

May 29, 2020

## Good morning, Everybody.

One of the first questions people ask each other these days is, *How are you doing with this?*, the *this*, of course, being the inconveniences and uncertainties of the virus crisis. Well, everyone is *doing* with it according to whatever they're most concerned about or interested in. There are probably lots of variations to those agendas.



Several times the last few years I've shared with you a statement from J. C. Ryle's classic, *Holiness*, that describes the only agenda that Christians should dare to have at any time, but especially in a time of trouble. The entirety of it is critical to grasp, but I want to emphasize the last sentence especially.

*Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment—hating what He hates—loving what He loves—and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.*

"Holiness" is God's agenda.

We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them [their agenda, whether right or wrong], but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness . . . the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:9-10, 14b).

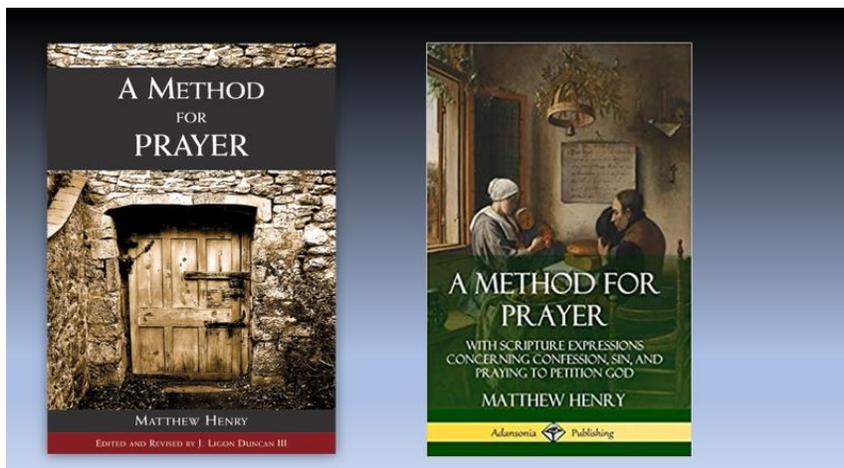
God says a great deal in His Word about why things are as they are at any time.

He's particularly concerned that His people recognize His hand in all of it, submit to it meekly and graciously, *learn* from it, *grow* through it, and then be its interpreters to those who don't (or *won't*) acknowledge Him in all their ways (Proverbs 4:3:6).

So I'd like to pose the question, are we growing in *this holiness*? The holiness Ryle so succinctly describes? Of agreeing with God *entirely*?

### Using Scripture Expressions in Prayer

During this unprecedented world-wide crisis, we should all be growing in our coveting of that kind of holiness in our praying. That is, praying in entire

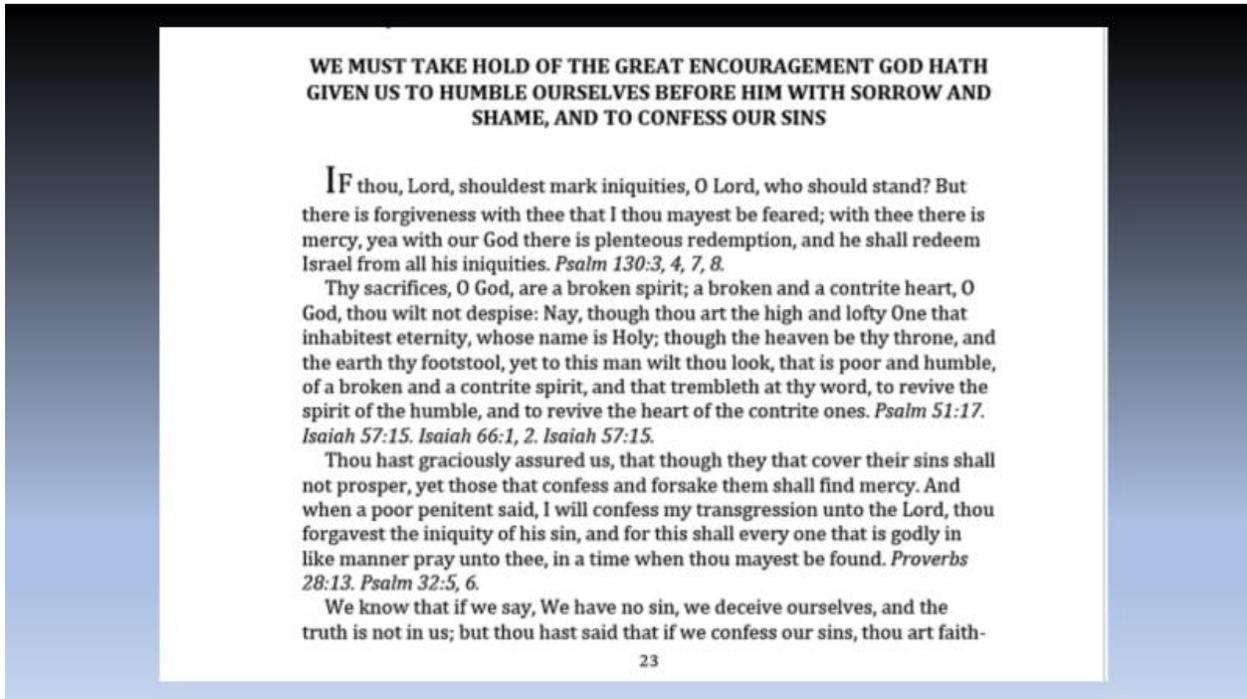


agreement with God; just as we find His mind revealed in our Bibles. The way to do that best is to learn to make use of His own words; to make His exact words to us, our very words back to Him.

Last Sunday night's message included a ppt slide of a page from Matthew Henry's, *A Method for Prayer*. Henry published this four years before his death in 1714. His aim was to provide his church and others with God's exact words for their adoration, confession, petition, thanksgiving, etc. in prayer.

Henry arranged Bible expressions for praying under nine major headings and scores and scores of sub-categories. His pulpit prayers on the Lord's Day were often thirty minutes or so in length. Undoubtedly the headings, sub-categories, and scripture quotations in *A Method for Prayer* were originally compiled for those pulpit prayers, as well as his own personal devotion. In all, the book incorporates . . . *are you ready for this?* . . . over two thousand, three hundred direct quotations of scripture!

I'm going to include the slide I used last week so that you can see what he was doing. What you're looking at is a portion of one subheading under the major category of "Confession of Sin."



You might wonder whether anyone would really be drawn to making use of such extensive prayers. But the book went through at least 30 editions between 1712 and 1865. In recent years several publishers have reissued it. The page above is from a new printing by a publisher I'd not heard of before; Adansonia. It's the one on the right in the picture on the first page above; the one with the family praying before a meal.

I like this edition very much. For one thing, the book is hardback (though the spine is only glued, not stitched; so it will remain to be seen how durable it is). And as you can see, the layout is attractive, with plenty of white space on the pages. Best of all, it includes the verse references with the quotations.

The other edition in the picture above is the paperback that many of us have been using. It includes Henry's "Directions for Daily Communion," which the Adansonia edition does not. But the verse references are confined to endnotes at the back

of the book. So there's a tradeoff, no matter which edition you choose. And both editions are slightly marred by occasional, careless typos.

There's also a pdf of the complete work that John Rodgers found for us. I've attached it to this e-mail for any of you who would like to have it. The nice thing about it? It's free (smile). Thanks, Brother John!

**Encouragement:**

One of the things that has been great blessing to me during this virus crisis is the way in which many of you have seized the moment to work on a deeper devotional walk with the Lord. Almost every day I've heard in one way or another of new steps that you've taken. One that has been mentioned repeatedly has to do with your prayer lives. One of our dear older believers wrote, *My praying has changed. . . . I still pray a lot for people's needs. . . . But now my prayers are about God and who He is. How blessed we are to have such a great God.*

I don't know how you could begin to estimate the value of that kind of upward step. I don't guess that it would be possible. What must it mean and say to the Lord Himself?

Have a blessed day. For those of us who are usually stressed with pollen allergies this time of year, all this rain is great!

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick