

# Psalm 5: In the Morning You Shall Hear My Voice

Expository Lessons from the Psalms

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## I. Introduction to Psalm 5

- a. Read **Psalm 5**.
- b. A few immediate observations and comments:
  - i. This psalm was written by David.
  - ii. The Masoretic Text (MT) and Septuagint (LXX) read are almost the same for this psalm, but the verse numbering varies slightly.
  - iii. One line from this psalm is quoted in the New Testament, by Paul, in **Romans 3**.
    1. In laying out the wickedness of men, Paul quotes from this psalm: “Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have *practiced deceit*...” (**Romans 3:13**, NKJV)
    2. Note that **Psalm 5** from the Masoretic Text (MT) reads *almost the same* as **Romans 3:13** here.
      - a. “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is destruction; Their throat is an open tomb; *They flatter with their tongue.*” (**Psalm 5:9**, NKJV)
      - b. Most other translations based on the MT render this similarly: “flatter” (including KJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, ESV).
      - c. In the MT it says literally, “their tongue they *make smooth*” (see Young’s Literal Translation and the JPS 1917 translation).
    3. However, Paul in **Romans 3:13** is quoting directly (word-for-word in Greek) from the LXX of **Psalm 5:10** here. There it says exactly the same thing, in the same words, including “they deal deceptively with their tongues / with their tongues they practice deceit” (in the Greek, the two passages are identical).
    4. This is one more example of why I like to consider the LXX when studying the Old Testament. I want to read the same version that the apostles are quoting from.

## II. In the Morning You Shall Hear My Voice

- a. Many years ago, I was part of a group of teachers who were working together as a team to teach a lesson on prayer. The teacher who spoke immediately prior to me made the statement, "It does not matter *when* you pray during the day, just so long as you do pray."
  - i. I spoke right after the man who said that it really didn't matter when we pray and went to this passage from **Psalm 5** (and a few others) to make my counterpoint.
    1. Read **Psalm 5:1-4** (LXX).
    2. Also, consider other passages that speak of early morning devotions: **Psalm 57:7-9** (designated **Psalm 56:8-10** in the LXX) and **Psalm 108:1-3** (designated **Psalm 107:1-3** in the LXX).
      - a. In these passages it says he arises to pray "at dawn / early in the morning".
  - ii. **Question:** What do you think? Is it especially important to pray in the morning? Does it matter?
  - iii. Consider the example of Jesus.
    1. "At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him. Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. And Simon and those who were with Him searched for Him. When they found Him, they said to Him, 'Everyone is looking for You.' But He said to them, 'Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth.' And He was preaching in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and casting out demons." (**Mark 1:32-39**, NKJV)
      - a. After an exhausting night of ministering to others, Jesus rises very early in the morning and goes off by Himself, to pray.
      - b. After praying, He resumes his ministry of preaching and casting out demons.

2. **Question:** If the Son of God needed to spend time alone with the Father at the start of His day, *what about us?* Should we be following his example?
  - b. Some may be struggling with this topic (early morning prayer and devotional life).
    - i. Some of us have been in very human-effort-driven churches with pressure to do all kinds of things in very measurable ways, with accompanying accountability (evangelism, Bible study, prayer, etc.). Therefore, just mentioning this subject may cause distress to some.
      1. I do not believe the Lord wants me to attempt to manage the spiritual lives of other people. I have plenty to deal with in my own life!
      2. However, if someone who is convicted by the Scriptures and/or their own conscience asks for accountability regarding something they struggle with or want to change, and *takes the initiative to ask*, I am happy to help them.
    - ii. Some Christians simply are not ‘morning people’. They struggle to stay engaged with God early in the morning. They sincerely connect better with God later in the day.
    - iii. Some may have physical limitations that require them to sleep more to be healthy (chronic fatigue or other debilitating conditions, acute health challenges, etc.)
    - iv. Some may have jobs that involve being at work extremely early, or shift work that makes early morning prayer and devotional life particularly challenging or impractical.
  - c. Others (like me) may struggle with this for *other* reasons (which may not be good reasons). For example:
    - i. Many of us are lazy and just don’t want to get out of bed in the morning when we need to.
      1. “Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain, Overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, And gathers her food in the harvest. *How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to sleep— So shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, And your need like an armed man.*” (**Proverbs 6:6–11, NKJV**)

- ii. Lack of discipline in getting to bed when you need to, at night. Do you consider your time online or doing other things as more important than prayer?
  - iii. Some are like the third soil in the Parable of the Sower (**Mark 4:19**, **Luke 8:14**). Over time, they are choked out by the pleasures and comforts of this life, worldly worries, and riches.
- d. My personal situation (being open).
- i. Teaching on this subject, I do not want to be a hypocrite, pretending to be one way and calling others to do something I myself am not doing. Jesus strongly condemned the Pharisees for that, in **Matthew 23**.
    - 1. "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for *they say, and do not do.*'" (**Matthew 23:1-3**, NKJV)
    - 2. "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, *hypocrites!* ..." (**Matthew 23:13**, NKJV)
  - ii. When I was younger, before being retired from my engineering career, I *had to* get up early in the morning if I wanted to pray and study the Bible. Realistically, there was no other way for me under those life circumstances!
    - 1. A lot of the time I was tired and often did not get all the rest I needed for my health.
  - iii. Now that I am mostly retired from my engineering career, I enjoy the fact that I have the ability to sleep in the morning as long as I want to.
  - iv. The example of Ron Drabot, a minister who set a great example of personal devotion to early morning prayer and Bible study:
    - 1. Although in the full-time ministry with a flexible schedule (he could have arisen late in the morning), Ron made a point of rising early every morning to pray and to read his Bible.
    - 2. He was not boasting or showy about his private devotional life. I saw how he lived. He did this in part because he wanted to lead the way for others, by example.
      - a. He did not want to call others (who had to get up early if they wanted to have extended time to pray and read) to do something he was not willing to do himself.

- b. As Peter told the elders, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but *being examples to the flock*;” (1 Peter 5:2–3, NKJV)

### III. Strong Medicine from Cyprian and from William Law

- a. I would like to bring forward the convicting words of writers from the past who had some very challenging things to say regarding the Christian way of life, including on the importance of early morning prayer.
  - i. I encourage you to *at least consider* what they are saying.
  - ii. Ask yourself whether what they teach aligns with what is found in the Scriptures.
  - iii. However, do feel free to ‘push back’ if, on any point, you think they are going too far, or if you believe any of their points really do not apply to your own situation.
- b. Sometimes it is good to hear strong messages, to clear out garbage and spiritual decay that may have accumulated in our hearts or lifestyles.
  - i. This reminds me of a line from the old advertisement: “Once in every week, Drano in every drain!”
    - 1. Drano is a very strong caustic drain cleaner that eats away at and dissolves grease, gunk, hair, etc. that has accumulated in plumbing drains in the home.
  - ii. Strong Biblical teaching also reminds me of something from my own civil engineering career: ‘pig launchers’ and ‘pig catchers’, rather colorfully named stations we would design into critical wastewater or sludge pipelines.
    - 1. When a young engineer I first heard about these and was baffled by the reference to a ‘pig’.
    - 2. In the wastewater piping world, a “pig” refers to an inflatable cylinder with brushes on the exterior, slightly smaller than the inside diameter of the pipe it was intended to clean out. The “pig” would be flushed through the partially clogged pipeline under high pressure, to clean it out.
  - iii. Similarly, we need strong preaching and teaching periodically to help our spiritual heart and arteries stay clean!

- c. Cyprian, bishop of the church in Carthage, North Africa, during a time of great persecution, wrote a treatise on the Lord's Prayer, c. 250 AD. In it, he which he addressed the importance of that prayer, as well as general principles for effective prayer.
- i. In that work, Cyprian went through the Lord's prayer phrase by phrase, explaining the significance of each part of the prayer.
  - ii. He then explained that if we want to have *effective prayers*, we should combine that with good works, especially helping the poor and oppressed. Cyprian wrote:
    1. "By Isaiah also the Lord reminds us, and teaches similar things, saying, 'Loosen every knot of iniquity, release the oppressions of contracts which have no power, let the troubled go into peace, and break every unjust engagement. Break your bread for the hungry, and bring the poor that are without shelter into your house. When you see the naked, clothe him; and do not despise those of the same family and race as yourself. Then your light shall break forth in season, and thy raiment shall spring forth speedily; and righteousness shall go before you, and the glory of God shall surround you. Then you shall call, and God shall hear you; and while you shall yet speak, He shall say, Here I am.' (**Isaiah 58:6-9**)
    2. "He promises that He will be at hand, and says that He will hear and protect those who, loosening the knots of unrighteousness from their heart, and giving alms among the members of God's household according to His commands, even in hearing what God commands to be done, do themselves also deserve to be heard by God.
    3. "The blessed apostle Paul, when aided in the necessity of affliction by his brethren, said that good works which are performed are sacrifices to God. 'I am full, he said, 'having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.' (**Philippians 4:18**)
    4. "For when one has pity on the poor, he lends to God; and he who gives to the least gives to God—sacrifices spiritually to God an odor of a sweet smell."
      - a. (Source: Cyprian, *The Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise IV - On the Lord's Prayer*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 456)

- iii. Cyprian then points to the special times of prayer observed by many Christians (the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> hours, corresponding to 9 am, noon and 3 pm). He ties those back to Daniel praying three times per day, the times marking Jesus on the cross, the trinity (the number three), and the times we find the apostles praying in the book of **Acts**.
- iv. Cyprian then explains the importance of prayer in the morning, at the start of the day.
  1. “But for us, beloved brethren, besides the hours of prayer observed of old, both the times and the sacraments have now increased in number. For we must also pray in the morning, that the Lord’s resurrection may be celebrated by morning prayer. And this formerly the Holy Spirit pointed out in the Psalms, saying, ‘My King, and my God, because to You will I cry; O Lord, in the morning You shall hear my voice; in the morning will I stand before You, and will look up to You.’ (**Psalm 5:1-4**)
  2. “And again, the Lord speaks by the mouth of the prophet: ‘Early in the morning shall they watch for me, saying, Let us go, and return unto the Lord our God.’ (**Hosea 5:15-6:1, LXX**)
  3. “Also at the sunsetting and at the decline of day, of necessity we must pray again. For since Christ is the true sun and the true day, as the worldly sun and worldly day depart, when we pray and ask that light may return to us again, we pray for the advent of Christ, which shall give us the grace of everlasting light.”
    - a. (Source: Cyprian, *Treatise IV - On the Lord’s Prayer*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 457)
    - b. Points made here by Cyprian include:
      - i. Morning (sunrise) is an important time for Christians to pray.
      - ii. This was foreshadowed by what David through the Holy Spirit said in **Psalm 5:1-4**.
      - iii. Elsewhere in the same treatise, Cyprian explained that Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, as revealed in **Malachi 4:2**. Therefore, at the rising and setting of the sun in the sky, we think of Christ.
        1. At the rising of the sun we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus.

2. At the setting of the sun, we pray for His return, at the Second Coming.
- v. Cyprian concludes that since Jesus is the light of the world, we who are “children of the light” have the light even at night. Therefore, we do not cease from praying even at night.
- d. From William Law’s spiritual classic, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (published 1728), chapter 14:
  - i. (Read the text included in the Appendix to these notes.)
    1. Points made by Law here include:
      - a. Every Christian should be up early in the morning to pray. It is more important for a Christian to be up early to pray, than for a tradesman or businessman to rise early for their work.
      - b. Lying in bed when one should be up praying is sloth and laziness. Choosing this over praying to and praising God is wasteful of our time and our lives.
      - c. Being lazy and arriving late to pray impacts our prayers and our character.
        - i. Softness, idleness and giving in to sensuality will erode our character, making it easier for us to give in to various sins of the flesh throughout the day.
        - ii. We need to mortify our bodies and bring them under control.
      - d. We can’t be both Epicureans (= living to maximize pleasure) and Christians.
        - i. We must choose between the narrow road and the broad road (**Matthew 7:13-14**). We can’t travel down both at the same time!
        - ii. Law explains the problems of living an indulgent life and contrasts that with the blessing of a life of self-control.
    - ii. The *very first* decisions we make each day, right after we awake from sleep, are typically:
      1. Will I get up now, or will I linger for a while longer in bed?

2. Once I am up, what thing will I do next? Will I devote myself to God in prayer or Bible reading, or do something else first (like check my phone or computer)?
  - a. These first two decisions of the day can impact *everything that follows!*
- iii. Law concludes his discussion on morning prayer by giving suggestions regarding how we should pray.
  1. Meditate on great passages from Scripture on praise and petition (especially from the **Psalms**), and even commit them to memory.
  2. Learn from others who have gone before us, including reading spiritual classics on prayer. Strive to study and grow constantly in our ability to pray effectively, as one would do in anything he or she wanted to excel at.

#### IV. Paul's Use of Psalm 5

- a. In **Romans 3:10-18**, Paul quotes from **Psalm 5** and other psalms (including **Psalm 13**) in his discussion of the depravity of man. In this particular context, Paul appears to be addressing the condition of the Jews (see **Romans 3:19**).
- b. Calvinists and other Protestants use this to teach a doctrine of '*total depravity*' (claiming that following the Fall of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3**, all people have been totally morally corrupt, incapable of anything good). The points that Protestants often make from **Romans 3** include:
  - i. There is "no one who does good, not one".
  - ii. No one fears God. There is "no fear of God before their eyes".
  - iii. The spiritual condition of all men is further described: "their throat is an open tomb / with their tongues they have practiced deceit" (**Psalm 5**).
- c. The best way to evaluate this claim is to read the Old Testament passages that Paul is quoting from, in context.
  - i. **Question:** Does David teach that all people are totally wicked, that none fear God?
  - ii. David speaks of *two groups of people* in **Psalm 5** and **Psalm 13**.
    1. The righteous (including David himself, at the time he wrote these psalms); and

2. the wicked.
- iii. Note: David says that he *fears God* (**Psalm 5:7**; designated **Psalm 5:8** in the LXX).
- iv. David also speaks in the same psalm of those who “hope in the Lord”, who “love His name”; and of the Lord blessing “the righteous” (**Psalm 5:11-12**; designated **Psalm 5:12-13** in the LXX).
- v. Is it true that *absolutely no one* fears God?
  1. David said that *he* did!
  2. Another example of Scripture attesting to a person being God-fearing is the case of Cornelius (**Acts 10:1-4, 10:34-35**).
  3. There are many others throughout the Scriptures who are referred to as people who feared God, including:
    - a. Noah (**Hebrews 11:7**),
    - b. Abraham (**Genesis 22:12**),
    - c. Isaac (**Genesis 31:42**), and
    - d. The Hebrew midwives (**Exodus 1:17-21**).
  4. **Conclusion:** The Scriptures clearly teach that indeed there *were* some people who feared God after the Fall of Adam and Eve. Protestant reformers like Calvin are taking Paul’s statement in **Romans 3** out of context.

- V. Appendix – From Chapter 14 of *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, by William Law** (excerpted from the republished text by Vintage Spiritual Classics, 2002, pp. 146-153)
- a. “I take it for granted that every Christian that is in health is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early because he is a Christian then because he is a laborer or a tradesman or a servant or has business that wants him.
  - b. “We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in bed when he should be at his labor or in his shop. We cannot tell how to think anything good of him who is such a slave to drowsiness as to neglect his business for it.
  - c. “Let this therefore teach us to conceive how odious we must appear in the sight of Heaven if we are in bed, shut up in sleep and darkness, when we should be praising God, and are such slaves to drowsiness as to neglect our devotions for it.
  - d. “For if he is to be blamed as a slothful drone that rather chooses the lazy indulgence of sleep than to perform his proper share of worldly business, how much more is he to be reproached that would rather lie folded up in a bed then be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration!
  - e. “Prayer is the nearest approach to God and the highest enjoyment of Him that we are capable of in this life.
  - f. “It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest imitation of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven.
  - g. “When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness; we are not before kings and princes, but in the presence and audience of the Lord of all the world, and can be no higher till death is swallowed up by glory.
  - h. “On the other hand, sleep is the poorest, dullest refreshment of the body, that is so far from being intended as an enjoyment that we are forced to receive it either in a state of insensibility or in the folly of dreams.
  - i. “Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence that even amongst mere animals we despise them most which are most drowsy.
  - j. “He, therefore, that chooses to enlarge the slothful indulgence of sleep rather than be early in his devotions to God, chooses the dullest refreshment of the body before the highest, noblest employment of the soul; he chooses that state which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exercise which is the glory of angels.

- k. "You will perhaps say, though you rise late yet you are always careful of your devotions when you are up.
- l. "It may be so. But what then? Is it well done of you to rise late because you pray when you are up? Is it pardonable to waste a great part of the day in bed because sometime after you say your prayers?
- m. "It is as much your duty to rise up to pray, as to pray when you are risen. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle slothful worshiper that rises to prayers as idle servants rise to their labor.
- n. "Further, if you fancy that you are careful of your devotions when you are up though it be your custom to rise late, you deceive yourself; for you cannot perform your devotions as you ought. For he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away a good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up then he is prepared for fasting, abstinence, or any other self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer than he can perform these duties, but he is no more disposed to enter into the true spirit of prayer than he is disposed to fasting. For sleep thus indulged gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers and makes us unable to relish anything but what suits with an idle state of mind and gratifies our natural tempers, as sleep does. So that a person who is a slave to this idleness is in the same temper when he is up, and though he is not asleep, yet he is under the effects of it, and everything that is idle, indulgent, or sensual, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him; and, on the other hand, everything that requires care or trouble or self-denial is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. He that places any happiness in this morning indulgence would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner, though not with sleep, yet with such enjoyments as gratify and indulge the body in the same manner as sleep does; or, at least, with such as come as near to it as they can. The remembrance of a warm bed is in his mind all the day, and he is glad when he is not one of those that sit starving in a church.
- o. "Now you do not imagine such a one can truly mortified that body which he thus indulges: yet you might as well think this as that he can truly perform his devotions, or live in such a drowsy state of indulgence and yet relish the joys of a spiritual life.
- p. "For surely no one will pretend to say that he knows and feels the true happiness of prayer, who does not think it while to be early at it.
- q. "It is not possible in nature for an epicure to be truly devout. He must renounce this habit of sensuality before he can relish the happiness of devotion.

- r. "Now he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all devout and heavenly tempers as he that turns the necessities of eating into a course of indulgence.
- s. "A person that eats and drinks too much does not feel such effects from it as those do who live in notorious instances of gluttony and intemperance. But yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world, nor such as torments his own conscience, is a great and constant hindrance to his improvement in virtue. It gives him eyes that see not and ears that hear not; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entering into the true spirit of religion.
- t. "Now this is the case of those who waste their time and sleep. It does not disorder their lives or wound their consciences as notorious acts of intemperance do; but, like any other more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion and sinks the soul into a state of dullness and sensuality."
- u. "... What conquest has he got over himself; what right hand has he cut off; what trials is he prepared for; what sacrifice is he ready to offer unto God, who cannot be so cruel to himself as to rise to prayer at such time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise for their labor?
- v. "Some people will not scruple to tell you that they indulge themselves in sleep because they have nothing to do, and that if they had either business or pleasure to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But such people must be told that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a hardened heart to change; they have a whole spirit of religion to get. For surely he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure, or that he has nothing to do because nothing but his prayers want him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.
- w. "You must not therefore consider how small a crime it is to rise late, but you must consider how great a misery it is to want the spirit of religion, to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer, and to live in such softness and idleness as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly Christian and spiritual life.
- x. "This is a right way of judging of the crime of wasting a great part of your time in bed.
- y. "... If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day; if He spent whole nights in prayer; if the devout Anna was day and night in the temple (**Luke 2:36-37**); if St. Paul and Silas at midnight sang praises unto God (**Acts**

**16:35**); if the primitive Christians for several hundred years, besides their hours of prayers in the daytime, met publicly in the churches at midnight to join in psalms and prayers; is it not certain that these practices showed the state of their heart? Are they not so many plain proofs of the whole turn of their minds?

- z. "And if you live in a contrary state, wasting a great part of every day in sleep, thinking any time soon enough to be at your prayers; is it not equally certain that this practice as much shows the state of your heart and the whole turn of your mind?
- aa. "So that if this indulgence is your way of life, you have as much reason to believe yourself destitute of the true spirit of devotion as you have to believe the apostles and saints of the primitive church were truly devout. For as their way of life was a demonstration of their devotion, so a contrary way of life is as strong a proof of want of devotion.
- bb. "... When you look into the writings and lives of the first Christians, you see the same spirit that you see in the Scriptures. All is reality, life, and action. Watching and prayers, self-denial and mortification was the common business of their lives.
- cc. "From that time to this, there has been no person like them, eminent for piety, who has not, like them, been eminent for self-denial and mortification. This is the only royal way that leads to a kingdom.
- dd. "But how far are you from this way of life, or rather how contrary to it, if, instead of imitating their austerity and mortification you cannot so much as renounce so poor an indulgence as to be able to rise to your prayers! If self-denials and bodily sufferings, if watchings and fastings, will be marks of glory at the day of judgment, where must we hide our heads, that have slumbered away our time in sloth and softness?
- ee. "... For the same reason, I do not insist much on the crime of wasting so much of your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit which was not only the spirit of Christ and His apostles, the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been amongst men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.
- ff. "Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit that extends itself through our whole spirit and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

- gg. "It is contrary to piety, not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner as an ill habit of body is contrary to health.
- hh. "On the other hand, if you were to rise early every morning as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though it seems such a small circumstance of life, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constantly in your head that softness and idleness were to be avoided, that self-denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.
- ii. "This one rule would teach you to think of others; it would dispose your mind to exactness, and would be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day under rules of prudence and devotion.
- jj. "But above all, one certain benefit from this method you will be sure of having – it will best fit and prepare you for the reception of the Holy Spirit. When you thus begin the day in the spirit of religion, renouncing sleep because you are to renounce softness and redeem your time, this disposition, as it puts your heart into a good state, so it will procure the assistance of the Holy Spirit. What is so planted and watered will certainly have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you like meat and drink, you will feel what you say, and begin to know what saints and holy men have meant by fervors of devotion.
- kk. "He that is thus prepared for prayer, who rises with these dispositions, is in a very different state from him who has no rules of this kind; who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed or is able to sleep no longer. If such a one prays only with his mouth, if his heart feels nothing of that which he says, if his prayers are only things of course, if they are a lifeless form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said, there is nothing to be wondered at in all this; for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life."