

mercy seat, will pray from a full heart, with rich variety, and the true spirit of prayer. He will have power with God and with man.

3. It is well to make a *study* of what will tend most to edification. There is an aversion to this in many minds from the fear of being too artificial, or of seeking glory of men. There is danger in these directions undoubtedly, but is there none on the other hand, of carelessness, irreverence, and parrot-like repetition? The Holy Spirit when teaching us to pray, does not always work by immediate inspiration, but far more frequently in accordance with the natural process of deliberate thought. In speaking to any man, even, upon important affairs, every prudent man thinks beforehand of what he will say. In coming before a person of high rank we prepare and weigh every word. Is it only in converse with the King of Kings that we may trust to the impulse of the moment? “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” (Eccl. v. 2.) Especially does this forethought become necessary when we have not only to make our own case known, but to be also the mouth-piece of our brethren.

4. The *topics* fit to be introduced in public prayer should be well considered. One chief difficulty experienced by many persons in leading the devotions of others is in making the change represented by the substitution of “we” for “I.” They can speak to God of their own wants, but they do not feel it right—nor is it—to bring what is peculiar to themselves into a meeting, while yet they can hardly separate the general from the particular. But a little reflection will soon show how much all Christian hearts have in common—adoration of the Divine perfections, thanksgiving for God’s innumerable mercies, contrition for sin, trust and love towards Christ, zeal for His kingdom, the hope of glory, and such like,—personal to each believer, but to *every* one, and therefore common to all. What an unbounded field also is furnished by intercessory prayer, taking in that little company with their families and friends, the neighbourhood, the churches, the ministry, the land, the cause of Christ, the world! Let the mind and heart only be enlarged, and there will be found an inexhaustible variety of subjects of universal interest, without the introduction of merely personal requests. But let no one be too chary of praying out of his own experience, for “as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.” Some will be sure to feel as he feels. And we can imagine cases, we have known them, where a heart pressed with its own burden could not keep silence, and in breaking out has carried all other hearts with it. Where there is the true spirit of prayer, there is not much danger of going astray.

5. The *language* in which prayer is expressed, has much to do with its power over other minds. Here, as in other respects, our greatest security will be, in feeling aright, and speaking as we feel. There is a reverence due to the Most High God, that should never be wanting. A vulgar familiarity of address takes the name of God in vain. But equally abominable is an oratorical prayer, with balanced periods and pretty figures. The simpler the language in which earnest thought and feeling can naturally clothe themselves, the better. The Scriptures furnish us with the true model of what is required. For sublime simplicity and intense though chastened ardour, the prayers of the Bible can never be surpassed. The human prayers that have carried us nearest to God, have generally been those in which the very words of inspiration most abounded. Next to these, have been