

The Excellency of Prayer!

(By William Huntington, in a letter to a friend)

Prayer is the blessed means which God has appointed to bring every grace from Christ to the believer. The believer is to let his requests be made known unto God, and for his encouragement God says that the prayer of the upright is His delight. Yes, He says that He loves to hear it. "Let Me hear your voice, let Me see your face! For your voice is pleasant, and you are lovely!"

Prayer is the casting of our cares and burdens on the Lord. It is the pouring out of the soul before Him, the presenting of our troubles to Him. Prayer is communing and corresponding with Christ—and receiving grace from His fullness to help in every time of need. It is keeping open the communion between the Lord and His people. Prayer is their way of paying morning and evening visits to the King of kings and Lord of lords! It is their means of cultivating and keeping up perfect friendship with a Friend who loves at all times—and therefore it should never be neglected.

Prayer is pouring out the soul unto God and placing before Him our **troubles**. It is "casting all our **cares** upon Him who cares for us."—and our **burdens** upon Him in whom we have "righteousness and strength." Prayer is opening the heart, the mind, and the mouth to Him who has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble! I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." It is besieging the everlasting kingdom, moving the throne of grace and knocking importunately at the door of mercy—encouraged by the promise, "Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

In prayer we must take no denial. If we have but a feeling sense of our needs, and a Scripture warrant of a promise to plead, we must argue, reason, plead, supplicate, intercede, confess, acknowledge, thank, bless, praise, adore, repeat, importune, watch, and take hold of whatever may be of use to the soul. Sinners, sensible of their lost estate by nature, who feel their need and poverty, have many invitations, encouragements, precedents and promises. They have, under the teachings of the Holy Spirit, to plead and rely upon the covenant of Jehovah, the oath of God; the merits of Christ and all His covenant engagements, undertakings and performances; the covenant characters He sustains; His near relationship to them—together with all the glorious train of Divine perfections found in the proclamation of the Name of God to Moses (Ex. 34:6,7)—for these all sweetly harmonize and brightly shine in Christ crucified—who has never once yet disappointed the hope of a penitent sinner, but has graciously said, "Come unto Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" His promises, like Himself, are unchangeable, and this is one of them—"The one who comes unto Me, I will never cast out."

Private prayer is the Christian's court-visit to his God—the life and breath of his soul. It is the ascent of the heart to the Almighty—and its returns are the descent of Christ to be the soul's help!

Prayer is the assuagement of grief, the easement of a burdened heart, and

the vent of a joyful heart. It is the rich aroma of mystical incense, the overflowing of a living fountain, an all-prevailing sacrifice, and the delight of the Almighty! Moreover, prayer is the greatest, most blessed and most glorious privilege, with which perishing sinners ever were favored!

Prayer is a defense against the spirit of this world, a bar to the inroads of vanity, a maul upon the head of the 'old man', and a lash of scorpions for the devil. It is a bridle in the jaws of a persecutor, a triumph over a voracious enemy, a dagger to the heart of a heretic, a key to parables and difficult Scriptures, and a battering-ram on the walls of salvation—for "the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it."

Prayer uncloses the bountiful hand of God, opens the door of mercy, retains Christ on the throne of the affections, and covers every rival and usurper with shame and confusion of face! It is the believer's Royal Exchange, where he may take his cares, burdens, snares and troubles; his vexations, temptations, doubts and fears; his misgivings of heart, sorrows of mind, hardness of heart and ingratitude; together with his faintness, unbelief, and rebellion; also all his spiritual disorders—the leprosy of sin, the evil within, the plague of his heart, the plague of his head, his deaf ears, blind eyes, feeble knees, languid hands, halting feet and stiff neck! He may take all his sins there get rid of—and leave them all!

In return for their troubles, believers receive from their heavenly Banker numberless deliverances, blessings and mercies; many spiritual refreshings, renewings, revivals and restorations; large returns of comfort, peace, love and joy; together with fresh discoveries, love tokens, wholesome truths, profound mysteries, glorious glimpses, bright prospects, celestial views, undoubted evidences, heavenly lessons; conspicuous deliverances, pledges and foretastes; reviving cordials; valuable banknotes in "exceeding great and precious promises," payable this very day, and every day—and even to millions of ages afterwards—signed, sealed, and delivered by Jehovah Himself—the "God who cannot lie!"

Prayer has often scattered the confederate enemies of the soul, marred the schemes of opponents, frustrated the tales of liars, and made false teachers mad. Prayer counteracts the designs of Satan and his emissaries. It has made the believer to be an enemy to the world, the successful rival of deceivers, the envy of hypocrites, an eye-sore to the devil, the admiration of perishing sinners, a spectacle to the world—**and a wonder to himself!** He prays to his Father in secret, and his Father who sees in secret has engaged to reward him openly.

By prayer the spiritual pauper comes up from the dust, and the beggar up from the ash-heap—to sit among the princes of God's people, and inherit the throne of glory!

Prayer in faith has brought in countless providential mercies, as well as spiritual blessings. God could have granted them all without asking, but has condescended to honor the exercise of prayer by saying, "For all these things I will be inquired of by the house of Israel—that I may do it for them."

Prayer engages the Almighty on the side of the suppliant, and establishes an alliance with God. "All things are possible to him who believes." "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Prayer has brought health to the sick, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, eyes to the blind, life to the dead, salvation to the lost; and has even driven the devil himself from the hearts of many—and brought the God of heaven to dwell in his place.

Prayer is God's appointment, the Spirit's gift, the believer's privilege, and the scourge of Satan! Therefore, prize it and use it!

God is well-pleased, and receives with pleasure, approbation, and delight—all who approach His throne of grace, sensible of their needs—in the name of Christ crucified. Hence faith in Christ becomes the only way of access to God—all other avenues are stopped up! The sword of justice is brandished to keep every other way to the tree of life closed. In Christ, we may come with boldness to the throne of grace; there is no obstacle, no hindrance, in this way. The sword of justice is sheathed, the law magnified, the ransom price paid, the devil dethroned, sin expiated, wrath endured, God well-pleased, sinners redeemed, enemies reconciled—that the Lord God might dwell among them!