
Thoughts in Verse On Private Prayer and Publick Worship

Ford James

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THOUGHTS IN VERSE

ON

PRIVATE PRAYER

AND

PUBLICK WORSHIP

By JAMES FORD, A.M.

PREBENDARY OF EXETER CATHEDRAL.

“Oh let my mouth be filled with Thy praise, that I may sing of Thy glory and
honour all the day long.”—Ps. lxxi. 7.

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NOTICE.

THE Author's design, in these "Thoughts in Verse," is to apply individually, and to connect with particular times in the day, the general precept of "*speaking*" to each other, at publick Worship, "*in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.*" That, which is left to the uncertainty of the moment, is often but negligently done; and, it may be, not done at all. Against danger of this kind a rule, tending to form the devotional habit, is our sure safeguard; and, in these times of great earnestness and excitement in the more outward calls of religion, it seems to be one especially required. We must be "*fervent in spirit,*" before we can acceptably "*serve the Lord.*" With Mary we must "*sit still in the house,*" before we "*arise quickly,*" and go forth to our active duties.

Having derived benefit, in these important respects, from thus "*speaking to himself,*" the Author hopes that his Verses may prove of some service to his Christian brethren; and he is the more encouraged to hope this from the success, that has already attended their private and anonymous circulation. He has since revised the whole, and made some considerable additions, which, he trusts, will be found equally conducive to the end in view.

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THE KEY OF PRAYER.

"All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."—S. Matth. xxi. 22.

PRAYER is the key, that opens wide
GOD'S mercies at the dawn of day;
Prayer is the key, at even-tide,
That guards us safe beneath His sway.

Prayer is the key, that gains supply
Of holy strength and heavenly aid;
In weakness when our task we ply,
Or mourn alone in sorrow's shade.

Prayer is the key, that keeps the heart,
Lest vanity should steal within;
While saving Grace, that better part,
It treasures up, secur'd from sin.

"Ask, and ye shall receive of Me:
"Seek, and your souls shall mercy find;
"Knock, and the door shall open'd be:"
Thus spake the Saviour of mankind.

O spell of spells, Angelick might,
O more than Angel's, power Divine;
LORD, give me grace to pray aright,
And every blessing shall be mine.

B

THE PRAYER OF WANT.

“ Oh, that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep Thy statutes.”—Ps. cxix. 5.

FATHER, to me Thy mighty aid impart ;
 Enlighten, govern, sanctify my heart ;
 Refine my temper, and my will subdue ;
 Oh, make me, dead to self, “ a creature new.”
 I would the daily tenour of my way
 Witness'd more sure Thy Spirit's Heavenly
 sway ;
 Shone in the Image of Thy SON more clear—
 That Image blest—His love and filial fear ;
 His meekness, and humility of mind,
 In joy so calm, in sorrow so resign'd ;
 His tender feeling for all human woe,
 That rais'd the fallen, and embrac'd the foe.
 My soul should then unmov'd composure win,
 When Grace triumphant breaks the power of
 sin ;
 When the free captive spurns the tyrant's chain,
 And holy joys bring Eden back again.
 His living sacrifice I fain would be,
 A Dying Sacrifice Who was for me ;

Who wash'd me in the pure Baptismal flood,
Made me His own, a child an heir of God;
And oft has fed me, since, with food Divine—
Heaven's strengthening bread, and Heaven's
refreshing wine.

Oh, for such love, my grateful heart desires
To do, to be, whate'er my LORD requires.
Long, as I live, to glorify His Grace,
And, after death, behold Him "face to face."
Sated for ever with that blissful gaze,
The Prayer of Want becomes the Song of
Praise—
Praise, all the louder and more sweet to sound,
The more our "hunger" now and "thirst"
abound.

A DAY-BREAK MEDITATION.

"He continued all night in prayer to God."—S. Luke vi. 12.

THE reddening tints, that streak the sky,
 Announce the solar bridegroom nigh :
 Now all around is glad and bright,
 Rejoicing in a flood of light.
 But clouds and darkness still oppress
 Th' unrisen "Sun of Righteousness :"
 CHRIST on the earth still prostrate lies ;
 Nor yet have ceas'd His midnight cries.
 Ye dews, embalm the sacred sod,
 Where JESUS intercedes with GOD,
 That man's offence may be forgiv'n,
 And pardon seal'd 'tween earth and heav'n :
 There rests the SPIRIT'S dove-like wing,
 And Angels "Alleluia" sing.

Oh, may I worthy prove to share
 The joy of that accepted prayer,
 Heard through the tardy live-long night,
 In all its undiminished might ;
 Staying the morning stars to gaze,
 And listen, in their deep amaze—

How He, the GOD, who made them all,
Prone on the earth, a man, should fall!

Now glorious on Thy FATHER's throne,
Pleading their griefs, as if Thine own,
Thou, LORD, for sinners in their need
Dost ever live to intercede;
New grace and mercies gaining still,
Our hearts with joy and peace to fill;
Nor less, by bright example giv'n,
Chiding our languid zeal of Heav'n,
Who coldly ask from faint desire,
And soon in our devotions tire.

Yet didst Thou say; "What, could not ye
"Watch for a single hour *with Me* ?
"My kingdom violence sustains,
"And taken is by force and pains."

Then touch my lips with that "live coal,"
Fire of Thy love, to warm my soul:
An arrow from Thy quiver dart,
To penetrate to fix my heart.
Then shall my spirit freely soar,
The flesh impede, obstruct no more;
Faith shall untiring speed her heavenly way;
My prayer prevent the dawn, my praise outlive
the day.