

PRAY FOR EVERYTHING.

But in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God—PHILIP. IV. 6.

THE apostle having forbidden the Philippians to be careful, he shews them what they should do instead thereof. He shews them a better way to obtain what they or others are apt to be careful about, than all such forbidden carefulness would prove. Instead of troubling yourselves with cares for anything, apply yourselves to God by prayer in everything.

Obs. The people of God should have recourse to him by prayer in everything.

For explication, let us inquire into the act, the extent, the manner of praying. What we must do, and wherein it must be done, and how we must do it.

1. For the act. It is prayer, expressed here by four words, *προσυχῆ*, asking of God, or, as it is rendered, prayer; *δέησις*, supplication; *εὐχαριστία*, praise or thanksgiving; *αἰτήματα*, petitions or requests. For the opening of which, you know there are two principal parts of prayer, petition and thanksgiving, the asking of what we would have, and the due acknowledgment of what we have received. When we take notice of what the Lord bestows, and are affected with the riches and the freeness of his mercy therein, and out of an hearty sense thereof gratefully acknowledged; this is, *εὐχαριστεῖν*, to give him thanks, which is one chief part of prayer, that which should not be omitted. When we would pray, as he requires, our requests should be joined, *μετ' εὐχαριστίας*, with thanksgiving. The sense of our wants, pressures, sufferings, should not drown the sense of his mercy and bounty expressed towards us. Eagerness after more should not make us overlook what he has done for us already; but while we beg, we should also be thankful, having as much occasion for this as the other.

Then for petition, the other part of prayer, that is here, *αἰτήματα*, the several requests we make, or petitions we put up, and *προσυχῆ*, and *δέησις*, denote the same. He uses more words to express the same thing, as the Hebrews were wont to do (whose manner of speech he much uses) to signify frequency or vehemency; to mind us that we should be very much and often in this duty, or that our hearts should be very much in it when we are about it.

We need not inquire how these two words may be distinguished; it is

like the apostle intended no more than I have expressed. But if we will be so curious, one of them may denote the object of our prayers, *προσευχή* is *εἰς τὸν Θεὸν ἐυχῆ*, a request directed to God. To whom shall we address ourselves if we would be relieved, or supplied, or delivered? Let your requests be made known to God, *εἰς τὸν Θεόν*. Others may be unable or unwilling to help; it may be a wickedness, or it may be to no purpose to seek to them; but God is able and willing to relieve, he has made it your duty to apply yourselves to him, and to none else without him. The other may denote the subject of our prayers; *δεήσις*, rendered supplication, is from *δέωμαι*, to want. That which we are to request of God is what we want, be it something which we have not, or more of that which we have, if it be needful for us, that which we want indeed. We may seek it of God; it is both our duty and privilege to do it; he both encourages and commands it. It is a principal part of prayer, to which there are so many promises, for which there are so many precepts, to spread our wants before God, to make them known to him. Not that he knows not what we want before we declare it, Mat. vi.; but this is the way, most for his honour and our advantage, to have supplies. 'He will be sought unto,' Ezek. xxxvi. 37. We must seek him, and not formally, and as of course; but as those who are sensible what they want, and who it is that only can relieve us, make all known to him.

2. For the extent of it. 'In everything;' so we must both pray and praise him, both make our requests, and give thanks, in everything; but here seems some difficulty, as to both, which I will endeavour to remove.

(1.) How can it be our duty to give thanks in everything? There are many cases, wherein it may be a question, whether they require thankfulness; several, which seem to call for humiliation rather than thanksgiving. But this in general may be determined, whatever our estate or the circumstances of it be, so far as there is any mercy to be discerned therein, so far we ought to be thankful, yea, though there be much of anger and divine displeasure there. And thereby we may resolve the particular cases wherein it is questionable, whether it is our duty to be thankful, and how it can be so.

[1.] When we are under afflictions, are we to give thanks for personal grievances? Yes; there is something in them for which we may, we ought to be thankful. But how? Not for the afflictions considered in themselves, for so they are not joyous, but grievous. But if they be for righteousness' sake, then are they blessed dispensations, then they are occasions of joy, and so of praise, Mat. v. Then they are gifts, special favours, and so oblige us to thankfulness: Phil. i. 29, 'Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.' Yea, when they are chastisements, and occasioned by our miscarriages, yet then we may and ought to be thankful, because they are no more, not so much as we had deserved, and had reason to fear; not so many, not so grievous, not so continued. When we lose something, had it not been for that mercy (which we should be thankful for) we had lost all. When we suffer in one particular, we might have suffered in all, in soul, body, estate, relations, altogether. When it is but a rod, it might have been a scorpion; when it lies but on us a while, it might have oppressed us all our days, and made our whole life a life of sorrow and affliction. But they are not so much as others suffer. What are our sufferings, when greatest, to those of Christ, though he was innocent, not, as we are, covered with guilt? What are our afflictions to the sufferings of others, who are as dear to him, and have less provoked him? What to theirs, who, by the Lord's testimony, were such, of whom the world was not worthy? Heb. xi. And because they proceed from love, and shall have a merciful issue, if not for the grievance of them

yet for the rise, and for the effects of them, so far as they are sanctified, to make you partakers of his holiness, to bring forth the fruits of it ; so far as you have his presence, and are supported under them, and enabled to demean yourselves under them as children, to bear them with patience, submission, the exercise of faith, hope, and other graces requisite in such a state ; and because, where we have one affliction, we have a thousand mercies. And should the sense of one, though sharp, drown all these, especially a few of them ? Some one of them is more just matter of praise and rejoicing, than all the afflictions in the world of sorrow and dejection. You are in troubles, but you are not in hell ; and why not there, but because his mercy towards you is infinite ? The Lord has taken this or that from you. Oh, but hath he taken his loving-kindness from you ? Has he divorced you from Christ ? Has he cut you off from hopes of glory ? Has he extinguished his grace in you, or taken his Holy Spirit from you, or shut you out from the covenant of grace, or separated you from his love ? Rom. viii.

[2.] When public judgments are inflicted, that calls for mourning and lamentations, what place then for praise and thanksgiving ? Why, so far even then we are to be thankful, as the Lord remembers mercy in the midst of judgment. We then have occasion of thanksgiving, because he inflicts no more judgments, pours but out some one vial, when he might pour out all together ; because he makes not those inflicted more grievous and intolerable, more spreading and universal, more destructive and ruining ; because we are secured and preserved, we escape when others fall ; because it does but scorch us, when it might consume us, Lam. iii. They could see occasion of thankfulness in the midst of those calamities, which had burnt their temple, destroyed Jerusalem, laid their country desolate, and carried the inhabitants into captivity ; they could discern mercy and compassions through all this, and so far as this can be discerned, there is cause of thanksgiving.

[3.] When we are under temptations. An hour of temptation is a time of fear and trembling, yet even then we have cause of thanksgiving. So far as the temptation prevails not ; so far as we are strengthened to resist it ; so far as it is not too violent to be borne or withstood ; so far as we escape the danger ; if we do not quite escape, so far as we take warning by it, and are made more watchful, and stand more upon our guard, and are more humbled in the sense of our own weakness, and led to more dependence on the Lord our strength, and fear and hate that more to which we were tempted, and are more resolute against it. 1 Cor. x. 13, ' There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' So far as the Lord's faithfulness, his mindfulness of his covenant, appears in any temptations, whether for good or to evil, so much cause is there of thanksgiving.

[4.] When we fall into sin. That is the hardest case ; yet here we ought to be thankful, not because we are left to sin, for that is cause of sorrow and deep humiliation, but because he leaves us not to sin more, as we would do were it not for his gracious restraints ; because the Lord does not leave us, does not cast us off when we sin ; because he proceeds not more severely against us for sin ; because we do not die in it ; because he does not cast us off, and cause us to perish in the very act ; because he gives any time for repentance, or any heart for it. Here is matter of thankfulness, since he is so highly provoked by sin ; since he might so easily satisfy his just displeasure in destroying us ; since he might do it with advantage to his glory, the glory of his justice, and might prevent further provocations, and more dis-

honour; or because he over-rules this desperate evil, to occasion any good; or works any cure of this deadly poison, as he can do. And thus you see how we may give thanks in everything, even in those wherein it is hard to see any occasion for thanksgiving.

(2.) As there is some difficulty in respect of thanksgiving, so in respect of prayer, whether we may apply ourselves to God in everything particularly; and that which the text leads me to, whether we may make our requests known to him for temporal things, the concerns of this world. With some, this seems questionable; *μη προσελθῆς θεῷ ὑπὲρ ἰνυτλων πραγμάτων*, says Chrysostom, make not thy address to God for small things; *injuriam magno Deo facit, qui parva petit, parva autem sunt omnia temporalia*, says Savonarola. But such sayings must be understood as intending a restraint only, not an absolute prohibition, since by warrant from Scripture we may pray for what is there promised, and 'godliness has the promise of this life,' 1 Tim. iv. 8. And these are some of the things that the text directs us to pray for. We are not to be careful for the things of this life, but instead thereof, make our requests known in everything; as in other things, so in these. We have both rule and example for this in Scripture. Our Lord Jesus directs us to pray for our daily bread; so Jacob: Gen. xxviii. 20, 'And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,' &c. And Agur, Prov. xxx. 8, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me.' They may be sought, but with limitation.

[1.] Not principally; for they are not the things that we are principally concerned in, Mat. vi. 33. The kingdom of God, and the righteousness of it, things eternal and spiritual, are to be sought principally, first and most, above all, more than all, as being of far greater value and consequence, of greater necessity and importance. We may far better fall short of the things of this life, that may trouble us for a time; but to miss the other, will be our misery for ever, and of greater value. The other are but loss and dung in comparison, of no considerable value; and so we should be far from seeking them principally.

[2.] Not for themselves, but in order to better things; not to serve ourselves of them, but to be more serviceable by them, to do more good with them; not to please our senses, but to help us the better to please the Lord; not because they suit our inclinations, but to enable us to do the will of God, and that work which he has set us to do. As the apostle desired a prosperous journey, Rom. x. 10, not for the journey's sake, as though he loved or delighted in that, but that he might have thereby an opportunity to do more good. To seek these things for themselves, profit for profit's sake, or pleasure's sake, is to seek them as God only should be sought, and so to idolize them.

[3.] With submission. These things are not good for all, in every degree. We know not whether they will be good for us, nor what measure of them may be best. We must not seek them peremptorily, as those that have a mind to have them at a venture, but with a reserve if they may be good for us; and these must be submitted to the will and wisdom of God, who only knows it. *Illi committite, ut si prosint, det; si scit obesse, non det.* Refer it to him, either to bestow them if he see it good, or deny them, if he know they will not be good. The all-wise physician knows better what is good or hurtful than the distempered patient.

We are not to seek outward things as we may seek faith, repentance, pardon, holiness, growth in grace, power against sin. These are absolutely necessary to our happiness; it is his will his people shall have them; he

has declared it in his word, and promised them without reserve ; and therefore so we may beg them. But outward things are not absolutely necessary to salvation ; we may be happy without them, or such a measure of them ; we know not but it may hinder instead of promoting our happiness. They are not promised absolutely, and therefore should not be so sought.

Those things which tend but to our well-being in spirituals, as comfort, assurance, and highest degrees of holiness, are not to be sought but with submission, much less these which tend but to our well-being in temporals. 'Not my will but thine be done,' said our great pattern. And David herein shewed himself to be a man after his own heart : 2 Sam. xv. 25, 'And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city ; if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation.' He referred it wholly to the will of God, whether his outward condition should be prosperous or no. So much for the act and the extent of it. The mode or manner of praying is, the

8. Third particular propounded, how we must pray. Take an account of this in these severals.

(1.) Pray much and often. That we are enjoined, when he bids us pray in everything. We must pray whenever we have occasion ; and everything gives us occasion for some request. We have occasion to pray, from what concerns our eternal state, our spiritual state, and our outward conditions, occasions to pray from everything. We have either wants or fears, which respect every state ; and therefore frequent, constant occasions to pray, and so we should be much and often in this duty. It is called for in the like expressions : Eph. vi. 18, 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, and supplication for all saints.' What is here implied, is there expressed, *πρὸςευχόμενοι ἰν παντὶ καιρῶν*, praying always whenever opportunity or occasion is offered ; this is offered frequently, continually. And so we are enjoined to continue in prayer : Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ;' to 'pray continually without ceasing,' 1 Thes. v. 17, Luke xviii. 1. The meaning of these expressions is not that we should do nothing else but pray, that this should take up all our time, and we should be every moment in this employment, but that we should be much and often in it. We should still keep a praying temper ; we should always be disposed to it, always ready for it when occasion is offered. No employment should wear off this temper, or indispose us to this duty. As when the apostle says, Rom. ix. 2, 'I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart ;' not that the acts and expressions of his sorrow were never discontinued. We know he was often rejoicing upon other occasions, but their sad condition had made a lasting impression of grief upon his heart, which he was ready and disposed to express when occasion was offered. Though the act of prayer be intermitted, and discontinued through other employments, yet the disposedness to it should last ; the heart should be ready for it whenever there is occasion and opportunity. Such a continual disposition and readiness to pray, is, as we call it, an habitual praying ; and in this respect we may be said to rejoice always, evermore, 1 Thes. v. 16, Philip. iv. 4. So to pray always.

But that is not all. As we must be always ready to pray, so we must frequently shew this readiness, this habitual frame, by praying actually ; we must do it every day ; it must be our daily employment, our daily sacrifice. As the priests might be said always to sacrifice, because they constantly offered sacrifice, evening and morning ; or, as Mephibosheth is said to eat meat with David continually, 2 Sam. ix. 7, because he did eat with him at

his set meals ; so we, that we may answer these commands which require us to pray continually, must have our times for prayer every day ; as they had for their sacrifice, and we have they had for their daily meals.

But this is not all neither : we have many times repasts and refreshments besides our set meals ; and they had many other sacrifices besides those offered evening and morning, some extraordinary, and some upon particular occasions. So should we, besides our ordinary and daily addresses to God, make our requests known in an extraordinary manner when we have extraordinary occasion, public or personal. We should apply ourselves to him at any time (besides those seasons which we daily observe) when we have more particular and special occasion. We must take all occasions to offer our requests which the providence of God offers us, both those that are continued and in course, and those that are emergent, and bring special reason for it. In everything, both of this and that nature, our requests must be made known, and so much and often, such a frequency as may be called a continuance in prayer.

(2.) Pray carefully. Instead of being careful about other things, be careful in this. Pray carefully ; take care how you perform this duty : shew this care about prayer in everything you pray for. Not that you should pray with anxiousness, solicitousness, perplexity, but that you should not pray carelessly. This care in praying is expressed by watching, frequently joined to this duty in Scripture : Col. iv. 2, ' Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving ;' Eph. vi. 18, ' Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance ;' 1 Pet. iv. 7, ' Be ye sober, and watch unto prayer.' There must be diligence and care in praying. We must be watchful about it, as that which requires our care. We are careful about that which keeps us waking and watchful. Watchfulness denotes the importance of that which we watch, and some danger in it, and the sense of both. It is of some consequence that we think ourselves concerned to be watchful about. We should go about this duty as a matter of great importance. We should be sensible who it is with whom we have to do, of what importance it is to make an address to the great God, and of what importance our necessities are which we spread before him. If we pray with sleepy, drowsy, listless hearts, we slight the great God, and slight our own necessities, our own interest, and slight a duty wherein both the Lord and ourselves are so much concerned. If we go about this duty with a sleepy soul, we offer to God a dream instead of a real supplication ; we affront him, and shew a wretched disregard of our own concerns, and therefore we should awake ourselves when we come before God ; as Deborah, Judges v. 12, ' Awake, awake, Deborah ; awake, awake, utter a song ;' David, Ps. cviii. 2, ' Awake, psaltery and harp, I myself will awake early ;' and Ps. lvii. 8, ' Awake up, my glory,' &c. We should stir up ourselves to lay hold on him ; we should rouse mind and heart, graces and affections, that all may be stirring and active, and not shut up in a careless, drowsy listlessness. This is to watch unto prayer, this is to be vigilant and careful about it.

Further, it denotes danger. When we are watchful, we apprehend some danger, and this is signified when watchfulness in prayer is called for : Mat. xvi. 41, ' Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation ;' Mark xiii. 33, ' Take heed, watch and pray ;' Luke xxi. 36, ' Watch ye, therefore, and pray always.' There is danger, for there is temptation attends our prayers. There is danger lest our minds and hearts should wander from God, when they should be fixed on him. There is danger lest such distempers seize on,

and cleave to our souls in praying, as may turn our prayers into sin; so there is danger lest our prayers should miscarry. We should be apprehensive of the danger, and so watchful to prevent it, to avoid it. Careful and vigilant that we enter not into the temptation to which we are subject when we pray; watchful to espy it, that we be not surprised; to resist it, that we be not overcome; that though it attack us, it may not carry us along with it, we may not enter into it. Vigilant to prevent wanderings and distractions, those loose vagaries of our vain minds and hearts into which they are apt to run when they should be most fixed, and have that before them which should wholly take them up, as Abraham watched his sacrifice; vigilant and careful to discern and shake off inward distempers, which are wont to mix themselves with our prayers, and spoil them.

(8.) Pray earnestly. It is the property of the Hebrew tongue to express vehemency, by joining divers words of the same signification together. The apostle being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, usually follows that style; and that may be one thing intended here, by adding divers words of the like signification to express prayer. He would have us to pray with some vehemence and earnestness, as Elias did; his vehemence in praying is so expressed, James v. 17, *προσευχήν σφοδρῶτα*, he prayed vehemently, as Luke xxii., 'With desire have I desired,' *i.e.* greatly, earnestly, vehemently desired. Our hearts and affections in prayer should not only be roused, but extended; drawn out in some earnestness: not only awakened, but warmed; there should be a spiritual heat and fervour in them. We should be 'fervent in spirit' when we are thus 'serving the Lord.' Pray as the church for Peter, Acts xii. 5, *προσευχή ἱερνής*, fervent prayer was made; the same word 1 Pet. iv. 8, *ἀγάπην ἱερνήν*; and so it is said 'the tribes served God,' Acts xxvi. 7, *ἐν ἱερνείᾳ*, 'in fervency,' or, which is all one in effect, with souls stretched to him. Prayer is *ἀνάστασις τοῦ νοῦ πρὸς Θεόν*, the ascent of the soul to God; and therein the soul should stretch forth itself to the utmost to get near unto God. To pray lazily, slothfully, is to pray as though we prayed not; and that will have answerable returns from him, will provoke him to hear as though he heard not, to regard our requests as though he regarded them not. He that begs coldly bespeaks a denial; may be used like an idle beggar; too lazy not only to work, but to seek relief. The Lord, if he love you, will whip you out of such intolerable sloth.

It is earnestness the Lord expects in prayer, such as is expressed in Scripture by crying out of the depths, Ps. cxxx. 1, by mighty cries, Jonah iii. 8, strong cries, Heb. v. 7, such as those of a woman in travail, Isa. xxvi. The soul should cry, as pained with its spiritual wants, inward distempers and corruption, as one in anguish till delivered.

By striving: Rom. xv. 30, 'Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;' such as wrestlers use when they put forth all their strength, use all their might to prevail.

By wrestling. So Jacob wrestled with God, Gen. xxxii. 26. And herein his wrestling consisted, Hos. xii. 4, he 'wept and made supplications;' he prayed earnestly, affectionately; his heart melted and run out in his supplications.

If we would take care to pray thus, the other carefulness wherewith we trouble ourselves would be needless; this would do our work both for the things of time and eternity: James v. 16, 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'

(4.) Pray spiritually; with spiritual intentions, and by the Spirit's influence.

[1.] With spiritual intentions. Look that your aim and end be right in

all you seek. It cannot be right unless it be spiritual. Even in our worldly business our end and design should be higher than the world. A Christian should not have such ends and designs as a natural and worldly man hath in his earthly affairs. How far should we be from such ends in holy and spiritual employments. Our prayers will be such as our ends are, carnal, and selfish, and earthly, if our intentions be such; for the form gives the denomination, and *quid forma in naturalibus, id finis in moralibus*; what the form is in natural things, that the end is in moral acts. If the end in praying be carnal or worldly, it is a carnal and worldly prayer, no more fit to be offered unto God than an unclean beast was to be offered in sacrifice. 'It is as the cutting off a dog's neck, or the pouring out of swine's blood, an abomination in the sight of God,' Isa. lxvi. 8, 4. When you pretend to be best employed, it is to be doing evil before his eyes, and to choose that in which he delights not: James iv. 8, 'Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.' They asked amiss, because they missed the right end. The ends we should aim at are the honouring of God, pleasing him, enjoying communion with him. These we should principally aim at in seeking either spiritual or temporal things. If we seek spiritual gifts, that we may be more eminent than others, and accordingly respected, applauded, admired, this is to be little better than Simon Magus, Acts viii. 9. Such prayers may be the issue of the gall of bitterness. Those that are in the bond of iniquity may be enlarged in making such requests. If we seek more grace, higher degrees of holiness, out of respect to our reputation, or merely for our own ease and comfort, instead of seeking and worshipping God in such prayers, we do but seek ourselves.

When we desire health, that we may live pleasantly; or long life, that we may long enjoy the comforts of this world; or plenty, that we may have enough to gratify the flesh, and lay out upon our pleasures; or riches, for those low and common ends for which worldly men desire them; or outward prosperity, that we may not be troubled with sufferings, grievous to flesh and blood; or public deliverance, for our own safety and welfare or success, that we may have our wills upon these we have suffered by: this is not to pray spiritually. The Lord counts not such requests to be prayers, though for the object they be directed to him, and for the manner be fervent and affectionate. The Lord accounts things to be such as their end is. That which is an act of obedience in itself may be no better than murder in his account, when the end is not right; as Jehu's killing of Ahab's children; God enjoined it, 2 Kings x. 30; yet he obeying only for his own ends, God will avenge it of him as if he had been a murderer, Hosea i. 4. So sacrifice, though he required it, is resented by him, as if no better than the killing of a man, Isa. lxvi. 8. And prayer likewise, if not for spiritual ends, instead of proving an acceptable sacrifice, will be counted an abomination, Prov. xxi. 27.

[2.] Pray by the Spirit's assistance; seek it, wait for it; do nothing that may check or restrain it, and give any impediment to it. Rely not upon inward abilities, or outward helps, real or pretended, so as to disengage that blessed Spirit, ready to help his people in praying when they are sensible of their want of his assistance, and look up to him for it. Be not like those who do shut their eyes because they have spectacles, or do tie up their legs, if not cut them off, because they have got crutches. When you have a better help, do not disoblige it by preferring or confining yourselves to a worse. Depend upon him alone who can help you to make requests in everything; do nothing which may provoke him to withdraw or suspend his assistance. Look upon this alone as your sufficiency for this duty, which

are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought, much less to offer up a good prayer, a spiritual sacrifice. The Lord will not have it offered with common fire, of your own or others' kindling. You must fetch fire from heaven if you would sanctify the Lord in your approaches. Look to the promise, Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look upon him whom they have pierced,' &c. Prayer should not be the issue of models and exemplars only, no, nor of habits and qualifications within; but should flow from the spirit of grace and supplication. So in the primitive times, they are required to pray accordingly, *προσέυχασθαι ἐν πνεύματι*, Eph. vi. 18; *ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*, Jude, ver. 20; by the Spirit, by its help and assistance; so that the prayer may be said to proceed from him. Those who like not to hear [of] praying by the Spirit, confess from hence, that so they prayed in the apostle's time; but they would have us believe it was a miraculous and extraordinary gift, such as was not to continue, and it is not now to be expected or pretended to; but I think they mistake. By praying in the Spirit in these two texts cannot be meant an extraordinary gift, such as those of healing, prophesying, tongues, &c.; for not to take notice that such a gift of prayer is not mentioned amongst those that were miraculous and extraordinary, where we have a particular account of them, Mark xvi., 1 Cor. xii. 8-10, xiv.; but this we may insist on as granted by them. Yet as all extraordinary gifts were not confined* upon any one person except the apostles, so no one extraordinary gift was bestowed upon all and every believer; and so that which all partaked of was no extraordinary *χάρισμα*, grace or gift. But this for praying was bestowed upon all believers, as appears by the texts alleged; for all the believing Hebrews, all that were sanctified, to whom Jude wrote, ver. 1, are required thus to pray, *ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ*; and all the converted Gentiles at Ephesus, to whom Paul wrote, are exhorted to exercise this gift, Eph. vi. 18; and all other believers in them are called to do it, if the epistles be of general concernment. Now, it could not be their duty to exercise it if they had it not, or might not have had it; and if they all had it, it was an ordinary gift, and continued to the church in all ages. These precepts oblige us as much as them, and it is as much our duty to pray in or by the Spirit as it was theirs. We are still to pray by the assistance of the Spirit; but how does the Spirit help us therein? What assistance are we to look for? We may learn that by the apostle: Rom. viii. 26, 'The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' This assistance is expressed by two words, especially *συναγχιλαμβάνεσθαι*, he helps our infirmities or weaknesses. 'Ασθενίαις, ἀσθενούντες ἀντι τοῦ ἐν ἡμῶν ὄντος, says Favorinus: weakness is from some want. We are in some want as to several things requisite to praying: want of judgment to discern what we should pray for; what is best for us we know not, he helps that. And so want of memory: he minds us of what is most needful, most seasonable, when otherwise we might pass it over; it is promised. So want of affection, holy and lively motions, the languor and sickness of the soul, the dulness, listlessness, deadness of it, that is, many infirmities in one. So want of expression too, which will more appear by the other word *ὑπερευχαίνεσθαι*, which signifies to act for one, as an advocate for his client. The Spirit of God advises his people, intercedes for them, as it were petitioning, or, as they say in our courts, moving for him, or drawing up his petitions or motions, dictating what he shall move for, and how, and in what form and words. And this is it which the apostle

* Qu. 'conferred'?—Ed.

declares here; this is the way whereby the Holy Ghost helps our infirmities in prayer. Thus it is that he makes intercession for them, by dictating what, *τι*, and how, *καθὸς οὗτος*, in what manner, for what things, with what expressions; helping them both to matter, affections, and words. Thus Grotius explains the word, a man of great esteem with those who differ from us herein, *est advocatorum*, &c. It belongs to advocates, who dictate petitions to their clients; and is ascribed to the Spirit of God, *quia preces ad Deum nobis dictat*, because he dictates to us the requests we offer to God. And so to pray in the Holy Ghost, Jude 20, is with him to pray *dictante Spiritu Sancto*, the Spirit of God dictating, suggesting to us what and how.

But of the Spirit's assistance in prayer, more hereafter. Let us in the mean time be sensible, when we are going to pray, of our great need of it, our insufficiency without it; let us labour to engage it for us by all means, especially by depending on him for it. Let us hearken to his motions, and follow his dictates, and yield to what he suggests, and not grieve, nor quench the Spirit of grace, nor put restraints upon him, nor any way provoke him to withdraw and leave us to ourselves, or to our own seeming abilities, but real weaknesses, our own lazy inventions and devices. When we come to the throne of grace, if the Spirit be not there our advocate, our plea will avail nothing. Our prayers cannot be spiritual without the assistance of the Spirit; and unless they be spiritual, they will not be fit to be offered unto that God who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and truth.

(5.) Pray in faith. This is frequently called for, and made the condition of effectual and prevailing prayers: Mark xi. 24, 'What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them;' James i. 16, 'Ask in faith, nothing wavering;' Mat. xxi. 22, 'All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.' Our whole life should be a life of faith, Gal. ii. 20; by virtue of this, we should walk with God and man too: 'We walk by faith,' 2 Cor. v. 7; and should hear with faith, if we will hear to purpose, Heb. iv. 2; and so pray in faith, if we would prevail.

But what is it to pray [in faith? It requires particular application, a fiducial recumbence, or a general persuasion.

Use. Since this is our duty, let us take notice of it, let us observe it, and make our requests known, and that in everything. Pray, and pray much and often, and pray carefully, and pray earnestly, pray spiritually, and in faith; and thus pray in everything. I might enforce this duty with many motives, but I intend not to stay on it. Mind these two.

1. It is most honourable to God, is as much for his glory as anything we can do. We can speak nothing more high and excellent, more noble and glorious of anything than this, that it honours God. This excels all, because it is the end of all. Everything is more valuable as it promotes this sovereign end; and therefore prayer is most valuable, because it most advances, and tends most to honour God: We can add nothing to the essential and absolute glory of God; this is *δόξα ἀκίνητος και ἀναλλοιώτως*, a glory which is infinite, to which nothing can be added. We have no way to glorify him but by declaring or acknowledging him to be glorious, giving a testimony to his glorious perfections and excellencies. Now, there is nothing we can do does more declare the glory of God than prayer; nothing that acknowledges more of his excellencies, and gives a clearer testimony to his glorious perfections. This gives him the glory of his immensity and omnipresence, acknowledges he is everywhere, applying ourselves to him wherever we are. His omniscience: acknowledges he knows the desires of our hearts, and understands best of all what is best for us; his power: acknowledges he

can do whatever we would have him, exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think; his goodness: that he is willing to hear such vile creatures, to supply, relieve, support, deliver, save to the utmost; his dominion: that he has right to dispose of all things as his own; his providence: that he rules and orders all, good and evil, small and great; his justice: that he is ready to revenge his elect that cry; his truth and faithfulness: that he is mindful of his word and promise, the ground of all our requests; his all-sufficiency: that there is enough in him for us, to satisfy, enhappy whatever our condition at present happen to be; more in him than in all things, since we seek to him more: Ps. l. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' That which is said of one part of prayer is true of the whole, he that offereth praise glorifieth him. If we would honour him much, glorify him in everything, let us in everything make our requests known.

2. It is most advantageous to us.

(1.) It is an universal expedient, that will avail us in everything; the Lord would not direct us to use it in everything, but that there is nothing in which it will not stand us in stead. The advantage of other things is particular: one is good for this, another for that purpose, but prayer is good for all. The efficacy and advantage of it reaches as far as the Lord lets forth his omnipotency. Prayer can prevail for anything that the Lord will employ his power about. This can prevail for the supply of all wants, redress of all grievances, security from all fears, deliverance from all troubles, the satisfying of all our desires. It can prevail with that great God who can do whatever he will in heaven and earth, who has all creatures, all things, at his beck: Hos. xii. 8, 4, 'By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed.' That which can prevail with him who can do all, can do all at the second hand. This can prevail, not for small things only, but the greatest, not only for earth but heaven: Deut. iv. 29, 'If thou seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him; if thou seek him with all thine heart and all thy soul.' For Christ, Prov. viii. 6; for the Spirit, Luke xi. 13: 'How much more shall the Father give the Spirit to them that ask him?' Rom. viii. 32. It can prevail not only for easy things, but the hardest, that which is most difficult, and bring relief in cases that seem most desperate, can do more than the whole power of nature. Prayer has wrought miracles, and if it do not so still, that is not because it is less powerful, but because the Lord thinks not fit they should be done: Joshua x. 12, 13, 'Then spake Joshua to the Lord, in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still and the moon stayed,' &c. Peter was in prison, the king resolved to have his life; he is secured by armed men, by iron gates, by chains and bolts; his case seems desperate, his escape hopeless, to sense or reason impossible; but prayer is made for him, and this brings him out in despite of all, and conveys him out of danger through a train of miracles, Acts xii. 4, 5. It is the readiest expedient, always at hand; the easiest and shortest way, and the surest; never fails, is never in vain.

(2.) It is a ready way, always at hand; you need never be to seek for this, as you may be for other means of supply and relief. All others may be out of your power, above your reach, but you need not be at a loss for this, which is *instar omnium*, and will stand you instead of all else. In such a destitute condition you may pray; when you are without riches, without liberty, without strength, without health, without friends; when you can

neither help yourselves nor others can help you; yet then you may pray, and so engage the Lord to help you. When you are in the depths, sunk below the reach of other relief, then you may pray: Ps. cxxx. 1, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord!' When you are environed with calamities, so straitly besieged by them as no supply, no relief, can get in to you, then you may relieve yourselves by prayer, as David did in such a case: Ps. cxvi. 8, 4, 'The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul!' Or if you were in as forlorn a condition, as Jonah in the whale's belly, where neither he nor any creature else could afford any help, yet then you might pray, as he did, Jonah ii. 1, 2, 7, 10. He that can pray needs never be at a loss, however the world goes. He has the key in his hand which can open all the treasures of heaven, and let him in to all the riches of the goodness of an all-sufficient God. The violence of men may take estates from you, but they cannot take away the spirit of grace and supplication; they may shut out friends from you, but they cannot shut you out from access to God by prayer; they may bereave you of liberty, but not of liberty to pray; they may cast you into prison, but there you may be as much enlarged as anywhere; they may take from you public opportunities, but you may pray in private, in secret; they may watch your months, but your hearts may pray; you may be too weak to work, to follow your callings, but scarce too weak to pray; not able to go abroad for help, but then you may go to God with your requests. You may be too weak to speak, to move your lips, but then your hearts may move, and therein lies the heart and soul of prayer, 2 Kings xx. 1, 2, Isa. xxxviii. Prayer is an expedient ready at all times, on all occasions, to bring you in what supply and relief you need.

(3.) It is a short and easy way: no more to ask and have, seek and find, Mat. vii. 7. There may be difficulty and trouble in other ways of relief, but what show of either in this? Could your hearts desire an easier way to compass what you desire, than by making your requests known? Jehoshaphat's enemies were like to prove too hard for him; he could not levy an army sufficient to deal with them, but he could lift up his eyes to God and pray, and that did his work; a few words prevailed against a huge army: 2 Chron. xx. 12, 'O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee.' When you know not what to do, when you can do nothing, do but pray, which you may easily do, and the rest shall be done to your hand. So it was to him, ver. 17, 28. The poor woman in the Gospel, that had taken a costly and tedious way for relief, Mark v. 25, 26, she applies but herself to Christ, and without further trouble or expense, her grievance is removed, ver. 29; so, Mat. xvii. 15, 16, 18, 21, that which nothing else can effect may be thus done with ease. When Naaman liked not the prophet's way for his relief, what say his servants to him? 2 Kings v. 18, 'If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean?' If the Lord had bid us do something difficult and troublesome to get our wants supplied, our fears scattered, our grievances redressed, would we not have done it? How much more when he bids us but make our requests known? You have not money at command, you can make no friends, you can get no interest in great persons, you can raise no armies; these are too hard for you. Oh, but can you pray? Is that too hard for you? Why, this that you may so easily do will do more for you than all the other can do. This can do all for you that

you need desire, and may not this be done with ease? The Lord does not require you should consume your bodies or waste your strength in praying; put but up your petitions, let but your hearts go along with it, you need not trouble yourselves to write it, no, nor to express it in words, when your weakness will not afford expressions. The Lord hears the language of the heart, and knows our meaning when we cannot utter it; Rom. viii. 27, 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit.' Oh what an easy way has the Lord opened unto us for an universal supply and relief to us in all cases! How inexcusable shall we be if we walk not in it!

(4.) It is a sure way, an expedient that never fails, of such efficacy that it was never used in vain: Isa. xlv. 19, 'I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain;' Ps. xxiii. 4, 5, 'Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered;' Ps. ix. 10, 'Thou hast not forsaken them that seek thee,' He has never been wanting to them that seek him; he will never disappoint them, never suffer them to seek him in vain. Your labour and pains may be in vain; your designs and projects, your care and thoughtfulness, your endeavours for yourselves, and others' for you, may be in vain. But your prayers, if prayers indeed, will never be in vain. Oh, where will you meet with an expedient that will never fail? Such an admirable engine is prayer, never used in vain. The disciples fished all night and caught nothing, John xxi. 8; but they never prayed a night, or an hour, and caught nothing. This net is never spread in vain, we may be confident of it, 1 John. v. 14, 15. We have all the assurance of it that can be desired, the very best security that heaven and earth can afford, the word of the true and faithful God, his truth and faithfulness engaged for it, who is truth and faithfulness itself, and that in many great and precious promises. Martha says to Jesus, John xi. 22, ' whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give it thee.' He has vouchsafed to give us the like confidence as to whatever we shall ask, John xv. 7, 'If ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' John xvi. 23, and Mat. vii. 7, &c. Prayer will either be answered or rewarded; it will either procure the thing we desire, or something as good, or something better. If it be not returned on those you pray for, it will be returned with a blessing upon yourselves, Ps. xxxv. 18.