

"The Proper Design and Energy of Prayer"

by
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*"For as a prince have you power with God and with men,
and have prevailed."
Genesis 32:28*

Though all Christians agree in maintaining the duty of prayer, yet many find a difficulty in reconciling this duty with the divine character. They suppose God is perfectly good, infinitely wise, and absolutely immutable in all his purposes; and upon this ground they cannot easily conceive what influence prayer can have either to procure his favors or to avert his frowns. It is the design of the ensuing discourse, therefore, to remove this difficulty by pointing out the nature and tendency of prayer. And the words I have read, taken in their proper connection, directly lead us to the consideration of this serious and practical subject.

As Jacob was returning from Padan-Aram to his native country, he sent messengers to his brother Esau to acquaint him with his intended visit and to conciliate his favor. But the messengers brought back information that his brother was on his way to meet him with four hundred men. This news was extremely alarming to Jacob, who knew his brother's resentment and his own weakness. In this critical situation he acted the part of a pious and prudent man. He first attempted to appease his brother's wrath by a noble and princely present. But lest this precaution should fail of success, he ordered his servants to conduct his family and flocks over the brook Jabbok while he himself remained alone to supplicate the divine favor and protection.

At this season of solitude and devotion, he wrestled with God and prevailed. The account is extremely solemn and instructive.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that He prevailed not against him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "*I will not let You go unless You bless me!*" And He said unto him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; *for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed.*" . . . And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "*For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.*" [Gen. 32:24-30]

Here it is very evident that Jacob wrestled with a Divine Person, and that his wrestling principally or wholly consisted in pleading and crying for mercy. So we find it represented by the prophet Hosea: "*Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him.*" The sincerity, fervency, and importunity of his prayers *moved* God to hear and answer his requests. Both the letter and spirit of the text suggest this general observation: **That it is the design of prayer to move God to bestow mercy.**

This will appear if we consider,

1. That prayer properly and essentially consists in *pleading*. Though it may be divided into distinct parts or branches, yet all these ultimately unite and center in supplication. In adoration, confession, petition, and thanksgiving we ultimately plead for divine mercy. When we petition our fellowmen, we always mean to move them to grant our requests; and in order to prevail, it is common to make use of various modes of supplication or pleading. This is the method which a penitent child would take to obtain the forfeited favor of his father. He would acknowledge the rectitude of his father's government; he would confess the injury he had done to his father's character; he would thank him for his past favors; and pathetically plead for his forgiving love. He would naturally employ all these modes of address in order to *move* his father to pardon his faults.

So when we praise God for his perfections, thank him for his mercies, confess our trespasses against him, and present our petitions to him, we do all this with an ultimate aim to move his heart and obtain the blessings we implore. Indeed, we never supplicate any being without an ultimate intention of prevailing upon him to do or grant what we desire. And any address which does not express or imply a design of moving the person addressed cannot deserve the name of petition or prayer.

So far, therefore, as prayer signifies "the offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will," just so far it necessarily implies our design and desire of moving God to bestow the favors we request. There are no two words in our language more nearly synonymous than praying and pleading. And since praying always implies pleading, it must necessarily imply a desire and design of moving God to show mercy.

2. It appears from the prayers of good men which are recorded in Scripture, that they meant to move God to grant their petitions. Abraham's intercession for Sodom carries this idea. He earnestly desired and prayed that God would graciously spare that degenerate city. And he was so fervent and importunate in his addresses to the Deity that he apologized for his importunity. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak." And he continued to apologize until he made his last and smallest request. "Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once." Such great importunity in prayer plainly supposes that Abraham meant to move the Supreme Being to spare those guilty creatures for whom he intreated.

Jacob wrestled all night with God in prayer, and humbly though confidently said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." We must conclude from this that he meant to move God to grant him a blessing.

Job had the same design in praying to God. "Oh!" said he, "that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would order my speech before him and fill my mouth with arguments" [Job 23:3, 4].

And what a variety of arguments did Daniel use to prevail upon God to grant pardon and deliverance to his covenant people! He prayed in this fervent and importunate strain:

Now therefore, O my God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's

sake. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You for our righteous deeds, but for Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do! Defer not, for Your name sake, O my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name. [Dan. 9:17-19]

Why should Daniel use so many arguments with God, and plead with so much fervor and importunity, unless he desired and intended to move his compassion towards his people and incline him to work their deliverance? No men ever understood the nature and design of prayer better than Abraham, Job, and Daniel. And since these eminent saints evidently meant by their fervent and importunate supplications to move God to show mercy, we may justly conclude this to be a proper end to be proposed in praying. Indeed, it is much to be doubted whether any good men ever did call upon God with freedom and fervency without an ardent desire of moving God to grant their requests.

This is so essential to prayer that no pious person, perhaps, would know how to order his speech before God if this were to be excluded from his petitions. And though some good men may think that they ought not to indulge a desire of moving God to show mercy, yet we believe if they would examine their own feelings they would find that they never have been able to pray in sincerity without indulging and expressing such a reasonable desire.

3. The friends of God are urged to pray with fervency and importunity in order to *move* the divine compassion. This seems to be the spirit of the Prophet's exhortation to the saints in his day. "Ye who make mention of Yahweh, keep not silence, and *give Him no rest* till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" [Isa. 62:6,7]. God is pleased to represent himself as greatly influenced by the prayers of good men. To them he says, "Concerning my sons, and concerning my daughters, *command ye me*" [Isa. 45:11]. Again he says, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind would not be favorable toward this people" [Jer. 15:1]. And he conveys the same idea in stronger terms still: "Even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they should deliver neither sons nor daughters, but only themselves" [Ezek. 14:20]. These modes of expression clearly and forcibly express the prevailing influence of prayer upon the heart of the Deity.

Christ likewise illustrates and inculcates the energy of prayer by the parable of the unjust judge and importunate widow.

And He spoke a parable unto this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint, saying: "There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Avenge me of my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I fear not God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenger her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " And the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night to Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you He will avenge them speedily." [Luke 18:1-8]

The plain and obvious design of this parable is to represent the powerful influence of pious and persevering prayer to move God to pity and relieve his friends in distress. And agreeably to this the Apostle James expressly declares, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man *avails much*." Indeed, the whole tenor of Scripture encourages saints to call upon God with desires and hopes of moving his compassion. It is still further to be observed,

4. That the prayers of good men have actually prevailed upon God to grant great and signal favors. When the children of Israel had made a molten image, God was highly displeased, and felt disposed to destroy them. But Moses prayed, and his prayers prevailed upon God to spare the idolaters. This appears from the account which Moses gives of that memorable event.

And Yahweh said to me, "Arise, get down quickly from hence, for your people whom you brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image." Furthermore Yahweh spoke to me, saying, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. *Let Me alone*, that I may destroy them from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they." So I turned and came down from the mount . . . And I fell down before Yahweh, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of Yahweh, to provide him to anger. For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith Yahweh was angry with you, to destroy you. *But Yahweh hearkened to me at that time also.* [Deut. 9:12-19]

It is here plainly intimated that the prayers of Moses once and again moved God to bestow great and undeserved favors.

The prayer of Joshua moved God to stop the course of nature and cause the sun and moon to stand still, while he completed his victory over the enemies of Israel. The prayers of Job moved God to forgive the folly and presumption of his three friends, who had reproached both him and his Maker. David prevailed upon God by his humble and fervent prayer to countermand the angel who stood with a drawn sword over Jerusalem to destroy it. Samuel often interceded and prevailed with God to spare and bless his rebellious people. Though Elijah was an imperfectly righteous man, yet his effectual fervent prayers *availed much* to bring and to remove divine judgments. The Apostle gives this account of the man and of his prayers:

Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. [James 5:17, 18]

It was the well known influence of Elijah's prayers in moving God to smile or frown upon his people that extorted the significant and pathetic [poignant] exclamation of Elisha, when he saw him gloriously ascending to heaven, "My Father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" [2 Kings 2:12]

We have another instance of the prevailing influence of prayer in the conduct of the primitive

Christians. While Peter was in prison the church prayed incessantly for him, and at length prevailed. For in answer to their prayers God miraculously loosed his bands and set him at liberty. These effects of prayer, in connection with the other considerations which have been suggested, afford sufficient evidence that it is the design of prayer to move God to bestow favors.

But now some may be ready to ask, How can this be? How can prayer have the least influence to move the heart of God, who is of one mind, and with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning?

Here we ought to consider, in the first place, that the prayers of good men are *proper reasons* why an infinitely wise and good Being should grant their requests. The entreaties and tears of Joseph were proper reasons why his brethren should have spared him from the pit; and they were finally constrained to acknowledge the force of those reasons: "They said one to another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear" [Gen. 42:21]. The cries of the poor and needy are proper reasons why we should grant them relief. And the ardent desires of a dutiful child are proper reasons why the parent should gratify his feelings. So, the sincere and humble prayers of the upright are proper reasons why the great Parent of all should show them favor. Hence says the Psalmist, "As a father pities his children, so Yahweh pities those who fear him" [Ps. 103:13].

When a saint sincerely offers up his desires to God for a certain favor, God views his prayer as a reason why he should grant his request. And when a number of saints unite in praying for any public blessing, God views their united petitions as so many reasons why he should grant it. It is true, indeed, God does not always answer the prayers of his friends, because he often sees stronger reasons for denying than for granting their requests. His perfect benevolence is under the direction of his unerring wisdom, which always leads him to act according to the highest reason. So far, therefore, as the prayers of his people are consistent with the general good, just so far they are always a powerful and prevailing reason for the bestowing of divine favors.

We ought to consider, in the next place, that though God formed all his purposes from eternity, yet he formed them in the view of all the pious petitions which should ever be presented to him, and gave them all the weight that they deserved in fixing his determinations. In determining to forgive the idolatry of Israel, he had respect to the request of Moses. In determining to cause the sun and moon to stand still, he had respect to the petition of Joshua. In determining to release Peter from prison, he had respect to the pressing importunity of the church. Indeed, all his purposes, which relate to the bestowment of *solicited* favors, were formed under the weight and influence of those prayers which he intended to answer. He adapted preventing, preserving, delivering mercies to the prayers of his people, and fixed a connection between their prayers and his special interpositions.

This leads us, in the last place, to consider pious prayers as *the proper means* of bringing about the events with which they are connected in the divine purpose. Though God is able to work without means, yet he has been pleased to adopt means into his plan of operation. And according to this mode of operation, means are absolutely necessary in order to accomplish the designs of God. As he designed to save Noah and his family by the instrumentality of the ark, so it was absolutely necessary that the ark should be built. As he designed to deliver Israel by the hand of Moses, so it was absolutely necessary that Moses should be preserved by the daughter of

Pharaoh. And as he designed to save Paul from shipwreck by the exertion of the sailors, so it was absolutely necessary that the sailors should abide in the ship.

In the same manner, the prayers of saints are *the necessary means* of procuring those favors, or of bringing about those events, which God has connected with their petitions. This will appear from a single consideration. If prayers did not really operate *as means* in procuring divine favors, then it would be as proper to pray for divine blessings after they are granted as before. But this we all know to be absurd. Suppose a good man hears that his friend at a distance is dangerously sick. It is certainly proper that he should pray for his life. But supposing he is credibly informed a few weeks after that his friend is entirely restored to health? It is certainly improper that he should continue to pray for the removal of his sickness. The reason is, while his friend was sick, his prayers might be *the means* of procuring his recovery. But after that event had actually taken place, his prayers could no longer operate *as means* of bringing it to pass.

Hence it appears that the immutability of the divine purposes, instead of destroying, actually establishes the necessity and prevalence of prayer. The more indissolubly God has fixed the connection between our praying and his hearing, the more we are bound and encouraged to pray. After God had promised his people in Babylon that he would restore them to their former prosperity, he expressly said, "For this, moreover, will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them" [Ezek. 36:37]. But who can imagine that God's promise to bless his people in answer to prayer should destroy the propriety or the energy of their prayers for promised blessings?

IMPROVEMENT

1. If it be the design of prayer to move God to bestow temporal and spiritual favors, then there is a propriety in praying *for others* as well as *for ourselves*. We find intercession to be much inculcated in the word of God. The Psalmist calls upon saints to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that is, for the general prosperity of the church.¹ Paul represents intercession as the first and principal branch of prayer: "I exhort therefore that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." And James enjoins the duty of intercession upon every Christian: "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another."

Those who possess universal benevolence find a peculiar pleasure in praying for others. And it appears from Scripture that the most eminent saints have always been the most remarkable intercessors at the throne of divine grace. But were it not the design of prayer to move God to show mercy, there would be no propriety nor importance in praying for any but ourselves. If, as many pious divines have taught, the only purpose of prayer is to prepare ourselves to receive or to be denied divine favors, then there seems to be no ground or reason to pray for the temporal or spiritual good of our fellowmen. Our prayers can have no tendency to prepare them for either the smiles or frowns of heaven. If we pray for their outward prosperity, this can have no tendency to prepare them for the reception of external blessings. If we pray for their deliverance from

1 **KM Note:** We believe this verse, Ps. 122:6, and every verse in the Bible that mentions the name "Jerusalem," is in fact talking about the city of Jerusalem, not "the church." However, this misinterpretation, common in some theological systems, does not impair the arguments in this part of Emmons' sermon.

outward evils, this can have no tendency to prepare them for the removal of afflictions. If we pray for their right improvement of divine favors or divine judgments, this can have no tendency to inspire their hearts with either gratitude or submission.

Indeed, our prayers for others can answer no other purpose than that of *moving the Deity* to do them good. Take away this design of intercession, and it ceases to have any meaning and to answer any valuable end. But if, as we have shown, it be the proper design of prayer to move the Deity to bestow favors, then the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous may have a powerful tendency to draw down divine blessings upon others as well as upon themselves. Upon this ground, intercession appears to be as proper and important as any other branch of prayer.

2. We are led to conclude, from what has been said upon this subject, that we have as fair an opportunity of obtaining divine favors as if God were to form his determinations at the time we present our petitions. Many imagine that it is a great discouragement to prayer that God has determined from all eternity what he will grant and what he will deny to the children of men. But it appears from what has been said that our prayers may have all the influence now, in procuring divine favors, that they could have if God were now to form his purposes respecting us. For he actually formed his eternal purposes in the full view of all our prayers, and gave them all the weight they deserved. It is as strictly true, therefore, that our prayers move him to grant us favors as if he determined to grant them at the time of our praying. Hence we have as fair an opportunity of *prevailing* upon the Deity to grant us any particular future blessings as if we knew he had yet to form his purpose of granting or denying it.

This may be easily and clearly illustrated. Suppose two men are condemned to die. Suppose a certain day is set for each of them to plead for pardon before the king. Suppose each criminal has a friend who, unknown to him, goes to the king before the day appointed and states his case exactly as it is, and offers all the reasons for his being pardoned that can be offered. And suppose the king, upon hearing the pleas made in favor of each criminal, absolutely determines to pardon one and to execute the other. Let me now ask, can these fixed determinations of the king be any disadvantage to the criminals when they actually make their own pleas before him on the day appointed? Thus God foresaw from eternity all his suppliants, and all their supplications, and gave them all the weight that an infinitely wise and benevolent Being ought to give them. Their prayers, therefore, avail as much as it is possible they should avail were God to form his determinations at the time they stand praying before him.

But here perhaps it may be said, there is no occasion of their praying at all if God foresaw their prayers from eternity and fixed his purposes in connection with them. The answer to this is easy. When God determines to do anything one way, he equally determines not to do it another way. When he determines to bring about any event by prayer, he equally determines not to bring about that event without prayer. Thus when he determined to deliver his people from the Babylonish captivity, in answer to the prayers of Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and other pious Israelites, he equally determined not to deliver them if he were not inquired of by those good men to do it for them. Indeed, the energy of prayer properly consists in moving God to execute those purposes which were formed in connection with prayer.

In some cases God has revealed not only his purposes but also revealed that they are to be accomplished in answer to prayer. In all such cases prayers are as necessary as any other

appointed means of accomplishing the divine purposes. And though in most cases God has not revealed his purposes, nor whether they are to be accomplished by prayer, yet if some of his *unrevealed* purposes are connected with prayer, the accomplishment of these particular purposes as much depends upon prayer as upon any other means or second causes.

Hence it appears that every person may do as much to obtain temporal and eternal blessings by sincere and submissive prayer as if God had not from eternity absolutely determined when and where and upon whom to bestow his favors. Even importunity, ardor, and perseverance in prayer are as proper and as influential in order to obtain any divine blessing on supposition of God's immutability as they could be on supposition of his being now at liberty to alter his past purposes or to form his determinations anew. And since this is the case, we have all the encouragement to pray for divine favors that rational, dependent, ill-deserving creatures can reasonably desire or can possibly enjoy. For God has determined from eternity to hear every prayer that ought to be heard.

3. We learn from what has been said the propriety of praying for future as well as for present blessings. If it were the sole design of prayer to prepare our own hearts for the reception of divine favors, there could be no propriety in praying for any far distant good to be bestowed upon ourselves or upon others. But if it be the proper design of addressing the throne of divine grace to move the compassion of God, then we may pray for future mercies with as much propriety as for present relief, and our prayers may be of as much avail to draw down divine favors upon the world hundreds and thousands of years hence as at this day.

There is a great reason to believe that the prayers of good men in all ages have had a mighty influence in moving God to bestow great and extensive blessings upon future generations of mankind. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob no doubt prayed that God would put their future posterity into the possession of the land of promise. All the while the Jews were in Babylon, those who were Israelites indeed, no doubt, incessantly prayed for their restoration to their native country at the period predicted. All good men from Adam to Simeon undoubtedly prayed for the fulfilment of the first promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. In all these instances the prayers of holy men were not lost but had great influence in procuring long desired and far distant blessings.

Our Savior taught his disciples to pray for the future enlargement of his kingdom, saying, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." God intends to send the gospel to the ends of the earth and bring all nations into his kingdom. And we may presume that the fervent prayers of myriads of pious Christians will avail much to bring about this great and desirable event. If prayer be designed to move God to bestow mercy, then it may be as proper and as important to pray for the prosperity of the church and the happiness of mankind to the remotest ages as to pray for any present temporal or spiritual good. As the prayers of our pious progenitors have procured great and distinguishing favors for us, so our humble and fervent prayers may procure the best of blessings for our distant posterity. Indeed, it is our indispensable duty to pray for the accomplishment of all the purposes and predictions of God which remain to be accomplished.

4. It appears from what has been said that saints are in a safe and happy condition. They enjoy the benefit of the prayers of all the people of God. Good men are required to pray for one

another, and they live in the daily performance of this duty. They make intercessions and supplications for all the friends of Zion. They continually pray for the enlargement and prosperity of the church, which is virtually praying for the peace and comfort and edification of every sincere Christian on earth. These prayers of God's people are very efficacious. They have all the influence which any good man can desire to draw down the blessings of God upon him. Must it not be a source of peculiar satisfaction to any pious pilgrim and stranger on earth to reflect that all God's people are constantly praying for him while he is passing through this vale of tears? The effectual fervent prayers of the friends of God for one another ought to comfort, quicken, and animate them to run with patience and confidence the race that is set before them. They may rely upon it that they will never be forgotten nor forsaken of God while so many memorials in their favor are daily presented to the throne of divine grace.

5. This subject may remind sinners of what they have to fear from the prayers of saints. Their united supplications for the honor of God, the accomplishment of his designs, and the overthrow of all his incorrigible enemies, forebode terrible and eternal evils to impenitent sinners. The prayers of Noah proved fatal to the old world. The prayers of Lot proved fatal to Sodom. The prayers of Moses proved fatal to the Egyptians and the Amalekites. The prayers of Joshua proved fatal to the inhabitants of Canaan. The prayers of Elijah proved the ruin of Ahab. The prayers of David destroyed Ahithophel. And the Apostle John represents the prayers of saints as one procuring cause of the wasting judgments which God has sent, and is still sending, upon the Antichristian world by the ministers of his vengeance.

I saw the seven angels who stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer. There was given to him much incense, that he should offer it *with the prayers of the saints* upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, *which came with the prayers of the saints*, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar, and cast it into the earth. And there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. [Rev. 8:2-6]

This is a lively representation of the power of prayer to kindle the wrath of God against the enemies of his church. The wicked, therefore, have abundant reason to tremble at the powerful intercession of the people of God against them. In their present state they have nothing to expect but that the prayers of saints will prove their final ruin. They certainly will, unless they repent and believe the gospel.

6. Since prayer has such a prevailing influence upon the heart of the Deity, saints have great encouragement to abound in this duty. They are formed for this devout and holy exercise. Having become the children of God, they possess the spirit of adoption, which is the spirit of grace and supplication. It was said of Saul of Tarsus as soon as he was converted, "Behold, he prays." Prayer is the proper business of good men, who have the greatest encouragement to call upon God without ceasing. Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed. And God has never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." Their prayers are always heard and accepted, even though the things they pray for be not immediately, nor eventually, granted. But besides this, there are many other motives which ought to prevail upon all good men to abound in the duty of

prayer.

Let them consider, in the next place, the peculiar pleasure to be found in devotion. When do saints enjoy more of heaven upon earth than while they are drawing near to God and unbosoming themselves to their heavenly Father? What divine satisfaction did Job, David, Daniel, and other devout men enjoy while they were fervently praying for the peace and prosperity of Zion? Prayer naturally fixes the attention upon the character, the conduct, and the designs of the Deity, and upon all those great and amiable objects which are suited to gratify every holy and devout affection. Jacob never enjoyed a happier season than while his whole soul was vigorously wrestling with God in prayer. God is ever ready to reward those who call upon him in sincerity with the peculiar manifestations of his love. And this is certainly an animating motive to pray without ceasing and without fainting.

Let them consider, in the third place, that humble, fervent, constant prayer will give them life and spirit in the performance of all other duties. They will meditate, they will read the word of God, they will hear the gospel preached, they will attend divine ordinances, they will pursue their secular concerns, and converse with their fellowmen, very much in the same manner in which they call upon God. If they maintain a daily intercourse with the Deity and sincerely implore his gracious presence and assistance, they will find themselves ready to every good work, and exhibit an amiable example of virtue and piety to all around them. They will most certainly live as they pray.

In the last place, let them seriously consider that constancy, sincerity, and fervency in prayer will be the best means to prepare them for dying. It is the natural tendency of this duty to inspire the mind with clear and realizing views of invisible and divine objects. It is principally by prayer that saints familiarize the scenes which lie beyond the grave and prepare for an easy and joyful transition out of time into eternity. Hence we find the ancient patriarchs spent their last moments in prayer. The last words of David were employed in thanksgiving and praise. Stephen died calling upon God. And the great Redeemer expired in the act of praying. Those who live prayerfully are prepared to die prayerfully. And who would not wish to leave this world and appear before God in a praying frame?

Sermon XX from *Sermons on Some of the First Principles and Doctrines of True Religion* by Nathanael Emmons (Samuel T. Armstrong, Boston, 1815). **Note:** The text has not been modified, except that punctuation and KJV-era verbs and pronouns have been modernized and long paragraphs divided.