

GOSPEL REQUISITES  
TO  
**ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.**

A  
SERMON  
Delivered at a  
Monthly Association,  
IN  
Unicorn-Yard, Tooley-street, SOUTHWARD  
On Thursday, February the 22d, 1770.

**BY BENJAMIN WALLIN.**

*The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the LORD: but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight. PROV. XV. 8.*

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## **Advertisement.**

IT is not very common, or proper to publish discourses on the like occasion with that on which the ensuing was delivered, nor had the Author any further view than to answer the design of that meeting. After the Brethren who heard it expressed their approbation, nothing seemed to remain but thankfulness to God and prayer for the prosperity of *Zion*, but certain persons having spread abroad a false report of the sermon, the generality of his friends thought it expedient to satisfy the public that there was no foundation for the complaint; and it is hoped that the Reader will peruse it with candor and advantage.

GOSPEL REQUISITES  
TO  
ACCEPTABLE PRAYER.

1 TIM. ii. 8.

*I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

MY subject, I presume, will suit the design of our gathering together. This is certain, that if we would build up one another on our most holy faith, we must pray in the Holy Ghost. These assemblies have been held at least between thirty and forty years; no wonder then that, in a mortal state, but few, very few remain who first united in this expedient for promoting the power of godliness among us;—they are now entered where “the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary be at rest.”

I HAVE no inclination, Beloved, to sadden your spirits; it is pleasant and hopeful to see the rising generation of members and hearers, in our several congregations, so ready to attend; not but that if an esteem for these meetings universally prevailed, they would be larger; I apprehend, too large for the most capacious of our houses to contain; nevertheless it is an encouragement to behold the people inclined to increase their attention; and I trust, that so long; and as often, as we can give them opportunity they will continue thus waiting on the Lord,

yea, and not let him go till the Spirit from on high being poured out upon us, our wilderness becomes a fruitful field, odoriferous as Lebanon. The almighty Sovereign of grace may permit a declension from the good order, steadfast faith, and tender affection, which are the objects in view, to prove us, and try whether or not we will cleave to one another in him, though, for a season, he may, as it were, hold back the face of his throne, and spread a cloud over it; yet when by dissipation, dissolution, and other sad occasions, the number of churches concerned in this exercise is diminished, so that hands are wanting to a perfect rotation in the service; is there not a cause? is it not high time to enquire, each one of himself, what have I done? And also reasonable that we should impartially examine the spirit with which our associations are held. On these solemn occasions, it is not sufficient that we pray a good prayer, or that the sermon delivered be simply judicious and sound; I humbly apprehend that our prayers and discourses should be adapted to our general circumstances, as a people, whether better or worse, and applied with a becoming freedom, that like *Juda* we may rule with our God, and be faithful with his saints, for this is acceptable in the sight of the Lord. We are charged to take heed how we *hear*; the same caution is needful in respect of our *prayers*, if we would obtain the blessing we seek: Now, the inspired apostle, with an authority becoming his high commission, from the Head of the church, in the passage before us, directs every one to the essentials required in our addresses to the throne of the most High; *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* The *I will* in the text

is not to be understood of a carnal, proud, selfish, domineering will, as though the apostle took occasion from his superior talents and station to trample on the church; no instance can be produced of his saying, *I will*, to his self-exaltation: No; he was careful as *Peter* not to Lord it over God's heritage: *We*, says he, *preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus, the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus's sake*. If once it comes to pass that under any pretense, out of fear or love, so unreasonable an assumption should be presumed and allowed, there is an end of liberty, virtue, and religion: The *I will* is Christ's will, in whose name the apostle gave forth this evangelical precept. The particle, *therefore*, preserves the connection, and demands our attention to what goes before, in order to a complete view of that prayer which becomes the children of God; I shall accordingly, in handling the passage, glance on the preceding part of the chapter, consider the particulars essential to acceptable prayer, and close with some remarks and reflections.

FIRST then, The subject is *prayer*; Prayer, in its simple and native idea, is no other than an address to the Almighty, on matters that concern us in the present or future state of existence; the manner of these addresses differ, and may be considered as consisting of various branches, as specified in the context, verse 1. *I exhort therefore first of all*, as a principal and leading exercise in the worship of God, *that supplications*, i.e. deprecations of evil, to which we are continually liable in a state of temptation and sin; *prayers*, or petitions for every blessing we need, *and intercessions*, or pleadings; the word is rendered *prayer* in chap. iv. 5. the

precise idea of which in this place is not universally agreed, but I humbly apprehend it is most natural to take the expression as it here stands distinguished from supplication and prayer; for our solicitations in behalf of others, which answers to the notion of an intercessor; see *Isa.* lxix. 16. Intercessions then, are prayers for our neighbour, especially for his salvation, agreeable to the tenor of the context, to omit this in behalf of those we plead for, whatever the immediate occasion, is to leave out the main thing, the one thing needful, of infinite importance, which is unworthy the knowledge and love of God. It is added, *and giving thanks*, without which we must be strangely forgetful of the innumerable benefits the Lord bestows on us, amidst all our necessities and trials. These addresses to the Father are not to be partial or confined, but extended to *all men*: There is no individual we can think of, but may in some respect require our prayers, and it is becoming the Christian to be concerned for the welfare and salvation of every man who falls under his notice, however mean or unworthy, yea and though he were an enemy: *Pray for them which despitefully use you*, Matt. v. 44. But it is evident that by *all men* here is intended persons of every rank, however exalted; *for kings, and for all that are in authority*. The old serpent took early advantage of some primitive disciples, who not understanding the nature of Christian liberty, and that separation from the world unto which they were called, were tempted to withdraw from their superiors, who were left in unbelief; they conceived themselves free from their obligations to magistrates, parents, and masters, and even in some instances scrupled to converse with the

nearest and dearest relations in the flesh, not excepting that of the conjugal kind; but the gospel teaches its subject to fill up every character, in civil or natural life, with the utmost fidelity and honour, that the name of God be not blasphemed. Hence the New-Testament abounds with exhortations, and among the rest *to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates*, Tit. iii. 1. In correspondence with this the apostle here says; *I will that men pray every where—for all men—for kings, and for all that are in authority*. Genuine christianity gives no countenance to the stupid and servile doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance; but it carries the obligations of loyalty to the highest reasonable pitch, insomuch that nothing short of a manifest, habitual, and capital deficiency, in civil government, can justify the believer, in withdrawing his affection, obedience, or prayers from his prince.

THIS divine exhortation is enforced by a variety of motives: Public tranquility, through the moral conduct and practical piety of individuals, much depends thereupon; *that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty*. Moreover, it is *good in itself, and acceptable in the sight of God and our Saviour*. Whence the apostle proceeds to a reason peculiar to the gospel, which contains the noblest motives to goodness and love; it is taken from the extent of the divine purpose in the salvation of sinners by the Son of God, who was manifest in the flesh; that one Mediator, who gave *himself a ransom for all*, verses 4, 5, and 6. The argument from hence to universal redemption, or that Christ died for the whole human race is certainly inconclusive, since by this

interpretation it would follow that every individual will be saved, which a sober advocate for that sentiment will himself disallow; but the revealed purpose of God, in respect of his mercy in Christ, being without exception, as to station or character in life, which is the manifest scope of these verses, is a cogent argument indeed for most affectionate intercessions in behalf of all men, and more especially for kings, and all that are in authority, seeing, however but few of the wise and noble are called, and we have but little expectation from the great of the world, yet forasmuch as some of every rank, even of royal character, are redeemed unto God by the blood of his Son, and will by him be made kings and priests to the Father, no person is to be excluded from our prayers on account of his dignified station: And this by the way shews that in pleading for magistrates, supreme or subordinate, we are not to be confined to those things which belong to their state, as princes in this world, but to extend our desires, that they may partake in the salvation and glory in Christ; that when they go the way of all flesh, for they die as their subjects, and leave their earthly power and dignity, they may obtain the incorruptible crown of the saints. What follows in the seventh verse, concerning, the commission of our apostle, as a teacher of the *Gentiles*, will appear another argument for our praying for all men, *i.e.* for Heathens, as well as the professing and visible people of God, to them who consider the ancient high prejudice of the *Jews* against the world, who knew not this mystery that the *Gentiles* should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise of God in Christ by the gospel.” But it is time,



Secondly, To consider the particulars essential to acceptable prayer. And it may be useful to note, that the whole of this direction is applicable to all prayer, in every place or capacity; though the united supplications of the saints in church-worship, is the immediate design of the apostle, who is directing the evangelist's behaviour in the house of God, chap. iii. 15. yet the same extensive, generous concern for all men, and the same inward frame of the heart, and external deportment in life, is required in a more private address to the throne of grace; in the closet, in the family, the Father, seeks and approves no other suppliants than those, whose views, conversation and spirit, answer to the demand of the text: The occasion and context lead me more especially to the prayers of the church, but let each one apply every part of the direction, when he calls upon the name of the Lord in a more private capacity.

This premised, I proceed to the articles required in them who would be heard at the footstool of mercy; and they are such as a mere nominal Christian, however ostentatious his form, can neither understand nor relish. Three things are essential; *purity, charity, and faith.*

I. We must *lift up holy hands.* Here is a manifest allusion to the primitive posture in prayer, which was wont to be made, not with their elbows on a cushion, or, like the sluggard, with hands folded in the bosom, nor yet with a wandering gaze at the multitude; no; men prayed every where with their eyes closed, or lifted up, and their hands stretched forth towards heaven, the habitation and throne of the most High. It is true, no bodily gesture is expressly enjoined, and in cases of

weakness, or necessity, the prayer of faith is accepted by the Lord, who searcheth the heart, in any situation; yet the scriptures abundantly shew, that in this earnest and reverend manner the faithful delivered their prayers, insomuch that in the language of prophecy the whole worship of the living God, by his Son Jesus Christ is described by this posture: Thus the conversion of the Heathen is foretold, *Psalm lxxviii. 31. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.* And a pertinent description this, seeing *prayer*, in which the hands are stretched forth unto God, is a capital branch of worship, under the christian dispensation, of which more hereafter. Of this manner in prayer, see an example in *Moses, Exod. xvii. 12.* whose hands were sustained while *Israel* fought and discomfited *Amalek*. Again, *I Kings viii. 22. Behold Solomon the king, stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven.* The same posture also was used in *Nehemiah's* time, chap. viii. 6. by the people as well as by *Ezra* their minister, at least when they spoke; *and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God, and all the people answered, Amen, amen, with LIFTING UP THEIR HANDS.*

This audible Amen of the people, to express their content to the prayer in which they joined, no doubt was the custom of the *Jews*, *1 Chron. xvi. 36. Psalm cvi 48.* And, from *1 Cor. xiv. 16*, we may with reason conclude, it was used in christian assemblies, though now laid aside by many; however, the scriptures frequently allude to that gesture in prayer referred to in the text. Thus the prophet, *Psalm cxli. 2. Let my prayer*

*be set forth before thee as incense, and the LIFTING UP OF MY HANDS as the evening sacrifice*, which answers to the service of the temple, where the priest, as *Zacharias, Luke i. 9*, in his course, burnt incense at the altar, while the multitude prayed.

Now these hands must be *holy*. *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary*, Psalm cxxxiv. 2, or in holiness; it may be applied to the holiness of the temple, or the worshipper, peculiar to that law; they are one in the spiritual temple in Christ, the sanctuary now is the people incorporated and assembled in the name of the Lord. *The temple of God is holy, which temple are ye*, 1 Cor. iii. 17. Ceremonial consecration of houses for worship have no rational place in the gospel-dispensation, the prayers of the saints are now as acceptable in a barn, or, if need be, in the fields, with no other covering than the cope<sup>1</sup> of the natural heavens, as in the most commodious or stately edifice of stone or other materials. But wherever we pray *holy hands* are required. It is well known that hands are the instruments of action, and that, in the language of scripture, to have holy, or clean hands, is to be of an upright and pure conversation. *The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean bands shall wax stronger and stronger*, Job xvii. 9. And again, *Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart*, Psalm xxiv. 3, 4. *Holy hands* in the text, cannot be taken for spotless innocence; *there is not a just man on earth that doeth good, and sinneth not*. If no man is to pray who is not perfectly pure, there is an end of all praying; this phrase must needs be understood consistent

<sup>1</sup> Any thing spread or extended over the head; the arch or concave of the sky; the roof or covering of a house; the arch over a door, &c.

with the present state of weakness and sin; besides, we plead at a throne of *grace* confessing our sins, the forgiveness of which we receive through faith in the blood of Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all. *David* explains this expression, *Psalms* lxxvi. 18. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* It is the indulgence of sin, that offends the most High. To have holy hands is to be free from an allowance of any iniquity, and indeed it is the vilest hypocrisy, and in the sight of God a most daring presumption, by which every perfection in Deity is affronted, when a willful transgressor presents himself at the throne for a blessing at the hand of a sin-pardoning God; such a man's prayer must needs be abhorred of the Lord. Habitual and universal holiness is required in him who could address the Majesty of heaven with success. *Both* hands must be holy; he must be a sincere and earnest follower after every kind of holiness; not partial or wavering, but a person who walks in *all* holy conversation and godliness; one who can say with the prophet, *Psalms* xxvi. 6. *I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD.* In a word to lift up *holy hands*, as it relates to social prayer, *i.e.* the united prayers of several churches, requires a godly discipline, in respect of particular bodies, as well as of individuals; and shews that if we would please the Lord in these associations we must exclude, or purify ourselves, not only from every unholy person whatever, whether of a ministerial or private capacity, but also from every congregation that indulges to sin, let who will reproach us. Nor is this purity alone sufficient. For,

II. No prayer is acceptable to God that is not presented in a

spirit of love. *Charity* likewise is needful. This is emphatically expressed by a denial of its opposite affection; *without wrath*. A more striking manner than if it had been said simply *with love*. Indeed holiness in a comprehensive view includes a freedom from every sinful passion of the mind, but the text distinguishes between natural and spiritual uncleanness, and here demands that which flesh cannot bear; *without wrath*. Ah, Sirs, this bears hard on some in every age, who go out in the world, under a profession of religion, in a public or private capacity, boasting over others, and priding themselves in their comparative purity; they have escaped the pollutions of a sensual kind, by which some loose persons have defiled their garments, and brought a scandal on themselves and their profession; at least their skirts have not been turned up, in this they exult, as though without spot, though at the same time they notoriously indulge to pride, avarice, wrath, malice, and those spiteful malevolent lusts of the heart, which are not less hateful to God, but more diabolical, and mischievous, than the sins under which the voluptuous, whom they despise, are covered with shame. The expression carries in it an idea of contempt, anger and indignation, such as the haughty unbelieving *Jews* discovered against the *Gentiles*<sup>2</sup>; no doubt it is here to be extended to every species of anger, ill-will and contempt, unto which we may be tempted in the flesh, and which dwells in the bosom of a proud, selfish man, who is not

<sup>2</sup> It is accordingly of the elder son in that striking picture of a self-righteous Pharisee, in the parable of the Prodigal, ὀργίζω is there rather coldly rendered he was *angry*, *Beza* and *Arius Mont* render it *indignatus ist*, i.e. a mind inflamed with desire of revenge, and it is evident that the man was implacable and cruel, as well as haughty and insolent, the natural complexion of those whom he is designed to represent.

to be pleased, and disdains to forgive; such rancor and malice, with a disposition or purpose of revenge on every offence, as the word implies, is the opposite of a christian temper, and however indulged or palliated by men, is disallowed of God, and an abomination in his sight. We are taught by our Saviour to pray, *forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors, Matt. vi. 12.* And in the 15th verse he peremptorily declares, *If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Certainty an implacable unforgiving spirit unfits the subject for addressing Jehovah by the great Mediator, through whose blood the worshipper obtains remission of sins, in order to his acceptance with the father; if then we would be heard when we pray, let us “lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, envies, and all evil-speaking, and walk in love with a pure heart fervently, *being kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you, Eph, iv. 32.* Once more,

III. FAITH is required; this is also negatively expressed, *without doubting*, i. e. say some, without murmurings or strivings; these sinful commotions are the natural and usual attendants of a mind inflamed with the passions now mentioned, for as *Solomon* says, *A wrathful man stirreth up strife, Prov. xv. 18.* But this sense of the term seems rather to confound two articles, which are manifestly distinct in the text. For the same reason I think it cannot be understood of being without doubt, in respect to one another, *i.e.* without evil surmisings, which are the fruit of a proud and carnal spirit, and by no means allowed; but this also belongs to the article

dismissed. The word <sup>3</sup> signifies debating, reasoning, or disputing, and I humbly apprehend, here intends those perverse disputings of the flesh. which are too often found in opposition to the testimony of God, or in other words, those carnal reasonings, and fond imaginations, which proceed from the vanity and unbelief of the heart; these sometimes overtake even the Christian himself, and cause him to stagger, against which the shield of faith must be opposed: these base corrupt reasonings universally prevail in the carnal mind, and must be subdued, in order to a recovery of the subject to the obedience of faith, which is effected by the Holy Ghost, under the ministry of the gospel. Accordingly we read, *2 Cor x. 4, 5. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations;* where the same word is used and rendered *reasonings*, in the margin, *i.e.* these proud carnal reasonings, which are the strong holds of satan in the unbeliever, even those high thoughts or conceits of the flesh, all which exalt themselves against the knowledge or counsel of God, in proportion to which men rebel against Christ. To pray *without doubting*, is to pray in *faith* nothing wavering, as required in *James i. 6.* which agrees with the promise, *Matt. xxi. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, BELIEVING ye shall receive.* There is indeed a decent and honourable doubt or suspense, becoming the faithful when they pray; whether or not it may suit the wisdom of God to grant the particular temporal blessing requested, either natural

<sup>3</sup> διαλογισμός

or spiritual: Health, prosperity, or even the continuance of life is uncertain; and the same may be observed concerning an increase of gifts, the light of God's countenance, freedom from temptations of satan, the incursions of indwelling sin, or the enjoyments of faith, they are all referred in the bosom of our heavenly Father to be dispensed or withheld, as it seemeth good in his sight, and the believer will hold himself in readiness for his pleasure; but his faith must be steadfast in the divine promise; no debate or hesitation may be indulged in his mind concerning an audience, or obtaining needful grace, on any consideration whatever; this strikes at the faithfulness of God, and the truth of his word; it is dishonourable provoking unbelief, nor can any thing excuse it: No; not that plausible pretense, *ill desert* or *unworthiness*, which some fondly plead, as though it was an instance of humility, and to be commended, whereas it is no other than a foolish and ungrateful contradiction to the spirit and tenor of the gospel, which opens to the necessitous sinner a throne of *grace*. Then, Beloved, whatever call ye may have for mourning and shame before God, let us beware of nourishing a doubt of being heard and accepted in our supplications by Christ to the Father, on account of our *unworthiness*, in a private or social capacity; *for this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.* John v. 14, 15.

So then we are to pray every where, for all men, in all manner of holy conversation and godliness, mortifying every sinful



passion of the mind, in purity and love, and, however uncertain as to present enjoyments, in full assurance of faith that the Lord will hear and answer us, according to his word. And from this apostolic injunction we may note the following things:

I THAT prayer is *an essential* and *capital* branch of worship, in the assemblies of the saints. Indeed it is not the only article of worship, as the Deist suggests, who blasphemes the testimony of God, and the institutions of his house; and some, who are far from Deism, seem rather on the extreme, making little account of any thing else but their prayers in the church; but the apostle, as hinted, has an immediate respect to worshipping assemblies, when he saith, *I exhort therefore that, FIRST OF ALL, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made, &c.* This therefore is a principal thing, and every manner or scheme of worship, by which prayer is excluded from bearing a considerable part in the service, is neither agreeable to the testimony of God, nor adapted to the edification of his people: Our intercourse with heaven, while here, lies much in this way, and, thanks be to the Father, great is our boldness through the mediation of his Son, our great High-Priest, who, having by himself, purged our sins, is gone into the holy place, with the incense of his own infinite merit, to offer up the prayers of all saints unto God, *Heb. iv. 16. Rev. viii. 3.* compared.

How strange then, and deserving reproof are they who accustom themselves to be absent great part of the time allotted for prayer, in the service of the sanctuary! yet, alas! who is unacquainted with this shameful practice among us?

So far are many sunk below a becoming readiness and zeal for this most interesting and delightful branch of social worship, that it is but too much the case, that our first and chief prayer, with the previous psalmody, is like what is vulgarly called the saints bell, which rings the people into church! O astonishing! How disgraceful and grievous, that any Protestant Dissenters, who separate from the national service, under a pretense of conscience for pure and free worship, should not blush to see their devout neighbours of the established persuasion, daily go out long before them, to be present at the beginning of their prayers, or not be constrained by their example, to a more decent and early attendance on the stated seasons for calling on the name of the Lord. I cannot help thinking but that an allowance of this Notorious partiality and growing neglect, is one evil for which the Lord hath a controversy with us; such sloth and lukewarmness is odious in itself, and hateful to him who is a jealous God, and will be sanctified by them who approach him, therefore if any one is more or less conscious of this growing evil, let him repent.

II. IT appears that the prayers of the church were not originally read, or by any printed form imposed on the people. This note is far from a design to censure any one, if such should be present, who judge it expedient for their own, or common edification, to use forms of prayer, though we confine not ourselves; much less would I admit the uncharitable supposition, that the devout heart of a believer may not ascend, in the exercise of grace, with acceptance to God by the divine Mediator, under a form of sound words, but I hope it will be no offence to mention a consequence so

natural and obvious from the text. It has been frequently and justly enquired; if the hands of a minister were thus extended towards heaven, how could he turn over the leaves of a prayer-book?’ And that this was the undoubted prevailing posture we have already seen from a variety of scripture, to which more might be added, besides, if needful<sup>4</sup>, the history of the church will show that it continued for centuries after the days of the apostles; but I hasten to a more important remark, for,

III. It follows that a moral behaviour; and good conversation, is required in them who are employed in this service. Every worshipper should see to it that his own hands are clean in the sanctuary of the Lord, who is holy, and hate even the garment spotted with the flesh, but it is an abomination indeed when a man habitually and notoriously unclean, wrathful, covetous or proud, is allowed to lift up his filthy hands in the name of the people; or lead in the prayers of the church; this appearance is shocking to a serious mind, and no less than to affront the Almighty to his face; yet alas, it is sometimes the case; men of scandalous lives, take upon them to officiate in divine service, and draw people after them, for too many pay little

<sup>4</sup> See enquiry into the constitution and worship of the primitive church by an impartial hand, of which Sir *Peter King*, late Lord High Chancellor, is the reputed author, Part 2. chap. 2. page 33. concerning prescribed liturgies, he largely proves from the testimony of *Origen*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, &c. who wrote in the second and third centuries, and by other arguments, that no forms of prayer were imposed, but that these exercises were free, according to the ability of the minister, as assisted, and concludes page 40, with these remarkable words: “It is very unlikely that they were obliged to prescribed forms, because they never read a syllable of their prayers out of any book whatsoever, which is evident from their posture of prayer, which was twofold, either with their hands and eyes lifted up to heaven, or with their eyes shut.”

regard to the character of a man, if his notions and manner are pleasing! This pernicious foible has appeared more or less in every age, and runs parallel with that predominant evil, a vain admiration of this and the other man's person; I heartily wish that our own could be excepted, but the truth is, that of late years, so wide a door has been opened to all men who set themselves forth as ministers of Christ, to a neglect of the qualifications needful and prescribed, that we are in very great danger, if not in the high road to a total disregard of the voice of reason and revelation concerning this point; but, as the excellent Dr. *Owen* observes: "God will not accept of the tongue where the devil hath the soul; Jesus did *do* and teach, *Acts* i. 1. "If a man teach *uprightly* and walk *crookedly*, more will fall down in the *night* of his life, than be built in the *day* of his doctrine<sup>5</sup>." Beloved; you will one day find it no less than a contempt of the holiness and authority of God, under any pretense whatever, to countenance a man who comes in his own name, or without good evidence that his character and furniture in some true degree, answer to what is expressly required in the word of the Lord. Permit me one remark more:

IV. THAT gospel ministers are to use a becoming boldness in the discharge of their office. All are not apostles, whose gifts and powers were singular and extraordinary, but he that is called and ordained to the service of the church, in the name of the Lord, has an authority, the exercise of which is for the honour of religion, and the edification of the saints, *2 Cor.* x.

<sup>5</sup> See the Doctor's *Escho* 1, page 9.

8. and therefore not to be shunned: As to a domineering power, under any character, it is utterly inconsistent with the whole testimony of God, and system of christianity; *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren*, Matt. xxiii. 28. The least attempt of this kind, by whomsoever made, is to be checked on its very first appearance, as we regard the peace and liberty of *Zion*, nevertheless there is a stewardly power to be exerted in the house of God; ministers are rulers and guides, and are in faithfulness and love to act and speak with boldness in the name of the Lord, as they would not be held in contempt: *These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee*, Tit. ii. 15. This authority consists with meekness and love, a due exercise of which has no tendency to subject the disciples to the carnal will of them that are over them in the Lord, but there is nothing virtuous in a dastardly spirit, which is contrary to the genius of true religion and the gospel, for *God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*, 2 Tim. i. 7. Which is my apology for the freedom I have taken on the present occasion.

AND now, my dear Friends, is it the will of God, that men pray *every where*? what must be said of them who pray *no where*? In all appearance, there are but too many, and even some who more or less attend the preaching of the word, instead of praying *without ceasing*, pray not *at all*; their closets, their families, and their consciences tell them that they live without prayer, and so without God in the world, and yet they would be accounted religious! I hope better things of you,

but easy as it is to maintain, at least some form of prayer, in private or in public, it is more than some nominal christians *can* do; their lusts and their pleasures leave them no time or disposition for prayer; so wretched their course! what better are such than practical Atheists? Can that man who lies down and rises up, and from day to day, passes through the various scenes of life, prosperous or adverse, without addressing the throne of grace, be a reasonable Creature? can he be a Christian? is he less than an Infidel, or more than a Brute, who is an utter stranger to prayer?

BUT this communion with God is not to be maintained in the course of this world: Self-denial is needful to prayer. It is easy to fall on our knees, and pray in a customary and formal manner, which, as hinted already, is more than some do, but he that would *pray well* must *live well*; he must be sober and vigilant; much in self-examination, and give himself in a manner wholly unto it, as a first and principal business of life. This makes it grievous to them who consult flesh and blood, yet thus it must be; unless a man shun carnal company, the pleasures of life, yea and all appearance of evil, if I may be allowed the expression, the grass will grow in his closet and family, or, which, if possible, is worse, his polluted hands will be an abomination to the Lord.

AND what can more illustrate the excellency of prayer, or be a greater encouragement to persevere and unite in prayer-meetings. Both in our several churches, and in these associations; the more we pray in the Spirit, or attend on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, in the manner required, the greater advances towards a perfection in holiness, love and

faith, may be expected among the people of God: O that this proof of our thus praying was evident and universal! To neglect or discourage praying assemblies, is to discountenance a principal means of promoting vital religion in ourselves and in others.

How earnest then should we be for the Spirit of grace and supplication; the operations of that Divine Agent, are needful to subdue those sinful passions of the flesh, which unfit us for prayer, and to excite those heavenly graces, more or less required in that spiritual exercise; through his aids alone we can maintain that virtue, charity, and reliance on the divine promise, which becomes those who would succeed in their application to the mercy-seat of a reconciled, but holy God. And is there a manifest deficiency in either of the articles required, let us early and freely reprove it, in ourselves or others, without partiality? Yea, *let God be true, and every man a liar*. If we connive at allowed, habitual uncleanness, or any kind of wrath or iniquity in our persons or assemblies, or are wavering in our minds concerning the divine power, faithfulness, and grace, as the Lord liveth he will not hear us! O then let us cleanse ourselves, as directed, from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, so shall we ever come together for the *better*, and under the blessing of the most High rejoice with admiration at the rich mercy manifested in this inestimable privilege that men may pray every where, on all occasions, or come boldly to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need: A choice liberty indeed! In one word; forget not, O christian, to what thou art indebted for this blessed freedom, namely, to the blood of thy Redeemer, the

one Mediator between God and man; his ransom procured it, and he is passed into the heavens that thou mayest use it without hesitation; he is the Son of the Father, to whom, with the Holy Ghost, on whose aids we depend for our enjoyment of this gospel-liberty, be glory and dominion for ever. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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