

PRAYER

Some Gospel Truths, Catechistically Laid Down, Explained & Vindicated

by John Heydon, 1647

Prayer: Question - What is prayer and the benefit thereof? Does it inform God; does it do good unto him, or prevail with, or change his mind? Answer - Prayer is the breath of God, or the breathings forth of his Spirit, by which God informs us, {we do not inform God,} by which he persuades us, prevails with and changes our minds; as we do not persuade God, prevail with God, nor change the mind of God. {Js.1:17, Mal.3:6} It is God that persuaded Japheth by his Spirit, to live in the tents of Shem, to believe in the Messiah that was to come, and to rest upon that Salvation that was to be accomplished by him in the fullness of time. {Gen.9:27} And it is that same Spirit that enables us that now live by the Faith of God's power, as well as those that have lived or shall live hereafter by Christ, to cry Abba Father. {Rom.8:17, 26-27, Gal.4:6} From hence I conclude most certainly, that the spirit of prayer is given to help, succor, and bear us up in our infirmities, and not to assist, support and bear up God, for he hath no infirmities, needs no prayers, tears, or any of the means of grace offered us in endless mercies; but on the contrary, we stand in need of all Grace, as prayer, preaching, and reading the holy Scriptures; and God in and by prayer, &c., seeks us, persuades us, finds us, gathers, heals, comforts, instructs, enlarges, and adds to us; adorns, beautifies, enriches, allures, attracts and draws us up unto Himself that are poor, lost, dazed and castaway sinners in ourselves, both antagonistic and contrary to God, and from God, even from the womb; straggling sheep and fugitives from the right & only way - Christ; {Hos.2:14;} in the wilderness of sin, death, and hell, and in a high esteem of our own dunghill goodness and plague righteousness. {Is.64:6, Phil.3:7,8} Thus God by prayer discovers ourselves to ourselves, and others that join with us in prayer; he likewise manifests himself to us, imparting, communicating and revealing his secrets to us, and we being rapt with the discoveries, incomes, and constant enjoyments of God, do in prayer hold forth before the view of our faith and understanding, and of those that we pray with, and for, so clearly without blindfolding of Christ in his worth, excellencies and dignity; together with the absolute necessity of better prayers than we can pray, thoughts, words, and works that will commend us to God, which are only found in Christ, who is our Representative Person,

and prayed for us. When we thus pray in faith, it doth prevail much with those drooping spirits, and they are mightily strengthened in the Faith, in hearing the Lord Jesus Christ in all his benefits, thus held forth in prayer. The believer is satisfied in the work of redemption, wrought by Christ and held forth by prayer, as well as in preaching, and this is God's end in prayer; namely, the satisfying of our consciences, and confirming us in our faith, and in the true Grace of God, wherein we stand. {I Pet.5:12} God hath received satisfaction from Jesus Christ who hath saved us both freely, perfectly and permanently; and by the spirit of prayer according to the proportion of faith, the sick are healed in their consciences, to their comfortable knowledge, and so prayer prevails much with men and saves men; namely, it brings home that Salvation to the heart, which was wrought by Christ. {Jn.5:15,16} So Elijah knew that there should be rain, for the Lord had told him before that he would send it, {I Kg.18:1,} but he prayed to affect the people; and so Hezekiah spread the letter of railing Rabshakeh, not to affect God, but himself and the hearts of the people; {Is.37:14,15;} and it is certain that God did prevail mightily against Jacob's sense and reason that caused him to stagger through hesitancy or too much astonishment, when he had well warned him by the spirit of prayer, then as he went to meet Esau with undaunted resolution, though he were lame, and not able to go against his powerful adversary, then as God strengthened his faith with cheerfulness and good success, as he went on in the great and weighty business; and so indeed the end of prayer is to increase ours, not God's faith, he being Faithfulness itself. Objection: But what say you of such texts of Scripture that call prayer sacrifice, incense, and odors? {Heb.13:15, Rev.5:8, 8:3, Acts 10:4} Answer: These Scriptures are all to be understood evangelically, thus by him let us offer the sacrifice to God continually; that is, let us always believe that Christ our Surety hath once for all offered one sacrifice that fully did satisfy God, and that forever. {Eph.5:2} Let us be content with that and rest quiet, and be satisfied therewith, and always be speaking thereof, for God is well pleased when we delight in, and are well pleased in Christ our sacrifice, which he offered in his bloody death and passion. May it please the Lord to set this always before our faith, that we may speak it out in all our prayers, believing that all his interests are ours, and being brought to the realization that he stands for us perpetually. {Lk.22:32, Jn.17:20, I Cor.3:20-23} Christ being that Eternal Surety and Covenant Representative Person in our stead for us, and to us; the new Adam, so that by Him, in Him, and through Him in Scripture language, is to stand in all that Christ accomplished, and in faith to apply, possess and enjoy Christ in all, and at all times, completely as he hath made us and presented us to God his Father. {Col.2:10, Heb.10:14, I Jn.4:17} For those texts, {Rev.5:8 & 8:3,} are both one in signification, and it is clear, that the ministers of the Gospel, their chiefest employment is to exalt Jesus Christ, by holding forth to the Church that one and only soul saving and soul satisfying sacrifice of Christ;

{Eph.5:2, Heb.9:26;} and to appropriate that to the Church by telling her that her warfare is at an end; sin, death, hell and the curse are removed, and righteousness is come in their stead; {Is.40:2;} that a Son is born and given; {Is.9:6;} that is, all Christ, whatever he did or suffered, and that all the holy prayers that he prayed, the pure thoughts that he thought, the gracious words that he uttered and the righteous works that he wrought, are truly and in very deed ours evangelically by Grace. God hath given Christ to his Church, and all his excellencies, &c., and hence Christ's prayer in those texts are to be understood. Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; {I Cor.1:30,31;} and those sacrifices, odors and incense of old did but type out Christ to the Church as he was to come, and in this respect it may be truly said, that all their prayers were but shadowish prayers, &., holding forth the perfect prayers that Christ should offer on their behalf; and we are not to conceive that ministers under the Gospel are to offer incense or odors, but they are to preach Christ clearly to the Congregations and to present before the view of their understandings, the perfect and effectual prayers that Jesus Christ prayed in the days of his flesh for them; he prays no more now, but rules all in heaven and in earth, and tis his stock of prayers for the saints that are gone up into heaven for them. And thus Cornelius prayed and fasted in Christ that was to come, in his false apprehensions, for Christ was come in the flesh, and had indeed fasted and prayed on his behalf, though he knew it not, and therefore Peter must be sent for to undeceive Cornelius in this point and to unriddle this mystery to him, and to preach Christ and his prayers, alms, deeds and fastings on his behalf that were in heaven before God, and pleaded effectively for Cornelius, though he were ignorant of this glorious Truth, that Christ already come was his, and that all his prayers and alms that were had in remembrance in the sight of God were all mystically, passively and evangelically his and were come up to God for him, though he were not aware of it; {Acts 10:31, 43;} and thus are we not to conceive that it is our imperfect, weak, drowsy and spiritually drunken prayers, &c., that ascend to the throne of God; but Christ's {and those offered in His Name alone,} are in prevailing approbation with Him to eternity, and it is confessed by all the faithful that Christ, as Surety, and the only Mediator between God and man is a spiritual and eternal Priest, and that his kingdom is spiritually universal and eternal, and all his actions are of eternal force, virtue and efficacy to the Church. This is to pray in faith, meekness, humility, temperance, sobriety, love, hope, sincerity, uprightness of heart, fervency of spirit and effectually, when we believe that Christ's effectual prayer is offered on our behalf; yea, and that the perfection of faith that was in Christ is ours, as well as his wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, life, death, resurrection, ascension and his mediation. Is not all Christ's thine? When God hath given him to thee, then doubtless all that perfection that dwelt in Him becomes the believers by virtue of Divine

Imputation, by which the believer is sanctified in Him; so Paul is to be understood when he saith that Christ gave himself for me, Christ lives in me, and Christ in you, the hope of glory, or that amongst you; {Gal.2:20, Col.1:27;} by faith the Spirit presenting Christ in all that he did or suffered for thee, and before thy eyes, and this is to live by the Faith of the Son of God, by the Faith of God's power, by the Faith of the Spirit of God, or the Faith of Jesus the Righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus unto all, and upon all, and in all them that believe. The wedding garment is the covering of God, the armor of God, the Righteousness of God, that the Lord God in a figure of coats of skins or fur brought to Adam, {Gen.3:21,} which being put on, {Rom.13:14,} by the Spirit of God, that can only make application of Christ to the soul, the Christian standing in the true Grace of God, {I Pet.5:12,} in Christ invincibly, {Mt.16:18, 7:25,} being built on the rock of eternity, {I Pet.2:6;} but also to understand any of this legally; {thus of our own heart, faith or magnanimity,} is the greatest dishonor to Christ that may be, yet most do so, for our own heart will fail us, and our faith droop, {being weak and feeble;} yea our magnanimity will prove mere spinelessness and gross cowardliness, and will not our fig leaf covering of man's righteousness make us as Aaron did the nation of the Jews, {Ex.32:25,} naked, wretched and most miserable, our castles of air, strongholds, though huge mountains in our own blinded estimations, and others deluded as well, or as bad as ourselves will topple down before Christ, {Dan.2:44,45, II Cor.10:4,5,} like a tower of cards that little children are wont to make in winter nights, which by the least gale of wind, or breath of God's wrath in a dismal day or time; or rather as the walls of Jericho by the sounding of the rams horns that fell down before the children of Israel upon their alarm, {Jos.6:20, I Sam.5:4;} just so when the true light appears; namely, Christ that Day Star {II Pet.1:19,} and Sun of Righteousness, {Mal.4:2,} to be ours, then and not before shall we see our false humility to be true pride, our sincerity - hypocrisy, our wisdom - folly, light - darkness, knowledge - ignorance, strength - weakness, and cry out that our candle is snuffed out, {Jer.25:10,} our heaven is hell, our patience is so threadbare that it may most fitly be called impatience, our righteousness is a very plague, our obedience - rebellion, and there is no health, nor help in any of these, and where Paul saith, "through Christ" he could do all things, {Phil.4:13,} tis to be understood, that Paul by faith believed that Christ had done all things for him, and thus Christ strengthens all his by his Spirit, and so all believers do the will of God, work well and are newborn, when they believe that his birth, {the "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph.4:24,} is theirs, and this is renewed every day to their faith, as they disclaim their old and first birth daily, by faith being crucified with Christ, work well, and so patience hath her perfect work, {Js.1:4, I Jn.4:17,} that they may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing, {possessing all in Him;} so the true Christian that eagle-

eyes Christ in all his perfections, wants or lacks anything in Christ, for there in God's esteem he stands a perfect man in Christ, and is daily strengthened in this faith, in and by the ways of grace, amidst all his distempers, manifold imperfections and countless defects; and so I understand that the Christian's love is made perfect in a passive, mystical and evangelical way, and thus being ashamed of his own cold, little, and imperfect love; dares not for his life to appear in God's presence in his own love, knowing that God hates that halt, blind, and lame love that is in man, but in the love of Christ is his delight; and so faith ventures boldly at the judgment seat; because as Christ is, so are we in Him. All things flourish in Christ's kingdom, as there is nothing but blessed felicity & true tranquility at the right hand of God; that is, in Christ, there are pleasures for evermore; and it arises from this; namely, that Christians do frequently set before their eyes God's justice, and seeing it fully satisfied, are bold to appeal unto God for justice, and so plead it out in the court of their own consciences, and are not afraid, {slavishly,} knowing that they stand in a state of perfection in Christ, so that they have no torment, seeing they now believe that Christ was once tormented for them, so fear and torment hath no room or place in Christianity, in the true sense aforesaid. Truly a believer neither fears the devil, sin, law, curse, death, hell, plagues, famines, wars, nor God as a wrathful Judge, but loves and fears God in spirit and truth, and so worships God in Christ, and believes that Christ's pure and perfect worship unto his Father is reckoned to his account, and thus enabled to lie down in peace, love, and in that spiritual safety that Christ, his walls, bulwarks and tower afford him, {Ps.48:12,13, Is.32:2,3; 26:1,} singing songs of Zion, not to us, but to Christ, ascribing all glory to his name alone. {Col.3:16, Col.1:9, Ps.47:7} This is to sing in spirit and in understanding, with grace in our hearts, when we look to Christ, of whom it is most truly and properly to be understood. So Christians give thanks to God by Christ, {Heb.13:15;} namely, when we believe Christ was perfectly thankful for us, and when we are affected with it by meditation and contemplation thereof, and break out in words and deeds demonstrably in the sight and hearing of men. This properly is the believers thankfulness before God. I would gladly know of any man in the world, whether there be not a vast difference between the creature and the christian, the flesh and the spirit, the old {crucified} man and the new man in Christ Jesus. Truly so much difference there is between their faith and facts, and if this difference be not kept pure and apart, all religion will be corrupted quickly, as we see by woeful experience in Popery to this day; and what is it to be made perfect in every good work, but to look well to this text, {Heb.13:21;} "to do his will," doing or working in you {by faith} that which is well pleasing {Christ} "in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen;" where note, that when he speaks of Christ, with what affection he speaks, "to whom be glory;" that is, let this glory be ascribed to Christ alone, &c., that none can come to God in their own doings, but through

Christ, and what is that but to truly disclaim their own imperfect works, done in their own persons, and to embrace the perfect works wrought by Christ for them, he being their Surety, paying all that was owing to God the Great Creditor; but Christ having paid the debt that we owed, and now would have the fully discharged principle to make use of his Name when coming to God; namely, to believe constantly that God is just, and will not charge that on us, which Christ hath fully discharged, and so day and night we should say Amen to it, say that it is most true, and beyond all peradventure or question. Therefore consider what prayer is. Prayer is an imploring of God for help, and a direct fruit of the Spirit; the parts thereof consisting of confession, petition, intercession and thanksgiving; the properties thereof, being breathed forth faithfully, freely, fervently, feelingly, fruitfully and effectually. Its characteristics are humility, sincerity and heavenly mindedness; and its motive is that it is God's way for obtaining good and removing evil. Its means to further it are hearing the word, reading, conference and serious consideration; and its end is always God's glory, and the believers corroboration in the Faith. Prayer doth through God's goodness remove evil and obtain good through Jesus Christ.