

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 16

by William Gurnall

To be a Christian, one must pray always, in everything, in all conditions, and daily, to show dependence on God and to avoid being ensnared by prosperity.

Scripture: Genesis 25:22

Topics: "Private Prayer", "Communion With God"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the importance of secret or closet prayer, emphasizing the duty of Christians to have intimate and frequent communion with God in private. He highlights the examples of biblical saints who engaged in secret prayer, such as Abraham, Rebekah, Jacob, and David, as well as the practice of our Lord Jesus Christ. Gurnall encourages believers to maintain a strong love, fear, and joy in God, which will naturally lead them to engage in secret prayer. He emphasizes that secret prayer is a duty incumbent upon Christians, as it allows them to pour out their hearts to God, who sees and hears their every cry and groan in secret.

Transcript

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).

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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 somehow 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 Gods providence. Or, should they observe how hard they work in their shop, and how seldom and lazy they are at prayer for Gods 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 Gods 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. Davids eye did but casually light on Bathsheba, and the good mans foot was presently in the devils 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. Jobs servants were destroyed with lightning from heaven when they were abroad about their masters business. Where canst thou be safe if heavens 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 quàm 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 net. 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 beggars trick, but not a friends part.

Second. Pray in prosperity, to clear thyself that thou didst not pray in hypocrisy when thou wert afflicted. 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 fælicitas 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. Davids 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 worlds 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 Christians 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 twofold 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 goodness!

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 {the} spiritual.

3. Prayer is Gods 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 Gods 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 capitehe 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 mans prayers stayed their flight. Gods 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 Gods 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 mans 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 Gods 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 morrow, but for the present day: Give us this day our daily breadplainly 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 souls constitution, who thinks it can live or thrive with yesterdays 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 Gods 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 jumble not with the necessary duties of your particular callings; the oftener the more welcome. We read of Davids 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 Gods 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 citys safeguard. God is his peoples 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 mans work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, I 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 apostles directory for prayer follows, which hath respect to the kinds of prayer that are to be taken into the Christians 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 tongues 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 kings speech to him, interposeth a short prayer to God between the kings 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 Absaloms 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 mans 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 childrens 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, I 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 Christians 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 Christians affections to the world done of the worst enemies he hath in the field against him; for it chokes the soul, thickens the Christians 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 worlds 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 Christians 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 prayernot 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 slaves 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 devils 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 Gods 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 nothingthis 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 athleticstrong 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 GodWhen I awake I am still with thee. And as he walked abroad in the daytime, every occasion led him into the presence with God: Seven times a day do I praise thee; that is, oftenas 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 believers 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 itif 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 pursegrace and comfort, I mean, in our heartsthan 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 bewhat I have read of a holy manbut one communion‑day with Christ. Then neither friends nor foes, joys nor woes, callings nor recreationsor whatever else we have in this world to do withshould 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 walklike 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 possession 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 allies 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 affectionsthy 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 proximity potentia 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 Gods 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 Gods 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 Gods 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 disposure 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 compliest 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 Gods 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 socialperformed 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 Christians 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 shipit 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 Davids life was little else, he gave himself to prayer, Ps. 109:4. Allow but some time spent by him for natures refection and the necessary occasions of his public employmentwhich yet came in but as a parenthesisand 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 Saviourwhose soul could have fasted longest without any inward impair through the want of this repastyet 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 itand 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 Gods 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 mansa poor exile, in the midst of enemies that thirsted for my blood. Yet land that when I betrayed so much dastardly unbelief as to scrabble on the wall like a madmancried, 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 Gods 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 ourselvesthe more to prove our sincerity. I do not say that to pray in secret amounts to an infallible character of sincerityfor 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 hypocrites 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 hypocrites 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 worlds 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

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