

Bunyan said it is the Spirit who works to “show the soul its misery, where it is, and what is like to become of it; also the intolerableness of that condition.” He grounded this assertion in [John 16:7–9](#) and said, “For it is the Spirit that doth effectually convince of sin and misery, without the Lord Jesus ... and so puts the soul into a sweet, serious, sensible, affectionate way of praying to God according to His Word.”⁵¹ He argued that even if a man were to see his own sin, without

⁵¹ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 251.

the help of the Spirit, the result would be to flee from God as Cain and Judas instead of fleeing to Him through Christ. He wrote, “When a man is indeed sensible of his sin, and God’s curse, then it is an hard thing to persuade him to pray. For saith his heart, *There is no hope, It is in vain to seek God*, [Jer. 2:25](#); [Jer. 18:12](#). I am so vile, so wretched, and so cursed a creature, that I shall never be regarded.” But the Spirit “stayeth the soul, helpeth it to hold up its face to God, by letting into the heart some small sense of mercy, to encourage it to go to God; and hence it is

called the Comforter, John 14:26."⁵² Therefore, when the Spirit helps us have a right view of ourselves, He shows us both our misery and the hope to be found in Christ. This help enables true prayer, for Christ is the one through whom we can pray to God.

The Spirit's work to give us a right view of God, Christ, and ourselves is intertwined. Boston showed how a correct view of God and of oneself inevitably lead to sincere confession of sin, true thanksgiving for God's mercies, and a

high valuing of Christ.⁵³ We need humility to see the preciousness of Christ (Ps. 69:32), and "the higher the Mediator is [valued], the more fit one is to pray."⁵⁴ The right view of ourselves is always related to the right view of God, as Manton reminded us: "Serious dealing with God in prayer is wrought in us by the Spirit, in whose light we see both God and ourselves, his majesty and our vileness, his purity and our sinfulness, his greatness and our nothingness."⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Boston, *Works*, 11:63.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Manton, *Works*, 12:235.

William Gurnall
(1616–1679) wrote that
the Spirit “excites the
saint’s fear, filling it with
such a sense of God’s
greatness, his nothingness
and baseness, as makes
him with awful thoughts
reverence the divine
majesty he speaks unto,
and deliver every petition
with a holy trembling
upon his spirit.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*
(Edinburgh: The Banner of
Truth Trust, 2002), 2:489.