upon thee—either by his wounding thy faith or slackening thy care in thy obediential walking; and if he can do either, he will give a sad blow to thy prayers.

(1.) Look therefore after such a day to thy faith. To pray and not to act faith, is to shoot and not look where the arrow lights; to send a ship with merchandise to sea and look for no return by the voyage. Thou hast in prayer laboured to overcome God to hear and help thee; now take as much pains to overcome thy heart into a quiet waiting on God and entire confidence in him. When Jehoshaphat had ended his public fast, he stands up the next day and speaks these words to his people that had joined with him in that solemn duty, 'Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the Lord your

God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper,' II Chr. 20:20. So when our blessed Saviour had taught his disciples to pray, then he preseth them entirely to commit themselves and their affairs to that God to whom they prayed, Matt. 6:19-34. Truly else extraordinary prayer is but extraordinary prattle; we mock God, and our prayers will mock us, for no fruit will come of them. The hunter may want his supper, though his dog runs fast and mouths it well, if, when he comes at the prey, he dares not fasten upon it. Now it is faith's office to fasten on the promise and take hold of God, without which thy loud cry in prayer is bootless and fruitless. O canst thou trust thy cause with the lawyer, after thy opening it to him; and put thy life into the physician's hand by following his prescriptions, when thou hast acquainted him with thy disease; and darest not thou venture thy stake in God's hand, after thou hast poured thy soul forth to him in prayer! This is a great folly. Why shouldst thou think omnipotency cannot help, or truth and faithfulness will not? Yea, a grievous sin to bring the name of the great God into question by thy unbelief. Yet this our Saviour complains sadly to be the usage God meets with at their hands from whom he might expect better. 'Shall not God avenge his own elect which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.' What greater security can the heart of a saint desire more than the word of a faithful God? yet few to be found after all their praying for deliverance that can entirely wait for the same. 'Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?' Luke 18:8.

(2.) Look after a day of extraordinary prayer to thy obedient walking. Solomon's advice is, to 'keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,' Ecc. 5:1. Mine at present is, to look to thy foot as thou comest from it. Thou mayest do thyself more mischief than all the devils in hell can do thee. They cannot intercept thy prayers and hinder the happy return of them into thy bosom, but thou mayest soon do it: 'Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear,' Isa. 59:1, 2. This is the whisperer that separateth chief friends; that makes

God, our best friend, stand aloof from his people and their prayers. Be as careful, Christian, after a fast, as a man would be after strong physic. A cold caught now—a little disorder in thy walking—may be of sad consequence. Remember that as thou hast left thy prayers, so thy vows, with the Lord. As thou lookest God should answer the one, so he expects thou shouldst pay the other. Break thy promise to him and thou dischargest God with thy own hand of any mercy he owes thee. It is folly to think thou canst bind God and leave thyself free.—We have despatched then the first branch of the distinction of the kinds of prayer, which held forth the *diversos modos orandi*—diverse manners of praying; from which hath been shown, that we are to pray with all manner of prayer, ejaculatory and composed, solitary and social, private and public, ordinary and extraordinary; and we now go on to the second.

BRANCH SECOND.

['All prayer' viewed as to DIVERSITY IN MATTER.]

Passing from what we have said of diverse manner in prayer, we are now to consider the *diversam materiam orationis*—the diverse matter of prayer. And thus, to pray with all prayer and supplication, is to encircle the whole matter of prayer within the compass of our duties, and not to leave anything out of our prayers which God would have taken in. Now this diversity of prayer's matter, some think they find in the two words of the text, *πρωσευχῆ* and *δεήσις*; but I shall not ground my discourse on so nice a criticism. We will content ourselves with the division which the same apostle makes: 'In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,' Php. 4:6; and, 'Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks,' I Thes. 5:17, 18. In both which places the whole matter of prayer is comprehended in these two: **FIRST.** Request or petitionary prayer. **SECOND.** Thanksgiving. These two are like the double motion of the lungs, by which they suck in and breathe out the air again. In the petitionary part of prayer we desire something at God's hands; in thanksgiving we return praise to him for mercies received from him. I begin with the peti-

tionary part of prayer.

[THE PETITIONARY part of prayer.]

FIRST. The first of the twofold division of the whole matter of prayer, viz. petitionary prayer. This is threefold. First. Precatory. Second. Deprecatory. Third. Imprecatory. As for that of intercession, we shall leave it to another place, under those words ‘supplication for all saints.’

[First kind of petitionary prayer—THE PRECATORY.]

First. Precatory prayer; that part of prayer, I mean, wherein the Christian desires of God, in the name of Christ, some good thing of the promise to be given unto him. Now the good things promised are either spiritual or temporal—those that respect our souls and our eternal salvation, or those which relate to our bodies and temporary estate of them in this life. Such a large field hath the Christian given him for his requests to walk in, for ‘godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,’ I Tim. 4:8. This earth below, to a saint, is a land of promise, though not the land which is chiefly promised. God hath not promised him heaven but left him to the wide world to shift for his outward subsistence, he hath not bid them live by faith for their souls, but live by their wits for their bodies. No, he that hath promised to ‘give’ him ‘grace and glory,’ hath also said, ‘no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,’ Ps. 84:11. Their bill of fare is provided as well as their inheritance hereafter. Now all that I shall do here is to put a compass into your hand, by the help of which you may steer your course safely, when you are bound in your requests to either point of the promise, whether it be for temporal or spiritual mercies. And that I may not run you beside the true channel upon rocks or sands, I shall touch the needle of that compass I would commend to your use with the lodestone of Scripture, from which we may gather a fourfold similitude to be used in our request for spiritual and temporal good things promised, and a threefold dissimilitude also.

1. There is a fourfold similitude to be used in precatory prayer.

(1.) Whether thou prayest for temporal or spir-

itual blessings, thou must pray in the sense of thy own unworthiness, for thou deservest neither. When Christ prays for us, he pleads as an advocate for justice, because he paid before he prays, and asks but what he gives the price for. But we poor creatures are beggars, and must crave all as pure alms, for the money comes not out of our purse that made the purchase; neither was God the Father bound to engage his Son, or the Son to engage himself, in our recovery, who were fallen by forfeiture into the hands of divine justice. So that mercy is the only plea thou who art a sinner canst make with God. Thou mayest with man stand upon thy desert. Thus Jacob claimed his wages at Laban’s hand; but when he hath to do with God he changeth his plea, and sues sub formâ pauperis—in the form of the poor: ‘I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant,’ Gen. 32:10. So Daniel: ‘We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.’ No blessing so great but may be obtained where mercy is the plea, and none so little that we merit. If thou wouldst therefore beg anything at God’s hand, confess thou deservest nothing. Then are we fit to receive great things from God when we are least in our own eye; then nearest the crown when we judge ourselves unworthy of a crust. The proud Pharisee brought his righteousness in his prayer to God, and carried away his sin bound upon him; the publican brought his sin in his humble confession, and carries away his absolution and justification with him. Thus God crosseth his hands like Jacob in giving his blessings.

(2.) In both thou must pray in faith, for both spiritual and temporal blessings are promised, and therefore thou art to believe that God will be as faithful and punctual in the performance of the less promises that concern this life, as in the more weighty matters which respect thy eternal happiness in the other. Indeed, he promiseth spiritual blessings in specie—grace and glory he will give; but temporal enjoyments in valore—either in kind or value—‘no good thing will he withhold.’ And it is fit he should judge when a temporal enjoyment will be good for us, and when it will be better to give some other thing in the lieu of it. Hence that method in our Lord’s prayer, first to pray, ‘Thy will be done,’ before we

pray, 'Give us this day our daily bread.' But the seal is the same which ratifies temporal promises with that which he sets to spiritual; his truth and faithfulness are as deeply obliged to perform temporal promises, according to the tenure in which they are made, as to make good the other. And therefore we are as strongly to acquiesce in his care and providence for our protection and provision here, as for our salvation hereafter; else he had done his people wrong to take them off from an anxious care for those things which he meant not to charge his providence with. Certainly if he bids us be careful for none of these things, but only let our requests be made known to him, he intends not our loss by our ease, but thereby would have us understand and believe that he will take the care upon himself, and give us at last a full account of his love and faithfulness in the issue of his providence, how all was disposed for our best advantage.

(3.) We must join our endeavour in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings. Lazy beggars are not to be relieved at our door. 'This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat,' II Thes. 3:10. And certainly God will not bid them welcome to his door whom he would have us deny at ours. We must pray with our hand at the pump or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers.

Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? Pray and work, or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work whilst thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom? Those two proverbs in Solomon are observable, 'The hand of the diligent maketh rich,' Prov. 10:4; and, ver. 22, 'The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.' He that prays but is not diligent is not like to be rich. He that is diligent but prays not may be rich, but he cannot be blessed with his riches. But he that obtains his riches by sincere prayer in conjunction with his diligence is rich by the blessing of God, and shall escape the sorrow which the worldling lays up with his money; yea, though he gets not an estate, yet he hath the blessing of God, and that makes him rich when there is no money in his purse.

Again, is it any spiritual blessing thou prayest for? Wouldst thou have more knowledge in the things of God? Think not it will drop into thy mind

without endeavour. Daniel studied as his eyes were one while on the book, and another while lift up to heaven in prayer, Dan. 9:2. 'Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased,' Dan. 12:4. It is got by running from one means to another. As the merchant's ship takes in some of her freight at one port, some at another, so the Christian gets some light in a sermon, some in a conference; some in one duty, some in another. And he that takes up one duty, but through sloth neglects the rest, saves but his pains to lose his gains. Sometimes God is found in this duty and sometimes in that, on purpose to keep up the credit of all, that we waive none.

(4.) Our requests for both must be spiced with thanksgiving. 'With thanksgiving let your requests be made known,' Php. 4:6; and, I Thes. 5:18, 'in everything give thanks.' Art thou praying for the love and favour of God? Bless God thou art where it may be obtained, and not in hell past hope or help. Is it health thou desirest? Bless God for life; it is the Lord's mercy we are not consumed. No condition on earth can be of so sad a colour in which there may not some eye of white, some mixture of mercy, be found interwoven. *Puræ tenebræ*—utter darkness, without any stricture of mercy, is found in hell alone. Come not therefore to pray till you know also what to praise God for. As God hath an open hand to give, so he hath an open eye to see who comes to his door, and to discern between the thankful beggar and the unthankful. Will God give more to him on whom all is lost that he hath formerly bestowed? Indeed he doth do good to the evil and unthankful, but it is not a gracious return of their prayers, but an act of common providence, of which they will have little comfort when he brings the bounty of his providence in judgment against them, to aggravate their sins and increase their torment.—Now follows a threefold dissimilitude which we are to observe in framing our requests for spiritual and temporal mercies.

2. There is a threefold dissimilitude to be used in precatory prayer. Temporal mercies are chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual, but spiritual mercies for themselves, and not for temporal advantages.

(1.) Temporal mercies are chiefly to be desired for the sake of spiritual blessings, and not their own. The traveller desires a horse not for itself so much as for the convenience of his journey he is to go. Thus

the Christian, when praying for temporal things, should desire them as helps in his way and passage to heaven. I do not say it is unlawful to desire life, health, and other comforts of this life, for the suitability these have to our natural affections, and to supply our outward necessities; but to desire them only for this is low and base, it is the mere cry of the creature. The ravens thus cry, and all the beasts of the field seek their meat of God; that is, they desire the preservation of their lives, and make their moan when they want that which should support them. And these creatures being made for no higher end than the enjoyment of these particular narrow good things, they observe the law of their creation. But thou art an intellectual being, and by thy immortal soul, which is a spiritual substance, thou art as near akin to the angels in heaven as thou art by thy meaner bodily part to the beasts, yea, allied to God thy Maker, not only made by him, as they were, but for him, which they are not. He is thy chief good, and therefore thou infinitely dishonourest him and thyself too if thou canst sit down short of him in thy desires. *Nihil bonum sine summo bono*—nothing should be good to thee without God, who is thy chief good. *Non placent tibi mea sine mecum, nec tua mihi sine tecum*—thus shouldst thou say and pray, O Lord, as all my gifts and services do not please thee except with them I give thee myself, so none of these gifts of thy bounty can content me except with them thou wilt bestow thyself on me. Now this regular motion of the heart in praying for temporals is to be found only in those whose inward wheels—I mean powers and faculties—are set right by the hand of divine grace. Man in his corrupt state is like Nebuchadnezzar at grass—he hath a beast’s heart, that craves no more than the satisfaction of his sensual appetite. But when renewed by grace, then his understanding returns to him, by which he is enabled in praying for temporals to elevate his desires to a higher pitch and nobler end.

Doth sick David pray that some further time may be added to the lease of his temporal life? It is not out of a fond love to this world or the carnal entertainments of it, but to prepare himself the better for another life. ‘O spare me,’ a little ‘that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more,’ Ps. 39:13. Is he comforted with hopes of a longer stay

here? It is not any of this world’s carnal pleasures that kindles this joy in his holy breast, but the advantage he shall thereby have for praising God in the land of the living. ‘Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,’ Ps. 42:11. The saint hath as quick a sense to taste the sweetness of a temporal mercy as another; but his heart being spiritual, and so acquainted with higher enjoyments, he desires with Luther that God would not put him off with these shells of blessings. O how few thus pray for temporals! Most are but propping⁴ for their lusts while praying for them. ‘Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts,’ James 4:3. One is sick, and prays for health that he may be again at his pots or harlots. Another is childless, and he would have an heir to uphold the pride and grandeur of his house, but not the increase of Christ’s family in the world. A third would be a greater man in the world—and for what? May be, that having more power he may take the fuller revenge on his enemies that are now out of his reach. And other that bring not their sacrifice with so evil a mind, yet look no higher their carnal contentment in the enjoyment they would have, as appears by their carriage in the use of it. Thus the mariners in a sea-storm, ‘Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,’ Ps. 107:28. And when they have their life given them as they desire, ‘then are they glad because they be quiet,’ and God hears no more of them now their turn is served—a plain evidence that they were selfish and carnal in their prayer for this mercy, because they improve it not for their spiritual end. Which makes the psalmist break out into that holy option and vote, ‘Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness,’ ver. 31. But much more abominable is it to pray for spiritual mercies for the sake of some temporal advantage we hope to have by them. Thus Simon Magus desired the gifts of the Holy Ghost that he might be τὶς μέγας—a man of fame and name. And do not some labour to bring the gospel to town as an expedient to mend the takings in their shop?—others pray for the assistances of the Spirit, and

4. Propping;—(poss. derived from M.E. *prokken*, to beg) to prowl about, as in search of food or plunder; forage. From Webster’s. — SDB

project their own praise by the means, basely perverting those holy things to secular advantages? O horrid baseness! As if one should desire a prince's robe to stop an oven with it! This is, as Austin saith, *uti Deo ut fruamur mundo*—to make God the stirrup and the creature our saddle.

(2.) Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsic to our happiness and indispensably necessary to our salvation, these we are to pray for with an undeniable importunity. Such are pardon of sin, the love and favour of God, and the sanctifying graces of the Spirit. To be cold or indifferent in our prayers for these is a great wickedness. The promise will bear us out in our greatest importunity: 'Seek the Lord, and his strength: seek his face evermore,' Ps. 105:4. 'Who-soever will, let him take the water of life freely,' Rev. 22:17. *Tantum possumus in negotio religionis, quantum volumus*—we are powerful in the matter of religion. Nothing loseth us these mercies more than weak velleities and faint desires of them. But our prayers for temporal blessings must be with a latitude of submission to the will of God, because they are promised conditionally. The promise is the foundation of our faith, the superstructure therefore of our prayers must not jet beyond it. This was Israel's sin—'Who shall give us flesh to eat?' Num. 11:18. God had indeed promised to feed them in the wilderness, but not to give them every dish their wanton palate craved; and therefore, when God's bill of fare contents them not, but they cry for flesh, they have their desire but sour sauce with it; for, 'while their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them,' Ps. 78:31. Thus they were fed for the slaughter by the meat they inordinately lusted after. O take heed of peremptory prayers for any temporal enjoyment, for thereby thou beggest but a rod for thy own back. Rachel must have children or else she dies, and she at last hath two, but dies in travail of the latter. It was a smart saying of one to his wife, who passionately desired a son, and had one at last, but none of the wisest, 'Wife,' saith he, 'thou hast long passionately desired a boy, and now thou hast one that will always be a boy.' God may justly set some print of his anger on that mercy which he answers our peremptory prayers with. Why, alas! must we needs have that which we must needs lose, or shall not enjoy while we have it?

(3.) Those spiritual blessings which are intrinsic to the saints' happiness are to be prayed for with boundless desires. Not, Give me thus much grace and I will trouble thee for no more. No, God gives a little grace, not to stop our mouth, but to open it wider for more. Yet, alas! how unreasonably reasonable are most in this particular! So much holiness contents them as will, like salt, keep them from putrefying in gross sins, that they be not unsavoury to the nostrils of their neighbours, or as will save them from the lash of their tormenting conscience; like school-boys, that care for no more of their lesson than will save a whipping. Alas! this is not to desire it at all; it is thy credit abroad and thy quiet within thou desirest, and the other but to help thee to these. He that knows the true worth of grace thinks he hath never enough till satisfied with it in glory. Paul had more than many of his brethren, yet prays and presseth as hard after more as if he had none at all, Php. 3:13, 14. But in temporal enjoyments we are to stint our desires, and not let out all the sails of our affections when praying for them. A gracious heart is as unwilling to have too much of these as afraid of having too little. 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me,' Prov. 30:8. I think not a saint but could cheerfully say amen to this prayer of Agur—I am sure he ought. That house is best seated which stands neither on the bleak top of the hill nor on the wet bottom. The nature of these temporal good things is enough to convince any wise man that the mean is best. They are not the Christian's freight but his ballast, and therefore are to be desired to poise, not load, the vessel. They are not his portion—heaven is that; but his spending money in his journey thither; and what traveller that is wise desires to carry any greater charge about him than will pay for his quarters?

[Second kind of petitionary prayer
—THE DEPRECATORY.]

Second. Deprecatory prayer. The second branch in the petitionary part of prayer is deprecation, wherein we desire of God, in the name of Christ, the removal of some evil felt or feared, inflicted or threatened. So that evil is the object of deprecation. Here I shall briefly point at the evils to be deprecated,

and how we are to frame our requests to God in deprecating of them. All evil is comprehended in these two:—1. Sin. 2. Suffering.

[First object of deprecatory prayer.]

1. Object. Sin. This indeed is the evil of evils, against which chiefly we are to let fly the arrows of our prayers. This is the only thing that is intrinsically evil in its own nature. Suffering is rather evil to us than in itself, and our sufferings have both their being and malignity from the evil of our sins. Had there been no sin, there had been no suffering. Where that ceaseth, this is not to be found. No sorrow in heaven, because no sin. These, like twins, live and die together. ‘If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door;’ that is, if thou doest the evil of sin, prepare to meet with the evil of suffering. Now in sin two things [are] to be deprecated: (1.) Guilt, and (2.) Filth—the defiling power of sin.

(1.) Guilt. This is the proper effect and consequent of every sin. Whenever any sin is committed there is guilt contracted, whereby the creature becomes obnoxious to the wrath of God; and this guilt wears not off by length of time, but continues bound upon the sinner till God by an act of pardoning mercy absolves him. So that, though the act of sin be transient, and passeth away as soon as the fact is committed, yet the creature is in the bond of his iniquity, held with this chain of guilt as a prisoner to divine justice, till he by faith and repentance sues out his pardon; even as a felon who, may be, is not presently after the fact taken and brought into judgment, yet abides a debtor to the law, wherever he is, till he can obtain his pardon. Now need I speak anything to set out the dismal and deplored condition of a soul under guilt, thereby to provoke you to pray for the removal of it? There is no mountain so heavy as the guilt of the least sin is to an awakened conscience. Better thy house were haunted with devils than thy soul with guilt. If thy conscience tells thee thou art ‘in the bond of iniquity,’ thou canst not be ‘in the gall of bitterness,’ they are joined together, Acts 8:23. Guilt is a burden which the sinner can neither stand under nor throw off. One compares him to a beast stung with a gadfly—fain would he run from his pain, but still he finds it in him. This lies throbbing in his soul

like a thorn in the flesh, and will not let him rest by day or sleep by night; he turns himself on his bed as Regulus in his barrel stuck with nails—not an easy plat that he can find in it. This makes him afraid of every disease that comes to town, pox or plague, lest it should arrest him and bring him by death to judgment. His guilt makes him think that every bush a man, and every man a messenger of divine vengeance to slay him. The ‘mark’ that God set upon guilty Cain, Gen. 4:15, is by many interpreters conceived to be a trembling heart, made visible by a ghastly countenance and discomposed carriage of his outward man; and that passage, ver. 12, ‘A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth,’ the Septuagint read thus, *στένων καὶ τρέμων ἔση ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*—thou shalt be sighing and trembling in the earth. No convulsion fit so distorts the body as sin doth the soul.—Now in this prayer against guilt, and for pardon, observe these particulars.

[Five particulars to be observed
in praying against guilt.]

(a) Pray with a deep sense and sorrow for thy sins. The worse nonsense in prayer is of the heart, when that hath no sense of the sin [the person praying] deprecates, or of the mercy he desires. Nothing more hardens the heart of God against our prayer, than the hardness of our heart in prayer; and, on the contrary, no such way to melt God into pity as for our own hearts to dissolve into sorrow. He that would have us ‘give wine unto those that be of heavy hearts,’ Prov. 31:6, saves this vessel—the promise, I mean, of pardoning mercy, which holds the sweetest wine in God’s cellar—‘to revive the heart of the contrite ones,’ Isa. 57:15. A tear in the eye for sin adorns the creature more than a jewel in his ear, and his prayer more than all the embroidery of expressions in it can do. While the publican smote his own breast, he got into God’s bosom, and carried a pardon home with him. Will Christ drop his blood to procure thy pardon who canst shed no tears for thy sin? The truth is, here lies the difficulty of the work—not how to move God, but how to get the sinner’s own heart melted. It is harder to get sin felt by the creature, than the burden, when felt, removed by the hand of a forgiving God. Never was tender-hearted chirurgeon more

willing to take up the vein and bind up the wound of his fainting patient, when he hath bled enough, than God is, by his pardoning mercy, to ease the troubled spirit of a mourning penitent. It is one rule he gives his servants in their practice upon their spiritual patients, to beware of making too great an evacuation in the souls of poor sinners by excessive humiliation, lest thereby the spirits of their faith be too much weakened: 'Sufficient to such a man is this punishment,' &c. 'So that...ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow,' II Cor. 2:6, 7.

(b) Justify and clear God in all the expressions of his displeasure for thy sins. Thou dost perhaps carry the marks of his anger on thy flesh in some outward judgment; or, which is worse, the terrors of the Lord have taken hold of thy soul, and like poisoned arrows lie burning in thy conscience, where they stick. Acknowledge him just, and all this that has come upon thee 'less than thy iniquities deserve,' *Ezra* 9:13. The way to escape the fatal stroke of his axe is to kiss the block. Clear his justice, and fear not but his mercy will save thy life. Thou hast a promise on thy side: 'If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant,' *Lev.* 26:41, 42. David took this course and sped, 'For I acknowledge my transgressions,' *Ps.* 51:3. And why is he so willing to spread his sins in his confession before the Lord? See *ver.* 4: 'That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.' He would have all the world know that God did him no wrong in the judgments that came upon him; he takes all the blame upon himself.

(c) Take heed thou prayest not with a reservation. Be sure thou renouncest what thou wouldst have God remit. God will never remove the guilt so long as thou entertainest the sin. What prince will pardon his treason that means to continue a traitor? It is desperate folly to desire God to forgive what thou intendest to commit. Thou hadst as good speak out and ask leave to sin with impunity, for God knows the language of thy heart, and needs not thy tongue to be an interpreter. Some princes have misplaced their high favours to their heavy cost, as the emperor Leo Armenius, who pardoned that monster of ingratitude Michael Balbus, and was in the same night in which

he was delivered out of prison murdered by him. But the great God is subject to no mistake in his government. Never got a hypocrite pardon in the disguise of a saint. He will call thee by thy own name, though thou comest to him in the semblance of a penitent. 'Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam,' said the prophet. Hypocrisy is too thin a veil to blind the eyes of the Almighty. Thou mayest put thy own eyes out, so as not to see him; but thou canst never blind his eyes that he should not see thee. And as long as God loves himself, he must needs hate the hypocrite; and if he hates him, surely he will not pardon him. The pardoned soul and the sincere are all one. 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,' *Ps.* 32:2.

(d) Make Christ thy plea. Pardon of sin is a favour not known in the first covenant. Do, and live; sin, and die, were all its contents. No room left for an after-game by that law. The gospel covenant is our tabula post naufragium—the only plank by which we may recover the shore after our miserable wreck. This covenant is founded in Christ, who, upon agreement with his Father, undertook to answer the demands of the law, and happily performed what he undertook; upon which the gospel is preached, and pardon promised to all that repent and believe on him. 'Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour,' *Acts* 5:31. Him hath God 'set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,' *Rom.* 3:25. As therefore, when Christ intercedes for poor sinners, he carries his blood with him and presents it to God, for the price of that forgiveness he desires for them; so thou mayest bring the same blood in the hand of thy faith when thou prayest for the pardon of thy sins, for 'without shedding of blood is no remission,' *Heb.* 9:22. This is the more to be heeded, because many, out of ignorance, and some from a corrupt principle, apply themselves to their prayers to the absolute goodness and mercy of God for pardon. Ask them why they hope to be forgiven, and they will tell you, 'God is good, and they hope he will be merciful to them, seeing his nature is so gracious.' But, alas! they forget he is just as well as merciful, and mercy will not act but with the consent of his justice. Now the only salve for the justice of God is the satisfaction of Christ. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteous-

ness;...that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,' Rom. 3:25, 26. So that, to desire God to forgive thee thy sin without the intervening of Christ's satisfaction, is to desire God to be unjust, and pardon thee with the loss of his own honour; and how welcome thou art like to be that comest to him on such an errand, is easy to think.

(e) Lastly, take no denial in this thy request, but, pray for it with unwearied importunity. It is a mercy thou canst not want; it is more necessary than thy very being. Better never to be than ever be unpardoned. Think but a little on thy dismal condition while guilt is not taken off and thy pardon not obtained, and it is impossible that thou shouldst be a cold faint suitor for this mercy of mercies. Know, then, while unpardoned thou art God's prisoner. All the plagues written in the law cleave as close to thee as thy girdle to thy loins. Every moment thou mayest fear they should take hold upon thee as thou walkest in thy house, sittest at thy table, or liest on thy bed. Where canst thou be safe who hast God {for} thine enemy? Can the bread resist him that eats it? or the tree withstand the axe of the feller? truly no more canst thou the wrath of an avenging God. Is it not he that holds the stoutest devils in chains?—he who can kindle a fire in thy own bones and bosom, and make thee consume like lime with the inward burning of thy self-tormenting thoughts? Is he not a righteous God, whose justice binds him, in the distributions of justice, to be exact according to the sinner's demerit? Is he not the everlasting God?—not a sorry creature, who may threaten thee to-day, and be dead himself to-morrow; but eternity itself, who ever lives to take vengeance on sinners, out of whose hands thou canst not escape by dying?

In earthly courts, when the man dies his cause dies with him, because out of their jurisdiction, and past their summons. But, at death, thou fallest into the hands of the living God, who will pursue his quarrel with thee in the other world also. No sooner is thy soul abandoned of thy body and turned out of its earthly house, but it shall return to God to receive its doom. Neither shall thy body long rest in the grave where it is earthed, but be called forth to share with the soul in torment, whose partner it hath been in sin. The parting of these at death to a guilty soul is sad enough; but their meeting again at the great day

of judgment will be much more dismal. For husband and wife, that have joined in some bloody murder, to be attached and sent to several prisons in order to their trial, must needs fill them with fear and terror of their approaching judgment, but much more dreadful is it to them when brought forth to receive their sentence, and suffer at the same gibbet together. At death, the sinner's body is disposed of to one prison, his soul to another, and both meet again at the great day of assize for the world—then to be sent by the final sentence of the Judge to everlasting flames in hell's fiery furnace, where, after the poor wretch hath experimented a thousand millions of years the weight of God's just vengeance, he shall find himself no nearer the end of his misery than he was the first day wherein his torment commenced. Then death will be desired as a favour, but it shall flee from him—his misery being both intolerable and interminable. By this time, I suppose, a pardon will be thought worth thy having, and too good to be lost by sluggish sleepy praying for it. When, therefore, thou hast chafed thy soul thus into a sense of the indispensable necessity of this mercy, then take up a holy resolution to lay thy siege to the throne of grace, and never to rise till God open the gates of his mercy to thee. As it is so necessary thou canst not want it; so thou hast the promise of a faithful God that thou shalt not miss it, upon the timely and sincere seeking of it. 'If we confess, he is faithful and just to forgive.' Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the Almighty may be overcome. Manasseh, who could not on his throne—when he sinned and stouted it out against God—defend himself from the justice of God, yet in his dungeon and fetters, greatly humbling himself before the Lord, obtained his mercy. So Ephraim, 'when he spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died,' Hosea 13:1.

(2.) The second thing in sin to be deprecated is the defiling power of it. He that desires not to be purged from the filth of sin, prays in vain to be eased of the guilt. If we love the work of sin, we must like the wages also. A false heart, could be willing to have his sin covered, but the sincere desires his nature to be cured and cleansed. David begged a clean heart as well as a quiet conscience: 'Blot out all mine iniquities; create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me,' Ps. 51:9, 10. He desires water to

purify his heart, as well as blood to sprinkle and pacify his conscience. Now, in framing thy requests as to this, observe these particulars.

[Five particulars to be observed in praying against the defilement of sin.]

(a) Be sure thou comest with a deep abhorrence of thyself for that sin-filth which cleaves to thee. This is called 'knowing the plague of a man's own heart,' I Kings 8:38, when a creature is affected and afflicted with the sense of his corruptions, as if he had so many plague sores running upon him, and bathes himself for them, as much as Job did for the boils and sores with which his body was covered. The leper was commanded, in order to his cure, to put himself into a mourner's habit: 'His clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean,' Lev. 13:45. Why all this, but to express the deep sense of his sin and misery? Look upon the saints in scripture, and you shall find this was their way to abase themselves in their prayers with the greatest self-abhorrency that was possible. Penitent David takes the fool, yea the beast, unto himself; he knows not how to speak bad enough of himself. 'So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee,' Ps. 73:22. Holy Job cries out, 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,' Job 42:6. Others blush, and are as much ashamed to be seen in the presence of God, as one that had fallen into some puddle or jakes⁵ would be in that pickle to come before his prince.

(b) In praying against thy lusts, look thy heart goes with thy tongue. In nothing so our hearts put more cheats upon us than in our prayers, and in no requests more than in those which are levelled against our lusts. That is least oftentimes intended which is most pretended. And truly we had need be well acquainted with ourselves before we can find the bottom of our designs. Austin confesseth, when he was a young man, and forced by conviction in his conscience to pray that God would deliver him out of the bondage of his lust, that yet the secret whispers of his heart were non adhuc, Domine—not yet, Lord. He

was afraid that God would take him at his word. Thus the hypocritical Jews first 'set up their idols in their heart,' Eze. 14:3. This is a great wickedness. And it were a just, though a heavy plague, for God to answer such according to the secret vote of their hearts, by them up to those lusts which they inwardly crave. When Paul begs prayers for himself, to embolden them in their requests for him, he assures them of his sincerity: 'Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly,' Heb. 13:18. As if he had said, I durst not make you my spokesmen to God, if my heart did not check me that I did secretly comply with any sin, and did not mean in all things to live honestly. How then canst thou have the face to go thyself to God on an errand to desire that of him which thou wouldst be loath to have.

Question. But how may we come to know that our hearts are sincere or hypocritical in praying against the defiling power of sin?

Answer [1]. Observe whether thy prayer be uniform—laid against all sin, one lust as well as another. Sincerity makes not here a balk and there a furrow; is not hot against one lust and cold against another; but goes through stitch in the work: it 'hates every false way,' Ps. 119:104. It shoots its arrows at the whole flock, and singles not this sin out in his prayers which he would have taken, and that left: 'Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,' ver. 133. He knows if all his chains were knocked off, and only one left upon him, he should be as true a slave to Satan as if all the other were still on. He prays not against one sin because a great one, and pleads for another because it is a little one. The dust and rubbish help to fill up the wall as well as the great stones; little sins contribute as well as great to make up the partition wall between God and the creature. Every little speck blemisheth the garment, and every penny increaseth the sums. So little sins defile the soul and swell the sinner's account. Therefore he prays against them as well as the other. David, who desired to be kept back from 'presumptuous sins,' did also beg to be 'cleansed from his secret faults,' Ps. 19:12.

Answer [2]. Observe whether thy heart stand firmly resolved to renounce that sin thou prayest God to subdue. The sincere Christian binds himself, as well as labours to engage God against his sin. Indeed that prayer is a blank which hath not a vow in it.

5. Jakes:—an outdoor toilet, privy, outhouse. From Webster's.

‘Thou...hast heard my vows,’ Ps. 61:5; that is, his prayers, which are always to be put up with vows. Is it a mercy thou prayest him to give? If sincere, thou wilt vow to praise him for it and serve him with it. Is it a sin thou prayest against? Except thou jugglest with God thou wilt vow as well as pray against it. ‘Remove from me the way of lying,’ Ps. 119:29. There is David’s deprecation. Now, mark his promise and vow: ‘I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me,’ ver. 30. While he prays against the way of lying he chooseth the way of truth.

Answer [3]. Observe whether thou beest vigorous in the use of all appointed means to mortify the lust thou prayest against. Resolutions in the time of prayer are good when backed with strenuous endeavours, else but a blind for a false heart to cover itself with. Samson did not only pray he might be avenged on his enemies, but set his hands to the pillars of the house. He that hath bid thee pray against thy lust hath bid thee shun the occasions of it. ‘Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house, lest thou give thy honour unto others,’ Prov. 5:8; that is, lest thou be hooked in to her by the occasion. Thus Joseph, that he might not be drawn to lie with his mistress, would not stay alone in the room with her, Gen. 39:7-12. So, Prov. 23:20, ‘be not among wine-bibbers;’ and, ‘look not on the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup,’ ver. 31, because looking may breed liking. Now, art thou conscientiously careful to keep out of the way that leads to the sin, and to shun the occasion that might betray thee into the hands of that lust thou prayest against? Certainly, he that would not have his house blown up will not have set his gunpowder in the chimney-corner.

(c) Again, God, who bids thee pray against thy lusts, commands thee also to take the sword of his word, by meditating on it, and applying it close to thy heart and conscience, to cut them down and get victory over them. Thus did David. He hid the word in his heart that he might not sin. Thou prayest against covetousness. O that God would rid thy heart of it! Well, what dost thou towards thy own delivery from this base lust? Here is a sword put into thy hand, whose edge is sharp enough to cut and kill if thou wilt lay it on in good earnest. This sets forth the vanity of the creature—how vile and base a sin covetousness is;

takes away all occasion of inordinate desires and cares for the world by many sweet promises—what he hath laid up in another world for us, and what care in his providence he will take for us in this life. ‘Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ Heb. 13:5. Now, what use doth thou make of this weapon? Dost thou strengthen thy assent to the truth of these promises?—labour to affect thy heart with the sweetness of them, and then draw forth this sword to defend thyself against this lust when the enemy comes with a temptation to it? If so, thou wert sincere in thy prayer. A false heart contents itself with a few idle lay prayers against his lust, but is afraid to use this sword against it. Or, if he doth, he strikes with the back and not the edge; or lays his stroke so favourably on that it shall not much endanger the life of his sin—like a mountebank, that will be sure to make no worse wound in his side than his balsam will in a day or two cure.

Now, to raise thy heart to the greater vehemency in praying against thy lusts, labour deeply to affect thy heart what a fearful plague it is—indeed, of all other incomparably the greatest—for a soul to be given up of God to the power of his lusts. This consideration, if any, will make thee lay close siege to God and set upon him with the utmost importunity, knowing thou art an undone creature if thou speedest not in thy errand. When God intends to smite home he takes his aim at the heart, he gives the creature over to his lusts. Thus he hardened Pharaoh to a final obstinacy, ‘I will...send all my plagues upon thine heart,’ Ex. 9:14. They did not only light upon the beasts and fruits of the field, or upon their own bodies, but chiefly upon their hearts and spirits, hardening them into obstinacy to their destruction. And this, indeed, is to send all plagues in one. Other plagues, that reach only to estate or body, are consistent with the love and favour of God. He can smite the body and smile on the soul; blast the man’s estate and bless him with spiritual riches; make him poor in the world and rich in faith. But he that is given up to his lusts is abhorred of God. A saint may be given up to Satan ut lictori—to correct him, for the destruction of the flesh and saving of his spirit; but it is the brand of a reprobate to be delivered up to Satan ut domino—that his lusts

may have full power over him; which judiciary act of God portends the sinner's destruction, Deut. 2:30; II Thes. 2:11. Outward plagues are sometimes in the sinner's mouth as a bridle to restrain him from sin. But this is a spur that makes them more mad after their lusts; it takes away the sense of sin, and then the wretch plays the devil. Nothing will stop him in his way, but to hell he will go over hedge and ditch.

(d) Pray against the power of thy lusts as a branch of the gospel covenant. God is not bound by the first covenant to stir a foot for man's help. Man went of his own accord over to the devil's quarters. He deserted God and chose a new lord; and in his hands God might have left him, without offering any help for his rescue. It was not any tie that man had upon God by the covenant of nature which obliged him, but his own free grace that moved him, to undertake his recovery. And this he doth by making a new covenant on the ruins of the old. So that, whoever will pray against his lusts with success must first become a covenanter with God, by accepting the terms upon which God in it offers to save us from our sins, and they are faith and repentance. When the soul doth thus face about from his sins to close with Christ, then he becomes a covenanter with God, and may, with faith, call God into the field for his help against this huge host of lusts and devils that come against him. God's chariots are his; the whole militia of heaven is engaged in his quarrel. 'Sin shall not have dominion over you'—and why?—'for ye are not under law but under grace,' Rom. 6:14; that is, you are not under the law covenant made with Adam, but under the gospel covenant made with Christ, and through him with all believers. O how many prayers against sin are lost for want of well understanding this grand notion of the gospel! A great cry is made and complaint by many of their sins to God, and victory over them pretend to be desired; yet they live and grow stronger every day than other. And what is the reason? Alas! they stand not in a federal relation to God; neither take they any care how to get into it. Will a prince raise an army to fight for he knows not whom? Indeed, if his subjects or allies be in distress he is ready to step in for their succour; but strangers cannot expect he should do this for them. Leagues are made before assistance desired. God first promised to bring Israel 'into the bond of his covenant,'

Eze. 20:37; and then, that he will 'accept them with your sweet savour,' ver. 41. David knew this very well, that the carnal world are abandoned by God, to be trod under the foot of every lust; and therefore, when he prays God would order his steps in his word, and let no iniquity have dominion over him, he desires it as a favour peculiar to those that were near and dear to him: Deal with me 'as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name,' Ps. 119:132.

(e) Pray not only against the power of sin, but for the power of holiness also. A naughty heart may pray against his sins, not out of any inward enmity to them, or love to holiness, but because they are troublesome guests to his conscience. Believe it for a certain truth, his zeal is false that seems hot against sin but is key-cold to holiness. A city is rebellious that keeps their rightful prince out though it receives not his enemy in. Nay, the devil needs not fear but at last he shall make that soul his garrison again, out of which for a while he seems shut, so long as it stands empty and is not filled with solid grace, Matt. 12:44, 45. What indeed should hinder Satan's re-entry into that house which hath not in it to keep him out?

[Second object of deprecatory prayer.]

2. Object. The second object of deprecatory prayer is suffering. Sin brought suffering into the world. Sin is indeed the elder twin, but suffering stayed not long after it; for it took it by the heel, presently arresting Adam upon the very place where he committed his trespass, and ever since follows it as close as the shadow doth the body. It leaves not the saint till death parts him and his sin, but pursues the wicked with their sins into the other world also. So that this distribution of suffering into temporal and eternal shall content us at present—they being comprehensive of all the miseries which sin hath brought upon the sons of men. Now my work in this place shall be only to direct the Christian how to frame his prayer in deprecating the one and the other also. (1.) Temporal sufferings—how the Christian is to deprecate and pray against them. (2.) Eternal suffering.

[How the Christian is to pray
against temporal sufferings.]

(1.) Temporal sufferings—how the Christian is to deprecate and pray against them.

[1.] Negatively—The Christian is not to pray for an immunity from all temporal sufferings. There is no foundation for such a prayer in the promise; and what God thinks not fit to promise we must not be bold to ask. Temporal promises are to be understood, saith Melancthon, cum exceptione crucis—with exception of the cross. God had one Son without sin, but he will have none in this life without suffering. John writes himself, ‘Your brother, and companion in tribulation,’ Rev. 1:9. He hath too high an opinion of himself that would have God lead him dryshod on a fair causeway to heaven, while he sees the rest of his brethren march through thick and thin to the same place; or who thinks he needs not this thorn-hedge of suffering, to keep him as well as others from wandering out of his way to glory. The rod and ferule are not more needful among children at school than suffering is to the saints while in their minority here on earth. If thou wert come to that ripeness of ingenuity as to have worn off all thy childishness, thou shouldst stay here no longer under the lash; but while thou art subject to sin thou must submit to his disciplinary rod. Valetudinarios⁶ bodies can as well spare food as physic, and saints in this their crazy state may as well live without ordinances as without sufferings. In a word, to pray absolutely against all suffering is to desire one of the greatest punishments on this side hell. When God said, ‘I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom,’ Hosea 4:14, he meant them no good by sparing his rod. If we count him an unwise father that, when he puts his child to school, indents with his master not to whip him; surely much more folly were it in thee to desire God to privilege thee from all suffering.

[2.] Affirmatively—how he may and should pray against sufferings; and in these particulars following.

(a) Deprecate the vindictive justice and wrath of God in all temporal sufferings. Thus Jeremiah shapes his prayer, ‘O Lord, correct me, but with judgment;

not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing,’ Jer. 10:24, and, ch. 17:17, ‘Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.’ He declines not suffering but deprecates wrath. As if he had said, ‘Let trouble come, but not with this message—to tell me thou art mine enemy; shoot thy darts, my breast is open to receive them; but let them not be envenomed arrows headed with thy punitive justice.’ Without this sting all suffering is innocent and harmless. But if the creature does fear—though without just cause—that they are shot out of justice’s bow, then they drink up his spirits and exanimate him presently. ‘When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth,’ Ps. 39:11. That holy woman, I Kings 17:18, was not so much distressed for her son’s death as for the reflection this sad providence made upon her conscience: ‘Art thou come...to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?’ Thou canst not therefore be too passionately importunate in deprecating this.

(b) Deprecate the snare and temptation that suffering may expose thee to. Satan commonly finds it easy to make some sinful impression upon the saint when he is heated, and his ‘heart made soft,’ as Job phraseth it, ‘in the furnace of affliction.’ He is a rare Christian in whom the stream of his grace runs clear upon such royling. Job was a man of a thousand—God’s nonesuch: ‘None like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man,’ Job 1:8; yet bewrayed many weaknesses in his troubles, and would have done more, had not God in pity to his poor servant taken the devil off before he had quite run him down. Christ teacheth us to pray against suffering under the notion of temptation: ‘Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.’ That is, let us not be led into sin when we fall into suffering, let us not fall into thy hands and Satan’s together. This discovers a holy frame of heart—to be more tender of our conscience than skin; not so much to fear affliction from God, as, left in it, we should be have ourselves unseemly and unholily towards him. Agur is not so much ashamed to beg as afraid to steal, and so take the name of his God in vain, upon which account he chiefly prays against poverty, Prov. 30:8, 9. There is nothing lost by serving God first and preferring his honour before our own private interest in our prayers. Self-denial is the best for self-seeking; for, by neg-

6. Valetudinarios; sickly, ill, in poor health.
—From Webster’s.

lecting ourselves for God's sake, we oblige him to take the care of us upon himself, and he is the only happy man who hath his stake laid up in God's hands.

(c) Deprecate the excess of suffering—that thou beest not overladen, thy burden too heavy for thy back. This is promised. Thou mayest therefore present it in faith: 'I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure;' Jer. 46:28. The patient doth not intrench upon the physician's art by desiring him to proportion his dose according to the weakness of his body, if, when he hath done this, he acquiesceth in his skill and faithfulness for the same. Indeed, to desire God to consider our weakness, and then not to rely on his wisdom and care, but continue jealous and suspicious, or to murmur at his prescriptions, as if the physic he gives were too churlish and strong, this makes a dishonourable reflection upon God. Sometimes the physician exceeds the proportion that his fearful patient thinks strong enough, but withal tells him, 'You are not so weak as you take yourself to be. Your body may bear so many grains more in the composition. Leave me to my art and all shall be well.' Thus God, who knows our frame exactly, deals with his people, and is highly pleased to see them satisfied with what he orders them out: 'In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,' Job 1:22; οὐκ ἔδωκεν ἄφροσύνην τῷ θεῷ—so the Septuagint reads it—he did not impute folly to God; indeed the word {Hebrew Characters Omitted} (tiphlah), is a noun. The meaning of the place is, Job did not make any unworthy reflection upon God for the evils he suffered by his providence, as if anything were wanting in his care or wisdom, like some rash physician, who fails either in timing or tempering his physic.

(d) Thou mayest not only deprecate these evils in thy affections, but also pray believingly for a happy issue out of them all. The darkest lane of suffering shall, to the saint, have a lightsome end. And all, we say, is well that ends well. 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful,' James 5:11. This is that which God so fully intends in all his saints' troubles, that he takes pleasure in thinking of it beforehand: 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace,' Jer. 29:11. And that petition comes

in a happy time to court, which finds the king thinking of the very business it prays for.

(2.) Eternal suffering. The second kind of suffering is eternal in hell. This is the center in which all the lines of sin and of misery meet—the common shoal into which they all disgorge themselves, as rivers do their streams into the vast ocean. And as rivers, when they are fallen into the sea, lose their several names in one that comprehends them all—the ocean; so all the evils of this life, when resolved into this, forget their private names—sickness, pains, poverty, &c,—and are called hell. Not that these are all formally and literally there, but virtually, in that the torment of the damned doth not only amount to, but, beyond expression, exceed them all. As in heaven there is no belly-cheer, yet a feast; no silks and satins worn, yet all in glorious robes; as silver is in gold, and gold in a jewel, so all these are in heaven—because that which is of infinite more value and worth than such things as are of highest reckoning on earth. Thus the great miseries of this life are incomparably less than the least torment of hell. Never can the creature say he is completely miserable, till the devouring jaws of that infernal pit inclose him. Were the worst of his punishment what he feels here, he might in a manner bless himself; as Paul, on the contrary saith, he should judge the saint miserable above others, if all his hope were here. But there is the sinner's easeless endless state. There is not so much as one well day to release him a while from his pain, but he shall continue forever in the height of his paroxysm; no change of weather or hope of clearing, but a perpetual storm set in to rain fire and brimstone upon him to all eternity, for so long it will be before the arm of the Almighty is weary of pouring out his wrath, or his heart be brought in love with sin, and reconciled to the sinner. Now, in deprecating this, we should endeavour to keep this threefold notion of hell in our thoughts, for which above all we are to desire to be delivered from it.

(a) Conceive of hell as a state of sin as well as of suffering, yea, in its utmost height. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell. Neither sin in the wicked, nor grace in the saint, come here to their full

ripeness. Grace being an outlandish⁷ slip brought from heaven's paradise, riseth not to its just height and procerity⁸, till it be transplanted and set in its native climate from whence it came. And sin, being a brat of hell, comes not to its full complexion and monstrosity, till it be sent back to the place it came from. Here poor wretches are tolled on to sin by the pleasure it promiseth. But there they sin out of malice, for nothing else can invite them where this morsel is eaten with such sour sauce. On earth the sinner is maidenly, and conceals the venom that is bagged in his heart; but in hell he spits it out in blasphemies against heaven. In a word, here he sins with wavering thoughts, and some weak purposes of repenting, but there he is as desperate as the devil himself—hardened beyond all relenting. Now, under this notion, thou shouldst pray to be delivered from hell, that thou mayest never be one of that damned crew, who think it not enough to fight against God their Maker on earth, but carry the war with them into the other world also, and there continue their feud with implacable enmity to eternity. Certainly the saints—to whom the notions of sin in this life are so grievous, above all the crosses and losses that befall them, and who count a few years' neighbourhood among the wicked so great an affliction, that they cry, 'Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar'—must needs deprecate that dismal state with their utmost vehemency of spirit, wherein they should be everlastingly yoked with sin, and cooped up with unclean sinners, both which they loathe so perfectly.

It was the speech of a gracious woman when on the very marches of death: 'O Lord, send me not to hell among such filthy company, which thou knowest I have not liked on earth.' But as for those that can fadge very well with their lusts, and the company of the wicked here, I know not how they can thus deprecate that place where they shall meet with that which pleaseth them so much on earth. David, Ps. 26, first

7. By outlandish, Rev. Gurnall means foreign or alien here. —SDB

8. procerity, n. [L. proceritas, from procerus, tall.] Tallness; height of stature. From WEBSTER'S

— SDB

protests his abhorrency against the ways and society of the wicked: 'I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil-doers; and will not sit with the wicked,' ver. 4, 5: then his zeal for God, and delight he had in his house to praise and serve him, ver. 6-8. After which, he breaks out into this prayer, 'Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men,' ver. 9. As if he had said, I am not of their knot in my life, O let me not be of their bundle at my death. I have praised thee on earth, send me not to blaspheme thee in hell. I have loved the habitations of thy house here, let me not dwell with unclean spirits hereafter.

(b) Hell is a state of separation from the blissful presence of God. Pray to be delivered from it under this notion—as it is the last, yea, everlasting excommunication of the creature from God. 'Go, ye cursed,' that is, never to see my sweet face more—called therefore 'outer darkness,' because not the least beam or stricture of his favour to enlighten the souls of the damned, nor the least crevice is left open for hope to expect it. The heat of hell-fire is not so dismal, as the want of this light. This makes them cursed; 'Go, ye cursed.' The curse lies in their departure from God, the fountain of all blessing. All besides this were tolerable. Would God cast but one kind look upon those miserable souls, as they swim in this lake of fire and brimstone, it were able to change the property of the place, and the joy thereof were enough to take away the sense of their torment. The three worthies in Daniel could walk in the fire, having God to bear them company, as if they had been only in the sunshine. That which a saint prizeth most in heaven is the presence of God: 'So shall we ever be with the Lord,' 1 Thes. 4:17. And hell is most dreaded by them, because a gulf is fixed between the souls in it and God, that no communion can be had with him to all eternity. O how few pray against hell under this notion! how few cry out with David, 'Cast me not away from thy presence!' Ps. 51:11. If this were the thing above all they feared should befall them in the other world, would they so willingly live without acquaintance with God in this world? Surely no.

(c) Hell is a state wherein the damned can never actually satisfy God's justice; for their debt being infinite, and they, because creatures, but finite, will ever

be paying. But the last farthing can never be paid, which is the only reason they lie forever in prison, because it can never be said, 'Now God hath his due.' But Christ, the saints' pay-master, discharged their whole debt at once, and took in the bond, which he nailed to his cross, leaving no back-reckoning unpaid, to bring the believer afterward into any danger from the hands of divine justice. Now, as an ingenuous debtor desires his freedom at his creditor's hands, that thereby he may be capable of paying his debt, as well as to escape the misery that himself should endure by his imprisonment; so an ingenuous soul—and such is every saint—deprecates hell, as well with an eye to God's glory, as to his own ease and happiness. Lord, saith the sincere soul, if thou packest me away to hell, there I shall pay thee, it is true, by my just torments something in a dribbling way by retail, but never be able to discharge the whole sum; but at Christ's hands thou mayest receive to the full what thy justice can demand at mine, and also make me thy poor creature a trumpeter of thy praise to eternity. O send me not to blaspheme thee among that wretched crew of damned souls and unclean spirits, who so much desire to join with the choir of holy angels and saints in singing hallelujahs to thy holy and glorious name.

[Third kind of petitionary prayer
—THE IMPRECATORY.]

Third. Imprecatory prayer; wherein the Christian imprecates the vengeance of God upon the enemies of God and his people. On such a sad and solemn errand are the saints' prayers sometimes sent to heaven, and speed as effectually as when they go to obtain blessings for themselves and the church of God. And no wonder, for they are perfumed with Christ's merits, and thereby are as acceptable to God as any other they put up in his name. 'And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God,' Rev. 8:4. Now what kind of prayers these were is clear by the next words, 'And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake,' ver. 5. By which is signified the dreadful judgments which God in answer to his

saints' prayers would bring upon the wicked world, whose bloody persecutions of the church, and fury against the truth of God, made the saints to cry to heaven for vengeance upon them; and that it should come inevitably come as thunder, lightning, and earthquakes, that can be resisted by no power or policy of the greatest monarch on earth. Thus, as at the firing of some cannon planted against a city, you may see its turrets or wall come tumbling down; so, upon the prayers of the saints, great judgments were certainly to befall the enemies of God and his church. Now, the path wherein the Christian is here to tread being very narrow, he is to be the more cautious that he steps not awry. He is, in this part of prayer which is imprecatory, like one that drives a chariot on the brow of a steep hill, who, if he hath not the quicker eye and steadier hand, may soon spoil all. The highest strains of a saint's duty run nearest the most dangerous precipices, as the most mysterious truths are soonest perverted into the most damnable errors. I shall therefore first lay down a few particulars which may serve as a rail to compass in this duty, for the better securing the Christian from falling into any miscarriage about it.

1. Take heed thou dost not make thy private particular enemies the object of thy imprecation. We have no warrant, when any wrong us, presently to go and call for fire from heaven upon them. We are bid, indeed, to heap coals upon our enemy's head, but they are of love, not of wrath and revenge. Job sets a black brand upon this, and clears himself from the imputation of so great a sin: 'If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,...neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul,' Job 31:29, 30. He durst not wish his enemy ill, much less deliberately form a wish into a prayer, and desire God to curse him. Our Saviour hath taught us a more excellent way: 'Bless them that curse you, ...and pray for them which despitefully use you,' Matt. 5:44. I know this is counted a poor sheepish spirit by many of our gallants. Go pray for them? No, send them the glove rather, and be revenged on them in a duel by shedding their blood. This is the drink-offering which these sons of pride delight to pour out to their revenge. Or, curse them to the pit of hell with their God damn them oaths! O tremble at such a spirit as this! The ready way to fetch a curse from

heaven on thyself, is to imprecate one sinfully upon another. 'As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones,' Ps. 109:17, 18. Moses, I suppose, has as noble a spirit as any of these that style them such men of honour; yet, did he draw upon Aaron, or fall a cursing of Miriam, when they had used him so unworthily? I trow not, but bears all patiently. Nay, when God declares his displeasure against Miriam for this affront put upon him, see how this holy man intercedes for her with God, Num. 12. This is valour of the right make, to overcome evil with good, and instead of seeking revenge on him that wrongs us, to get the mastery of our own corruption so far as to desire his good the more. Thus our Lord, when he was numbered amongst transgressors, even then 'made intercession for the transgressors,' Isa. 53:12; that is, those very men which used him so bloodily, while they were digging his heart out of his body with their instruments of cruelty, then was he begging the life of their souls with his fervent prayers.

2. When thou prayest against the enemies of God and his church, direct thy prayers rather against their plots than person. Thus the apostles, 'And now, Lord, behold their threatenings,' Acts 4:29. Not, 'confound their persons,' but, 'behold their threatenings;' and so they leave their case with the Lord to right it for them. So David, 'O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness,' II Sam. 15:31. Indeed, did do more, he destroyed plot and plotter also; and in this sense the saints may oft say with the prophet, 'Thou hast done terrible things we looked not for'—by pouring out his vengeance on the persons, when they have only prayed against their wicked designs.

3. When praying against the persons of those that are open enemies to God and his church, it is safest to pray indefinitely and in general: 'Let them all be confounded...that hate Zion,' Ps. 129:5; because we know not who of them are implacable, and who not, and therefore cannot pray absolutely and peremptorily against particular persons. There may be an elect vessel for a time in open hostility against God and his church, whom afterward God may consecrate to himself by converting grace, and so make him a holy vessel for the use of his sanctuary. We do, it is

confessed, find some in Scripture prayed against by name. So Moses prayed against Korah and his complices, Num. 16:15; and Paul against Alexander the copersmith, 'The Lord reward him according to his works;' but these and other in the Scripture had an extraordinary spirit, and not to be patterns for us in this case. Elias called for fire from heaven upon the captains, but the disciples were soundly chid for a preposterous imitation of this act, who had not his spirit, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' Luke 9:55. Pray thou for vengeance against all the implacable enemies of God, and leave him to direct thy arrow to its mark. Ahab was hit, though the arrow was shot at a venture by one that may be thought not of him. Prayers are sorted in heaven before their answer returns. Some of those emperors for whom the church in the primitive times prayed, yet proving implacable enemies to God and his people, felt the weight of those imprecations, which in general they put up against the adversaries of the truth.

4. In praying against the implacable enemies of God and his church, the glory of God should be principally aimed at, and vengeance on them in order to that. 'Arise, O Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered.' As the sun, when it hath dispelled the vapours that muffled it up from our sight, breaks out in the glory of its beams; so God, by taking vengeance on his enemies, and scattering them in their wicked imaginations with which they endeavoured to obscure his glory in the world, doth display and make visible the splendour of his attributes before his people's eyes. The saddest consequence which attends the prosperity and success of God's enemies in the world, is their pride and blasphemy against God, his truth, and church. Then they belch out their horrid blasphemies against heaven; then they mock the poor saints, and pierce them with the sharp sword of their mocking language, while they say unto them, 'Where is now their God?' But when God takes to himself power and strength, and confounds these giants and sons of the earth, by tumbling destruction upon their heads in the midst of their wicked enterprises; when he recoils their own plots they have charged against his church upon themselves—making them go off like a pistol in their pocket—to procure their own death and ruin; now the reproach is taken off, and they have an answer given to their question, 'Where is now

your God?’ He is at their throat, he is with his sword of vengeance vindicating his glorious name upon them. When Julian the Apostate was slain—and confessed at whose hand he received his fatal blow, in crying, *vicisti Galilæ—thou hast conquered, O Galilean—*then Libænius, his scoffing sophister, had his question, ‘What is the carpenter’s son now a doing?’—which a little before he had put to a Christian in scorn of his Saviour—thrown in his teeth to the confusion of his face, and found the Christian’s answer—that he was making a coffin for his master—prove truer than he was aware of. It cannot but be a joyful day to a saint, that prizeth the honour of his God above his own life, when he sees even the wicked—that before denied a providence, and thought all events were thrown out of blind fortune’s lap, as if the world were but a lottery, wherein everyone had his portion by chance—now forced by the remarkable appearance of his power and wisdom in saving his people, and destroying his implacable enemies, to confess, ‘Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth,’ Ps. 58:11. The exaltation of the glorious name of God, every saint doth, and should, aim at, in the prayers wherein he imprecates vengeance. ‘Let them be confounded ...let them be put to shame, and perish, that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth,’ Ps. 83:17, 18. Now from this head of imprecatory prayer, there is—

(1.) Matter of comfort to the saints against those direful imprecations which the wicked world belcheth out against them. The saints in this sense are a cursed people. The wicked make the greatest part of the world; the church is a little flock, but her enemies a huge herd; and these cannot wish well to the saints. Cain, as Luther saith, will hate and kill Abel to the end of the world; the same spirit that was in him remaineth in his seed. Sometimes when the church of God flourisheth, and hath the sun of outward prosperity on her side, they may cry hosanna in the crowd—as Shimei, when David was going up the hill of honour, then he could worship the rising sun, and crouch to him whom he had bitterly cursed in his distress—but when ‘they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly’ in their heart, Ps. 62:4. A wicked man cannot wish well to a saint as a saint, as, on the contrary, a saint cannot bless the wicked as such.

‘Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you: we bless you in the name of the Lord,’ Ps. 129:8. They do, indeed, desire their conversion, and therein wish them well, but in the wicked way they are in at present they cannot bless them. So the wicked can desire the saints should come over to their party, do as they do, and then they would applaud and hug them. But, let the saints keep close to God, and refuse to run into riot and excess with them, and they are sure to meet with their curse and imprecation; it is not their unblamable and peaceable will free them from their wrath and fury. ‘I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me,’ Jer. 15:10. But fear not, thou who art a saint, their imprecations. This is but *anathema secundum dici*; like false fire in the pan of an uncharged gun, it gives a crack but hurts not. God’s blessing will cover thee from their curse; ‘Let them curse, but bless thou,’ Ps. 109:28. When the viper flew out of the fire upon Paul’s hand, the barbarians looked that he should presently drop down dead, but it proved no such matter. Thus the enemies of God and his people have looked one generation after another, when the church, that hath been always laden with their curses, should perish under them; but it lives yet to walk over the graves of all those that have wished it ill. Alas, poor wretches! what is your imprecation worth? Truly as your blessing can do no good, so neither your curse any hurt, till you can get God to set his seal and say amen to it; which is impossible for you to obtain.

Did our Saviour so sharply rebuke the rash request of his disciples, calling for fire to fall on them whom they thought deserved it? and will he gratify the lust of your devilish wrath and fury against his own dear people, by pouring on them what you audaciously, yea blasphemously, desire of him? Will nothing serve you but to have God your executioner to hang whom you condemn? and those no other than his dear children, and for nought else but because they dare not be as wicked as yourselves? Go bid the tender mother imbrue her hands in the blood of her sweet babe, that even now came out of her womb, and now lies at her breast; or the husband betray and deliver the wife of his bosom into the hands of murderers that wait for her life. Would these be an errand to make the messenger that brings

them welcome to loving mother or husband? But if any such anomalies in nature's grammar and monsters among men were to be found, yet remember he is a God thou solicitest whose nature is unchangeable and covenant with his people inviolable. How was God courted by Balak and Balaam with altar after altar, from place to place! But all to no purpose: 'Nevertheless the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the Lord thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the Lord thy God loved thee,' Deut. 23:5. Never was any design carried on with more zeal and passionate desire to effect it than this; one would think that God had said enough to Balaam at first to make him sick of his enterprise, as a thing infeasible, Num. 22:12: 'Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.' But he liked the work and loved the wages, and therefore baffles his conscience, not telling the messengers all that God said to him, and they also report not all to Balak what Balaam said to them, so loath were both the work should fall: yet we see by the event, that they took but pains to lose their labour, nay worse, to lose themselves, for God made them, and him that set them on this work, to drink the curse which they would so fain have brewed for Israel.

(2.) A word to the wicked. Take heed that by your implacable hatred to the truth and church of God, ye do not engage her prayers against you. These imprecatory prayers of the saints, when shot at the right mark, and duly put up, they are murdering pieces, and strike dead where they light. 'Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily,' Luke 18:7, 8. They are not empty words—as the imprecations of the wicked poured into the air, and there vanish with their breath—but are received into heaven, and shall be sent back with thunder and lightning upon the pates of the wicked. David's prayer unravelled Ahithophel's fine-spun policy, and twisted his halter for him. The prayers of the saints are more to be feared—as once a great person said and felt—than an army of twenty thousand men in the field. Esther's fast hastened Haman's ruin, and Hezekiah's against Sennacherib brought his huge host to the slaughter, and fetched an angel from heaven to do the execution in one night upon them.

[Thanksgiving,
OF THE GRATULATORY PART of prayer.]

SECOND. The second of the twofold division of the whole matter of prayer, viz. THANKSGIVING. In handling of this I shall still keep my former method. First. I shall show what we are to return praises and thanks to God for. Second. How we are to frame our thanksgiving we return.

[What we are to praise and thank God for.]

First. I shall show what we are to return praises and thanks to God for. Now the object of thanksgiving, as of requests, is something that is good, but under another notion. We ask what we want; we bless and praise God for the mercies we have received, or for the hope we have from the promise that we shall in due time receive them. So that we see the Christian hath as large a field for the exercise of his thankfulness in praising God, as he hath in the petitionary part of prayer for his desires. This duty circumscribes heaven and earth; it takes both worlds within its circumference. As God does nothing but he aims at his own glory thereby, Prov. 16:4; so no act of God towards his people, wherein he intends not their good, and as such becomes the subject of their thanksgiving. Hence we are bid 'in everything give thanks.' O what a copious theme hath God given his people to enlarge their meditations upon—'in everything!' The whole course and series of divine providence towards the saints is like a music-book, in every leaf whereof there is a song ready pricked for them to learn and sing to the praise of their God. No passage in their life of which they can say, 'In this I received no mercy for which I should bless God.' Now, as a partial obedience is not good, so partial thanks is stark naught. Not that any saint is able to keep all the commands, or reckon up all the mercies of God, much less return particular and express acknowledgement for every single mercy. But, as he hath respect to all the commandments, Ps. 119:6, so he desires to value highly every mercy, and to his utmost power give God the praise of all his mercies. 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?' Ps. 116:12. This is an honest soul indeed; he would not sink any debt he owes to God, but calls his soul to an account

for all his benefits, not this or that. The skipping over one note in a lesson may spoil the grace of the music; unthankfulness for one mercy disparageth our thanks for the rest. But to sort the mercies of God into several ranks, that you may see more distinctly your work in this duty lie before you.

1. Mercies are either ordinary or extraordinary—our everyday commons or exceedings, with which God now and then feasts us. Thou must not only praise God for some extraordinary mercy which once in a year betides thee—a mercy that comes with such pomp and observation, that all thy neighbours take notice of it with thee, as the mercy which Zacharias and Elizabeth had in their son, that was ‘noised abroad throughout all the hill country,’ Luke 1:65—but also for ordinary, everyday mercies. For,

(1.) We are unworthy of the least mercy, Gen. 32:10; and therefore God is worthy of praise for the least, because it is more than he owes us.

(2.) These common ordinary mercies are many. Thus David enhanceth the mercies of this kind: ‘O God! how great is the sum of them? if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee,’ Ps. 139:17, 18. As if he had said, There is not a point of time wherein thou art not doing me good; as soon as I open my eyes in the morning, I have a new theme, in some fresh mercies given in since I closed them overnight, to employ my praiseful meditations. Many little items make together a great sum. What less than a grain of sand? yet what heavier than the sand on the sea-shore? As little sins—such as are vain thoughts and idle words—because of their multitude, arise to a great guilt and will bring in a long bill, a heavy reckoning, at last; so ordinary mercies, what they want in their size, particularly and individually considered, of some other great mercies, they have it compensated in their number. Who will not say that a man shows as great, yea greater, kindness to maintain one at his table with ordinary fare all the year, as in entertaining him at a great feast twice or thrice in the same time?

(3.) The sincerity of the heart is seen more in thankfulness for ordinary mercies than extraordinary. As it shows a naughty heart upon every ordinary occasion to fall into sin, so the soul very gracious that takes the hint of every common mercy to bless his God. Some, they are bound up in their spirits, that

none but strong physic will work upon them; they can digest little afflictions, and swallow ordinary mercies, without humbling themselves under the one or praising God for the other. That is the upright heart which gentle physic prevails with, little chastisements humble, and ordinary mercies raise to thankfulness.

2. Mercies are complete or imperfect—begun mercies, or finished. We must not make God stay for our praises till he hath finished a mercy, but praise him at the beginning of a mercy. We should be as ready to return our praises for a mercy, as God is to hear our prayers when begging a mercy. Now God comes forth early to meet a praying soul: ‘At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth,’ Dan. 9:23. ‘I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest,’ Ps. 32:5. Thus should we echo in our thankfulness to the first intimation that God gives in his providence of an approaching mercy. If you do but hear the king is on the road toward your town, you raise your bells to ring him in, and stay not till he be entered {through} the gates.

The birds, they rise betimes in the morning, and are saluting the rising sun with their sweet notes in the air. Thus should we strike up our harps in praising God at the first appearance of a mercy. Notable instances we have for this: Moses did not promise God, when he had saved them from Pharaoh’s wrath and the sea’s waves, that, at his landing them safe in Canaan, and lodging his victorious colours at the end of their journey in their full rest, he would then praise him for all his mercies together. No, but he presently pens a song, and on the bank, within sight of the howling wilderness, which they were now to enter into, he sings it with Israel in thankfulness for this first handsel after their march out of Egypt. So, II Sam. 6:13, ‘And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.’ And, I Chr. 15:26, which is a place parallel to this, and speaks of the same passage, ‘When God helped the Levites that bare the ark,...they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.’ That is, so soon as, by going a few paces or steps, they perceived God graciously to favour their enterprise—making no breach as formerly he had done upon them—they presently express their thankfulness upon the place for this hopeful beginning, well knowing no way was

better to engage God in the continuance and enlargement of this mercy, than by a praiseful entertainment thereof at its first approach.

In a word, thus the Jews in Babylon at the very first peep of day, when their deliverance began to break out, are at their praises: 'Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them,' Ps. 126:2. It was now but coming tide, as I may say, with them; the water was newly turned, and their affairs began to look with a more smiling face, yet now they salute their infant mercy with joy and thankfulness. May be, Christian, thou art upon a sick-bed, and some little reviving thou hast, though far from thy former health—O bless God for this little lift of thy head from thy pillow. May be thou hast been, as to thy spiritual state, in great distress—as it were in the belly of hell—swallowed up with terrors from the Lord, but now thy agony abates; though the Comforter be not come, yet thou hast some strictures of divine light let into thy dungeon, that raise a little hope to wait for more: O, let not this handsel of mercy pass without some thankful acknowledgment. Some, alas! are like great ships that cannot be set afloat but with the spring-tide and high-water of a mercy completed; if they have not all they would, they cannot see what they have, nor tune their hearts into a praiseful frame.

3. Mercies are such as are received in this life or reserved for the next—mercies in the hand or mercies in hope. There are promises which God will have us stay till we come to heaven for the performance of, and these we are to praise God for, as well as what we receive here; bless God for what he hath laid up for thee in heaven, as well as that he lays out upon thee on earth. The more our hearts are enlarged in thankfulness for these mercies, which we now have only in hope, the more honour we put upon his faithful promise. He that bestows much cost upon a house he hath in reversion, shows his confidence is great one day to be possessed of it. When a bill of exchange is paid at sight, it shows the merchant whose it is to be a man of credit and ability. By the joy thou takest up, and the thankfulness thou layest out for what the bare promise tells thee thou shalt at death receive, thou glorifiest the truth of God that is the promiser.

4. There are bitter mercies and sweet mercies

—some mercies God gives in wine, some in wormwood. Now we must praise God for the bitter mercies as well as the sweet. Thus Job, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Too many are prone to think nothing is a mercy that is not sweet in the going down, and leaves not a pleasant farewell on their palate; but this is the childishness of our spirits, which, as grace grows more manly, and the Christian more judicious, will wear off. Who that understands himself will value a book by the gilt on the cover? Truly none of our temporals—whether crosses or enjoyments—considered in themselves abstractly, are either a curse or a mercy. They are only as the covering to the book. It is what is written in them that they must resolve us whether they be a mercy or not. Is it an affliction that lies on thee? If thou canst find it comes from love, and ends in grace and holiness, it is a mercy though it be bitter to thy taste. Is it an enjoyment? If love doth not send it, and grace end it—which appears when thou growest worse by it—it is a curse, though sweet to thy sense. There are sweet poisons as well as bitter cordials. The saints commonly have greater advantage from their afflictions in the world, than enjoyments of the world. Their eyes are oftener enlightened with wormwood than honey—those dispensations that are bitter and displeasing to sense, than those that are sweet and luscious.

5. Mercies are either personal, or such as we receive in partnership with others—and these must be recognized as well as the other. 'Pardon, O God,' said he, 'my other men's sins.' Thus, 'Blessed be God,' say thou, 'for my other men's mercies.' Haply, Christian, thou hast prayed for a sick friend, and he is restored to health: for another in distress of spirit, and the Comforter at last is come to him. Now thou who hadst an adventure in his bottom, hast a mercy also in the return that is made to him, and therefore art to bless God with him. He that prays for his friend, and joins not with him in thankfulness when the mercy is given, is like one that is a means to bring his friend into debt, but takes no care to help him out. Thy friend, Christian, needs thy aid much more to pay the thanks, than to borrow the mercy, because this is the harder work of the two. But above all mercies to others, be sure church mercies and nation mercies be not forgot.

[TEN DIRECTIONS how to frame our thanksgivings.]

Second. You have heard what is the subject of our praises and thanksgivings; we shall now lay down some directions how we are to frame our thanksgivings.

1. Direction. Be sure the thing thou prayest God for be found among the good things of the promise. That is the compass by which we are to steer our course, as in the petitionary, so also in the gratulatory, part of prayer. If it be not in the promise it is not a mercy, and so not the subject of thanksgiving. When some prosper in their wickedness, they are so bold as to thank God they sped so well. Now, if it be grievous sin for a man to bless himself in any wicked way, Deut. 29:19, much more horrid is it to bless God for prospering therein. By the former, he only voucheth his own sin—which indeed is bad enough—but by the other he makes God a party with him, and tempts the Lord to own it also. It is a good speech of Bernard to this purpose, who, comparing those that on the one hand thank God for their success in wickedness, with hypocrites, who praise him for the good things they receive, saith, *isti impiè mala suo Deo, isti dei bona fraudulenter intorquent sibi* (Serm. 45 super Cant.)—the one impute their sin to God, the other ascribe the glory of his mercies to themselves. God cannot accept thy praise, unless he first approve thy fact. He that receives a bribe is guilty of the fault. And dare you thus tempt the holy One? If the God you serve were like the heathens' idols, the matter were not much. When the Philistines had practiced their cruelty on Samson, they present his head to their god. The devil desires no better sacrifices than the fruit of men's sins. But the holy One of Israel abhors all wicked praises. 'The hire of a whore, was not to be offered,' Deut. 23:18.

2. Direction. Let all your praises be offered up in Christ. 'By him...let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God,' Heb. 13:15. 'Ye...are...an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter 2:5. Couldst thou pen never so rare a panegyric⁹, couldst thou flourish it with never

so much art or rhetoric, and deliver it with the greatest passion and zeal possible, all this would be harsh and grate the Almighty's ear except sounded through Christ. It is not the breath poured into the open air but passing through the trumpet or some other instrument—where it is formed into a tunable sound—that makes it pleasing music. Possibly when thou prayest for a mercy thou shelterest thyself under Christ's wing, and usest his name to procure thy admission—because conscious of thine own unworthiness to receive what thou askest—but, when thou praisest God, thy errand being not to beg and receive but to give, thou expectest welcome. He that brings a present shall surely find the door open. Yes, if thy gift were suitable to the great God. But who art thou that the great God should take a present at thy hand? If thou beest not worthy of the least mercy thou beggest, then surely thou art unworthy of this honour to have thy thank-offering accepted. Thou needest Christ's mediation for the one as much as for the other.

3. Direction. Stay not in generals, but descend to the particular instances of God's mercy towards thee in thy thanksgivings. *Est dolus in generalibus*—there is guile in generals. It bewrays a slighty spirit, if not a false, when in confession of sin we content ourselves with a general indictment, 'I am a sinner—a great sinner,' and there to stop, without a particular sense of the several breaches made in the law of God. Neither is here a better symptom when a man puts God off with a compliment at distance for his goodness and mercy in general, but takes no notice of the particular items which swell and make up the total sum. Now, to be able to do this, it will be necessary that thou takest special notice of God's daily providence to thee and thine, yea, and to the church of Christ also. Lay up these in thy heart, as Mary did our Saviour's words, for the matter of thanksgiving against the time of prayer; this true good husbandry for thy soul. You do not expect to find that money in your chest which you never laid up there; neither will you readily find in your heart to praise God for those mercies which you never committed to your memory. It is to be feared the man means not to pay that debt

9. panegyric: — A formal speech or writing praising a person or event; a high or hyperbolic praise; laudation.

(continued...)

9. (...continued)

— From Webster's

honestly which he doth not set down in his book. Ps. 107, when the psalmist there had stirred them up to thankfulness for the mercies of God in creation and providence, his conclusion is worthy of remark, 'Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord,' ver. 43. As if he had said, The reason why so little praise is given for such great works of mercy, is because men see not the lovingkindness of God in them; and they see not this because they observe not those; and they observe not those because they have not wisdom. It is not a library that makes a scholar, but wisdom to observe and gather the choice notions out of his books. None want mercies to bless God for. Divine providence is a large volume, written thick and close with mercies from one end of our life to the other; but few, alas! have a heart to read in it, and fewer have wisdom to collect the choice passages of it for such a holy purpose as this is.

4. Direction. Excite thy praising graces. David stirs up all that is within him to praise God, Ps. 103; that is, all the powers and graces of his soul. To instance but in two or three.

(1.) Humility. A proud man cannot well tell how to beg, yet selfishness may make him stoop to it; but in thankfulness he must needs be a bungler, for this is a high piece of self-denial. 'Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise.' The proud man's gift will cleave to his hand; he is unfit to set the crown on God's head that hath a mind to wear it himself. We find indeed the tool in the Pharisee's hand, but he cuts his work into chips. He seems to honour God with his mouth, but eats his words as he speaks them, and discovers plainly that he intends more to exalt himself than God: 'I thank God I am not as this publican.' This, 'I thank God,' comes in pro formâ; it is the publican he disdains, and himself that he applauds. You may easily think what a look ambitious Haman gave Mordecai when he held his stirrup, who desired himself to have been in the saddle. How, alas! can a proud heart give God that which he covets himself? No man, saith Luther, can pray sanctificetur nomen tuum till he first be able to pray profanetur nomen meum—sanctified be thy name, till he be willing his own name should be debased.

Labour therefore to vilify, nullify thyself; then,

and not till then, thou wilt magnify, omnify thy God. None so zealous in begging as he that is most pinched with his want; none so hearty in his thanks as he that hath most sense of his unworthiness. And who can think better of himself that is thoroughly acquainted with himself? If God had not set thee up, what stock couldst thou have found of thy own? Thou wert as bare as a shorn sheep, naked camest thou into the world, and ever since thou hast been cast upon thy God, even as a poor child upon the charge of the parish. What hast thou earned by all the service thou hast done him? Not the bread of thy poorest meal. And art thou yet proud? Bernard compares Joseph's carriage with his master and the grateful soul's with God thus together: Joseph, saith the father, knew that his master, who put all he had into his hands, yet excepted his wife, and therefore accounted it too base an ingratitude to take her from his master's bed who had been so kind to him in his house. Thus, saith he, God freely gives his mercies into the saint's hands but excepts his glory. Therefore the gracious soul takes what God gives thankfully; but leaves the praise of them, which God reserves for himself humbly.

(2.) Love and joy. *Amour et gaudium faciunt musicum*—love and joy, it is said, make a musician. Indeed then this music of praise is best—in heaven, I mean—where the graces are perfect.

(a) Excite thy love. This is an affection that cannot keep within door, but must be sallying forth in the praises of God. Austin, speaking of heaven, breaks out thus, *ibi vacabimus et videbimus, videbimus et amabimus, amabimus et laudabimus, laudabimus et cantabimus*—in heaven we shall have nothing to do but to behold the face of God, and seeing him we shall love him, loving him we shall praise him, and praising we shall sing and rejoice. Love and thankfulness are like the symbolical qualities of the elements—easily resolved into each other. David begins with 'I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice,' Ps. 116:1. And, to enkindle this grace into a greater flame, he aggravates the mercies of God in some following verses; which done, then he is in the right cue for praises, and strikes up his instrument, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?' Ps. 116:12. The spouse, when once she was thoroughly awake, pondering with herself what a friend had been at her door, and how his sweet company was lost

through her unkindness, shakes off her sloth, riseth, and away she goes after him. Now, when with running after her beloved she had put her soul into a heat of love, then she breaks out into an encomium of her beloved, praising him from top to toe, Song 5:10. That is the acceptable praising which comes from a warm heart; and he that would warm his heart must use some holy exercise to stir up his habit of love, which, like natural heat in the body, is preserved and increased by motion.

(b) Excite thy joy. I will sing ‘with joyful lips,’ Ps. 63:5. A sad heart and a thankful hardly can dwell together—I mean, sad with worldly sorrow. The disciples for sorrow could not hold open their eyes to pray, much more sure were they unfit to praise. This indeed makes the duty of praise and thanksgiving more difficult than to pray, because our joy here is so often quenched and interrupted with intervening sins and sorrows that this heavenly fore seldom burns long clear on the Christian’s altar from which his praises should ascend. Temptations and afflictions, they both drive the soul to prayer and more dispose it for prayer; but they untune his instrument for praise. Hannah, she wept and prayed, but durst not eat of the peace-offering, the sacrifice of praise, because she wept. It behoves us therefore the more to watch our hearts lest they be indisposed by any affliction for this duty. Do with thy soul as the musician in wet weather doth with his instrument, which he hangs not in a moist nasty room, but where it may have the air of the fire. Art thou under affliction? let not thy soul pore too long on those thy troubles, but bring it within the scent of God’s mercies that are intermingled with them. Sit near this fire of God’s love in Christ—warm thy heart with meditation on spiritual promises—while thou art under bodily pressures, and thou shalt find, through God’s blessing thy heart in some comfortable tune to praise God in the saddest and most rainy day that can befall thee in all thy life. Thus David could make music in the cave: ‘My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise,’ Ps. 57:7.

5. Direction. Content not thyself with a bare narrative, but give every mercy its proper accent according to the enhancing circumstances thereof. There is great difference in two that sing the same song. From one you have only the plain song; the

other descants and runs division upon it, in which consists the grace of music. The mercies of God affect our hearts as they are dressed forth. If we put on them their rich habiliments—the circumstances, I mean, that advance them, they appear glorious to our eyes and enlarge our hearts in praises for them; but considered without these, we pass them slightly. God himself, when he would express the height of his love to his people, presents them to his own eye, not as now they are, but as clothed with the glory he intends them. ‘As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee,’ Isa. 62:5. At the wedding day the best clothes are put on. Thus do thou, to draw out thy thankfulness for mercies, consider them in the circumstances that may render them most glorious in thine eye. Some emperors have not suffered every one to draw their picture, lest they should be disfigured by their bungling pencil. Truly, slighty praises disfigure the lovely face of God’s mercy. They are but few that draw them to life. To do this much study and meditation are requisite. ‘The works of the Lord are sought out of them that have pleasure in them.’ The curious limner studies the face of the man before he makes his draught. Praise is a work not done in a trice, the lesson must be pricked before it can be sung. Read therefore the word, and learn from the saints there recorded what aggravating circumstances they have observed in recognizing their mercies.

Sometimes we have them setting the accent upon the speedy return of their prayers, ‘In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,’ Ps. 138:3. This is a print that superadds a further excellency to the mercy. It was but knock, and have; come, and be served. While the church were at God’s door praying for Peter’s deliverance, Peter is knocking at theirs to tell them their prayer is heard.

Sometimes from the sinful infirmities which mingled with their prayers. Now that mercy would come with a ‘notwithstanding these,’ and steal upon them when they had hardly faith to wait for them, this hath exceedingly endeared the goodness of God to them. ‘I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?’ Ps. 116:11, 12.

Sometimes from the greatness of their strait: ‘This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and

saved him out of all his troubles.’ ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good,’ Ps. 34:6, 8. So, ‘Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever,’ Ps. 136:23. Indeed this must needs raise high appreciating thoughts of the mercy. The water that God gave Israel out of the rock is called honey, because it came in their extreme want, and so was as sweet to them as honey. Silver is gold when given to a poor man that must else have died for lack of bread.

Sometimes from the frequent returns of God’s goodness and expressions of his care; thy mercies ‘are new every morning,’ Lam. 3:23. ‘Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed,’ Ps. 129:2. ‘Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,’ I Sam. 7:12. This gives such an accent as, without it, the mercy cannot be pronounced with its due emphasis. A course of sin is worse than an act of sin. ‘Their course is evil,’ Jer. 23:10. So a course of mercy from time to time speaks more love. Some that could betem¹⁰ a single alms on a beggar, would beat him from their door should he lie there and make it a trade.

Sometimes from the peculiarity of the mercy, they take notice of the distinction God makes in issuing out his favours: ‘He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord,’ Ps. 147:20. ‘Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?’ John 14:22—Let these few hints suffice to set thee on work to find out the other. Without this, we rob God of the best part of our sacrifice; as if a Jew had stripped off the fat and laid the lean on God’s altar; or, as he did by his idol, who took off the cloak of silver it had and put on his own threadbare one in the room of it. The mercies thou receivest are great and rich; give not him thy beggarly praises. He expects they should bear some proportion to his mercy: ‘Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness,’ Ps. 150:2.

6. Direction. Distinguish between mercy and mercy; let the choicest mercies have thy highest praises. It shows a naughty heart to howl and make a great noise in prayer for corn and wine, and in the meantime to be indifferent or faint in his desires for

Christ and his grace. Nor better is it, when one acknowledges the goodness of God in temporals, but takes little notice of those greater blessings which concern another life. You shall have sometimes a covetous earthworm speak what a blessed time and season it is for the corn and the fruits of the earth—that fit his carnal palate, as the pottage did Esau’s—but you never hear him express any feeling sense of the blessed seasons of grace, the miracle of God’s patience that such a wretch as he s out of hell so long, the infinite love of God in offering in offering Christ by the gospel to him. He turns over these as a child doth a book, till he hits on some gaud and picture, and there he stays to gaze. Christ and his grace, with other spiritual blessings, he skills not of, he cares not for, except they would fill his bags and barns. Now, shall such a one pass for a thankful man? will God accept his praises for earth that rejects heaven? that takes corn and wine with thanks, and bids him keep Christ to himself with scorn? saying, as Esau when his brother offered him his present, ‘I have enough?’ A gracious heart is of another strain: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,’ Eph. 1:3. Indeed God gives temporals to make us in love with spirituals, yea, with himself that gave them; as the suitor sends the token to get the love of the person.

Again, as we are to distinguish between mercy and mercy, so even in these lower mercies that concern this life, because thou layest the accent of thy thankfulness on the spiritual part of them. In every outward mercy there is food for the flesh and food for the spirit; that which pleaseth the sense and that which may exercise our grace. Is it health? The carnal heart is most taken with it, as it brings the joy of his natural life to him, which sickness deprived him of; but that which, above all, pleaseth a saint, is the opportunity that comes with it for his glorifying God in his place and generation: ‘I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,’ Ps. 42:11. Is it an estate that God casts in? The carnal wretch values it for his private accommodation, as if it were given for no higher end than to spend it upon himself, or enrich his family; but the gracious soul blesseth God that gives him to give to the necessity of others, and counts a large heart to be a greater

10. Beteem, sometimes beteeme, to give, bestow. — ED.

mercy than a full purse. David did not bless himself in his abundance, but blessed God that gave him a heart to return it again into the bosom of God, from whom he received it: 'But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?' 1 Chr. 29:14.

7. Direction. Let not thy praises be transient—a fit of music, and then the instrument hung by the wall, till another gaudy day of some remarkable providence makes thee take it down. God will not sit at such a niggard's table, who invites him to a thanksgiving feast once for all the year. God comes not guest-wise to his saints' house, but to dwell with them; he 'inhabits the praises of Israel,' Ps. 22:3. That day thou blessest not God thou turnest him out of doors. David took this up for a life-work, 'As long as I live I will praise thee.' 'A lying tongue is but for a moment,' saith Solomon, Prov. 12:19. Something drops from a liar within a while that discovers his falsehood; the tongue that lies in praising of God is thus for a moment. He can curse God with that tongue to-morrow with which he praiseth him to-day.

8. Direction. Thou must not only continue, but grow in thy praises. As the tide increaseth the ship is lift higher on the waters; as your crop increaseth your barns are enlarged; as you grow richer you advance in your garb and port; in a word, as your bodies grow so you make your clothes bigger. Every day swells the tide of your mercies, adds to your heap, increases your treasure, and heightens your stature. They are 'new,' saith the prophet, 'every morning,' Lam. 3:23; they grow whether thou sleepest or wakest. Now, as the coat thou didst wear when thou wert a child would not become thee now thou art a man; so neither will the garment of praise, which thou didst clothe thy soul with when a young convert, become thee now thou art an old disciple. Thou standest deeper in God's books than before, and God expects according to what every man hath received. Yourselfs are not so bad husbands, but you would improve your estates to the height. Would you let a farm now by the rate it bare forty or fifty years ago? why then may not God raise the rent of his mercies also? Look back, Christian, and see how well the world is mended with thee since thou didst first set up. May be thou canst say with Jacob, 'I passed over with my staff, and behold now I am become two

bands.'

Well, see what thou hast more, in health, estate, in gifts, graces, or comforts, than thou hadst formerly, and then compare thy present thankfulness with what it was before these additions were made to thy stock and treasure. Would it not be a shame to thee if it should be found not to have grown as the goodness of God to thee hath done, much more if it hath shrunk and grown less? And yet how common are such instances of ingratitude? The freer God is with his mercy, the more close and gripple they are in their thankful returns. When poor, they could be thankful for a short meal of coarse fare, more than they are now for their varieties and dainties. When sick, a few broken sleeps that amounted to an hour or two rest in a night, O how affected were their hearts for this mercy! Whereas now they can rise and take little notice of the goodness of God, that gives them their full rest night after night without interruption. Thus as the days lengthen, so the cold strengthens. But is it not strange to see a man grow colder in his love to God, as the sun of God's mercy riseth higher and shines hotter upon him? O it is sad to see the heap increase, and the heart waste; to find a man grow richer in mercy, and poorer in thankfulness.

9. Direction. Let thy praises be real. Words, we say, pay no debts. There goes more to thankfulness than a mouthful of windy praises, which pass away with the sound they make. A gracious heart is too wise to think God will be put off with a song. He will give God that, but it is the least he intends. 'The Lord is my strength and song, ... and I will prepare him an habitation,' Ex. 15:2. Aye, here it sticks, building is chargeable; thankfulness is a costly work. Shall I offer to God that which cost me nothing? saith David to Araunah. Cheap praises are easily obtained, but when it comes to charges, then many grow sick of the work. The Jews could sing a 'song' when delivered from Babylon, Ps. 137; but it was long before they could find in their hearts to build God 'a habitation.' The time was not come for that. They might have said, their heart was not come. They had money and time enough to build their own nests, but none for God, though herein they played the fools egregiously, for as fast as they built at one end, God pulled down at the other. Some have been of their mind in our times; instead of finding God a habitation and loving

our nation to build synagogues, they have pulled them down and carried the beams to their own houses. Excellent artists, in taking down ministers, ministry, and their maintenance, whereby the gospel should be upheld! If this be the way to thrive, God gave his people ill counsel when he said, Consider now from this day I will bless you, Hag. 2:18. But you will ask what I mean by real praises?

[What is meant by REAL PRAISES.]

(1.) Our praises are real when they are cordial—‘All that is within me, bless his holy name,’ Ps. 103:1—when his mercies beget amiable thoughts of God in our hearts. We read of ‘cursing God in the heart,’ Ps. 106.1 {better: Job 1:5}; which then is done when we have base, low, unbecoming thoughts of his greatness and goodness. And, on the contrary, when the mercies of God imprint such an image in the heart of him as lively represents these his attributes, then thou blessest God in thy heart, by adoring his majesty, reverencing his holiness, delighting in his love, and fearing his goodness. Here is real thankfulness. What is laus—praise or honour, but a reflection of the person’s excellency we commend? Now, as the glass represents the image of the person that looks on it, so the thankful soul reflects those glorious attributes again upon God which he puts forth in his mercies. Thus God sees his face in a true glass, which the thankful soul holds up while he praiseth him. Whereas an unthankful heart, like a broken glass, distorts and disfigures the beautiful face of God, by conceiving such low thoughts of God as are unworthy of his glorious attributes.

(2.) Our praises are real when they are obediential. God accounts those mercies forgotten which are not written with legible characters in our lives, ‘They forgot God their Saviour,’ Ps. 106:21. That of Joshua is observable, ch. 8:32. Upon their victory over the city Ai, an altar is built as a monument of that signal mercy. Now mark, what doth God command to be written or engraved on the stones thereof? One would have thought the history of that day’s work should have been the sculpture, but it is ‘the copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel,’ ver. 32, whereby he plainly showed the best way of remembering the mercy was

not to forget to keep the law. Saul could not blind Samuel’s eyes with his many good-morrrows, that the people saved the best of the cattle for sacrifice: ‘Hath the Lord,’ saith he, ‘as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,’ 1 Sam. 15:22. As if he had said, ‘What, Saul! thinkest thou to bribe God with a sacrifice, while thou art disobedient to his command? Dost thou take the swan, and stick the feather in the room? deny him thine own heart to obey his word, and give him a beast’s heart in sacrifice for it? Is this the oblation which he hath required, or will accept?’ Truly God riseth hungry from our thanksgiving-dinners, if obedience be not a dish at the table. Without this we and our sacrifices may burn together. God will pluck such from the horns of the altar, and take them off their knees with their hypocritical praises, to pay this debt in another kind. ‘If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land,’ Isa. 1:19. Then, and not till then, will God eat of your sacrifices, and yourselves taste the sweetness of your enjoyments. ‘He meeteth him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness,’ Isa. 64:5. Not either apart, but both together are required; not rejoice without working righteousness, nor that without rejoicing in the work. The threatening is levelled against Israel not barely because they served not God, but because they served him not ‘with gladness in the abundance of his mercies,’ Deut. 28. God delights to have his mercy seen in the cheerful countenance of his servants while they are at his work, which may tell the spectators they serve a good master.

(3.) Then they are real praises when they end in acts of mercy. Very observable is that place, ‘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,’ Heb. 13:15. Now mark the very next words, ‘but to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.’ As if he had said, Think not you may thank God to save charges, be willing to both or neither. God’s goodness to us should make us merciful to others. It were strange indeed a soul should come out of his tender bosom with a hard uncharitable heart. Some children do not indeed take after their earthly parents; as Cicero’s son, that had nothing of his father but his

name. But God's children partake all of their heavenly Father's nature. Philosophy tells us that there is no reaction from the earth to the heavens. They, indeed, shed their influences upon the lower world, which quicken and fructify it, but the earth returns none back to make the sun and stars shine the better. David knew very well that 'his goodness extended not unto God,' but this made him reach forth to his brethren, 'to the saints that are in the earth,' Ps. 16:2, 3. Indeed, God hath left his poor saints to receive his rents we owe unto him for his mercies. An ingenuous guest, though his friend will take nothing for his entertainment, yet to show his thankfulness will give something to his servants. At Christ's return, how doth he salute his saints? Not, 'Come ye blessed,' ye have kept such a thanksgiving day, and filled the air with your songs of praise; but, When 'I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, naked and ye clothed me,' Matt. 25. Alms-deeds in Saint Paul's language are called fruit: 'When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit,' Rom. 15:28; implying that all our profession without these good works are but leaves. This is the solid fruit of our faith—love to God and thankfulness for his mercies. Neither must these acts of charity be restrained to the money in thy purse or bread in thy cupboard, though these are included: there are poor souls as well as poor bodies, that need relief.

Hath God plucked thee out of Sodom—out of Satan's bondage? Where are then thy bowels of compassion to those who are yet chained to the devil's post? What means dost thou use to redeem these captives out of their worse than Turkish slavery? The argument God urgeth to Israel to use strangers kindly, is to remember they were once so, Deut. 23:7. Hast thou, after long lying in the dungeon of spiritual darkness and troubles of conscience, had thy head lift up with the comforts of the Spirit—received into the presence of God, as Pharaoh's butler was to his prince's court? how canst thou think thyself thankful, while thou forgettest others that lie in the same prison-house, under as sad fears and terrors as once thyself did? 'Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous,' Ps. 112:4. Surely this will hold, if in any, then in this case. In a word—that I may not be thought to make you hard to the outward man,

while I stir up your charity to the inward—hath God raised thee to an estate? May be thy pilgrim's staff, with Jacob's, is turned to two troops? Dost thou now show the kindness of God to his poor members? as David, who inquired if there were none of the house of Saul. O how unlike are we to the saints of primitive times! They would run to meet an object for their charity, and we run from them. They considered the poor, what they wanted, how they might relieve them, yea, they 'devised liberal things;' but we consider and contrive how we may save our purse best. They were willing to part with all in case of extremity, while we grudge a little from our superfluity; laying that, by pride, on our backs which should cover the poor's; throw that to our hawks and hounds which should refresh the bowels of the poor; yea, spend more in our drunken meeting, a miser's feast, or a wrangling suit at law, than we can be willing to give in a year to the necessitous members of Christ.

(4.) Our praises are real when they produce a stronger confidence on God for the future. Who will say that man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness that nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future, and dares not trust him when he needs him again? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God for his miraculous broaching the rock to quench their thirst, 'Behold, he smote the rock, can he give bread also?' Ps. 78:20. This indeed was their trade all along their wilderness march. Wherefore God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were piping hot, and the feast stood before them—then they could say, 'God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer'—but by their temper and carriage in straits. When the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion had they then of God? Could they sanctify his name so far as to trust him for their dinner to-morrow who had feasted them yesterday? Truly no. As soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore God spits on the face of their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record, 'They forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel.' O how sad is this, that after God had entertained a soul many a time at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that

not a bit of them all should be left to give faith a meal, thereby to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as we desire! He is the most thankful man that ponders up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with the thoughts of what hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits. When Job was on the dunghill, he forgot not God's old kindnesses, but durst trust him with a knife at his throat, 'Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.' He that distrusts God, after former experience, is like the foolish builder, *Matt. 7*—he rears his monument for past mercies on the sand, which the next tide of affliction washeth away.

10. Direction. Thou must not only praise God thyself while on the stage of this earth, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. The psalmist, speaking of the mercies of God, saith, 'We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,' *Ps. 78:4*. Children are their parents' heirs, they enter upon their estates. It were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth, where his children should not find or enjoy it. Now the mercies of God are not the least part of his treasure, nor the least of his child's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience: 'Our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old; how thou didst drive out the heathen,' &c., *Ps. 44:1-3*. From this they ground their confidence, 'Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob,' *ver. 4*; and excite their thankfulness, 'In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever,' *ver. 8*. Indeed, as children are their parents' heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts. Now, the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and therefore it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to the ungrateful world,
and exhortation to saints.]

We shall wind up this head with a double application of reproof and exhortation.

Use First. Of reproof to the ungrateful world. How few, alas! can we find so ingenuous as to pay this little quit-rent to the great Lord of this world's manor for all the mercies they hold of him! Some are such brutes that, like swine, their nose is nailed to the trough in which they feed. They have not the use of their understanding so far as to lift up their eye to heaven and say, there dwells that God that provides this for me, that God by whom I live, and from whom I have my livelihood. It were well if we knew not in all our towns where such brutes as these dwell. You would count it a sad spectacle to behold a man in a lethargy, with his senses and reason so blasted by his disease, that he knows not his nearest friends, and takes no notice of those that tend him or bring his daily food to him. How many such senseless wretches are at this day lying on his hands? Divine providence ministers daily supplies to their necessities, but they take no notice of his care and goodness. Others there are, that feloniously, yea sacrilegiously, set the crown of praise on their own head which is due alone to God. Thus Nebuchadnezzar writes his own name upon his palace, and leaves God out of the story: 'Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?' *Dan. 4:30*. Proud wretch! was not every stone he used in that pile cut out of God's quarry? and for every skeep of sand did he not come upon God's ground? Thus the atheistical husbandman cons his plough and dung-cart more thanks than the God of heaven, who 'crowns the year with his goodness.' The proud soldier stands upon his sword, daring to take the honour of his victory to himself, and not ascribe it to the Lord of hosts, who at his pleasure gives and takes away the heart from the mighty.

Yea, some, rather than God shall have it, will give it to any other. Thus Pope Adrian, in his blasphemous inscription on the gates of a college he built, abuseth God with Scripture language, 'Utrecht

planted me, Lovian watered me, and Cæsar gave the increase;’ which made one underwrite, *nihil hic Deus fecit*—it seems God did nothing for this man. Not that I think it unlawful to acknowledge our benefactors, as instruments in God’s hand for our good, but to blot out the name of God, our chief founder, to write the name of an underling creature, is a high piece of wickedness and ingratitude. I like that form which a good man used to his friend for a kindness: ‘I bless God for you, I thank God and you.’ He that will exact more, requires what we owe him not.

In a word, some, the worst of the three, instead of returning thanks to God for his mercies, abuse them to his dishonour. It is not more sad than true, that the goodness of God with many serves but to feed and nourish their lusts. They eat and drink at God’s cost, and then rise up to play the rebels against God; no weapons will serve them to use but the mercies he hath given them. It is too bad if the tenant pays not his easy rent; but to make strip and waste of the trees on his landlord’s ground, this is more intolerable. Yet such outrages are daily practised in the wicked world with the mercies of God.

Michael Balbus is infamous for his horrid ingratitude, who, the same night that the emperor had pardoned and released him, barbarously slew his saviour. And do not many, whom God lets out of the prison of affliction, lift up their traitorous knife at God, wounding his name with their oaths, drunkenness, and profaneness, as soon almost as the sentence of death is taken off and their prison door set open? To conclude, others that will needs pass for thankful, yet all the return is but windy praise—honour him with their lips, and pour contempt upon him in their lives. What music more harsh and unpleasing than to hear a harper sing to one tune with his voice and play another with his hand? O it grates in God’s ears when Jacob’s voice is attended with Esau’s rough hands. Truly, when I consider how the goodness of God is abused and perverted by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said *maximum miraculum est Dei patientia et munificentia*—the greatest miracle in the world is God’s patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them.

But the great God, that could wink all his enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may he command us to bless them that curse us, who himself ‘does good to the evil and thankful.’ O what would not God do for his creature if thankful, that thus heaps the coals of his mercies upon the heads of his enemies!

But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus. God’s mill goes slow, but it grinds small; the more admirable his patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable will that fury be which ariseth out of his abused goodness. Nothing blunter than iron, yet when sharpened it hath an edge that will cut mortally. Nothing smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest nothing rageth more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of God, and nothing so terrible as his wrath when it takes fire. Be therefore, in the fear of God, stirred up to bethink yourselves what you mean to do. It is the trick, they say, of distracted people to spite their dearest friends and nearest relations most. These above all they seek to mischief. But what folly and madness is it in thee to fly at the face of God with thy sins, that hath done more for thee than all thy friends, and can do more against thee than all thy enemies thou hast in the world! But the more to move thee,

1. Consider that God keeps an exact account of all his mercies thou receivest. You cannot steal God’s custom. He that could tell the prophet where his servant Gehazi had been, and what he had received of Naaman, will one day tell thee to a farthing every talent thou hast received of him. God hath, as a bag for thy sins, so a book for his mercies, and what he books he means to reckon for.

2. Consider how severely he hath dealt with those that never had so much mercy from him as thyself. If heathens are speechless in judgment, when God reckons with them for their mercies, O how confounded wilt thou be that goest from gospel dispensations to hold up thy hand at the bar before the Judge of all the world! ‘They are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful,’ Rom. 1:21. If the heathen that was not thankful for his penny, cannot lift up his hand in the day of the Lord, where wilt thou appear that hast so many hundred talents in thy hand to answer for?

Question. But may be, poor wretch, thou mayest now ask, what thou shouldst do to give God the praise of his mercies?

Answer. In a word, thou hast but one way to pay God this his tribute, and it is a strange one—even by running deeper into his debt than by all the mercies that yet thou hast received of him. Hear therefore, poor sinner, what I mean: That God—who hath given thee life and being—that hath exercised unspeakable patience towards thee—been at a vast expense in his daily providence upon thee, to preserve, feed, clothe, and maintain thee—all which have been most wretchedly abused by thee, and for it thy life become forfeited to his justice—doth yet offer a greater mercy than all these, even the Lord Jesus, whom, if thou wilt, with shame and sorrow for thy past sins, but come unto, and accept to be thy Lord and Saviour, then wilt thou be in a posture, and not till then, to give God the praise of his other mercies. He that rejects this, that is the greatest of all mercies, can never be thankful for any. It is Christ who alone can give thee a spirit of thankfulness. Not a Christian person in the world but is an unthankful person. 'Evil' and 'unthankful' are inseparable. O what a blessed gospel is this, that teacheth us here to pay debts by running deeper into the score!—to be thankful for less mercies, by accepting that which is infinitely greater!

Use Second. For exhortation to the saints; not to call you to this duty, which if you answer your name is undoubtedly your practice, but to quicken you in it, and make you more in love with it.

1. Consider it is a duty that becomes you well, 'Praise is comely for the upright,' Ps. 33:1. This garment of praise sits so well on none as on your back; you should not think yourselves dressed in a morning till you have it on. An unthankful saint carries a contradiction with it. 'Evil' and 'unthankful' are the twins that live and die together. As any ceaseth to be evil, he begins to be thankful.

2. Consider it is that which God both expects and promiseth himself at your hands; he made you for this end. When the vote passed in heaven for your being, yea happy being, in Christ, it was upon this account, that you should be 'a name and a praise' to him on earth in time and in heaven to eternity. Should God miss of this, he would fail of one main

part of his design. What prompts him to bestow every mercy, but to afford you matter to compose a song for his praise? They are 'a people, children that will not lie: so he became their Saviour,' Isa. 63:8. He looks for fair dealing, you see, at your hands. Whom may a father trust with his reputation, if not a child? Where can a prince expect honour, if not among his courtiers and favourites? Your state is such as the least mercy you have is more than all the world can show besides. Thou, Christian, and thy fewbrethren, divide heaven and earth among you. What hath God that he withholds from you? Sun, moon, and stars are set up to give you light, sea and land have their treasure and store for your use. Others do but ravish them, you are the rightful heirs to them. They groan that any other should be served by them. The angels, bad and good, minister unto you; the evil, against their will, are forced, like scullions, when they tempt you to scour and brighten your graces, and make way for your greater comforts. Like Haman, they hold your stirrup, while you mount up higher in favour with God. The good angels are servants to your heavenly Father, and disdain not to carry you, as the nurse her master's child in her arms. Your God withholds not himself from you. He is your portion, father, husband, friend, and what not. The same heaven you shall have to dwell in with him; the same table and fare. God is his own happiness, and admits you to enjoy himself. O what honour is this, for the subject to drink in his prince's cup! 'Thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures,' Ps. 36:8. And all this, not as the purchase of your sweat, much less blood; the feast is paid for by another hand, and you are welcome; only he expects your thanks to the founder of it, at whose cost you are entertained. No sin-offering is imposed upon you under the gospel; thank-offerings are all he looks for.

3. God hath a book of remembrance for your services; he takes kind notice of the little good that is in you, and done by you. Not the least office of love to his name and house is overlooked, though mingled with much evil; he commands the one, pardons and pities you for the other. 'There is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel,' it was said of Jeroboam's son, I Kings 14:13. What an honourable testimony doth God give of Asa, that 'his was perfect all his days,' II Chr. 15:17, though we find many wry

steps he took. The little strength Philadelphia had must not be forgot. What a favourable apology doth Christ make for Joshua, accused by Satan for his filthy garments—‘Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?’ and for his drowsy disciples—‘The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak?’ Now shall God take notice of the little good in his saints, apologize for their infirmities, commend and reward their weak services, yea eternize their memory with honour, ‘The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance,’ Ps. 112:6; and doth not he deserve to be exalted for his infinite perfections? praised and loved, who is all good, ever good, and doing good to them? Shall not he be tender of thy name, and thou be regardless of his honour, so as to entomb his precious mercies in the sepulchre of unthankfulness?

4. Consider what an ornament a thankful frame of heart is to religion. This commends God to the unbelieving world, who knows little more of him than your lives preach to them. They read religion in that character you print it, and make their report of God and his ways as they see you behave yourselves in the world. If you walk disconsolately, or grumble at divine providence, how they can believe the ways are so pleasant as they are told? We listen what the servant saith of his master. If he commends him, and goes cheerfully through his work, this gains him credit among his neighbours. It was a convincing testimony Daniel gave to the goodness of God, when he would praise him thrice a day with the hazard of his life. To see a poor Christian thankful for his little pittance, yea, in the midst of his afflictions, as if he had crowns and kingdoms at his dispose, an ordinary understanding would reason thus, Surely this man finds some sweetness in his God that we see not, and is better paid for his service than we know of. The joyful praise of dying saints in the midst of fiery flames, have made their spectators go home in love, not only with religion, but with martyrdom.

5. Consider the honour that is put upon you in this duty. To attend on a prince, though bareheaded and on the knee, is counted more honour for a nobleman, than to live in the country, and have the service

of his fellow-subjects. Though we serve God all the day long, yet in acts of worship we have the honour immediately to attend on him, and minister to him. O blessed are they who may thus stand about him! Praise is the highest act of worship, and therefore to be continued in heaven’s blissful state. Whereas other graces shall be melted into love and joy, so other duties of worship, as hearing, praying, &c., into praise and thanksgiving. The priesthood was a great honour under the law. He chose Aaron and his tribe from among their brethren to serve at his altar; he would take that gift from their hand which he would not at a king’s. But in this gospel state every believer hath a more honourable priesthood, because he brings better sacrifices, the spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. And while thou art honouring thy God, thou honourest thyself. The whole body shines with the beams of that crown which is put on the head.

6. Consider that thy praises will render thy prayers more grateful and successful. It was thought a good omen for Alexander’s future victories, that he was liberal to the gods in his sacrifices, throwing frankincense by handfuls into the fire. He is a niggard to himself that is so to his God. Remittatur in suum principium caeleste profluvium, quo uberius terræ refundatur (Bern. Serm. 42 in Cantic.)—let the river of God’s mercies be returned to pay its tribute to God, their source and fountain, that they may refund more abundantly to us again. You shall observe the saints in their greatest straits, when they have most to beg, deliver their prayers praise-wise. Jehoshaphat sends his priest praising God into the field, and God fights for him. David, in the cave, My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.’ Daniel, when a trap was laid for his life, ‘praiseth God thrice a day.’ Christ himself, when he would raise Lazarus, lifts up his eyes and blesseth God, ‘I thank thee, O Father,’ &c.; when he was to suffer, sings a hymn. A thankful heart cannot easily meet with a denial. ‘Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand,’ Ps. 149:6.