

C H A P. XXII.

Of Prayer.

AS God is, and is to be worshipped; so one great part of the worship of God is Prayer, thereby we acknowledge him to be, and our want of supply from him and his ability to help us, it is such a part of Gospel Worship which includes all gospel virtues in it, unto which the promise is made, *Rom, 10. 13.* from the Gospel-promise, *Joel 2. 32.* *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved*; in speaking distinctly to this matter, I shall endeavour to shew, 1. What Prayer is. 2. By whom it is to be performed. 3. That it is a duty of special concernment to be performed by those concerned in it. 4. The manner how it is to be performed. 5. The priviledges thereof and the encouragements thereunto, and the hinderances and discouragements that sometimes Christians meet with all in this service; and in these I shall be very brief, yet as plain and as full as brevity will permit.

What Prayer is.

1. What Prayer is. 1. More generally, Prayer includes Confession, Contrition, Petition, Thanksgiving, and may be, and ordinarily

dinarily is performed all in one, and comes under that of Prayer, *Dan. 9. 3, to 20.* where under Prayer is included much of confession and humble confession of spirit, with earnest petition: and *Dauids Psalms* are called sometimes Psalms, and sometimes Prayers, because both was contained in them, *Psal. 72. 20.* and good it is for the Saints to be much exercised in all these parts of prayer, that so much sutes our low conditions and needs, and the greatness and majesty of him to whom we pray.

But I shall especially speak to the petitionary part of Prayer, that being most properly and distinctly prayer, as that doctrine and rule of prayer prescribed by our Lord doth manifest, which consists especially in Petition; and on this account, prayer is the asking or begging something of God, in the name of Jesus Christ; that either our selves or others do want and stand in need of, either for body or soul, in things relating to this life or that which is to come, *Mat. 7. 7. to 11.* Prayer is not appointed as a complementing work, but that the soul might therein and thereby go to God, in all holy and humble boldness, to make known its wants, and beg supplies and help in all cases of need; it is to come with all holy boldness to the throne of Grace, in the name of Jesus Christ in faith and expectation, in that way to receive from the Father what we truly need.

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But more particularly as to the matter of Prayer. 1. It must be good and according to the will of God, if we fail in this we fail in all, for we have no promise of hearing, further then we pray according to his will, 1 John 5. 14. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* And this is one special work of the spirit in the hearts of Saints, to help them to pray according to the will of God, Ro. 8. 27. persons may pray in their own spirits, and be very earnest, and will have no nay for that which God would not have them, and it may be is not good for them, and he may give it them in judgment. I believe that many have experience of this truth at this day, as his people of old, Psal. 78. 18. *They tempted God in their hearts, by asking meat for their lusts, v. 29. 30, 31. He gave them their hearts desire, but while the meat was in their mouths the wrath of God came upon them; they must have their lusts fulfilled, and their lusts they had, but in anger and in wrath, with vengeance for their lusting; so the same people Israel lusted for a King, and would have no nay, and God gave them their desire, Hos. 13. 11. I gave thee a King in my anger, and took him away in my wrath.* It greatly behoves Christians to look to the matter what they pray for, that they pray for that which is good, for which they have some precept or promise, either generally

rally or particularly, and that too according to the terms thereof, either absolute or conditional, that is, of submission to the will of God relating either to thing or time.

1. What is absolutely promised, we may and ought absolutely to pray for, as Mortification of sin, Sanctification of Life, Preservation in the Faith, Perseverance in Grace to the end, with profiting under the various dispensations of God in the World, &c. All which comes under some special command or promise, either general or particular.

2. Some things we must pray for conditionally, with submission to the will of God, both relating to thing and time, as Health, Peace, deliverance from Affliction, prosperity in the world, &c. because these are things of worldly and temporary concernments, and not absolutely necessary to the life of the new Covenant, nor absolutely promised; Christ our Lord is an example to us in this matter, *Mat. 26. 39*, yet we may pray absolutely in this, so far as God hath promised, that is, Food and Rayment is promised, *all these things shall be added to you*, but worldly riches is not promised, but Food and Rayment is promised, because *your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things*; you cannot live nor subsist without them, nor serve God in the world without them: That was it which

which Jacob said, that if God would give him Food to eat, and Cloaths to put on, then God should be his God, because without it he could not live; if God would keep him alive he would live to God; so that for Food and Rayment we ought to pray in faith, and to believe the promise, *all these things shall be added*, Mat. 6. 33.

And as for Deliverance from Afflictions, Christians ought to pray absolute for support under them, and profiting by them, and deliverance in the Lords time; time not the deliverance, and then you may be absolute, and that because you have the promise, *Pf. 50. 15. Isa. 45. 17.*

2. By whom
it is to be
performed.

2. By whom this duty of Prayer is to be performed, and that is by believers, though I shall not question the common duty of all men in this matter, but none can perform it acceptably, but Believers. Justified persons; God first accepts the person before the service is accepted, it is *the Prayers of a righteous man that availeth much*, *Jam. 5. 16.* as for others, see what God saith, *Pf. 50. 16, 17.* *As for the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou shouldst take my Covenant in thy mouth, &c. Prov. 15. 8.* *The Sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is his delight,* chap. 21. 27. it behoves every one to look to it, to have some ground of assurance of relation to the Lord in the New Covenant, which will greatly imbolden the soul in
this

this duty, although souls may cry and call and obtain too, when they lye under doubtings of interest, they may cry *Abba Father*; for the acceptation of our persons doth not consist in assurance of interest and relation, but in believing the Gospel and cleaving to the Lord therein, yet the higher our assurance of interest and relation works, the more boldness and confidence will there be in Prayer; and sometimes sinkings in spirit on that account may increase fervency; but it is the duty of upright ones to worship God, to pray unto him, and to praise him it becomes them; it is futable to their high calling, *it becometh the upright to be thankful*, Ps. 33. 1. *Praise is comely for the upright*; all the wicked of the Earth, whose persons are unaccepted, their Prayers are abomination to the Lord; for *without Faith it is impossible to please him*, it was by Faith, that *Abels Sacrifice was accepted*, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.

3. That Prayer is a duty of special concernment to be performed by those concerned therein, that is believing, righteous, justified persons, the Children of God; and this appeareth, 1. From the manifold commands and Exhortations thereunto, a few of which I shall mention, *Mat. 7.7. Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you*; a plain command from our Lord, with a promise of answer,

3. That it is a special duty to be performed.

Eph. 6. 18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, &c. 1 Thes. 5. 17. Pray continually, Col. 4. 2. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; by all which, and many other Exhortations in Holy Scripture it appeareth, that Prayer is the special duty of the Saints.

2. It appears from the frequent example of the Lords people throughout all ages, who were frequently exercised in this divine duty and work, as Abraham, Gen. 18. 23, to 33. Moses, Exod. 32. 30, 31, 32, & 33. 13 & 34. 9. Solomon, 1 King 8. 22. David, Ps. 5. 1, 2, 3. & 17. 1, 2, &c. & 55. 16, 17. in the New Testament, Christ himself was very often exercised in this work, Mat. 14. 23. Luke 6. 12. and Paul, Phil. 1. 9. Col. 1. 9. 1 Thes. 3. 10. The Apostles, Acts 4. 24. to 31. and the whole Church, Chap. 2. 42. with multitudes of like examples both in old and new Testament; all which confirms the truth, that it is the great duty and concernment of the Saints, according to the will of God, to be frequently exercised therein.

3. It appears to be a very acceptable service to the Lord when rightly performed, from the acceptance thereof which God hath manifested, and the returns that he hath made to the prayers of his people throughout all ages, wherein he hath manifested himself to be well pleased with the faithful prayers of his people, in his hearing

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hearing and answering of their prayers; see his answer to *Abraham* in his requests, *Gen.* 18. 21, to 33. to *Moses*, *Exod.* 32. 33, 34. & 33. 14. 17. to *Jehoshaphat*, 2 *Chron.* 20. 6, 15, 16, 17. to *David*, *Psal.* 18. 6, 7, 8. & 118. 5. *I called upon the Lord in distress, he answered me and set me in a large place.* In a word, the Lord never commanded his people to seek his face in vain, *Isa.* 45. 19. *I said not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain;* and of this his people hath had experience, and must say (if they speak true of him) as *Moses*, *Deut.* 4. 7. *What Nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God in all that we call upon him for.*

I may add 4. that an unpraying people are noted in Scripture to be a Graceless and Godless people; *The workers of iniquity*, *Psal.* 14. 4. *Are a people that call not upon God;* and *Psal.* 10. 4. *The wicked in the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts;* wicked men, if they pray, it is but in form, and for fear, or custome and tradition, and not in faith and love with constancy, as gracious persons doth, *Job* 27. 10. *speaking of the Hypocrite, will he always call upon God?* No, he will not, it is of custome, or for fear, or to be seen of men, if he doth it at all; and as wicked men are a prayerless people, so it is a note of a Godly man to be a praying man. No sooner was *Saul* converted, but behold he prayeth, *Acts* 9. 11. which was given as a to-

ken to *Annanias* that he was a converted man, and the Prophet deprecates against an unpraying people. *Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the Families that call not upon thy name. Psal. 79. 6.* by all which it appeareth, that prayer is the special duty of the people of the Lord.

4. The right manner of Prayer.

The fourth particular relates to the manner of prayer, how it is to be performed, and in this are many requisites to be considered to the right performance thereof.

1. It must be in the spirit.

I. We must pray in the Spirit, if we pray in a right manner, not only with our own spirits, but in the spirit of Christ; there is a gift of prayer with large expressions, which Hipocrites may attain, and there is the spirit of prayer, which is proper only to sincere Christians, hence the Apostle saith, *1 Cor. 14. 15. I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also, Jud. v. 20. praying in the holy spirit,* and this is the promise of God to give his people, *the spirit of grace and of supplication, Zech. 12. 10.* The spirit of Christ is a spirit of prayer, it enables those in whom it is to cry *Abba Father, Rom. 8. 15.* it helpeth both as to matter and manner, *for we know not what to pray for as we ought.*

Quest.

Quest. How shall I know that I have this spirit of prayer?

Answe.

Ans. We may know it in the matter and in

in the manner of our prayers. 1. In the matter of our prayers when we are kept to, and helpt in the right matter of prayer; the matter you have heard, it must be good, and according to the will of God, when we are rightly lead in this matter, it is by the Spirit of Christ, Rom. 8. 26, 27. *We know not what we pray for as we ought, &c. but the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and make intercession for us according to the will of God.* There is much in this, to have our hearts lead in the will of God in our praying. When persons run out in their own spirits and in their own wills, and it may be besides the matter of prayer, there is nothing of the spirit of Christ therein.

2. We then pray with the Spirit, when our own spirits are set at work in the duty; prayer by the spirit is not lip labour only, but heart work, when we (as we ought in all other services) in prayer, serve God with our Spirits, with our whole Heart, Rom. 1. 9. *God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, &c. Psal. 119. 10. With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy Commandments;* then have we the spirit of Christ in Prayer, when our whole heart is in the work, *My Son give me thy heart;* the Spirit works the heart to God according to his word, and in this note, that (ordinarily) when the spirit worketh in our hearts to the work, it works the heart beyond the words; and

here lyeth the difference between Praying in the Spirit and without the Spirit; he that prayeth in the spirit, his spirit thereby outruns his words, he is more in heart then in word, the spirit worketh in us with *Groanings that cannot be uttered*; that is, heart groanings and desirings beyond the expressions, but the other his tongue out runs his heart, he is far better at lip labour, then at heart work in Prayer.

3. Then we pray by the Spirit, and in a right manner, when we pray in Faith; believing, that is the right spirit of prayer; then pray we by the spirit, and in a right manner; for the spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Faith, 2 Cor. 4. 13. *But having the same Spirit of Faith, &c. Mat. 21. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive*; so that to pray believingly, is the right manner of praying.

Quest.

Quest. When may I be said to Pray Believingly?

Answ.

1. When you believe understandingly and rightly, that the matter or things you pray for is according to the will of God.

2. When you believe that God will give you what you pray for, because it is according to his will, it is his will you should ask it, because it is his will that you should have it, and that you should thus believe in asking, see 1 Joh. 5. 14, 15.

Quest.

Quest. Are there not some things that we ought to pray for, which we have no particular ground for faith, that it shall be granted? we are commanded to pray for wicked men and enemies, *Mat. 5. 44.*

Ans. We ought to pray in such and like cases, because God requires it, and may and ought to pray in Faith, we ought to pray for what God hath promised, believing that he will give it; and to pray for what he hath commanded us, believing,

1. That it is our duty because commanded.
2. That he will accept us therein, if not grant the thing prayed for; yet that he will assuredly answer us in returning our prayers into our own bosom, *Pf. 35. 13.* *But as for me when they were sick my cloathing was Sackcloth, I humbled my self by fasting, and my prayer returned into mine own bosome;* so that we ought to pray and believe that God will accept us, and make a return of our prayers to advantage; though in this and in many other cases we have no particular ground to believe an answer in the very thing prayed for, yet we ought to pray in Faith, not doubting the matter, or Gods faithfulness in hearing and answering, either in granting the things prayed for, or make a return to the souls advantage.

4. To Pray in a right manner is to pray fervently (with heart fervency) and earnestly, not sluggishly and coldly, but

zealously to have the heart affected in prayer. *Jam. 5. 16. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;* and its the work of the spirit to fill us with true zeal and fervency in prayer, when the soul will have no nay, like *Jacob* wrestling with God, *Gen. 32. 26. I will not let thee go except you bless me.* *Hos. 12. 4. He had power with the Angel and prevailed, he wept and made supplication.* And this fervency consisteth not so much in multitudes of expressions, or loudness of voice, but in pouring out our souls to the Lord, and in strength of faith to prevail with him, *Pf. 42. 4. When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me,* & *25. 1. I lift my soul to thee,* & *143. 8.* Thus, in this and in every part of Gods service it behoves Christians to be *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*; hence is prayer so frequently called in Scripture, crying from its fervency. *Psal. 17. 1. & 34. 15. 17. &c.*

5. To pray humbly.

5. To pray rightly, is to pray humbly and self-abasingly, and this is the proper work of the spirit to discover our own nothingness and needs unto us; this is a special requisite in prayer, *Psal. 9. 12. He forgetteth not the cry of the humble,* & *10. 12. Arise O Lord God lift up thine hand, forget not the humble*; The fear of Gods greatness and goodness living in the heart, will tend (very much) to humble the soul in its addresses to him, and is very acceptable with him,

him, Ps. 51. 17. *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit, a broken and a contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise;* its that Prayer that comes from a humble and broken Spirit that is well pleasing to the Lord; the poor Publican that had nothing to say for himself, *But Lord be merciful to me a Sinner,* was accepted, when the proud boasting Pharisee was rejected, Luke 18. 13. 14. Proud Persons, and Proud Prayers, are an abomination to the Lord, but he will not forget nor despise the prayers of the humble.

6. To Pray in a right manner, is to pray sincerely, and not hypocritically, and this can never be without sincerity and truth of heart to God-ward, in the main of Religion, Ps. 51. 6. *Tbou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou hast made me to know Wisdom,* & 17. 1. *Give ear unto my Prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips.* Unfeigned Faith, and unfeigned Love, and unfeigned Obedience, and unfeigned Prayer, is the Lords delight, he loveth that, he desireth truth in the inward parts, Psal. 145-18. *The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth;* heart and tongue must go together, yea, and there had need be more in the heart then the tongue expresseth rather then less; an empty hearted Christian performs empty service, makes empty airy prayers, and must expect empty returns, but truth and integrity reacheth Heaven, it being the spirits work

6. Sincerely and not Hypocritically.

work to effect it, and truth alone is there embraced.

7. To pray
Briefly.

7. To pray in a right manner is to pray Briefly, and without Tautologies, and this has been the practice of all Saints throughout all Generations, and is the express command of our Lord, *Mat. 6. 7, 8.* But when we Pray use not vain repetitions, (or babbling or speaking idely) as the Heathens doe, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking, be ye not therefore like unto them; for your Heavenly Father knoweth what things you need before you ask them. In which are two things observable, 1. Our Lord forbids vain Repetitions, Tautologies, and idle Talking in Prayer. 2. Much speaking, as if multitude of words would prevail with God; this is it he reproves in the Pharisees as well as in the Heathen, their making of long Prayers, *Mat. 23. 14.* and this he forbids in his Disciples, in warning them not to be like the Heathen, who think to be heard for their much speaking; it is much speaking in Prayer that Christ reproves, as well as vain speaking, and that appeareth, 1. From the argument used to inforce the Exhortation, *Your Father knoweth the things ye have need before ye ask,* therefore you need not have much speaking about the matter. 2. The pattern of prayer presented by Christ in the verses following, as an example of the substance and brevity in prayer.

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3. The example of Christ Himself in Prayer, *Matt. 26. 39.* The exhortation of the Wise man, *Eccl. 5. 2.* According to which we find the Prayers of the Saints to be both brief, and full of matter, throughout all Generations, *Exod. 33. 12. and 16. 2. 2 Chron. 20. 5, -- 12. Dan. 9. 3. 19. 1 King. 8. 22. --* is the longest we read of, on a special occasion; yet without vain repetitions; *Acts 4. 24.* All which confirms the truth, that it's a right manner of praying to pray briefly; and this cannot be done truly but by the Spirit: Christ would not have his to think, that enumerating words like the Heathens, or Papists, or Hypocrites, that pray by number, and length of time, and multitude of words, is prevalent with God; but to pray briefly, and understandingly, according to the word and work of the Spirit.

8. To pray in a right manner, and by the Spirit, is to pray in the fear of God; as the *8. In the fear of God.* fear of God is a choice new Covenant Virtue to dwell in the heart alwaies, so especially when the soul addresseth it self to God in Prayer, to do it in the holy awe of the Lord; *Psal. 5. 7. As for me,* (saith the Prophet) *I will come into thine house in the multitude of thy Mercies, and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy Temple.* It's a choice frame of Spirit, to serve the Lord with fear in all the parts of his service, and especially in this of Prayer, *To serve him with Reverence*

Reverence and Godly fear. They are the persons that God will accept, and answer their Prayers, *Ps. 145. 19. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him, he will hear their cry, and save them.*

9. To pray
holily.

9. To pray in a right spirit, and so in a right manner, is to pray holily, with a desire of holiness, and a design for holiness; *1 Tit. 2. 8. I will that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.* To lift up holy hearts, and holy hands, is well pleasing to the Lord; *Psal. 86. 2. Preserve my soul, for I am holy; that is, I am sanctified to thee, and am one of thine holy ones, and do love holiness, and design holiness; this is absolutely necessary in Prayer, Ps. 66. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* Unholy Prayers are not like to have any acceptance with, or answer from the Lord, to pray and sin, and sin and pray, as if persons in Prayer did design to ask leave to sin, to be covetous and oppressing, to be proud, vain, and prophane, such Prayers the Lord abominates, *Isa. 58. 3, 4. They fasted, and prayed, but their design was not for holiness, but for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness; this shall never cause their voice to be heard on high: No, God heareth not sinners: that is, those who held themselves servants to their lusts, that design not holiness; Chap. 59. 2, 3. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins*

God have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

10. To pray in a right manner, and by the Spirit of Christ, is to pray in the name of Christ, to offer up all our Prayers to God in his Name, and not in our own Name, or on the account of any worth that is in our selves; this is essential to a right manner of Praying; for there is no acceptance of our persons or services out of him; *Col. 3. 17. Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus: that must be the manner of our doing: Joh. 16. 23. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you;* that is, that is good, and according to his will; *ver. 26. And this is by the Spirit of Christ, for it is the spirit of the Gospel that leads us to Jesus Christ, and to the Father by him: but the question will be, What it is to pray to the Father in the Name of Christ?*

10. It must be in the Name of Christ.

Quest.

Answ. 1. To come to the Father in the Name of Christ, is to come to him in the authority of Christ; though Prayer be a common duty to man, as related to God his Creator; yet on the new Covenant account, true Believers stand related to God in Christ, on the account of Redemption; and that is the Service and Prayer I am speaking of: and we must perform every duty to God, by virtue of his authority, as our Lord and Law-giver, in the new and

Answ.

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everlasting Covenant; so that we are to perform this and every service in his Name, that is, in his authority, by virtue of his commission and command, *Matt. 7. 7. 8. John 16. 26.*

2. To Pray in the Name of Christ, is to offer up our Prayers to the Father, as persons interested in Christ by Faith, according to the Word, believing and expecting acceptance with the Father for the sake of Christ, and not for any worth in our selves; Jesus Christ, Son to the King of Glory, being our only way of acceptance, both of our persons and services: therefore we must by Faith in all our addresses to the Throne of Grace, have respect to Jesus, as our way, and as upon the Throne for us, to plead our cause, and to present the persons and services of his people in himself to the Father; he is our friend in the Court of Heaven, and to pray the Father in his Name, is to pray the Father for his sake to accept us, and grant our requests; because by the Law of the new Covenant we belong to him, and are the children of God by Faith in him. And the reason why we must offer up all in the Name of Christ is, because we are imperfect, and our service imperfect, and can have no acceptance but in him, and for his sake, who is perfect, *1 Pet. 2. 5.*

xi. To pray
boldly.

ii. As an effect of this acceptation in our dear Lord; and for his sake, a right Gospel

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Gospel way of praying is, to pray boldly; an holy, humble boldness becometh Christians, and God is well pleased therewith: He would have them come with *boldness to the Throne of Grace*, Heb. 4. 16. He having opened such a *new and living way*, so full of Grace, he would have his children to know it, and improve it with all holy and humble boldness, and confidence, believing his readiness and willingness to hear and answer the prayers of his people: God would have his people to exercise so much Faith in the way of the Gospel, that new and living way, as to command of him what he hath promised to give, because he hath of his own Grace bound himself to it by his new Covenant Law promise, and he takes it as Glory to his Name, for his people to believe that he will not, cannot withhold what he hath promised: therefore Believers ought to come to God with holy boldness, and humble claiming their right, by Grace, in the blessings, and blessed things promised in the new Covenant, as the Apostles, *Acts* 4. 24. to 31.

12. To pray in a right manner, is to ^{12. Be ever} pray constantly, and not to faint and give ^{stant.} over: if you wax weary, either through a carnal carelessness and sluggishness, or fainting for fear of not being answered, it's the way to lose all; and as a necessary ingredient to constancy, and persevering herein, you must add patience; *Pf.* 40. 1. ^{waited}

waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my crie: that is, it was long before I had an answer; but I waited long, and patiently, and had my desire in the end. Christ put forth that Parable, Luke 18. 1. -- to this very end, *That men ought alwaies to pray, and not to faint*; to assure us, that if we wax not weary, God will hear and answer in the end; Rom. 12. 12. *Continuing instant in Prayer*; Eph. 6. 18. *Praying alwaies with all supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance*. This is a duty that Saints must persevere in while they are in this World, it's the way in which God will be worshipped, and they have daily need of mercy from him: as for times of Prayer, there is publick and private Prayer in Church, in Family, and in Closet, all which ought to have its time. The Prophet fixes on the morning, Ps. 5. 3. and 55. 17. *Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and crie aloud, and he shall bear my voice*. O that Christians would lay this to heart, and not bethink time to spend in this holy and heavenly service to converse with God; but according to the exhortation, 1 Thes. 5. 17. *To pray without ceasing*, that is, without being weary, or giving over, or neglecting so holy, acceptable, and needful a service: it is a note of an hypocrite, that *does not alwaies call upon God*, Job 27. 10. but by fits and starts, when he hath a mind to it; or for fear, in time of danger,

ger, or the like; but it is not constant and sincere with God in the work.

5. I come to the priviledges of this duty of Prayer, and encouragements thereunto to those that rightly perform it. As it is a duty, so there is much of priviledg in it; and for such as are capable to a right performance of the duty, by how much they live in the neglect thereof, so much do they forsake their own mercy.

5. The priviledges of Prayer, and Encouragements.

The first priviledg is access with acceptance at the Throne of Grace, *To come with boldness to the Throne of Grace*, to pour out our souls to God, to make known our weakness, wants, and wrongs, and to obtain mercy; a priviledg which no carnal, unconverted person in the World hath to do withal; *Pf. 50. 16. Prov. 28. 9.*

1. Access with acceptance.

2. To have power with God, when rightly performed, and this have the Saints had experience of throughout all Generations: *Jacob the great Wrestler, who had power with God, and prevailed; Gen. 32. 24. --28. With Hof. 12. 3, 4. By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him. Moses likewise had power with God, and prevailed for his people, when God bid him let him alone; Exod. 32. 10. Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them; yet Moses would not let God alone in this matter, but besought the Lord God, and said, &c. ver. 11, 12, 13. and prevailed*

2. Have power with God.

vailed with God; *ver. 14.* That he said unto him, *ver. 34.* Go lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee; behold, mine Angel shall go before thee, &c. I might speak of Jehosopbat, 2 Chron. 20. David, Psal. 34. 4. Daniel, Chap. 9. 3, to 23. With multitudes of others that I might mention in holy Scripture, that have prevailed with God in this way, and indeed it is the priviledg of all the Saints; God will be commanded by them, when they pray according to his will revealed in his Word; *Isa. 45. 11.* *Jam. 5. --16, 17.* When the Prayer of the wicked shall be turned into sin, *Ps. 9. 7.* and abomination, *Prov. 15. 8.* and reproach, *Isa. 66. 3.*

3. To have
what they
will.

3. To have what they will of God, as an effect of this prevalency with him; *Mat. 7. 7, 8.* Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, &c. *Joh. 14. 13.* Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, that will I do, and *15. 7.* If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Here is a priviledg for praying Saints; it is but ask and have; Ask what you will, and ye shall have it, only remember the rules before prescribed, keep in Gods will, let his will be yours, and let this be the rule of your praying, and then ask what you will, and it shall be done; and his will is a good and perfect will in all things, and alwaies wills that which is best for his people: so that a Christian that
lives

lives in the will of God, may say truly, that he hath his will granted at all times.

4. Priviledg is free converse and communion with God in Jesus Christ, as a Son with a Father, with heart, delight and joy. It's said, *Exod. 33. 11.* That *God talked w. th Moses face to face, as a man talketh with his friend.* Prayer is a talking with God face to face, as with a Father, and a friend; *Abraham was called the friend of God, Jam. 2. 23.* And talked with God; *Gen. 18. 23.* *And ye are my friends,* saith Christ, *if ye do whatsoever I command you;* *Joh. 15. 14.* Prayer is to the Saints a son-like and friendly conversing with God, who is a consuming fire to his enemies, but a Father and a friend in Jesus Christ to his children, who have this priviledge to come boldly to him, to have access with acceptance at his Throne of Grace, and to commune with him about the great things of his will, relating to his Glory, and their own eternal welfare, according to the Gospel of his Grace in Jesus Christ: priviledges they are, unto which all carnal hearts (though wise in the World's wisdom) are strangers too, their souls come not in sight of these secrets. O that all sincere hearted Christians did more study, prize, and improve this Mercy.

Though these priviledges are all encouragements to this duty, and who, or what Christian soul, interested in such

4. Converse
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nion with
God.

4. Converse
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nion with
God.

Grace and favour, can neglect a duty attended with such soul-advantages; it's the way to maintain friendship with God: persons that are negligent in this duty, grow carnal, and estranged from God, and liable to reproof and judgment: it was the sin that *Job's* friends supposed him to be guilty of, as the cause of his affliction; *Job* 15. 4. *Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest Prayer before God.* But I add to these, as a further encouragement.

3. The great and precious promises made unto praying people.

5. The great and precious promises of God made to this duty, should wonderfully encourage gracious souls to a frequent and faithful performance thereof, not only the promises of hearing and answering of the Prayers of his people; *Pf.* 50. 15. *Matt.* 7. 7. *Job.* 15. 7. *Jam.* 1. 5. *If any man want wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him:* but the promise of Salvation is made unto it, being performed according to the rules prescribed, which includes all the virtues of the new Covenant, unto which the promises are made; *Joel* 2. 32. *And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved:* which intends new Covenant deliverance and salvation, compared with, *Rom.* 10. 13, 14. *New Covenant* spirited praying people are under the promise of Salvation; therefore let all new Covenant spirited people be encouraged to this work and

and duty, as one of the most noble, Son-like parts of Christians obedience, full of spiritual advantage to the soul, as well as Honour and Glory to God.

6. And lastly, I shall speak something to some of the hinderances and discouragements that Christians meet with all sometimes in the performance of this duty.

6. *Lastly of the hinderances and discouragements of Prayer.*

1. Sometimes with some persons, a received Principle, that Prayer to God is no duty, nor ought not so to be performed, but only as a priviledge or liberty, or at most if a duty, yet not to be performed by Christians, without some more then ordinary movings thereunto by the Spirit of Christ; and that without this it is but formal and fleshly, &c. And from hence they neglect this duty.

1. *That it is not a duty but a priviledge on-*

In answer hereunto, and to help the soul out of this mistake; consider and ponder well, 1. That Prayer is a duty, and is frequently so stated in the Scripture (as hath been before proved) and ought so to be practised, *Mat. 7. 8, 9, 10.* and this notion runs contrary to and thwart the law of the New Covenant, and so cannot be of God, and whence then it is you may easily judge.

2. Its a Notion never mentioned by Christ or his Apostles in the Scriptures, who were frequently exercised in this work according to time, place, and opportunity.

therefore an unscriptural and new foundation, and not of God.

3. The event discovers it whence it is, intending to make such persons to become Prayerless, and so by degrees (if grace prevent not) graceless persons, woful experience hath taught us the truth of this; its a temptation that gracious persons have met withall, and have suffered much of loss thereby, on the spiritual account, it being the Devils design under any pretence, to work off souls from this duty. Yet fourthly, it concerns Christians to perform it as a duty, and in spirit too, the duty destroys not, nor hinders spiritual service, and indeed it cannot be spiritual where it is not performed to God in conscience as duty; prayer with and in the spirit is a duty, *praying always in the holy spirit, and pray without ceasing, &c.* and where it is in conscience to God performed by believers, the holy spirit is never wanting to doe his office, if we are faithful to our duty; therefore be exhorted to be faithful in your duty, and be sure you shall not want the Spirit of Christ to assist you in this or any other service of his.

*The sense
of sin.*

2. Others are discouraged in this duty from the sense of their sinfulness, their corrupt natures. O saith the soul, I see such a body of death, such a mass of corruption attending me daily, that I am afraid to pray or to go to God as to a Father; for I see iniquity

quity cleaves to my best services, and I cannot pray without sin, and therefore better not pray at all. To this I say, 1. That its a mercy to have the true sight and sence of sin, with a loathing thereof, and this hath been and is the case of the most holy justified persons in the world, Rom. 7. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death:* to be without the sence of Sin, that is the true misery and most dangerous condition.

2. Art sensible of thy Sin and Sinful Nature, Man, Woman, and is that thy burthen in good earnest? Why, then Pray the more, and cry the more unto God in the name of Christ for Pardon, for Power to mortifie thy sins and sinful nature, and be not discouraged because of thy sinfulness; indeed if you like and love thy sins, then tremble, God will not hear thee, but if you hate and abhor thy corruptions, and thy self because thereof, then be not discouraged, but go to God repentingly and believably, and Pray God, in the name of Jesus Christ, for pardon and power against thine iniquities; and this know, that if thou wilt not pray till thou hast no sin, thou art never like to pray here in this world, nor wouldst thou have need to pray hadst thou no sin. Remember the Prophet made this an argument to pray the more and more earnest, because of his sin, Psal. 25. 11. *For thy Name sake O Lord pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.*

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Quest.

Quest. Why did Christ Pray then who had no sin?

Answ.

1. Though he had no sin of his own, yet he was to encounter with all the sins of the world, to bear our sins, and to encounter with Justice, and satisfie that, and to conquer all the enemies of poor sinners, even death it self, and therefore no wonder if he was much in Prayer.

2. He was a pattern to us in this matter, that we might learn of him and find support for our souls in all difficulties by Faith and Prayer.

3. Want of expressions.

A third hinderance in this duty of Prayer is, want of words and expressions: O faith the Soul, I want the gift of Prayer, had I words and expressions as some have, I should be encouraged in the work, but I want words to express my mind, I am so weak on that account, that I am discouraged in the work, &c.

Answ. To this I shall say, 1. this may come to pass through thine own negligence and sluggishness, want of use is ordinarily attended with debility in any duty or service, the Sluggard saith, *a Lyon is in the way*, and so sitteth still, from a supposition of difficulty, but up and be doing, and the Lord will be with thee; this the Lord foresaw, the backwardness and sluggishness of his people, therefore hath he given so many commands unto it, and promises to the encouragement of a right performance there-

thereof, I say set about the work in obedience to him, and thou shalt not be without his assistance.

2. If thou hast the Spirit of Prayer (as that thou hast in some measure, if thou be a Christian in truth, for if *any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his*) Then be not discouraged though thou hast but little of the gift of utterance, men may have the gift without the spirit, although where-soever spirit and gift goes together, it is of choice use for the Church; yet be not discouraged, for *God accepts his children according to what they have, and not according to what they have not*; therefore if thou canst make known thy wants and weakneses, though thy language be not eloquent, yet groan it, and cry it out before the Lord *who knoweth the meaning of the Spirit*; for where the spirit of Christ is, it will help to cry, *Abba Father*, and know that as a Father delighteth more in the stammering and broken language of his little Child, then in the most composed speech of the most excellent Orator; yea, and it may be more then in the most acute language of his own grown Children; so doth God, the Father of all Believers, delight in the Prayers of his own poor weak Children, coming from sincere hearts *and faith unfeigned*, more then in the most excellent language of the Hypocrite or Stranger, and as much as in the well ordered Prayers of his own more
grown

grown and gifted children; therefore be not discouraged in this matter, and if thy Father see it best in thy faithful exercise of what thou hast, he will give you increase.

3. It may be thy Father seeth that the Spirit of Prayer without much of gift is best for thee, to keep thee humble and lowly; it may be thou wouldst be proud and ruine thy self if thou hadst such gifts as some others have, but he knows what is best, and gives suitable to our abilities, though its true, that abilities to a right use of gifts, are of him likewise.

4. We are to know, that God gives his gifts varioussly and differingly as he pleaseth, and that for the use and edification of the Church, for that indeed is the great end and use of gifts, and he never intended to give to all his children gifts for publick service in the Church; *are all Prophets, &c.* no, they are not, *Some are Prophets or Spiritual,* and others are reputed as ignorant, that is without gift for publick service, but must rather learn, I Cor. 14. 37, 38. of which are Women in general, and many Men likewise; therefore be content with what God hath given thee and faithfully improve that, and in so doing, thou shalt not only meet with acceptation, but (it may be) with increase.

For there are ways for use and improvement of Christians gifts, though not in a publick

publick way on a Church account, that is inclosed and in family duties, and in private with Brethren and Members, *Mat. 18. 19, 20.* therefore note this by the way.

1. That it is a weakness for weak Brethren, that have not a gift of publick use for edification to put themselves on publick employment when it is neither profitable to the Church, nor honourable to the Lord. 2. That its the Churches weakness to urge Publick Duty on Private Spirits.

A fourth hinderance and discouragement in Prayer is, may the soul say, I have prayed often and waited long, but I doe not find that I have any answer or return of my Prayers, but rather the contrary, God seems to go over all my Prayers, and to work contrary to my Prayers, and to write bitter things against me; the more I pray the worse it seems to be, and what should I do in this matter?

4. No return of prayer.

Ans. 1. In General, if it be so indeed, as you suppose, yet be not discouraged, it is no otherwise then sometimes hath been the dealings of God with his people formerly, as appears by their complaint in this matter, *Psal. 13. 1, 2.* *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? how long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemies be exalted over me? yet the Prophet giveth not off, but prayeth still*

still, ver. 3. Consider and hear O Lord my God, lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death. And further the Lord did not only seem to forget and not hear the Prayers of his Servants, but to be angry with the Prayers of his people, Pjal. 80. 4. O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with the prayers of thy people? See ver. 5. 6. and ver. 7. 14. He continueth Praying still, Turn us again, O God of Hosts, look down from Heaven and visit this Vine, &c. so that if the case be thus yet, be not discouraged, but pray still and faint not, the Lord proveth the faith and patience of his People, for he hath not said to the House of Jacob, seek ye me in vain; and remember that it is a note of a graceless person to give off, and to say, it is in vain to serve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have walked mournfully before him, Mal. 3. 14. But it often comes to pass, that God doth not answer the Prayers of his people from several just grounds which I shall endeavour to shew as followeth.

Grounds of
Gods not
answering
Prayer.

I. It may be thou Prayest for that which God will not give, or for that which he hath not promised, or at least not promised it in the way, and at the time that thou wouldst have it; so did Moses that servant of God pray for that which God would not give him, and then it is in vain to pray against the will of God; see this in Deut. 3. 23, 26, Moses besought the Lord that he might not die, but that he might live and

go into the goodly Land ; but God had designed the contrary, and would not answer his Prayer, ver. 26. *The Lord was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not bear me, and the Lord said unto me, let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter, &c.* So that when the people of God ask of him things that he will not give them, but hath determined the contrary, its in vain then to ask, see the like, *Jer. 7. 16. Pray not thou for this People, neither lift up cry nor Prayer for them, neither make Intercession nor Prayer for them, for I will not bear thee.*

Or secondly, if thy Prayer be right in all things in this matter, he may answer thee and thou not know it. For 1. God does not always answer the Prayers of his people in the same things they pray for, and yet answer them in that which is equivalent, that is as good and better then that which they prayed for, for God knoweth what is good, and giveth the best good to his people. Thus Moses prayed, *Exod. 33. 18. Lord I beseech thee shew me thy Glory* ; he asked too much of God, not too much for God to grant, but too much for Moses to receive; if he should have had his desire, it would have killed him, ver. 20. *And he said thou canst not see my face, for there shall no man see me and live.* But God answered him in that which was better for him in his present capacity, that is, the sight of his goodness which should suffice him till he was
capaci-

capacitated to see his glory, Ex. 34. 6, 7. So likewise Paul, 2 Cor. 12. 7, 8, 9. he prayed thrice to be rid of the *Thorn in the Flesh* the messenger of Satan that buffeted him, and the Lord answered him not in the very thing, but in that which was as good and better, *My Grace is sufficient for thee, my strength shall be perfected in weakness*; and this the Apostle took for a good and full answer, *most gladly will I therefore glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me, &c.* So it may be thou hast prayed over and over, again and again, to be delivered from afflictions and persecutions, and yet they increase daily, and thou thinkest God hath not heard thee, but if he assure thee that his Grace shall be sufficient to bear thee up under all that he hath done, and will bless thee with strength in thy Soul, that is enough and a gracious answer, and that he will deliver in his time, for this he hath promised; it may be thou hast been wrestling and praying against thy corruptions of nature, and crying out as the Apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who will deliver me?* And when shall I be delivered, &c. and yet canst not be rid of them, but some of these *Canaanites* do still remain, and so thou thinkest that God does not hear thee, but if he lead thee thereby, the more to Jesus Christ, to see the need thou hast of him, and the salvation that is in him, keeping up the warfare still, and keeping humble in
the

the sense thereof, believing the full delivering in the end; it is a gracious answer that will fill the soul with joy, *Rom. 7. 25.* Thanks be unto God through Jesus Christ my Lord. The like may be said in many other cases, Christians may seek good things of God, and he may answer them in other things, even cross to expectation, yet best for them; they may seek Riches, and he may give them Poverty; they may seek prosperity, and he may give them adversity; they may seek life, and he may give them death; and yet give them that which is good and best for them.

Or thirdly, It may be thou hast not prayed in a right manner, which is so necessary a requisite in Prayer (as hath been before shewed) as that without it we may not expect any answer from God, that is, to pray with the spirit understandingly, believingly, humbly, &c. but in thine own spirit, if not in thine own name, and then no wonder if thou hast no return of thy Prayers from God, for he regardeth the manner as well as the matter of the prayers of his people, he will be sought in the due manner, or else he will reprove and cross his people in the service; *1 Chron. 15. 13.* *The Lord our God made a breach for that we sought him not after the due order.* God hath respect to manner and order, in all his worship, and when his people miss therein, he will meet with them in way of reproof.

OR

Or 4ly, it may be thou hast had wrong ends in thy Prayers, and that hath hindered thy success; there are two great ends to be sought in our Prayers, that is, the Glory of God, and the good of our selves and others; and if thou miss in the end of seeking, thou missest of all, it may be thou hast prayed for Conquest over thy Lusts, for the increase of the gifts and Graces of Christ, that thou mayest be accounted some body in Profession, gifts of Ministry, that thou maiest be Esteemed and have a Name, &c. if God give them, it will be to thy wrong; this is minded, *Jam. 4. 3. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, to bestow it upon your lusts.* God sees that your desires granted would ruine you; you pray for deliverance from Affliction, not that you may glorifie God, but that you may live at ease, and see no sorrow; you pray for worldly injoyments, when (perhaps you have enough before, and more then you do well use for the Glory of God) to bestow it upon your lusts, like *Israel of old, Psal. 78. 18.* who ever thus misses in their ends in praying, must expect to miss of obtaining, or else if they have their desire it will be to their spiritual los and damage; he granted his peoples desires, when they asked meat for their lusts, but he sent leanness into their souls. I am afraid that there are many rich Christians that are grown fat and rich in the World, but are grown

grown lean in their Souls, and others like the Church of *Corinth* grow rich in gifts, but poor in Grace, that he could not write to them *as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to Babes in Christ*, and notwithstanding all their gifts had need to be instructed in that excellent vertue and way of love; O all ye Churches and Ministers, remember this, Gifts without grace to a right use thereof, is but like to a Jewel of Gold in a Swines Snout.

Fifth and Finally, or else sin may be the cause why God doth not hear and answer your Prayers; Men Pray and Sin, and Sin and Pray, and wonder why God doth not hear them; but if men allow themselves in sin, God will not hear them. I intend not the common infirmities of nature, watched over and warred against by the Saints, that shall not hinder their Prayers; *Jam. 5. 17.* but sins lived in and owned, unrepented of, surely God will not here such, *Psal. 66. 18.* *If I regard iniquity in mine heart, God will not bear me*; it is the iniquity of the heart and hands that makes a separation between God and the Soul, *Psal. 49. 5.* *Why should I be afraid of evil, when the iniquity of my heels do compass me about.* It is not the iniquity of our heels that should make us afraid, but the iniquities of our hands; the iniquities of our heels are such as we shun and run from, such as we hate and war against; but the iniquities of our hearts and hands are such as we

love, follow after, catch it, and hold it fast, plead for it, that is the iniquity that will stop your Prayers, and the influence of Gods Grace to your Souls; *Isa. 58. 3.* They complained they had fasted and prayed, and sought God, but he did not hear, nor take notice of them; the cause see, *ch. 59. 1, 2.* Behold the Lords hand is not shorned that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear, but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. O its sin and iniquity that puts a stop to our Prayers, and causeth God to hide his face that he will not hear, and this the Church was sensible of; and O that we were more sensible then we are, *Micb. 7. 9.* I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, &c. If souls once come to be sensible of sin, that it is the cause of affliction, and of Gods indignation against his own people, and hinders the prevalency of their Prayers; they would certainly search out the sins which are the cause, and humble themselves, and turn from their iniquities, and patiently to wait and bear till he turn to them in mercy.

Quest.

What Sins are they that ordinarily causerh God to pass over the prayers of his people, and to refuse to hear, but rather to afflict them?

Answ.

1. All sins of the heart and hands have

have the same effect, but I shall mention some more remarkable sins, for which the people of God hath been afflicted, and against which he hath manifested his displeasure.

1. That sin of Covetousness and worldly mindedness, the common bait by which the Devil deceiveth souls, that steals away the hearts of Christians (if Grace prevent not) to their spiritual and effectual ruine, or at best to their great loss on the spiritual account, and oft times on the outward account likewise, stopping and hindering their prayers, and drawing down Judgment both upon themselves and others. *Isa. 57. 17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wrath, and smote him, I hid my face and was wrath, and he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart, &c.* O that we had not cause to say, that this iniquity prevails at this day; and though God smites and smites at this iniquity, as is evident by the manner of his smiting, yet whether he hath not cause to say, *he went on frowardly in the way of his own heart.* O who is it that reforms and returns to him that smiteth, but rather quarrel at the rod, and cry out for deliverance, but keep fast the sin that is the cause thereof; surely God will make us sick with smiting before he hath done, if there be no reformation.

2. Pride is another crying abomination,

for which God hath a controversie with his people, self conceit, pride of heart, pride in Apparel, pride of riches; O this damnable hell born sin, is like to prove the ruine of multitudes, for its followed after and pleaded for, rushing into the new invented and devised fashions, to the dishonour of God, and shame of Religion, and undoing of poor souls; the Lord may justly for these things complain as of his people of old; *Hos. 5. 5. The Pride of Israel doth testifie to their face*; and he is at work with his people at this day for these abominations.

O that Professors in the City of London would lay these things to heart, from whence prophaneness in this matter is come forth into all the nation; Pride was *Sodom* sin, and likewise the sin of spiritual *Sodom* and *Agypt* *Rev. 18. 12, 13. & 17. 4.* Let all the Sons and Daughters of Sion, tremble in the thoughts of living in the practise of *Sodoms* abominations; and on the contrary, *be ye cloathed with humillity*; that is, let all your carriages and behaviours, your words and works, your gesture and apparel, shew forth humility, and prove *the Lord if he hath not a blessing in store for you.*

3. Loss of first love both to God and one to another, and loss of zeal for God, his name and truth in the earth; this is it for which God hath a controversie with his people, and will not hear them cry, they never

never so loud, and make they never so many prayers, Rev. 2. 4, 5. *Thou hast lost thy first love, remember from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except you repent; it is repentance God expects, before he will hear and answer our prayers, for it is these and the like sins that doth hinder the prevailing of our prayers, that they can have no enterance at the throne of Grace. See these sins more fully described Chap. 29.*
