

Charles Armond Miller

The Perfect Prayer
A Devotional Study



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and lead us not into temptation,
deliver us from evil.

The Lord's Prayer

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The Lord's Prayer

A Devotional Study Based on Luther's Smaller Catechism

:: { .spacedtitle } By Pastor Charles Armond Miller, M.A.
Author of "The Way of the Cross", etc.

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Dedication

To My Father and Mother Who First Taught Me To Pray

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking spiritual truth.

CHARLES ARMAND MILLER (1864-1917) earned degrees from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Chicago. Rev. Miller served pastorates in New York City, Charleston, SC, and Philadelphia. His books include *The Way of the Cross* and *The Perfect Prayer*, a devotional study of the Lord's Prayer based on Martin Luther's Small Catechism.

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Preface

LUTHER'S CATECHISM is universally recognized among us as the best basis for the instruction of our people, and it serves equally well to aid their devotion. Our Church literature, in the English language, has provided for the fuller treatment of several of its divisions. Dallman's "Ten Commandments," Gerberding's "Way of Salvation," Cooper-rider's "Means of Grace," and other books, excellently cover the First, Second, Fourth and Fifth parts. But we have nothing, so far as the present writer has been able to discover, which explains and applies the Third Part, the Lord's Prayer. It has seemed desirable to attempt to supply this lack. May the blessing of the Lord be given to this small contribution to the glory of His Name and to the use of His Church.

Second Week in Lent, 1902.

The School Of Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray. – Luke 11:1

THESE WORDS are a suitable expression of what ought to be our deep desire as we approach the study of the Lord's Prayer. They embody the request of the disciples, which was answered by our Lord in that wonderful pattern of prayer which the study of all the generations since His day has never exhausted, and which we cannot hope to fathom in its depth, though we may expect to see something of its beauty and comprehensiveness. We ought to be thankful that this desire to be taught to pray came into the hearts of these disciples, and that they laid it before the Master, since it became the occasion for this priceless utterance from His lips.

To pray is not an easy thing. It requires preparation, instruction and practice. Prayer must be taught. From childhood at the mother's knee, up through the increasing years with their increasing complexity of life, everyone needs to be taught to pray. It showed a wise appreciation of their need that the disciples should have made the request, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" Although it is true that every cry from the heart is prayer, and reaches the sympathizing ear of God, it is none the less true that to understand all the privilege and propriety of prayer, to know how to approach God fitly, appropriately and acceptably, is the task of the maturing Christian life, and never ends. "*We know not what we should pray for as we ought*" is the testimony of the inspired Apostle. (Rom. 8:26.) Experience surely has proven the truth for us. Are we not ready then to join the Master's school of prayer, and ask Him to teach *us* to pray?

There is something for us to learn before we are ready to examine the words of the prayer He has given us; – something to learn from the connection in which that prayer is found, in the pages of the two Evangelists who record it. The first account of the giving of the Lord's Prayer is written in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the sixth chapter, beginning at the sixth verse. We may notice that here, in rebuking and

warning against the dead formalities of prayer, as it was practiced among the Pharisees, and in offering inspiration to a stronger and deeper use of prayer, our Lord gives to His disciples a *form* of prayer. Again, at a later time it would seem, (according to the account in St. Luke 11:2, and following verses), Jesus was asked by one of his disciples, not one of the Twelve, but a more recent follower, who had not been present at the first giving of the prayer, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" It is a suggestive fact that the Lord did not find it necessary to give any further instruction or any substitute or improvement but repeated the answer He had already given, and thus distinctly authorized the use of what we call the Lord's Prayer, not only as a model, but as a fixed form. "*And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'*" Here, once for all, is given justification, nay, even command, for the devout and fervent use of forms of prayer. Men ought to be able to see that formality does not consist in the use of forms, but in that which may as easily be found when there is extempore prayer as when the ancient and beautiful prayers of the Church are employed, – the desire to be seen of men, the assumption of the attitude and pretense of true prayer when the heart is far from God.

As we look carefully at the setting of the two accounts already referred to we may learn some of the foundation principles of prayer.

1. Prayer is Indispensable to the Christian Life.

This is assumed. The example of Jesus is enough to establish the truth. He was praying in a certain place, and it was when He had ceased that one of the disciples said unto Him, "*Lord, teach us to pray.*" No further proof that prayer is indispensable is needed. If the Lord did not know how to dispense with prayer in His life, (and we read, again and again, of His fervent, earnest prayers, in the clear still night, under the watching stars, in the wilderness during the long forty days of fasting, and in the last hours, when the agony was coming upon Him, and He found relief and strength only in the agonizing entreaties to His Father,) – if He, spotless, pure, un-fallen, free from the temptations from within which are our greatest foes, needed prayer, how can any one of us, helpless and sinful, hope or expect to live without it?

It is worth emphasizing at the very beginning of our studies, that he who does not pray is no Christian. Whatever other things, commonly associated with the Christian life, may be regarded as unessential, this is one thing that cannot be put aside. You will pray if the Spirit of Christ is in your heart, and if you are not led by the Spirit you are none of His.

2. Prayer is a Thing of Intimate, Secret Communion with God.

Our Lord tells very distinctly, in the passage in St. Matthew, what prayer is not. It is not a hypocritical exhibition of one's supposed piety. The men who love to stand and pray in public, "*to be seen of men,*" are not praying at all when they think they are. True prayer is the opposite of this. It is a thing between God and the soul, and none other.

Neither does prayer consist in the repetition of words. It is not a question of the repeating of so many forms. Prayer is not acceptable in proportion to its length. That is a heathen idea. The prophets of Baal, crying aloud from morning till night, "O Baal, hear us!" "O Baal, hear us!" had that idea. The Hindus and Mohammedans of today have that idea. The Church of Rome, teaching her people, as a penance, to repeat so many "Ave Marias" and so many "Pater Nosters," keeping account, the while, on their string of beads, arranged for that purpose, has something very like the idea the Master rejected.

Over against all this, our Lord tells us, When ye pray go into the secret places, your places of prayer; shut the door, let nothing be present to disturb your thoughts, think of nothing, care for nothing, but the privilege and opportunity to speak with God; then open your heart to Him, let Him see into your soul, and behold all the springs of your life, and beseech Him for pardon, for guidance, for protection, for grace. That is prayer.

3. Prayer Involves Trust in the Father's Love and Wisdom.

“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him,”(Matt. 6:8.) It is a child’s approach to the father. The realization of this blessed and most intimate relation lies very near to the basis of all true prayer. Christ traces very clearly the thought of the fatherhood of God, as He invites to prayer and instructs concerning it. We are to say *“Our Father,”* and we are to come remembering that our Father knoweth that we have need. Prayer is not something from which to shrink. The presence of God is not a presence that you need to fear or dread, nor is the approach to that presence one to cause alarm. Does the child fear to come to the mother’s knee and prattle all its desires, though they be, in very truth, trifles light as air? Just so, the foundation of all prayer must be the recognition of God as our wise and loving Father. And that is only saying in another way, that no prayer is a true prayer unless it is offered from a believing heart. To trust in Him as Father, who knows us and all our thoughts, who yearns with infinite love over His weak and ignorant children, and who will give us the answer to our prayer which His love and wisdom indicate as best, is to come aright. This also solves many of the difficult questions about prayer which arise in our minds. He is our Father. He knows our need. We must trust Him. That is enough.

4. Prayer Should Expect and Receive an Answer.

This is simply reiterating the last thought and going a step further. It finds its proof in the words of our Lord immediately following the account of the giving of the prayer in the Gospel according to St. Luke. (Luke 11:5-13.) The parable of the unwilling friend, who is persuaded to action in spite of every obstacle and difficulty, by his importunate neighbor, presents perhaps more striking points of contrast with our relation to God in prayer than points of similarity. But the one lesson of perseverance in presenting our supplications, is very clear. A man who has gone to bed, and does not wish to be disturbed, who calls to the man knocking at his door, “It is too late, too much trouble, come some other time,” can be convinced that he will get no more rest until he complies with the urgent request, and that the quickest way of getting rid of his friend is to give him what he wants. But our Friend never slumbers nor sleeps, never is too tired to hear and help us, needs no

such arguments as prevailed with the unwilling householder. We call upon One whose eye is always upon the righteous, and whose ear is ever open to their cry, who sees no obstacle, and knows no difficulty that can separate His loved ones from Him, since Jesus came and opened up a way of access by His death and resurrection and ascension. Why should we hesitate to entreat Him again and again, until He answers our entreaty, and pours upon us more of His grace and more of the richness of His power? But some one may ask what we are to think of the prayers that are not answered. Some one tells us, "I have been praying for years for a certain gift, and have not received it; my prayers have not been answered." Perhaps the time has not yet come. We may ask what we will, but we may not tell God the day and the hour of the arrival of His answer. He knows when the fullness of time is here. Perhaps it was not prayer which you have been offering. It may have been that the believing heart was not there, or that the outpouring of that heart was not based upon His Word of promise. And again, it may have been that the prayer was answered and that you did not recognize the answer.

Let us establish in our souls the conviction that no true prayer ever went unanswered. No true father ever refused to give his son bread or a fish, when the need was present. Nor does any true father ever refuse his child any request which he can bestow, if it is for the good of the child. And our Father, besides, is bound by His Word. "*Ask*" He says, that is, persevere in presenting your desires; "*seek*," which involves faith that there is something that may be obtained; "*knock*," a word which denotes the intensity of the spiritual longing, – and He vouches for the receiving, and finding, and opening to the petitioner. Prayer should expect and should receive an answer. And it does.

St. Paul went before the Lord with the thorn in his flesh. He desired its removal. He asked perseveringly, believingly, earnestly. "*Thrice I besought the Lord.*" There was prayer, intense, full of faith, meeting all the conditions. Yet the thorn was not removed. Do you say that St. Paul's prayer was not answered? Then you are wrong. "*He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee.*" So the Apostle was answered. Is not grace sufficient to endure, sufficient to transmute pain into nobler character, a greater gift, a better answer than what he had asked for? The thorn changed into a glory, – "*Most gladly therefore will I glory in my weakness,*" – was not that a far richer boon than the thorn extracted? God will always answer

true prayer, but not always in the very gift requested. That would be for the father, when the ignorant child asked for a stone, to give it him, or when he asked for a scorpion, to put the deadly creature into his hands. God will not do that, any more than He will disappoint the one who asks for bread with the gift of a stone. But He will, and often He does, give bread when you foolishly cried for a stone, or a fish when you wanted a scorpion. But surely He answers the prayer, when for a lesser boon, or for a hurtful thing. He bestows a gracious gift.

In truth, prayer is simply one manifestation of a believing life, and a believing life means a life surrendered to God. Faith is not a mere intellectual act, but it is the yielding up of the man to God, in all he does, loves, desires and thinks. *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you,”* because, abiding in Him, you will seek only for those things which make for His glory, and are according to His will, and when you cannot know with certitude His will, the deepest desire of our heart is that He choose for you what is best. True prayer, then, cannot be unanswered.

But, best of all. He encourages us to ask for the highest things. Then we cannot fail of finding our hearts’ desires fulfilled in letter as well as in spirit. He bids us ask, with utmost confidence, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, (Luke 11:13.) And in that gift is embodied all others. To have the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, in overflowing power, is to be drawn into ever closer fellowship with Christ, and in Him abiding, we shall ask what we will and it shall be done unto us. Let us not fail to grasp and claim the promise.

The Introduction

“Our Father who art in heaven.” – Matt 6:9.

THE LORD’S PRAYER forms the third part of our Catechism. We learn in that wonderful little book, first, the Law, in order to understand our sinfulness; and, secondly, the Creed, or the Gospel, which sets before us God’s grace, and tells us what the Christian must believe in order to his soul’s salvation; and then comes the Lord’s Prayer, which teaches us how we are to approach God, and how we must seek from Him that grace which He is ready to bestow upon us. After we have trusted in Jesus Christ and received forgiveness through Him, prayer is the most important lesson for us to learn.

In Luther’s Larger Catechism he emphasizes, by way of introduction to the Lord’s Prayer, the thought of the necessity of prayer, and urges this duty upon the people. He points out that we are commanded to pray, basing this argument on the Second Commandment, which means, that “we should call upon Him in every time of need and worship Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving.” Then, having made clear to us that this Commandment is as much to be obeyed as any one of the ten, he calls attention to the promise connected with prayer, “*Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.*” After this he urges the truth, that having commanded, and promised, God has condescended to teach us to pray, “himself prescribing to us the words and manner of prayer, putting them into our mouths, so that we may see how lovingly He takes to heart our need, and may not doubt in any way that our prayers are pleasing to Him, and will certainly be heard.”

In the Smaller Catechism Luther places the whole emphasis of his explanation of this introduction on the thought that God ’is our Father, when he declares that these words mean, “God would thereby affectionately encourage us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are his

children indeed, so that we may call upon Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, even as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents.”

These words, “*Our Father, who art in Heaven,*” form the prayer gate through which we enter into the sanctuary, the holy place of prayer itself. What a majestic, mysterious and wonderful portal it is! As we enter, we pause to look at this door of access and to understand its beauty and significance. Oh, that we may catch a glimpse, at least, of what it should bring to our minds.

Let us notice, then, that in the believing use of the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer, there is involved, first of all, *adoration*. It is easy to understand the necessity of adoration as the first act of prayer. We must adore God before we begin to plead with Him. We would count it a great privilege to be admitted to the presence of some earthly monarch, and we would not rush unprepared, nor without some sense of what was due to an exalted ruler, into that presence. Much less should we approach the King of Kings without reverent appreciation of His power and of His Person.

It was one of the chief mistakes of the Pharisee, in his so-called prayer (Luke 18:9-11), that he was in such a hurry to speak of himself, to exploit his own excellences in the sight of God, that he did not stop at all to think of God, and to address Him with adoring recognition of His attributes. “*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men.*” These are his opening words, and the rest of his prayer is entirely occupied with the catalog of his own virtues.

Not so does our Master tell us to come. In this brief prayer, with its seven petitions, the introduction and the first three petitions are full of the thought of God, are steeped in adoration. If we pray these words aright, we approach the throne of the heavenly grace with hearts mindful of the fact that He to whom we come is our Father, our Father who is in Heaven.

The second characteristic of this introduction is, that it embodies a *confession* on the part of him who prays. We confess our faith in the Fatherhood of God. Wonderful is that word “Father”. It is the first name we learn to use, in nature and in grace. What a thrill pulses through the heart of the earthly father or mother as the little one lisps for the first time, the name of love. God, the Great First Cause, as some like to call Him, the King, the Almighty, as others know Him, tells us “*like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,*” and again, “*as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, saith the Lord.*” And this tender

name, by which our Lord bids us address him, is the first word that the regenerate man learns to speak, when through the Spirit of adoption, he begins to cry, "*Abba, Father.*"

This is the name which we are to utter in our prayerful access to Him who dwells in the light unto which no man can approach. Thus to address Him is to declare that we believe the message of His love, and that we come trustingly, because we know that in His heart is all the tenderness of an infinite mother-love, and all the strength, and protection of an infinite father-love.

To say "Our Father" is also a confession of our kinship to Him, in Jesus Christ. The phrase, "the Fatherhood of God," may mean much, or, as is very often the case, in its modern use, it may mean very little. He only can use it in its full and proper meaning who has been taught to speak it by the author of this prayer. It is "the Spirit of his Son" sent into our hearts, who alone can cry from within us "*Abba, Father.*" So clearly was this recognized in the ancient Church that none but the Christian members of the congregation were permitted to join in the Lord's Prayer. For the sonship which we thus claim is not merely that God has created us. It involves a spiritual relation. Only he who has been at the cross, who has renounced his allegiance to the great enemy of God, who has received into his heart the Spirit of adoption, can be in the true sense, a son of God. "*As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God.*" (Jn. 1:12.) To have a right to use the name Father means more than merely to spring from a certain parentage. There are fathers in blood who are no true fathers; and there are sons after the flesh who are no true sons. But such a relationship can have no place in the conception of prayer. This is to enter into close and intimate communion with God, and that means community of nature. We say of a true son, "he is the child of his father." He shows the father's traits, and is the heir of the character and the principles of his father. Those who, without this inner kinship, (to be attained only through the work of Jesus Christ, accepted by faith), call God their Father, are liable to the rebuke of the Master which He spoke to the Jews, "*If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*" Again, there is in these words a confession of the Almighty power of Him to whom we pray. He is our Father who is in heaven. This is no exclusion of God from all the rest of the universe. Indeed, this confession, rightly understood, includes the idea of His omnipresence. But He is at home in Heaven. That is, in a peculiar

sense. His dwelling place; there is His throne, there he reveals His glory, the majesty of His Being shines there unobscured. There eternally. He sits, and from Heaven He has made the earth, and looking down upon it, rules and guides it. In this thought is summed up the whole conception of God as Infinite in all His attributes. If He is, eternally, in Heaven, then His might. His wisdom. His knowledge, are of the infinite, divine, celestial sort, that befit His exalted Home. To call Him our Father in Heaven, is to confess Him as the One, Supreme, Eternal God, Creator, Governor and Potentate.

Note, in the third place, that this introduction involves, besides adoration and confession, the *truthful acceptance and appreciation* in our individual lives, of the truths embodied in the words. Here lies the very essence of prayer. Every petition is rooted in the believing appropriation of these words, "*Our Father, who art in heaven.*" In this is included the whole spirit of prayer. Only he who comes in this spirit of reverence, of sonship, of trust in the Father's love and in His infinite power, can truly pray. If He is our Father, then we can draw near to Him fearlessly, even as we draw near to our father and mother on earth, even as our little ones come to us with no hesitation or fear, to proffer the requests of their childish hearts. If we fully trust in Him as Father, then all the barriers and hindrances to prayer are overthrown, and we come in the very spirit of the explanation of Luther, believing, "that He is truly our Father, and that we are His children indeed, so that we may call upon Him with all cheerfulness and confidence, even as beloved children entreat their affectionate parents."

If He is the One who dwells in Heaven, the Almighty, then we can come confidently, knowing that His love will not be restricted by any lack of power to answer, or to give us what is best, and that in Him there is no want of wisdom, to see and decide for us what we most need. In appropriating this thought, that God is our Father who is in Heaven, lies all the peace of the Christian's life, and all the power of his prayer, as he believes that God is abundantly able, and abundantly wise, and infinitely loving, so that He will bestow upon us all that we ought to have, and will withhold all things that would hurt us.

The need of appropriation is emphasized in the first word of this introduction. Our Teacher does not bid us come before God and say simply, "Father." Even in that word there would be found the necessity of a personal acceptance of a tender relation. But more than that is taught. The difference between a man who believes that God is, and the Christian man,

can be expressed in two letters. The Christian says, “my God,” and the other says, “God.” Most men would say that the Lord is a refuge and a fortress, but the Psalmist says (Ps. 91:2): “I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress.” This is the faith that brings to the individual the gifts of grace. Even so, at the very beginning of this prayer, there should be the expression of a personal faith. We approach not merely everybody’s Father, the world-Father, but “our Father.” This, too, is a more precious form than if we had been taught to say, “my Father.” It equally emphasizes the idea of appropriative faith, and yet it binds us together, in our prayer, with our fellow-believers. It shows us the primary purpose of this prayer. It is not so much the closet prayer, as the family prayer, the congregation’s prayer, and in its proper use we recognize our fellowship in common worship, and in common love and need.

Herein is embodiment and illustration of the truth that *in our Christian life we are not alone* that you and I and all of us in Jesus Christ, are bound to God, and bound together in the “bundle of life.” In the German churches, the bell rings slowly while the congregation repeats this prayer, that those who are in their homes, perhaps on sick-beds, may unite with those gathered in the church, in this common supplication. It is a beautiful, poetic recognition of the thought of communion, and of the unity of the prayer life. To say “our Father” brings the joyful remembrance that every one of us who is in Christ, is simply a member of the One Head, knit together with every other member. It involves the fundamental conception of the Church, the communion of saints.

This word “our” also reminds us of the *duty of intercession*. We dare not pray for ourselves alone. When we go before our Father and thus address Him, we seek His gifts not only upon the one who prays but upon the whole brotherhood of faith. In that word, “our,” we put our neighbor upon the same plane of loving care and desire as ourselves. As we have been taught, so we do, in prayer at least, exemplify the command: “*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*” And this spirit of wider sympathy, of all-embracing love, dare not be lacking from true prayer.

Is it not a blessed thing to be able to pray, not only in the Name of Christ, but *in the very words of Christ*? Add only the trust in His Name, the reverence for His words, which are indispensable, and how sure is the acceptance of our prayer, how indubitable its prevalent power?

Here we have what meets our need. We need (and we feel the need) a Father, all-wise, all-powerful. How we long, in the perplexities of life, for this very thing. In childhood, though perhaps we did not then appreciate our privilege, we had only in any time of uncertainty to go to our father, and ask him what to do. He would guide us, by his experience and wisdom, and then the course was clear. But now we must decide for ourselves, and we can seek no final help from any earthly adviser. How good it is to have a Father in Heaven, who can and will deliver us from the might of our temptations, the entanglements of our perplexities, and the difficulties of our conflicts, all which are too great and complex for any earthly help.

There is a power in the very form of this appeal. John Randolph, of Roanoke, once said to an intimate friend: "I used to be called a Frenchman, because I took the French side in politics; and though that was unjust, yet the truth is, I should have been a French atheist, if it had not been for one recollection, the memory of the time when my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers, and cause me, on my knees, to say, 'Our Father who art in heaven.'" Who can tell how many men have been held back from doubt and sin, as with invisible bands, by the secret power of the truth which our Lord taught us in these words!

May God help us, that with understanding hearts, and simple, childlike faith and confidence, we may call, in every time of need, on "*Our Father in Heaven.*"

The First Petition

Hallowed be thy Name. – Matt. 6:9

WITH A DEEP REVERENCE, remembering how we are commanded to pray, how we are taught by the example and by the words of Jesus Christ, and how we are encouraged by the truth that He to whom we come is our Father, our Father in Heaven, we approach, in the first petition, and say, “*Hallowed be thy name.*”

In the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, there are two significant words. The first is the word “thy” which characterizes each of the first three petitions. The second is the word “our” or “us,” which is found in each of the last four petitions. In the first division, we are to ask chiefly for God’s glory; we are to “*seek first the kingdom of God.*” Only then, in the second place, are we to appeal for the things that especially pertain to our need. We are reminded of a similar classification in the two tables of the Commandments. We are impressed with the thought that this is a deep and pervading principle, applicable throughout our lives.

We know what is meant by the Name of God. It designates God Himself, in so far as He is revealed to us. The thought of the petition is, “*Be Thou sanctified, revered and glorified in us, and by us, in our hearts and our outward life.*”

The name of a man is that which distinguishes him from other men. It is intended, and in earlier times was chosen as a description of the man. In the Bible this idea is very often illustrated. “Adam” meant man; “Abraham,” father of many nations; “Isaac,” laughter, his name pointing always back to that moment when, in her unbelief, Sarah laughed at the promise of God, and again to the joyous laughter that filled her heart when, in spite of her unbelief, God fulfilled His gracious word. Best of all, “Jesus” means Saviour; and “Christ,” Anointed One, is the name that tells of all His glorious work as Prophet, Priest and King.

Even so, God's Name is that which designates God; it is God Revealed. Especially is the Bible the Name of God, for in it we best learn to know Him, and upon every page of it is written some revelation of His Being.

We are to pray that this Name of God may be hallowed. Not that God's Name lacks holiness. It is "indeed holy in itself, without our prayer." Surely we have no need to pray that God may be holy, but we pray in this petition that His name maybe "hallowed," that is, recognized as holy, and treated as holy, "by us." After all, though the object of our prayer is the hallowing of God's Name, it is not a prayer for God's glory alone; it is a prayer in our own behalf.

The holiness of God and of His Name is supreme, and beyond our power to increase or to diminish. Dwelling in light unapproachable, sitting on the throne of the heavens, He is, and ever has been, holy and pure far beyond our highest conceptions. This all the holy men of God have understood. Isaiah understood it, when the temple was filled with smoke, and, in celestial vision, it was given to him to see that the very seraphim, flaming spirits of fire, pure as no human spirit can be pure, stand before the throne hiding their faces as they realize the holiness of God. No wonder that Isaiah fell down at that sight, and cried, "*Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*" (Isa. 6:5.) God's Name is holy.

But have you not known of a man whose name having always been honored, yet descending to a son who was not worthy of it, has been besmirched? How sad for the father and for those who love the name! How shameful for him who dishonors it! Our prayer is, that we may never bring dishonor on the Name we bear as sons of God; that we may honor the Name; that we may hallow it, and lead others to hallow it also.

There are two chief requests in the heart of him who rightly prays this petition. We have seen what the meaning of the petition is, in general. But Luther, in our Catechism, goes into more detail. "How is this [sanctifying of God's name] effected?" he asks. The answer is,

"When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity among us, and we, as the children of God lead holy lives in accordance with it; to this may our blessed Father in heaven help us! But whoever teaches or lives otherwise than as God's Word prescribes, profanes the Name of God among us; from this preserve us. Heavenly Father."

There are, then, two things for which we pray. Whenever we offer this petition *we ask first, for the preservation among us, in its purity, of the word of God*. That prayer needs strong emphasis in our time. The common opinion is, that it makes no difference what you believe, nor what our pulpits teach. It alarms not at all the great number of men, that in many so-called Christian churches the divinity of Christ, the reality of the atonement, the forgiveness of sins through Christ's merit received by faith, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's work, are either untaught or explicitly denied. Whether a man be a Jew, a Unitarian, a Romanist or a heathen, is all one to the new teachers. Only do good, only rely on your own righteousness, and all is well, is their message.

But if it makes no difference what a man believes, God would have committed folly in guiding and inspiring holy men to write this Bible, teaching, from beginning to end, what is His Name, and how we are to hallow it! It would have been supreme folly for the Lord, the Son of God, to have denied Himself, and to have humbled Himself to take upon Him our nature, to live that life of abject self-humiliation on earth, to yield Himself to the bitter agony of the cross, and the far bitterer agony of the burden of sins, not His but ours, which He assumed that He might set us free! To what end is all this price of pain, if man can save himself, without any true knowledge of God's Name?

God makes no mistakes, commits no folly. If it made no difference whether we know the truth or not, God would not have used the consecrated minds and hearts of more than forty men, in every land, and of every condition, ignorant, often, of each other's work, for a period covering sixteen hundred years, to complete the wonderful divine-human book which we call the Bible, and which, in its composition, in its preservation, in the unity of its contents, in its sufficiency, in its living power to transform men and nations, and to produce the highest type of noble character, is a living miracle. Nor would He have sent His Son at such stupendous cost of sacrifice, if we had not needed to know Him, and through Him, the Father.

It does make a difference, and so we are taught to pray "*Hallowed be thy name.*" As often as we do thus pray we are asking that He will preserve the pure teaching of the Word in our hearts and among us. It is not hallowing God's Name to teach things about God which His Word does not teach; to set before men a plan of salvation which is not Christ's plan; to set up as a guide to wisdom and life, some word of man, some rationalizing

philosophy, the offspring of a poor, unaided, human intellect, the babblings of a man who never knew God, nor yielded to the guidance of His Spirit. Nor is it hallowing God's Name to trust in these earthly substitutes for a divine revelation. All this is to profane God's Name among us.

Oh that we might pray this petition with full hearts! Especially is it a prayer for parents, teachers and pastors to use. It is a petition for family altars, for the restoration of the day when the catechism shall be taught by the head of the family, for the pure teaching of the Word of God, in the Bible School of the Church, in the catechetical class, in the pulpit.

Nor can you be praying this prayer aright, unless in all these relations you are doing your duty, seeking to accomplish that for which you pray.

Whenever we offer this petition, we ask, in the second place, *that we may be enabled to glorify the Name of God by a holy life*. Remember the explanation, God's Name is hallowed "when we, as the children of God, lead holy lives in accordance with" His Word.

We hallow God's Name in our lives, by a spirit of reverence. How lightly many speak of God, of His Church, of His holy Book, and of the sacred doctrines of the Gospel! How few realize, as Isaiah did, the majesty of the Lord whose Name they bear, and to whose Church they belong! All levity, all foolishness in His house, all thoughtless approach to Him, all coming to hear His Word with unprepared hearts, with minds and souls filled with things other than Himself and His truth, – this is profaning the Name of God among us, and from this may our Heavenly Father defend us!

We hallow God's Name in our lives, by devoting all things to Him. You have riches, they are to be used for His glory; you have talents, they are to be employed in His service; you have only one talent, it is not to be hidden or to be wrapped in a napkin, but whatever, with your little, you can do, you must do, for the hallowing of the Name.

A call comes to you: it may be to teach in the Sunday-school; it may be to become an officer of the congregation; it may be simply to be in your place in the church, hearing God's Word; it may be to see to it that your child is in the catechetical class; it may be to visit some sick one, or to invite some wanderer to come back to the Father's house, – whatever it is, it gives you an opportunity to hallow God's Name, by the undertaking of that service, and the use of whatever gift and ability you have for the glory of God.

You know *how our Lord Jesus hallowed His Father's Name.* *He left God out of nothing. He found God in everything. He saw a Sparrow, and He said, "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father."* And so He made the sparrow to us forever a messenger of the Father's care. There grows a lily of the field. Jesus points to it, and says, *"They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."* And so He taught how in the perishable things around us, the lesson of our Father's oversight and the certainty of His provision for us, may be read. Nothing could be more homely than the hen which we see in the barnyard or along the country roadside and scarcely notice, yet Jesus found in it an opportunity of hallowing God's Name. *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."* Oh, to see God in everything, to find in everything that which lifts us God-ward, that would be to hallow His Name. He who never sees, nor cares to see, anywhere, the presence of God; who never comes to God's house, to hear His Word, to use the Holy Sacraments, and thus to draw near to Him; who never opens the dust-covered Bible that lies in some forgotten corner of his shelves, let him not deceive himself with the thought that he is doing aught but profaning the Name of God among us.

Shall we not here, as always, follow the example of our Lord? There was but one thought in the life of the Great Exemplar. It was to do His Father's will, to accomplish His Father's work, to live in communion, unbroken and precious, with His Father. Whatever of time and of power and of life He had was devoted to this one thing – the bringing to the Father's Name of the glory that was due Him from men.

If we pray for these two things, namely, for the pure teaching of the Word, and for the pure living of the Word, we thereby acknowledge that *we cannot of ourselves accomplish what we pray for.* If we must ask, *"Hallowed be thy name"* then it is evident that we cannot alone hallow it aright. The hallowing of God's Name comes, after all, of His power, and all that we can do is to look up suppliantly, to Him, and say, "Give me Thy Spirit, that, so far as in me lies, I may teach purely what is given me to teach, whether in the pulpit, or to the little child; and give me power to resist the temptations that come from without and from within, and to let my light so shine that others may see my good works and glorify my Father which is in Heaven." That is what this petition holds. It is a confession of

our inability to serve God, and to live so that His Name may be hallowed; a confession of our sin, in not having hallowed His Name as it deserves, in our own lives, and in the lives of other men, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth; and an earnest entreaty that we may be so enabled to hallow it, that men here and everywhere shall come with us, constrained to render glory and honor to the Name that is above every name!

This petition is the expression of a desire to *drive* self, and all self-seeking out of our lives, to have self swallowed up in an overmastering longing for the glory and praise of God. "Hallowed be *thy* name" not my name. If I have done anything, let it be forgotten that I did it. To God alone be the glory. In the old days, of a more wide-spread faith, it used to be the custom to print at the end of the books which were published, the words, "*Soli Deo Gloria,*" to God alone the glory. The architects, in those old days, were wont to inscribe over the doors or windows of their great temples, the same inscription, "*Soli Deo Gloria.*" So let us inscribe over the portals of our hearts, the temples of our lives, "*Soli Deo Gloria.*"

The Second Petition

Thy kingdom come. – Matt. 6:10

DEEPER STUDY of this model and masterpiece of prayer is the only thing necessary to cause us to stand amazed at the richness of the meaning of each of its brief petitions; so comprehensive, so heart-searching, so truly the expression of the believing soul at prayer. As we examine the second petition, notice again that solicitude for God's glory which is characteristic of the first three petitions. "Thy" is still the emphatic word, as we pray, "*Thy kingdom come.*"

Is the coming of the kingdom of God, then, an uncertain thing? a contingency? a consummation for whose attainment our prayers are sorely needed? as if, without our prayer, God's plans would fail? Not so! In the explanation of our Catechism Luther says, "The kingdom of God comes, indeed, of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may come unto us also."

Nothing is so certain as that the kingdom of God has come, and is coming, and will come. Men may not observe it, for they look at outward manifestations alone, and by these they measure the power of the onward march of the kingdom. But "the kingdom of God cometh not with outward shew." (Luke 17, 20, margin.)

They may tell us that great multitudes are turning away from the Church; they may speak to us of the godlessness of the "masses," (though we may well remember that our Lord never spoke of the "masses"); they may seek to turn our eyes from the glory of the Church to scenes of decadence and demoralization; but we will not forget that this kingdom is not like other kingdoms. It has a King; but He is the King immortal, invisible, dwelling in light to which no man can approach. It has a citizenship; but this is not composed of those precisely who bear upon their brows the baptismal cross, and whose names can be read upon the rolls of the churches. No man can point them out nor count them. God only knows their number and identity.

We believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints. There is a great multitude who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Wherever the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel there are citizens of the kingdom. Yet not even the chosen ones can infallibly recognize their fellows by so much of a man's life as comes before the eye. You cannot definitely say of a man that he is a citizen of the kingdom of God because he obeys the laws that belong to the outward life of a Christian. Men are able to give a good outward imitation of how a child of God should live, without a spark of the inward life of God. And this one fact realized, makes us hesitate in the acceptance of the statements, on the one side, or on the other, which measure the growth and power of God's kingdom by the standards of human statistics.

Whether men can or cannot recognize the kingdom in its coming, the fact stands eternally, that the kingdom comes and has come. However far we may be from seeking to make a census of its citizens, surely the kingdom has grown wonderfully since that day when the Master taught the Twelve to pray, "*Thy kingdom come!*" There may seem to be times of retrogression in the Church, there are such times of discouragement, when the leaven that has been put in the meal does not manifest its presence; and there have been times when men with the bitterest hostility of heart sought to overthrow the kingdom of God. But the darkness has passed, and the sun has shone brightly again; the leaven has wrought and leavened the mass; the persecutors have died and the Church still lives! If this kingdom could have been overthrown its fall would long since have been accomplished. The day can never come, unless it be in the last days of this dispensation, when God's kingdom will have to meet stronger foes than it has met and vanquished in the past. The very gates of hell shall not prevail against the kingdom which Jesus Christ has founded upon the rock of divine truth, believed by human hearts and confessed by human lips. (Matt. 16:18.)

"The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself," that is, without dependence upon aught that we can do. It comes not absolutely of itself, for God is in it, God's power rests upon it, and God's might will keep it alive and give it growth and expansion. You and I cannot cause it to come, nor give it success. That is God's work. But what you and I can do, is to lose the glory and the eternal joy and reward of having received it and of having helped in its coming.

Whenever, then, we pray this petition, we do not ask as if we feared that the kingdom were in danger. But our chief request is this: that in the coming of the kingdom we may not be overlooked. We do not ask that we may come to the kingdom, the coming is not on our part; but we pray, let this kingdom come to us, in our hearts, to have sway in our lives. And if one inquires how this can be effected, the answer is given by that man whom God so marvelously gifted for this work, and his explanation reads: “When our Heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we may believe His holy Word, and lead godly lives here on earth and in Heaven forever.”

That is a wonderful answer. The kingdom of God is a spiritual realm in human lives. The coming of the kingdom is the coming of Jesus Christ, through His Word, by His Holy Spirit, to a human heart. The kingdom has come, when by divine grace, we lead godly lives here on earth, and in Heaven forever.

Luther emphasizes, first of all, *that sole Divine Agent through whom this work can be effected*. You read in the explanation of the third article of the Creed: “I believe that I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel.” That is the coming of the kingdom of God to a lost soul. And here the same thought is put in these words: it is “when our Heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit.”

If there be any member of the Church of the Evangelical Faith who does not understand and realize the immense, the indescribable importance of the presence and the power and the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of his own soul, it is not because in our Catechism, in our Confessions, or in the liturgy of the Church, the Holy Spirit is not often honored, invoked and exalted. We ought to be deeply aware of the meaning of the statement, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” Only thus can we say with understanding, “I believe in the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.”

To pray this petition aright means, first of all, that we ask our Heavenly Father *for the gift of the Holy Spirit*. We have warrant for this request. “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” To say, “Thy kingdom come” is to ask for that same most precious of all gifts. It is to pray that Word and Sacraments, the chosen instruments through which the Holy Spirit comes to men, may be blessed to us, in the

fullness of their efficacy; that through them we may receive in all His richness of gracious power, the Holy Spirit, regenerating, cleansing, indwelling.

In the prayer for the Holy Spirit is included all that is requisite for the beginning and the development of the Christian life. “When our Heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit,” then, “by his [the Holy Spirit’s] grace, we believe his Holy Word.” That is the beginning. A man does not believe of his own power. The faith which takes hold of God’s Word, not merely with an intellectual grasp, but with the heart’s deep trust, for encouragement, for peace, for power in service, – that faith is bestowed by the Holy Spirit, it is the gift of God! From first to last, the man who would live godly in Christ Jesus must have this guiding, guarding, inspiring presence of the Holy Spirit, as indispensable as air and sunlight to the physical life. Rightly to pray, “Thy kingdom come” is to ask for this most necessary gift.

But the blessed Spirit works always through the Word. We pray, in this petition, consequently, for a fuller, deeper faith in that Holy Word. Such a prayer is mockery, if we neglect to use the Word through which the Spirit comes to us, and by which we are to be enabled to “live a godly life here on earth.” A godly life is a life built upon and incorporating within it, God’s Holy Word. To pray for the kingdom of God to come to us, is to pray for the power of that Word in our lives. For a Christian to suppose that he can leave the constant, prayerful use of God’s Word out of his daily life, and still remain a Christian, is to convict him of a folly directly excluding the wisdom that is unto salvation, for it is the Word that makes wise unto salvation. (2 Tim. 3:15). But, believing, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Word, we have the beginning of spiritual life; then we have justification; then, with the first spark of faith, we have regeneration; and with the Spirit dwelling in the heart and operating there continually through the Word, we have sanctification, the inner life showing itself in the outward demeanor as “a godly life here on earth.”

The kingdom of God has its beginning on earth. Its fullness and consummation are in the other world. And so the meaning of our petition is not yet exhausted. A godly life here simply develops as the flower grows from bud to blossom, into the blessed life “in Heaven forever.” We pray then in this petition, *for the glorious salvation of Heaven*. The Christian life, ruled by the Holy Spirit working through His word, is like “the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,” the day of Christ’s

victorious return, when we shall enter in very deed into the kingdom. For the kingdom to come in its fullness, the King must be there. Our prayer involves the outpouring of the Christian's deep desire for the speedy coming of the Lord in His glory. Then will the kingdom have come! All things that hinder and hold us back done away, all veils and darkness torn and brushed aside, the power of the great Adversary overthrown, the reign of righteousness inaugurated, we, lost in joy and amaze, shall have entered upon the full possession of our citizenship with all the saints! "Thy kingdom come."

If now you will consult the Larger Catechism of Luther, you will find that he did not overlook a *wider application of this petition*, than that which seems to be embraced in his words "that the kingdom may come unto us also." We must ask for the coming of the kingdom first to us, for we have no business to pray for any body else until we have received salvation for ourselves. But afterward, when you and I have a living trust in Him, and are seeking more and more fully to plunge our will into God's will and lose it there, then, as we pray this petition, do we ask only for ourselves? Ah! no, we cannot pray "Thy kingdom come," and pray thoughtfully, without remembering that, on the map of the world today, there are great spaces, vast, immense, that represent large countries, one might almost say entire continents, where Christ is not known. Upon the wall of many a pastor's study there hangs a map, colored to indicate the regions in which the various religions are predominant. To stand and gaze upon that chart, to realize what it means, to picture to one's mind the millions upon millions represented, as the tints that indicate the false religions sweep over almost immeasurable spaces; to see how little of the whole surface of the earth is covered with the yellow tinge which stands for our own Protestant faith,—this is enough almost to break one's heart with grief and this impels as few things do, to plead with tears and longing entreaty, "Thy kingdom come."

Nineteen centuries ago, He bade His children thus to pray, while, in the power of His Spirit, they went forth to bear witness of Him to every nation! And today, over great portions of the globe, the kingdom of God is manifested only as the lighthouses visible along the coast, when you voyage on the sea, here and there a shining witness of the rocks that threaten destruction, here and there a light turning slowly and flashing out over the tempestuous waves, — but only here and there; in between, the long stretches of impenetrable darkness. So is it in the vast fields of heathendom.

A row of lights along parts of the coast of Africa; a little row of lights along the coast of China; a little row of lights along the coast of India; here and there a candlestick inside – only here and there a candlestick, instead of the bright shining of the Sun of Righteousness throughout those great continents! And oh, the centuries gone by, since He gave the great Commission to His Church!

And yet this kingdom is to embrace and conquer by its gracious power all the kingdoms of the earth! If God's Word does not mean that, it means nothing. And you and I are set in the earth to pray that this kingdom may come. *“Ye that are the Lord's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”* (Isa. 42:6).

It is ours not only to help by prayer but to translate our prayers into deeds, to lay upon His altar our consecrated gifts, to carry out His will, if it may be, by going forth, even as Abraham went, not knowing whither the hand of God might lead him!

The man who does not care whether God's kingdom is carried to the perishing ones of earth or not, dare not pray this prayer. The man who does not give, in the measure of his ability, to carry out the last command of Jesus Christ, and to send the herald of the kingdom, with the message of the kingdom, and the light of the kingdom, to the great multitude of a thousand millions, two-thirds of the population of the earth, who know not the truth, dare not pray this petition. The man who does not believe in Foreign Missions, whose heart does not beat in sympathy with the heart of Jesus Christ for the perishing in other lands, dare not pray this petition. Who will tell us that he does not believe in Foreign Missions? Christ believed in Foreign Missions. He commanded this work. Is that not enough for you and me?

God grant that when we pray this petition our hearts may go out in deep, sincere longing for the things for which we ask. To come, not willing for the Holy Spirit to enter in and take possession of your heart and pray, “Thy kingdom come” is mere lip service and mockery. To speak the words and yet go on, not caring whether the kingdom of Satan be overthrown, whether the kingdom Christ come and increase, whether the power of the kingdom in your heart grow deeper, or not, is to turn the petition from prayer into scoffing. To say “Thy kingdom come,” and have no interest in the Word, nor in the extension of the Gospel, is to commit a great sin. And to repeat

the words with no thought at all, without a spark of sympathy, without the earnest outpouring of the heart, this is to profane the name of God, to dishonor Him under the very form and aspect of worship.

With that prayer of the disciples, we come again to Thee, O Teacher of prayer, "Lord, teach us to pray."

The Third Petition

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” – Matt. 6:10

THE HIGHEST BEING OF THE UNIVERSE IS GOD; the highest object of our prayer is that God’s Name be hallowed, that is, that He receive the honor due Him; but wherever this takes place, there God’s kingdom comes; and wherever God’s kingdom comes and rules, there God’s will is done.

If then, all is included in the first petition, and in it we express the highest object of our prayer, it is none the less true that in this third petition we find the end toward which the first and the second move, “*Thy will be done.*”

It is a hard prayer. To *say* the words is easy, but to *pray* them means to learn a lesson for which the whole life will not be too much.

A friend once found a devout woman with her Bible open before her, and asked “What are you doing?” “I am learning the Lord’s Prayer,” was the answer. “What!” said the friend, “Have you never learned the Lord’s Prayer before?” And the woman, wise in spiritual things, replied, “No, I have only gotten as far as the third petition, and I am trying to learn that.”

It is not an easy thing to learn to offer any true prayer; to do it understandingly, with the whole heart, without conflict between the words and the deepest desires of the soul. But of all prayers and of all petitions, this, to one who apprehends its meaning, is perhaps the most difficult to pray.

When we pray this prayer, *we are asking*, first of all, *for God’s glory, that it may be supreme.* “*Thy will be done.*” It means that we would see God recognized as King of Kings and Lord of Lords; it means that we would have Him acknowledged as the Supreme Lawgiver; it means that we would have His unqualified authority honored without question; it means that we would see self put down and God’s will exalted.

To pray this petition means, in the second place, to ask for the *overthrow of the power of Satan*, and of all that hinders the hallowing of God’s Name,

the coming of His kingdom, and the universal dominion of His will.

“The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done by us also.” This is Luther’s explanation of what the petition means. And then, in answer to the question, “How is this effected?” come these weighty words: “When God frustrates and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose, which would hinder us from hallowing the Name of God, and prevent His kingdom from coming to us, such as the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh; and when He strengthens us, and keeps us steadfast in His word and in the faith, even unto our end. This is His gracious and good will.”

From this is evident the importance of the request for the overthrow of the power that is hostile to God, for His will cannot perfectly be done so long as other wills, that are opposed to His, have might and control.

In the explanation *three wills that must be overthrown* are suggested.

There is the will of the devil, which is against whatever God wills. In order to know what Satan’s will is, you have but to seek what God’s will is, and then, to find its exact opposite. Satan’s one will is to thwart God. From the beginning it was so. God set man in the beautiful garden, a perfect being, pure and good, and fitted for the highest enjoyment of the best things, in a perfect environment containing all that was needed for his happiness. The adversary instantly set himself to destroy God’s plans for man: to mar the beauty of God’s world which He had made for man; to stain and blot and destroy God’s image in man. How well he succeeded, we know who see the trail of the serpent on all God’s creation; we, who, conceived and born in sin, find it not easy, today, to have God’s will done in us, and far too easy to let the devil find his way into our hearts and have influence in our lives.

There is the will of the world. Not the world that God made; not the world of Nature; not the world of redeemed men; but the world in so far as it is Satan’s kingdom over which he rules and which he has perverted from its allegiance to God. Here is the material which he molds to the temptation of man; in which he shrewdly finds that with which to inflame and solicit the lusts of the flesh, the selfishness of the unrenewed spirit; and which he knows how to make so beautiful and attractive that men, instead of using it for a means, come to find in it an end, and to place it, in their desires, above its Creator.

Many a man, who would not for a moment agree to adopt the will of the devil for his own, has fallen easily into the devil's trap, in accepting and embracing the will of the world!

There is the will of our own flesh. That is, our own selfish, sinful will; the will that still lives in our corrupt nature, and that is so hard to overcome. Satan's will, and the world's will, press upon us from without, but here is the enemy within the citadel, the traitor within the gates, ready always to fling open the portals for the entrance of the foe! Strong in the cordon of angelic defenders around us (Ps. 34:7), we may laugh at the attacks of Satan and his hosts, but we dare never be forgetful of the stubborn, hostile will of our own flesh, rebelling against the higher will within us, and making us tremble as we realize its power. It is good to know that this, too, is among the foes that are overthrown "when God frustrates and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose which would hinder us from hallowing His name, and prevent His kingdom from coming to us."

God does "frustrate and bring to naught" the evil counsels of men. They once set themselves, under the will of Satan and of the world and of the flesh, to build the tower of Babel, to climb to Heaven by the work of their own hands. God brought it to naught. His finger touched some secret spring of the brain and instantly the ambitious builders, who had all spoken one language, found themselves unable to understand each other's speech, and their task was frustrate.

Pharaoh set himself against God, refusing to let His people go out of Egypt. The Lord, whom he would not acknowledge, sent upon him plague after plague, and at last the destroying angel sped swift upon God's awful errand, touching that which was nearest and dearest; and when the morning dawned, in every Egyptian home, from palace to hovel, the first-born lay dead. Then the proud will of the monarch was broken and subdued.

Nebuchadnezzar set himself against the will of God, seeking to remove the worship of Jehovah, that all men might bow before his golden image. And God let him go on, even to lay his impious hands upon the three Hebrew heroes, even to cast them into the fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than its wont. His evil counsel seemed crowned with success. But the king, staring with countenance amazed, into the white heat of the oven, beheld not only the three whom he had condemned, but a fourth, who was walking with them, the Son of God come down to meet, comfort and defend them. And according to God's promise, so it was, "In the furnace of

affliction” he chose them (Isa. 48: 10), and they came forth without the smell of fire upon their garments.

The Pharisees set themselves to confound the Son of Man, when He walked on earth. Snare after snare they laid to entrap Him. But He spake and they were confounded and their evil counsel brought to naught.

We pray, in this petition, in the third place, for *oneness of our will with God's will*. That which makes a man different from the lower creatures, that in which his superiority to them consists, is the possession of a free will. This is the great fact which makes morality, religion and philosophy possible. Philosophies falsely so called, have laid down the theory of fatalism, of a will absolutely subject to the influences that determine each one of its decisions; but the sober sense of mankind, the calm consideration of the facts of conscious experience, has always led to the rejection of such a theory as false and baseless. There is not a man on earth who does not know, when he has made a choice, that he could have chosen otherwise. You know, when you have sinned, that you are responsible; for your will yielded to the temptation, and with your will you did the evil thing. You know that though all the powers of earth and hell should set themselves against you, they could not constrain you to will the thing that is wrong. Men may imprison you, they may bring you to the stake, they may destroy the body, and yet you may, in the very moment of death, look them in the face (as martyrs from the first century to the latest have done), and remain victorious, in the empire of the will which they are powerless to conquer or to sway! While the fierce, bloodthirsty foes have watched the devouring flames creep round the witnesses of Christ, and scorch the life-springs dry at their source, the victorious victims, not recreant to their Lord, have been able still to show that their wills were invincible. The will is the man, and he alone can control his volitions. If his will is good, he is good; if his will is weak, he is weak; if his will is bad, he is bad; if his will is steadfastly set on God's side, he is God's man; and he who cannot earnestly pray this prayer, seeking God's will rather than his own, is not a son of God.

To pray this petition, then, is to ask that God Himself will enable us (for we cannot do it of our own strength or power), to adopt His will in all things as our will. It is to pledge ourselves, by His help, to love what He loves, to seek what He desires, to choose His choices. In this conception of the Christian life, there is but one all-embracing thing to do: it is to choose, once for all, that God's will shall be done by me; and then, in reference to

each individual choice I have but to inquire. Is this God's will? That decided, my decision is already made. The ground of willing is not, and cannot, dare not be to the Christian, Do I want this? Will this serve my pleasure, or my honor? but. Does God want this? Will it serve God's glory? And our prayer, in this petition is, that God may give us grace and strength thus to join our will with His.

“My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
O may Thy will be mine.”

It is ours to choose His will. It is His to frustrate and bring to naught the wills that we have definitely, and forever, renounced, such as “the will of the devil, of the world, and of our own flesh.”

“Thy will be done,” means more. It means not only that His will is to be done by us, in accordance with our prayer, but that it is to be done to us. We ask that *God's will for us be accomplished in our lives*. Not only in the holiness which He requires, nor only in the service which is His due, do we choose His choices for us, but in the providential apportionment of the discipline of joy and of chastening, do we will and pray that His will be done. But sometimes God sees that the very best for us is suffering. His medicine for us may be loss of goods, of reputation, of health, of loved ones. Shall we then rebel, or doubt His love and wisdom, or repent our choice of His will? Were it better for us to have our way, or will we still trust Him, and be satisfied that it is better for us that He have His way? Oh, beloved, the very best of all good things for us, embracing and glorifying the whole life on earth, is that our wills be lost in His, so that whatever God wills, we will.

God spoke to Abraham, and said, “*Take thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering.*” That could not have been the will of the father's heart. But it was God's will, and Abraham made God's will his own. He went upon the journey to the appointed place, Isaac, a young man of twenty-five years, accompanying him, in ignorance of the purpose of the mission. At last, with breaking heart, the aged Abraham, told the son of promise, the heir of all the best hopes of the old man's life, what the divine voice had enjoined, and with heroic consecration, scarcely second to his father's, he also accepted God's will as his own, and without struggle or hesitation was laid upon the altar. The

sacrificial knife was lifted, poised, about to fall, when God interposed. "*Lay not thine hand upon the lad.*" He did not want the sacrifice. It was not the blood of Isaac He cared for; it was the submission of Abraham's will, in all things, to the will divine. He would have Abraham ready to surrender that which he loved most, with all the hopes and expectations entwined within the life of his beloved son. But He would never forget the welfare and the best interests of His child. Our affairs are safe in God's hands, and the soul that trusts Him utterly, need never fear that God will be unfaithful to the trust.

God came, through his angel Gabriel, to a pure maiden in a small Judaeon village, and said to her, "*Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son, and he shall be called the Son of the Highest.*" I think that in all the pages of God's Word there is no higher instance of consecration than the submission to the will of God which that pure maiden showed, when she said, simply and with supreme confidence, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" God asked her to surrender her good name, to submit her will to His at the cost of liability to suspicion of impurity. What God asked of her, meant that she should suffer that which to a pure woman is the highest conceivable ill: and she answered, "*Be it unto me according to thy word.*"

But her trust was not disappointed. God vindicated her to her betrothed. God gave her honor above all women. God put into the mouths of all nations the angel's salutation, "*Hail thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee.*"

To find God's will best, and to accept it as our will is the secret of happiness and peace, in trial no less than in prosperity. If, in the hour of affliction you resist God's will, there can be no peace. But only believe that He knows and that He does what is best for you; only be sure that if you could see as He sees, you would choose as He chooses for you, that all things, even what seem to us the sorest ills, work together for good to them that love God, and then you have the sweetness of that peace which passeth all understanding.

When Luther heard the news that the awful ban of the Pope had been put upon him, making him an outcast, to whom every faithful son of that church which claims alone to represent the God of love, ought to refuse food and drink, yes, even the right to live, the great Reformer went out into the garden and was singing with full, joyous voice. Some one coming to him

was surprised and said, "Have you not heard the news?" And this was Luther's answer: "That is not my concern, that is Christ's concern. Will He permit men to drag Him down from the right hand of God, and to overthrow His kingdom on earth? Let Him care for it: I am far too weak to defend Him against the Prince of darkness and his power!" He looked upon it as a trial in which God would bring him blessing. He looked upon himself as in God's hands. In the treatment of this petition in the Larger Catechism there is nothing so evidently impressed upon the mind of the reader, as the comfort which Luther found in this prayer. In his exposition there is constant reference to the enemy, how he rages, foams, and gnashes his teeth against God's Word and God's ministers. Yet he reminds himself of these words, "*Thy will be done*" and is sure that though men rage and Satan seeks to overthrow God's Word, His will shall be done!

Notwithstanding: all the wills of the conflicting powers, the petition bids us ask, "*Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*"

A teacher in a school is said to have asked a class of children, "How is God's will done in Heaven?" One child answered, "Completely;" another, "Immediately;" another said, "Always;" and another, "Whole-heartedly." At last a little one added another word, "The angels do God's will in Heaven not asking 'Why?'"

Yes, among the angels and blessed spirits, in all the myriads of those glorified dwellers in that land of light and love and song, there is but one will, God's will! When that great day shall come in which on earth there shall be but one will, and that God's will, then will the reign of peace and joy be perfect, then Heaven will be here! And so as we pray this petition, let us remember Him who taught us thus to pray, and who, when He was an hungered, said, "*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me;*" who, when He taught the multitude that hung upon His lips, said, "*My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;*" and who declared as He looked upon the whole of His earthly life and mission, "*I came from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.*"

We, too, are sent, and our lives are to be the expression of our Father's will.

'Tis Thee alone I seek in all my yearning,
Dwell Thou, dear Lord, with me.
I have no power, but Thou, my need discerning,
Wilt give me victory.
Rule Thou within me, all my life controlling,
Keep Thou, and guide my will;
If Thou art guarding, helping and consoling,
I fear not any ill.

The Fourth Petition

“Give us this day our daily bread.” – Matt. 6:11

THE FIRST THREE PETITIONS in the Lord’s Prayer are directed to the glory of God. Their emphatic word is “Thy.” Beginning with the fourth petition we find a different word on which the emphasis lies. It is “our.” God’s glory must be the first object in the Christian’s heart, God and His kingdom the first subjects of his prayer, but there is room also for the requests that pertain most nearly to his own concerns, and after he has given to God His rightful place it is fitting that his prayer should touch all that is vital to himself. The arrangement is just. We cannot first pray for ourselves and our neighbors. The heart that does not hold communion with God for what He is in Himself, that does not desire, above all, God and His glory, has not learned truly to pray. If we would invoke real blessings upon our fellow-men, we must know Him of whom we ask, we must have the access of a friend, a child, we must have entered into the love of God, and have made Him All-in-All.

In this petition we find the transition between the two parts of the prayer. Our spirits have been with God, soaring into Heaven, dwelling on celestial aims and hopes; but now we remember that we are not in Heaven but here upon the earth, with our poor bodies and their returning needs, and with our weak and faulty souls and their iniquities and sins.

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*” As we ask what this means we hear Luther’s reply in the Catechism, “God gives indeed without our prayer, even to the wicked also, their daily bread; but we pray in this petition that he would make us sensible of His benefits, and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” And then we find the question, “What is implied in the words, Our daily bread?” To one who has never studied this Catechism, the answer must seem a very strange one, presenting a very unexpected and ample field before his vision, for Luther says:

“All things that pertain to the wants and the support of this present life; such as food, raiment, money, goods, house and land, and other property; a believing spouse and good children; trustworthy servants and faithful magistrates; favorable seasons, peace and health; education and honor; true friends, good neighbors, and the like.”

Luther would have us understand that when our Lord bade his disciples pray for “daily bread” he meant to include all that is needful for the welfare of life in this world, and his own enumeration of particulars is to be taken as embracing typical things, illustrative of the truth that much more than mere food is necessary for the wants and the support of this present life.

Let us pause for a moment to thank God that we have this supreme authority for our right to pray for the needs of our bodily life. There are a great many good people who have an idea that religion is a thing by itself, to be kept from all contact with the things that are “secular.” They are very much opposed to mixing religion and business or politics or social life. They believe that religion is a good medicine for the “soul” but has no other use whatever. Some indeed, restrict its value, as conceived by them, to the time of death. Many with a better conception than this, still have a certain false reverence which bids them be silent when they come before God, as to the necessities and trials of the daily life. They know that it is good to pray to God for a better, stronger, spiritual life, for more power in His service, for the victory of His Church, but they have not learned that He condescends to the actual and petty needs of our daily living; that He is not only the One who is in Heaven, but that He is “Father” to whom no thing, however small, that touches His child can be beneath notice. It is indeed, a truth wonderful, amazing, hard to realize! And yet it is not new. Think over that old, precious Psalm: “*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures,*” etc. Food, rest, peace, guidance, defense, joy, as well as eternal blessing are the gifts promised to us in the well-known verses.

It is not a new thing that God should care for the temporal necessities of His children. The Lord sent the quails and the manna from the skies, that the children of Israel might not hunger in their journey through the wilderness. Our Saviour did not think it an act unworthy of the use of His divine, miraculous power, to feed the hungry, fainting bodies of the five thousand who were gathered about Him, forgetful, in their interest, of prudence and necessary provision. God cares for our bodies. He made them and He provides for them. We have a right to ask Him for what they need,

and for what we, dwelling in these bodies, find to be necessary for our well-being. The business man has a right to ask God's blessing, and to expect it, on his business, if it is one on which God's blessing may fitly rest. The housewife has a right to pray to God with confidence about her daily duties. And we all have a right to look to Him for the supply of our returning needs. God forbid that we should forget and cast away our privileges.

Bread is "the staff of life." We can readily see how appropriately it may stand as the representative of all the needs of the body. Money, with which to purchase it, food and shelter, family and friends, all are essential if our bread is to be enjoyed, and if the life which it supports is to be worth living. Luther with his quaint vigor says that when we go to God with reference to our most pressing needs we should lift up our hearts above the bread-box and the flour-barrel. Of how little use to us is bread, if war and strife are raging; if we do not know in the morning whether there is any security for our homes and our lives until the night; if misrule and misgovernment have deprived us of peace and prosperity. We little realize, unless we have actually experienced the horrors of a dwelling-place in the theater of war, how many of the needs of this bodily life are connected with good government and peace. It is easy to see how favorable seasons and health have to do with the enjoyment of our daily bread. Education is a means to the obtaining of a livelihood, and it gives a richer joy in every sphere of the life of this world, in the understanding and enjoyment of all things in nature, science and history. And who would care for daily bread, if the life that it sustained was without reputation and honor, and if it was without the charm of friendship, and the social good-fellowship of neighbors? All of these things, and many more, recognized in the addition of the words, "and the like," are connected with the central thought and included in it.

We must note, too, the fact that we are to pray for "our" daily bread. We ask not for that which of right belongs to another. We ask not the bread of charity or the bread of fraud and theft. This is a petition that by the sweat of our brows and the labor of hand or brain, we may be enabled to earn the honest bread we eat. This is no prayer for the man who imagines that the "world owes him a living." It is no prayer for the man who has no independence of spirit and who is willing and glad to have others bear his burdens for him, and do his task. The man who is living in idleness when he has strength and ability to go out and win his necessary food ought not to have it. St. Paul laid down what is just coming to be recognized as a

fundamental principle in dealing with the problem of poverty, when he said, “*He that will not work, neither shall he eat.*” We are not acting in accordance with this petition when we support and encourage men in idleness. To such and to all comes the word of the inspired Apostle, “*we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*” (2 Thes. 3:12.)

Note, again, that this is a prayer for God’s continued daily care. “*Give us this day our daily bread.*” It is better to have God’s daily oversight, than to have a great store, and be left to ourselves for a time. “Just for today” is to be our motto, “there may never be a tomorrow.” We are not authorized to ask God for great provision for the future. If He gives wealth to any man it is well, but He does not teach us to pray for that. The spirit of this petition is that day by day we are to wait upon God for the supply of every needed gift.

Neither is this a new lesson. While the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness, every morning, after the dew had passed away, there lay little white morsels, thickly scattered over the ground, which Moses told them was the bread that God had given them. They were bidden to gather of it just enough for each person, but not to gather for the morrow, as the morrow would bring its own bread. It was daily bread. And those who, distrustful, thought to make provision for the coming day, found their portion which was left, spoiled and disgusting when the morrow came, while, sweet and fresh and wholesome, there lay anew upon the ground the bountiful supply which the unforgetting Father had sent down. In this petition and in the closing part of this chapter, the Lord Jesus teaches us the lesson we are so slow, so slow to learn: “*Be not anxious for the morrow, for the morrow shall take care for the things of itself.*” Be not anxious for food, for raiment, for any good thing. Let God see to the morrow. He bids us put aside our care and trust Him for the day. “*Give us this day our daily bread.*”

August Herman Francke was the man, rich in faith, who undertook the great orphan work at Halle, and whose wonderful success and simple, trustful methods were the inspiration of George Mailer, the founder and director of the marvelous institutions at Bristol, England. Francke tells, in his diary, how one day, there was no food in the house, a great number of children were dependent on him, and he went, with a very heavy heart into his closet. Should these little ones go hungry, the children he had gathered, with no wealth of his own back of the enterprise, trusting only in the

Father's care and the Father's riches? Francke sat and meditated, and sought to pray, and then it was that this petition sprang into his heart with a great and peculiar force, laying hold upon him, stirring up his whole soul; "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" Those two words seemed to him most wonderfully adapted to his need, the need that was pressing upon him at that very moment. He plead as his Lord had taught him, with an intensity of earnestness that we, it is to be feared, seldom feel, and as he rose from his knees he was called to the door, and found there a friend in a carriage who handed him \$400 and said, "I thought you might be in need, so I brought it at once that I might put it instantly into your own hands." And this is only one instance out of a hundred that might be given. From the experience of the men who have been named, of Dr. Passavant, the founder of so many of our own institutions of mercy in this country, of all who have trusted God for great things, day by day, it is evident that He does not want to make us independent of Him; He does want us to look up to him every day, and realizing that if He were to fail us for a moment we were undone, to entreat Him, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*"

When we pray this petition, we pray that "God would make us sensible of his benefits and enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving." It is a prayer that we may recognize the fact that all we have is from God, "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.*" To pray this prayer is to put entirely away the fallacious fancy that we are the architects of our own fortune, that we are "self made" and have achieved for ourselves all that we possess. Those who thus delude themselves, indeed, stand greatly in need of this petition, that "He would make us sensible of His benefits." Here we ask for those, the multitudes, who receive everything from God and give Him no thanks, nor even stop to think that what they have is His gift.

"My toil, my talent, my shrewdness, have been the instruments of my success, and I owe no thanks to any one." Ah, and who gave you the intellect, and the bodily strength and health, and the opportunities and favorable influences? Had God's providence nothing to do with these? Oh, the many who never acknowledge God in their lives, nor even as the bird when it drinks, looks upward in the reception of His mercies! There are two kinds of foolish men, in regard to this question. One kind looks only at what he himself has done, and ignores any other source of prosperity than his

own unaided efforts. The other relies so absolutely on the influence of God in his life, that he considers it entirely useless to work or to plan, but prays and waits for the gifts of heaven to be poured into his lap! The one is as far from the truth as the other. There are two elements in every man's life, neither of which dare be overlooked, if the best results are to follow: human powers, and the divine blessing. Both are indispensable. The wise man toils as if it all depended on him, yet knows that only as God prospers his best endeavor, can there be successful issue. God grant that we may be made sensible of His benefits.

This petition is adapted to foster a spirit of contentment. The poorest as well as the richest is to be made sensible of the benefits of the Lord. We, asking for daily bread, are to be satisfied if the supply of absolutely necessary things is granted. We are not bidden to ask for great things here – only when the object of our seeking is spiritual riches are we to “open our mouth wide” that He may fill it. “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*” A humble request, “daily bread,” but one which is assured of favorable answer, and one which comes after the chief things, “*the kingdom of God and his righteousness.*”

And we ask, again, that God “would enable us to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.” The unpardonable sin is ingratitude,” some one has said. We teach our children to say “thank you” no matter how small the gift or the kindness. Is thanklessness less base because He to whom the thanks are due, is the Unseen, Infinite Father? Morning by morning we see the sunshine, and feel the sweet breath of the new day; upon our tables is abundant food, we suffer neither hunger nor thirst, neither for clothing nor for roof-tree; possessed of every gift of mind and body, we are able to understand and to enjoy the things that make the world and human life so full in this twentieth century; we take our part in the great task of “subduing the earth,” and our business is successful, our plans reach their consummation. Or even if we have only bare necessities, does not the sun shine on us? and the pure air, is it not ours to breathe? and is there not some one to love us, and to soothe our sorrows with tender sympathy? And all of this is the daily gift of God's unforgetting daily care and love, and we, alas, receive it as the unthinking cattle do, and realize how little, the most devout among us, the thanks that are due to the One who gives us all!

As we pray this petition, let us feel its spirit of humility. Let us be willing to ask for no more, in worldly things, than God is willing to give; let us be satisfied with what He sees to be best for us; willing to take the lowly place of a little child to whom the loving parents allot the portion that he needs.

Let us have the spirit of trust that belongs to this prayer. Oh, that we may fully trust Him who "*knoweth that we have need of these things*" to supply the need; that we may be perfectly assured that if He gives us another day of life, He will also provide for the life of that day. He who doubts and is anxious, dishonors his Father and brings floods of disquietude and grief upon the soul whose birthright is blessedness and peace!

There is in this petition, also, a lesson of love. We pray not for ourselves alone.

"Our" daily bread, is the subject of our request. It is a prayer of intercession. We cannot be satisfied if we alone have the food and drink and clothing that we need while all about us are hungry, freezing ones. We are not taught to say, "Give me this day, my daily bread." Here is the thought of the love of fellow-men. The proverb of the world, "Look out for Number One!" is not in the Scriptures, nor does it bear the marks of the Christian spirit. When we pray the prayer of the text, we are seeking God's blessing upon the poor, the weak, the sick, the helpless, all of those who are unable to earn their daily bread, and to whom it is our duty to minister; and he surely does not pray aright whose hand is not outstretched to give, for the relief of those for whom he prays.

May He who answers prayer give us to ask with spirit and with understanding, that we may receive provision for all the wants and the support of this present life, and that we may be made sensible of His benefits and be enabled to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

The Fifth Petition

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." – Matt. 6: 12.

THE DEBTS OF THE TEXT are those incurred by us in the infractions of God's law, debts to offended justice. The idea is in no wise perverted in the phraseology with which the frequent liturgical use of the prayer has made us familiar, "*Forgive us our trespasses.*" This is, indeed, the more direct statement of what we pray for.

Our attention is attracted to this petition in a peculiar way as we give it closer examination. It is the first petition in the prayer which asks for spiritual blessings upon ourselves. The second part of the prayer, upon which we entered with the fourth petition, seeks directly for the supply of our needs, and this is the first reference to our spiritual needs.

This is the only petition of the seven upon which our Master thought it well to add a word of comment in immediate connection with the giving of the prayer, and this makes another claim upon our interest.

A third point of peculiarity is found in the fact that this petition does not stand isolated, but is connected with the one immediately preceding by the conjunction, "and." There must be some sort of special connection of thought with the plea, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" As the words "daily bread" sum up all that is needed for the support of this bodily life, so, it would seem, the Master would indicate as the comprehensive need of the higher, spiritual life, the forgiveness of sins, and thus in these two petitions we have compassed the requirements of our human lives, in regard to the bestowment of gifts from our Heavenly Father. He who has what is included in daily bread has enough for the outward life; and he who has the forgiveness of sins has all that the inner man can need, for _"where forgiveness of sins is, there are also life and salvation._"

Let us hear and heed Luther's exposition of this petition. This is what he tells us it means:

“We pray in this petition, that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins, nor deny us our requests on account of them; for we are not worthy of anything for which we pray, and have not merited it; but that he would grant us all things through grace, although we daily commit much sin, and deserve chastisement alone. We will, therefore, on our part, both heartily forgive, and also readily do good to, those who may injure or offend us.”

Let us notice, first, then, that as often as we pray this petition, we confess that we are sinners.

It is significant that the Master, in giving a form of prayer for frequent use, certainly for daily use at least, does not omit from it the petition for the forgiveness of sins. He would surely have us understand that our lives are not and can never be, while we live here, pure and perfect in His sight. He would surely rebuke our tendency to be very well pleased if not satisfied with our own doings, and enforce the lesson we are so slow to learn, of the pervasive prevalence and the deceitfulness of sin. We do not like to believe that we are sinners. Much less do we like to be told that sin is sin; that our sins are no more tolerable in God’s sight than other peoples’ iniquities. We would like a distinction made. We might admit that the convict in the penitentiary is a sinner, and needs to use the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer assiduously. That cheat, that thief, that drunkard, that gambler is a sinner, but we, if we sin, are to be put in another class. But, there seems to be no distinction in this model prayer, in spite of the inoffensive character, in our eyes, of our pet forms of sin. God does not seem to be anxious to make distinctions between sins and sinners, though only another man’s sins seem hateful in our eyes.

A pastor was called to visit a stranger, a man dying of consumption. In answer to questions, the dying man said that he did not think that he had been, in any grave sense, a sinner.

He congratulated himself that he had never been dissipated, unkind to his wife, or riotous, as other men. He seemed to have absolutely no conviction of sin, of himself as a wretched lost soul about to go, utterly unprepared, into the presence of Him who cannot look upon sin! Yet the pastor learned that the poor man had been for years obtaining his livelihood as an agent and emissary of a gambling house, wringing its cursed gains from the pitiful doles of the wretchedly poor. To you and to me that would seem to be a very hateful, a very hideous form of sin; but it was *his* sin, and to him it did not wear nearly so culpable an aspect as the sins of men about him, who, in their turn, would have felt polluted by his touch upon the hem

of their garments. Who shall decide in whose eye is the mote, and in whose the beam?

The prayer of the text is all the more noteworthy when we remember that it was given *for the use of believing Christians* the genuine children of God. Do those who are justified and regenerate need daily prayer for the forgiveness of sins? There those are who say. No! But they must either be unaware of their own faults or of the height and purity of the requirements of God's law.

Let us pause and think. Take the *Ten Commandments* in which the will of God, the law of holiness, is written. Consider them one by one, not merely in their literal force, but in their spiritual application, and test your life by them. Who is godly! Do you say, "I am?" "Yes, I have done no murder." But listen to the divine comment on that commandment, and learn that if you have ever felt anger against a fellow-man, you are guilty of the fifth commandment; and further, if you have ever failed to assist and provide for your neighbor in his want and distress, you have broken that fifth commandment; nay, more, if you had never anger in your heart, if you have always cared for your neighbor in his need, and yet if you did these things without the sole, pure motive of love to God, you still have broken that commandment. Of all the ten, perhaps, this is the one of which most persons would claim to be guiltless. Yet who can stand the test?

How does your life look, judged in the light of *the motives* of your actions? Are you always moved by the single desire to do that which is most for the glory of God and for the welfare of your fellow-men? Could you prefix to every deed of your life "I so fear and love God" as to do this? But if there enters the least of selfishness, the least of forgetfulness of God, the least lack of love to our neighbor, then are we guilty in every action whose motive is thus tainted.

Or, test yourself by the *sins of omission*.

Each one of us is bound by God's law: _"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength_" Nothing is to be influential in our lives but the love of God, and the love of our neighbor. There is no necessity to remember aught of the sins of commission, to be aware deeply and painfully of our need of the forgiveness of sins. Think only of the lack of perfect love; of the failure to give strength and power and money to the glory of God and the extension of His kingdom; of the defect of devotion of every gift to the one supreme

purpose and aim which makes this life worth living; of the shortcomings of our best service and effort; of the immeasurable gap between God's requirement and the thoughtless, selfish, or even openly sinful deeds of which most lives are so full; and you will feel that there is sin to confess!

What does *the altar* stand for in our churches? You know well that often there are placed upon it the bread and wine which by the Word of Institution of our Lord, bring to us the broken body and shed blood of the slain Redeemer. And every time we sit in the church and look at the altar, it should speak to us the message of our sin, the sin that nailed the Lord of Mercy to the Tree; the sin that wrung His heart in anguish as He purged it there; the sin that pierced His side, and that He expiated in inconceivable agony.

The worship of the Church reminds us in oft repeated tones, of the sin under which we are burdened and of which we have need to repent. In the Morning and Evening Services, there come first of all, the cry for forgiveness, the Confession of our sins, the upward look, in trustful love, for pardoning, cleansing grace. Does not the use of these services of the Church, so full of devotion, and of instruction, often bring to us the consciousness of sin? for how many times are you conscious that your heart has not entered with full appreciation into the words of confession, has not received with jubilant trust the gracious Absolution, has not risen heavenward on the wings of the prayer, has not praised the glorious God in the hymn! Alas! have we not seen even irreverence, and foolishness, smiles and whisperings, while God was speaking to us, and while we were met in His house to honor Him!

Another reflection comes to us as we consider the need of this prayer for forgiveness. It is not only my sins, but oirr trespasses that we bring before God beseeching His pardon. There is here more than a fellowship of intercession with those about us. There is a suggestion, at least, of a fellowship of responsibility for the sins of the people.

Sometimes we speak loudly of the corruption of municipal government, of the sins of the Commonwealth, of the guilt of the Nation. Whose sins, pray, are these, since we are of the municipality, the commonwealth and the nations? Are we condemning ourselves, or are we sure that we have done all that we can to avert the hideous iniquities? We are prone to declaim against the sins of society, but who makes society? Have we done all we can do to make better the circle in which we move? Have we felt the burden

for the sins of those who are in our own homes, and of those with whom we mingle in daily life? Have we cared for the souls of those about us? Have we spoken the word, and set the example which God might use to save them?

You and I are of necessity involved in the sins of the men and women in the midst of whom we live. Their sins are sins in which we ought to have a share of responsibility, unless we have discharged our duty in God's sight. Are we free from guilt even for the conditions which make possible the awful shame, that ought to break our hearts with sympathy and concern, the shame of the Scarlet woman, only a little while ago the joy of some fond mother's heart, who nightly walks our streets, corrupt and corrupting?

If we thus ponder, long enough, and earnestly, and honestly with our own souls, we shall feel the reason of Luther's words, and offer no lip service as we pray, "that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins, nor deny us our requests on account of them; for we are not worthy of anything for which we pray, and have not merited it." Who, with the awful hindrance of his sins interposing, would dare ask anything of God, but for His grace?

The second thought which we may notice in the petition, is that we may have the forgiveness of our sins. We cannot pay our debts. No one knows that better than He to whom we are in debt. And He bids us pray. Then He will hear.

Although the Church in its liturgies has put another, simpler word in this petition, and we say, "Forgive us our trespasses," yet there is a certain forceful suggestion in the original word, "debts." It brings remembrance of the foolish servant in the parable, who, when his master made inquisition of him, owing thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars, in a land and a time when the value of these measures was far more than now, said, "*Have patience and I will pay thee all!*" How many a life-time would he have needed before he could pay the half of the debt! What folly to promise to pay all! But his master, knowing the hopelessness of the task, forgave him all the debt. So it is with us and our Lord and Creditor. We are as helpless and far more guilty than that insolvent servant. Our debts are due to the infinite majesty of Heaven. What shall we do? Pay them? We are utterly powerless to do so. We are debtors to the law to do it wholly, perfectly, in act, and heart, and will. And every sin we have committed, in thought, or word, or deed, is entered against us, and we cannot discharge so much as one of the myriad items.

But some one has another idea. He says, "*I will commit no sin from this hour on!*" Excellent, if you can carry out your purpose. But even so, you will have paid no debt! you will only succeed in going no deeper into debt. It seems to be one of the most difficult things to get men to understand (in spiritual matters) that a debt is a debt, and that a debt must be paid before there can be pardon or acceptance. All about us are those who look for the favor of God because they are trying to live as near to the requirements of the law as they can. But what about the failures and the shortcomings? Every infraction of the law, every failure to keep the spirit of the law, is a debt, which God neither can nor will ignore. If we could be absolutely sinless, from this blessed day, the debt of the past, uncanceled, would sink us into hell. And all our future sinlessness would not discharge a farthing's worth of the ten thousand talents that we already owe!

What shall we do? The only plea is the plea for mercy. We dare not come alone, and plead for justice. We have hope in Him who bids us cry, "*Forgive us our debts.*"

And one thing more we need to remember: that God does not forgive sins. He never did and never can, being pure, and being God, overlook a sin, treat it as if it had not been. A sin is hateful, eternally hateful in God's sight. And the debt of sin must be paid. To act as if there had been no debt might seem merciful, but could not be just. The debt must be paid, that the debtor might be forgiven. The sin must be expiated, that the sinner might be pardoned. And so, as we come with this petition, we find in it much more than the disciples could understand when they used the same words, for we find in it the plea of mercy for Christ's sake, of justice, because since He has died for our sins and paid our penalty, it is just that we, trusting in Him, receive the forgiveness of sins. That we can pray for the forgiveness of sins, is because God's grace in Jesus Christ has opened the way. He can forgive sinners, because He has exacted the utmost penalty for sins and Jesus Christ has taken our place and fully paid that penalty. And now, there need be no doubt, no fear, when we bring this entreaty. We have a ground for the petition, not only in the fact that we are commanded thus to pray, but in the great fact that Jesus has died and risen again for our justification. We have the forgiveness for which we ask. Our heavenly Father, for Christ's sake, freely forgives us all our sins. "*There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.*" We should learn from this petition, not only that we

need the forgiveness of sins, but that we are sure of pardon, if we come with earnest trust in Jesus our Redeemer.

There is a third lesson for us in the words of the text: that *the test and manifestation of God's forgiveness is to be found in our forgiving spirit*. As we forgive those that trespass against us, so we beg that He will forgive us! Let us be careful that we understand these words. The forgiveness of those who sin against us is not the condition, still less the ground of God's forgiveness of our sins. We are not taught to say, "Forgive us . . . because we forgive." But our forgiveness is the proof, the evidence of the fact that we realize our sin before God, that we truly repent, and hence are ready to extend to others the same spirit of forgiveness which God has shown to us, and for which we are grateful. As God does not "regard our sins, nor deny us our requests on account of them," so in grateful recognition of His merciful love, "we will, therefore, on our part, both heartily forgive and also readily do good to those who may injure and offend us." His forgiveness will not hold good, who, having had the whole debt released, free from the ten thousand-talent burden, goes out and takes his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest," the petty obligation of the few pence!

Note also that the word "as" does not demand the impossible. It is not used here quantitatively, but qualitatively. It does not mean, "Lord, forgive us our trespasses in the measure in which we forgive others," but, "Lord, forgive us, even as Thou seest we seek to emulate Thy spirit of grace and free pardon." We cannot equal God in this grace of forgiveness; no, but we can have the same sort of spirit that He has, even though, like all His perfections, in Him it is infinite, while in us it is a poor, finite imitation.

We are to be in earnest about it; not holding fast the idea that we cannot forgive our enemies; not cheating ourselves with the specious form of words, "I will forgive, but I will never forget." Can you imagine God looking down upon us, and saying, "You guilty, sinful, wretched creature, I forgive you, because my Son died for you, but I will never forget a single one of your sins!" Oh, that is not the God of love, of grace, that we know. Our God says: "I not only freely forgive, but as for your sins, I have cast them behind my back." If you know, or if any angel, from Heaven or hell, should ever find the place in the universe that is behind God's back, then will your sins be remembered. No, God forgives them, and that means He will never drag them out into the light of His memory again. The Judgment

Day does not mean, to those who are in Christ, a long catalog of their sins. On the contrary, *“in that day, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and shall not be found; and the sins of Judah, and there shall be none!”* Thus God forgives, and the same spirit must be in us.

In a certain city there was a church in which some trouble had arisen. A young man who had been very active in the congregation was among those who had been alienated. He was urged to return and take up again the work in which he was so sorely needed. He answered, “No, I will not go back to that church. There are people in it who have injured me.” “Yes, and you have not forgiven them?” “No” said the young man, “I have never yet forgiven any one that has willfully wronged me, and I never will!” Of course, there was but one thing to say, and looking him full in the eye, the pastor said, “Then, you may be sure that God has never forgiven you one of your sins, and never will,” and added, “And you should never dare, in your own chamber, or in the services of the Church, to repeat the Lord’s Prayer, for, so long, as you hold in your heart that spirit, you are saying, ‘ Lord forgive me, as I forgive those who have sinned against me. I do not and will not forgive them, do not Thou forgive me’”

The red blood surged over his face, and the man began to realize, as he had probably not realized ever before, what his attitude and words truly meant. It was not long before he had put himself again in the place where duty called him, and was able to use the prayer which the Lord has given. Clearly and strongly do we find the truth in our form for Public Confession and Absolution, “if he forgive not from the heart, it is proof that he understandeth not his own sins against God, and despiseth the riches of the grace and forgiveness of Christ, purchased at so great a cost, and therefore hath not true faith.”

The man who goes out from the presence of his Lord, forgiven of the immense debt which he, helpless, owed, and taking his fellow-servant by the throat will hear naught of excuse, and will forgive nothing, casting him into prison until the last farthing of his little debt be paid, is an ungrateful wretch. You could not love him, neither can God. Let us beware of this great offense. Let us first feel our sinfulness, and come with deep contrition, true repentance and full confession of our guilt: believing firmly in the all-sufficient grace of Christ, in the free forgiveness of sins through His blood; and, with love, deep and true and strong, cover the sins of our fellow-men,

forgiving them as we have been forgiven. Then shall we dwell in the love of God.

The Sixth Petition

‘And lead us not into temptation.’ – Matt. 6:13.

THE PETITIONS OF THE SECOND PART of the Lord’s Prayer are arranged in an order which is very striking and comprehensive. The Fourth Petition, “Give us this day our daily bread,” refers to the present. It is the prayer we offer for the need one feels at the time he prays, for the supply of the wants of the body in “this *present* life” at this present time. The Fifth Petition is a cry for the pardon of what is past. We look back at the life that is spent, at the past year or month or day, and we realize the failures and the faults, and the sins. How could we restrain the words so precious in their promise, “Forgive us our sins.” But the present and the past do not include the whole of life, even though the present be richly supplied, and the past be fully covered by the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ, and by the atoning power of His blood. There is more for which we must pray. There is the future.

To serious men, who are considering the importance of a renunciation of self and sin, but who know the power of the allurements to that which is inconsistent with the profession of Christ, one of the chief difficulties in the way is the fear that they may fall again into sin, that the new life may not prove permanent. Many a man has said, “If only I could hold out, if only I could be sure that I should remain faithful, then, it would be easy to take this step, easy to trust in Christ for the forgiveness of past sin.”

The Sixth Petition covers just the need that is felt when the pathway of the future is seen bristling with temptations and besetments. It is for those who tremble at the lions in the way. It is for every one who feels that though fear for the present and for the guilt of the past has been put away, his greatest lack is strength for the combat that lies on the threshold of the morrow, and that will confront him at every step as he goes onward. He who knows the might of the foe, will not underestimate it. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with wicked spirits in heavenly places. Our struggle is unending against the three great

enemies, the devil, the world and our own flesh; the foe from beneath, the one who is about us, and the one within. For him who has measured the might of his adversaries, and who has felt the earnestness of the strife and the weakness with which he must enter it, these words are given in the matchless prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

The form of the petition may seem strange to us, and may need explanation. Are we to fear that God Himself will fight against us? Will He in whom is all our hope lead us into temptation? What do the words mean? With his deep spiritual insight, Luther answers us:

"God indeed tempts no one to sin; but we pray in this petition that God would so guard and preserve us, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh, may not deceive us, nor lead us into error or unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and that, though we may be thus tempted, we may nevertheless finally prevail and gain the victory.

This answer rings of truth. *God does not tempt any man to evil.* That is a devil's work, whoever does it. St. James enjoins us, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God tempteth no one to evil." That would be impossible for Him who wills only good to all His creatures. Why then should we beseech God that He would not lead us into temptation?

The simplest answer seems to be that many things are ascribed to God which come from Him only indirectly. You remember, for instance, how it is written in many places in the story of Pharaoh, that he hardened his heart against all the purposes of God; and then, in other places in the same story it is written, that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. What does it mean? Evidently and simply, that God, seeing that the Egyptian monarch was hardening his heart deliberately against every softening influence, withdrew His grace and left the stubborn king unhindered so that his heart grew all the more hard.

When the Lord withdraws His aid, the human heart is harder than steel. See how it befell Peter, when he paid no heed to the warning of the Master as the awful night of the arrest of Jesus drew near. Peter might have been spared the sin and shame of his denial. Tenderly, gently, the Lord spoke to him: "Simon, Simon, Satan desired to have you, that he might sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." The Lord, doubtless, spoke before the hour of the great temptation, in order that the self-confident, impulsive man might have a warning, might cease from trusting in his own uprightness and fearlessness, and might lean upon the

higher strength of God. But it was in vain. Not defiantly, but none the less surely, did Peter harden his heart against the gentle voice that bade him be on his guard. "I will go with thee even unto death," he said. "You need not be afraid. 'Surely the Captain may depend on me?' There is no danger that I, at least, will fall or fail you." Such was the spirit and the thought that his words indicate. And the loving Lord saw, what the whole subsequent history of Peter illustrates to us, that the only way for him to learn his weakness was by permitting him to meet this great temptation, and find out for himself its strength and his own lack of power; so that ever after he might plant his feet not on shifting sand but on the great rock foundation. The Lord simply left him to himself, to the strength he vaunted, to meet alone the temptation which was inevitable. It was not God that tempted him, but God did not hinder the temptation from coming upon him in the pride of his self-righteousness. That was all. And we pray that this may not be our lot. Such is evidently the meaning of the petition.

When we thus pray, we are asking God for two things, as Luther, in his explanation, brings to light. We are asking in the first place, that God would so guard and preserve us *that we may not be the prey of the foes that would hunt us to our death*. We ask that He would not stand aside as He did with Pharaoh, and with Peter, and leave us helpless in the hour of need; that He will withhold temptation from us when it can be in accordance with His wisdom; that we may not be deceived, and fail to recognize our foe, nor the awfulness of the sins into which he would lead us.

There is many a temptation which might be spared us without hurt to the development of character. A Christian saves himself many enticements to sin, by taking his stand clearly and squarely as a Christian. The young boy, away from home for the first time, is led into many a trap of the devil, if he fears or hesitates, at the first assault, to stand by his colors. Once having declared his allegiance to the Captain of the army of truth and purity, those who hate these things will seek his companionship no longer. We pray that God will aid us so that we may avoid every temptation which it is right for us to escape.

There is many a temptation which has its power over us because we do not recognize it as a temptation. The devil, the world and our own flesh deceive us. It is when he plays his part as the "father of lies" more than when he goeth about "as a roaring lion," that the adversary is dangerous. "Ye shall not surely die" were the words with which he deceived our first

mother. In his garb as an angel of light, there are many who do not recognize what lies beneath. To be discovered is, for him, to be far on the way to be defeated. In the three assaults upon our Saviour in the wilderness he had power; but when, in the last temptation he revealed the diabolical spirit in his desire for the worship due to God alone, our Champion unmasked him, and at the calling of his name, "Get thee behind me, *Satan*," vanquished, he fled. "In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird." Blind and ignorant, we do not see, too often, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh are enticing us that they may lead us to doubt, despair and other great and shameful sins, and we go on until the snare entangles us. We pray, in this temptation that He who watches and sees, may deliver us from the deceit of the enemy.

The second thing for which we pray is that *when the temptation comes* from which there is no escape, *we may be enabled to resist it* to "prevail and gain the victory." For we do not and cannot ask that God would save us from all temptation. That would be like a soldier, beseeching his captain not to lead him into battle: like a sailor asking that the ship might lie continually in the safe shelter of the harbor, and never launch out to sea, where the winds blow and the waves beat high. For what have we enlisted? "Quit yourselves like men." "Endure hardship like a good soldier of Jesus Christ." These are the ringing battle calls addressed to us.

There is a place and a need for temptation in every life. The little plant that grows up into a tree, always sheltered and protected, never beaten upon by the wind or storm, has no strong roots; and, at last, exposed to some sudden blast, is overthrown at once, and lies crushed and prone. The innocence of the little babe, beautiful as it seems to us, aware of all the taint of sin of which the world is full, is not the innocence of victory but of powerlessness. Our Lord wants in us the purity of the conqueror who has felt the strength of the evil allurements, has known all its attractiveness, and has overcome, choosing the right, allying himself of his own will with the pure. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation."

This is what we pray for, that when the hour of trying comes, we, armed with the Christian panoply, may fight the good fight with the strength that comes from above, and may prevail and gain the victory.

This is *no prayer for a trifler*. It needs an earnest heart behind it. It is meaningless to him who regards sin as a joke, and the devil as an outworn superstition. To him who prays this petition aright there can be no belittling

of sin; no choice of some sins as little ones; no fancy that he can do some things that he knows are wrong, without serious damage to himself and his profession. He who has such conceptions is already within the very grasp of the power of the foe.

If we do not pray this prayer aright, we cannot have prayed the Fifth Petition with sincerity. For if we have received the grace of God in the forgiveness of sins, if we have received the gift of justification, we have within our hearts an intense desire and purpose never again to be the slave of sin, never by our will, to become displeasing to the God who has freely pardoned us. There is no fitter expression of the heart's longing of the justified sinner, than in these words, "Lead us not into temptation."

This is *a prayer for every day and every place*. Where will you go to escape temptation? Go where you will, as long as you have with you your own heart, you have temptation. So long as this life lasts, the "old man" of sin dwells within you. Not until that glorious day when Jesus shall return, and when we shall be like Him, will our own flesh cease to tempt us. Not until then can we shout, "Thank God, temptation is no more!"

Prosperity brings temptation. It tempts you to forget God, and to rely upon the creature; to rejoice in the things of this life, its joys and pleasures, and to be oblivious to the true life that is eternal. Adversity tempts: it adopts the adjuration of Job's wife, and bids you "curse God and die." It tempts you to believe that God has forgotten. It would lead you to unbelief, despair and other great and shameful sins.

The society of the wicked is full of temptation. You are prone to feel the might of association and example. And, on the other hand, even in the company of the righteous you are not free from the possibility of temptation. You may see in them, that which is not fully in accord with God's Word, and you may be inclined to take their lives as your standard instead of the life of the Perfect One. You may be induced by friendship to do the thing which they do; to be silent when you ought to make protest; to follow when you ought to resist. And if you do take the right stand, and by your steadfast defense of the truth and of the good, rebuke their error, you are tempted to spiritual pride, and to think with the Pharisee, that God must rejoice to see that you are not as other men!

If you go into places where sin abounds you will be tempted, most surely; nor even when you go into the House of God, are you beyond the reach of temptation, for while God's Word is spoken Satan works, directing

your attention to other things. Alas! how often even as you join in repeating the Lord's Prayer, your mind will wander, and you murmur, "Lead us not into temptation," with no sense of the words you speak, and no thought that while you seem to pray, your adversary is causing you to profane the Name of God! How truly we need not merely to say the words, but to pray this prayer, beset as we are on every hand with the might of temptation!

He is sadly in danger who does not feel this need. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Slippery is the place on which he has his feet who thinks he need not fear temptation. An old man, who had been a drunkard, was reclaimed. He was urged to go with one who claimed to be his friend to a place where he knew temptation lurked. The rescued man refused. "I dare not," he said. The other still insisted, when the old man answered, "You do not seem to understand. I am a brand plucked from the burning and a brand catches fire much more easily than a piece of wood which has never been burned. It may be possible for you to go there and not fall into great and shameful sin. I fear to go. I will not go." He was safe. It is a great thing to fear temptation. It is folly for us to seek out temptation, and put ourselves, uncalled by duty, in the place where we will be tempted, expecting God to hear our prayer when we ask for deliverance.

He is safe who trusts not in himself but in *the power and His promise of God*. In the days of Queen Mary, the bloody persecutor of the pure Gospel, two men were speaking together of the trials that were plainly to be seen approaching. One of them was sore afraid. Timid and distrustful of himself, he feared that in the hour of stress, he might, like Peter, deny his Lord, and bring reproach upon the Name he bore. Dreadful to him was the thought of the stake and the flames, and he trembled lest he prove unworthy. The other was confident. Sure that he would face death and torture rather than deny the faith, he laughed at the terrors of his friend and boasted of his courage. The hour came to them both, and lo, the trembling one witnessed with boldness a good confession, even in the martyr's fire! But he who had been so sure of his steadfastness, renounced, at the very first approach of suffering, the faith he had professed, and turned again to the false religion, which, in the name of Christ, destroyed those who trusted in Him rather than in priest and pope!

Let us tremble if we will, only let us also trust. There is a promise, which forms the complement of this petition. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you

to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). This is the word you need at the approach of the trial of your faith. Would that it were engraven with a pen of iron on every heart! “God is faithful.” It does not depend on your strength. All that is in you is nothing; but who shall limit or lessen the faithfulness of God? Look for the way to escape; be sure He will provide it; and cry to Him with confident assurance, daily and hourly, “Lead us not into temptation.”

The Seventh Petition

“But Deliver us from evil.” – Matt. 6:13.

WE HAVE PRAYED for the pardon of past sins; for strength, that we may not fall anew into the sin of which we have already felt the power; and, now, in the seventh petition, we take a broader outlook, and recognizing our condition, defenseless, and the object of hostile attack on every side, we beseech God, in His mercy, to deliver us from evil, or, as the Revised Version suggests the translation, from the evil one.

The plain meaning of these words is fully set forth in the explanation of the Catechism, when Luther says: “We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect the body or soul, property or character, and, at last, when the hour of death shall arrive, grant us a happy end, and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.”

When we pray this petition we are asking for *God’s defense against the devil*. Our age has become so refined as to dislike all mention of the great enemy. A new and prominent commentary says that it is unfortunate that the text of the Revised Version restores the meaning “the evil one,” because “evil” is abstract, while in the new rendering it becomes concrete, “the evil one,” the devil. But to the people of our day evil is something abstract, and it does not fit in the thought of our day to pray to be delivered from the evil one, the devil.

If that be true, so much the worse for our day. For in our day, there is manifest evidence, if men will look for it, of the actual presence in the world, in very many individuals, and in many unexpected places and forms, of a personal devil, hostile to man, hating God and hateful to Him, seeking to thwart the divine work. And if the world has gotten beyond the recognition of the devil, then this age is in far greater danger than any other has been, for not to know who is your foe renders you more helpless than you would be with the same foe recognized. “Forewarned is forearmed.”

No man can make a severer indictment against the human race than by the denial of a personal spirit of evil, suggesting and inspiring the iniquities of men. To say that humanity, unaided by satanic depravity, is capable of such deeds of shame, such depths of corruption, as the history of the past and the morning paper of today continually describe, is to conceive of human nature as far more base than Christian doctrine teaches. Yet, strangely enough, the deniers of the devil's existence are the very ones who deny the doctrine of man's native sinfulness, and pose as those who hold the highest idea of humanity! There are still some of us, even in the present day of enlightenment, who believe man incapable of such crimes and debasement as are written large all over the story of the world's doings, if there were not a spirit of hell that knew how to sway him, to turn men themselves into devilish beings.

Certainly, the man who believes the Scriptures as they stand, can have no doubt of the existence of an evil one, the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, rejoicing in the destruction of souls made for immortal blessedness; whom our Master fought in that great battle in the Wilderness, and who, there overcome, never yielded up his purpose to destroy the hope of our redemption, but in demoniac folly, drove men to the supreme crime of history, when he caused the Lord, by wicked hands to be crucified and slain; yet even then, and then most of all, defeated on the cross, in the victory the Saviour won when He yielded up His breath, and declared "it is finished." "To this end was the son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" is the message of St. John. (1 John. 3:8) Blessed is the news that there is one who can meet and overcome our greatest foe. Blessed is the news that He who has thus overcome dwells in us; "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John. 4:4.) And he is safe, he only, who is in Christ Jesus, in whom Christ Jesus dwells, for he is allied, even identified, with the one power in all the universe of God that Satan fears.

This construction of the meaning of the petition does not narrow it, for *all the evil of the world comes from this same evil one*. Anything is evil that is not as it ought to be. When God had completed His wondrous handiwork, and looked upon it, He saw "that it was very good." All that was in the world was as it ought to be. There were no discords, no conflicts, no jarring elements or principles or creatures. But Satan came and did his fiendish work, and woe and war began. Every sorrow, every tear, every anguished

heart, every soul parting from the body in that last struggle which we call the hour and article of death, every sad, slow-moving funeral train, sable and ghastly, every grave and cemetery, every sin and all its following procession of sorrow, is but one item in the awful scroll of evil, for which the evil one is responsible. All is not now as it ought to be, for sin is here, and Satan brought it here.

Luther was once walking with a friend through a country full of beauty, and both being deeply impressed with the loveliness of nature, as her charms lay before their eyes and spoke to their appreciative hearts, the friend said, "Earth, in its beauty, is a paradise." "Yes," was the answer, "paradise enough if sin were not." There is the core and kernel of all our woe and sadness, bereavement, pain and loss. Two things we should learn: the hatefulness of sin and Satan, and the goodness of God. Trial should bring us to hate evil. And the remembrance of the mighty goodness of the Lord, which shall turn these sores and pains, and losses and griefs into means of chastening, into ways of profit, so that they shall work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, should cause in us undying thankfulness to Him who will "deliver us from evil."

It is not strange, nor is it the fruit of a blind pessimism, that men should speak of this world as "*a world of sorrow*" The Psalmist knows how often men are seen "passing through the valley of Baca" or, as the Revised Version has it, "the valley of weeping." We have need only to look upon the world as it lieth "in the evil one" (1 John 5:19. R. V.) without the comfort of God's grace, to understand why there should be long and earnest disquisitions on the theme "Is life worth living?" Even with the grace of God, we would not live alway, in this land of disappointments and dissatisfactions. We can appreciate the words of Luther, "that He should graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in Heaven."

There are *the bodily conflicts* that we suffer. How men crowded about the Master, sightless, loathsome with leprosy, lame and halt, deaf and dumb. And how they crowd today about the quacks and pretenders, who without the Master's spirit or power, claim to do His wonderful deeds! Hezekiah lying sick unto death, for even kings cannot keep off sickness and death; David, wretched in his home life, with a son that shamed him and conspired against him; Paul, with the thorn in the flesh; Paul in the prison-house, and at the stake; – all through the Scriptures we find the record of the sorrows of this present life! Look about you, in your home there is perhaps one weary

of the sufferings of years; down in the slums of the city, there are the hungry, the shivering, the wretched. Saddest of all to see men, as we do sometimes, in spite of the great horde of impostors, see them, eager to work, standing all day idle in the market-place, not because they would be idle, but because no man will hire them; walling to eat their bread in the sweat of their brows, desiring no man's charity, but finding no opportunity to turn their power of muscle or of brain into the food they and their children want: evil, sin, man's greed and selfishness stand monstrous, horrible, revealed in such scenes as this.

There are the *evils that affect the character*. The sordid cares that turn the man into a miser. The wild extravagances that make the boy, influenced by all he sees, a worthless spendthrift. The impurity that lets loose in the earliest youth all the devils of lust, to make filthy the soul. The environment of dishonesty and corruption that educate the children into a creed of crime. The cowardly slanderers that would rob character of one of its richest earnings, a good name. Are not these, all of them, evils thickly sown and richly growing in this world's soil?

There are the *evils that affect the soul*. Sin, sin, sin, – that includes all the rest. Add the indifference to sin, the sore want of realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the truckling to sinfulness, the metamorphosis of sin into misfortune or unavoidable conformity to environment, and you have the story of the world's deepest evil. "Deliver us from evil" may well mean first of all, deliver us from our blindness to the evil that is in sin, the sorest evil of all, and the least suspected. Oh, Lord deliver us from our thoughtlessness, as we go on with the sin of omission and of commission filling our lives, forgetting even to refresh ourselves at the fountains of grace ere we enter upon the duties and temptations of the day; or sometimes carelessly repeating the words, "Deliver us from evil" but with no sense of the peril, no heart cry of terror at the encompassing dangers!

As we pray let us not forget here, peculiarly, the emphasis on the little word "us." No man that has felt ever so little of the world's sin and woe, can forget the sorrows of his fellow-men; surely no man whom Christ has redeemed can go on careless of his neighbor. God may have held His shield before us and warded off the fiery darts of the evil one, but there are sore wounded ones about us. Oh, for more sympathy, divinely born, for those who suffer and are weary. "Deliver *us* from evil."

And, as we pray, we must recognize the fact that *in us, alone, there is no deliverance*. How fatally do men fall as they forget God and seek to deliver themselves!

Here is one upon whom wretchedness has come. He seeks the saloon that he may drown his misery. Has he delivered himself, or has he but added to the weight of woe upon him?

Another, in his despair, sends the bullet through his brain. Is he delivered, or has he plunged into the fullness of the evil? Oh, how shall the murderer of himself give account to God? This, surely, is Satan's deliverance into the flames of his own place.

Shall you trust in your wealth for deliverance? Will that bring back the life that is ebbing, ebbing, despite all the skill of the wisest physicians? Will that bring the wayward boy to repentance, or fill the empty home with love?

There is no help for so many of the sorrows of life, no helper, but God. He can help, He has delivered. *He will deliver.*

St. Paul knew something about evil. He felt bodily evils; men scourged him. He experienced evils affecting his reputation; they slandered him, and within the Church and without, he was bitterly attacked. He suffered through years of opposition and discouragement. Read the outline sketch of his trials in II Cor. 4:8-11; 11:1-28. Worst of all he endured were not the stripes, imprisonment and loneliness, but the warfare against the Gospel, and the disappointment in those who had seemed to be Christ's and who turned away again to the beggarly elements of the world. "All men forsook me," he says, "notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." He was strong in the assurance that the "Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom." And surely God did deliver him. What matters it to him, now, that his heroic spirit went up to the rest above through Nero's flames, since God was with him, and in the midst of the agony delivered him, bringing him safe home at last!

Nothing, perhaps, illustrates more fully how God does deliver and will deliver than the conflict with *that last evil* which you and I must meet and conquer, if Jesus tarry much longer. What will we do "when the hour of death shall arrive?" Let us see how He delivered some of his servants.

John Arndt, one of the holiest souls the Spirit ever sanctified, lay upon his dying bed. He had fallen into a deep unconsciousness, and they who stood around thought that he would not arouse again. But he came to himself, and clearly and distinctly he spoke, "And we beheld his glory, the

glory as of the only-begotten Son of the Father.” His wife said to him, " ‘Beheld his glory’ when did you behold it?" “Just now” he said, “Just now I beheld it, and my heart is full of joy.” And then after but a little time the Lord took him, to behold unceasingly the glory of which his dying eye had just caught a glimpse. Was that death? Was it not victory?

The last hour came to Martin Luther. He had not bowed before the face of Pope and Emperor, bidding him deny his Lord. Nor was he afraid when the grim visage of Death confronted him. On his lips were the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 31:5). “Into thine hand I commit my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.” Thrice he repeated the paean of trust, then fell asleep. The same words have served as the departing song of Melanchthon, and of a host of others. Was this the fear of death? Where was the horror of the grave? Where was the sting? “The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory!”

No man prays this prayer aright who denies or doubts Satan’s existence or his power. No man prays it aright who makes little of the sinfulness, the awfulness of sin. No man prays it aright who imagines that he can deliver himself, or that any human power can give him deliverance, who trusts to an arm of flesh and has no refuge save that the world can give. And no man prays it aright who doubts that God can and will deliver.

Only he can pray this petition truly who has that majestic confidence which finds expression in the hymn we love to sing:

"A mighty Fortress is our God,
A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need
That hath us now o’ertaken.
The old bitter foe
Means us deadly woe
Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight,
On earth is not his equal.
Though devils all the world should fill.
All watching to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They cannot overpower us.
This world’s prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He’s judged, the deed is done,
One little word o’erthrows him.

He who is in Christ, he who truly prays this petition, need have no fear from Satan's craft and might. Evil, whether it affect the body or soul, property or character, can not reach him. He is safe, for Christ is with him, and day by day, and especially in that last hour, he can use the words of Paul Gerhardt, the wonderful singer of our German Church:

“Forbid that I should leave Thee;
O Jesus, leave not me;
In faith may I receive Thee,
When death shall set me free.
When strength and comfort languish;
And I must hence depart,
Release me then from anguish
By Thine own wounded heart.”
Amen.

The Conclusion

“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen” – Matt. 6:13.

THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THESE WORDS is not questioned. We might take for a text, embodying the same thought, the sixteenth verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, “*For of him and through him and to him be the glory forever, Amen.*”

All things for which we pray in this perfect prayer are of God, come forth *from Him*, are the treasures of His Kingdom which He fills and pervades; all are to be accomplished by His power, *through Him*, through that might divine by which He made the worlds and upholds all things, guiding, and controlling the destinies of men and of nations also today. And all things are *to Him*, not only created by Him, and coming forth from Him, but also returning to Him, for His glory. Especially is this true of His own children, ransomed, cleansed and adopted by Him. Thus all the kingdom and the power and the glory is His, “For of Him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

At the beginning of this meditation it is important to know the significance of that word “for” since it connects this doxology with all that has preceded it.

This ascription of praise and glory, dominion and power, to God on high is here to be added for the reason that *all that goes before is based upon the fact which we here declare and acknowledge*. “Thine is the kingdom.” And therefore we pray “Thy kingdom come.” God’s Word is full of the truth that he is the King of Kings, and we come to Him with every one of the petitions we have offered because His is the kingdom, and because the things for which He has bidden us to pray are the things that pertain to His kingdom. It is there that His Name is kept holy. It is there that His will is to be done; there only that His is the one will that is truly supreme, filling the hearts of all the members of that kingdom. It is the part of the King to care

for the welfare of His subjects. It is in the kingdom of this King alone that forgiveness of sins is to be found; there alone that we can expect to have the victory over sin, to conquer temptation, to be restrained from falling into sin; and the bulwarks of this kingdom are the only walls strong enough to repel the assaults of the evil one, within them the only place where we can surely find deliverance.

And more, the things for which we are taught to pray, in this prayer, are not our concern, our business, but God's affair. His business. It is upon this ground that we confidently expect His answer. "Thine is the kingdom" and thou, Ruler of this realm, wilt not fail to guard and direct and prosper the things that belong to Thy kingdom; Thou canst not fail to hear our prayers when we ask for that which is for the increase and upbuilding of the kingdom which it is Thine to govern.

Again we say, "Thine is the power." This is *another reason* upon which we plead with assurance for an answer to our prayers. It is well for us not only to be reminded that God is interested in these things, that they are His concern, but it is profitable for faith, to remember that He is able to do what we ask. This whole doxology, indeed, binds itself very closely with the Introduction, "Our Father which is in Heaven" and it is here especially, in this thought of power, that the difference between every fatherhood of earth, and the Father in Heaven is emphasized. How often you and I would so gladly give to our children what they desire; it is our desire also, in so far as we can see that they would receive benefit only from the granting of their request; we crave for them and would fain pour out upon them every good thing that the world affords, but we cannot. But there may be no means within our power, to give them what they seek. Oh, it is good to know that no such defect of power limits the beneficent work of the Father of infinite love! His is the power! The power that went out with the creative Word; the power that causes "all things to continue as they were from the foundation of the world," the sun and the moon to rise, the seed-time and the harvest to follow in their due seasons; the power that restrains evil and brings good to conquest, – this power is His to whom, by His own mandate, we offer our supplications!

And nowhere is His power more clearly shown than in His *answers to prayer*. Moses, in extremity of peril, with the lives of the whole nation upon his shoulders, cried to Him, while the pathless waters of the Red Sea stayed his feet. The Lord answered, and said, "Stretch forth the rod that is in thine

hand.” And Moses stretched it forth, the waves parted, and the Israelites marched through. Jesus in His humanity stood before the closed sepulchre, behind whose door of stone lay the already corrupting form of Lazarus, His friend. Ere He spoke the word of power, Jesus looked up into Heaven and said, (though the gate of the tomb was still closed, and the inanimate form still lay, the captive of death), “Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always,” and the prayer was answered before He had even asked, and the fulfillment of which He was already assured was evidenced before those who were with Him, when the grave-clothes were loosed and Lazarus came forth.

You. have heard the story of Luther, coming to the sick room of Melanchthon, when his friend was already apparently in the very last moments of life, when it seemed as if death had already laid his seal upon him, and the countenance was disfigured as if the last enemy had already seized him. “Oh, Death,” said Luther, “how hast thou marred and destroyed this human tabernacle.” Then he turned and went to the window, and poured out before God all the promises to believing prayer that he knew of in the Scriptures, (and he was mighty in the Scriptures,) and returning to the bedside he saw Melanchthon restored to life! Not all the physicians of earth could have done what God did then, in answer to prayer. It was the same mighty faith which the Reformer expressed on another occasion when he said to Melanchthon, “I have prayed for thee, and I do pray for thee, and I will pray for thee, and I have in my heart already, the Amen of God.” Time fails to tell of the victories of the saints of God, in all the ages, who, with simple prayer, laid their heart’s desires before the Lord, careless of the difficulties in the way, heedless of the apparent impossibility of their accomplishment, confident only that of Him from whom they sought the answer, they could say, “Thine is the power.” And that same power is His even now, and you and I can claim it if we will, as fully as any of the mighty men of prayer in past days. What a marvelous thing that the power of God may be grasped by the prayer of His humblest child!

“Thine is the glory.” Whose else shall it be? Not only the glory of His kingship, His royal majesty divine; not only the glory of His might, to whom the round globe is a very little thing; but above all *the glory of His character*. The glory of God may be seen, indeed, in the world of beauty which He has made by His strength, and still more in the infinite wisdom which is revealed in every smallest part of His creation, with its perfect

correlations; but after all, we see His glory chiefly in the purity and holiness and love which are Himself; in the Divinity which is His essence.

In that character which is His supreme glory there are preeminently two traits which furnish the basis of our assurance as we come to Him in prayer.

The first is, that *God is love*. When we come to Him, His little children, all ignorant and helpless, but using the words He has given us, and seeking in our blindness only to do His will, He is bound by His love to hear us, to take our hands and lead us, to lift us when we fall, to cheer us when we are sad, and to teach us and fit us for our homecoming to dwell with Him. Could a father do less? And is He not bound by the glory of His truth to keep His promises?

And again, there is *the precious Name* by which He reveals Himself to the praying soul. He has many glorious names, but none we love more to hear than that by which the Psalmist calls him, (Ps. 65:2.) “O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come.” Have you ever thought of that Name of God, “Prayer-Hearer?” It is for His glory, it is of His glory that that Name should be vindicated. And He does not hesitate, all through the Blessed Book, to challenge us to pray and test the truth of His Name. Oh, you remember so many of the precious promises; you have found them and tried them again and again; in the stress of some sore need, you have come upon the words, “Call Upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me,” and you have called and He has delivered. He is the Prayer-Hearer, that is His Name, and you have glorified Him.

Let us give Him the glory. It is told of the great and devout Lutheran musician Handel, the composer of the magnificent oratorio “The Creation,” that as he sat and heard the music sung for the first time, the tears streamed down his cheeks, and when the sweet sounds had ceased and the multitude thronged about him to grasp his hands and to heap praises upon him, he replied, “Oh, no, the glory is not mine, but all good things are from God.”

That is what we mean when we say, “Thine is the glory.” We ask these good things not for our praise, but for Thine, and because Thou wilt be glorified in the granting of them.

But we must yet look at *the closing word*, the “Amen,” with which we sum up all that we have said, and in which we compress the strength of our unflinching faith. In the Catechism you will remember that it is this word to which Luther gives the closing explanation. It means, he tells us, “that I should be assured that these petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father

and are heard of him, for he has commanded us thus to pray and has promised that he will hear us. Amen, Amen, that is it shall be so.”

That is no mere formal closing phrase. It is a distinct expression of *confident assurance*. It is the strength of essential faith that breathes in it. Why should we not have a perfect confidence that these petitions are acceptable to God and will be heard by Him? They seek the very things which His dear Son saw to be most needful for us. They are expressed in the very words His Son has taught us. They make request for the things that work for the advancement of His kingdom; the things in which His eternal power may most worthily be displayed; the things which tend in the highest measure to the recognition of His glory. The prayer is divinely inspired, how should it not meet with divine acceptance?

We have a right indeed, in our own words, to ask for all things which as Christians, living in Christ, we could desire. There are some things which no true child of God could ask for. There are many for which we may ask without being certain that they would be good for us and acceptable to God, and for these we pray conditionally. But it is not so here; we know that these petitions are acceptable to Him, for He has commanded us thus to pray.

But there is more in the " Amen " than the confidence that our prayer will be answered. We have *the assurance that God has heard them*, and that the fulfillment of them is absolutely certain. "Amen, Amen, it shall be so." The prayer is already registered in the records of Heaven. The stamp and seal of God's approval is already placed upon it. The only thing that may tarry, is the time of its complete fulfillment.

This is no strange doctrine. The Apostle of love tells us, (I John. 5:14, 15) "This is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know *that we have* the petitions which we have asked of him." This was what Luther meant, when, writing to Melancthon, he said that he had already, in his heart, God's "Amen" to his prayer. There is a sweet witness of the Spirit, testifying with our spirits to God's "Amen," in many of our prayers.

There is a striking illustration of the prayer already answered before the "Amen" is spoken, in the story of Daniel. How much is found in the life of that hero of faith, to encourage us to prayer! How impossible it was for him to think of giving up his communion with God, to which he went with

joyful heart thrice daily! Far rather would he give up his life. And so, when the wicked decree of the king forbade the offering of prayer for thirty days to any other than himself, Daniel, calm and trustful, went to his chamber and knelt down by the open window, facing toward Jerusalem, and prayed aloud "as aforetime." Prayer was to him who knew its power and blessedness too precious a privilege, by far, for him to abandon even for a day. He was one of those men to whom it would have seemed treachery to his God to pray in secret, under the stress of persecution, and the spies who had laid the trap and were there to catch him, had no difficulty. And He whose is the kingdom and the power and the glory, honored His fearless child, and wrought new wonders and brought new glory to His Name.

This man was praying with all the earnestness which characterizes true prayer, for the restoration of the people to Jerusalem, and the end of the long captivity; confessing his sins and the sins of his people. It was an acceptable prayer, offered in faith, and in sincerity. Doubtless, too, he had the "Amen" of God in his heart, for he says: "While I was speaking and praying and confessing my sins and the sin of my people Israel, yea, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment went forth, and I am come to tell thee." (Dan. 9:21, 23.) The prayer was already heard and accepted and its fulfillment was sure. Yet, in all its fullness, that prayer was not completely answered until centuries had passed away, and the Son of Man came in the fullness of the times. We grow impatient and fretful if for a week or a year God withholds the completion of our request, as if we knew when the best time was; as if we thought He ought to respond to our petulance and turn His blessing, prematurely given, into a curse. Let it be enough for us, that we can say "Amen," knowing that our prayer is heard of Him and is accepted, and let us leave to Him the times and seasons which are not for us to know.

Precious to us should be this word, "Amen," so often as we use it. Sometimes it seems as if the people did not care whether they said it or not, so feeble is the response, so weak the voices. It was the custom in the earlier days for the people to respond "Amen" with a great shout; endeavoring to give expression in the vigor of the sound to the earnestness of their hearts. Surely, if not with shouting, yet with joyful tones, distinctly

and confidently, we should utter, in the sacred word, the assurance of our faith in the promises of God!

This is a *rich word*, for it is both our word and God's word. On our part it is the declaration of our confidence that it will be so; on God's part, the assurance that it shall be so, and if truly used, it means the believing consecration of every act with which it is connected.

This is a *holy word*, a word which the Lord Jesus Christ honors by choosing it as His Name. He is the "Amen" of God, "in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen," (II Cor. 1:20:) the pledge and assurance of God's purpose of grace and the actualization of our finished redemption, of our acceptance as the children of the Most High. Let us from our inmost spirits join in this doxology. He truly deserves our praises to whom we pray, for "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

The Prayer As A Whole

AFTER THE EXAMINATION we have been permitted to make, of the separate petitions of the Model Prayer, we are ready to take a comprehensive view of the prayer as a whole. I have no words with which to express an estimate of the priceless value of this prayer, nor dare attempt to give it general characterization. I point you to words which are abundantly worthy of your meditation and study, the words of Luther, who was a mighty man of prayer. He says:

"The Lord's Prayer, because it arises from the Lord, is without question the highest, noblest and best. For if He had known a better, the holy faithful school-master that He was, He would have taught us that also. There is on earth no nobler prayer to be found, it is the highest under the sun. It is a wall and bulwark of the Church, a strong weapon for all godly Christians, a prayer above all prayers. I am well aware that I do not rightly know the Lord's Prayer, old and experienced Doctor that I am! Like a babe I daily draw milk from the Lord's Prayer, and cannot get enough of it; to me it surpasses even the Psalms, although I have great love for them, and it is the very best of prayers. In other prayers is not the sap, the power, the fervor and the fire, which I find in the Psalter and the Lord's Prayer. Truly He was a wise man who made it, after whom no one can do any thing! The Lord's Prayer binds the people together, so that each prays with and for the other, and it makes strong and mighty, so that it drives away even death. The Lord's Prayer is my prayer, I use it, and intermingle at times something from the Psalms. *But it is a pity above all pities that such a prayer of such a Master should be babbled and chattered without the least devotion over all the world.*

"Many pray the Lord's Prayer many times in a year, and if they prayed in the same way a thousand years, they would never then have tasted or prayed a word or a tittle of it."

In our glance at the Lord's Prayer, in its entirety, let us view it in three general aspects: first, its inner connection; second, its comprehensiveness and universal appropriateness; and third, its proper use.

There is an *inner connection* to be observed in this prayer. We have already pointed out how each petition is related to that which precedes and to that which follows it. It has been said that the Lord's Prayer is a golden

chain, which is let down from Heaven, so that men may be lifted up to Heaven; and each petition is one of the links in the chain, hanging from that which is above it, and upholding that which is below. Perhaps it will not be useless, even at the cost of some repetition, to set down here, from beginning to end, the relations of the petitions to each other.

In the Introduction we lay the foundation for our prayer. We have a right to come to a Father with all our needs, we are able to come with sure confidence to the Father who is in Heaven. We do come. We pray, "Hallowed be thy name," and since wherever God's Name is hallowed there His kingdom comes, we offer petition for that coming of the kingdom. But he who truly is in God's kingdom, seeks to do only one thing, the will of God. We are led then, naturally, to ask, "Thy will be done," here and everywhere.

Thus far we have looked upward to God, now we look downward at our own needs. And, first of these, the insistent demands of this bodily life press upon our notice, and we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." Yet this depends upon what has preceded, for though it be true that He causeth His rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust, and though they who never honor Him, have daily bread given to them, yet it is only as we are hallowing His Name, subjects of His kingdom, and servants of His will, that we have a right to expect His free gifts in the bestowment upon us of all good things, and that we are moved to seek and then to return thanks for our daily bread. But now that we have asked for the supply of the present wants, we look backward, and seeing nothing but sin in our lives, we needs must pray, "Forgive us our trespasses." Still thinking of ourselves, we cannot fail to look forward also, and to observe the foes armed with the fiery darts of the wicked one, on every hand; and, hopeless of security apart from the power of God, we seek His protection, in the request, "Lead us not into temptation." Not doubting that this petition is heard, there still is a comprehensive summary that we need to offer, for besides temptations to sin, there is all manner of evil which the enemy of our souls would fain inflict upon us, and we include all this in our last supplication, and ask, "Deliver us from evil."

Observe how at the beginning, we are lifted up, and begin our requests with the glory of God; and then we come down to earth, and to man, necessitous and weak; and then, in the closing petitions we soar Heavenward again, until we close with that glorious doxology, "Thine is the

kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever and ever, Amen.” The two ends of the prayer are rooted in God, and that which lies between covers the whole scope of what is needful for God’s kingdom and for our part in it, here and hereafter.

This is a prayer for the pilgrim on the way to Heaven. At the beginning he enters, through the narrow door, into the kingdom, hallowing the Name of God, with reverent faith, adoring, worshiping. He dwells in that kingdom which has come to him, loving and obeying God’s will. For the needs of this life while he journeys, he takes no anxious thought, looking to his Father who knoweth that he hath need, for the supply of daily bread; and even so, trusting in Him, with suppliant heart, for the pardon of sin, for defense against temptation, and for protection against all the assaults of the evil one; until, at last, the final evil is changed into a friendly messenger, leading to the home eternal, and as the pilgrim enters through the gates into the city, he is ready to join the heavenly doxologies, with the old, sweet praises to Him whose is the kingdom into which at last, he has fully entered; the power, which, through all perils, has brought him safe to the goal; and the glory, which eternity alone can fully reveal!

Observe, again, what we may learn from *the position of these petitions* in relation to each other. There is a certain emphasis indicated by the order of their sequence. It is vastly important, in our lives, that the emphasis be right. Many a life is ruined, not because there is so much in it absolutely wrong, as because the emphasis is put in the wrong place. That excellent fellow, moral, honorable, even outwardly attentive to church and religion, seems to you well-equipped; but if you could see within, you would realize, that after all, he puts the emphasis on the things temporal, and they must, of necessity, cease when time ceases for him! His life is ruined. And there is the humble, devout Christian, who does not seem to you of as much force as many another, and for whom you do not have the greatest admiration, but who puts the emphasis on God, and His kingdom. His righteousness and his will. He may not gain so many of the good things of this life, but He has made the eternal things first and they endure. His life is saved. It is not, after all, a contrast between the things of this life and the things of God, as if the choice of the one meant the loss of the other; it is only a question of *which is first*. “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” That is the divine program, and he who follows it, gains both; he who puts the emphasis of his life on the

wrong place, may gain the world, but will surely lose his own soul. Why not have both the eternal things and the things needful for this life also?

Such is the lesson of the *arrangement of the petitions* in this prayer. We are prone to speak first, (and second also,) of the things that we need for ourselves, especially in this present life of the body. We are in trouble; this is the only thing we can find to pray about. We are poor; the supply of our necessities is the only request that seems to call forth much of earnestness. But the Lord Jesus Christ, the great School-master in the art of prayer, teaches us that the first things which ought to have place in our desires, are the things of God. His Name, His kingdom. His will, *first* and then, indeed, we are welcome with our tale of earthly needs. These, in their proper place, have as good a right to God's notice, and as certain a response of mercy, as the highest spiritual aspirations, but "First, the kingdom of God." It is worthy of notice, moreover, that of the four petitions, in which the word "us" occurs, three are for spiritual needs, and only one petition of the seven is exclusively devoted to the needs of the body, while one, (the seventh), may fairly be held to include protection against the dangers incident to both body and soul. Is there not here suggestion for our own prayers, the prayers of the closet, in which our hearts speak out spontaneously their message to the Lord? Is there not much for us to learn as to the order and the proportion of our prayers? First, so the Lord shows us, the things of God; then the blessings for ourselves, and of these, the smallest portion of our care should be for "daily bread."

Let us pass on to notice, in the second place, the *comprehensiveness* and *universal appropriateness* of this prayer.

In the seven brief petitions is included all for which we have need. For God's glory, and for man's welfare; for myself and for all men; for the needs of the body and for those of the soul; for provision and for defense; for the past, the present and the future; for this life and for the life to come; for the saved and for the unsaved; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory, we have prayed. There is no want, no circumstance, no time in any man's life which is not embraced within the marvelous sweep of one or another of these petitions. Not one too few, not one too many, for there is not one we could omit, unless we left some need uncovered.

The comprehensiveness of the prayer is perhaps in no way better brought to our attention than by observing the frequent use of it in the public worship of the Church. Thus, too, we recognize its universal

appropriateness. It is easy to see, why in every service, we make use of the Perfect Prayer. It is adapted to general use, and so serves always as a fitting summary of the general prayer. It contains those requests which a worshipping congregation, anywhere, and composed of any people, would desire to offer.

In the special orders in which the Lord's Prayer forms a part, it only needs a thoughtful and devout heart to appreciate the peculiar fitness, in each case, of a part or the whole of the prayer. In the Order for Baptism, for instance, there is a beautiful appropriateness of the words, as the Pastor lays his hand upon the head of the little child while he and the sponsors pray, "Our Father who art in Heaven," – be the Father of this little one, by the adoption in Jesus Christ; "Hallowed be thy name," – as we are about to name that Name upon this child, may the hallowed consecration of the baptismal waters be blessed, so that this soul may never be untrue to Thy Name, nor ever fail to hallow it; "Thy kingdom come" – into this heart, through this life's service into other hearts; "Thy will be done" – by this new member of Thy kingdom, in active and in passive obedience; "Give us this day our daily bread," – let every needed earthly gift be granted to him for whom we pray; "And forgive us our sins" – blot out all the guilt of the sin of nature, by virtue of Christ's redemption; " And lead us not into temptation," – keep and defend this little one from Satan's craft and power; "But deliver us from evil," – preserve and protect in the midst of all the dangers and evils of this world, the child whom we are devoting unto Thee!

With a similar interpretation, the beautiful appropriateness of the prayer in the Confirmation service is evident: when the dear children of the Church; having been instructed and moved to recognize what God has done for them, and what He would have them do for Him, come to confirm and ratify the promises made in their baptism, and in answer to the prayer of the congregation in their behalf, to be confirmed, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, in their faith and devotion.

In the Marriage Service a reverent, considerate use reveals in like manner, that this is the prayer that is needed. The same thing is true of the Burial Service. The illustration just given in connection with the Order of Baptism will serve to indicate how the peculiar circumstances, leading to a particular construction of the petitions, will give color to the meaning of the words, and bring to light the adaptation of the prayer to our every condition.

We may wish to make more explicit what is involved in these pregnant words, we may desire to add, in definite phrase, the particular cravings of our hearts in particular circumstances, our present needs may give emphasis to desires upon which we are impelled to enlarge, but we could not do without this prayer, nor could any other take its place, in the varied scenes of our lives.

John Arndt, in his Postils, on Rogate Sunday shows how one should pray the Lord's Prayer with the true spirit of worship, and also how the principal Christian virtues are recognized in it. (Quoted by Friedrich Arndt, "*Das Vater Unser.*")

Our Father.

Dear Father, remember thy miserable children. Thou art in Heaven, in eternal joy, we in the vale of sorrow; therefore be Thou with us, in all our need.

(The true knowledge of God.)

Hallowed be thy Name.

Dear Father grant that Thy holy Name may be held high, precious and worthy in every human heart, known of all men, honored, praised, adored, and that all men may believe on Thee.

(Faith.)

Thy kingdom come.

May thy kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, sustain the hope of eternal life in us.

(Hope.)

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Grant that we may heartily love Thee, give us obedient hearts, to do Thy will, as the angels in Heaven fulfill Thy holy will in us, make us vessels meet for Thy use.

(Love)

Give us this day our daily bread.

Have pity on our wretched, needy, mortal bodies, feed, clothe, preserve them, give peace and unity, guard us from greed, give us contented spirits.

(Contentment and frugality.)

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Cleanse us from our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ, remember our sins no more, and give us peaceable, forgiving hearts.

(Justification by faith.)

And lead us not into temptation.

Ward off the attacks of the devil and defend us from his fiery darts, give us not over to him that he may cause us to fall, let us not be overcome by the world, the flesh or the devil.

(Christian power and prudence.)

But deliver us from evil.

Grant us a holy life, a blessed death, and eternal life beyond.

(Christian perseverance and patience.)

For thine is the kingdom,

To which Thou hast called us.

And the power,

Through which we shall be kept.

And the glory,

For which we were created, redeemed, and sanctified.

(Thankfulness, and confession.)

Let us notice, in the last place, the *proper use* of this prayer. "I know those," says Luther, "who are wont to say: If there were nothing else to convince me of the imperfectness of my Christian life and to make me ashamed before God, this would be enough, that I find myself unable to pray the Lord's Prayer aright. With many, devotion is lacking in the first three petitions, although they are the most important. If, however, we give attention to the thoughtful expression of these, and fix our hearts upon them, our spirit of prayer is apt not to endure through the last four petitions; so that I am convinced that if the just and holy God were to enter into judgment with us, and to pronounce sentence upon us according to the sharpness of His law, though He were to find nothing else amiss in us, the profaning of the Lord's Prayer, by the intermingling of strange and vain thoughts, would furnish cause enough for our condemnation." These are serious words. How have you used the Lord's Prayer? Or have you misused it? Perfect as it is, a model for all our prayers, sacred and precious in its form, its meaning and its completeness, yet in our very familiarity with it, there lies the snare of idle repetition. To pray this prayer with profit to ourselves, and with glory to our God, it is necessary that we be earnest, thoughtful, conscious of our need, reverent, as we take upon our lips the words sacred from the use of the lips of Jesus. Too often we pray the prayer because it is the time to pray it, and others are repeating it, and

mechanically, with thoughts far away, we follow with them. We should never use these hallowed words without attentive thought. Let us think of the Father whom we approach, of His Son who gave us the prayer, of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to draw near to the throne of God aright. And let us think of the rich, comprehensive meaning of each petition. We cannot, indeed, in the public use of the prayer, stop to recall each involved and related idea; but we can, in our private devotions, and we can meditate again and again upon the fullness of each phrase, and we can renew and repeat our studies of these seven requests, until our hearts are saturated with the spirit of the Master's words, and realize with each repetition, how deep is the current that flows beneath their surface. Familiarity with the form of the prayer will do us no hurt, if only there is a like familiarity with its inner fullness, with its all-embracing spirit.

To suggest how we may include under the seven petitions the varied objects of our daily desire, in the actual use of the Perfect Prayer, the following outline, prepared for an aid to private devotion, is presented:

A GUIDE TO PRAYER.

MATT. VI. 9-13.

After this manner therefore pray ye :

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN,	{	Adore God—in His Fatherhood —in His perfections.		
HALLOWED	{	Pray for a reverential spirit spiritual worship in the churches a true observance of the Lord's Day more study and honor to be given to God's Word The continuance and increase of the grace given in Baptism	{	on my own part
BE THY NAME,	{	Pray for The Church—Christ's body, Our own congregation, Our Pastor, The Church Officers, The Sunday School, Its Officers and Teachers, Its pupils, The Young Peoples' Society, Every member of our congregation, That the power of the Holy Spirit may rest on every one of these mentioned above, The churches and pastors of the commu- nity, The <i>ministry</i> of all the churches That they especially may be filled with the Spirit, The presence and power of the Holy Spirit with Word and Sacraments, The Missions of the whole church of Christ At Home, in our General Body, in our Synod, Abroad. Especially <i>our</i> mission, Missionaries (by name) Native converts	{	univer- sally.
THY	{		{	
KINGDOM	{		{	
COME,	{		{	

The thrusting forth of more laborers,
All the evangelizing agencies of the church
Theological Seminary and College,
YEA : I COME QUICKLY,
AMEN ; COME, LORD JESUS !—Rev. 22 : 20.

THY	Pray for A consecrated will—renunciation of self and sin
WILL,	That I may be filled with the Holy Spirit, For Christian graces in my heart and life,
BE DONE,	LOVE { to God A deeper yearning for souls, { to fellowmen Patience in trial Humility, Power in prayer Purity, A fixed desire to honor God,
AS IN	A sense of obligation to consecrate our means for God's glory,
HEAVEN,	All institutions of love and mercy, Our Orphanage, etc., The people of the earth and their rulers, Our town and her officers, Our State and her officers and law- makers, Our country and her officers and law- makers,
SO ON	The great cities and their officers, The overthrow of sin and vice, especially
EARTH,	The liquor traffic, The importation of rum to Africa, of opium to China, All true and worthy reforms.
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD,	Pray for Supply of temporal need and guidance in temporal things, for me and for my loved ones.
FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE ALSO HAVE FOR- GIVEN OUR DEBTORS	Pray for My enemies and adversaries, Grace to forgive and love them, Forgiveness of my sins Neglect of opportunities, Coldness in the spiritual life, Besetting and peculiar sins.
LEAD US Now	Pray To be spared and enabled to avoid need- less temptation, For grace to resist temptation,

LEAD
US
INTO
TEMPTATION,

For a blessing from temptation that cannot be avoided,
For all who are struggling with temptation.

DELIVER

US

FROM

EVIL.

Pray for VICTORY over sin, and continual power to overcome,
Plead my peculiar needs, trials and sorrows, temporal and spiritual,
Pray for peace of heart and freedom from anxious thought,
for those who have heavy burdens,
the sick,
the bereaved,
for those who are in Satan's chains,
for their conviction
and salvation,
for steadfast trust in the promises of deliverance.
for all spiritual blessings upon those that are dear to me.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Eph. 6:18.

Let us close our studies with the quaint and interesting words of Thomasius, (quoted by F. Arndt):

“In the Lord’s Prayer there is no petition to which one can not give a particular and distinguishing predicate, or surname. That the first petition is the *holiest* the words themselves indicate, “Hallowed be thy name.” The second, “Thy kingdom come,” is the *most blessed* for it is in the kingdom of God, (here on earth, and hereafter in Heaven), that we are truly blessed. The third, “thy will be done,” is the *hardest*, for it goes hard with us, when not our own, but God’s will, is fulfilled in us. On the other hand, the fourth, for daily bread, is the *easiest* petition, for our hearts lean upon the earthly. That the fifth, “And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive,” is the most *dangerous*, is evident from our Lord’s parable of the king and the unmerciful servant, and from other narratives. On the other hand, the sixth, “Lead us not into temptation,” is the *safest*, for if we are free from temptations we are safe, indeed. The seventh, “Deliver us from evil,” is the most *needful*, for so long as we live on this earth, we will be up to our ears in evil and unhappiness.”

We have had a few lessons in the School of Prayer. God grant that we may have heard the voice of the Master Himself, teaching us! Yet we have only begun to learn, in Christ's kindergarten. Forbid it, Lord, that we should fancy that we have learned enough. Day after day, we shall come to Thee again, and even as we grow, and are promoted through higher grades of this, Thy school, we yet shall ask Thee, with ever insistent entreaty, until we see Thy face, "Lord, teach us to pray."

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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