

## Prayer: Puritan Quotes

- Prayer is the soul's breathing itself into the bosom of its heavenly Father. THOMAS WATSON
- Praying is the same to the new creature as crying is to the natural. The child is not learned by art or example to cry, but instructed by nature; it comes into the world crying. Praying is not a lesson got by forms and rules of art, but flowing from principles of new life itself. WILLIAM GURNALL
- You can do more than pray, after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed. JOHN BUNYAN
- Prayer is nothing but the promise reversed, or God's Word formed into an argument, and retorted by faith upon God again. WILLIAM GURNALL

### Key to character:

- I had rather learn what some men really judge about their own justification from their prayers than their writings. JOHN OWEN

### Deeper than words:

- Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb. . . . Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD
- Many dumb beggars have been relieved at Christ's gate by making signs. WILLIAM SECKER

### Its efficacy:

- I had rather stand against the cannons of the wicked than against the prayers of the righteous. THOMAS LYE
- Good prayers never come weeping home. I am sure I shall receive, either what I ask or what I should ask. JOSEPH HALL
- The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer fetched the angel. THOMAS WATSON
- Prayer is putting the promises into suit. JOHN TRAPP
- God never denied that soul anything that went as far as heaven to ask it. JOHN TRAPP
- Prayer will make a man cease from sin, or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer. JOHN BUNYAN
- God may deny your wantonness, but not your wants. JOHN FLAVEL
- Bernard never went from God without God. JOHN TRAPP
- Pray often; for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan. JOHN BUNYAN
- That which begins not with prayer, seldom winds up with comfort. JOHN FLAVEL
- Israel prevailed with God in wrestling with Him, and therefore it is that he prevails with men also. If so be that we will wrestle with God for a blessing, and prevail with Him, then we need not to fear but we shall wrestle the enemies out of it also. ALEXANDER HENDERSON
- Misbelief does seek many ways for delivery from trouble; but faith hath but one way—to go to God, to wit, by prayer, for whatsoever is needful. DAVID DICKSON

### Why prayers are ineffective?

- When people do not mind what God speaks to them in His word, God does as little mind what they say to Him in prayer. WILLIAM GURNALL
- Christ went more readily ad crucem, than we to the throne of grace. THOMAS WATSON
- God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded, or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have the child divided. God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so He loathes a divided heart. God neither loves halting nor halving. THOMAS BROOKS
- Be very particular in secret prayer, both as to sins, wants and mercies. . . . Be not ashamed to open out all thy necessities. . . . Before God we may speak out our minds fully, and name the persons that afflict, affront, and trouble us; and woe to them that a child of God upon a mature judgment names in prayer! I find not that such a prayer in Scripture ever returned empty. A great reason why we reap so little benefit in prayer is, because we rest too much in generals. SAMUEL LEE
- (The hypocrite) When he got what he a mind to in prayer, he hath no more mind to pray. JOSEPH CARYL
- Prayer that is faithless is fruitless. THOMAS WATSON
- It is a sweet saying of one, "O Lord; I have come to Thee; but by Thee, I will never go from Thee, without Thee." THOMAS BROOKS

### Steps to efficacy:

- "Ask. . . ." (Matthew 7:7). If we don't receive by asking, then let us seek; if we don't receive by seeking, then let us knock. THOMAS MANTON
- A Christian should shut both the door of his closet and the door of his lips so close, that none should hear without what he says within. THOMAS BROOKS

- The speech of the mouth must not go before, but always follow after the conception of the mind. Many times as a musician's fingers will run over a song which he has been used to play, although his mind is otherwise occupied; so many in prayer will run over that form of words they have been used to utter, though their minds are roving about other matters. Oh, let the absurdity of the fault breed in us a loathing of it. ISAAC AMBROSE
- There must be delight on our parts. Joy is the tuning the soul. The command to rejoice precedes the command to pray: "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing." Delight makes the melody; prayer else will be but a harsh sound. STEPHEN CHARNOCK
- When thou grayest before others, observe on what thou bestowest thy chief care and zeal, whether in the externals or internals of prayer, that which is exposed to the eye and ear of men, or that which should be prepared for the eye and ear of God, the devout posture of thy body, or the inward devotion of thy soul; the pomp of thy words, or the power of thy faith; the agitation of thy bodily spirits in the vehemency of thy voice, or the fervency of thy spirit in heartbreaking affections. These inward workings of the soul in prayer, are the very soul of prayer. WILLIAM GURNALL
- Furnish thyself with arguments from the promises to enforce thy prayers, and make them prevalent with God. The promises are the ground of faith, and faith, when strengthened, will make thee fervent. and such fervency ever speeds and returns with victory out of the field of prayer. . . . The mightier any is in the Word, the more mighty he will be in prayer. WILLIAM GURNALL
- Where God hath not a mouth to speak, men must not have a tongue to ask. CHRISTOPHER NESSE
- Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven. THOMAS BROOKS
- Observe whether thy fervency in prayer be uniform; a false heart may seem very hot in praying against one sin, but he can skip over another, and either leave it out of his confession, or handle it very gently, as a partial witness, that would fain save the prisoner's life he comes against, will not speak all he knows, but minceth his evidence; thus does the hypocrite deal with his darling lust. WILLIAM GURNALL
- Take heed of carrying purposes of going on in sin with thee to the throne of grace! This were a horrible wickedness indeed. . . . Is it not enough to sin, but wouldst thou make God accessory to His own dishonor also? WILLIAM GURNALL
- To an effectual prayer there must concur the intention of the mind and the affections of the heart; else it is not praying but parroting JOHN TRAPP
- We must join our endeavor in the use of all means with our prayers, whether they be put up for spiritual or temporal blessings. . . . We must pray with our hand at the pump, or the ship will sink in sight of our prayers. Is it temporal subsistence thou prayest for? Pray and work, or pray and starve. Dost thou think to set God at work, while thou sittest with thy hand in thy bosom? WILLIAM GURNALL
- Do not any day, upon any presence, omit to offer up thy morning and evening sacrifices. Remember, so often as thou neglectest morning prayer, so often thou art all the day naked destitute of thy spiritual guard, and exposed to all manner of evils and enemies, and cost forespeak thyself an evil day; and so often as thou omittest evening prayer thou presumest upon sleep, and rest, and safety, without God's leave, and forespeakest thyself an evil night. GEORGE SWINNOCK
- Pray in prosperity, that thou mayest speed when thou prayest in adversity; own God now, that He may acknowledge thee then. Shall that friend be welcome to us, that never gives us a visit, but when he comes to borrow? This is a right beggar's trick, but not a friend's part. WILLIAM GURNALL
- When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words, than thy words without a heart. JOHN BUNYAN
- Pray often rather than very long at a time. It is hard to be very long in prayer, and not slacken in our affections. WILLIAM GURNALL
- I have been benefited by praying for others; for by making an errand to God for them I have gotten something for myself. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD
- When you do not hear so much and so often from God in preaching, let God hear the more and oftener from you in prayer. Pray to the throne of grace. Give God no rest till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. JOHN WHITLOCK
- You should, in Tertullian's phrase, with a holy conspiracy, besiege heaven. THOMAS MANTON
- One way to get comfort is to plead the promise of God in prayer, show Him His handwriting; God is tender of His Word. THOMAS MANTON
- He that cannot pray, let him go to sea, and there he will learn. Quoted by JOHN TRAPP

### **The privileges of prayer:**

- A praying man can never be very miserable, whatever his condition be, for he has the ear of God, the Spirit within to indite, a Friend in heaven to present, and God Himself to receive his desires as a Father. It is a mercy to pray, even though I never receive the mercy prayed for. WILLIAM BRIDGE
- Ah! How often, Christians, hath God kissed you at the beginning of prayer, and spoken peace to you in the midst of prayer, and filled you with joy and assurance upon the close of prayer! THOMAS BROOKS

### **How can I know that my prayers are prompted by the Spirit?**

- When they are not only vocal, but mental; when they are not only gifts, but groans. THOMAS WATSON

### **Does prayer move God?**

- Though God be not changed by it (prayer) in Himself, yet the real change that is made by it on ourselves, does infer a change in God by mere relation or extrinsical denomination; He being, according to the tenor of His own covenant, engaged to punish the unbelieving, prayerless, and disobedient, and to pardon them that are faithfully desirous and obedient. So that in prayer, faith and fervency are so far from being useless, that they as much prevail for the thing desired by qualifying ourselves for it, as if indeed they moved the mind of God to a real change; even as he that is in a boat, and by his hook layeth hold of the bank, does as truly by his labor get nearer the bank, as if he drew the bank to him. RICHARD BAXTER

### **Should an unbeliever pray?**

- Though an unbeliever sin in praying, yet it is not a sin for him to pray. There is sin in the manner of his praying; but prayer, as to the act and substance of it, is his duty. He sins, not because he prays, that is required of him, but because he prays amiss, not in that manner that is required of him. There are abominations in the prayers of a wicked man, but for him to pray is not an abomination, it is the good and acceptable will of God, that which He commands. DAVID CLARKSON

### **Extemporaneous prayers?**

- Some lay it to the charge of extemporary prayers, as if it were a diminution of God's majesty to offer them unto Him, because they cost nothing, but come without any pains or industry to provide them. A most false aspersion (2 Samuel 24:24). Surely preparation of the heart (though not premeditation of every word) is required thereunto And grant the party, praying at that very instant, forestudies not every expression, yet surely he has formerly labored with his heart and tongue too, before he attained that dexterity of utterance, properly and readily to express himself. Many hours in the night no doubt he is waking, and was, by himself, practicing Scripture phrase and the language of Canaan, whilst such as censure him for his laziness were fast asleep in their beds. THOMAS FULLER
- God can pick sense out of a confused prayer. RICHARD SIBBES

### **Written prayers?**

- Set prayers are prescript forms of our own or others, composition; such are lawful for any, and needful for some.
- Lawful for any. Otherwise God would not have appointed the priests a form of blessing the people. Nor would the Savior have set His prayer which is both a prayer in itself, and a pattern or platform of prayer.
- Needful for some. Namely, for such who as yet have not attained to pray extempore by the spirit. But as little children are so ambitious of going alone, that they scorn to take the guidance of a form or bench to direct them, but will venture by themselves. . . . so many confess their weakness, in denying to confess it, who, refusing to be beholden to a set form of prayer, prefer to say nonsense, rather than nothing, in their extempore expressions. More modesty, and no less piety, it had been for such men to have prayed longer with set forms that they might pray better without them. THOMAS FULLER
- Is it lawful to pray in a set form of words ? Nothing but very great ignorance can make you really doubt it. Hath God anywhere forbid it? You will say that it is enough that He hath not commanded it. I answer, that in general He hath it for you that all be done to edification; but He hath given to you no particular command or prohibition. No more hath He commanded you to pray in English, French, or Latin; nor to sing psalms in this tune or that; nor after this or that version or translation. RICHARD BAXTER
- Hath it not the show of error to say that no man may use any set prayer, seeing there be many set prayers, and psalms, and blessings in the Holy Scripture, which were used in the same form? HENRY SMITH
- Those who will never enter the water but with flags or bladders under them will scarce ever learn to swim and it cannot be denied but that the constant and unvaried use of set forms of prayer may become a great occasion of quenching the Spirit, and hindering all progress or growth in gifts or graces. JOHN OWEN
- Overvalue not therefore the manner of your own worship, and overvilify not other men's of a different mode. RICHARD BAXTER

### **Joint prayers?**

- There is a wonderful prevalency in the joint prayers of His people. When Peter was in prison, the church met and prayed him out of his enemies' hands. A prince will grant a petition subscribed by the hands of a whole city, which, may be, he would not at the request of a private subject, and yet love him well too. There is an especial promise to public prayer: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." WILLIAM GURNALL

### **Delayed answers to prayer?**

- You must distinguish between delays and denials. THOMAS BROOKS
- A saint is to put forth his faith in prayer, and afterwards follow his prayer with faith. VAVASOR POWELL
- He hath engaged to answer the prayers of His people, and "fulfill the desires of those that fear Him." But it proves a long voyage sometimes before the praying saint hath the return of his adventure. There comes oft a long and sharp winter between the sowing-time of prayer, and the reaping. He hears us indeed as soon as we pray, but we oh do not hear of Him so soon. Prayers are not long in their journey to heaven, but long a coming thence in a full answer. WILLIAM GURNALL
- Objection: Where is omnipotence so long when I cry with a dry throat and pained breast, and am not heard?
- Answer: Omnipotence is in God, and not elsewhere. Be sure not always at a call to claw your scabbed back. Neither is it omnipotence's part to flatter you, or, as a pick-thank servant ready waiting on, to say "aye" and "nay" to your

“yeas” and “nays.” In a word, omnipotence is at hand to save you when God will, not to humor your impatience as you will. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

- Set no time to the Lord the creator of time, for His time is always best. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD
- Yea, but we have waited a long time. Well, but yet know that you are at the right door. JEREMIAH BURROUGHS
- (Referring to the Savior’s delay in responding to the request of the Syrophenician woman) It is said that “He answered not a word,” but it is not said, He heard not a word. These two differ much. Christ often heareth when He does not answer—His not answering is an answer. . . . SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

### PRAYER AS A MEANS OF GRACE. [SEPTEMBER 18, 1859]

#### I. *What is prayer?*

It is not simply petition, but converse with God, including, therefore, 1. The expression of our feelings in view of his greatness and glory, *i.e.*, adoration. 2. The expression of our feelings in view of his goodness, *i.e.*, thanksgiving. 3. The expression of our feelings in view of our sins and sinfulness, *i.e.*, confession. 4. The expression of our feelings in view of our wants, *i.e.*, supplication. Of course this verse with God may be,

1st. Solemn and formal, in the use of articulate words and on set occasions, in the closet, family, or sanctuary.

2d. Occasional and ejaculatory, and thus constant, as the bubbling of a spring of living water.

3d. Or in the unuttered aspirations and longings of the soul after God, like the constant ascent of the flame towards heaven.

#### II. *Prayer, or this converse with God, is means of grace.*

1. It is not merely a means of spiritual improvement, nor a means of securing divine blessings, but one of the appointed means of supernatural, divine communications to the soul from God.

2. This, therefore, is not due to a law of nature, according to which we are assimilated to those with whom we converse, but to the fact that in prayer God communicates himself, reveals his glory and his love to the soul.

3. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of prayer, in the sense, (a.) That he reveals those objects which call forth spiritual affections, *i.e.*, the glory of God, his love, the glory and love of Christ, the inexhaustible riches of the divine promises, our own sinfulness and necessities. (b.) That he not only presents these objects, but also awakens the appropriate feelings. (c.) That he leads us to clothe those feelings, those adoring, penitential, grateful or craving feelings, in appropriate language, or in groanings which cannot be uttered. Thus he maketh intercession for us. Thus he is our *parakeltos* (advocate). Prayer thus inspired is not only always answered in some way, and that the best, but it is also a means of grace. It is the occasion and the channel of infusing new measures of divine life into the soul. It is not therefore prayer as the mere uttering of words, nor prayer as the uttering of natural desires of affection, as when one prays for his own life or the life of those dear to him; but it is prayer as the real intercourse of the soul with God, by the Holy Ghost, that is, the Holy Ghost revealing truth, exciting feeling, and giving appropriate utterance.

#### III. *Our duty in the premises is,*

1. To remember that this intercourse with God is optional. We can gain access to him only when he pleases to admit us.

2. That as it is the life of the soul, we should most earnestly desire and diligently seek it.

3. That we must seek it in his appointed way, that is, through Christ and the Spirit.

4. That we must seek it on the occasions on which he is wont to grant it, in the closet, the family, and the sanctuary.

5. That we must not wait for it, so as to pray only when we feel the spirit of prayer. We must go to his courts, knock at his door, bow before the oracle, and expect him in the use of his appointed means.

### PRAYER. [JANUARY 27, 1856]

#### I. *General idea.*

1. Prayer is converse with and to God. It is not mercy petition, nor confession, nor thanksgiving, nor adoration, but all the intercourse of the soul by address to God. It is distinguished, by being address, from contemplation and meditation. This address be, (1.) Oral or mental. (2.) Occasional or constant. (3.) Formal, in the good sense of the word, and ejaculatory.

2. It is therefore a form of spiritual activity, as essential to spiritual life as the pulsation of the heart is to natural life. (1.) Because it is the evidence and exercise of life. (2.) Because it is necessary to its continuance. A prayerless Christian and a pulseless man are alike impossible. The pulse is the great criterion or index of the health of the body; so prayer is of the health of the soul.

#### II. *The attributes of acceptable prayer.*

They are such as flow from the state of mind produced by the Spirit. For the Spirit is the author of all genuine prayer, as it is by the Spirit that we have access unto God. Those feelings and graces which the Spirit calls into exercise, and which find their expression in prayer, are, 1. Those of admiration and reverence, giving rise to praise and adoration. 2. Those of penitence, giving rise to confession. 3. Those of faith, (1.) In God as the hearer of prayer. (2.) In Christ as our mediator and intercessor. (3.) In God’s ability and willingness to answer. (4.) In his actual promise to answer our prayer. 4. Those of gratitude, giving rise to thanksgiving. 5. Those of longing desire after spiritual blessings, and for other things needful for ourselves and others. 6. Those of patience and submission, manifested in perseverance and humble, persistent solicitation.

#### III. *The efficacy of prayer. prayer’, effectiveness of*

1. As it regards ourselves. It calls into exercise and strengthens all the graces of the Spirit. 2. It is an appointed means to an end, and has the same relation in the moral government of God that other second causes have to their

effects. It is an antecedent *sine qua non*. The objection that God has determined either to give or not give those blessings for which we pray, and that his purpose cannot be changed by our prayers, has no more force than in any other case where means are connected with an end. The objection that it is derogatory to God to be pleased with our praises and thanks has no force, if it is right to praise and thank him. God is pleased with what is right. The objection confounds God with man. Because it is unseemly to praise a creature, it is assumed to be unseemly to adore God.

IV. *The importance of cultivating the gift and habit of prayer.* To improve in this gift, 1. It is necessary to cherish the right feelings, otherwise all prayer is offense. 2. To cultivate the mind for public prayer, an intellectual exercise. This is as much incumbent on us in prayer as in preaching, especially as others join with us. We lead them; they say what we say. We should not, therefore, make them say what is revolting or unsuitable. 3. The careful, devout reading of the Scriptures, and storing the mind with Scriptural expressions, is necessary. These are the forms in which the Holy Ghost has given utterance to the thoughts and feelings which we desire to express. 4. Premeditation is as necessary here as in preaching. The design is, (1.) To collect and arrange our (2.) To call into exercise the proper feelings. (3.) To adapt our prayer to the occasion. The want of this adaptation is a serious evil. 5. Devotional composition is another means much practiced by many devout men, who have attained excellence in this part of social and public service.

This is a very important object, both as regards our own improvement and the edification and honor of the Church.

### **THE PRAYER OF FAITH. [APRIL 9, 1854]**

The passages relating to this subject are Mark 11:23; Matt. 6:7; John 14:13, 14; 15:7; 16:23; James 1:5, 6.

Such passages may be divided into three classes. 1. Those relating to the faith of miracles, and to those only who have the gift of miracles 2. Those which relate to the officers of the church in the discharge of their duties. 3. Those which relate to believers generally.

I. *A false doctrine has been deduced from these passages, i.e., that every specific request made with the assurance of its being granted, shall be granted. This cannot be true.*

1. Because it would be to submit the divine government to the erring wisdom of men.
2. Because it would lead to undesirable or disastrous consequences. Men might pray for things which would be their own ruin and the ruin of others.
3. It is contrary to all experience.
4. It is contrary to the desire of every pious heart, as every Christian would rather that God's will than his own should be done.

5. The doctrine rests on a false principle of interpretation of the divine promises. The principles which should determine the interpretation of such promises are, (1.) The analogy of Scripture, of other promises, (a.) As to parents in regard to their children. (b.) To the Jews. (c.) To the Church. (2.) The nature of the case, or the nature of the thing promised. (3.) The actual dispensations of God. We find that he does not answer always. All these prove that these promises cannot be understood absolutely. Those that are general declare a general principle of God's administration; as "The hand of the diligent maketh rich"; "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"; the seed of the righteous shall not beg their breed, etc. These do not apply to every case, but assert the general course of providence. And this is enough for encouragement and direction.

Again, all promises of this kind are conditional. The promise of grace to the children of the pious is conditioned on the fidelity of the latter, etc. These promises are conditioned, of course, on the assumption, (1.) That the thing asked for is right. (2.) That it would be for the glory of God, and the good of those who make the request. All true prayer is the fruit of the Spirit, and he can ask for those things only which are according to the mind of God.

II. *The true doctrine concerning the prayer of faith is, that the only kind of prayer to which the promise of any favorable answer is given, is such as is offered in faith. This faith includes,*

1. Belief that God is.
2. That he is the hearer of prayer; that prayer is not superstitious, fanatical, or inefficacious, but a divine appointment, a means connected with the attainment of the end desired.
3. Faith in Christ, or praying in his name. This includes, (a.) Trust in Christ as the medium of access to God, and (b.) Reliance on his merit and intercession, as the ground on which we hope to be heard.
4. Faith that we shall receive what we ask, provided it be for the best. It implies that filial confidence manifested by a child in coming to a father in whose ability, affection and wisdom he has full confidence. Every such child knows that his request will be granted provided it meets with the approbation of his father.

Faith stands opposed to distrust; distrust of God's power, of his love, of the sufficiency of Christ, or of his actually interceding for us; distrust of God's disposition to grant what we ask, even though it would be for the best. This is illustrated often by the disposition of children who lack confidence in their parents.

The relation of prayer, therefore, to the end is not, (1.) that of an efficacious, nor (2.) of a meritorious, nor (3.) of an instrumental, nor (4.) of an occasional cause; but (5.) of a condition antecedent, *e.g.*, the case of Hannah, (1 Sam. 1:10, etc.), or of the blind and deaf in the time of Christ.

III. *The importance of this doctrine concerning the prayer of faith.*

1. As a preservative against the false presumptuous spirit before referred to.
2. As a ground of consolation and assurance. That we have access to the ear of our heavenly Father, who has promised to hear all our prayers when they are according to his will, is the greatest possible ground of comfort.
3. It should lead us to cultivate faith, as an element of Christian life, and as the source of our power with God.

## INTERCESSORY PRAYER. [NOVEMBER 26, 1865]

I. *To intercede, in the Scriptures, is to approach a person for another.* In this sense Christ intercedes for his people, and we intercede for each other. Our intercession is simply approaching God in prayer in behalf of others.

1. This is a commanded duty. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." (1 Tim. 2:1.) James says, "Pray one for another." Our Lord commands us to pray for our enemies, to bless those who curse us.

2. It is often exemplified in the Scriptures. Abraham intercedes for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses often for the people, Elijah for the Israelites of his day, and Daniel and Nehemiah for those of their time.

3. Such prayers being authorized and commanded, are peculiarly effectual, as in the cases above mentioned. In Jeremiah 15:1, God says, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people." Paul expected the prayers of believers to be heard on his behalf. James says of intercessory prayer, that the prayer of faith avails much, and illustrates its efficacy by a reference to the case of Elijah.

II. *It is the exercise of a priestly function.*

1. Such is the union of believers with Christ that they share his Offices.

2. Hence they are prophets. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of prophecy; that is, those in whom the Spirit dwells become prophets or spokesmen. Hence they are called Christ's witnesses, and those who hear them hear Christ. The Church is Christ's messenger to teach all nations, to act the part of prophets to them. As Christ executes the office of a prophet by revealing to us the will of God, so we execute that office by making known that revelation in his name and by his authority, to our fellowmen.

3. They are kings. They share his authority. (a.) To them are committed the keys of the kingdom of heaven. They are invested with authority from him to rule in the Church. (b.) They are to rule over all the earth. "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Dan. 7:27.) The saints shall judge the world. (c.) Hereafter they are to sit with Christ on his throne.

4. They are priests. A priest is one authorized to approach God for others. This is by the Romanists to the clergy, or to those who in heaven (angels and the canonized) have liberty of access. The priesthood of believers consists, 1st. In their being permitted to draw near to God. 2d. In their offering to him prayers and praises. 3d. In interceding for others. This is especially a priestly function. The High Priest interceded for the Jews. Christ intercedes for his people. We intercede for one another. Hence intercessory prayer is (a.) Commanded. (b.) Often exemplified. (c.) Available or efficacious. This then is a great duty, a great privilege, and a great source of consolation; one too often neglected and undervalued.

## PRAYER FOR COLLEGES. [FEBRUARY 26, 1857]

I. *The observance of a day of this kind has the sanction of the word of God.* Numerous examples of the people meeting for prayer are recorded, as among the exiles in Babylon, on their return to the holy city, among the apostles. Numerous exhortations and commands to observe such meetings are found in the Law and in the Prophets. What the word of God sanctions, our nature dictates. When a common necessity presses, or a common desire impels, men will unite; parents for children, children for parents; the family, the college, the Church, the whole body of the faithful. The law of our social nature demands communion in religion as in other things. The sanction of God's dispensations, as well as of his word and of our nature, shows the value of such seasons of special prayer.

II. *But these days may be abused.* If they do not do good, they do harm. We know how it is when we draw near to God only with our lips; and we know, I trust, what it is when we are really admitted to his presence. When we behold his glory, are assured of his love, and receive the communications of his Spirit, then our strength is renewed, the intellect is enlightened, the heart enlarged; faith and every grace enthroned, and a holy peace and elevation above the world fill the mind. These are the subjective effects; but they never come alone. If God revives his people, it is that he may communicate life through, them to others. It is of vast importance, therefore, to ourselves and others, that we should really draw near to God in an effectual manner.

III. *How is this to be done? What are the requisites?*

1. *Humility.* We cannot be filled with God, unless emptied of ourselves. We must come with the conviction of sin and unworthiness, with the conviction also of our helplessness, our complete and absolute dependence on God; and, still further, with the conviction that it would be perfectly just in him to refuse us access to himself or to grant our requests.

2. *Faith.* This includes a great deal.

1st. Faith in the efficacy of prayer. The reasons why men doubt it are various. But we have proof of its efficacy from Scripture, from the constitution of our nature, and from experience. 2d. Faith in God as reconciled and willing to hear prayer. 3d. Faith in his promise to give what we ask in accordance with his will, that is, what is right, is for his glory and our good. 4th. Faith in Christ as the Son of God, as High Priest, as having passed into heaven, and as effectually interceding for us.

3. *Desire for the blessings sought.* This includes, 1st. A sense of their importance. 2d. A longing for them which leads to importunity and constancy, which takes no denial.

In the present case these blessings are the conversion of our youth, and their preparation for usefulness. On this depends under God, (a.) Their salvation as individuals. (b.) The interests of the institutions with which they are connected. (c.) The interests of the Church. (d.) The interests of the world; the accomplishment, in short, of the work of redemption.

4. The purpose to live in accordance with our prayers; that is, to live as if we felt the importance of the blessings sought, so that we shall continue to pray for them, and also to labor for them.