

# **FERVENT PRAYER**

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Fervent prayer by Ashton Oxenden

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**ASHTON OXENDEN**

**FERVENT  
PRAYER**



# FERVENT PRAYER.

BY THE

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OF SAFETY," &c.

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## CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS PRAYER? . . . . .	1
" 2. GOD THE HEARER OF PRAYER . . . . .	11
" 3. HOW TO PRAY RIGHTLY . . . . .	21
" 4. WHEN AND WHERE TO PRAY . . . . .	34
" 5. SOME COMMON MISTAKES ABOUT PRAYER . . . . .	43
" 6. ANSWERS TO PRAYER . . . . .	53
" 7. DIFFERENT KINDS OF PRAYER . . . . .	64
" 8. FAMILY PRAYER . . . . .	73
" 9. PUBLIC PRAYER . . . . .	85
" 10. A WORD OR TWO ABOUT WRITTEN PRAYERS AND EXTEMPORARY PRAYERS . . . . .	96
" 11. THE LORD'S PRAYER EXPLAINED . . . . .	102
" 12. HINDRANCES IN PRAYER . . . . .	109
" 13. ENCOURAGEMENTS IN PRAYER . . . . .	115
" 14. THE POWER OF PRAYER . . . . .	129
DAILY SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER . . . . .	138

## FERVENT PRAYER.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### WHAT IS PRAYER?

THERE is hardly a person in this Christian country who does not think that prayer is necessary. Every one makes use of it in some way or other. Even the most ignorant, and careless, and hard-hearted, offer up some kind of prayer. It is a rare thing for a man or woman to live *altogether* without prayer; deliberately to say, "I will do without it."

And yet how few *really pray*! Many people say over their prayers regularly; and the prayers they use may perhaps be very good; and yet, for all this, they never *pray*. They say certain words upon their knees. These they have been taught from their childhood.

Day after day they repeat them, as a matter of form. But there may be no *heart-work* all the while—no pouring out of the soul before God.

Do I, who am now sitting down to read this book, ever pray? Now, in order to answer this important question, it is very desirable that we should clearly understand WHAT PRAYER IS.

It is not going through a certain exercise—repeating before God a mere string of words—drawing near to Him with our lips, whilst our hearts are far from Him. No, though numberless words may be uttered, there is no prayer in this. Such sounds are empty, and worthless; they never reach heaven.

Many a person gets up in the morning, dresses himself, kneels down, and utters a few hurried sentences. And, having thus *said his prayers*, he goes forth to his daily occupation. During the twelve or fourteen hours which follow, he perhaps never once breathes a single petition to God. Nay, he almost forgets that there is One above, "in whom he lives, and moves, and has his being"—One, "in



whose hands his breath is." He thinks much of the little things of earth, with which he has to do, but seldom of Him, to whom he is indebted for every blessing he enjoys, and for every mercy which he receives. And then, at night, the same heartless, unmeaning exercise is gone through before he lies down to sleep. Can we call *this* prayer? Surely we cannot.

Prayer is the heart speaking to God—the telling all our wants to Him who is able to relieve them—the pouring out our complaints into His gracious ear. It is the poor, weak child going to his heavenly Father, and laying all his necessities before Him. It is the voice of one crying in his deep need to Him, who alone can help and save.

I dare say there have been occasions when you have gone and *asked* a favour of some one greater than yourself, have you not? Or can you not remember the time when you felt unhappy, because you had wronged one of your fellow-creatures: and this led you to *entreat* him to forgive you? Or again, some day when

you have been sitting in your house, you have heard a knock at the door. And when you have gone to it, you have found some poor distressed creature standing there, who immediately began to beg you to give him something to relieve his hunger, or to cover his nakedness.

Now, in all these cases there was prayer—real “ fervent prayer.” But then these were prayers to men. They will however just serve to show what it is to pray to God. It is to ask Him for something; to entreat Him: to knock at the door of mercy; to come to Him full of wants, and desiring to have those wants supplied.

But, if you would have your prayers accepted, they must be like arrows shot from the heart, for none else ever reach the throne of God. It is the heart that prays, not the knees, nor the hands, nor the lips. Have you never seen a dumb man, with his back to the wall, asking alms? His tongue can utter no words, and yet he begs as earnestly with his imploring countenance and with his outstretched hand, as one that had

a voice to tell his complaints. Oh that we felt the same real want, and the same deep earnestness, in offering up our petitions to God!

Now then put the question to yourself again, *Do I ever pray!* Do I ever go to God, as one asking some great favour, which I feel that He only can grant me? Do I draw near to Him as a penitent, as one who has sinned, imploring His forgiveness? Do I feel like a poor needy beggar, who has nothing to give, and all to receive? God does indeed love to hearken to us when we come to Him with humble hearts. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit."

Think often of that lowly Publican in the parable. And be assured that the contrite, penitent, humble heart is a sacrifice God will not despise.

Indeed, an unhumiliated heart cannot delight in prayer. A proud man may love to preach,