

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 15

by William Gurnall

Prayer is a necessary duty for the Christian, as it is a means to carry on his war against sin and Satan, and it has a great influence on all our graces.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Mark 9:24, John 14:13, Romans 8:26, Ephesians 6:18

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the importance of prayer, addressing the necessary duty of the Christian to be clothed in the Whole Armour of God and to keep it furbished through prayer. He emphasizes the need for constant prayer, supplication, and perseverance in the Spirit for all saints, highlighting prayer as a means to carry on the war against sin and Satan. Gurnall explains that prayer is a vital duty that influences all graces, evidences the truth of grace, and helps in its growth. He encourages believers to overcome Satan's tactics to keep them from prayer, such as charging them with hypocrisy or undervaluing their gifts for prayer, by emphasizing the sincerity and faith that make prayers valid and effective.

Transcript

Direction Eleventh.

The necessary duty of the Christian, as clothed in the Whole Armour of God:

or, how the Spiritual Panoply may alone be kept furbished.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto

with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:18).

We have at last set before you the Christian in his armour; and now he wants nothing to furnish him for the battle, or enable him for the victory, but the presence of his general to lead him on, and bring him honourably off again by the wisdom of his conduct; which, that he may obtain, the apostle sets him to prayerpraying always, &c. As if he had said, You have now, Christian, the armour of God; but take heed thou forgettest not to engage God of this armour by humble prayer for your assistance, lest for all this you be worsted in the fight. He that gives you the arms, can only teach you to use them, and enable you to overcome by their use. I am not ignorant that some make this of prayer, a piece of armour, and to be reckoned as a part of the panoply. The truth is, it matters not much in what notion we handle it, whether as a distinct piece of armour, or as a duty and means necessarily required to the use of our armour. The latter

I shall follow; partly because it hath no piece of material armour, as the other all have, allotted to it for a resemblance; as also, because by the connection it hath, not with the last preceding words only, but with the whole discourse of the armour, it seems to be superadded as a general duty influential upon all the pieces forenamed; and may be read with every piece: Take the girdle of truth, praying with all prayer, &c.; having on the breastplate of righteousness, praying with all prayer, &c., and the same of the rest. The Christians armour will rust except it be furnished and scoured with the oil of prayer. What the key is to the watch, that [is] prayer to our graces it winds them up and sets them agoing. In the words observe,

FIRST. The duty commanded, prayer; with the end for which it is appointed, viz. as a help to all his graces and means to carry on his war against sin and Satan: BD@F,LP`μ,<@4praying.

SECOND. A directory for prayer; wherein we are instructed how to perform this duty in six distinct divisions of the subject. First. The time for prayer praying always. Second. The kinds and sorts of prayer with all prayer and supplication. Third. The inward principle of prayer from which it must 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.

DIRECTION XI. FIRST GENERAL PART.

[The duty commanded, and its connection with the whole discourse.]

Praying (Eph. 6:18).

We begin with the first, the duty in general, together with the connection it hath with the whole preceding discourse of the armour, implied in the participle BD`F,LP`μ,<@4praying. That is, furnish yourselves with the armour of God, and join prayer to all these graces for your defence against your spiritual enemies. Let us take the three following branches of the subject. First. Prayer as a necessary duty to the Christian. Second. Why it is so necessary a means, with our other armour, for our defence. Third. Satans designs against prayer.

So that the point deducible from this is

BRANCH FIRST.

[Prayer a necessary duty to the Christian

in his spiritual warfare.]

We lay down as the point deducible from what we have said the following doctrine.

Doctrine. That prayer is a necessary duty to be performed by the Christian, and used with all other means in his spiritual warfare. This is the silver trumpet, by the sound of which he is to alarm heaven, and call in God to his succour, Num. 10:9. The saints enemies fall till God riseth; and God stays to be raised by their prayers. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, Ps. 68:1. Prayer, it is a catholic duty, and means to be made use of in all our affairs and enterprises. What bread and salt are to our table, that prayer is to the Christian in all his undertakings, enjoyments, and temptations. Whatever our meal is, bread and salt are set on the board; and whatever our condition is, prayer must not be forgot. As we dip all our morsels in salt, and eat them with bread; so we are to act every grace, season every enjoyment, mingle every duty,

and oppose every temptation, with prayer. It hath been the constant practice of the saints in all their dangers and straits, whether from enemies within or without, from sin, devils, or men, to betake themselves to the throne of grace, and draw a line of prayer about them; accounting this the only safe posture to stand in for their defence. When God called Abraham from Haran into a strange country, where he wandered from place to place amidst strangers, who could not but have him in some suspicion considering the train and retinue he had and this their suspicion create many dangers to this holy man from the kings round about, it is observable what course Abraham takes for his defence. You shall find in his removes from place to place, the memorable thing recorded of him is, that he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord, Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:3, 4. This was the breastwork he raised and entrenched himself in. When he had once by prayer cast himself into the arms of God for protection, then he made account that he was in his castle. But what need Abraham have put himself so often to this trouble? Had he not the security of Gods promise when he set forth, that God would bless them that blessed him, and curse them that cursed him? And had he not faith to believe God would be a God of his word to perform what he had promised? We confess both. But neither Gods promise, nor Abrahams faith thereon, gave any supersedeas^[1] to his duty in prayer. The promise is given as a ground of faith, and faith as an encouraging help in prayer; but neither [are] intended to discharge us of our duty, and save us the labour of that work.

And what Abraham did, the same have all the saints ever done. The great spoils which they ever got from their enemies was in the field of prayer. If Moses sent Joshua into the valley against Amalek, himself will be on the mount to storm heaven by his prayer, while he is engaged in fight with the enemy below; and the victory it is plain was not got by Joshuas sword, so much as Moses prayer. Jehoshaphat, when he had near a million of men mustered for the field, besides his garrisons that were all well appointed, yet we find him as hard at prayer as if he had not had a man on his side: We know not what to do, but our eyes upon thee, II Chr. 20:12. Now if these worthies when they had but flesh and bloodmen like themselves to contest with, did yet fetch in their help from heaven, and make such use of prayers auxiliary force and that when other helps were not wanting lest they should be found under the neglect of an indispensable duty and prevalent means in order to their defence, how much more doth it behove the Christian, both in point of duty and prudence, to take the same course in his spiritual war against principalities and powers! For the saints graces, when best trained and exercised, are, without prayer, far less able to stand against Satan than they, with their military preparation, were to repel the force of men like themselves. Watch and pray, saith our Saviour, that ye enter not into temptation, Matt. 26:41. The not keeping this pass gave the enemy Satan a fair occasion to come in upon them. For we see, not taking Christ's counsel, they were all, though holy men, shamefully foiled. Most of them shifted for themselves by a cowardly flight, while they left their Lord in his enemy's hands. And he that thought to show more courage than his fellows, at last came off with deeper guilt and shame than them all, by denying his Master, who was even then owning him in the face of death, yea his Fathers wrath. And it is observable that, as they were led into temptation through their own neglect of prayer, so they were rescued and led out of it again by Christs prayer, which he mercifully laid in beforehand for them. I have prayed...that thy faith fail not, Luke 22:32.

But that which above all commends this duty to us, is Christs own practice; who, besides his constant exercise in it, did, upon any great undertaking wherein he was to meet opposition from Satan and his instruments, much more abound in it. At his baptism, being now to enter the stage of his public ministry, and to make his way thereunto through the fierce and furious assaults of Satan with whom he was to grapple as it were hand to hand after his forty days solitude we find him at prayer, Luke 3:21. Which prayer had a present answer, heaven opening, and the Spirit descending on him, with this voice, saying, Thou art my

beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased, ver. 22. And now Christ marcheth forth undauntedly to meet his enemy, who waited for him in the wilderness. Again, when he intended to commission his apostles, and send them forth to preach the gospel which he knew would bring the lion fell and mad out of his den, as also derive the worlds wrath upon those his messengershe first sets his disciples on praying, Matt. 9:38, and then spends the whole night himself in the same work before their mission, Luke 6:12. But above all, when he was to fight his last battle with the prince of this world, and also conflict with the wrath of his Father, now armed against him, and ready to be poured upon him for mans sinwhose cause he had espousedon the success of which great undertaking depended the saving or losing his mediatory kingdom, O how then did he bestir himself in prayer! It is said, He prayed more earnestly. As a wrestler that strains every vein in his body, so he put forth his whole might, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, Heb. 5:7, so that he won the field, though himself slain upon the place. The spoils of this glorious victory believers do now divide, and shall enjoy it to all eternity. And what is the English of all this, but to show us both the necessity and prevalency of prayer? Without this, no victory to be had, though we have our armour; but this, with that, will make us conquerors over all.

BRANCH SECOND.

[Why prayer is necessary to the Christian
in his spiritual warfare.]

Now, to proceed and show why prayer is so necessary a means with our other armour for our defence, let us set forth these reasons in order. First. Because of the co-ordination of this duty with all other means for the Christians defence, and that by divine appointment. Second. Because of the influence that prayer hath upon all our graces. Third. Because of the great prevalency prayer hath with God.

[The co-ordination of prayer with other means for
the Christians defence makes it necessary.]

Reason First. The first reason is taken from the co-ordination of this duty of prayer with all other means for the Christians defence, and that by divine appointment. He that bids us take the girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, &c., commands also not to neglect this duty. Now what God joins we must not sever. The efficacy of co-ordinate means lies in their conjunction. The force of an army consists not in this troop, or that one regiment, but in all the parts in a body. And if any single troop or company shall presume to fight the enemy alone, what can they expect but to be routed by the enemy and punished by their general also? Let not any say they use this means and that. If any one duty be willingly neglected, the golden chain of obedience is broke. And bonum non nisi ex integrisnothing is really good that is not so in all its parts. As to a good action, there is required a concurrence of all the several ingredients and causes; so to make a good Christian, there is required a conscientious care to use all appointed means. He must follow the Lord fully; not make here a balk and there a furrow. It is not the least of Satan's policy to get between one duty and another, that the man may not unite his forces, and be uniform in his endeavour.

Few so bad as to use no means; and not many so faithful to God and themselves as conscientiously to use all. One, he pretends to sincerity, and dares appeal to God that he means well, and his heart is good. But, for the breastplate of righteousness, it is too heavy and cumbersome for him to wear. Another seems very just and righteous, so that he would not wrong his neighbour, no, not of one penny, to gain many

pounds. But, as for faith in Christ, this he never looks after. A third boasts of his faith and hope, as if he did not doubt of his salvation. But, as for the word of God that should beget and increase it, he cares not how seldom he looks on it at home, or hears it in the public. And a fourth, he hath this to say for himself, That he is a constant hearer, his seat at church is seldom found empty, and at home the Bible often in his hands. But, as for prayer, his closet, could it speak, would bear witness against him, that he seldom or never performs it. This half doing will prove many a souls whole undoing. Samuel asked Jesse, Are here all thy children? Though but a stripling wanting, he must be sent for before he will sit down. So may I say to many that are very busy and forward in some particular duties and means, Is here all that God hath given thee in charge? If but one be wanting, God's blessing will be wanting also. And as that son was wanting of Jesses which God did intend to set the crown upon, so that duty and means which is most neglected, we have cause to think is the means which God would especially crown with his blessing upon our faithful endeavour.

[The influence of prayer upon Christian
graces makes it a necessary duty.]

Reason Second. The second reason is taken from the influence that prayer hath upon all our graces. And that in a double respect. It will help to evidence the truth of grace, and also advance its growth.

First. The duty of prayer, frequently and spiritually performed, will be a means to evidence the truth of our graces. And this is of no small importance to the Christian, when he hath to do with the tempter. For that which he mainly drives at, is to bring the Christian into a suspicion of himself as to the work of grace in him, thereby to overturn the very foundation of his hope, and put him to a stand in his endeavours. He, indeed, will have little list to go on that fears he is not in his right way. I have heard that politicians can make use of a state liethough the credit of it lasts but a little whilefor great advantage to their designs. And he that learns them this art makes much more use of it himself to further his designs against the Christian. Because he could not keep Christ in the grave, therefore he raiseth a lie, to hinder the belief of his resurrection in the world. And when he cannot hinder the production of grace, he misreports the work of the Christian, as if all were but a cheat put upon him by his own deceitful heart; which the poor creature is prone enough, God knows, to believe. And so, though the fear be false and groundless; yet, being believed, [it] produceth as sad a confusion to his thoughts, and distress to his spirit, as if it were true. Jacob could not have mourned more if Joseph had indeed been slain, than he did when there was no such matter. Nor could a wicked wretch easily endure more terror and horror than some precious saints have felt, for the time that Satan's false reportslandering the truth of their gracehath found credit with them. Now, in prayer, the Christian stands at great advantage to find out the truth of his state, and that upon a double account.

1. God doth commonly take this season, when his people are pouring out their souls to him, to open his heart to them, and to give his testimony both to their persons and graces. God hath his sealing hours, in which his Spirit comes and bears witness to his children's state and grace. And this of prayer is a principal one. Where was it that God so marvellously dignified, and if I may so say, knighted Jacob with that new title of honour, Thou shalt be called Israel, but in the field of prayer? What was the happy hour in which the angel knocked at Daniels door to let him know how God loved him? was it not when he was knocking at heaven door by his prayer? At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved, Dan. 9:23. When got the woman of Canaan the sight of her faith, not only that it was true, but also strongO woman, great is thy faith! but when her heart was car-

ried forth so vehemently in prayer? Yea, Christ himself heard that miraculous voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, when he was lifting up his eyes in prayer to heaven, Luke 3:21.

2. The duty of prayer affords a demonstrative argument for the truth of that souls grace which spiritually performs it. The Spirit of God, when he testifies to the truth of a saints grace, useth to join issue with the saint's own spirit, The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, Rom. 8:16. Now the testimony which the Christian's own spirit gives for him, is taken from those vital acts of the new creature that operate in him such as sincerity, godly sorrow for sin, love of holiness, and other of this nature are. Now, no way do these and other graces more sensibly discover themselves to the Christians view than in prayer. Here sincerity shows itself in the Christians plain‑heartedness to confess all his sins freely, without extorting, and nakedly, without extenuation or reservation when there is no false box in the cabinet of the soul to lock up a darling sin in. Holy David, Ps. 32, having, ver. 1, pronounced himself blessed that had no sin imputed to him, and, in whose spirit there is no guile, gives ver. 5, this instance of his own sincerity, that he acknowledged his sin, and did not hide his iniquity; as also how well he sped thereby, And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Again, here [i.e. in prayer] doth the Christian give vent to his heart, aching with inward grief for sin. Prayer is the channel into which godly sorrow pours forth itself, and runs down in brinish tears, while the Christian is accusing himself of, and judging himself for, his abominations, with deep shame and self‑abhorrency. In a word, here the souls love to holiness flames forth in his fervent vehement desires and requests for grace that can bear no denial, but even breaks for the longing it hath to it.

Thus we see spirit of prayer is both an argument of true grace, and a means to draw out that true grace into act, whereby its truth may be the better exposed to view. A spirit of grace and of supplications are both joined together, Zech. 12:10. The latter doth indicate the former. What is prayer but the breathing forth of that grace which is breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit? When God breathed into man the breath of life, he became a living soul. So, when God breathes into the creature the breath of spiritual life, it becomes a praying soul. Behold he prayeth, saith God of Paul to Ananias, Acts 9:11. As if he had said, Be not afraid of him; he is an honest soul; thou mayest trust him for he prays. Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself.

Second. The duty of prayer, as it is a means to evidence, so to increase, grace. The praying Christian is the thriving Christian; whereas he that is infrequent or slothful in praying, is a waster. He is like one that lives at great expense, and drives little or no trade to bring wherewithal to maintain it. Now prayer helps toward the increase and growth of grace in these two ways: 1. As it draws the habits of grace into act, and exerciseth them. 2. As it sets the soul nigh to God.

1. As it draws the habits of grace into act, and exerciseth them. Now as exercise brings a double benefit to the body, so this to the soul.

(1.) Exercise doth help to digest or breathe forth those humours that clog the spirits. One that stirs little, we see, grows pury, and is soon choked up with phlegm, which exercise clears the body of. Prayer is the saints exercise‑field, where his graces are breathed. It is as the wind to the air to sweep the soul; as bellows to the fire, which clears the coals of those ashes that smother them. The Christian, while in this world, lives but in an unwholesome climate. One while the delights of it deaden and dull his love to Christ; another while, the troubles he meets in it damp his faith on the promise. How now should the poor

Christian get out of these his distempers, had he not a throne of grace to resort to, where, if once his soul be in a melting frame, he, like one laid in a kingly sweat, soon breathes out the malignity of his disease, and comes into his right temper again. How oft do we find the holy prophet, when he first kneels down to pray, full of fears and doubts, who yet before he and the duty part, grows into a sweet familiarity with God and repose in his own spirit? He begins his prayer, as if it were come to that pass that he thought that God would never give him a kind look more: How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? Ps. 13:1. But by that time he hath exercised himself a little in duty, his distemper wears off, the mists scatter, and his faith breaks out as the sun in its strength. I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation, I will sing unto the Lord, ver. 5. Thus his faith lays the cloth, expecting a feast ere long to be set on. He that even now questioned whether he should ever hear good news from heaven, is so strong in faith, as to make himself merry with the hopes of that mercy which he is assured will come at last. Abraham began with fifty, but his faith got ground on God every step, till he brought down the price of their lives to ten.

(2.) Exercise whets the appetite to that food which must be taken before strength can be got. And *causa causæ est causa causati* the remoter cause of an immediate one is, in a certain sense, the cause of that which flows as an effect from the more immediate. The hone that sets the edge on the husbandmans scythe, helps him to mow the grass. None comes so sharp; set to the word which is the saints food to strengthen his grace as the Christian that takes prayer in his way to the ordinance. The stronger natural heat is, the better stomach the man hath to his meat. Love in the soul is what natural heat is in the body. The more the soul loves the word, the more craving it has after it. Now, as exercise stirs up the natural heat of the body, so prayer excites this spiritual heat of love in the saints bosom to the word. Cornelius is an excellent instance for it. We find him hard at prayer in his house, when behold a vision that bids him send for Peter, who should preach the gospel to him a happy reward for his devotion! Now, see what a sharp appetite this praying soul hath to the word. He upon this presently posts away messengers for Peter, and before he comes, gathers an assembly together no doubt all of his friends that he could get. There he sits with a longing heart waiting for the preacher. As soon as ever he sees his face, he falls down at his feet, receiving him with that reverence and respect as if he had been an angel dropped out of heaven. Presently he sets Peter to work, though some may think he passed good manners in putting him to labour after so long a journey, before he had refreshed him with some collation or other; but the good man was so hungry to hear the message he brought, that he could not well pacify his soul to stay any longer, and like a man truly hunger-bit, he is ready to catch at any truth though never so bitter which shall be set before him. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God, Acts 10:33. And when the sermon is done, so savoury and sweet was the meal, that he is loath to think of parting with Peter before he gets more from him; and therefore beseeches him to stay some days with him. One sermon did but make his teeth water for another. O how unlike are they who come reeking out of the world to a sermon, to Cornelius that riseth from prayer to wait for the preacher?

2. Prayer helps our graces, as it sets the soul nigh to God. In prayer we are said to draw nigh to God, James 4:8 to come before his presence, Ps. 95:2. In it we have access by one spirit unto the Father, Eph. 2:18, as one that brings a petition to a prince is called into his presence; chamberone of the nearest approaches to God which the creature is capable of on this side heaven, which was signified by the incense altar, that stood so high even within the vail. Prayer, it is called, The throne of grace. We come in prayer to the throne of God, and put our petition into the very hand of God, as he sits on his throne in all his royalty. Now, as prayer is so near an approach to God, it hath a double influence into the growth of the saints grace.

(1.) By this near access to God, the soul is put the more into a holy awe and fear of that pure and piercing eye of God which he sees looking on him. It is true, God is ever near us. Pray or not pray, we cannot rid ourselves of his presence. But never hath the soul such apprehensions of his presence as when it is set before God in prayer. Now the soul speaks to God as it were mouth to mouth; and considering how holy that majesty is with whom he hath to do in prayer, he must needs reverence and tremble before him. Now the natural issue of this holy fear, what can it be but a care to approve itself to God? And this care cherishes every grace. They are carried in its arms, as the child in its nurse's. It keeps the girdle of truth buckled close about his loins. O, saith the soul, I must either leave praying, or leave doubling and juggling with God by hypocrisy! It will strengthen the breastplate of holiness. It is not possible that a Christian should walk loosely all day, and be free and familiar with God at night. He that waits on the person of a prince will be careful to carry nothing about him that should be offensive to his eye; yea, afraid lest anything should come to his ear, that should bring him under a cloud in his princes thoughts, and remove him from his place about him. And courtiers have those that will be always undermining then if they can; and the Christian wants not such an adversary for Satan is at his right hand at every miscarriage to accuse him unto God, saying, This is your favourite. Though he be so devout in prayer, he can do this or that, when the duty is over. And therefore, if any in the world have a tie upon them more than others to walk exactly, it is they that minister before the Lord in this duty. Princes are more curious of their attendants than of others at further distance from them. When David showed some distraction of mind before king Achish, he bids away with him. Have I need of madmen, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? And does a poor mortal man that sits on a throne of dust, only heaped up and raised a little above his fellows, take such state on him as not to bear the discomposure of any before him? How much less will the great God though we wink for a time at the foul sins of others brook any unholy behaviour in those that wait so nigh upon him! This, no doubt, made Cain run so fast from the presence of God, because he knew that it was no standing so nigh God with such an unholy heart as he carried in his bosom.

(2.) By the souls near access to God in prayer, it receives sweet influences of grace from him. All grace comes from the God of grace; not only the first seed of grace, but its growth and increment; and God usually sheds forth his grace in a way of communion with his people. Now, by prayer the Christian is led into most intimate communion with God. And from communion follows communication. As the warmth the chicken finds by sitting under the hens wings cherisheth it, so are the saints' graces enlivened and strengthened by the sweet influences they receive from this close communion with God. The Christian is compared to a tree, Ps. 1. And those trees flourish most, and bear sweetest fruit, which stand most in the sun. The praying Christian is, as they say of the Rhodians, in sole positus placed in the sun. He stands nigh to God, and hath, God nigh to him in all that he calls upon him for. And therefore you may expect his fruit to be sweet and ripe, when another stands as it were in the shade, and at a distance from God (through neglect of, or infrequency in, this duty), will have little fruit found on his branches, and that but green and sour. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, Ps. 92:13, 14.

[The prevalency of prayer with God

makes it a necessary duty.]

Reason Third. The third reason the Christian should join prayer to all other means, is taken from the great prevalency prayer hath with God. He will do no great matter for a saint without prayer, and nothing is too great for him to do at his request. Prayer, like Jonathans bow, when duly qualified as to the person and

act, never returns empty. Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty as the praying saint. Some prayers indeed have a longer voyage than others; but then they come with the richer lading at last into the port. In trading, he gets most by his commodity that can forbear his money longest. So does the Christian that can with most patience stay for a return of his prayer. Such a soul shall never be ashamed of his waiting. The promise is an assuring office to secure him his adventure, I John 3:22. O who can express the powerful oratory of a believer's prayer! Vocula Pater formaliter dicta in corde, est eloquentia, quam Demosthenes, Cicero, et eloquentissimi in mundo nunquam possunt exprimere (Luther) this little word Father, lisped forth in prayer by a child of God, exceeds the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and all other so famed orators in the world.

We read of taking heaven by force, Matt. 11:12. If ever this may be said to be done it is in prayer. Cælum tundimus et misericordiam extorquemus, saith Tertullian we knock at heaven, and the merciful heart of God flies open, which we bring away with us. And in the same apology he speaks of Christians, how they went to pray, as an enemy doth to besiege a town, and take it by storm coimus in coetum et congregationem, ut ad Deum quasi manufactuâ præcationibus ambiamus orantes. And then he adds, hæc vis Deo grata est this holy violence we offer to God in prayer is very pleasing to him. Surely, if it were not, he would neither help the Christian so in the work, nor reward him for it when it is done. Whereas he doth both. He helped Jacob to overcome: By his strength he had power with God, Hosea 12:3. That is, not by his own, but by the strength he had from God. And then he puts honour upon him for the victory, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed, Gen. 32:28. It were easy here to expatiate into a large history of the great exploits which prayer is renowned for in holy writ. James 5:17; Isa. 37; Dan 2:18; II Sam. 15:31; Est. 4:16; Acts 12:5; John 11:41; Jonah 2:2; Joshua 10:12, 14; II Kings 20:10; Ps. 106:23; Eze. 22:30. This is the key that hath opened and again shut heaven. It hath vanquished mighty armies, and unlocked such secrets as passed the skill of the very devil himself to find out. It hath strangled desperate plots in the very womb wherein they were conceived, and made those engines of cruelty prepared against the saints recoil upon the inventors of them; so that they have inherited the gallows which they did set up for others. At the knock of prayer, prison doors have opened, the grave hath delivered up its dead; and the seas leviathan, not able to digest his prey, hath been made to vomit it up again. It hath stopped he suns chariot in the heavens, yea made it go back. And that which surpasseth all, it hath taken hold of the Almighty, when on his full march against persons and people, and hath put him into a merciful retreat. Indeed, by the power prayer hath with God, it comes to prevail over all the rest.

He that hath a key to Gods heart cannot be shut out, or stopped at the creatures door. Now prayer moves God and overcomes him, not by causing any change in the divine will, and making God to take up new thoughts of doing that for his people which he did not before intend. No, God is immutable, and what good he doth in time for his people he purposed before any time was. But prayer is said to more than overcome God; because he then gives, what from eternity he purposed to give upon their praying to him. For when God decreed what he would do for his saints, he also purposed that they should pray for the same. I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, Eze. 36:37. Prayers midwifery shall be used to deliver the mercies God purposeth and promiseth. Hezekiah understood this when he calls the prophet to the churchs labour, and bids because the children that is, deliverance stuck in her birth, that he should therefore lift up a prayer, Isa. 37:3, 4. And when Daniel had found the full reckoning of the promise how long it had to go with the deliverance promised for their return from captivity perceiving it hastened, he therefore falls hard to prayer, knowing God's purpose to give doth not discharge us from our duty to ask, Dan. 9:3.

[Why Christians are to pray for what God

hath purposed and promised to give.]

Question. But why doth God impose this upon the saints, that they should pray for what he hath purposed and promised to give? First. That they may be conformable to Christ. Second. That he may give the good things of the promise with safety to his honour. Third. To show the great delight he takes in his saints prayers.

Answer First. That they may be conformable to Christ. The design of God is to make every saint like Christ. This was resolved from eternity Rom. 8:29. Now, as the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that may be; so doth God look on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, and in glory: yet so that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head. Yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree. An image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that which is engraved on gold. Now, as in other things, so in this our conformity to Christ appearsthat as the promises made to him were performed on his prayer to his Father, so promises made to his saints are given to them in the same way of prayer. Ask of me, saith God to his Son, and I shall give thee, Ps. 2:8. And the apostle tells us, Ye have not because ye ask not. God had promised support to Christ in all his conflicts: Behold my servant, whom I uphold, Isa. 42:1. Yet he prays with strong crying and tears, when his feet stood within the shadow of death. A seed is promised to him, and victory over his enemies; yet, for both these, he is at prayer now in heaven. Christ towards us acts as a king, but towards his Father as a priest. All he speaks to God is on his knee by prayer and intercession. In like manner the saints. The promise makes them kings over their lusts, conquerors over their enemies; but it makes them priests towards God, by prayer humbly to sue out those great things given in the promise.

Answer Second. That God may give the good things of the promise with safety to his honour. Secure God but his glory, and the saint may have what he will. The very life of God is bound up in his glory. The creatures honour is not intrinsical to his being. A prince is a man when his crown and kingdom are gone. But God cannot be a God, except he be glorious; neither can he be glorious, unless he be holy, just, merciful, and faithful, &c. Now, that this his glory may be seen and displayed, is the great end he propounds both in making and ordering of the world: The Lord hath made all things for himself, Prov. 16:4. If there were any one occurrence in the world which could no way be reducible to the glory of God, it would make the being of a deity to be questioned. But the all-wise God hath so made, and doth so order, all his creatures with their actions, that the manifestation of his glory is the result of all. Indeed, he forceth it from some, and takes it by distress, as princes do their taxes from disobedient subjects. Thus the very wrath of his enemies shall praise him, Ps. 76:10. But he expects the saints should be active instruments to glorify him, and, like loyal loving subjects, pay him the tribute of his praise freely, with acclamations of joy and gratitude; which, that they may do, he issueth out his mercies in such a way as may best suit with this their duty. And that is to give the good things he hath purposed and promised to them upon their humble address in prayer to him. Now two ways the glory of God is secured by this means.

1. The saint, in the very duty of prayerwhen he performs it in a qualified mannere doth highly glorify God. Prayer, as it is medium gratiæa channel of grace, for the conveying and deriving blessings from God, the fountain, into the cistern of our bosoms; so it is medium cultusa means of worship, whereby we are to do homage to God, and give him the glory of his deity. By this we give him the glory of his power. Prayer is a

humble appeal from our impotency to Gods omnipotence. None begs that at anothers door which he can pleasure himself with at home. And if we thought not God able, we would go to another, not to him. We give him the glory of his sovereignty and dominion and acknowledge that he is not only able to procure for us what we ask, but can give us a right to, and the blessing of, what he gives. Therefore Christ closeth his prayer with, Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, &c., as a reason why we direct our prayers to God; because he alone is the sovereign Lord that can invest us in, and give us title to, any enjoyment. So that it is high treason against the crown and dignity of God, when we wither attempt to possess ourselves of any enjoyments without praying to him; or when we pray religiously to any other besides him. By the first we usurp his sovereignty ourselves, in their language, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee, Jer. 2:31. And by the second we give away his kingdom and sovereignty to another. This was the devils drift when he would have had Christ fall down and worship him, that thereby he might acknowledge him to have the rule of the world. Again, by prayer give him the glory of his free mercy. Men demand a debt, but beg an alms. When we pray we renounce merit. See them opposed, Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge, Job 9:15. We might show the same in all the other attributes. But this taste from a few may suffice. And as God, essentially considered, receives by prayer an acknowledgement of his deity; so every person in the sacred Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in prayer are honoured. By directing our prayers to God the Father, we honour him as the source and fountain of all grace and mercy. We honour the Son in presenting our prayers in his name to the Father, thereby acknowledging him the purchaser of the mercies we beg. And the Holy Ghost, he receives the honour of that assistance which we acknowledge to receive from him for the duty of prayer. For as we pray to the Father through the Son, so by the help of the Spirit.

2. As God is honoured in the very act and exercise of his duty duly qualified, so by it the Christian is deeply engaged, and also sweetly disposed, to praise God for, and glorify him with, the mercies he obtains by prayer.

(1.) Prayer engageth to praise God because of his mercies. In prayer we do not only beg mercy of God, but vow praise to God for the mercies we beg. Prayers are called vows, Thou, O God, hast heard my vows; Ps. 61:5; that is, my prayers, in which I solemnly vowed praise for the deliverance I begged. It is no prayer where no vow is included. We must not think to bind God and leave ourselves free. God ties himself in the promise to help us; but the condition of the obligation on our part, is, that we will glorify him. And upon no other terms doth God give us leave to ask any mercy at his hands. Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Ps. 50:15. Now, what a strong tie doth this lay upon the praying Christians heart, to use the mercies he receives holily, and to wear with thankfulness what he wins by prayer! The Christian who would be loath to be taken in a lie to man, will much more fear to be found a liar to God. Surely they are my people, saith God; children that will not lie; so he was their Saviour, Isa. 63:8.

(2.) Prayer is a means to dispose the heart to praise. Prayer and praise, like the symbolical qualities in the elements, are soon resolved each into the other. When David begins a psalm with prayer, he commonly ends it with praise. From whence things have their original, thither they return. From the sea the riverwater comes, and no mountains can hinder, but back again to the sea it will go. That spirit which leads the soul out of itself to God for supply, will direct it to the same God with his praise. We do not use to borrow money of one man and pay it to another. If God hath been thy strength, surely thou wilt make him thy song. The thief comes not to thank a man for what he steals out of his yard. And I as little wonder that they do not glorify God for or with his mercies, who did not ask his leave by prayer for them. What men do by

themselves they ascribe to themselves. Mercies ill got are commonly as ill spent: because they are not sanctified to them, and so become fuel to feed their lusts. Hence it is, the more enjoyments they have the more proud and unthankful they are. But by prayer the Christians enjoyments are sanctified, and the flatulency of them, which puffs up others into pride, is corrected; and the same mercies received by prayer, become nourishment to the saints' graces, that putrefy and turn to noisome lusts in the prayerless sinner.

Answer Third. God will have his people pray for what he hath purposed and promised, to show the great delight he takes in their prayers. As a father, though he can send to his son who lives abroad the money he hath promised for his maintenance, yet let him not have it except he comes over at set times for it. And why? Not to trouble his son, but delight himself in his sons company. God takes such content in the company of his praying saints, that to prevent all strangeness on their part, he orders it so that they cannot neglect a duty but they shall lose something by it. Ye have not, because ye ask not. And the more they abound in prayer the more they shall with blessings. The oftener Joash had smote upon the ground, the fuller his victory over Syria had been. As the arrows of prayer are that we shoot to heaven, so will the returns of mercy from thence be. Yet must it not be imputed to any loathness in God to give, that he makes them pray often and long before the mercy comes, but rather to the content he takes in our prayers. He doth all this on a design to draw out the graces of his Spirit in his children, the voice and language of which in prayer makes most sweet melody in the ear of God. The truth is, we are in this too like musicians playing under our window; they play while the money is thrown out to them, and then their pipes are put up. And were our wants so supplied by the answer of one prayer, that we did not suddenly need a new recruit, we would be gone, and God should not hear of us in haste.

USE OR APPLICATION.

[Reproof to prayerless souls,
with the dismal state of such.]

Use First. A word to those who live in the total neglect of this duty, that are prayerless creatures. Such ruins of mankind there are to be found, who pass their wretched days like so many swine; they never look up to heaven till God lays them on their back; nor are heard to cry in prayer till this knife is at their throat. What shall I say to these giants and sons of the earth, that have renounced their allegiance to the God of heaven! these kine of Bashan, who, like so many metamorphosed Nebuchadnezzars, have lost the heart of a man, and live like as very brutes, as the beasts themselves, who, while they feed, take no notice of him that clothes the field with grass for them! Can I hope they will hear man who will not acknowledge the God of heaven by praying to him? Surely your case is deplored. What! not pray? Can you do less than by this homage to own God for your Maker? O less for your own souls, than to beg their life of God, whose hand of justice is lift up against you? Are you resolved thus to throw yourselves into the devil's mouth, without so much as striking one stroke for your defence? If God had required a greater matter at your hands than this, the salvation of your souls would have deserved it. And will you stick at this?

God does not put us to the cost of laying down the price of our ransom; no, not so much as to pay our prison fees. Only, he bids thee pray, and he will pay: Your heart shall live that seek God, Ps. 69:32. O, what salt and vinegar will this pour into thy wounds, when in hell thy conscience shall fly in thy face, and tell thee thou hadst not been there if thou wouldst in time have humbled thy soul before God, and sought his favour in that way which cost Christ his blood to procure.

Either thou must be dispossessed of this dumb devil, or undoubtedly it will be thy damnation! And who dies with less pity than that malefactor that stouts it before the judge, and will not so much as down on his knees, or open his mouth to cry for mercy, though the judge on purpose stays to pronounce the sentence and break up the court, to see whether his stomach will fall, and his proud spirit stoop to ask his life at his hands? You know how angry Pilate was when Christ was silent: Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

John 19:10, though, alas! poor creature, as Christ told him, he could do nothing for or against him; and therefore Christ neither feared him, nor ought him so much service as to bestow a word upon him. The warrant for Christs death was sealed in heaven, and he, with the rest of Christs enraged enemies, were but God's servants to do the execution according to the determinate counsel of God. But how much more reason hath the great God to be provoked by this irreligion, and say, Wilt thou not speak to me? pray to me?

Dost thou not know I have the power to save or damn? to deliver thee to the tormentor, or keep thee out of his hands? Or, dost thou look that God is bound to save thee whether pray or not pray? If he doth, I promise you he shall do more for thee than for others; yea, than for his own Son, who made strong cries and supplications to be saved by him. God hath laid the method of salvation and think not that he will alter it, and so make a blot in the counsel of his will, for thy pleasure.

What he hath written he hath written, and it shall not be reversed. Yea, though others should be so kind as out of pity to thy soul to pray for thee, yet if thou beest thyself a prayerless creature, thou shalt die the death. If they were Noah, Samuel, and Daniel, that stood up to beg thy life they should not be heard for thee. Proxy prayers in this case will not prevail. And therefore, when the Israelites came a begging to Samuel for his prayers which, good man, he easily promised; indeed, durst not have forgot them in that, though they had not remembered him of it mark what caveat he annexeth, Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart, I Sam. 12:24.

As if he had said, Do not set me to do for you {that} which you will not do for yourselves. It is not all the interest my prayers have in heaven {that} will keep the wrath of God from falling on you, if you be wicked and atheistical; therefore fear the Lord, and serve him. That is, pray and obey him.

Fear oft denotes the worship of God, Gen. 31:53. God is called the fear of Isaac; i.e. the God whom he feared and worshipped. So, Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? Jer. 10:7, that is, worship thee, rather than the stocks and stones; because the worshipping of God results from our reverence and fear we have of him. Christ was heard in that he feared him, Heb. 5:7 $\hat{J}H \hat{U}8"X4"H$; that is, his religious fear, expressed in those his strong cries which he groaned forth to God in his agony. And therefore, so long as you are prayerless, you live without the fear of God. And what will not such a wretch dare to do? Even anything that Satan shall command him, though it be to go to a wizard. When Saul had given over inquiring after God, we hear him by and by knocking at the devil's door, and asking counsel of a witch. Oh! take heed of living so near the tempter! If Satan might have his wish, surely it would be thisthat the creature might live prayerless; for by this he should do the greatest spite possible to God; in that he makes the creature set him at nought in all his attributes, and have the greatest advantage against the sinner himself. Now he hath thee as sure as the thief hath the traveller, when he hath thrown him into a ditch fast bound, and stopped his mouth, that he cannot cry to others for help. In a word, thou art free booty for Satan, who may now satisfy his lust upon thee. He that prayeth invites God into his further acquaintance, and soon shall have it; as we see in Paul, who had Ananias sent from God to him. But he that lives in the

neglect of this duty, gives the devil fuller possession of him. Thou art the man of all others most fit for him to make an atheist of. I should not wonder that the devil persuades thee there is no God, who already livest in such defiance against him as cannot but make the belief of a deity dreadful to thy thoughts. Herod was soon persuaded to cut off John's head, because, when he was alive, he so troubled and nettled his conscience. And it is to be feared thou wilt easily be drawn to attempt the stifling all thoughts of a deity, from whom thy criminous conscience expects to hear nothing that can please thee. Yea, it is probable thou hast too much of the atheist in thee already, or else thou durst not deny God that part of natural worship which they that know him least give unto him. I am sure the Scripture lays this brat of irreligion at the door of atheism, Ps. 14:1: The fool there would fain persuade himself there is no God, and when he hath got so far the mastery of his conscience as to blot God out of his creed, he then soon leaves him out of his paternoster, ver. 2.

Question. But, it may be, some will ask me whether I think that any do, where the gospel is preached, neglect prayer on this account of atheism?

Answer. Truly I do; and which is more, I think there are worse atheists to be found under the meridian light of the gospel, than in the darkest nook in America, where yet this day never broke. As weeds grow rankest in richest grounds, and fruits ripest in hottest climates; so do sins grow to the greatest height where the gospel's sun climbs highest. Who is blind, but my servant?...and blind as the Lords servant? Isa. 42:19. Who such atheists as those that have their eyes put out by the light of the gospel? The poor Indians little knowledge of a God is for want of light; which may be cured, when it is brought to them. But if a judiciary atheismas that in gospel times and places commonly isfalls upon a soul for rebelling against the light, this is incurable. Here the very visive faculty is perished, and the eye bored out.

[Exhortation to saints to abound in prayer.]

Use Second. To the saints. Be you provoked to ply this oar more diligently than ever. If this be neglected, a universal decay of all your graces follows. When the ports and havens of a kingdom are blocked up, that the merchant can not go forth, there follows a damp on all the inland trade, so that an enemy needs not strike a stroke, but only stand still to see them eat up one another. The psalmist tells of a stream which makes glad the city of God, Ps. 46:4. The promise is this stream, upon which the saints have all their livelihood brought up to their very doors. If this be kept open, Satan cannot much distress them; which then is done, when they can send out their prayers on this stream to heaven. But if once this trade be stopped, then they are hard put to it. It is observed of our neighbours the Netherlands, that whereas other nations used to be made poor by war, they have grown rich with it; because, with their wars, they have enlarged their trade and traffic abroad. And if thou, Christian, wouldst thrive by all thy temptations, thou must take the same course. Whatever thou dost, starve not thy trade with heaven. God hatto make thee more diligent in this dutyso ordered things, that all the treasure of the promise is to be conveyed to thee in this bottom of prayer. This is like the merchants ship, it bringeth her food from afar, Prov. 31:14. If thy mercies were of the growth of thy own country, thou mightest spare a voyage to heaven. But alas! poor creature, when thou art best laid in, and thy storehouse fullest, if no foreign supplies should come unto thee from heaven, how soon wouldst thou be brought, with the poor widow, to eat thy last cake and die! It was not her little meal in her barrel, nor oil at the bottom of her cruse, but Gods blessing multiplying them, that make them hold out so long. So, not thy present grace, strength, or comfort, but God's feeding these with a new spring, that thou must live upon. Now cease praying, and the oil of grace will cease running: Ye have not, because ye ask not. And when the store is spent the city must yield. As thou wouldst not therefore fall into Satans hands, lose not thy interest in God, thy best ally, for want of preserving a good

correspondence with him at the throne of grace.

Now, for the better pursuit of this exhortation, some counsel would not be amiss in order to thy driving this trade of prayer more successfully. Satan hath received so many shameful overthrows by the saints prayers, that he trembles at the force of this great ordnance of heaven. This is the voice, the mighty voice of God in his saints, which shakes those mountains of pride, divides the flames of fiery temptations, and makes them cast forth their abortive counsels to their shame and disappointment. O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, II Sam. 15:31. This one prayer made both Ahithophel a fool, and him that set him on work alsodefeating the wisdom both of man and devil. Satan hath such an impression of dread upon himfrom the remembrance of what he hath suffered from the hands of prayerthat he will turn every stone, and try every way, to obstruct thee in it. What do we, said the Pharisees concerning Christ, for this man doeth many miracles?...if we let him thus alone, the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. Satan cannot deny but great wonders have been wrought by prayer. As the spirit of prayer goes up, so his kingdom goes down. It is of the royal seed. He can no more stand before it than falling Haman before rising Mordecai. And therefore, seeing this is like to do thee such great service against him, it behooves thee the more to defend it from his stratagems. Because the great artillery of an army is so useful to it, and formidable to the enemy, therefore it hath a strong guard set about it.

BRANCH THIRD.

[Satans designs against prayer.]

Now Satans designs against prayer are of three kinds. First. If he can, he will keep thee from prayer. If that be not feasible, Second. He will strive to interrupt thee in prayer. And, Third. If that plot takes not, he will labour to hinder the success and return of thy prayer.

[Satan strives to keep from prayer.]

First Design. Satans first design upon the Christian will be to keep him from prayer. To effect this he wants not his stratagems; many objections that he will start, and discouragements he will throw in thy way to this duty; hoping that if thou stumblest not at one, yet he may make thee fall by another, and be sick of thy enterprise before thou settest upon it. And, which is worst, thou wilt find a party in thy own bosom too ready to listen to what he saith, yea, to take up his arguments and maintain the dispute against thy engaging in this work. We shall pick up a few among many, and put an answer into thy mouth against he comes.

Satan keeps from prayer by charging

the Christian with hypocrisy.]

First Stratagem. What! thou pray! If thou dost, thou wilt but play the hypocrite; and better not pray at all, than never the better! Nay, possibly thy own misgiving heart may suggest the same, or at least so far credit his charge, as to make thee waver in thy thoughts what thou shouldst dopray or not. Now, to arm thee against this, consider,

1. Thou art but afraid thou shouldst play the hypocrite, if [you] pray; but thou wilt certainly prove thyself an atheist if thou dost not. And that is it which he would have. I hope thou art wiser than to neglect a known duty upon a jealousy thou hast of miscarrying in it; to lie down in a known sinyea, so broad a one as

brands him for an atheist that continues in it for fear of meeting a lion, may be but a bugbear, in the way of thy obedience to an indispensable command.

2. Thou art in the less danger of playing the hypocrite, because of thy fear. Some bodily diseases indeed are caught with a fear and fancy. He is most like to have the plague or pox that fears most he shall have them. But none are so safe from sin as they that fear the falling into it most. The truth is, I would desire no better argument to prove thee sincere than this to fear thy hypocrisy. Believe it, if this be the great trouble of thy soul, the devil hath more reason to fear thy sincerity than thou thy hypocrisy. And in all likelihood this it is that makes him to scare thee from prayer because thou scare him so much by thy praying. If thou wert a hypocrite, as he pretends, himself would invite thee to it; yea, make a lane for thee, rather than that thou shouldst not come to the work; and when thou art risen from thy knees, he would thank thee for thy pains, because he knows God would not. The hypocrite does him more service than God. You do not believe, sure, that the devil was any great enemy to Jezebel's fasting. Nay, I doubt not but he put it into her head, that she might thereby mock both God and man. Her fast was the devils feast. But,

3. If thou findest more cause to fear thy playing the hypocrite than I who am a stranger to thy heart have reason to do who indeed can know so well how thy own heart beats as thyself? I say, if thou fearest this be the sin which is most likely to make a breach upon thee in thy duty, do as Moses, who slew the Egyptian to rescue the Israelites from the sin, that thou mayest rescue thy soul from the neglect of a duty. Thou hast a very fair advantage, by the intelligence God graciously gives thee whence thy danger is most likely to come, of falling on thy enemy, and taking the fuller revenge on him, before thou settest about the work of prayer. Get but thy heart into a hatred of this odious sin, and fixed resolution against it, and, with Gods blessing, it shall neither be able to hurt thee, nor hinder thy prayer from finding welcome with God.

[Satan keeps from prayer by undervaluing

the Christians gift for it.]

Second Stratagem. O but, saith Satan, thou hast no gifts for prayer. Leave that for them that can perform this duty after a better fashion.

What meanest thou by gifts? If a rowling, flowing tongue which some have, whereby they are able on a sudden, with a long-continued discourse, to run over all the heads of prayer in a clear method, and clothe every petition with apt and moving expressions, we will suppose thou hast not this gift. But, God forbid that want of this should keep thee from praying, or make thee go the less comfortably to the duty. The want of these, show only thou hast not so good a head, but doth not the least hinder thy heart to be as gracious as theirs. And better of the two, that the defect should be found in thy head than in thy heart. Thy invention indeed in prayer by this will be more barren, but thy heart may be as fruitful over the few broken disjointed sentences that by piecemeal fall from thee, as theirs with their eloquent oration. Thy language will not be so trim and gaudy but thy soul and spirit may be as sound yea more upright, than many of those will be found who charm the ears of those that join with them by the music their words make. It is possible a man may have a rotten body under a gorgeous suit; and sub hâc purpurâ linguæ pannosam conscientiam under the bravery of language a poor ragged conscience. Who had not rather be the healthful man in plain clothes, than unsound and diseased under rich apparel? sincere with mean gifts, rather than rotten-hearted with raised parts. We do not count him the best patriot in the parliament house that plays the orator, and makes more rhetorical speeches than others, but he that takes with the best side, and whose vote is sure not to be wanting to carry on a righteous cause.

It is not the rhetoric of the tongue, but the hearty amen which the sincere soul seals every holy request withal, that God values; and this thy honest heart will help thee to do, which his head cannot do for him that wants this sincerity. It is not the fairness of the hand that gives the force to the bond, but the person whose hand and seal it is. If it could, a scrivener might make all the country his debtors. Gifts may make a fair writing which the hypocrite can do but faith and sincerity make a valid prayer; and this alone can lay claim to the good things of the promise. In a word, sincere soul for so I take thee to be and if such, though thou h

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