



The Puritans on the Help of the Holy Spirit in Prayer

(The Spirit) writes our petitions in the heart, we offer them; he indites a good matter, we express it. That prayer which we are to believe will be accepted, is the work of the Holy Ghost; it is his voice, motion, operation, and so his prayer. Therefore, when we pray he is said to pray, and our groans are called his.

David Clarkson

"Prayer, in the whole compass and extent of it, as comprising meditation, supplication, praise, and thanksgiving, is one of the most signal duties of religion ... It is not only an important duty in religion, but ... without it there neither is nor can be the exercise of any religion in the world."¹ So wrote John Owen (1616-1683), who, like his Puritan brethren, saw that prayer is essential to the Christian life. Prayer must also be true, that is, acceptable to God and according to His will; for this, the believer needs the help of the Spirit. The Puritans were keen on showing that Spirit-less prayer is as good as "a little cold prattle and spiritless talk," as Thomas Manton (1620-1677) wrote.² William Fenner (1600-1640) concurred and described it as no better than "the lowing of oxen, or the grunting of hogs."³ John Bunyan (1628-1688) said that prayer without the assistance of the Holy Spirit could not possibly be "according to the will of God."⁴ On the other hand, the Puritans excelled in declaring the truth that those who have the indwelling Spirit will truly pray, as Matthew Henry (1662-1714) pointed out: "You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living saint without prayer."⁵ "When the Spirit gets into the heart then there is prayer indeed, and not till then," said Bunyan.⁶

The indwelling Spirit is the author of prayer in the soul of the believer. There simply cannot be true prayer – heaven-bound prayer – without the Spirit's help. And all true Christians, being indwelt by the Spirit, have the gift of true prayer and will seek to grow in the exercise of that gift. The Puritans based most of their writing upon the Spirit's work in prayer upon the classic text, Romans 8:26-27.

Romans 8:26 declares that the Spirit "*helpeth our infirmities.*" Thus, the Spirit's work of intercession is characterized as giving assistance and carrying the weight, both with and in one's stead, as the word in the original suggests. Robert Traill (1642-1716) defined the word "helpeth" (Greek, *sunantilambanomaî*) as the Spirit's helping us "*over-against us, as a powerful assistant to the weak, in carrying a heavy burden.*"⁷ Manton showed the Spirit's help is necessary, first, due to the economy of the Trinity, for in prayer we come to the Father through Christ our Mediator with the Spirit as our guide; second, due to the spirituality of all Christian duties, for "*all the children of God are led by the Spirit of God, Rom. 8:14; as in their whole conversation, so especially in this act of prayer*"; and third, due to our spiritual impotency, for, as Manton said, "*We cannot speak of God without the Spirit, much less to God.*"⁸

James Ussher (1581-1656) listed the many infirmities that comprise our need for the Spirit's help in prayer:

"Roving imaginations, inordinate affections, dullness of spirit, weakness of faith, coldness in feeling, faintness in asking, weariness in waiting, too much passion in our own matters, and too little compassion in other men's miseries."⁹

Manton added "*afflictions, and the perturbations occasioned thereby, as fretting or fainting; or more generally any sinful infirmities, as ignorance, distrust, etc.*"¹⁰

Although believers are regenerate, they still must deal with indwelling sin, which renders them to be of *“little strength,”* as Thomas Boston (1676-1732) said, and *“much bowed down with pressure.”*¹¹ Owen wrote of the blinding effect of sin: *“Nature is so corrupted as not to understand its own depravation ... Nature is blind, and cannot see them; it is proud, and will not own them; stupid, and is senseless of them.”* Although this blindness renders man hopeless, the Spirit’s work is exactly the remedy we need. Owen expressed this well: *“It is the work of the Spirit of God alone to give us a due conviction of, a spiritual insight into, and a sense of the concernment of, these things.”* He concluded, *“Without a sense of these things, I must profess I understand not how any man can pray.”*¹²

The apostle Paul shows in Romans 8:26 that these infirmities leave us in need of the Spirit’s help in two particular aspects of prayer. The first is the matter or content of prayer or, as Paul says, *“we know not what we should pray for.”* The second, which will be considered next month, is the manner of prayer, or how we ought to pray: *“We know not what we should pray for as we ought.”*

The Spirit’s Help in the Matter or Content of Our Prayers

“We know not what we should pray for” (Rom. 8:26). This ignorance extends to the words we should use, the petitions we should present, the petitions we should refrain from presenting – indeed, the thoughts we should think. Thus we need help, and divine help at that. The traditions of men and the wisdom of this world will never inform us sufficiently. We need the Spirit to give us the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:14-16).

Trails wrote, *“The voice of the Spirit is the best thing in our prayer; it is that God hears and regards.”*¹³

David Clarkson (1622-1686) described the Spirit’s help as simply this: *“to pray in us, i.e., to make our prayers.”* He continued, *“He, as it were, writes our petitions in the heart, we offer them; he indites (composes) a good matter, we express it. That prayer which we are to believe will be accepted, is the work of the Holy Ghost; it is his voice, motion, operation, and so his prayer. Therefore, when we pray he is said to pray, and our groans are called his.”*¹⁴

Our human condition renders us, Boston said, *“apt, instead of bread, to ask a stone; instead of a fish, a scorpion; to pray for what would do us ill, and against what is for our good.”*¹⁵ He elaborated that

- 1) we might pray against God’s mercy;
- 2) we might pray for that which could hurt us;
- 3) we might pray for that which would feed our sinful desires;
- 4) we might not pray for what we truly need;
- 5) we might forget what we should pray for; and simply,
- 6) we might not pray according to God’s will.

Boston concluded, *“There is so much remains of corruption in the best of us, that it is hard even in our prayers to keep within the compass of what is agreeable to his will.”*¹⁶ And in the same vein, he said, *“We are so weak, that in God’s dispensations many times we take our friends for our foes, and call what is for our good, evil, as Jacob did when he said, ‘All these things are against me.’”*¹⁷ Therefore we need the Holy Spirit to inform our minds so that we will know what to pray for.

Informing Our Prayers with the Knowledge of God and Christ

Bunyan spoke of our ignorance of the *“Object to whom we pray,”* as well as the *“Medium by, or through whom we pray,”* and said, *“None of these things know we, but by the help of the Spirit.”*¹⁸ He referred, of course, to our ignorance of God the Father as the object of prayer, the One to whom we pray, and Christ as the medium of prayer, the One by whom or through whom we pray. The Spirit reveals both the Father and the Son to us, so that we pray to the true God.

Bunyan explained, *“Without the Spirit, man is so infirm, that he cannot with all other means whatsoever, be enabled to think one right saving thought of God, of Christ, or of his blessed things; and therefore he saith of the wicked, **God is not in all their thoughts**, Psalm 10:4.”*¹⁹

Only with a right view of the One with whom we converse in prayer will the heart be in the right frame for prayer. Owen wrote that the *“Holy Spirit gives the soul of a believer a **delight in God** as the **object of prayer**”* and explained, *“without it ordinarily the duty is not accepted with God, and is a barren, burdensome task unto them by whom it is performed.”*²⁰

Boston wrote that a right view of God gives the soul *“holy reverence”* as well as *“holy confidence”* in prayer.²¹ Regarding the Spirit’s work of instilling reverence in the heart, Boston said,

*“By this view he strikes us with holy dread and awe of the majesty of God, whereby is banished that lightness and vanity of heart, that makes such flaunting in the prayers of some.”*²²

Although reverence is essential, faith or confidence in prayer is also necessary, for *“without this there can be no acceptable prayer,”* said Boston, alluding to Hebrews 11:6 and James 1:6. And, as all else needful in prayer, the Spirit supplies this. The Spirit *“helps the soul to approach with confidence, and yet with reverence,”* said Clarkson, *“with filial fear, and yet with an emboldened faith; with zeal and importunity, and yet with humble submission; with lively hope, and yet with self denial.”*²³

Manton spoke of the Spirit helping us approach God in prayer with childlike reverence and confidence.²⁴ He asserted, *“Our familiarity with God must not mar our reverence, nor confidence and delight in him our humility.”*²⁵ The presence of this confidence in prayer is a proof of the Spirit’s help. It reflects His *“ability and willingness to help,”* said Boston, *“the Spirit exciting in us holy confidence in God as Father.”*²⁶ And as Manton reminded us, *“A great part of the life and comfort of prayer consisteth in coming to God as a reconciled father,”*²⁷ which is the Spirit’s work, as seen in passages like Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) said, *“(The crying as a son) comes from the Spirit. If we be sons, then we have the Spirit, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. So, if we can go to God with a sweet familiarity, Father, have mercy upon me, forgive me; ... this sweet boldness and familiarity, it comes from the spirit of liberty, and shews that we are sons, and not bastards.”*²⁸

There are many things that we need to be reminded of in prayer, but surely the most essential thing is the promises of God found in Scripture. Prayer is dependent upon the promises, for by them we are assured that our prayer will be accepted. The promises are so foundational to prayer that without them, *“the sinner, pressed with a sense of need, has nothing to support him, and therefore cannot pray in faith.”*²⁹ Owen stated that ignorance of the promises of God is one of the reasons why *“men are so barren in their supplications.”*³⁰ Thankfully, this is one of the chief ways in which the Spirit helps us in prayer.

The heart of all the promises is Christ our Mediator. If the Spirit did not give us a view of Christ, He would be, as Boston said, *“a hidden beauty to us.”*³¹ This help is to *“point us to the only way of acceptance of our prayers ... He teaches us to pray as we ought, and so to pray in the name of Jesus Christ, depending on his merit and intercession.”*³²

Informing Our Prayers with the Knowledge of Our True Needs

John Flavel (1628-1691) wrote that the Spirit within believers is *“teaching them what they should ask of God.”*³³ The Holy Spirit *“shows them their need, what their wants are; he stirs them up to prayer, he supplies them with arguments, puts words into their mouths,”* as Gill said.³⁴ The Spirit helps by *“opening the eyes of the mind to discern the wants and needs we are compassed with,”* wrote Boston.³⁵ He helps us remember matters to be prayed for but not merely to be mentioned in prayer, for the Spirit also *“impresses us with a sense of need,”* said Boston, so that we also *“pray feelingly, that the tongue does but express what the heart feels.”*³⁶ As a result, we become sincere in our prayers, importunate, and specific as to the requests, praises, and thanksgivings.³⁷

We who address a holy God must remember our state of sin and lowliness.

As Boston said, we easily “lose sight of our sinfulness,”³⁸ but the Spirit helps us by revealing our hearts to us. The Spirit works to “fill us with low thoughts of ourselves before him,” said Boston, which “makes us see ourselves unworthy of the mercies, that either we have got, or desire to have.” Such a view of ourselves “fits us for the receipt of mercies of free grace; and the want of it makes sinners to be in their prayers, as if they came to buy of God, and not to beg, and so to be sent empty away.”³⁹

The Spirit’s work to give us a right view of God, Christ, and ourselves is intertwined. Boston showed how a correct view of God and of oneself inevitably lead to sincere confession of sin, true thanksgiving for God’s mercies, and a high valuing of Christ.⁴⁰ We need humility to see the preciousness of Christ (Ps. 69:32), and “the higher the Mediator is (valued), the more fit one is to pray.”⁴¹ The right view of ourselves is always related to the right view of God, as Manton reminded us:

“Serious dealing with God in prayer is wrought in us by the Spirit, in whose light we see both God and ourselves, his majesty and our vileness, his purity and our sinfulness, his greatness and our nothingness.”⁴²

William Gurnall (1616-1679) wrote that the Spirit “excites the saint’s fear, filling it with such a sense of God’s greatness, his nothingness and baseness, as makes him with awful thoughts reverence the divine majesty he speaks unto, and deliver every petition with a holy trembling upon his spirit.”⁴³

The Spirit’s help in the manner of our praying

We must also be concerned with having the right frame of heart in prayer, so that, as Paul says, we may pray “as we ought” to pray. As Boston said, “We cannot put our prayers in right shape, even when we are right as to the matter of them ... We cannot put our petitions in form, in the style of the court of heaven.”⁴⁴ Among many examples of the ways that we fail to pray in the right manner, Boston mentioned the following:

- 1) We may pray with an unfit spirit for prayer, “being either entangled with worldly cares, or discomposed with unruly passions.”
- 2) We can be lifeless, formal, and cold in prayer. Boston added, “We are called to be fervent in spirit ... But even where the fire of grace is in the hearth, unless it be blown up by the influence of the spirit of God, the prayers will be mismanaged.”
- 3) We have wandering hearts. “Many a prayer is lost this way,” wrote Boston, “while the heart steals away after some other thing than what it should then be on.”
- 4) We may exercise the gift without the grace, that is, without giving due thought to the “exercise of praying graces, reverence, faith, love, humility, etc.”
- 5) We pray disproportionately, for “how ready are we to be more concerned for our own interest, than for the honour of God; more fervent for temporal than for spiritual mercies.” This lack of right proportion “makes the prayers like legs of the lame that are not equal, the affections being disproportioned to the matter.”
- 6) We may be prone to faint, that is, to cease praying if a prayer is not answered, for “long trials are apt to run us out of breath.”⁴⁵

Left to ourselves, these failings would describe the best part of our prayers. Carnal, cold, wandering, graceless, and self-centered prayers are too common among us. It is encouraging to know that although we will always labor under these infirmities, the Spirit is ever to be trusted to help us fight against them, both in giving us new godliness and in taking away the old ungodliness.

Pouring Godly Affections into the Heart

Before there are words or expressions, there has to be a sense of our obligation and need to pray, and the Spirit works this in us. Boston referred to this as the Spirit's work in exciting us to pray. He wrote that the Spirit *"impresses our spirit with a sense of a divine call to it, and so binds it on our consciences as duty to God ... He disposes our hearts for it, inclines us to the duty, that we willingly comply with it."*⁴⁶ Indeed, as Manton pointed out, the duty becomes a delight as He raises *"our hearts to a desire after and a delight in God ... and causeth the soul to follow hard after God."*⁴⁷

"The Spirit's work," said Manton, *"is to raise the heart to things eternal and heavenly, that our main business might be there."*⁴⁸

There may be plenty of words without the Spirit's help, but, as Manton wrote, *"these lively motions and strong desires (are) from the Spirit of God."*⁴⁹

Clarkson also spoke of the Spirit's work of giving us a heart for prayer: *"He prepares and disposes, incites and inclines the heart to make requests ... He puts the heart into a praying frame, and sometimes excites us so powerfully, as we cannot withhold from pouring out our souls before him."*⁵⁰

Owen wrote, *"It is he alone who worketh us unto that frame wherein we pray continually ... our hearts being kept ready and prepared for this duty on all occasions and opportunities, being in the meantime acted and steered under the conduct and influence of those graces which are to be exercised therein."*⁵¹

Among what Owen called *"animating principles of prayer,"* which are all given us by the Spirit, are faith, love, trust, delight, desire, and self-abasement.⁵² Clarkson wrote that while the Spirit stirs the heart to pray, He also gives the emotions that suit the matter to be prayed for: *"He stirs up affections in prayer suitable to the subject thereof, joy or sorrow, and love and delight, with earnest desires ... (He) fills the heart with affections."*⁵³ Gurnall wrote, *"As the strings under the musician's hand stir and speak harmoniously, so doth the saint's affections at the secret touch of the Spirit."*⁵⁴

The Puritans demonstrated that this help of the Spirit translates, in our experience, into *"praying aright."*⁵⁵ For the Spirit to intercede is for Him to create in us "right" prayers. Boston explained that "right" is used not in a legal, moral, or rhetorical sense but in an evangelical sense – prayers containing "gospel graces" that Boston called *"the soul and life of prayer."*⁵⁶ Right prayers always have their origin in the Spirit, though much imperfection enters them from us.

Boston said, *"The water comes pure from the fountain, the Spirit; but running through a muddy channel, such as every saint here is, it cannot be accepted in heaven, but as purified and sweetened by the intercession of Christ."*⁵⁷ *"All that is right in our prayers is the Spirit's work,"* said Boston, *"and all that is wrong in them from ourselves, either as to matter or manner."* He concluded, *"In the incense of our prayers there is smoke that goes up toward heaven, ashes that remain behind on earth; it is the fire from the altar that sends up smoke, it is the earthly nature of the incense that occasions the ashes."*⁵⁸

The Spirit stirs our hearts. He excites those *"graces in us which incline us to God; he raiseth our minds in the vision and sight of God,"* wrote Manton.⁵⁹ The Spirit *"stirreth up in us ardent groans in prayer, or worketh up our hearts to God with desires expressed by sighs and groans."*⁶⁰ Elsewhere Manton said, *"He quickeneth and enliveneth our desires in prayer."*⁶¹ The Spirit takes the knowledge of God and uses it to fill us with the love of God, confidence in Him as our Father, and the fear of the Lord. Owen wrote that the *"Holy Spirit gives the soul of a believer a delight in God as the object of prayer"* and explained, *"Without it ordinarily the duty is not accepted with God, and is a barren, burdensome task unto them by whom it is performed."*⁶²

Romans 8:26 says that the Spirit helps with *"groanings which cannot be uttered."* What are these groanings? Whose groanings are they? The common Puritan interpretation of Romans 8:26 attributed such groanings to the person praying by the help of the Holy Spirit, and not immediately

to the Holy Spirit⁶³ (compare Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6). Boston explained the groans as the natural expression of the believer's soul living under external and internal afflictions: "*Such is the imperfection of our state in this life, that if there is life in a soul, it must groan, because there is no escaping of pressures, from an evil world without, and an evil heart within.*"⁶⁴ Sin is the greatest cause of groaning in the Christian. Boston said, "*This is a light burden to the most part of mankind, but it is the heaviest burden to a child of God, and causes in him, through the Spirit, the heaviest groans. For it is of all things the most contrary and opposite to the new nature in him.*"⁶⁵ In such groaning we experience fellowship with the suffering Savior, as Boston observed: "*True Christians ... will be found to resound as an echo to a groaning Saviour.*"⁶⁶

Audible groans or even the silent groans of the soul may not seem impressive as a prayer. But Gurnall said, "*It is a voice well understood (in heaven), and more musical in God's ear than the most ravishing music can be to ours.*"⁶⁷ Just as a child cries out as an expression of his trust that his father will hear and care, so the Spirit causes these groanings in our soul, mixed with trust that our heavenly Father will hear and understand them as our cries for His help. Such groanings are, in essence, the living confession of the believer's faith in a prayer-hearing God. Clarkson said that the Spirit "*fills the heart with affections and motions, as manifest themselves by sighs and groans, and cannot otherwise be expressed ... so full of affectionate workings as it cannot find vent by words.*"⁶⁸ So we can agree with Traill, who said, "*There is more of the Spirit in a sensible groan, than in many formal words of prayer.*"⁶⁹

William Perkins (1558-1602) expressed the comfort we should have in such help:

*Men in extremities of danger confounded in themselves know not what in the world to say, or do. In his sickness, Hezekiah could not say anything, but chatter in his throat, and mourn like a dove, Isa. 38:14. Some lie under the sword of the enemy, others in a tempest are cast over shipboard into the sea. Now this must be their comfort, if they can lift up their heart unto God, if they can but sigh and groan for his presence and assistance, the Lord will hear the petitions and their hearts: for their inward sobs, groans, and sighs of repentant sinners, are loud and strong cries in the ears of God the Father.*⁷⁰

Removing Ungodly Attitudes from the Heart

The Spirit removes what is present in the heart that is not conducive to right praying. Thus Clarkson spoke of the Spirit's work in removing "*that backwardness, averseness, indisposedness, that is in us naturally unto this spiritual service.*"⁷¹ "He removes," said Clarkson, "*or helps the soul against distempers which are ready to seize on the soul in prayer, distractions, straitness of heart, indifferency, formality, lukewarmness, hypocrisy, weariness, pride, self-confidence.*"⁷² Flavel wrote, "*It is he that humbles the pride of their hearts, dissolves, and breaks the hardness of their hearts; out of deadness makes them lively; out of weakness makes them strong.*"⁷³

The Scriptures speak to the need of committing to prayer the things that would make us anxious (Phil. 4:6), but these are the very things that quench a trusting, prayerful spirit in our hearts. Gratefully, the Spirit comes to the aid of the troubled heart. Boston spoke of this help during prayer:

*"He frames the heart, that is out of frame for it; commands a heavenly calm in the soul, whereby it may be fitted for divine communications; saying to the heart tossed with temptations, troubles and risings of corruption, 'Peace and be still'; and he blows up the fire of grace into a flame, 2 Tim. 1:7."*⁷⁴

Thus, the Spirit helps by overcoming those "distempers of the soul" that might otherwise keep us from praying at all.

Another inward obstacle to prayer is wandering thoughts. We tend not to regard wandering thoughts as a serious sin. However, as Boston said, "*The Spirit convinces and humbles the soul under the sense of that sin, and so makes it more serious than before, from thence shewing the corruption of nature.*"⁷⁵ The Spirit also manages the heart in prayer by keeping it from wanderings, "*for the heart itself is apt to wander off from the serious purpose, and the powers of hell exert themselves to divert from it. But the supply of the Spirit in prayer keeps the heart fixed.*"⁷⁶ We must

ourselves fight against this tendency to let our thoughts wander, but the Spirit helps us in that fight: *"It will always cost a struggle to hedge in the heart in duty, and the help of the Spirit is necessary to maintain the struggle."*⁷⁷

Yet another failing in prayer is giving up too quickly. We do not only need to prepare our hearts to pray, but we also need to persevere in praying. The Spirit helps us do this too.

"He causes us to continue in prayer from time to time," wrote Boston, *"till we obtain a gracious answer; and so makes us pray perseveringly."* He continued, *"The Lord may keep his people long hanging on for an answer ere they get it. The promise may be big with the mercy prayed for, and yet it be not only many months but years ere it bring forth, as in the case of Abraham and David. This is a sore trial, and there would be no keeping from fainting if the Spirit did not help our infirmity. But he helps to hang on."*⁷⁸

We all know perseverance is necessary in prayer, for often good requests, such as the salvation of loved ones, may go years unanswered. Boston presented three graces that the Spirit works in us during the time a prayer goes unanswered:

- 1) *Satisfaction.* The Spirit satisfies us in His delay by accounting for it in a consistent way with *"God's honor and our good ... And so he keeps up in us kind thoughts of God's dispensations."*
- 2) *Strength.* The Spirit strengthens faith and hope, *"Hangers on at the throne of grace may get a long stand, but they will get their strength renewed, Psalm 27:13-14."* Boston explained that the Spirit does this *"by shining anew on the promise; adding other promises to it tending to the same scope; ... whereby the soul is refreshed in the time; and helping to observe the signs of the approaching day while yet the night continues."*
- 3) *Sensitivity.* The Spirit sensitizes our spirit to our continuing need, *"which, pinching us anew, obliges to renew our suit for relief until the time we get it."* We respond, as do our senses to other stimuli, to the Spirit's prodding, recognizing that prayer must continue although unanswered. As the eye senses light, so the Spirit helps our soul sense the need for prayer.⁷⁹

Without help from God, after a long time of prayer we would be tempted to seek help *"from another quarter,"* wrote Boston, and *"our sense of need would wear off, and we would drop our petition. But the Spirit perfects what he begins; Psalm 138:8, 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.'"*⁸⁰ Thus the Spirit helps by keeping us hopeful, trusting we do not plead in vain, keeping us sensing our need of that for which we pray so that we faint not in praying for it.

Therefore by imparting gracious affections to the heart and by overcoming our infirmities, the Holy Spirit helps us to pray *"as we ought."* In sum, it is His office as *"the Giver of life"* (John 6:63) to impart life to prayers that would otherwise be dead and barren. Boston wrote, *"A prayer without life is as incense without fire, which sendeth forth no perfume or sweet savour."*⁸¹ With His assistance, our prayers become fragrant and acceptable to the Father, prayers He will both hear and answer.

Conclusion: A Many-Sided Work

The help of the Spirit in prayer is all encompassing. Truly the Christian prays *"in the Spirit"* (Eph. 6:18), for when he prays he finds the Spirit's help on every side. Flavel wrote that the Holy Spirit helps us before prayer by working upon the desires and affections; He helps during prayer by providing the right requests, *"teaching them what they should ask of God,"* as well as by instilling the right manner of prayer, *"supplying them with suitable affections, and helping them to be sincere in all their desires to God";* and He helps after prayer, *"helping them to faith and patience, to believe and wait for the returns and answers of their prayer."*⁸² This many-sided work of the Spirit shows that true prayer is more than a matter of the words we might utter. True prayer is related to a whole way of life, for our prayer life is an extension of our life in Christ. It is not an isolated devotion we offer as a mere duty, but a breathing after God as we praise, thank, ask, and extol our

great God. So we need the Spirit to breathe upon every aspect of our lives if we are to pray with understanding and faith, to pray according to God's will, to pray fervently and effectually, to pray always and not faint.

Praying in the Spirit is both an absolute necessity and one of the great privileges of the children of God. Owen said of prayer, "If we are left unto ourselves, without the especial guidance of the Spirit of God, our aims will never be suited unto the will of God."⁸³ Without the help of the Spirit, our attempts to pray would make us, as Boston put it, "like dumb (deaf-mute) people making a roar."⁸⁴ On the other hand, what a glorious thing it is to draw help in prayer from the resources of the Spirit of God, for if our prayers are Spirit wrought, they shall be heaven bound!

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 - ² Thomas Manton, *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1873), 5:337.
 - ³ William Fenner, "The Sacrifice of the Faithful," in *The Works of W. Fenner* (London: George near Fleet-Bridge for E. Tyler, 1657), 267 (sermon 20).
 - ⁴ John Bunyan, "I Will Pray with the Spirit," in *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded and I Will Pray with the Spirit*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 243.
 - ⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 4:1152.
 - ⁶ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 257.
 - ⁷ Robert Traill, *The Works of the Late Reverend Robert Traill* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 1:72.
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 - ⁹ James Ussher, *A Body of Divinity: or the Sum and Substance of Christian Religion* (London: J.D., 1677), 335.
 - ¹⁰ Manton, *Complete Works*, 12:225.
 - ¹¹ Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston* (Stoke-on-Trent, England: Tentmaker Publications, 2002), 11:20.
 - ¹² Owen, *Works*, 4:279.
 - ¹³ Traill, *Works*, 1:73.
 - ¹⁴ David Clarkson, *The Works of David Clarkson* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 3:207.
 - ¹⁵ Boston, *Works*, 11:21.
 - ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 11:45.
 - ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11:44.
 - ¹⁸ Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*, 247.
 - ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 249.
 - ²⁰ Owen, *Works*, 4:291.
 - ²¹ Boston, *Works*, 11:62.
 - ²² *Ibid.*
 - ²³ Clarkson, *Works*, 3:209-210.
 - ²⁴ Manton, *Works*, 12:234.
 - ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12:234-35.
 - ²⁶ Boston, *Works*, 11:62.
 - ²⁷ Manton, *Works*, 12:234.
 - ²⁸ Richard Sibbes, *The Works of Richard Sibbes* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 4:233.
 - ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4:65.
 - ³⁰ Owen, *Works*, 4:282.
 - ³¹ Boston, *Works*, 11:66.
 - ³² *Ibid.*
 - ³³ John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), 2:339.
 - ³⁴ Gill, *Exposition*, 8:492.
 - ³⁵ Boston, *Works*, 11:63.

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- ³⁶ Ibid., 64.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 11:62.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 11:63.
- ⁴⁰ Boston, *Works*, 11:63.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Manton, *Works*, 12:235.
- ⁴³ William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 2:489.
- ⁴⁴ Boston, *Works*, 11:21.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., 11:48-50.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 11:61.
- ⁴⁷ Manton, *Works*, 1:351.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 11:443.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 12:234.
- ⁵⁰ Clarkson, *Works*, 3:208.
- ⁵¹ Owen, *Works*, 4:259.
- ⁵² Ibid., 4:269.
- ⁵³ Clarkson, *Works*, 3:209.
- ⁵⁴ Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, 2:488-89.
- ⁵⁵ Boston, *Works*, 11:55.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 11:55-56.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 11:60.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 11:59.
- ⁵⁹ Manton, *Works*, 1:351.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 12:226.
- ⁶¹ Ibid., 12:234.
- ⁶² Owen, *Works*, 4:291.
- ⁶³ Traill, *Works*, 1:73; Boston, *Works*, 11:21; Gill, *Exposition*, 8:492.
- ⁶⁴ Boston, *Works*, 11:73.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 11:76.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 11:74.
- ⁶⁷ Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, 2:489.
- ⁶⁸ Clarkson, *Works*, 3:209.
- ⁶⁹ Traill, *Works*, 1:73.
- ⁷⁰ William Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins* (London: John Legatt, 1613), 3:279.
- ⁷¹ Clarkson, *Works*, 3:208.
- ⁷² Ibid., 3:210.
- ⁷³ Flavel, *Works*, 2:339.
- ⁷⁴ Boston, *Works*, 11:67.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 11:68.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 11:68-69.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 12:234.
- ⁸² Flavel, *Works*, 2:338-39.
- ⁸³ Owen, *Works*, 4:276.
- ⁸⁴ Boston, *Works*, 11:20.