

end of speaking (in public) is to be heard: and when that end is attained a greater elevation of the voice is frequently hurtful to the speaker, and is more likely to confuse a hearer than fix his attention. I do not deny but allowance must be made for constitution, and the warmth of the passions, which dispose some persons to speak louder than others. Yet such will do well to restrain themselves as much as they can. It may seem indeed to indicate great earnestness, and that the heart is much affected; yet it is often but false fire. It may be thought speaking 'with power'; but a person who is favoured with the Lord's presence may pray with power in a moderate voice; and there may be very little of the power of the Spirit, though the voice should be heard in the street and neighbourhood.

The other extreme of speaking too low is not so frequent; but, if we are not heard, we might as well altogether hold our peace. It exhausts the spirits, and wearies the attention, to be listening for any length of time to a very low voice. Some words or sentences will be lost, which will render what is heard less intelligible and agreeable. If the speaker can be heard by the person furthest distant from him, the rest will hear of course.

The tone of the voice is likewise so be regarded. Some have a tone in prayer so very different from their usual way of speaking, that their nearest friends, if not accustomed to them, could hardly know them by their voice. Sometimes the tone is changed, perhaps more than once, so that if our eyes did not give us more certain information than our ears, we might think two or three persons had been speaking by turns. It is a pity that when we approve what is spoken we should be so easily disconcerted by an awkwardness of delivery: yet so it often is, and probably so it will be, in

the present weak and imperfect state of human nature. It is more to be lamented than wondered at, that sincere Christians are sometimes forced to confess: 'He is a good man, and his prayers as to their substance are spiritual and judicious, but there is something so displeasing in his manner that I am always uneasy when I hear him'.

Contrary to this, and still more offensive, is a custom that some have of *talking* to the Lord in prayer. It is their natural voice indeed, but it is that expression of it which they use upon the most familiar and trivial occasions. The human voice is capable of so many inflections and variations, that it can adapt itself to the different sensations of the mind, as joy, sorrow, fear, desire, etc. If a man was pleading for his life, or expressing his thanks to the king for a pardon, common sense and decency would teach him a suitableness of manner; and anyone who could not understand his language might know by the sound of his words that he was not making a bargain or telling a story. How much more, when we speak to the King of kings, should the consideration of his glory and our own vileness, and of the important concerns we are engaged in before him, impress us with an air of seriousness and reverence, and prevent us from speaking to him as if he was altogether such an one as ourselves! The liberty to which we are called by the gospel does not at all encourage such a pertness and familiarity as would be unbecoming to use towards a fellow-worm, who was a little advanced above us in worldly dignity.

I shall be glad if these hints may be of any service to those who desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and who wish that whatever has a tendency to damp the spirit of devotion, either in themselves or in others, might be avoided.