

- "Prayer is so great and necessary a part of religion that every degree of assistance in it will be always acceptable to pious minds."

1. The Nature of Prayer

1. Invocation (calling upon God)

1. Mention one or more of the names or titles of God - e.g. "Almighty God, the everlasting King" or "O God of Israel"
2. A declaration of our desire and design to worship him - "Unto thee we lift up our souls", or, "we draw near to thee", or, "we come into our presence", or, "we bow before you"
3. A desire of his assistance and acceptance - Hearken unto me...

2. Adoration (honour paid to God)

1. Mention his works, attributes and nature - e.g. unity, three persons, incomprehensible, existence...

3. Confession

1. Watts divides this into four categories, including confessing our lowliness and deserving of punishment
2. Confession of sins (confess sins of omission and commission)

Examples:

1. Pride and vanity of mind
 2. Intensity of our passions
 3. Earthly mindedness
 4. Love of the world
 5. Indulgence of our flesh
 6. Carnal security
 7. Unthankfulness under plentiful mercies
 8. Fretfulness
 9. Impatience
 10. Sinful dejection
 11. Neglect of duty
 12. Lack of love to God
 13. Unbelief
 14. Hardness of heart
 15. Slothfulness
 16. Decay in religion
 17. Dishonor to God
 18. Failures toward fellow creatures
3. To truly feel and understand them we must:
 1. Reflect on their variety
 2. Reflect on their number
 3. Reflect on how often we've sinned this way before and after salvation
 4. Reflect how we've sinned against so much light and love
 5. Reflect how we've sinned after being rebuked so often.

6. We must be ashamed: "We are ashamed, and blush to lift up our faces before thee our God."
 4. Confessing we deserve punishment (i.e. "We deserve to be cast out of thy presence...not worthy to be called your children...")
 4. **Petition**
 1. Many requests we can give (e.g. deliverance from evil)
 2. **Imprecatory prayers should never be used against personal enemies but only enemies of Christ**
 5. **Pleading**
 1. **This is arguing our case with God** (Job 23:3-4; Jer. 12:1; Ex. 32:7-14).
 6. **Profession** (Self-dedication)
 1. Professing our relationships to God, resolutions etc.
 7. **Thanksgiving**
 1. Two parts, benefits he gives without our asking and benefits for those things we did ask for
 8. **Blessing**
 1. Ps. 145:10, "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee."
 9. **Amen**, or the Conclusion
2. **The Gift of Prayer**
1. What the Gift of prayer is
 1. It is the **ability to put our thoughts to prayer and readiness to express those thoughts to God for the profit of our own souls and the souls of others.**
 2. Just as **medicine has rules for healing and preaching has rules, prayer has rules.** If we want skill in prayer, we must follow the rules.
 2. Forms of prayer, free or conceived prayer, and praying extempore
 1. **Extreme 1: Only set, pre-composed prayer**
 1. **Jesus taught infant prayer in precomposed set (Lk. 11:1-13).**
 2. **Pre-composed prayer helps baby Christians**, those that get stage-fright etc.
 3. **BUT...** it also hinders free exercise of thought and desires to God and dampens inward devotion; it can **imprison** us; like **crutches**; it may also be hypocrisy, saying those things not really in our soul; could be cold and flat, we say the same thing over and over again, and can also hide spiritual lethargy; won't help him in prayer.
 2. **Extreme 2: Dependence of sudden prayer (no prep)**
 1. **Benefits of forms**
 1. Such a special matter as prayer cannot be done without some forethought
 2. Heart prep is crucial
 3. We may have **long pauses** not knowing what to say or else saying foolish things. The Spirit may be far from us; we are incoherent.
 4. The wicked may mock us because of our poor prayers
 2. Premeditation may fail to help us in prayer if we have (1) incomplete premeditation, or (2) of the head not heart, or (3) sin in life
 3. Content of prayer

1. Necessary to furnish our prayers with Content: Here are Some Rules to furnish us with content
 1. Know your Bible and Life experiences
 1. Let the word of God dwell in you richly
 2. Carefully observe God's dealings; this is where a journal helps
 2. Know the eight categories of prayer
 1. Invocation
 2. Adoration
 3. Confession
 4. Petition
 5. Pleading
 6. Profession
 7. Thanksgiving
 8. Blessing
 9. "Call upon God, adore, confess // Petition, plead, and then declare // You are the Lord's, given thanks and bless, // And let Amen confirm the prayer
 3. Use specifics not generalities
 1. Confess specifically
 2. "A saint in a right frame loves to pour out his soul before God in a hundred particulars." (53)
 4. Prime the pump of prayer by Scripture, fellowship, or meditation
 1. Getting help from Scripture will give divine content; he mused while the fire burned (Ps. 39:3).
 5. If empty, read from a petition portion of Scripture
 1. This will warm your soul; sometimes pause in your prayer to retrieve content from Scripture
 6. If you can't pray, honestly tell this to God and that you need his help
 1. "Lord, I cannot pray"
2. Directions concerning content
 1. Don't insist on praying all 8 parts in each prayer (focus on the parts that warm our hearts)
 2. Know the occasion
 1. Time: e.g. in the morning we thank him he does not sleep; confess inability to defend ourselves through the darkness and while asleep. We quote Ps. 3:5, "I laid me down and slept; I awakened; for the Lord sustained me"; also Ps. 4:8
 2. Place and persons: tell him all your follies and fears; maintain the friendship in secret; communicate with him as our condescending friend. This may cause listeners to blush and be ashamed and inwardly grieved.
 3. Don't pray long just to be long
 1. Especially when our spirit is dry; some are not fit for long prayers.
 2. Difficulties of long prayers

1. Many use crude, rash and unseemly expressions in prayer. "Be not rash to utter any thing before God" (Ecc. 5:2).
 2. Tempted to tautologies, saying same thing over and over again. Mt. 6:7 forbids this
 3. We may tire the listeners
 4. Tempted to exceed time slot; Even Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, eventually let him go, for it was break of day (Gn. 32:26).
 5. Length not matched by affection is not good
4. Method of Prayer (General Rules)
1. Usually start with generalities and then move to specifics (we may praise or confess generally, then specifically)
 2. Let things of the same kind be together in prayer
 3. Let the language of emotion follow the language of judgement.
 4. Start with invocation, then adoration, then confession, then following items; but don't too strictly follow these forms
5. Expression in Prayer
1. It is possible to pray secretly with no words, yet language is an excellent aid to prayer and should often be used in secret prayer.
 2. How to have rich expression in prayer
 1. Direction 1: Labor to express the greatness of God
 2. Direction 2: Treasure up expression you read in prayer
 1. Use what you read that morning in prayer; if you learn one verse a day and meditate upon it, you'll have a treasure house of expressions for prayer
 2. Cautions: Use the proper interpretation of the verse in prayer; too much Scripture may lead you to misinterpret the passage
 3. Direction 3: Always be ready to talk about holy, godly things
 1. Always be ready to talk about the sermon or the books you are reading. Talk to fellow Christians of this
 2. We struggle in prayer because we don't talk of spiritual things; we lack vocabulary and expressions in prayer; we talk well of things we know and meditate upon
 4. Direction 4: Pray for guidance and utterance
 1. Paul asked for freedom of speech (Col. 4:3)
 2. "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord" (Pr. 16:1)
 3. Rules for choosing proper expressions in prayer
 1. Rule 1: Pray what is really in your heart
 1. Don't go for fancy expressions. This mocks God
 2. When we pray movingly, it helps others
 2. Rule 2: Use natural way of speaking
 1. Easy to be understood (1Co. 14:9); avoid foreign and uncommon words, archaic words or long sentences
 2. PS: Seems to have been more of a problem back in Watts' day
 3. E.g: "Thou art hypostatically three, and essentially one."
 3. Rule 3: Use language that is grave and descent

1. Words should be like clothing: descent and neat but not pompous or gaudy; simple and plain, not careless or rude.
4. Rule 4: Pray with correct passions
 1. Modes of expression
 1. Exclamations (brings forth element of wonder)
 1. "O how great is thy goodness, which thou has laid up for them that fear thee!" (Ps. 31:19); "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" (Rm. 7:24)
 2. Interrogations (plain sense turned into question)
 1. "Where should I go from you Spirit?" (Ps. 139:7); "Do I not hate those that hate thee" (Ps. 139:21)
 3. Appeals to God (concerns our needs and sorrows)
 1. "Lord you know all things; you know that I love you" (Jn. 21:17)
 2. "My sins are not hid from thee" (Ps. 69:5)
 4. Expostulations (arguments to plead with God)
 1. "Awake, put on strength..." (Isa. 51:9)
 2. "Will the Lord cast off forever" (Ps. 77:7) (p. 84)
 5. Options/wishes
 1. "Oh that I might have my request" (Job 6:8)
 2. "O that my ways were directed to keep they statute!" (Ps. 119:5)
 6. Apostrophes (abruptly turn from our prayers and to our own souls)
 1. Ps. 16:1-2, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord..."
 7. Ingeminations (redoubling our expressions)
 1. "O Lord to whom vengeance belongs..." Ps. 94:1
 2. Amen and Amen
 3. Careful not to use repetitions because of fervency, not just to lengthen prayers
 2. Rule 5: Use variety but don't fear repetition
5. Voice of Prayer (p. 86)
 - Rule: use the same voice with which we usually speak in grave and serious conversation
 - 2. Direction 1: Speak clearly
 - 3. Direction 2: Speak as to be heard
 1. Lower voice, at least in the beginning, is best because it shows humility
 2. Don't start so loudly as to startle
 - 4. Direction 3: Speak at the right speed

1. Have proper pauses to give people time to reflect
2. Going too fast endangers you to go too quickly; no time for meditation
3. Too slow will make it tiresome
5. **Direction 4: Speak with proper expression**
 1. Avoid constant uniformity of voice
 2. Avoid faulty placement of the accents and false pronunciation (like a plain sentence delivered with fervency)
 3. Avoid excessively coloring every word and sentence with extremes (like impersonating crying)
6. **Gesture in Prayer**
 1. Since we are to pray always, no posture of body is unfit for short prayers (lying, sitting, walking)
 2. **David sat (1Chron 17:16)**
 3. **Posture nature says are most proper are standing, kneeling and prostration**
 1. **Abe fell on his face (Gn. 17:3), as did Moses, Ezekiel and Daniel**
 2. **Kneeling is the most frequent posture; even pagans kneel. Solomon (2Chr 6:13), Ezra:9:5; Dan. 6:10, Lk. 22:41, Paul in ACt 20**
 3. **Standing too (Mk. 11:25)**
 4. **Sitting is not a good posture for prayer for solemn prayer, unless infirmed. "Whatever gesture of body keeps the mind in the best composure.**
 5. **Good to keep head hanging. (Neh. 8:6).**
 6. **When praying, have your head uncovered as a man (1Co. 11:4).**
 4. **Jesus rebuked Pharisees that disfigured their faces in prayer (Mt. 6:16). Hearts should be warmer than faces.**
 5. **Avoid yawning.**
 6. **Lift up eyes to heaven (Ps. 121:1; 123:1; 141:8)**
 7. **Often keep eyes closed in prayer, so not distracted.**
 8. **Lifting hands, sometimes folded and also apart. (Ps. 28:2; 134:2)**
 9. **Lay hand upon head of person praying for.**
7. **Family Prayer**
 1. **Don't distract family prayers with noise or motion, moving chairs, waving hands.**
8. **Grace before and after meals**
 1. **Some are too quiet, only heard by self. Others are so loud thousands can hear.**
 2. **Better, few sentences suitable for the occasion heard by all. Not necessary to pray out loud when eating by self.**
6. **General Directions on the Gift of Prayer**

1. Keep the middle way between an exact and laborious attendance to all the rules I have given and a careless neglect of them.
2. Observe those among ministers and fellow Christians who have the most edifying gifts.
 1. That is, learn from those that pray well.
3. Use all proper means to obtain a manly presence of mind and holy courage in religious performances.
 1. Some are bashful. Some are way too slow. Some way too fast.
 2. **Tips*****:**
 1. Get above the shame of appearing religious. That is, don't let odd glances about your desire to speak of godly things get you down.
 2. Don't be embarrassed. If you are accustomed to talk to people about God, you'll pray better in public.
 3. Practice public pray in private.
 4. Prepare your heart and plan your prayers
 5. Fear God in your public prayers, not man
 6. Worrying what others think of your prayers will cause you to pray poorly.
 7. Practice praying with inferiors or equals
 8. Begin praying public prayers by being short
 9. Don't get down by your early attempts at public prayer
 10. Pray that God would give you courage and liberty in prayer
4. Ask the assistance of a kind Christian friend to notice all the irregularities that you may be guilty of in prayers, especially in your first years of the practice of this duty
 1. Tough to judge the tone of our own voice
 2. We often develop bad habits; ill tones, improper accents, will facial distortions, other improprieties.
5. Be frequent in the practice of this duty of prayer, not only in secret, but with one another.
 1. Without frequent practice you will never attain.
 2. Tim, don't neglect to stir up the gift. Some pray well because they practice a lot, not so much know the rules.

3. The Grace of Prayer

1. The Grace of Prayer and How it Differs from the Gift
 1. The gift is but the outside, the shape of the duty. the grace is the soul and spirit that gives it life, vigour and efficacy. Gift is ability. Grace is the inward drive. Gift comes through study and practice.
2. General Graces of Prayer
 1. Gravity and solemnity and seriousness of spirit. Light, trivial temper should be banished.
 2. Pleading: Argue humbly with God.
 3. At least once a day, pray alone with God. God is ready to hear a sudden sentence.

4. The Spirit of Prayer

1. Proofs of the Assistance of the Spirit of God in Prayer

1. First argument come from Scripture (Zech. 12:10 shows we need Spirit to help us in prayer; Luke 11:13, Jesus asks Father for HS for a fuller assistance in prayer.)
 2. I love his Objection/Answer style
 3. The HS has so long been absent from the church that we think this work of HS was only for early church. **We invent new methods to supply the absence of him.** ***
 4. The great difference between two believers is often that one has the gift of prayer (abilities) but lacks the grace of prayer.
2. How the Spirit Assists us in Prayer
 1. These people attribute too little to the Spirit of prayer (think it is just like normal conversation); some, Watts says, expect too much from Spirit (wait for inclinations, inspiration like Moses had
 2. **Ways:**
 1. **Gives us understanding, memory,** temperament, confidence, fluency, readiness.
 2. **blesses our diligence in reading, hearing, meditation,** study and attempts at prayer. Adds blessings to our study and sanctifies our memory.
 3. **Inclines our heart to pray;** we are naturally weary to pray. Spirit works in us lively sense of the necessity to pray.
 4. Supplies us with content to pray through secret teachings (Rm. 8:26). We don't know what is good for ourselves (Ecc. 6:12) and often ask for hurtful things (Jms 4:3). Spirit convinces us of sin and righteousness and brings sin to our remembrance. Satan can pluck the good seed of the Word from hearts (Mt. 13:19). Cannot the Spirit put good thoughts into our hearts for prayer?
 5. **Supplies us with content in prayer and method too.** Fills us with deep and penitent sense of our past. "O Lord, I am vile." The numbers of them are infinite.
 6. Gives assistance toward apt and proper expression in prayer. This is a spiritual gift (1Cor. 1:5). He often prayed for confidence and freedom of speech in preaching (Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3-4). HS brings things to our minds.
 7. He enlivens graces. He influences our minds. If God requires humble prayers, may he not help us in the duty which he demands?
 3. Cautions about the Assistance of the Spirit
 1. Not all impulses and impressions are from the Holy Spirit
 1. Sailors in Jonah's ship were moved to prayer but not for holy reasons. Some prayer may simply arise due to fear
 2. Distinguishing between Holy Spirit impulses from personal spirit is not always easy
 1. More obvious in OT, Spirit rushed upon prophets, similar to NT but today Spirit usually leads in a soft silent manner and works sweetly with our own spirits.
 3. Can have extraordinary movements of the HS but shouldn't expect it
 1. Like the conversion of Paul.
 2. God is in this place when in a public assembly a minister addresses God with a flow of divine eloquence and all are

ready to confess, 'Surely he knew all my heart' and there is divine power and drawing of hearts to the throne and a taste of heaven and large numbers converted.

3. But also many vain and foolish claims of HS when not. Three remarks:
 1. Special HS moving rare and shouldn't expect them
 2. Real HS movement moves towards humility and growing in holiness.
4. Gift and Spirit of prayer not the same
 1. Don't think that all those that have pious words are in HS. They may be in sin. Noise and force doesn't mean HS.
 2. Some are emotional and loud to make "up for the lack of inward devotion" (154). Often in still, small voice.
 3. Some judge man has not HS in prayer if he says same things over and over or struggles to find words or no beauty in his sentences. If this is the case, he shouldn't pray publicly. But he may have valid reasons:
 1. New Christian learning to pray
 2. Low abilities and poor memory
 3. Not used to praying in public
 4. Sense of guilt
 5. God is not with them and withholds gift from them
5. Don't always expect same measure of Spirit in prayer
 1. He is wind that cannot be controlled (Jn. 3)
4. Directions to Obtain and keep the Spirit in prayer
 1. Seek salvation
 1. HS only dwells with believers (1Cor. 3:16)
 2. Labor for content, method, manner of prayer in this book; then practice much in secret and with others and habits will grow (1Tm. 4:13). Work hard at prayer (Pr. 13:4). Arise and be doing (1Chron 22:16).
 3. **Pray earnestly for the Spirit**
 1. **Do not depend on natural abilities or memory (Lk. 11:13).**
 4. Don't quench the spirit by using only forms in prayer
 1. Don't grieve HS and don't stifle or restrain good desires through too many forms
 5. Don't pray with spiritless worship and formality without warm devotion in your spirit
 1. Take notice of your frame of mind in prayer; observe if HS is with you. Pray always in Spirit (Eph. 6:18)
 2. Don't be satisfied with pray where there were no divine stirrings inside.
 6. Be thankful for every aid of the Spirit in prayer
 1. "Spread all the sails of your soul to make use of every gale of this heavenly wind that blows when and where it listeth."
 7. Beware of pride when you pray well
 1. Not due to you but God. HS movement can puff you up. God dwells with humble (Isa. 57:15; James 4:6)
 8. Do not grieve the HS
 1. Walk in Spirit and don't fulfill flesh (Eph. 4:30). Heed whispers of Spirit when he convinces of sin. Don't grieve with sin. **If you**

thrust him away, he will not grant you his spirit. If you grieve him, he will withdraw from you.

2. "Live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and then you shall also pray in the Spirit." Watts
3. What to do if Spirit withdraws:
 1. Be aware of your great loss and mourn over it
 1. Heart is cold and head is dry and dead. When Ephraim turned to God, he showed compassion (Jer. 31:18-20)
 2. Backtrack to see the steps whereby Spirit withdrew and sins that led to this
 1. HS can be taken away in some way (Ps. 51:11); carnality of mind, prayer as duty? presumptuous sin?
 2. "If you decline secret prayer, the Spirit will not always attend you in public."
 3. Remember how you obtained the Spirit in the first

5. Persuasive Arguments to Learn to Pray

1. You will correspond with Heaven
 1. Worms and dust can address the king
 2. Men toil for 7 years to learn a trade. Mustn't we learn to speak to God? We take years to learn a language, but not learn to speak to Almighty?
2. This is what Christians do
 1. No excuse to be at a loss to perform what should be our daily duty
 2. "I am persuaded Christians would ask one another's assistance more frequently in prayer upon special occasions if a good gift of prayer were more commonly sought and more universally obtained." (173)**
3. It is delightful and helps our souls
 1. Many have received more edification from the prayer than the sermon because it was full of holiness and came with skill and fervency .
 2. "Has not your painful experience sometimes taught you that zeal and devotion has been cooled and almost quenched by the vain repetitions or weak and wandering thoughts of some fellow Christian that leads the worship? And at another time a well-framed prayer of beautiful order and language has been rendered disagreeable by some inappropriate tones, and gestures, so that you have been weary of listening and longed for the conclusion." (175)
4. Honor of God and rep of Christianity
 1. We think God only looks at heart, so order or beauty or how we address God isn't important.
 2. God doesn't want ugly gifts (Mal. 1:13-14).
5. Relatively easy to pray compared to acquiring other gifts
 1. Learn to pray privately before secretly
 2. Learn logic privately before public debates.

3. Practical: draw up a new prayer for AM and PM and for Lord's Day or follow Henry's *Method of Prayer*.
4. But don't be too tied to forms. Primes the pump. It could quench HS if not careful.
5. Do this and you will improve; you will attract audiences. It will raise spirits of church. They will receive sermon better.
6. If you neglect, many bad consequences
 1. Drag through life with poor prayer
 2. Focus too much on form
 3. Parents, how can you tell your kids to pray but you don't show them how?