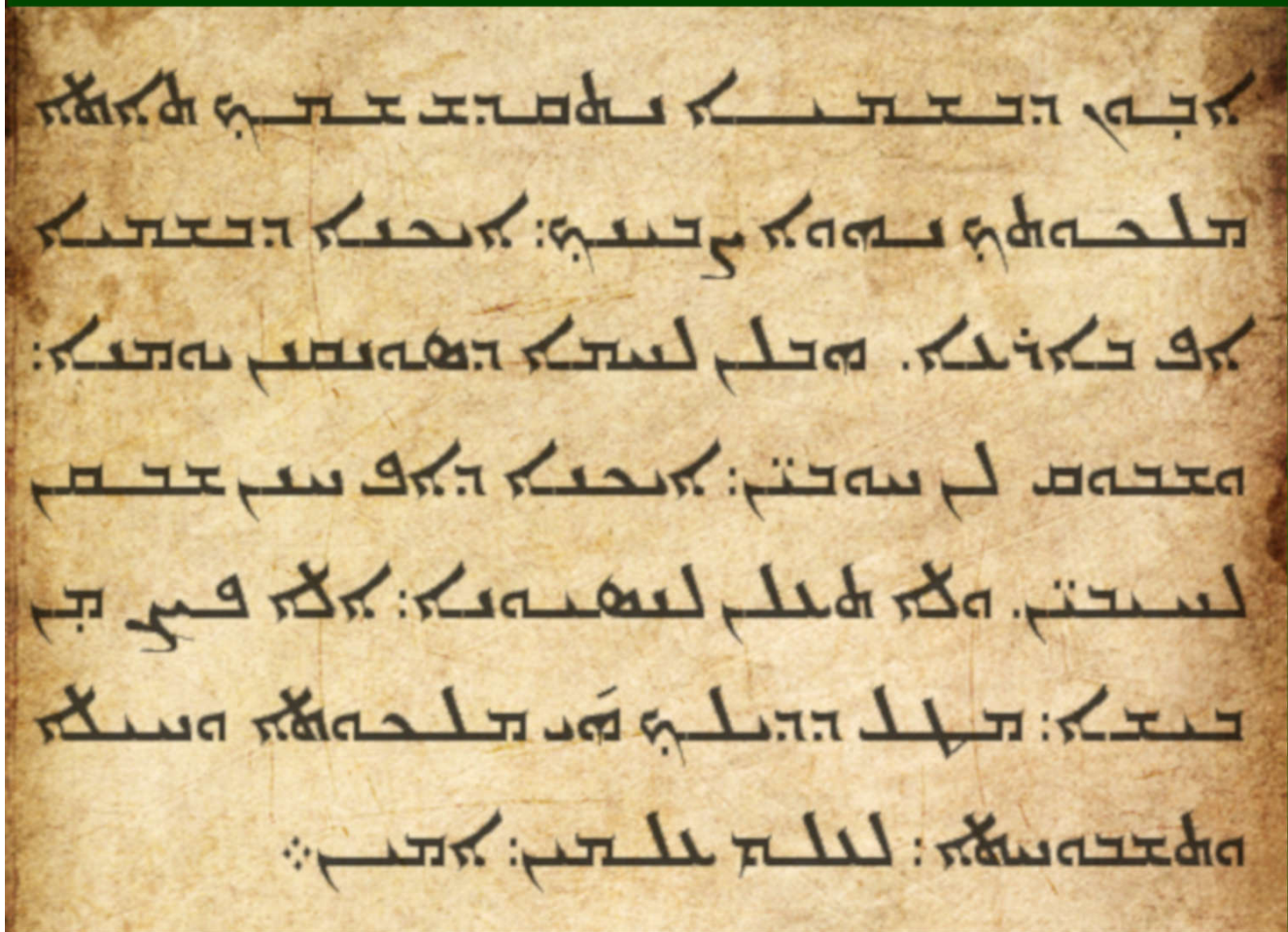


Robert Golladay

The Lord's Prayer



The Lord's Prayer

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The Lord's Prayer
Sermons on the Catechism III

By Robert Emory Golladay, A.M.
PASTOR OF GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, COLUMBUS OHIO; AUTHOR OF
"LENTEN OUTLINES AND SERMONS"

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Dedication

To the memory of my parents,
James W., and Attilia J. Golladay,
who first taught me to say:

Our Father,
this volume is lovingly,
gratefully dedicated.

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Dedication

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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A NOTE ABOUT TYPOS [Typographical Errors]:

Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

Introduction

LIMITLESSLY BEYOND all other men, did the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, in the days of His flesh, live in an atmosphere of prayer. On the mountain, in the desert, in the Garden, and on the cross; when alone, and in the presence of others, He prayed. His human soul now travailed, and now rejoiced, in prayer, and was satisfied. As His Divine nature was eternally one with the Father, so His sinless human nature became one with the heart and will of the Father.

And the blessed Christ prays still, for as our great high-priest He ever lives to make intercession for us.

Every man of God has been a man of prayer. Every one of God's heroes has been a man of much prayer.

"Prayer is the conversation of the heart with God." No one can be right with God — consciously and blissfully right — whose heart does not enjoy instant trustful and filial converse with Him. Only thus can the sad estrangement brought about by sin be overcome. Only thus can the cardinal Christian graces; faith, hope and love be made regnant in the heart and the life, since only thus can the Saviour, the Lord Christ, live in man.

How important; yea, how vital, then, is prayer, — prayer that in form, in substance, and in spirit, is Christian prayer. And Christian prayer is ever and only such as rests solely upon the perfect work of Jesus Christ as the race's one Redeemer, and the only needed intercessor between God and man.

"Lord teach us to pray," was a request that voiced the universal need. That need was met when the response of Jesus gave man the model prayer, fittingly called The Lord's Prayer.

Evermore the heart's fervent desire must be to pray aright. So books, didactic and devotional, that promote an edifying use of the Lord's Prayer, and in general, the practice of prayer with the spirit and understanding, must meet a real need.

Such a book is the present volume of Dr. Golladay. It is a fit companion to his previous excellent volumes on the Commandments and on the Apos-

bles' Creed. The sermons that compose it are a noble exhibit of fidelity in the cure of souls, and of obedience to the Apostle's injunction: Study to show thyself a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Many well-known devotional works, some of which are centuries old, have been precious aids in the development of a true spirituality among God's _ children. Many generations will yet be prepared in the Church of the first-born enrolled in Heaven before they will lose their gracious helpfulness. Still, new and fresh works, true to the teachings of Holy Writ, and meeting the needs constantly arising from the varied and peculiar experiences of the men and women of each generation, are also urgently needed. The work before us of Dr. Golladay is finely adapted to meet present needs, and should have a very extended period of usefulness for generations yet to be.

His previous volumes on the Catechism were introduced and strongly commended by the very competent divines, Professors C. B. Gohdes, Litt. D., and F. W. Stellhorn, D. D. If any word of one, who, since the days of their pleasurable association a score of years ago in the city of Baltimore, has noted with satisfaction the steady development of the author in intellectual and spiritual power, and in an ever-widening circle of effective service in the Church of Christ, will secure any additional favor for this volume, then I shall be fully rewarded for having written a few lines of commendation that are so manifestly deserved. For such a privilege I am truly grateful.

FRANK P. MANHART,

Susquehanna University.
Advent, 1920.

Preface

MAN PROPOSES, but, — does not always find himself able to carry out his plans according to program.

In my preface to The Apostles' Creed I promised a speedy appearance of this third volume.

A few months later I was in Fort Oglethorpe, where I served for eight months as a Camp pastor. On my return, I was twice impressed into service as state chairman for the campaigns for European relief conducted by the National Lutheran Council. And I am now engaged, as one of a committee of five, in a similar task for our own Synodical institutions. This explains the delay in publication. The final touches to the manuscript, which every author likes to give, have been given in moments taken from multiplied and taxing duties over and above those of my own considerable parish. This will help to explain any lapses in thought or expression.

It entails travail of mind and heart in the begetting of sermons. (Where this is not the case the travail is generally on the part of the hearers.) But I enjoy the work of preaching. It is my congenial task. As I gave myself, in a special way, to the work of delving into the study of God's holy Law, as summarized in the Ten Commandments; and of the Gospel of Christ, as synthesized in the Apostles' Creed; they fascinated me as never before.

If there has been any difference, this experience has been intensified as I studied the subject of prayer. I regretted it when the task was done. This has intensified my conviction that if people generally only knew these great old truths better they would love them more.

With respect to the fourth and final volume, on the Sacraments, experience has taught me that I had better make no promises. Much of the work is complete. The remainder, in process of preparation. If the good Lord continues to give me strength, and new duties do not arise, I hope to have it ready for publication by the close of the coming year.

R. E. GOLLADAY,

Columbus, Ohio,
Christmas, 1920.

Part 1. Prayer in General

The Nature And The Need Of Prayer

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance. — Eph 6:18.

THERE ARE TWO general ways of looking at God; from the point of view of Sinai, or as He is revealed to us on Calvary.

If we know God only, or chiefly, as He is revealed to us in the lights and shadows, the thunderings and threatenings, of Sinai, He will appear to us rather stern and austere, — a Lawgiver and Judge.

The Law is Good. It proceeds from the very nature of God. In terms applicable to man's nature and needs, it is the expression of God's own being. It demands holiness, because God is holy; it condemns all unholiness, because unholiness is abhorrent to the very nature of God; it pronounces sentence on all willful and persistent wickedness, because God can not endure to live in fellowship with such sinners.

All this is very true, and to know these things is a very necessary part of our religious education. But the Sinaitic view of God is not especially attractive to a poor sin-burdened, sin confused soul. There is no invitation in this view of God to a troubled sinner to come and cast himself down before God, and open his heart to Him, and crave the pardoning, healing touch of the sceptre of this Sovereign of sovereigns.

There is, and let us thank God that there is; a glimpse of another side to the God of Sinai; a glimpse of the truth that He is also merciful and long-

suffering toward all who recognize their need, and respect His sovereignty. But this is only anticipatory of the view of God we get from Calvary.

Calvary does not tell us of a new God, nor give us just another conception of the old God. It presents simply another, and not an altogether unknown, view of the God of the fathers. The picture we get from Calvary supplements the one we get from Sinai. And it is the full-orbed vision that we need; the picture of a God who, because of His very nature, demands holiness, who loathes unholiness; but who is, nevertheless, tender, compassionate, and forgiving toward the humbly penitent ones who come to be forgiven and restored.

It is the picture of God which we get from the Calvary cycle; the picture of God as revealed in the loving, serving, self-giving Jesus, from which men get all their encouragement. Jesus Christ was, and is, the living, pulsating, embodiment of the invitation which He put into these words: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (St. Matt. 11:28).

Just to take Jesus at His word, to come to Him weary and worn; decrepit from the ravages of disease, physical and spiritual; hungry and empty, but often not knowing, or very imperfectly knowing, of what we have been emptied, or for what we are really hungering; but still knowing full well that we are heavy laden, and need rest and healing; and, with child-like simplicity, believing that Jesus can, and will, meet our needs in the way that is best; — this is of the very heart of the Gospel message, — and it is the inspiration, the soul, of all true prayer.

We are going to make a study of this great subject of prayer. Our primary object is to get at the heart of the meaning of the greatest prayer of Christendom, the Lord's Prayer; but, preparatory to this, we are going to consider, at some length, some varied phases of the subject of prayer in general. Today our subject is: The Nature and the Need of Prayer. First of all, let us give some time to the consideration of this all-important question:

What is Prayer?

The subject of prayer is one of the utmost importance. It is a matter of spiritual life or death to the Christian. We all know something about it whether we have ever paused to analyze the subject satisfactorily to ourselves or not.

But it is well to ponder carefully such vitally important matters, and to be able to answer, to ourselves, or others, such questions as these: What is the nature of prayer? What does it really mean to pray? What are the results of prayer? The consequences of prayerlessness? and the like.

What is prayer? Perhaps the most frequent answer to this question would be something like this: Prayer is asking God for something one needs, or for the removal of some oppressive burden, or for guidance in dark hours of perplexity. Prayer has been defined as “Want felt, help desired, and faith going to God for the help needed.” Another tells us that “Prayer is helplessness casting itself upon power, it is misery seeking peace, it is unholiness seeking purity, it is mortality seeking immortality, it is the prisoner seeking release.”

Let us recall the hymn we so often sing when considering the subject of prayer; a hymn heard in Cathedral as well as Chapel. It gives a description of prayer which is rather general, but which, nevertheless, shows the elemental character of the longing and the need which drives to prayer.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

“Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is nigh.”

Prayer, then, according to the customary definition, is a coming to God, as to a physician, for help; it is a coming to Him, as to a storekeeper, for supplies, for self, or others. This is, indeed, an important, a necessary, part of prayer; but after all, rightly understood, only a small part.

Prayer; asking for relief, or the granting of some desired gift, what does this imply? What but this, the more or less clear recognition of our helplessness; and of God's superior, all-availing wisdom and power. Is not the very first thing, then, in prayer right relationship to God to whom we pray? the relation of an inferior to a Superior, of a needy one to the comprehensive source of supplies, of a grateful one to the Giver of all good? There is much blind praying, praying which is, so to speak, simply forced from men by

their overwhelming consciousness of need; and prompted only by the vague, dim, hopeless hope that there may be some one somewhere capable of helping, and willing to do so. Far be it from us to attempt to set limits to the distance, intellectual and spiritual, from which man may effectually call upon God. Out of the depth of the most bewildering maze, penetrating which there may be scarcely a ray of clearly discerned light, a cry may go out which, at once, reaches and touches the heart of God. In the delirium of grief and agony a hand may be thrown out for help, with but little consciousness of direction, and yet be at once grasped by the strong, helping hand of God. But with the consciousness, and it ought to be a growing consciousness, of the deep and lasting nature of our need; and of our own inability to meet these needs; and of the inability of any creature to meet these needs; there ought to be a consciousness, and a growing consciousness, of God, His wisdom, His power, His goodness. And as man comes to pray with more enlightenment he gains a clearer vision of the true nature of his need, that it is spiritual rather than of the body; and he makes this the real burden of his supplication.

True prayer implies a recognition of God as the author of man's being, the Ruler of his destiny, the One who provides for his necessities; and, further, implies confidence in God's willingness to help those who come to Him in the right way, in such manner, and to such extent, as will serve their highest, and most permanent, needs; and all this because they are his children. True prayer is not offered to some heartless sovereign, who may be moved to help only as the result of some whim or caprice; but to a Father, merciful and kind, more ready to give the really needed help than we are to ask. True prayer is, then, first of all, an attitude of life toward God. No one can truly pray whose heart has not first of all gone out in adoration of the person and perfections of God Himself. When the greatness, the beauty, and the condescending goodness of God have begun to be visioned by men, and more and more realized by them, then the heart, the soul, begins to go out to Him as the bee seeks the honey-laden flower, as the bird seeks its nest at eventide, as the child flees to mother's arms when affrighted, or in pain. No one has ever truly entered the holy of holies of prayer; no one has ever stood on the sun-kissed mount where man is privileged to hold real converse with God, whose heart has not felt something of the impassioned longing which inspired the Psalmist to say: "As the hart panteth after the

water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”

Prayer is not, first of all, a movement of the lips, the formulation of words; it is an attitude of the inner life, a God-ward movement of the soul. Prayer is, primarily, the going out of man’s inmost being to lay hold on, to appropriate, God; to be taken hold of by God. Prayer is, first of all, a losing of one’s self in God, the filling of one’s self with God.

When the right personal relationship exists between the earthly child and the heavenly Father, and when this relationship is the chief concern, then prayer will formulate itself in specific utterances. It will take the form of praise, praise of the being and works of God; it will express itself in devout thanksgiving for blessings possessed and enjoyed; it will voice itself in heartfelt confession, and the plea for pardon; it will seek a rich measure of spiritual blessings, and such a measure of the good things of this world as will be conducive to the spirit of child-like dependence, devout thankfulness, and brotherly helpfulness; it will express the desire to be delivered from all that which is in danger of injuring us, and for the grace and strength to bear, in uncomplaining submission, all that the Father’s all-wise and ever-loving wisdom and will allows to come upon us.

Christian Prayer

Prayer as we have described it, in a very general way, is of the very essence of Christian prayer, for only the Christian can thus pray. But there are a few distinguishing features of Christian prayer which need to be yet more specifically set forth.

Let us remember that prayer is not peculiar to Christians. The prayer-cry of the human heart goes out wherever the children of men are found. Men who have never heard of the God of Revelation, the Christian’s God, call on the gods to help them, and appeal to the demons to spare them. Men in Christian lands, so-called, who have never made profession of religion, who are often indifferent to, the claims of the Church, and sometimes even speak scornfully of it, not infrequently, indeed, generally, call on God for help in their times of dire distress.

“Do you ever pray, my friend?” said an army chaplain to a wounded soldier, in a Southern hospital, after the fierce, but fruitless, assault on Fort

Wagner. "Sometimes, chaplain," was the reply. "I prayed last Saturday night as we went into the fight at Wagner. I guess everybody prayed then." Yes, practically all people pray when they face great peril, when life hangs by a thread, when the resources of human wisdom and strength have revealed their impotency. People, even Christian people, often fail to pray when they sense no danger; they rely on their own vaunted wisdom, and the arm of flesh, in the day of peace and prosperity. Adults, unless their hearts are aflame with faith, and aglow with love, are, in practice, very much like the little boy who failed to say his prayers while his mother was away from home. In answer to her questioning, he thus explained his conduct: "Well, you see, it was this way, mother: The first night I forgot to say them, and nothing happened; then the second night I did not say them, and nothing happened; and so I decided I would never say them, if nothing happened." But when things begin to happen; when the stem-clouds break, men are shorn of their boasted self-reliance, their sense of security vanishes, and, in spite of themselves, the cry for help is forced from them.

"There is no God, the foolish saith;
But none, there is no sorrow;
And nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow.
Eyes which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised,
And lips will say, God be pitiful!
Who never said, God be praised!
Be pitiful, O God!"

Men pray because they are men, and need help; help from One who is wiser, and stronger, and better than they are. "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." The universality of the prayer-cry of the human heart is not only a proof of the universality of human need; but likewise a proof of the naturalness, the propriety, of man's coming to God in prayer.

Not all prayer, however, is Christian prayer. Christian prayer is not a cry of despair. It, like all other prayer, is a confession of need, of helplessness; but it is also an expression of confidence, of repose in God. Christian prayer is not a last desperate expedient, it is not the grasping at a straw on the part of a drowning man; prayer is not the call of a distressed man, who knows not where else to turn, on a possible being who may, or may not, be able,

and disposed, to help. Christian prayer is addressed to a known God, to the triune God, who has revealed Himself in holy Scripture as a Father, who has created us; as a Son, who has redeemed us; as a Holy Spirit, whose special work it is to enlighten us, and draw us to God.

Christian prayer may be offered to anyone of the three persons of the Godhead. Usually, however, prayer is represented in the Word as being prompted by the Holy Spirit, but offered to the Father, in the name of the Son.

Every prayer which deserves to be called Christian must be offered in the name of Jesus. This does not mean that every prayer must, necessarily, close with some such phrase as: This we ask in Jesus' name, or, for Jesus' sake, or some other equivalent. It does mean, however, that when we come to God in prayer it must be with the consciousness that our acceptable approach has been made possible alone by Jesus Christ, that it is by virtue of His redemptive work alone that we can be forgiven, and by virtue of His appropriated righteousness, alone that God can accept us as His dear children. To pray in Jesus' name means to be trusting solely in His merit for our salvation, and to have it as the greatest aim of our life to become Christ-like.

Not all the prayers of those who call themselves Christians are, in reality, Christian prayers. The Pharisee, who probably had all the advantages of religious training that his age could give, went through an exercise which he, and his kind, called prayer. It is said that he prayed loud and long. But it was not, in reality, a prayer. The inspired record says: "He prayed thus with himself." It was not a prayer, but a speech; a speech in praise of himself. No man with such a spirit, and such a speech, can ever be truly said to pray. By way of accommodation, it may be called a prayer; but it is not a true prayer, not a Christian prayer. Christian prayer is humble, not boastful; it comes penitently, not self-reliantly; it pleads for mercy, not desert; it cries for pardon, not reward. Jesus Himself has given us the abiding characteristic of a true Christian prayer in His commendation of the Publican's prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Christian prayer breathes the spirit of confidence. To the questioning, analytical mind the problem of prayer, like all other problems having to do with God and human life, presents not a few difficulties. And there are moments with most of us, yea, with the most favored of us, when about all we can say is: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Nevertheless, Christian prayer, in so far as it is Christian, is based on confidence in God's un-

failing wisdom, and unaltering goodness. And this confidence is based on Christ's atoning work, and His interceding love.

The night may be dark, and not a star appear to shed its ray across our path; the burden we bear may be heavy, and every step not only intensify its pain, but seemingly fasten it more tightly upon us; but God is unfailingly good. He loves us with ten thousand times more love than any human parent ever can, or human mind ever understand. He unfailingly does that which perfect wisdom sees to be best for us. If it is not best, for the present, to dissipate the darkness, or remove the burden, He puts His arm lovingly around us, whispers into our ear His word of comfort, and gives us grace to bear up till we have learned our lesson, and gotten the larger blessing. So the believing, loving child of such a Father puts self, and all the affairs of life, unreservedly into His Hands, resting assured that what the Father does, or permits, must, in the end, prove to be the very best thing which could come to us. This is the way the Christian prays. This is Christian prayer.

Faithfulness in Prayer

If we take up the old Book, one of the many striking lessons it teaches, by precept and example, is the duty of persevering prayer. Jacob wrestled with God in prayer, and would not be put off till the blessing came. Daniel could not be driven by fear, or led by favor, to cease praying. David tells us that morning, noon, and night he observed his hours of prayer. Jesus was a man of constant prayer. He taught his disciples to pray, both by word and His own, example. In our text the great Apostle Paul says: "Praying always with all perseverance." And elsewhere: "Pray without ceasing." And if we study the history of God's kingdom, we find that all the great workers in the Church, without exception, have been men and women of prayer, ceaseless prayer. And in other walks of life very many of the most illustrious workers have been most regular and earnest in prayer. Statesmen, like Gladstone; scientists, like Morse; and even soldiers, like Havelock, Jackson, and Gordon, were men of constant prayer. In view of the teaching of God's Word, and the example of the best men and women in every walk of life, what shall we think of the prayerlessness of so many who call themselves Christians?

That there are men and women in all the churches who fulfill the apostolic injunction to continue in prayer with all perseverance; men and women who believe in obeying God's command to pray; and who know, from their own experience, the blessedness of prayer, no one will deny. It would be deplorable, indeed, if there were no such faithful children of God. But from far and near, from every denomination, comes the plaint; and it comes from those in a position to know much of the temper, and private life, of professing Christian people, that the daily practice of prayer is on the wane; that family prayer is unknown in very many professedly Christian homes.

In a large conference of ministers, held in New York a few years ago, this question was pointedly put to the pastors present: "How many of you spend one-half hour daily in prayer for God's blessing upon the work of His kingdom?" But one man held up his hand. Then it was asked how many of them spent fifteen minutes in this way. Not half of them dared respond. And it is a question whether it is not still worse with the laity. This shows that there is something radically wrong with our Christian life. This condition unquestionably accounts for much of the lethargy so pronounced in many departments of Church-work.

What an insult it is to God Himself when His own professed children do not pray! It is just as if children in a home should come and go day after day, enjoy all the blessings their parents provide, at much cost in money and toil and thought; but never have a word of appreciation to express to their parents, never a word of advice to ask. God is our Father. He loves us. He has provided salvation for us. He is the giver of every good gift. But how many show Him little love, and even scant respect!

The explanation of this state and condition is within the reach of the merest tyro who is really spiritually minded. Vital Christianity is a praying Christianity. The living Christian knows his needs, and that the only source of real help is in God. And that the fountain of help is tapped for us by Christ Jesus. And that this is done by Him for us at our earnest, believing solicitation. Hence the living Christian is a praying Christian. Where there is no praying, or little praying, there is little Christianity. There is no other solution of the matter.

If we as individuals, and as congregations, are to be revived; if this blessed consummation is to be experienced by the Church at large; if there is to be a larger measure of power given to us; if the work God has given us to do is to be done as it ought to be done; then we must all repent of our sin

of prayerlessness, and cultivate the prayer-life, and the expression of it in the practice of prayer. The Apostle tells us that we have not, because we ask not (Jas. 4, 2). And Jesus Himself says: "Ask and it shall be given you." In the words of Coleridge:

"Be not afraid to pray — to pray is right,
Pray, if thou canst, with hope, but ever pray,
Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay;
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light,
Far is the time, remote from human sight
When war and discord on the earth shall cease;
Yet every prayer for universal peace
Avails the blessed time to expedite.
Whatever is good to wish, ask that of heaven, Though it be what thou canst not hope to see:
Pray to be perfect, though material heaven
Forbid the spirit so on earth to be;
But if for any wish thou darest not to pray,
Then pray to God to cast that wish away."

Let us begin by asking God to give us an ever-increasing measure of the spirit of prayer; let us pray for growth in grace; let us pray for the work of the Church at home and abroad, and not be afraid to specify by name and place; let us pray for our relatives and friends, for all their needs, especially their spiritual needs; and, as Christ admonishes us, let us not forget to pray even for our enemies.

Let us begin the day with prayer. He begins the day unwisely who begins it without a secret conference with his heavenly Father. There is where we get our armor, and our rations, for the day. The early morning hour is the golden time for devotion. The joyful heart that knows the meaning of the fatherhood of God in Christ Jesus will make its earliest flight, like the lark, toward the gates of heaven.

Let us close the day with prayer; asking God to pardon any remissness on our part in word or deed, in temper or conduct; to take our weary bodies, and souls, into His loving care and keeping. Thus shall our chamber, like that of Bunyan's pilgrim, be the chamber of peace, in which we shall awake and come forth to sing.

Ministers of the Gospel, we must be more than students, more than preachers, more than parish visitors; if we are to do these things as they should be done, we must be men of prayer; daily, fervent, believing prayer. The Apostles, those who had been with Jesus, those who were serving the

first Christian congregation, said: "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6, 4).

Officers of congregations, and the organizations thereof, you were doubtless chosen for your respective positions because of recognized ability; teachers; in the Sunday school, you were selected because you were thought to have special talent for training the minds, and forming the characters, of the young: none of these natural gifts are to be despised; indeed, they should be assiduously cultivated; but if God's work is to be done in God's way, we must still be men and women of prayer. No other qualification can compensate for a lack here. Failure in prayer means the loss of religion itself as an inward and vital relationship to God.

If God's kingdom is to prosper as it should, there must be, not less appeal to men, but more to God. There must be less confidence in mere human organization and effort, and more supplication to God for the power to vitalize the organization. The real secret of spiritual deadness, of a lack of enthusiasm, of a dearth of spiritual power, of a laggard missionary interest, of empty treasuries, is a prayerless, or almost prayerless, Church. A perishing world is waiting for a praying Church. Lord, teach us to pray.

Does God Answer Prayer?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him. — St. Matt. 7:11.

MEN EVERYWHERE PRAY, in the sense of calling for help. This is proof of a universal conscious inner necessity in man's life for prayer. The self-examining, honest man everywhere knows he is not all he would like to be. His daydreams, aspirations, longings are proof of this. He has a more or less well-defined consciousness of good lost, a higher goal to be won. At the same time he knows that, of himself, he is incapable of making good his loss, of attaining his goal. And in the travail of his soul he cries out for comfort, for help.

But, after all, what, in reality, is the profit of prayer? Is prayer only a cry of weakness, of anguish? Is it just like the cry of a child in pain? Is prayer beneficial only in a reflexive way, by way of nerving the one who prays for new exertions? When a true prayer goes up to the throne on high, when a child in need draws near to the footstool of God, puts his hand confidently in his Father's, looks up into His face, and pours out to Him all his troubles, and relates all his hopes, it cannot but enlarge and fortify the soul of the one who prays. The renewed sense of God's nearness, of our being overshadowed by His wisdom, power and goodness, cannot but inspire our timidity with courage, and our weakness with strength. But shall we believe that the only real benefit of prayer is the subjective stirring of our own powers? Or does prayer really reach the ear, touch the heart, and move the hand of God in such fashion that the one who prays obtains from without blessings he would not otherwise have received?

Questions of this character are often broached in a spirit of irreverence bordering on the blasphemous. But the difficulties come to all of us. If not in one form, then in another. We scorn, as a suggestion of the father of lies, the bald assertion of unbelief that prayer is a waste of time and energy. But

we often meet humbly devout and believing people who are perplexed, sorely troubled, as to the benefit of prayer. They have prayed, prayed earnestly; prayed, as they think, wisely, and believingly; but they have gotten, as they think, no answer to their prayers. We have all had more or less of this experience. Why is this so? Let us consider some of these perplexing matters today. Let us ask, the unvarnished question, — Does God Answer Prayer?

Difficulties and Doubts

There are those who think it unwise to publicly discuss these perplexing problems of our Christian faith and life. They argue that by so doing we only help to spread the difficulties. We are convinced that there is but little danger in this direction. We are not living in the dark ages when nobody among the people, as such, could read, and when but very few ever dared to entertain an independent thought. Most people in our day read, even if those who think originally, or investigate independently, are still rather scarce. And, whether people are widely read or not, they learn of these matters. Those who would weaken, or destroy, faith are great propagandists. And many, just because they have a smattering of knowledge, and hear these perplexing problems discussed with such positiveness by the doubters, are all the more disturbed.

The proper thing to do, it seems to me, is to be perfectly open and frank about these, as well as other difficulties. Let us candidly acknowledge that there are difficulties connected with the great problems of a. praying humanity, and a prayer-answering God; just as there are difficulties connected with every other vital problem having to do with God, and religion, and human life, and nature at every point. And let us not hesitate to admit that there are difficulties, all the details of which we are not able fully to explain, and never will be as long as we live in this world, and see as through a glass darkly.

We have very little patience with that pretended wisdom which professes to be able satisfactorily to explain, in detail, all the mysteries of God and His universe. But let us not fail to make clear at the same time that we are confronted by still greater difficulties when the attempt is made to rule a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God out of the universe.

The greatest difficulties which confront us in the study and practice of prayer arise at the point where prayer becomes strictly supplication, the bestowal of favors on the suppliant or others. To the Christian there is no difficulty in considering prayer as an act of worship, embracing adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. But when it comes to the point: — Does God actually give us things which have an existence outside of ourselves, especially of a tangible nature? here is where difficulties arise.

The Reign of Law

There are those who say, and many who are afraid, that God does not answer prayer, because this is an ordered universe, administered according to fixed laws. In every sphere laws are operative. It is said, they are inviolate. They operate as they do because of necessity. Consequently, the results are, must be, always the same.

With such an understanding of law, its adherents say it is folly to pray, at least for gifts of a material nature. To answer such prayers, they say, God would have to interfere with these eternally established and unchangeable laws of nature, and the result would be confusion and disaster. And the foolishness of it all would be heightened by the fact that this interruption would have to be made for the one, or the few, at the expense of the many; yea, of the universe as such.

In these days when such crassly materialistic ideas of the universe are often drilled into our youth from the grades to the university, and expressed in much of the literature of the day, it is no wonder that thousands of our devoutly inclined people are seriously perplexed as to what is the truth about prayer.

Some seek to avoid this difficulty by granting that God may in answer to prayer effect changes in man's inner life, in the sphere of things moral and spiritual; but not in things which have to do with man's physical nature or welfare. For instance, that God may, perchance, forgive a man's sins, change his moral disposition, give him new and better impulses, and the like; but not heal his physical ills, give him food, or ward off physical dangers.

Let us look at this proposition at which so many get scared. What are the laws of nature? How are they to be accounted for? Much is said of them,

much is claimed for them. Some people even write the word law, in this connection, with a capital letter, giving it personality, and ranking it with Deity.

We have previously briefly stated what it is to which the term laws of nature is given. Now what are these laws? What they are in themselves no scientist attempts fully, satisfactorily, to explain; no, not even such a generally recognized one as the law of gravitation. Are these laws mere blind, material forces? If so, whence did they come? How did they originate? If they are mere blind, material forces, then how are we to account for the order, the system, the evidence of intelligence everywhere shown in their operation? Did these laws originate themselves? If so, we have at least a very large part of the creation to explain without the help of an all-wise, and all-powerful Creator. If they were themselves created, how did these laws happen to get away from the control of their Creator, so that He cannot, even temporarily, modify or change them? If the latter hypothesis be the correct one, then the world is a dumb machine which God Himself cannot manage.

The agnostic and the atheist, from whom all these hypotheses come, have an easy refuge. The one says, when asked about these difficulties of his own raising, — I do not know; the other says, — things are as they are just because they are. If this were the real condition of things, then there would, indeed, be no use in praying. What is the profit of praying if there is no God; or of praying to a God who has been shorn of His power and liberty, and is but little better off than we are? If this be the case, we are all, God, if there be a God, and ourselves, living in a world with neither head nor tail. It is a universe without a mind or a heart to guide or control it. The only thing which rules is blind chance, which has gotten into a rut, and thus gives a most remarkable degree of uniformity, and displays a still more remarkable degree of intelligence. We did not come from anywhere; we are on the way, but we are not going anywhere. If men want, in spite of better light, to think of the world after this fashion, which stultifies every dictate of reason, they are welcome to do so. If they want to live their lives in the shadow of a Upas tree like this, we cannot prevent them. We have something better. We have a Father who loves us, and hears our prayers, and gives us good things.

We recognize the existence and operation of a force known as law. We recognize its greatness, and the important part it plays in the universe. But this law is not a thing in itself. Back of this law we see God Himself. This

law, with its power, regularity, and continuity, is but the expression of God's will. It has no independent existence. Natural law is God in action, it is the constant going forth of His almighty will. It is God who gives to every atom its affinities and repulsions. In Him do we and all things live, and move, and have our being. He upholds all things by the Word of His power (Heb. 1:6); by Him all things consist (Col. 1:17).

Because God is God, and has His hand on the lever of the world He designed, and brought forth, it is not folly, but the height of wisdom, to bring our needs to Him. Human beings are just as much subject to natural laws as is the material world. But we go, in case of extremity, to our friends for help. And we get it. And the natural laws by which our wants are ordinarily supplied are temporarily superseded. That is all God needs to do to answer our prayers. His will establishes, for the time being, a new antecedent, a new operative cause, with a new consequence.

And why perplex ourselves about how mind can manipulate matter! We are seeing more clearly every day that the real forces in the world are spiritual. Men everywhere are taking the laws of nature, diverting, harnessing them, applying them to produce results they never would produce if left alone. My hand, as a mere piece of corporeity, lies here inert, bound by the law of gravitation. But I will to raise my hand, and though you reinforce the law of gravitation by putting twenty more pounds on my hand, I raise it because my material muscles respond to the mandate of an immaterial will-force. Can you explain it? Am I not right in saying that no purely materialistic scientist in the universe has; ever satisfactorily explained it on any purely materialistic basis? The navigator of the air is constantly over-riding the law of gravitation by using other laws of nature.

In view of all these things which men are themselves doing; in view of the fact that there are a score of things in nature which cannot be satisfactorily explained without God, to one that looks to our darkened reason somewhat more complicated by supposing His existence and operation; and in view of the further fact that very many of the brightest, and most successful scientists the world has ever seen, have owned God, and credited Him with their success; and that most of the others have made admissions which rob their materialistic assertions of their force; let us not allow materialistic science to rob us of our God. They have not done it, they never can do it, in fact. Let us not allow them to do it so far as our reliance on Him is con-

cerned. Even from the viewpoint of science, the sanest science in the world, we have a God who can hear and answer prayer.

The Nature of God and Man

There are other objections urged against prayer by those who do not believe in it. They are sometimes called philosophical, by others theological difficulties. Looked at carefully, they are all seen to be difficulties which arise from what are supposed to be the nature of God and man.

It is urged by some, who unduly exalt man and his powers, that man is sufficient unto himself; that he can supply his own needs; that if he wants anything he should go and work for it, or get it in some manner by his own prowess. And they have asserted that prayer even has a tendency to weaken man's character, to take away his backbone, his self-reliance.

Prayer was never intended to be a lazy man's resort. No man need ever expect to get by prayer that for which he is too indolent to work. True prayer heartens men for work, drives them to work. The man who prays aright prays as if everything depended on God. It does. Man's disposition, and ability to work. The blessing upon his work. Then he goes to work as if everything depended on himself. In a sense it does. As long as God can supply man's needs by his own efforts, He does not work extraordinarily.

“With one hand work, with the other pray,
And God will bless them both from day to day.”

That prayer has a tendency to weaken character, to make it pliant, and suppliant, is an insult to the noblest manhood that has ever graced the world. The strongest and bravest men who have ever lived, the men of iron, have been men of constant prayer.

Another objection urged against prayer is that there are so many conflicting interests presented that they would largely nullify each other. This situation is well illustrated by one of Aesop's fables. He tells of a man who had two daughters, one married a gardener, the other a potter. Upon a certain day the father visited both daughters in succession. He asked the wife of the gardener how they were getting along. “Finely, only it is a little dry, and we are praying for rain for the plants.” A little later the same question was put

to the wife of the potter. Her answer was that they were getting along very well, only they had a great deal of pottery out, and they were praying that it might not rain till it got dry; How could God answer both prayers? Well, this staggering difficulty is a difficulty only to those who do not know the a, b, c of the laws of prayer. All true prayers for material benefits are made with the tacit, if not the expressed, condition that God will do what, in His wisdom and love, He sees is best. In all these things the words of the Christ apply, and must be incorporated in the spirit, if not the words of mans prayers. "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Here we may see at a glance, however, that if our prayers were, as they should be, more spiritual, there would be much less even of this apparent conflict. If a man prays for more grace, for an increase of faith, for cleansing, for a richer manhood, a larger power of service, however much he is enriched in answer to his prayer, no one else is thereby impoverished or embarrassed. Indeed, others also will, in some measure, thereby be benefited. There is another class of people who are troubled with this thought, — God is so great and wonderful, we are so little and insignificant; He is occupied with world-problems, how can He bend to trouble Himself with our little affairs?

It is proper that we should all be humble in the presence of God; but He does not, like some of the royalties of earth, hold Himself above, and aloof from His people. It is one of God's great glories that His love and His care extend to the least of His creatures. He tells us that not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, that all the hairs of our head are numbered. Yes, He so loved the world that He gave Himself for it. No, we should not worry because of the thought that we may be too insignificant for God to give any attention to our prayers. In word and deed, through all the ages, God has shown His love for us.

"I know not where His islands
Lift their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

On the human side, there is still one great difficulty, it is this: Multitudes of people say, — I have prayed, prayed the best I knew how, prayed long; but I have gotten no answer. This is a big question in itself, and we are going to answer it, God willing, next Sunday.

On the other hand, there are a few difficulties relative to prayer which present themselves when we consider the character of God. One of them comes from the thought of the perfection of God and His government. God knows all things. We cannot inform Him as to our needs. Jesus Himself tells us, “Your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.” (St. Matt. 6:8). What, then, is the use of going through the formality of asking Him? Does it not appear as if we distrusted God’s willingness to give us what we need, when we come importuning Him to give what He already knows we need?

The only answer necessary to these, and similar questions, is this, — God Himself, who tells us that He knows what we need, tells us that He wants us to ask for what we need. It is not for His sake, but our own that we are to pray. He who prays aright: is the one who evidences the most fitness to receive the blessings God has to give.

Another difficulty, and it is the greatest of all, is this, — the Scriptures tell us that God not only knows all things, but that in many things He has determined beforehand what He is going to do. How, then, can prayer change God’s eternally laid plans, His method of procedure? This is a big problem. It is the world-old problem of God’s sovereignty and man’s freedom. And the safest thing for us is simply to acknowledge that it is too big for us. But does not this throw considerable light on the problem, — God determined to do what He is going to do in view of His knowledge of what we were going to do, of our attitude toward Him? Did He then not probably determine to do certain things in view of the fact that He saw we were going to ask for them?

By prayer we are not changing God’s plans. We are not overcoming His reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness. At any rate, God has told us to pray; He commands, urges, entreats that we pray; Let us leave the mysteries to Him. They are as clear as daylight to Him; they may be, some day, to us. In the meanwhile let us go on praying like loving, obedient children, and getting God’s blessings.

God Does Answer Prayer

There are difficulties which perplex those who think, or, as the case may be, fail to think, about prayer. They probably keep some people from praying,

and make others lukewarm, and intermittent, in their praying. All these difficulties are capable of being very largely removed, even with our very imperfect understanding. But the best answer to all the difficulties is just this, in spite of all objections that men urge, God is answering prayer.

We know that the prayers of God's people have availed. We know that it puts the power of Heaven at our disposal. Through prayer we have fought battles, and won victories. It has made us strong to bear unbearable burdens. It has healed our wounds, and assuaged our griefs. It has given us wealth in the midst of poverty, health in the midst of sickness, strength in the midst of weakness, light in the midst of darkness, joy in the midst of sadness. Prayer is a weapon Satan cannot withstand.

The Bible, from beginning to end, is a book of answered prayers. How many there are whose experiences could be recorded in the words of Hannah: "As thy soul liveth, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord... And the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him."

And the history of the people of God, not embraced in the Book of books, is literally full of authentic records of answered prayers.

Even those who never pray, the godless and indifferent, often have a very wholesome respect for the power of prayer. Queen Mary of Scotland once declared: "I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men."

There are tens of thousands of God's people living today who know that God does answer prayer. We do not need to trouble ourselves about how God can do what seems to us the impossible, just so we know that He does it. We know that, in answer to our prayers, we have been spiritually quickened and cleansed, and endued with a power to which we previously were strangers. In answer to prayer in these modern materialistic days evils have been averted, and health restored. Institutions have been prayed into existence, and thus maintained.

Pastor Gosner read the promise: "Ask, and it shall be given you." He believed, he prayed. And expecting to receive, he made preparation to gather the blessings. As a result he was able to send out during the remainder of his life a hundred and forty foreign missionaries. He had an average of twenty missionaries depending on him for support during the whole of his later life. His life was thus summed up by another in a sentence of his funeral sermon: "He prayed up the walls of a hospital, and the hearts of the

nurses; he prayed mission stations into being, and missionaries into faith.” And there have been others like him. Indeed, the world, in every sense, would be a much poorer place than it is were it not for the prayers of God’s people.

Be sure that your prayers are in keeping with the will of God, and then take to heart these words:

"Unanswered yet, the prayer your lips have pleaded,
In agony of heart these many years?
Does faith begin to fail? Is hope departing?
And think you all in vain those falling tears?
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayers;
You shall have your desire sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? though when you first presented
This one petition at the Father’s throne,
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking,
So urgent was your heart to have it known?
Though years have passed since then, do not despair;
The Lord will answer you sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say ungranted;
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done;
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,
And God will finish what He has begun.
If you will keep the incense burning there,
His glory you will see sometime, somewhere.

“Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered,
Her feet are firmly planted on the rock;
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, It shall be done — sometime, somewhere.”

The Secret Of Unanswered Prayer

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. — Psalm 66:18.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures.
— James 4:3.

And this is the confidence we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." — 1 John 5:14.

DIFFICULTIES OF VARIOUS KINDS present themselves when we seriously take up the study of the big subject of prayer. Here are a few of them. Does the constitution of things allow of God breaking in on them with special providences? Would it not cause confusion for Him to do so? How can God answer individual prayers when a hundred thousand people are asking for a hundred thousand different things, when many of these are conflicting, some asking for the very things others are asking to have prevented? Will God, in the midst of His world-affairs, stop to consider the affairs, it may be the rather small affairs, of such little, insignificant worms of the dust as we, individually, are? What is; the use of praying anyway, — has not God determined on what He is going to do beforehand? Can we, with our ephemeral affairs, change the eternal plans of the Almighty? Are we not told that God is more ready to give than we are to ask? Are we not further told that He knows beforehand what our wants are going to be? What is the use, then, of asking? These are some of the questions which suggest themselves to those who want to think things out; the questions which suggest themselves to unbelief, or faltering faith.

There are difficulties about prayer mentioned in God's Word, but they are not the difficulties which bother unbelief, or littleness of faith; the diffi-

culties God mentions are on man's side. They are the absence of a conquering faith, failure to persevere, and lack of fellowship with Himself.

After all, however, the difficulties about prayer on man's side do not all come from the theoretical side. There is at least one big difficulty which comes from the practical side. It is this, people say they have prayed, but their prayers were not answered. What are we to say to this? Is there such a thing as an unanswered prayer? There assuredly is. God's Word itself tells us so.

Let us look into this matter. We will take as our subject, the secret of unanswered prayer.

Sin and Impenitence

The Lord tells us in very clear language why some prayers are not answered. And the reason is found, not in God, but in man. Men must pray not only with their lips, but with their lives; and when the heart is all wrong, when the life is not right, one cannot pray acceptably with his lips. Prayers which are only lip-prayers do not rise higher than the ceiling.

Men will sometimes, while still professing to be Christians, neglect all of God's established ministrations; they are strangers to His house; they never read His Word, or meditate upon it; they are wrapped up in the things of the world; they often live in secret sin; but something happens, some danger threatens, and, without repentance for past remissness, or confession of it, they begin to pray, to cry for help, and seem surprised that their prayers are not heard, and blame God for not hastening to answer them.

Let us give heed to what the Lord, through His prophet, tells us on this score. "If I regard iniquity in my heart," if I have some pet sin hidden away and cherished in my heart, for which I am not penitent, from which I am not earnestly trying to break away, "the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. 66:18) Again, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." (Isa. 59:12) And again, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are

full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” When this is done the Lord will hear. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isa. 1:14 ff.) Sin severs the line of communication between man and God. Only repentance and cleansing of life can restore it.

When the answer to prayer does not come, let us not begin to blame God, but to search our own hearts; we may there learn What the trouble is. If we desire to be able to pray prevailingly, we must deal mercilessly with our own sins. Excuses will not avail. We cannot gloss them over. We cannot make up for them by special activity in other directions. No, not even in the direct worship of God. This is especially true of a hard, unforgiving Spirit. If we will not forgive, Jesus says the Father will not forgive us. And that means that all other real blessings cannot be given, or received. When such a person draws near the altar to offer his gift, whatever it may be, — prayer, praise, an offering for the Kingdom, God says, stop, — put aside your gift, go first and be reconciled to your brother. Then, and not till then, will your gift be acceptable to me. Then Heaven will be open unto you. Then the channel of blessing will be unobstructed. And all that is good for you shall be given.

In all our praying, we are to pray from God’s side of the fence. The merchant who gets into trouble is not going to find any blessing in prayer if he is using a thirty-five inch yard stick, or a, fifteen-ounce pound weight. The workman who consciously shirks or slights his task; the one the current of whose whole life is unclean, has no ground of hope. He is praying from the devil’s side of the fence.

The only prayer appropriate for such a person is the heartfelt, penitent cry: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” And he who comes to the Father’s throne in this spirit will never go away unforgiven. And then he can begin to pray successfully for other blessings.

Unbelief

A prayer without faith has no promise. He who would come to God in prevailing prayer “must believe that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” People who know something about prayer, at times take to prayer as a last resort. They do not believe God will answer them; but think, well, it will at least do no harm to try it. But they would really be very much surprised if their prayer was heard. Now this is what the Lord says about such praying. He speaks of a specific gift; namely, wisdom; but the application may be made general. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the winds and tossed. Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.” (Jas. 1:5-7) And Jesus says: “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them.” (St. Mark 11:24.) If we would get anything from God in answer to our prayers, we must believe in God, believe in His ability and willingness to do all that is best for us.

Let us not at this point fail to give emphasis to the difference between praying in faith and faith in prayer. There is a great deal of talk about confidence in prayer, the benefit of prayer, and the like. What is meant by it? If people mean that just because they have prayed they are sure to get, that prayer is some kind of magical agency for gaining desired ends, or means, then that is faith in prayer. It makes of prayer a good work, as a reward for which God gives the things asked. The Bible does not say anything about this kind of prayer. There are no promises given to it. But the Bible does say very much about praying in faith. What does this mean? It means that we are praying to a God in whom we have perfect confidence. It means that this God has made us certain promises the fulfillment of which depends very largely on our asking, praying for them. And that when we pray thus we get that for which we pray, not just because we have prayed; but because there is such a God to hear and answer prayer. Our faith is in God, and not merely in what we can do by prayer; our faith is in what our God, to whom we pray, can do for us; not in what we can do by, as it were, coercing God to do what we will by prayer.

Selfishness

Prayers are often not answered because there is such an overwhelming element of selfishness in them. There is no thought of using the gift desired to God's glory, no thought that it shall be an incentive to a closer walk with God. The only thought is of personal pleasure or aggrandizement. The Apostle tells us of such prayers when he says: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures." (Jas. 4:3.) How many of us have prayed in this way at times? We have been threatened with some annoyance, or loss. We have never asked ourselves, — what lesson does God hereby want to teach me? Is there, probably, a lacking virtue He would thus cultivate? a needed strength of soul He would give? Is this His way of weaning us from the world, of drawing us closer to Himself? We see only the present embarrassment, the discomfort; and we flee to plead for its removal.

Dr. Dixon tells of a woman, wealthy, cultured; but given to worldly pleasures, though professedly a member of his church. She lost her health by late hours, and genteel dissipation; and then came to her pastor to get him to pray for her restoration to health. By questioning he found out that her prevailing motive was that she might be enabled to go on with her worldly life of selfish pleasure. Under such conditions the pastor would not join in prayer for her restoration to health. And if he had, there is no promise to justify a belief that the prayer would have been heard. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures." The only prayer appropriate under the circumstances aforementioned would be one of submission, of willingness to be taught all the lessons God would thereby teach.

There are people who pray for business success. This is legitimate, when not carried too far. But what is the motive? Does one seek success that he may be more useful, that he may be able to help the less fortunate, to relieve the unfortunate? or is it only to gratify a greedy desire, to get more of the pleasures that can be bought with money, to dominate more successfully over his less fortunate rivals, and be a big figure in the financial world? If these latter form the hidden motive which prompts the prayer, there is not the shadow of a promise of an answer.

Do you remember the story of the mother of, Zebedee's children. She came to Jesus with a petition. It was this: "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy Kingdom." (St. Matt. 20:21.) This petition sounds well. She wanted her sons to

be close to Jesus. But there was an element of selfishness, of the desire for honor, in it, and it could not be granted.

Possibly if we were thoroughly honest with ourselves; or, to put it more mildly, if we better understood ourselves, we would find, if we went right down to the roots of things, that a good many, even of our well-sounding prayers, are poisoned by the bite of this same serpent — selfishness. We pray for grace, for power, the ability to do this, that, and the other thing. It looks good. It sounds well. But may be that, way down among the hidden springs of conduct, there lurks the desire, which scarce dares lift its head, that these coveted gifts may serve as an adornment to other eyes, and lead to their homage; and give us the consciousness, felt if not expressed, I am not as others are.

Again, parents pray for their children. They want them to be preserved from the snares and pitfalls of the world. They want them to be respectable. They want them to be cultured, genteel, observing the forms of religion. To this end they plead for the Lord's blessing on them. But if it should be suggested to them that the Lord might want to use one of those children for His own particular work, as a teacher, or preacher, or a missionary, they would throw up their hands in horror. Analyzed carefully, this reveals itself as a refined species of selfishness. Such parents, or friends, want to get, for themselves, and their children, and for themselves through their children, all the benefits God can give them; but they do not want to give anything back to God which really costs them anything. God's cause needs the help of our gifts. But first of all God wants us. Let us not be too sure such selfish prayers are going to be answered. They come very close to this passage we are considering. "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your pleasures."

There is another class of prayers which come under the head of selfishness, and have no promise. They are hypocritical prayers. The hypocrite is one, who, for some reason, wants to be considered different from what he really is. So a man may, in order to be considered pious, and trustworthy, engage in prayer. This is what Jesus says of such prayer. "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." (St. Matt. 6:5); in the praise of men, not in God's approval, or answer.

When prayers are only a lip service, a formality; when those who pray are mere actors, going through the motions without the motives, there is no promise of an answer. “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” (St. Matt. 6:7.)

God wants prayers which come blood-warm from the heart. Prayers that are soul-cries from penitent, unselfish hearts; prayers which look first of all, and all the time, to God’s glory; knowing that our highest good is wrapped up in His glory. And as God is God such prayers will be, must be, answered. His honor is at stake.

Prevailing Prayer Conditioned

Prayer is sometimes spoken of as a means of getting anything a person may set his heart on, and ask for persistently enough of God. This is a result of the error of faith in prayer, instead of prayer in faith. There are Scripture passages which, taken in their isolation, seem to say that men can have anything they want, just so they ask for it confidently enough, and long enough. But one of the most elementary rules of Scripture interpretation is that Scripture, wherever possible, must be interpreted by Scripture. Where there are a number of statements on any given subject, we must bring them all together, compare them, and see what the general statement is after it has received its various limitations, modifications, or amplifications. When we do this with the Bible teaching on prayer, we find that we have absolute assurance of getting only those things which are definitely promised by God.

The gift of the Spirit, fellowship with Jesus, forgiveness, increase of faith, courage, success in the fight against sin, the coming of the Kingdom of God, these, and kindred things, God has promised. All that God stands back of these promises. If we pray for these things, pray aright, and keep on praying, we shall have them. For when we thus pray, God opens His storehouse, and puts the contents, in so far as we need them, at our disposal. It is simply a matter of taking them on our part. They are spiritual blessings, spiritually appropriated, and he who believes God’s promise has them. Jesus tells us: “Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye have received them, and you shall have them.” (St. Mark 11:24.)

Right here again we have one of those perplexing statements, “whatsoever ye desire.” But notice the condition, whatsoever ye desire believingly, and we have no ground for believing anything beyond what God has promised. As Jesus says elsewhere: “If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.” (St. John 15:7.) If we are living close to Christ, if we are ruled by His Spirit, if He lives in us, and we have hidden ourselves in Him, and stick to the promises of God’s Word, then we can ask what we will. Ah, but is it not plain that then we will ask only such things, as the passage tells us, as are contained in His Word?

There is just one more word of Scripture to which we are going to call your attention by way of showing that while God’s promises as to answering prayer are rich and full, they are nevertheless conditioned. “And this is the confidence we have in 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 we desired of Him.” (1 John 5:14,15.) Here again the matter is put plainly before us. If that for which we pray is in accordance with God’s will we shall have it. But how can we know what is His will? In all essential spiritual and moral matters He has revealed it, in His Word, there can be no doubt about it.

How about the wide field of things having to do with the bodily and material welfare of ourselves, our relatives, and others? The Bible teaches us that it is right to pray concerning them. What assurance have we as to the answer to such prayers? Only this general assurance that God is watching over us, that He has pledged Himself to do what is best for us. So in all things not specifically promised in God’s Word, we bring our petitions to our Heavenly Father, with all boldness and confidence, even as His dear children. But knowing our frailty, our own imperfect understanding of even our own deepest, truest needs, we pray with a tacit, if not an expressed, condition. This condition is that we want what we have prayed for if it is God’s will, if He sees that it is best for us. We leave it all to the perfect wisdom and deathless love of our God. If it is not best, in our heart of hearts, we do not want the thing for which we have plead.

The best example of this kind of prayer is that of our blessed Saviour. Facing the supreme crisis of His life, with the cup of bodily suffering, and soul-anguish, filled to the last bitter drop, He closed His heart-throbbing, blood-mingled prayer with these words: “Nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done.” And when people pray thus, God never turns a deaf ear. He

knows our real needs. He knows the final purpose to be served. He never makes any mistakes. We leave it all to Him. And He does, always does, what is right, what is best, for His children. And when we have prayed thus, we should arise and go our way rejoicing; for the thing God does for us is the very best thing that can possibly be done.

Prayers Answered, but not as Asked

For a true child of God there is no such thing as an unanswered prayer. If I get sick, it is perfectly proper for me to ask God to restore my health. But I do not presume to dictate to Him, or demand of Him. He may have allowed my illness to come in order to shield me from a much worse thing; He may have allowed it as a means of teaching me some much needed lesson. I want, whatever the cost, I want Gods will to be done. So, not knowing what God's good and gracious will is, I ask for what I think is best; but leave it all to my God. And what- ever He does I have my prayer, and so regard it.

To insist on God answering our prayers. for purely temporal and material things just as we ask them is sinful. It is evidence of presumptuousness, that yve think we know better than God does what is good for us, — it is evidence that there is very little trust in our hearts. And to insist on praying in this way often gets people into trouble. The Psalmist tells us that upon a time the children of Israel besought certain things of the Lord in a wrong way, or for a wrong purpose; and “He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.” (106:15.)

God sometimes has to deal with us as we have to deal with our children; deny them, or teach them a never-to-be-forgotten lesson by letting them have what they want. I know of a mother whose child wanted continually to put its hand on the stove. She remonstrated, and tried to explain; but to no avail. One day when the stove was not very hot, and the child extremely insistent, the mother deliberately allowed the child to have its way, though it cost it a few blisters, and many tears. But it had learned a lesson it would not learn in any other way, and which it never forgot. This is the way God sometimes has to treat us, — because we will not take His Word, or learn in any other way. Many a time, no doubt, the worst thing God could do for us would be to give us the things for which we ask.

Sometimes God answers our prayers, not by giving us the thing for which we pray, but something better. You remember the story of St. Paul. (2 Cor. 12.) He was troubled with what he calls a thorn in the flesh. It must have been very grievous. He prayed thrice that it might be taken from him. But God did not take it away. He did, however, give the Apostle such a measure of grace as would enable him to bear it. There is only one way that we can satisfactorily explain this, and it is in this way, — God had some lesson to teach his servant in this way; some lesson of humility, of dependence, of sympathy, of faith. He was a better man, and a better workman, for bearing the thorn in the flesh, than he would have been without it.

Sometimes God does not give us the thing for which we pray, if we consider the letter of the prayer; but nevertheless answers it according to its real spirit. One of the classic examples of this is an incident from Augustine's early life. As a young man he was quite worldly. When it became known to his mother that he wanted to go to Rome she prayed very earnestly that he might be prevented from going. She was animated in this long continued praying by the fear that if he went to Rome he would wander still farther away from God. In spite of his mother's prayers, Augustine went to Rome. While there a friend persuaded him to go to Milan. While at this latter place he was brought under the influence of Bishop Ambrose's preaching, and was converted, and started on his great career, not only as a Christian, but a Christian teacher. So, after all, in reality, Monica's prayer was answered. Not in keeping her son from Rome, she did not care for this in itself; but in getting her son truly converted to Christianity, which was the very thing, we might say the only thing, about which Monica was concerned.

Let us learn the lessons of God's Word as to the answer to prayer. There is such a thing as unanswered prayer. But the fault is with man, and not with God. A life of sin, of unbelief, of selfishness, of worldliness will make our prayers of no avail. If, we pray aright for the things which God has unconditionally promised in His Word, all the gifts which our souls need, we get them, get them at once, get them in richest measure. If we pray according to our best light for our physical and temporal wellbeing; but leave it all to our Heavenly Father, trusting His love and Fatherly care, our prayers are all answered, not always as we would have thought best; but, as God sees is best.

Oh, Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come.

The Elements Of Prayer: Adoration And Confession

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him. — Rev. 19:5-7.

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. — Ps. 66:18.

When ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. — Is. 1:15.

THE SUBJECT OF PRAYER confronts the Christian at every step. He finds it on every page of his Bible; by way of precept, or example. All the people of the Bible, who are mentioned favorably, were praying people. All the people known to Church history, who were real workers for God, and amounted to anything in His Kingdom, were praying people. There are no exceptions. If we know anything at all about ourselves, if there is any degree of spiritual life in us, we have a sense of obligation, of dependence, of emptiness, of need, which impels us to seek help. Many, probably, scarcely recognize this as a call to prayer. They may regard it as no more than a feeling of restlessness, of dissatisfaction, of ambition. Fundamentally it is a soul-hunger. It should lead to prayer.

Not Knowing How to Pray

In spite of the universal prayer-need, in spite of the largely recognized need, in spite of the considerable praying that is done; many of us often feel, and all of us sometimes feel, that “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” We “labor in prayer,” not as often as we should in the sense of per-

severance, and earnestness; but in the sense that our prayers are labored. There is a drought, a fruitlessness, in our prayer-life. There is but little certainty as to the scope, or order of prayer; the things for, or about, which we should pray; what proportion of our prayers should be given to this object, and what to that.

We are not advocating that prayers must always be subjected to a keen analytical process; that there must be just so many divisions, of so many paragraphs, or lines, each. We have no doubt that some of the sweetest prayers ever wafted to the ears of God come from persons who know little, if anything, about formal logic. When the heart is on fire with faith and love, God will straighten out the logic, and the grammar. But the Scriptures plainly show us that there are certain elements which go to make up a complete prayer. These elements may be differently classified as to their order, and some of them may be further subdivided; but one of the simplest classifications, and arrangements of the elements of prayer is as follows: Adoration, confession, petition, intercession, and thanksgiving.

We find all these elements, directly or indirectly, in the Lord's Prayer. The introduction, the first three petitions, and the conclusion are full of the thought of adoration, of worship. Confession is specifically made in the fifth petition, and in all of the man-ward looking petitions of the second part. The whole prayer is a petition. The plural pronouns make it intercessory. And the whole content of the Prayer is of such a character that to offer it, and seal it with the Amen, and not have gratitude and thankfulness would be worse than farcical; it would be blasphemous.

It is not to be understood that any given prayer must contain all these elements in detail. A theoretically perfect prayer will contain all of them; and the prayers of any length, which are the result of intelligent premeditation, contain some part of all these elements. There are times when, under great emotion, or stress, one may devote himself almost exclusively to one or the other of these elements. When the heart is full of joy, when one's feet are resting on the sure rock, a prayer may be very largely of adoration and thanksgiving. At other times, when the sense of sin, like a barbed arrow, has pierced to the inner recesses of the heart, and one feels crushed and undone, the prayer may be almost exclusively one of confession and of petition, as with the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner." At another time, when the heart is especially warm with the feeling of Christ-like brotherliness, and stirred by the sense of others' needs, a prayer may be almost wholly

one of intercession. But no one can truly pray whose heart is not full of all these elements of prayer.

He who does not adore God cannot pray. He who has no deep, humbling sense of sin, which drives him to confession, cannot pray. He who is never impelled to plead for others cannot truly pray. And he who never thanks cannot truly plead.

In discussing these elements of prayer, we are going to see what God's Word says about them. To do this we will not be able to consider them all at one time. Today we are going to consider only two — adoration and confession.

Adoration

No one can pray aright who does not have a somewhat adequate understanding of the nature and character of God, the one to whom prayer is to be offered.

If a man were famishing, he could not appeal with very much enthusiasm, or hope of success, to a beggar, who was himself unkempt, and half-starved. If a man had an important message to be carried to a distant point, he could not put much heart in his entreaties to a one-legged man, without a crutch, to become his messenger. And if a man has a poor, one-sided, unworthy conception of God, there is not going to be any largeness, any warmth, any urgency, any enthusiasm, any faith in his praying, if he prays at all. And, consequently, there is going to be but little, if any, result to his praying.

The person who would come to God must believe that God is, says the Apostle. (Heb. 11:6.) When we come to pray, unless we are coming to a known God, known in the sense of being assured of His existence and general nature, it is a fruitless exercise. And when we come into the presence of the God of Heaven, — all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and merciful, everywhere present, infinitely perfect in all His attributes; there can be but one result, if we are in a state of mind and heart such as we ought to be, — we will prostrate ourselves before Him; we will worship Him for what He is, and for what He has done, and is doing in the world.

Do you know what the root idea of the word worship is? It means to prostrate oneself before another, or others. Divine worship, then, is the act

wherein a devout soul prostrates itself before God in entire submission, in homage, in adoration.

And unquestionably one reason why so many do not pray as they should is because they do not know such a God. And the reason so many professing Christians pray so listlessly, and intermittently, mostly only when driven by dire stress of circumstances, is because they have no such consciousness of God as they ought to have. God is not a reality to them. He dwells, so far as they are concerned, in the realm of shadows; they have never felt His nearness.

I know that a great many Christians, who are reasonably in earnest, are ready to reply: We believe in God; we want to realize His presence; but do not the Scriptures teach us that He is a Spirit? It is hard for us, with our earth-bound senses, to grasp the spiritual. There are always influences at work to make the spiritual seem the unreal. By what mode of procedure is it possible to make God more real? This is just the point. There is a method about it. It does not come accidentally.

God is a spirit. We cannot put forth our hand and feel Him. With no kind of a glass can we see Him. We cannot find Him, in this tangible way, by and laboratory tests. And yet He is everywhere revealing Himself. The whole creation is full of God, and every bush is aflame with the glory of His presence. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard." (Ps. 19:1, 2.) All this universe is constantly telling us about God's power, wisdom, love, and goodness.

We have all been privileged, at some time, to be out in God's country on a perfect autumn day, the sun's rays just delightfully warm; the autumn breeze laden with a tonicity which makes the whole being tingle with pure delight in living; the fields all covered with grain; the boughs of the trees drooping with their burden of fruit; the birds singing, the flowers smiling, and hill and dale everywhere radiating beauty. In the midst of all this delight, fairly intoxicating in its intensity and extent, have we not, at times, actually felt burdened by the thought, — there is something back of all this struggling to express itself? And our souls have yearned, and sighed, to find a means of communication with this power struggling to express itself in terms intelligible to us. This is not imagination. It is reality. It is God talking through His works. And if it was not that sin has so sadly blinded us, and

blunted our sensibilities, we could read the language. But we can do much, by God's grace, in the way of cultivating this ability. And we should do it.

Man, with all his sinfulness, is a creature from whom to learn something about God. Man was made in the image of God. God is the original after which man was patterned. The image has been sadly defaced. But when man is born again of God the Holy Ghost, the process of restoring the lost image is begun. And everything that is beautiful and good in the children of men is just that much of God showing itself in them. The noblest in fatherhood and motherhood; all that is beautiful in childhood; all that is true, and pure, and honest, and just, and of good report in human life anywhere, is a reflection which the creature has caught from the Creator. Here then, with grace-touched hearts, and Spirit-opened eyes, we catch some little idea of what God is in His character. Only, let us not forget, these qualities must be multiplied to infinitude before we get to what God is.

But the best place to grow into a real satisfying knowledge of God is in fellowship with Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we have a being, who not only reflected God, but was God. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Col. 2:9.) In Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, who, in substance, was, and is, one with the eternal Father, took to Himself a human nature. In Jesus Christ the eternal Spirit took a tangible form, which could be seen and handled.

For myself, whenever there is some question about God which perplexes me, I flee to Jesus Christ. In Him the Infinite has found a local habitation. In Him Spirit has become embodied. Jesus Christ is the crown of nature, He is the flower of Revelation. He transcends all other revelations. Here man can learn to know all that he needs to know about God; His greatness, His goodness, His justice, His love, His sympathy for the children of men, His interest in them.

And if we walk with Him; if we allow Him, through the Spirit, to speak to our minds and hearts; if we surrender ourselves to Him, if we conscientiously try to do His will, we shall have a witness within, a witness which cannot be controverted, telling us about God, His reality, His glorious character, and His condescending goodness. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16.)

And then there is God's infallibly enlightening Word. If we read, meditate upon, pray over, this Word, and honestly try to live its precepts, it will be given to us to know God. St. Paul could say: "I know whom I have be-

lieved, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” (2 Tim. 1:12.) And the same blessing will be granted to anyone who will live as close to God as St. Paul did.

Let us, then, at all times, cultivate what Jeremy Taylor calls, “The practice of the presence of God.” And God, though not visible to the sight of our eyes of flesh, nor audible to our acutest sense of hearing, nor tangible to our most delicate sense of touch, nor capable of being tested by any test of our physical senses, will reveal Himself to us more and more. He will make Himself known through the higher, and as yet untabulated, senses of the soul. But we must walk reverently. Reverence is the soul of religion. And more and still more we shall come to realize, not only in the vaulted cathedral, and under the spell of the organ’s peal, but everywhere, what the Lord God wanted Moses to realize when He said to him: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” (Ex. 3:5.)

And then we are going to have more real worship on earth. Then we will worship not only when we are in a church. We will worship there. God wants it. But we will worship everywhere. Our work and our play, every breath we breathe, will have elements of worship, of adoration in it. Thus it is in Heaven among the angels. Their whole life is an expression of their appreciation of God’s nature. They adore God for what He is. They worship Him because of His exalted position. They praise Him because of the glory of His deeds. They thank Him for His innumerable benefits. If we would truly pray, we must learn of them.

Confession

If we have worshipped God aright; if we have come into His audience chamber, if we have lived in the realization, not only of God’s power, greatness, and wisdom; but of His holiness, His purity, His goodness, then the light shed from His presence upon ourselves cannot but reveal, and show up, in startling, terrifying colors, our own glaring imperfections. And just as our eyes are opened to see the glory of God’s perfections, will they be opened to see the blackness of our sins, and to understand its paralyzing, deforming power. All this is set before us graphically in the experience of the prophet Isaiah. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. The Seraphim surrounded His throne,

and cried one to another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.” And then the prophet felt constrained to cry out: “Woe is me; 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.) So it ever is. And just in proportion as we see, and appreciate, the glory of the Lord, the beauty of His holiness, will we see, understand, and be alarmed at our own wretched sinfulness.

This is the very beginning of true religion, the recognition of sin; its character, and its consequences. An inadequate conception of sin and its consequences is back of much of the false teaching abroad in the world. And it accounts for much of the indifference, and lack of spirituality from which the Church itself suffers.

With the direct, full rays of the light of God’s perfections; especially His holiness, His purity falling upon us, especially as revealed in the life and teaching of Jesus, let us search out our sins. Aided by the Holy Spirit in the use of the Word, let us seek to get to see sin as God sees it, and reveals it.

“Search all my sense, and know my heart
Who only canst make known,
And let the deep, the hidden part
To me be fully shown.
Throw light into the darkened cells,
Where passion reigns within;
Quicken my conscience till it feels
The loathsomeness of sin.”

Knowing sin, what it has done to us, — marred all our beauty, paralyzed our powers, turned us from our true goal, set us at war with ourselves, and everybody and everything about us that is good, there is only one right thing to do, to start with, and that is to confess it all to God. We can never be right with Him, we can never look Him confidingly in the face, we can never have power with Him, till we do this. God says: “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offenses, and seek my face.” (Hos. 5:15.) What man conceals God will not cancel.

And we must learn to loathe sin. If we really get to know sin we will hate it. And our confession will be a language of the heart; it will be, like that of David, baptized with tears. Then the words will come with meaning: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ...Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be

whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Ps. 51.)

And we must not try to save our face by a general acknowledgment of wrongdoing. It is well, like the prodigal, to say, in general terms: “Father, I have sinned;” but we must also, at times, put a finger on the sore spot in our lives; we ought to specify, and put into words the sins of which we know ourselves guilty. “Take with you words,” says the Lord through the prophet, “and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” (Hos. 14:2.)

This is a difficult thing to do. The words stick in our throat, they falter on our lips, they burn like coals of fire. The very sound of them strikes terror to our ears. Oh, it is well that this is so. There is a double profit if this be true. We have learned to know how ugly, how loathsome, how enfeebling, and damnable sin is; how great God’s mercy in forgiving. And the very process of enumerating our sins makes them recoil upon our conscience, and helps, by God’s grace, to shame us out of them. And this is always a part of true repentance and confession, a turning from sin, an amendment of life.

This confession must be not only a periodic one, such as we have, for instance, at communion seasons; it must not only be weekly as we have it in our chief service; it must not only be daily as we give it brief expression at least in the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer, — “Forgive us our trespasses.” This confession must become a condition, an attitude of life.

The best, the only effectual, help in coming to a real, heartfelt consciousness of what sin is, and of what our sinfulness means, is to live in God’s Word, and; through that Word, with God Himself, especially with Christ Jesus in His great struggle with sin. It will be a great help to us in all this to make frequent and prayerful use of such portions of God’s Word as describe sin and its consequences in human life, particularly the penitential Psalms, — the sixth, the thirty-second, the thirty-eighth, the fifty-first; the hundred and second, thirtieth, and forty-third.

When these two elements, adoration and confession, have become an integral part of our Christian life, and, consequently, of our prayer-life; then we are in a condition to begin to pray effectually. Lord, teach us to pray.

The Elements Of Prayer: Petition And Intercession

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. — St. Matt. 7:7.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. — 1 Tim. 2:1-2.

WE HAVE CONSIDERED the elements of prayer known as adoration and confession. These two steps show us that to pray aright one must have a somewhat adequate knowledge of God and self. Those who expect anything from God as a result of prayer must believe in God. God must be a reality, the great reality, to them. Those who would prevail in prayer must cultivate this acquaintanceship with God. They must have a growing realization, and appreciation, of the perfection and beauty of His wonderful attributes; severally, and in their personal union. And this appreciation cannot otherwise than find expression in a worshipful attitude of mind and heart and life.

Further, having stood in the effulgent light of God's perfections, we see with ever increasing clearness our own imperfections. We are humbled, we are crushed to the earth. The meanwhile God's mercy gives us hope, leads us to repentance and confession; as a result of which God, in the richness of His goodness, lifts us up, and restores us to sonship.

In fewer words, the indispensable prerequisites to fruitful prayer are to rightly know God and ourselves; God in the beauty of His holiness, ourselves in the decrepitude of our sins.

With these preliminaries duly discharged, we, are ready to begin to pray in the more strictly defined sense of the word; that is, to begin to plead for things.

So today let us continue our study of two more of the elements of prayer, — petition, and intercession.

Petition

Every person who truly knows God, and himself in the light which God's nature throws on human nature, as this is revealed in the Scriptures, knows something at least of his own dependence and need. And he who knows his need, together with the richness of God's provision for man's need, and the benevolence of His disposition in appropriating of His treasures for man's good, will become a pleader at God's throne.

Let us briefly review the ground of our confidence in approaching God with our petitions. An all-sufficient warrant for prayer is God's command: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. 50:15.) And Jesus says: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be Opened unto you." (St. Matt. 7:7.) Any one at home in the sacred Book knows how frequently the Lord tells us to bring our troubles, our perplexities, to Him.

The Lord God does not only command us to come, but He entreats us to do so. Let us examine but one of these invitations. St. Paul, having told us that our great high priest, Jesus Christ, having overcome, has passed into the Heavens, where He is still touched by the feeling of our infirmities, voices the Spirit's invitation in these words: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:16.)

"Let us therefore come." This is God's invitation. It is simple, direct; there is no mistaking it. "Let us come boldly," — with courage, with confidence; for He into whose august presence we are invited to come Himself does the inviting. And He invites us to come thus boldly to the very "Throne of grace;" the seat of the Divine government, the throne of God Himself. And if we come with the humility born of a true knowledge of our need, and the courage born of faith, we shall "obtain mercy;" that is, relief for the ills of the past, and their consequences, — our shortcomings, failures, sins. And at the same time we shall find help for all possible present, or future, need.

Then let us think of the invitations Jesus Christ voiced, for Himself, and the entire family of the God-head. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." (St. Matt. 11:28.) "Come unto me," for what? To tell of our weariness and burdens, to plead for relief. And the result? To find rest. And again the Apostle, voicing the Lord's call, says: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by I prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6.)

So we might continue by the hour to cite God's invitations to prayer. Everything in life conspires to impel us to prayer. Our need, of body and soul; our experience, if we are God's true children, of the blessedness, the profit, of prayer; God's command, and His promise.

Further, do you know of any of God's great blessings which are promised to those who do not ask for them? He makes the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and rich harvests to grow, for the unjust, who never pray, as well as for the just, who do pray. But we have no record of anyone ever having the door of the Kingdom opened without some one knocking, of sins being forgiven without, some one asking, of any one's name being written in the Lamb's book of life without some one pleading for it.

If we have not in spiritual things it is because we do not ask. (Jas. 4:2.) Oh, let us, then, heed God's invitation; let us take Him at His word; let us ask, let us pray. Let us be frank, earnest, and explicit in our praying. God knows what we need, but He wants us to ask. And He rewards those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6.)

If prayer is to accomplish anything it must be a prayer of faith, — faith in God's power and goodness; such a faith as will be begotten by a proper knowledge of God, and fellowship with Him. And we must pray with confidence in the efficacy of prayer, that prayer will unfailingly get us what we really need, what, in God's unfailing knowledge, is best for us. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John 5:14.)

But here is a question which often comes into our minds, — what are the things we may ask of God with all this certainty? We are invited to bring all our cares to Him. He hears them all. He is interested in all of them; but He can actually give only what is good for us, that is His will. Hence we are taught, by the example of Jesus, as well as by numerous precepts, to put the lesser things of life, of physical and temporal welfare, into God's hands, to do as His wisdom and love dictate. "Father, not my will, but Thine, be

done.” And when a child of God thus prays, his prayer is unfailingly answered. What God gives him is the thing that is best for him.

As the newborn children of God, and only such can pray aright, we should, we must, put first things first. “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (St. Matt. 6:33.) I am afraid this is far from the way many of us pray. If some one, a stranger to these things, should over-hear many of our prayers he would probably come to the conclusion that we were inditing an epistle to some benevolent keeper of a grocery store, a loan bank, or an apothecary shop. We often pray, but little in any manner until disaster threatens, or is upon us. The only real concern which our prayers reveal is about health, and success, for ourselves, and our loved ones. We ought, indeed, to make all these things subjects of prayer; but subordinated to the greater things of the spiritual life, — growth in grace, in faith, in holiness of life, in the ability to do God’s will.

I wish you would read the Epistles of St. Paul with this purpose first of all in mind, — to see how St. Paul prayed, and especially the things for which he prayed. What are they? He prayed once, very earnestly, and repeatedly, that God would remove some kind of thorn from his flesh. This may have been some kind of physical disability. And there are other instances of his praying for help in his bodily need. But the great burden of his much praying, and he exemplified his precept — “Pray without ceasing,” — was for spiritual blessings — that he might know Christ, and that others might know him; that he might be strengthened with might in the inner man; that he might be rooted and grounded in love, and be able to understand, better and better, the breadth, length, depth, and height of God’s love; which, in its fulness, transcends all human knowledge.

Brethren, if I read the Word of God aright, one of the biggest things in the Christian life is to learn how to pray aright. Let us ever be pupils in the school of prayer. Let us ever sit at the great teacher’s feet, with this petition in our hearts, and on our lips — “Lord, teach us to pray.”

Intercession

Prayer for self will ever be only a part of the true Christian’s praying. It is probably because so much of our praying, when we do pray, is on the old

selfish plane, concerned only about our individual interests, that our prayers are so largely fruitless.

Study the prayers of God's people as they are recorded in the Bible, study the prayer-chain of God's people as it stretches across the ages; what characterizes them all? Not the narrow vision of the egotistical and selfish man, who can see no farther than the interests of himself, his family, and his party. They take in all that God's judgments, and God's love, embraces. Thus we must learn to pray, if we would pray aright.

In worship, or adoration; in petition, as now generally defined; in confession and thanksgiving, there need be only two persons,— God, the one addressed, and the one addressing. In intercession there must be three, — God, the one addressed, the child addressing Him; and the one, or more, in the interest of whom the address is made.

We are Divinely obligated to be intercessors. We are obligated to pray for others in just the same way that we are to pray for ourselves. We are obligated to pray for others, because God commands it, and because they need it.

Do we look out upon the world and see its millions outside of the Kingdom; do we see the millions of heathen lands groping in darkness, seeking for the light but finding it not, bowing down to false man-made gods, going through services which give them no peace, torturing themselves without profit, seeking but never finding; journeying, but never progressing; eating, but never satisfied; what can we do about it? Jesus says: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." (St. Matt. 9:38.) What a responsibility! what a privilege! By Christ's own words, a power is put into our hands to help these people by intercession.

Do we see people about us careless of their own soul's interests; selfish, greedy, unclean; may be simply easy going, and engrossed by the mad chase after pleasure? Are we concerned about them? If so, what do we do about it? Here is what the Lord tells us to do about it. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." (1 John 5:16.)

What a power is put at our disposal! Some how, for some reason, in some measure, it is ours to move the hand that alone can move and save the world. What a privilege if we do our duty! How terrible the responsibility if we fail!

Maybe we have a near relative, or friend, or neighbor, or mere acquaintance, who is unsaved. Does it rest as a burden on our souls? What have we done about it? God loved that soul enough to redeem it. Jesus shed His blood for this person. He is pleading for him in heaven. What are we doing? Harboring a more or less transient regret? That is not enough. We ought to be interceding for them at the throne of grace. There is many a wanderer who would be in the Kingdom if he had been prayed for as he should have been. But we can not pray prevailingly, and pray only spasmodically. We can not pray Victoriously and pray halfheartedly, with little faith. The prayer which wins is the one that takes God at His Word, and never lets go. Monica prayed for her son, Augustine, for forty years before he was won. She followed him, when she could, from place to place; she always, and everywhere, followed him with her prayers. There is something strenuous and purposeful in such praying. It is a wrestling with God. St. Paul tells the Galatians that he is in “travail” for them till Christ be formed in them. To the Colossians he writes that he “strives” for them in prayer. And he urges the Roman Christians to “strive together” with him in their prayers to God. This striving is not because of God’s unwillingness to hear and help, but because of the opposition of the powers of darkness. And such prevailing prayer necessitates faith, child like, but unyielding faith, — the faith which never gives up.

How many of us really make much of this element of prayer? We criticize not a little, we scold a good bit; how much do we pray for others? Sunday school teachers, how often do you pray for your pupils? pray for them by name? specifying their needs? Members of the congregation, how often do you pray for our congregation that we may become more and more a people of God, spiritually minded, clean and strong? When did you pray for the officers of the congregation, mentioning them by name, pleading for them that they might have grace, and wisdom, and strength? When did you pray for missions, mentioning some field, or worker? our schools, and other institutions?

Brethren, we believe in meetings, organizations, and committees for church work. Very well. They are a necessity. But unless those who attend the meetings, and form the organizations, and committees know how to pray, the best results can never be attained. Time spent in prayer is time gained. The busiest people, and those who have achieved most in God’s

Kingdom, have ever been those who prayed most, for themselves and others.

And what glorious company we are keeping when we come as intercessors to the throne of grace. We join hands with God's best children of all ages, and climes. We join the goodly company of the Old Testament which plead Israel's cause before God's throne; with Abraham, and the patriarchs; with David, the sweet singer, and fervent pleader; with Isaiah, and with Daniel the faithful and fearless; and all the hosts of lesser name, or unnamed, as to human records, but well known, and loved in Heaven.

As intercessors we enter the circle of rare and consecrated souls like the Baptist, St. Paul, Augustine, Luther, Knox, and tens of thousands of others, the choicest spirits of all the ages.

And above all, especially when we enter the field of intercession, when others' burdens and woes, in a way, become our own, when our own souls are in travail that others may have the blessings and hopes which have become our own, we are permitted to draw within the veil, and join the band at the head of which stands the peerless intercessor of the race, God's Son, our brother, the Lord Christ; and at the center of which band, the great inspirer of all true prayer, stands the Holy Spirit, who maketh intercession for us. (Rom. 8:26.) What a glorious company! What a privilege to be associated with it! What a glory it reflects! What a responsibility it imposes!

O Thou Christ of Gethsemane, of Calvary, of the great white throne of sovereignty and of prayer, teach us to pray. Teach us to make petitions for ourselves. And give us the love which will impel us to make intercession for others, for all men, as we see their need.

The Elements Of Prayer: Thanksgiving

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that they youth is renewed like the eagles. — Psalm 103:1—5.

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. — Col. 2:6, 7.

WE COME NOW to consider the last of the distinctive elements of prayer, — thanksgiving. With this we complete the golden circle of prayer.

We begin with adoration. This means, literally, to put the hand to the mouth; that is, to kiss some one's hand. In olden times, particularly in eastern countries, this was one of the greatest marks of respect and submission. Until we have taken this attitude toward God; until we have learned to see in Him the One infinitely great, supremely wise, and altogether lovely; the one who is just as loving, kind and helpful as He is great and wise; we will never feel the great, irresistible call to prayer. But when we do thus learn to know God; know Him in what He is, know Him in what He has done, and is doing, and has pledged Himself to do for us; know Him in His fatherly attitude toward us; then we will be drawn to pray as the particle of iron is drawn to the magnet.

In the light of the glory of God's presence we come best to know ourselves, our moral and spiritual poverty; the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores with which we are afflicted. This leads, naturally, to confession. Our imperfections as shown in the light of God's perfections, our poverty in the light of God's riches, impel us to confession. Especially when we remember that we were created in the image of the riches of that perfection.

The very act of confession but gives emphasis to our realization of our state of emptiness and illness, and prepares the way for our cry for help, and prompts to it. Thus we have petition, the asking God to supply our need.

From petition, prayer primarily for one's self, it is but a step, and, for a Christian, a natural and inevitable step, to intercession, — prayer for others. For are we not all kindred by the common tie of ancestral blood; kindred by the tie of common ills, needs, and hopes? And are we not prompted thereto still more by the Christ newborn within, the first begotten of many brethren?

Now there remains thanksgiving, not as something merely added to all the other elements; but as a leaven permeating all of them though finding expression, again and again, as an element by itself.

When we speak of thanksgiving as a golden circle, ever making the round from adoration to thanksgiving, we do not mean that the Christian prayer-life always makes its way round over the same path. The pathway of life of the truly praying Christian is a spiral circle. It goes from one to the other of these steps, always carrying something of the elements of adoration and thanksgiving into the others, but always on a higher level. The true child of God does not only go forward, but upward as well in its turnings into the fuller light and life of God.

In our study of thanksgiving as an element of prayer, let us consider, first of all

The Biblical Development of the Idea of Thanksgiving

As you have read your Bible have you ever noticed how frequently it speaks, in one or another form, of thanksgiving? Is it possible for you to have read your Bible carefully without observing it?

In the early books of the Bible we have, in very brief form, the story of the beginning of things. No one can read this with any understanding of its meaning, read it as a child of God, without being filled with the breathing spirit of adoration, the moving element of thanksgiving. But in close connection with this; indeed, as an integral part of it, we have the story of the early tragedy of human life. These are the books of the founding and unfolding of God's Kingdom on earth. In these early chapters there is not so

much said, at least directly, of thanksgiving. But it is not entirely lacking. The cry of the mother of us all, as her first born was laid at her breast, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," was not without its note of thanksgiving; caused, probably, by the thought that God's promise of a Deliverer, One to undo the mischief wrought in human life by that first great disobedience, was fulfilled. The offerings of her first born sons indicate the presence of some measure of the same feeling. And when, just a little later, it is said: "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord," it is most certain that the element of thanksgiving was present.

The vivid consciousness of the dark night of the tyranny of sin, in comparison with the exalted state from which it had hurled the first children of men; as portrayed in so much of the early history of individuals, and peoples, and recorded in the early Scriptures was not a fruitful soil in which to grow the golden fruit of praise and thanksgiving. It took the dawning consciousness of God's gracious plans for restoration, of coming deliverance, of the sovereignty of a God of love and grace, to bring down the harps from the willow trees, and enable those people to strike the sustained notes of praise and thanksgiving. So it is in Exodus, where we find the story of Israel's first great deliverance, the type of a still greater deliverance to come, that we find the first great striking song of praise and thanksgiving. It is the song of Moses and Miriam; a song of emancipation, of liberty, and of hope. And from this time on the theme grows in volume and intensity. And early in the history of Israel's national life we find that the rendering of praise and thanksgiving had assumed an organized and systematic form in their service, as we learn especially from the Chronicles and Ezra.

The book of Psalms is the great praise center of the Old Testament. It was the great hymnbook of the Hebrew Church. Here we find some of the soul's highest flights of sustained praise and thanksgiving. The Psalmist's ecstatic soul, which, by inspirational uplift, had pierced beyond the veil, swept the keyboards of creation, providence, and redemption, and brought forth enraptured, and enrapturing songs of praise. He calls on Heaven and earth, sky and sea, things animate and inanimate, to join him in the glad refrain of thanksgiving.

In the New Testament the songs of thanksgiving continue to rise in loftiness of flight till they reach their grand climax in the hallelujah chorus of the Apocalypse.

In the first and second chapters of St. Luke we have the Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;" the Benedictus: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel"; the Gloria in Excelsis: "Glory to God in the highest"; and the Nunc Dimittis: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace"; these are all, in the highest sense, hymns of joy, of praise, of thanksgiving; they are permeated with the soul of all prayer, — adoration, adoring gratitude.

Look at the great doxologies of the Epistles; for example, Rom. 11:33-36: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to Him be glory for ever." And Rom. 16:25-27, the closing verse of which says: "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever." And again, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ throughout all ages, world without end." These are but types of many exultant songs of praise throughout the Bible, the spirit and practice of which is urged on all Christians.

Finally, the songs of praise and thanksgiving of all the ages will reach their climax in the grand outburst of joyous adoration and praise and thanksgiving in which the voices of all the redeemed and finally saved will join with the angelic hosts as they surround the throne of the once crucified, but arisen and glorified God-man: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, — to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

In view of the fact of this golden thread of praise and thanksgiving running through all the Scriptures; in view of the fact that all of God's saints, in all ages, and in all lands have had their hearts and their lips full of thanksgiving, ought we not to be cultivating the spirit and habit of thanksgiving? If we are real children of God, knowing God, and our blessings, we can not keep from it.

The anthems and hymns of praise sung in our churches are not mere adornments of our service; they are, or ought to be, but the refrain of the ever developing theme of praise begun in creation's morn by the angel hosts, carried on by God's redeemed children of all ages, swelling ever onward with the progress of the plan of redemption. It is our duty, as God's

children, to learn this; to take our place in this great thanksgiving choir, and help swell the chorus.

The Motives Impelling to Thanksgiving

The inspired Word shows that the angels in Heaven praise God. Sacred and ecclesiastical history both show that the best of the sons of men have ever been the most thankful to God. The Bible teaches us that we ought to give God thanks. What are the grounds of true thanksgiving? What are the motives which should prompt us to give God thanks?

We should express our thanks to God because it is a duty to do so, a debt we owe Him. “Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name.” (Ps. 29:1, 2.) “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” (1 Thess. 5:18.)

The giving of thanks to God, or to anyone else, for that matter, as a debt owed is not the highest form of thanksgiving; but to hold one to the discharge of a duty from a sense of obligation often leads to something better. We do not always stop to argue with our children, or explain, at the time, the why of the things we ask them to do. There are some things the full significance of which dawns on them only gradually. There are Christians who, learn but slowly, and, at best, but imperfectly, the riches of the beauty, and goodness, and wisdom, and power, and glory hidden in God, and constantly showing forth from Him; consequently their praise and thanksgiving will be imperfect. But their teachers should take opportunity for impressing on them, again and again, how much they owe God, and that it is a divinely imposed duty to be thankful to Him, and to say, from time to time: God, I thank Thee.

When we are trying to teach our children to be appreciative, and polite, we often pause, after we, or some one else, has given them something, to ask: “What do you say?” And it is a gratification to hear their tardily lisped, — “Thank you.” But after awhile, when they have learned to know and appreciate instinctively, we are still more pleased by their unsolicited and appreciative response of thanksgiving. God is a very patient parent. He knows our frame; how piecemeal our knowledge, how dull our sense of appreciation. And He is pleased with our faltering, I thank you, God. But the thanks-

giving which thrills the heart of God is the one which comes freely from the heart of a child of His full of conscious gratitude.

When human relations are what they ought to be, and where children have come to an understanding age, the chief cause for gratitude on the part of children is not that father and mother have given them a new dress, or a suit of clothes, or some other useful, or much desired, article; the chief cause of joy and gratitude is that they have such loving, companionable, solicitous, helpful parents. Just so it is with the enlightened child of God.

The highest motive to thankfulness to God is truly to know Him; who and what He is, and what He means to us. We can never fully know Him, that is impossible to us in our present condition. And I do not profess to know how much of God We will be able to take in when we have been restored to perfection. This is the problem of how much of the infinite can be comprehended by a perfect finite being. But a measure, yes, a large measure, of the knowledge of God can be acquired now and here. God has made this possible. And this knowledge is necessary to true thankfulness toward Him.

Let us, then, apply ourselves to gaining an adequate knowledge of God. Let us go to the Book of books in which God has revealed Himself so wondrously as to His nature and disposition toward the children of men. Let us study God as He stands revealed in Jesus Christ. There we see God taking the world to His heart; binding up the wounds of the children of men; cleansing and renewing the lives of all who, by faith, will but touch the hem of His garment; easing their terrified consciences, drying their tears. And now, with eyes opened, and minds clarified, as they have been bathed in the fountain of revelation, we may turn and see God shining in every sunbeam, breathing in every breeze that blows, vitalizing every drop of rain that falls, smiling in every flower that unfolds its beauty to the gaze of mortal eyes. Now we, will be thankful, not merely because we have food to eat, and homes in which to live, and clothes to wear, and many other material blessings to enjoy; but along with this, and above it all, because we are the children of such a God.

We are under obligation to thank God for all the blessings of this world: for the gift of life itself; for all our faculties and opportunities; for our ability to take a place in the complex affairs of this world, and be a contributing factor in the world's progress; for all the good things we get, for all the joys and pleasures of life; for all these things we should thank God. Yes, and for

life's difficulties, too; for as enlightened children of God, we know every one of these must serve as a stepping stone to bring us into a clearer realization of the good and true, into a closer fellowship with God.

When men have it in their hearts to say: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (Jas. 1:17), then they will be truly thankful to God. And when to this they have added the knowledge that all gifts, when they come from God, are good gifts; and that every experience through which His children pass, in humble submission, and childlike faith, God has pledged Himself to turn into a blessing for them, then we are going to have a calm, a joyous people; a people whose hearts are full of thanksgiving, and whose lips run over with songs of praise. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name."

Especially should a large part of our thanksgiving be motivated by the thought of redemption. There is nothing else can put such thankfulness in a Christian's heart as the thought of what Christ Jesus means to him. When a man has learned to know what sin is; and recognizes the blight it has spread over all human life, including his own; and realizes the utter hopelessness of escape, so far as self-help, or any human effort, is concerned; and that, uncured, it is destined to go on eating as a canker forever; and then learns to know what Christ, His life, His work, His death, and resurrection, and resumption of the throne, means to the children of men; and has had the personal experience of it all, — knowing that his own soul has been cleansed, and started on the path which shall end in perfect restoration, such a man's soul is attuned to the music of Heaven. And through it all runs the theme of thanksgiving. And this man's song of praise is not going to be merely a note, it will be a chord; it is not going to be a mere sound, but a sweet harmony. And in this glad refrain, the chief notes will be those dealing with redemption, soul satisfaction, and victory.

The world has its music, and much of it makes a strong appeal. But, as Shelley says, it is often true that: "The sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." They recall sad memories, but offer no compensation. It is not so with those on the glory side of the cross, who know the songs of the redeemed. They, too, at times, have their crosses to bear, their crown of thorns to wear. But with Christ in the heart, and a firm hold of His blessings, they can still look up even through tear-stained eyes, and sing: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

The Expression of Our Thanksgiving

God wants, first of all, hearts that are attuned to the music of Heaven; souls that know how to sing. In other words, God wants gratitude, appreciation of what He is, and what He is constantly doing. And until He has this He does not want anything else, for without this all else would be a form. But while this is the starting point, it is not enough. God wants hearts filled with gratitude, but He does not want us to hide it in our hearts as if we were afraid to speak of it to any one.

Most of us ought to tell out more of our appreciation to those around us than we do. Children, if your parents show, by word and deed, how much they think of you, how heavily your interests rest on their hearts, you ought not only to love them for it, and carry gratitude in your heart toward them. You should tell them of your love; you should put your gratitude into words. You ought not be too timid to do it, and you should not be ashamed to do it. It will warm the hearts of your parents, and nerve them to renewed efforts on your behalf. Parents, if your children are obedient and industrious, if their conduct pleases you, tell them so. It will not hurt them. It will put zest into all their further efforts. Husband, or wife, if you are trying hard to carry your end of the burden; you know how much it heartens you, and helps to make your burden lighter, if your partner whispers into your ear that word of appreciation, and affection. Then do not withhold your word of love, and encouragement.

I do not know that God needs this word of affectionate appreciation, of love, and praise; at least not in the sense in which we need it. He is perfect, self-contained, self-sufficient. He does not need the stimulus we need. But I like to think that there is a sense in which even our God needs from us this word of love and appreciation. We know that God loves us. He loves us with an unspeakably great love. And love always yearns for love. In whatever sense God may need our love, our word of appreciative thankfulness, we know He wants it. He wants us to whisper it into His ear in the silent watches of the night. He wants us to tell it to the morning breeze, that it may be carried to the waiting Heavens. He wants us to tell it out in the great congregation, in hymn and prayer. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. ...Come before His presence with singing. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts With praise; be thankful unto Him,

and bless His name.” God wants us not to be ashamed to speak of these things to our associates in the everyday affairs of life.

There is still another way of expressing our thanksgiving, when the heart is grateful, and the lips accustomed to speaking What the heart feels, and that is in the everyday life which is an unmistakable outflowing of the faith, and love, and joy which dwells within. When we give ourselves to live, as best we can, Christ’s life after Him; to love as He loved, to serve as He served; never to lose the sense of God’s Fatherhood, and our sonship; to be strong because we know God’s arm to be around us, and joyful because we know not a breeze can blow but that it wafts us nearer the harbor where our treasures lie, — this is to be truly thankful in a practical way.

It is said that Tauler of Strasburg, at a time when he was seeking a deeper knowledge of God, met a beggar, whom he thus addressed: “God give you a good day, my friend.” “I thank God,” replied the beggar, “I never have a bad day.” Tauler, astonished at the man’s reply, changed his salutation: “God give you a happy life, friend.” “I thank God, I am never unhappy,” said the beggar. “Never unhappy!” said Tauler, “what do you mean?” Rejoined the beggar, “Well, when it is fine, I thank God; when it rains, I thank God; when I have plenty, I thank God; when I am hungry, I thank God; and since God’s will is my will, and whatsoever pleases Him pleases me, why should I say I am unhappy when I am not?” “But what if God should cast you hence into hell, — what then?” said Tauler. Whereat the beggar paused a moment, and then lifted his eyes upon him, and said: “And if He did, I should have two arms to embrace Him with, — the arm of my faith, wherewith I lean upon His holy humanity, and the arm of my love, wherewith I am united to His ineffable Deity; and thus one with Him, He would descend with me, and there would I infinitely rather be with Him than anywhere else without Him.” “But who are you?” said Tauler, taken aback by the sublimity of the reply. “I am a king,” replied the beggar. “A king!” said Tauler; “where is your kingdom?” “In my own heart,” said the beggar.

Here we have the secret of true gratitude, and of thanksgiving. When a man’s real kingdom is in his own breast; when that kingdom is the kingdom of God; when Jesus Christ sits enthroned in that kingdom, and rules without a rival, then men are going to be truly grateful and thankful.

The Adiaphora Of Prayer

As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice. — Ps. 55:16:17.

Remember that I stood before Thee to speak good for them, and to turn away Thy wrath from them. — Jer. 20:18.

And He went forth a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. — St. Mark 14:35.

I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. — 1 Cor. 14:15.

I AM GOING to speak to you today on the adiaphora of prayer. An adiaphoron, in theology, is something which is neither prescribed or forbidden in God's Word; a matter, therefore, left to the choice of God's children. Some of the things concerning prayer with respect to which the Lord has made no specific revelations of His will are: the time and place of prayer; the posture, or attitude, in prayer; and whether there shall be freedom or form in our prayers.

There are differences of opinion on all these points. The trouble is that so many people are more insistent that their opinion in these matters is the only right way, than they are that the only right way is God's way where He has clearly and expressly defined it in His Word.

The principle we uphold is that where God has clearly spoken there can be no debate, implicit obedience is the only right, the only safe way; that where God has not spoken there shall be liberty, a liberty controlled by love, a due regard for the rights and feelings of others, a desire to further the common good, and the glory of God.

The Time and Place of Prayer

Should there be a time and place for prayer? In a general way, and to a certain extent, God has set, both by precept and example, a time and place for prayer. God has prescribed that there shall be a public worship of God's people. For this there must be a time and a place. A time for this He has set, the Lord's day; the day, not the hour. The accustomed place, and God commanded the building of the Temple, is the house of God; though, of course, if necessary, an acceptable service can be held anywhere. As prayer is a part, an essential part, of public worship, every Christian should be present, and participate in the worship, the prayers, of God's house.

In considering the question of time and place, we are thinking, however, first of all of the prayers of the individual in his private life. And if we put the proposition before us in the form of a question, should a Christian have a time and place of prayer? we answer unhesitatingly, yes; but we do not mean thereby that every one must pray by the clock.

Regularity and punctuality are good qualities in all the affairs of life, why not in the practice of prayer? Of course, if one should really be temperamentally so disposed that the thought of a set time and a fixed place for prayer becomes burdensome and serves as a clog to the spirit of prayer rather than a stimulus, then it will be better not to be in bondage to the clock, or any fixed place. But for the great majority of people it is a decided advantage to do everything with a degree of method. We recognize the benefit of regular habits for the body. The mind usually works best when we accustom it to regular hours of work. On general principles, is it not reasonable to assume that the rule holds good in the supreme business of holding conscious fellowship with God? If we have regularly appointed hours for our trysts with Him, and use them to keep our oftentimes sluggish spirits from playing truant, and then use these hours to good advantage, we shall eventually find that, as the hour draws near, we shall find our souls becoming expectant.

The point of importance in this discussion is not the time for prayer, but the prayer. If we are such Christians as we ought to be, we must pray, the spirit impels us to pray. If we are to become such Christians as we ought to be we must pray. The only thing to do is to quit making excuses, and begin to pray. But unless we have a set time for prayer, our praying is very apt to be desultory. We have time, and generally a set time, for everything else; time for business; time for all kinds of engagements, social and civic; time for pleasure and recreation; time for various kinds of churchly duties; but,

often, very little time for prayer, which puts the soul in all else that is really worth while. We must make war on our prayerless moods, and equally should we make war on the custom of waiting for our moods to prompt us to prayer. We should not put off our praying to some idle moments when there is nothing else to do. There is nothing more important in life than the time spent with God in prayer.

Great men of God have chosen different hours for their season of special prayer. One of England's greatest statesmen, a member of the cabinet during the last quarter of the past century, made it the practice of the greater part of his life to make the hour before going to the duties of the day one for reading his Bible and prayer. And so clearly did this intercourse with God affect his life that his colleagues called him "The great central calm." He got it from God, who is this in the superlative sense. The late Dr. Maclaren, the great preacher and Bible teacher, spent the hour between nine and ten with his Bible on his knee, in communion with God. And of another great divine it is reported that, for him, the best hour of the day for meditation and prayer was the one before retiring, between ten and eleven at night. The thought of the completed activities of the day, the absence of distractions, the all-embracing calm, the felt nearness of the all-pervading Presence, attuned his spirit to prayer.

No one should attempt to prescribe to another in this matter. But every one should decide for himself on a time for his daily devotions. And adhere to it, not in a slavish manner, which will become burdensome; but as a help to faithfulness.

From of old it has been considered appropriate, and helpful, to at least begin and end the day with a season of prayerful communion with God.

In the morning, when facing the strenuous and important duties of the day, the earnest Christian cannot but feel the call to prayer. He recognizes his own insufficiency, and that his sufficiency must come from God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." When the leaders of the American colonies were assembled for the purpose of framing a Constitution, Benjamin Franklin made this plea before that august body for daily prayer: "I have lived for eighty-one years, and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see of this truth, — that God governs in the affairs of men. I also believe that without His concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assis-

tance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business.”

How can we, Who are professed believers in God’s all-embracing sovereignty, who believe that without His blessing nothing can prosper, how can we assume to take up the, oft times, difficult and far-reaching, tasks of the day without first seeking guidance and strength from our Almighty, all-wise, all-loving Father? Before we see the face of man in the morning, it is well to seek the face of the Lord our God. If He is not given the first place in our minds and hearts in the early morning hour, He will probably have the last place all day.

And how about the evening hour? Do we wish the gracious companion and helper of the day to depart? If we have been successful with our tasks, if we have avoided the pitfalls set to ensnare our feet, if we have been given grace to be kind and helpful, are we going to say: God, I thank you? If we have made mistakes, and who does not; if we have been fretful and ungrateful, if we have refused the kind word and the brotherly hand, if we have been too much absorbed in the things of time and sense, are we not going to say: Father, forgive me? As the shades of evening gather around us, as the noise and bustle of the day subside, as we get ready for repose and slumber, the nightly reminder of the last great sleep, are we not going to say: Father, watch by my bedside; ward off all enemies; keep me till morning light? George Herbert says:

Who goes to bed and doth not pray,
Maketh two nights of every day.

In what we have been saying we have had in mind, first of all, the individual in his own private devotions. This should by no means be neglected even where there are family prayers; which there ought to be in every professing Christian home. For this individual approach to God we should take forethought, and make preparation. One should be alone, if possible, in order to be free from interruption. In this sanctuary, where the soul, without any camouflage, is bared to the eye of God, we should have a Bible at a convenient place. Some portion of it, however brief, though we do not believe in skimping things with God, should be read, and digested. A verse or two should be stored in the mind as a memory verse, a guide for the day; the principle of action for that day. And then that lesson, in its application to

the problems of life, should be taken to the Lord in a brief prayer of committal of self to God; seeking protection, light, guidance, and strength.

Many of God's saints have felt that the time from morning till night was too long to go without prayer. David says: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice." (Ps. 55:17.) Of Daniel it is said: "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before His God, as he did aforetime. (Dan. 6:10.) As he did aforetime. This was his daily custom. And this has been true of many others, in all ages, Whose names are not in the inspired record.

We speak, sometimes, of ejaculatory prayers; which means prayers thrown out like a dart. If, in our busy, work-a-day life, it is not convenient to have a set time and place for prayer during the day, let us cultivate this habit. As one follows the plow, or walks the street, or sits by the desk, or in the busy shop, there will come moments which call for these sentence prayers. A new vision opens to us, an ennobling thought comes to us, something happens to make us thankful; let us tell it to God, if only in a sentence. An evil train of thought would insinuate itself into our minds, a companion suggests something dubious, a trying situation arises in the line of duty; let a cry for help ascend to the throne of grace for help.

All times of special importance in life should be made special seasons of prayer. When we are trying to find out what life's plan is to be, when some specially important task is at hand, when some burden is to be borne, when there is a call for an unusual measure of wisdom, patience, forbearance, and the like, let us take it to the Lord in special prayer. Our Saviour did this. When He began His public ministry, when He was going to select His Apostles, when His passion was at hand, and at other times, He did this. Let us follow His example.

The Attitude in Prayer

There is not a little discussion about what is generally spoken of as the posture, or position of the body, in prayer. I prefer to speak of it as the attitude of the body in prayer. A position of the body taken without thought, or which is forced, or ungainly, is properly called posture. Those positions of

the body which are the result of thought; full of noble, reverent meaning; which are the reflections of the thoughts of the mind, and the feelings of the heart (we ought always to carry ourselves as sons and daughters of God), are appropriately called attitudes. By all means, our position in prayer, whatever it may be, should be an attitude, expressive of our spiritual state.

Beyond the shadow of a doubt, many a Christian of inquiring turn of mind asks himself the question: Why do certain Christians pray standing, and others, kneeling? Why is it that among the same people the prayers, in certain services, are offered standing, and in others, kneeling? And often those who have not been instructed in this matter, but are of an observant and inquisitive turn of mind, and sensitive with respect to the things having to do with the Christian life, are perplexed, and sometimes offended.

There is history, ancient history, back of these churchly customs. In the first place, let us make clear that the Bible makes no specifications in this matter. In both Testaments different attitudes are mentioned; but no one of them commanded, or specially singled out and made obligatory on us. The Jewish custom, for centuries before the time of Christ, in the public services particularly, was to pray standing. The earliest Christians were Jews. They worshipped, for a time, in the Temple and the Synagogues. Unquestionably they were influenced by the customs of their fathers, where nothing to the contrary was commanded. Early Christian records show that at an early age Christians prayed both standing and kneeling. Probably the more common attitude was standing. And there is evidence that it was believed by many that this was the Apostolic custom.

The Council of Nicea, held in 325, decreed, in the twentieth canon, that all prayers on Sunday should be offered standing; and that the same rule should apply to the prayers of any other day between Easter and Pentecost. Personally, I very much doubt the wisdom of such a decree. And, save for the sake of harmony, and the giving of offense, would not feel myself bound, at least in private, by any such decree, even though promulgated by such an august ecclesiastical assembly as the Council of Nicea. However, the whole Eastern Church has, ever since observed this ruling. And among the, Protestants, the Scotch Presbyterians, and, in the main, the Lutherans, follow the custom. And there is a reason for it, though we do not like for it to be made into an ironclad rule, or a specified reason prescribed for its observance.

Sunday is the weekly, as Easter is the yearly, anniversary of our Saviour's resurrection. Easter, and consequently, in a measure, each Sunday, is a day of triumph, of joy. Through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whose resurrection was the crown of His work, and the evidence of its acceptance by God, we are no more strangers to God, or foreigners so far as His Kingdom is concerned. We need no longer be fearful and downcast. Through Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, we have become God's dear children; not only by adoption, but by a new birth, and a transformed life. We have a new outlook upon life, for the present and the future. And, as anyone may see who carefully reads the New Testament, the dominant note in the Christian's life should be one of victoriousness, of peace and joy. This is typified in prayer by an erect, upward looking, attitude. We come, not as servants, fearful and trembling; but as children beloved.

We, however, apart from Christ, are not perfect. And never will be while in this world. "If we," that is, we Christian people, "say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8.) This is a source of sorrow and penitence. And the bowed head, and the bended knee, or prostrate form, is the token of sorrow and penitence. So it comes that even those who, as a rule, pray standing, as a token of their assured sonship, also have their seasons when they pray kneeling. Such are the times when humiliation and confession: of sin give the dominant note to the service of the day.

In this matter of attitude in prayer, as in practically everything else in life, we are influenced, it may be all unknown to ourselves, by temperament, antecedents, and environment. If we all our life were accustomed to pray in either the one attitude, or the other, and saw others doing the same, we will very likely have a predilection for that attitude. If constitutionally, and by conviction, we have an oppressive sense of sin and unworthiness, the kneeling attitude, typical of the bowed spirit, will appeal strongly to us; if custom has not overbalanced it. If, on the other hand, we are, by nature, optimistically inclined; if our sense of forgiveness, of sonship, and heirship, is strong; if courage is one of the strong elements in our character, then, barring other influences, the resolute, forward, upward looking standing attitude will have an appeal for us.

A little knowledge of Scripture, of history, and, human nature ought to keep us from being narrow, partisan, and uncharitable toward those who differ from us, especially in things where God has not spoken. The brother

who prefers to kneel when I stand, .or stand when I kneel, may offer just as acceptable a prayer in his way as I in mine. And we should as we may with all good conscience, where this is the only difference, conform to the practice of those in whose midst we find ourselves, at home or in the church.

In the Scriptures we have examples of prayers uttered standing, kneeling, prostrate, in bed, walking in the open, and the like. But we search in vain for a word, of special approval, or of censure, with respect to attitude. What God wants is prayer; whole-souled prayer from believing, loving, hungering hearts. And where the attitude does not belie the word uttered, but lends emphasis to it, we may believe that God is not overly much concerned about it.

There is one thing, however, about which we should be very much concerned, and that is reverence. Reverence is of the soul of religion. We rightly teach our children to be respectful and courteous to all, especially to their elders and superiors. And if we have any sense of propriety, we are very much chagrined and humiliated when they fail in this respect. Does not this apply, with a thousandfold emphasis, when we, God's children, come into His presence? The very way in which we stand or kneel; the folded hands; the concentration of mind and heart; the calm, devout, yet joyous expression of the very countenance; the voice, if we speak aloud; should all bear outward evidence of an inner reverence, humility, love and trust; not assumed, but cultivated and actually possessed.

Freedom or Form in Prayer

Should we pray in the language of another, should we premeditate on the thought-content and language-form of our prayers, or should we leave everything to the inspiration of the moment? This is a subject which, at times, has been rather warmly discussed; and, not infrequently, in language and spirit, it would seem, far-removed from any true prayer-life.

There are those who have a decided aversion to all set prayers, prayers thought out and formulated into language beforehand; especially by some one other than the one to use them. Some even go so far as to claim that it is fettering the Spirit of God if one pre-meditates on the thought or language which he himself is going to use in prayer. On the other hand, there are those who are just as decidedly opposed to any freedom in the form or con-

tent of prayer. Everything must be done by rule. All one's, thoughts, feelings, aspirations must run in a groove, set by some one else. Which is right? Is there any Scriptural authority for either the one side or the other?

The Word of God does not prescribe that prayer, to be acceptable, must be either extemporaneous, or follow a given form; but unquestionably indicates that, other things being right, either will be acceptable.

As one reads his Bible with care he cannot escape the conclusion that many of those who are spoken of as having prayed, or whose prayers are given, wholly, or in part, prayed spontaneously, without any prepared prayers before them. But many of them had their minds and hearts saturated with the material of prayer. But Jesus tells us expressly that there is at least one prayer which it is not only permissible to use, but a duty to do so. When the disciples came to Jesus with the request: "Lord, teach us to pray"; they not only revealed it as their conviction that there is something about prayer which can be taught, and learned; but Jesus replied: "When ye pray, say," — and then He gave them, for their and our use, that master-piece of prayer, the Lord's Prayer. And anyone who uses this prayer has most of his argument against previously formulated prayers taken from him. It is true, this is a Divinely formulated, a God-given, prayer. But if it is right to use this prayer for expressing our praise and our petitions, it cannot be wrong to use any other prayer prepared by godly people, who have gotten their inspiration, and the content of their prayers, from the rich teaching of God's holy Word.

We have heard people speak slightly of the service in the churches where, as they said, the prayers are read from a book. The intimation being that such prayers were not real prayers. The reading of prayers, in the Church, or anywhere else, should not be a mere formality, a lip service. They should not be droned over by one who shows that he does "not enter into their spirit. They should come from the heart. They should express our present thoughts and feelings. But there is no reason in the world why this cannot be true of the prayer which has been thought out beforehand and reduced to writing, or even prepared by a different person than the one who is now presenting it at the throne of grace. Indeed, there is much reason why the general prayer of a worshipping congregation should be familiar to all who join in the service. It is the prayer of the congregation It is the expression of their devotion. Through it they are all to speak. They should all join

in it, at least silently. And it is a good thing if they have it before them so that they can follow it word for word.

There are times when conditions, local, national, or international, call for special prayers. And the leader of God's people should not fail to meet the situation; after due deliberation, he should lead the people in special prayers of praise, petition, or intercession, as the cause may indicate.

The "Directory of Worship," prescribed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, in the chapter treating "Of Public Prayers," gives a lengthy outline for the "Long Prayer," with many divisions and sub-divisions; and closes with the admonition that when the minister is "To enter on particular acts of worship, he should compose his spirit, and digest his thoughts for prayer, that it may be performed with dignity and propriety, and that he may not disgrace that important service by mean, irregular and extravagant effusions." This being the expression of a rather non-liturgical Church is significant, and wholly relevant. It shows that the leaders of that intelligent Church hold that a man should pray with understanding. And to do this, he must use forethought, and make preparation. And if he uses, to any extent, the outline furnished, he is offering, essentially, a stated prayer.

Dr. Jefferson, one of the most eminent divines of the Methodist Church, has written some strong words against undigested, unprepared prayers in the services of God's house. "Extemporaneous prayer is a form of liberty which harbors a multitude of sins. It is often taken for granted that because a man is given the privilege of framing each Sunday his own prayers he holds a license to mold them on the spur of the moment. The result is that in many a church there is a type of confused and deformed prayer which is both scandalous and insufferable. Many a Christian of cultivation has been driven into a liturgical church because he could not endure the unkempt and boorish prayers of his pastor. Men and women of refinement cannot be led to the throne of grace by a man who lacerates all the nerves of taste at every step in his supplications. Prayers as well as sermons must be prepared, not necessarily in every phrase and word, but by meditation and a careful survey, first of the needs of the congregation, and then the needs of the Church universal. There was a superstition once that prepared sermons were an abomination to the Lord, inasmuch as they interfered with the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the preacher's brain and heart in the hour when he stood before the people. Happily for the world that superstition has passed away. Experience has proved that the Holy Spirit has better opportunity to

work His will through the sermon which has been prepared by long and patient labor, than through the flighty and rhapsodical mouthings of a preacher averse to study.”

What is true of the prayer of the pastor in God’s house before the congregation is true, in principle, of the prayers of the individual in his closet, and in the family circle. Prayer ought not be formal here any more than elsewhere. But formality is not the same as the use of a form. To say a prayer, as a mere duty, is not a high form of prayer. To say it as a convention, without thinking or caring, is a hypocritical formality. To make our requests known unto God, to pour out our heart’s praise, and our soul’s wants to Him, with faith and in love, this is praying. And if we can find somebody else’s words that convey our thoughts better than we can express them ourselves there is nothing to prevent it, everything to favor it.

A great many of our people, I am sure, feel in their hearts that they ought to pray more than they do; but are afraid that they can not pray aright. In part, this may be only a sense of timidity. In part, it is true of all of us. We all need to pray: “Lord, teach us to pray.” But we must remedy the defect as best we can. We must learn to pray. And the Holy Spirit is constantly seeking to teach us to pray. We should be docile pupils. And we will learn to pray best by praying.

We are not all alike fluent in expressing ourselves. Some of us are rather halting in this respect. But if we need something badly, and feel strongly that we need it, we generally succeed in making ourselves understood. It will be so in prayer. God tells us that He understands even our groanings. It is not our poor grammar and faulty logic which offend God, when it is the best we can do. It is our neglect of prayer, our failure to try to pray, which grieves His heart.

If we fear that we cannot put our thoughts into proper words, or if we can not overcome our fear of trying to do so, there are plenty of good helps provided for us. There are prayer books with prayers for all times and conditions; prayers which have stood the test of years, prayers through which the best of God’s people have voiced their hearts desires. Let us use them, they will teach us how to pray.

"A tender child of summers three,
Seeking her little bed at night,
Paused on the dark stair timidly.
'O, mother, take my hand,' said she,
'And then the dark will all be light.'

"We older children grope our way
From dark behind to dark before;
And only when our hands we lay,
Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day,
And there is darkness nevermore.

"Reach downward to the sunless days,
Wherein our guides are blind as we,
And faith is small and hope delays;
Take Thou the hand of prayer we raise,
And let us feel the light of Thee."

The Prayer Life Of Jesus

And it came to pass in these days that He went out into the mountain to pray, and He continued all night in prayer to God. — St. Luke 6:12.

THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES connected with the subject of prayer; difficulties if we make prayer a subject of intellectual study, difficulties if we simply take a survey of the practical experiences of our own prayer-life. But who would expect it to be otherwise with a subject so vast, reaching out toward the very shores of the infinite? Some of these difficulties we have recently considered. But a little reflection will soon convince us that the difficulties which the subject of prayer presents are much smaller than those which the thinking mind has to face when the attempt is made to brush prayer aside, and all the great truths necessarily involved in it. The man who does not believe in prayer cannot consistently believe in God, at least not in such a God as the Scriptures represent Him to be. And then how absolutely unfathomable, and distressingly perplexing, becomes the problem of human life.

If the difficulties connected with the study and practice of prayer were ten times as great as they are, there is one thing which should, and for the Christian does, forever settle the question of the perfect reasonableness of prayer, and its unquestionable profitableness. This one thing is the simple fact that Jesus Christ prayed, prayed regularly and earnestly.

Jesus was a perfect being. No taint of sin ever touched the sanctuary of His inner life. He was holy, harmless, undefiled; separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. But on one side of His nature Jesus was truly a man. And the word man, as is the name of every other creature, is but another term for dependence. Man is physically and spiritually dependent. To have a human nature means to be subject to temptation, and to have many needs. And man cannot help feeling his needs, and his dependence. This is the explanation, in large part, of the fact that man is never fully satisfied. The only condition under which man can be reasonably satisfied, and experience something of that peace which Jesus showed that He had, and of

which He speaks so much to us, is when he is walking in fellowship with God, with his hand in his heavenly Father's, and drawing his inspiration and strength from the inexhaustible fountain of the Father's life. It may not explain all, but this was unquestionably part of the reason why Jesus prayed as He did. He had a human nature. And all that is human needs the help which only God can give, which He wants to bestow on His children; but for the bestowal of which He wants His children to ask.

Brethren, if we have looked deep into the mysteries and involved processes of nature, and think we have found difficulties there when it comes to harmonizing them with the principles and practice of prayer, then let us look up through the mists, which obscure the vision of the dwellers in the vale, to the mountaintop, where Jesus spent long hours in prayer. That sight settles all argument. If Jesus prayed it must be good to pray. It must be in perfect harmony with the highest of all systems of law, only the faintest outlines of which, perchance, have as yet come within the purview of our knowledge.

For our further instruction and encouragement, let us today make a study of the Prayer-Life of Jesus.

1. Jesus Prayed

In the first place, let us more fully consider the simple fact that Jesus prayed, that He was a man of prayer.

To the devout child of God, I think, there is nothing in the Gospel record which sounds more natural, and becoming, than the oft repeated statement that Jesus prayed. Some few, a very few, have stumbled at the thought of a praying Christ. They have felt, somehow, that to wrestle in prayer, as Jesus unmistakably did, detracts from the splendor of His divine, kingly character. And to explain the unusual, not to say, to them, rather unbecoming sight they say, — Jesus must have prayed, not because He ever felt the need of anything; only as an example for us who do have need to pray. Away with all quibbling. Let us embrace the mystery, nor care much to explain. Jesus prayed, that is enough. And, oh, how He prayed! In the Temple, and on the mountaintop; in the hour of trying conflict, and in the hour of cheering victory; in the midst of His disciples, and alone in the wilderness; when He sat

at table in the quiet family circle to break bread, and when He stood by the grave from which the dead was to be called.

Jesus prayed not only at times during the silent watches of the night; but, as our text informs us, He prayed all through the night. And this was the case again and again. And He prayed thus, not as a mere process of self-mortification; but to satisfy His soul's desire for fellowship with the Father, and to gain strength for the duties of the day. All hours were suitable hours of prayer for Jesus. He prayed in the morning when the sun, all glorious, called the children of men to the duties of the day. He prayed at eventide when the tasks of the day had left His body weary, and calling for repose. Jesus prayed for Himself, He prayed for others; He prayed when His heart was filled with grief, He prayed when His soul was full of songs of thankfulness. The Master prayed for His friends, He prayed for His foes. He prayed under all circumstances, He embraced every opportunity. Being a perfect man, Jesus did that which perfect man must ever do, find His chief delight in communion with the Father of light and life.

The four Gospels, as you know, give us a brief biographical sketch of Jesus' life; each of the books, generally, adding something to supplement the others. The casual reader of this record may not be very deeply impressed by what is said here of the prayers, and the prayer-life of Jesus. But the picture which the careful student gets is different. One discovers that the prayer-life of Jesus subtly permeates the whole story, forming, so to speak, its warp and woof. Some fifteen specific mentions of prayers, and times of prayer, are given; but, usually, the references seem incidental, a word here and there; but in their totality they show us a kneeling Christ, a Christ with an up-turned face.

The greater number of the fifteen mentions of the fact that Jesus prayed are found in the Gospel according to St. Luke, who, above all the other Gospel writers, gives us the picture of the human nature of the world's Saviour. It is St. Luke who, in chapter one, tells us that Jesus, when He was baptized, and was thus, officially, inducted into His public office, and consecrated to His great life-work, prayed. And it was while thus engaged that the heavens were opened, that the Holy Spirit came down upon Him, and the everlasting Father proclaimed that this was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

As we should expect, Jesus prayed in connection with all His work. Most, if not all, His miracles were prefaced with, may we not correctly say

the result of, earnest prayer.

In the first chapter of St. Mark we have the account of a strenuous day's work performed by Jesus in the early days of His ministry. It was in what came to be known as His home town — Capernaum. He had taught in the Synagogue, He had cast out a demon, He healed Peter's mother-in-law. And then, in the evening, the people, having learned of the Master's mighty works, crowded about the house, having brought with them all their ailing kinsfolk. Jesus passed among them, and healed them all. This continued till far into the night. Reasoning from human analogies, we should say, assuredly after such prolonged, and exhausting, application the Master would require a period of rest longer than usual. Not so. Next morning, even before break of day, Jesus arose and went out into the desert to pray. Virtue had gone out of Jesus; the sight of so much distress, physical and spiritual, drew upon the very fountain of life. His soul-life, His vital forces needed replenishing. He could find it only in communion with God. So while others would have been seeking the needed rest in added hours of repose, Jesus sought it in prayer.

And it is to be noted that, when the absence of Jesus from Peter's home was discovered, this Apostle at once easily divines where Jesus may be found. And, pray, how did he come to this knowledge? I think there is only one, but a very obvious, explanation. Even in these early days of Christ's ministry it had become known that thus to retire, and be alone with God, and cast down His burdens at His feet, and refresh Himself by drinking at this inexhaustible fountain of strength, was a habit of life with Jesus.

The next mention of Jesus' praying we find in St. Luke five. The record tells us that His works were so widely heralded, and drew such a multitude of people around Him, that He withdrew to the countryside, and prayed. But there is more in these words than the casual reader sees at a glimpse. The words really suggest a series of acts running through a number of days. This was the situation. Jesus was thronged by the people day after day. The greater the number that came to Him the less time He had for retirement and prayer; but the less time Jesus had for this, because of the multiplicity of duties, the more He needed it. So we see Him, again and again, seeking for opportunities to withdraw for moments, if not hours, of prayer.

In His conduct here Jesus did not do as do so many of His followers. As opportunities for service present themselves in increasing number, as duties press upon us, we often give less time to the secret chamber. We are prone

to say: Well, this must be done, and that task is calling; we will have to curtail the period usually set aside for prayer. Not so with Jesus. He did not say: We will give all our time to work, it is so pressing; and when we can find a little time we will ask the Lord to bless it. First of all, He went to the Father in prayer; earnest, whole-souled prayer; and then He went to His work with telling power. And similar have been the experiences of all God's great children. There are no exceptions.

The fourth mention of Jesus' praying is that of our text. The time was yet rather early in His ministry. He had been having some very trying times with the Jewish leaders, who were nagging His every step, and criticizing His every move. On the morrow the Master was to make selection of the twelve who were to form the inner circle of disciples while He lived, and continue His work after His resurrection and ascension into heaven. There was only one best thing that Jesus could do at such a time, — take it all to the Father in prayer. This He did. There is nothing said of His having planned to spend all the night in prayer. But Jesus found so much rest in prayer, such a calmness came over His spirit while He prayed, there was so much of genuine delight in communion with His heavenly Father that, ere He knew it, the night had flown, and the landscape was kissed by the rays of a newly, risen sun. And if we stood in such relation to our heavenly Father as we might, if our hearts were attuned to spiritual things as they ought to be, the hours of prayer would not be irksome, they would not be forgotten; these times of communion would draw us, the flight of time would be forgotten; and, instead of a very few minutes of hurriedly uttered prayer, the minutes would lengthen into quarter hours, half hours, and hours.

We cannot enter into details concerning all the occasions which have been made a matter of record as to Jesus' prayers. We can only briefly sketch it. After having been interrupted in His search for rest, as St. Matthew tells us, in chapter fourteen, He spent the day in teaching the multitude; at eventide He multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed them all, and sent them away with gentle leave-taking, and then went up into the mountain, and spent the night in prayer. The more labors multiplied, the more numerous and trying the difficulties which beset Him, the more did Jesus find recourse in prayer. He prayed alone, He prayed in the circle of His disciples, as if to win them to the same kind of life.

Both St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us of the transfiguration; but it is St. Luke who tells us that Jesus, at this time, had gone up to the mountain to

pray; and that it was while He prayed that the fashion of His countenance was changed. It was while Jesus was praying in a certain place that one of the disciples approached Him with the request which must have delighted His heart, and to which we are directly indebted for the Lord's Prayer, the master prayer of the ages. This request was: Lord, teach us to pray. These men, beyond doubt, were men of prayer; but in the presence of the way Jesus prayed they felt that there was something they had not yet learned. This request, earnestly uttered, is the first step in effectually learning how to pray.

Jesus prayed when He raised Lazarus from the dead. He prayed when the cross loomed before Him.; He tells Peter that He has prayed for Him personally in view of his coming temptation. After the celebration of the last Passover, and the institution of the Lord's Supper, He gave utterance to that wonderful high priestly prayer, so full of calm courage, heavenly Wisdom, and yearning love. In Gethsemane, where the sinless soul of Jesus was brought face to face with the gripping reality of the world's sin, He prayed as no other being on earth ever prayed before, or since. During the intervals of most intense wrestling in prayer, He admonished His disciples to pray. Finally He won the complete victory of self-surrender, of self-immolation, which made Him so calm and strong in the closing ordeals of those tragic days; which enabled Him to pray for His murderers, and peacefully to commit His soul into His Father's hands.

As we look at the sublimely beautiful life, and blessed ministry of Jesus, thoughts come to us concerning the source of His initiative, the power of His sustained effort, His marvelous calmness and courage in the midst of confusing elements and the cry of battle. Not forgetful of the fact that He was truly the Son of God, not wishing to detract a particle from the sublime dignity and perfections of His purely human attributes, we answer that, as the son of man, all these gifts and graces came to Him in answer to His whole-hearted, unceasing, believing prayer. And every ministry of man which is, in any measure, freighted with blessing for self and others; which takes up, with heroic determination, the heavy tasks the accomplishment of which makes for the general betterment of human life; which meets, undaunted, the fierce, life-sapping, assaults of the powers of darkness, must be sustained by ceaseless mountaintop experiences, — by unbroken communion with God, the begetting, and sustaining, Father of all life. It is thus

alone that the inner man is sustained day by day, that he renews his strength like the eagle.

If the Master could not live, or work, without prayer, how can the disciple dispense with it and prosper, either as to his inner life, or his work? We all need the prayers of the company, of the family, of the congregation; but this is not enough. God said to Moses: "Come up to the top of the mountain." Again and again Jesus retired to the desert, or the mountaintop. In other words, we need to be alone with God; there to unburden, there to be replenished from the inexhaustible fountain. In those blessed hours what conquests have been won, are yet to be won! When men have had proper interview with God they do not fear what men can do.

Have we prayed? Have we pleaded earnestly at the throne of grace? Has our prayer been an act of worship? Have our hearts been enlarged by contemplation of the perfections of the triune God? Have we been grateful, thankful for all the blessings received? Have we confessed the weaknesses, the sins, which form the barriers to higher things? Have we asked to have the void in our lives filled with the things of God's own choosing? Have we asked for strength to overcome, to realize our ideals, to become the men and women the image of which we see reflected in the perfect example of Jesus? Have we been disappointed? Has our strength been inadequate? Have our burdens continued to be heavy? Have the thorns continued to prick and fester? Let us not think that our prayers have been in vain. An earnest, honest, spiritual, believing prayer is never in vain. We can never go astray, we never do in vain what Jesus taught us to do, and what He Himself practiced.

2. The Secret of the Prayer Life

In the second place, we want to notice that the secret of our Saviour's faithful praying, and our faithful praying, is to be found in the prayer-life.

Christians recognize that they ought to pray; that it is a duty and a privilege, that it ought to be a delight. Their needs impel them to pray from time to time. But with many there is little spontaneity, little joy, in their praying. And because, as they so often think, their prayers have not been answered, their praying is often very spasmodic, faint-hearted, and altogether unsatisfactory. There are many elements combining to produce this result.

We think, however, that they may all be summed up in this that such people lack the essentials of what we may call the prayer-life.

Our Saviour really prayed, there was no acting, no feigning. But prayer with Him was much more than repeating words; it was more than the crying out of a startled, suffering soul; it was more than the bombarding of heaven with petitions; it was more than the luxurious self-indulgence of a self-pitying soul. Oh, it is true, our Savior's shoulders were pressed down with accumulated burdens, invisible, but very real, and very heavy. No doubt Jesus prayed to recruit His strength. We know that there were times when the heart of Jesus was filled to its utmost capacity with grief, with grief caused by tasting others' grief. So real, so deep, so agonizing were these sorrows that the Lord of glory was constrained to cry out: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death." Beyond the shadow of a doubt Jesus prayed to the end that the potent touch of the Father's loving hand might send healing and comfort to His bruised heart. But this was not all. When Jesus prayed it was a going into the holy of holies, to meet His Father face to face, and to satisfy the yearning of His soul for God by drinking deeply at the inexhaustible fountain of wisdom, and power, and love. At the times when it is said that Jesus spent the night in prayer, it is probable that He did not spend the greater part of the time in offering a series of petitions, rather in a rapt contemplation of God's glorious presence, and of tasting the sweets of undisturbed fellowship with Him. These were hours of special entrance into the secret place of the most High, and of dwelling under the shadow of the Almighty. They were hours of meditation on the person and perfections of the Father of light and life; hours of drinking at the eternal fountain of beauty and truth and holiness; hours of listening to the Father's voice, directly spoken, whispered in Spirit breathings, heard in the evening zephyr, and read in the silent language of the bright sentinels of the sky. And when the glory that surrounded Him, and the blessings that filled His soul, moved Jesus to put His thoughts into words, His uttered prayer was, in substance, that He might, more and more, be identified with the Father in thought and will; that He might be wholly like Him in His life; that He might be able rightly to interpret the Father to the needy and waiting children of men; that He might be able successfully to complete the work the Father had sent Him to do.

This is what we mean by the prayer-life of Jesus. He had surrendered Himself wholly to His heavenly Father. "Father, not my will, but Thine be

done” was not only a once uttered petition; but the attitude of Jesus’ life. The deepest and most abiding tendencies of His life were going out Godward. Christ’s life was like the flower which, during the whole day, keeps turning so as to be able to bask in the direct rays of the sun. To a life like this, which is a living, and never ceasing, prayer, the uttered prayer becomes, indeed, a vital breath. Jesus prayed not only because, and when, He wanted certain specific blessings; but because His was a God-filled life, — and this not only as to His Godhead, but as to His manhood.

Jesus is our example in this that He prayed, prayed faithfully and earnestly. But if we are to follow Him in what we may call the externals, the form, of prayer, we must follow Him in the cultivation of a prayer-life. We must live close to God. We must love Him, and the things He loves. This can come only from a Spirit-filled life, from fellowship with Christ, and through Him with the everlasting Father.

If, through study and meditation, we have come to a lively appreciation of the greatness and goodness of God, as He has revealed Himself in His word; if Christ, in all His condescending lowliness, may we not say because of His condescending lowliness, has come to be to us the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely; if there is nothing in all the world fills our hearts with such a measure of delight as to dwell on what our Savior is to us, and has done for us, and is doing for us, then we, too, will pray, pray often, pray regularly; because we will have a prayer-life. Prayer then will not be a burden but a delight.

Christianity is primarily and preeminently a life of fellowship with God. It is not merely going through forms; it is not the detached doing of things, the doing of things without a defined motive. Christianity is a conscious living with God, a turning to Him in everything, for everything, — for life, guidance, strength, pardon, growth, approval. In fellowship there is mutual exchange of thought and feeling. In fellowship with God prayer is one of the chief ways of expressing one’s self to God, as God declares Himself to us chiefly through His word. When the life is right with God, then; when we have what we call the prayer-life, there will be little trouble about our prayers. Our life will be a prayer. We will put our thoughts and feelings into prayers because we want to pray. We will pray when joyous; pray when temporarily downcast; pray when we have been victorious; pray when, for the time being, we have tasted the bitterness of defeat. And when we have found, as yet, no words in which to formulate the visions we have glimpsed,

and our desires refuse to lend themselves to the accustomed formulas of language, God will still understand. He knows how to interpret our groans, our mute joys gain tongue before Him, and the unutterable yearnings of our hearts burst into pleadings most eloquent.

Jesus is our example in praying. If we would truly imitate Him in this, we must be filled, as He was, with the life of God; with our hand in His we must walk close to the heavenly Father. Only those who truly love God, the triune God, for what He is, and has done, and is doing, for us; and have absolute confidence in Him, can truly pray to Him. This kind of life does not come by accident, it comes only by cultivation; by living close to God in His word, by taking the life which Christ offers us in living faith, by practicing the virtues which Christ inculcates. Lord, Christ, give us more of Thy life, — teach us to pray!

The Prayers Of Jesus

As you have noticed, I have not selected any particular text as the basis of my sermon. Jesus Christ Himself is my text. And there is no better one.

Jesus is our great teacher. He teaches us no less by example than by word of mouth. Jesus Himself, and His Apostles after Him, frequently emphasize the importance of our imitating His example. After one of His remarkable acts of service, Jesus turned to His Apostles, and said: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." At another time He said: "Learn of Me," what I do, as well as what I say; imitate my manner of life. St. Peter tells us, speaking specially of Jesus' humility and patience, that He left us an example, that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). St. John says that those who profess to abide in Christ, ought also to walk, even as He walked (1 John 2:6).

IN ALL THINGS the pattern of life which Jesus sets before us should be the ideal at which the earnest Christian aims. But if there is one place in the ordering of the practical life where, more than another, we ought to follow, but have often failed to follow, the example of Jesus, it seems to me it is in what He teaches us about prayer.

In a recent service we had the opportunity of learning some important lessons concerning prayer from the life and conduct of Jesus. We saw that He was constant in prayer; that He made everything a subject of prayer; that He began every important work with a season of prayer; and that all His prayers were the spontaneous out-pourings of His soul. This was so because His life was a prayer. He lived in constant, and most intimate, fellowship with His Heavenly Father. Hence it was natural for Him to pray in words.

There are still many other important lessons to be learned by an earnest, sympathetic study of our Saviour as the model from whom we are to learn how to pray aright. Today let us make a brief study of His prayers themselves. From the great Master's own practice, we want to see how He prayed, and for what things He prayed.

The Spirit of Jesus' Prayers

Comparatively few of the prayers of Jesus have been recorded. Of the fact that He prayed, prayed often, sometimes prayed long, that He poured out His whole life in prayer, of this we have the most abundant evidence. But of the content of Jesus' prayers comparatively little is given. How we should like to have a book of the prayers of Jesus. What a revelation of His mind and heart; what a story of faith and love and loyalty it would give us. What an inspiration it would be to us. But here, as with the interpretation of the Messianic prophecies given on the way to Emmaus, they are withheld. God knows best. There are enough of Jesus' prayers given to reveal to us the tone, trend, and content of them.

The prayers of Jesus show us, by their content and general tone, that they are the utterances of a son, one who comes as a beloved son to a loved and revered father. There is no presumption, no taking of liberties, no taking of things for granted, in Jesus' prayers. But there is a direct, artless, confiding approach to the Father which shows that the One who comes knows that the Father is awaiting His approach, and is delighted with His coming. At the same time Jesus' prayers show that He recognizes the exalted privilege afforded Him in His coming to the Father, and that it was a never failing source of joy and pleasure for Him thus to come.

In this Jesus was but illustrating what He teaches us to do in the Lord's Prayer. Every petition in this prayer is linked, grammatically, and in thought sequence, with the word Father in the Introduction. Those who pray intelligently must recognize this. But more, they must get into the Spirit of it; their hearts must go out with each petition Fatherward. See how Jesus did this in His prayers. Take the latter part of St. Matthew, eleven. After a sad survey of the attitude of the people toward Him and His Kingdom, Jesus breaks out in a brief prayer. In the space of three short verses, part of which is a prayer, and part a statement, the word Father is repeated five times. Repeated! yes, but not merely repeated. It was the burden of the thought and feeling of the Son's heart. It was a loved, adored Father's all-important business the Son had on His heart. The work was important only because it was the Father's business. Hence the word Father sounds the dominant note. So it was always. At the raising of Lazarus, in the high priestly prayer, in the garden, on the cross, everywhere Father is the first word, the word which carries the theme of the prayer, the precious word around which all else clusters.

This kind of a relationship begets confidence, which is another element of prayer which Jesus teaches us by His example. Earthly parents worthy of the name do all they can for their children's welfare. Children of such parents know this. And it affects their intercourse. Jesus says, illustrating this very point: "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Yes, the Holy Spirit as the highest of all blessings: the guarantee of all other things really good for us.

Jesus always prayed with a full recognition of what God's fatherhood and His sonship meant to both. He knew that it meant that all the measureless resources of the Father were at the disposal of the Son in every step that was in accordance with the Father's good and gracious will, for the benefit of the Son, and for the furtherance of the Kingdom. See how Jesus expresses this confidence as He stands by the open grave of Lazarus. "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I know that Thou hearest me always." In the garden, on the cross, everywhere, the same confidence is in evidence.

This is a lesson we should learn, must learn, if we would pray aright. A faltering approach to the throne, requests which breathe doubt, do not only reveal our flabby faith; but it is an insult to God, it is a reflection upon either His power, or goodness, or both. When we pray we should remember that we are praying not only to a father; but to a Father back of whose infinitely yearning father-heart is an infinite wisdom, and an infinite power, all pledged to further every true interest of every true child of His. To forget this is to dishonor Him, and do ourselves an injustice.

This relation of loving, adoring, trusting sonship does not interfere with true reverence, but begets it. And this is a lesson which the prayers of Jesus teach.

There is so much of irreverence today that we should give special heed to this lesson. Many carry their irreverence into the very house of God, and some even into their prayers. Those who have veneration in their hearts will be reverent in all their demeanor. Those who have caught even glimpses of God's exalted nature, those whose souls go out to Him in adoration, will act reverently before Him at all times. It was so with Jesus in all things. He was

Himself the Son of God, He was a full Sharer in all things that makes God God, in all His possessions. But He was personified reverence in all things. His prayers breathed the soul of reverence. We can hear it in His tones. We can see it in His manner. It is discernible in the substance of all His utterances.

Irreverence is not merely a failure in deportment, it is a disease of spiritual character. The person devoid of reverence shows that he has a very shallow conception of the nature of God, and but little faith in Him. It shows a self-reliance wholly unwarranted by actual conditions. We need very much to become Christ-like in the practice of the virtue of reverence. Every increase in real reverence is a step God-ward.

Another lesson which Jesus teaches us in His prayers, and which sprang naturally from His consciousness of sonship, and the full meaning of God's fatherhood, is the lesson of submission to the Father's will; not a constrained, but a whole-hearted. satisfied submission.

In all the affairs of His life Jesus showed the Spirit of those ever memorable words: "Not my will, but Thine be done." In these words the spotless manhood of Jesus was speaking as it faced the task of wading through the mire and stench of the world's accumulated sin. This was a thousandfold more of a soul recoil from sin than it was of the flesh as it thought of the buffeting, the crown of thorns, and the mangling nails and spear. That tidal wave of sin was what was most on His mind when He cried: "Father, let this cup pass from me." It was a perfectly proper prayer. But terrible as He recognizes the ordeal to be through which He soon must pass, Jesus holds His will subject to the Father's will; subject, in other words, to the universal good; the establishment, the success, of the Kingdom He had come, in obedience to the Divine will, to found. In yielding His own will, the wish prompted chiefly by the purity of His own immaculate life, to the will of His Heavenly Father, Jesus showed His perfect confidence in the wisdom and love of His Heavenly Father.

Brethren, let us learn the lesson. It is a lesson badly needed by all of us. God has proved, and is still proving, that He deserves our confidence. Jesus Christ has proved, even by faithfulness unto death, that He deserves our confidence. His plans are all perfect. The love and wisdom which conceived them are perfect. The power which executes them is perfect. There have been, there can be, no mistakes. They do not always run current with our plans, or with our conceptions of ease and pleasure. But God always has

His eye on the goal, the ultimate good of each, and of all. When we come once to fully believe this the current of life becomes full and strong. It may momentarily flinch as it realizes the consequences the path of duty imposes. But it is only temporary. The dominant soul, in which the Christ reigns, takes the demurring will of the flesh captive to the will of God. Life itself, and all life's affairs, are submitted to the will of the Heavenly Father. Such children of God come confidently to Him; they tell Him all their troubles, they spread out before Him all their plans, they make known all their wants, and there they leave it all. Trusting His higher wisdom, and His farther-seeing love, they are willing to submit everything to the crucible of His unerring judgment. And if they find that their ways, being faultily conceived, are not His ways: if they find that His ways require self-renunciation, and sacrifice, even to the tearing of life's tenderest ties, they say: "Father, not my will; but Thine, be done." This is the supreme test of confidence.

The Subject Matter of Jesus' Prayers

Jesus' prayers show us that He came to the Father as a Son, that He came with a spirit of confidence, reverence, and submission. Let us now look more particularly at the content of these prayers. And as we do so let us candidly, and without sparing ourselves, compare with it the things for which we, ordinarily, pray.

There is no doubt that Jesus made all the minutia of the everyday life a subject of prayer. He who taught us to pray for all the things needful for this life did not fail to illustrate it in His own conduct. But have you never noticed that in the recorded prayers of Jesus, the things which have to do merely with this earthly life occupy a subordinate place? May this not explain why so many of our prayers are fruitless, or practically so? We pray so largely, some, probably, so exclusively, for things for the body, and the present life, that in spirit, at least, we get outside of the prayer sphere. We become so materially minded, so absorbed in mere things, that we get out of harmony with God. the great spirit who, must be approached by spiritually minded people, even when they pray for temporal blessings, that we do not really get in contact with God when we pray.

There is not a note of selfishness, of self-seeking, in any of Jesus' prayers. In that great prayer in St. John seventeen, He does begin with a plea for self, and that a plea to be glorified. That looks, at first glance, as if self was looming large in Jesus' thought. But a very little careful study shows that there is absolutely nothing self-centered in it. Jesus knew that His elevation to the throne of glory, where He belonged by inherent right, could come only as He went down into the valley of shame, and after He was lifted up, on the accursed tree as an object of scorn to the whole unbelieving world. Christ's high priestly prayer, so far as it was a prayer for Himself, was a prayer for faithfulness, that through His abasement the Father might be glorified. It was a prayer full of yearning for the lost children of men, to whom would be brought, as the result of the acceptance of His completed work, eternal life.

The only recorded prayer in which Jesus prayed only for Himself is the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. Here He wrestled in prayer as no creature, man or angel, before or since, ever wrestled in prayer. But even here there is not even an undertone of selfishness. There would have been no blameworthiness in it if it had been wholly a plea for release from the physical torture He knew to be coming. But this was the least of it. The cup which even then was torturing his pure soul, and beginning to steep Him more and more into hellish blackness, and compassing Him round with demoniac fury, was the inexpressible world-burden of sin. Even among men, the real agony caused by the consciousness of sin only the relative pure know. The agony Jesus felt when being engulfed by the accumulated, concentrated sin of humanity, man can only conjecture, but conjecture best when he reverently contemplates the scene in Gethsemane. Let us not forget that" even here the will of Jesus, sorrowing unto death, was wholly submissive to the will of the Father. For His sake, and the sake of many brethren thereby to be saved, Jesus was ready to cross the Stygian stream. It was all the very antithesis of selfishness.

The needs of others formed the burden of all Jesus' prayers. The hungry, the lame, the halt and the blind touched His compassionate heart, and called forth prayers for them which touched and opened the reservoirs of infinite power for them. When the mind that searches out the deepest recesses of men's souls saw the weakness which was going to cause one of the twelve to thrice deny Him; He, the Lord and Saviour, sounded the warning, and said, encouragingly: "Peter I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

This expressed the keynote of Jesus' attitude toward men, and is still; for He is still praying for His brethren on earth.

In that last night, in that upper chamber where the strengthening feast of love was instituted, and first received, the great high priestly prayer was offered. Of this prayer Melancthon said, shortly before his death: "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in Heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered by the Son of God." In this prayer, offered at the crisis of His earthly life, Jesus takes up, after a few introductory words concerning Himself in His relation to the Father, the theme of His life's activities. And the underlying thought of it all is the victory of God's plans, the welfare of His weak, but beloved, disciples. As Jesus prays for them, we can see, even to this distant day, that His words breathe forth His very soul. "I pray for them." "They are Thine." "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." "I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth."

In this prayer Jesus starts with Himself, the essential center of the spiritual, as well as the cosmic, Kingdom of God. In the next step, as we have seen, He makes the Apostles, who were to be, next in succession, the instruments for building up the Kingdom, the subjects of His special pleading. The next step is still in logical sequence. He prays for all those who will allow themselves to be won for the Kingdom. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me."

Brethren, once we begin to forget some of our petty, and, oftentimes, imaginary, ills; and catch such a vision of God's Kingdom, and its meaning to men, that our energies are absorbed, and our being transformed; then we will begin to pray, as to the subject matter of our prayers; then such great things are going to be done by God in answer to our prayers that the world will be astonished, and we ourselves will share it.

One of the great lessons taught, then, by the prayers of Jesus is that true prayer is largely intercessory; pleading for others, especially for their spiritual welfare. We have to pray for some things for ourselves for which Jesus did not have to pray for Himself. We have to make of prayer a vehicle of confession, and a plea for forgiveness. But knowing that all others are our brothers in need, we include them also in our petitions.

If we are Christians at all, we probably pray for others at times; for our children, other relatives, and friends. But candidly, what, in general, is the burden of our prayers for them? I know there are exceptions; but very often is it not that they may have health, be diligent and successful in business, be well thought of, and be spared shame, and disappointment? Very good things are these in their place. But is this as deep and as far as our love for parent, child, husband, wife, or fellowman goes? Then our love, as a Christian, is very shallow, and our prayers will have but little point, and less power.

The great trouble with us often is that we have but a superficial interest in our own spiritual welfare. We think more of our bodies than we do of our souls, more of present good than of eternal blessedness, more of the riches of earth than of the riches of Heaven, more of food for the body than of food for the spirit. When once the Spirit of God is allowed to take possession of us, and the scales fall from our eyes, materialism is burned out, selfishness vanishes, the relative value of things becomes clearer; we live more for Heaven ourselves, and we pray more for Heaven's blessings for others.

Many of us have relatives and friends we would like to see God's children, members of the Church. We sometimes argue with them about religious matters, or quietly get some one else to do it for us. Arguments seldom do much good in furthering spiritual interests. Sometimes it seems to have a detrimental effect. Have we ever ourselves borne these people on the wings of prayer to the throne of grace not only spasmodically, but incessantly? not faintheartedly, but with all the boldness of faith?

Monica prayed for forty years for her son, Augustine; not that he might become distinguished in the world, but have his name written in the Lamb's book of life. Like Jacob of old she wrestled with God, and would not let Him go; and God answered her prayer.

Mr. Moody tells of an English woman he knew, who had an unsaved husband. He would not even allow her to speak to him on religious matters. But he could not prevent her from speaking of him, and for him, at the

throne of grace. She resolved that every day she would pray for his conversion. She did this for a year, but with no visible result. Then she resolved that she would continue for six months longer, at the close of which time he was still unsaved. She then debated with herself whether it would do any good to continue. The Spirit of God leading her in the right way, she resolved then that she would continue her prayers for her husband's salvation so long as God gave her life. In what way the grace of God was brought to bear on him we are not told, but that very day the wife found him on his knees begging God for forgiveness. And he found light and peace, and became a noble Christian man.

George Müller tells us that in a certain year there were five persons whose spiritual welfare was laid heavily on his heart, and he began to pray for their salvation. In a year and a half one of them gave himself to the Lord; six and a half years passed before the second one surrendered, and more than twelve years before the third was added to the list of the saved. At the time when he told of this; experience, forty years had passed, and two were still outside of the Kingdom. In all that time he had not failed to pray regularly for them; and was still certain that if he was faithful in praying, God would be faithful in answering, and they would yet be saved. Such people as these have caught the spirit of the praying Christ. If more of us had a faith like this, and prayed like this, and worked as we pray, more souls would be brought into the Kingdom of God.

No doubt even some professing Christians will smile at this as a kind of harmless fanaticism. But let me ask this simple question: is it not in perfect harmony with the teaching and example of Christ? Is there anything more in harmony with God's will than that men should be saved? And does not God tell us that if we ask anything in accordance with His will He will give it to us? in His own good time, and His own way? Such people are the ones who are honoring God's promises.

Brethren, let us resolve, today, that here also we will follow the great Master's teaching and example. Not perfunctorily; but by educating ourselves into something of His vision, and His love for souls. Let us begin to pray the larger prayers; prayers which, because they are aimed at the sun, overlook many of the molehills at our feet; prayers which are taken up with the larger things of the Kingdom. This will necessarily include all good for ourselves. Let us begin, today, to make selection of a special work, a few individual souls, and make them the objects of particular supplication. Sup-

plication; yes, we need to learn the meaning of a few more words in the vocabulary of prayer; supplication, to beg on bended knees; to implore, to beg with tears; indicative, both, of extreme earnestness; thus we need to learn to pray. And let us make up our minds not to be discouraged when the answer does not come at once. God knows best. If we pray for the things God wants done, and pray as Jesus teaches us to pray, with earnestness and faith, the answer must come. Lord, teach us to pray.

Jesus' Doctrine Of Prayer

And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of his disciples said unto Him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. St. Luke 11:1.

“LORD, TEACH US TO PRAY.” In all our studies on the subject of prayer, we have been proceeding in the spirit of this request. In word, and in deed, Jesus is the great teacher; in prayer as in all other things spiritual and religious. It was the knowledge that Jesus lived a life of prayer, that He practiced what He preached, that led a disciple to come to Him with the request of our text.

The one who came to Jesus with this request was, probably, not one of the twelve. Jesus had already taught the Apostles many things concerning prayer. In His first public discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, He gave them lessons on this subject, and gave them the Lord's Prayer. But even for one of the Twelve this would not have been a superfluous request. There were yet many things about prayer which they could learn with profit. Indeed, there has never been a mere human being on earth in whose mouth this would not be an appropriate petition: “Lord, teach me to pray.”

What a lesson this inquiring disciple teaches us, should teach the whole Church of God. There are those who think, or seem to think, that there is nothing, or very little, about prayer which they need to learn.

In our theological seminaries we have professorships for the regular teaching of many subjects, and series of lectures on many occasional themes. I do not know of a school where a semester is devoted to the direct study of prayer, or where a series of lectures is regularly given on the subject.

A theological school without a professor of homiletics, the object of which is to teach men how to preach, would be considered a strange institution. This is a very important branch of study. But I do not find, in all Christ's teaching, a single lesson on either the theory or practice of preach-

ing. Jesus preached to the disciples. He gave them the example. He gave us, very largely, the material on which to preach. But there is not a lesson on how to preach. With respect to prayer, however, Jesus not only showed his disciples how to pray, by His own example, and by giving them a model prayer; but He gave them many specific lessons on the subject.

Inspired by the disciple's question, and Jesus' teaching on the subject, we are going to consider today: Jesus' Doctrine of Prayer, and confine ourselves to the chief of His direct statements on the subject.

Lord, be with us in our meditations; teach us to pray, to pray aright.

Prayer is of the Closet

In His first lesson on the subject of prayer, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches us that true prayer is of the closet. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," St. Matt. 6:6. As we understand it, this does not mean that the secret chamber is the only place where acceptable prayer can be offered. The example of Jesus Himself, and of many holy men of God mentioned in Scripture, shows this.

Jesus is speaking here of private prayer. There is to be prayer in the public assembly of God's house. There is to be prayer in the family circle. The true child of God can offer, and often does offer, acceptable prayer of a brief character, uttered in word, or only in thought, as he walks the streets, stands behind the counter, follows the plow, or stands by the side of his work-bench. But no doubt these words indicate that seclusion, some place where we are not likely to be disturbed, is the place where prayer can be most successfully offered.

There is, today, but little danger, on the part of most Christians, of the fault against which Jesus warns in the passage before quoted. In that day there were men who made a show of their praying. They stood on the street corners, and prayed loud and long, — to be seen of men. It was a vainglorious, work-righteous procedure. There are, no doubt, some people in the world still who have this spirit. But even most professing Christians, instead of praying to be seen, are afraid to be seen praying. The former may be the greater sin, the latter is a grievous fault.

The great lesson of these words about the closet, as all the evidence goes to show, is that when men truly pray they must have a realization of the presence, the nearness, of God. All the things of the world must be shut out. The soul of the prayer must be shut in with God. In true prayer, whether it be in the great congregation, or in the most secluded chamber, the one who prays must feel that, in the highest sense, he is alone with God; that God is his only auditor. And in the degree in which the quiet, secluded chamber furthers this state of mind and heart it is the place to pray.

Prayer is an intensely personal matter. This is indicated by Christ's repetition of the pronouns of the first person — "thou," "thy," and "thee" — found in the passage which tells us that the closet is the place for prayer.

When the child of God sits down with the sacred page of the inspired Word open before him, and devoutly meditates on its message to him, he soon feels God speaking to him. Then when he closes his eyes, and folds his hands, and bares his soul to God in prayer, there, at that time, and in that place, is man's holy of holies. God draws very near. There comes to man inner, vital assurances of God's presence, and of His blessing. Here, under the rays of the Light reflected from above, man learns to know himself, and God. Here the secret fountains are opened; the one within to receive, the one without and above to bestow the elements which sustain the hidden life. This is Christ's closet; a real closet in the sense of this passage, whether a secret chamber, or a mountain top. When men go from this closet God goes with them. And they begin to realize, in their own experience, the meaning of St. Paul's words to the Corinthians: "Let every man, in that calling to which he has been called, therein abide with God." (1 Cor. 7:20:24.)

The Language of Prayer

Prayer is the expression of a desire that burns with a white heat in the heart. It can not, then, be the formal, unthinking, repetition of words previously learned. It can not be the mumbling of phrases which have no meaning. It is not the piling of word on word, and phrase on phrase. There may be, there often are, yearnings of the soul which we are not yet capable of bringing fully into captivity, and reducing to the framework of words. When such yearning has real basis of need in the soul, and it is sent heavenward as a cry for help, God can unravel the tangled skein, and, according to His

Word, does so. But prayer, as we ordinarily understand it, is the formulation of desires into words. It is directed to the supreme Intelligence of the universe. And it should be intelligible. It should be clean cut, terse, to the point.

“When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” (St. Matt. 6:7.)

This counsel of the Master is not directed against long prayers, as such. Did not He pray all night? Have not many of God’s saints prayed more hours than most of us pray minutes? So long as the heart prays; so long as there are necessities to plead, or promises for which to claim fulfillment, we need not be scared by the specter of long prayers. It is not the long prayer that Christ scores; it is the thoughtless, meaningless prayer; the prayer which piles up words in order to have the appearance of having zeal and fluency in prayer. A prayer of a dozen words may be too long. It is just twelve words. too long if it does not come from the heart, if it is not the expression of the yearning of a God-filled, or a God-hungry soul.

We do not need be overmuch afraid of repetition. As long as a soul, in child-like humility, loves to stand face to face with the King of Glory, as long as it feels anything of the cruel weight of sin’s crushing burden, as long as there are blessings the full sweetness of which it has not yet been privileged to taste, one need not be afraid of coming even with the very same petitions over, and over, and over again. It is not against repetition, but vain repetition, that Jesus warns in the words of this text.

Let us not be abashed by thinking too seriously about the language of prayer. We have used this term for lack of a more specific one. Many of us are not experts in the use of language. We often grope for words, even when we have ideas to express. Let us do the best we can. If we really have something to say, and want to say it to God, and say it reverently, He will take care of all else. But for the person who has had little training in expressing his thoughts to another, the brief, direct prayer is, no doubt, the best. The cry of the Publican: “God be merciful to me a sinner,” was very brief; but it told all his want, and got all his soul’s desire. Jesus’ sublime, awe-inspiring prayer in Gethsemane was but little longer. In prayer let us speak out of the fulness of a humble, penitent, believing heart. We need be troubled about little else.

Hindrances to Prayer

A man may be ever so fluent in prayer, yet there may be certain spiritual conditions existing which prevent him from prevailing in prayer. The truth of the matter is that the existence of these conditions generally keep him from praying at all, or make him very intermittent and lukewarm in praying; but should the desire to keep up appearances, or the urge of necessity, lead him still to pray, it will be in vain, so far as results are concerned. One of these hindrances is an unforgiving spirit.

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also which is in Heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses.” (St. Mark 11:25:26.) So imperative is the need of the brotherly, humble, forgiving spirit that Jesus says elsewhere: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” (St. Matt. 5:23:24.)

So imperative is the need, not only of a forgiving spirit; but of the spirit which craves-peace and brotherly accord, that the very highest expressions of worship should be held in abeyance till all efforts have been put forth to bring about this condition.

On this point of Christ’s doctrine of prayer, I shall not greatly enlarge at this time. It is a subject presented in the Lord’s Prayer itself. But Christ’s re-iteration of it in so many places should cause us to pause and think seriously. May this not be the cause of many unanswered prayers? Remember, no one can come into the presence of God as a welcome guest whose heart is filled with bitterness and resentment against others. We should constantly plead, not only to be forgiven; but to be given the grace to fully and freely forgive others. No one can truly hate sin, and really desire to be freed from its penalty and paralyzing power, who can withstand the plea of another for forgiveness.

Pride, especially spiritual pride, is another barrier to successful approach to God in prayer. “Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican.” (St. Luke 18:10-12.)

The Pharisee went up to the Temple, but he did not get into the holy of holies (which may be any place in God's wide world where men meet God face to face). It is said, "He prayed thus with himself." It was a soliloquy; an address, if you please, directed at his fellow-worshippers; not a prayer addressed to God. The I is the biggest thing in this so-called prayer. And it got him naught, save, possibly, some envious glances from those who had foregathered with him in the Temple, or pity from those who truly knew.

This man's self-praise may not have been wholly unfounded if he drew his conclusions merely from comparisons with other men. There is nothing to indicate that he was just lying. Suppose he was a paragon of the outer virtues. What if he did outdo most of his fellow townsmen in the observance of the forms of religion. Should not have modesty kept him from flaunting all this in their faces, and God's face. If it was true most of them knew it, and God knew it. But if this man had known but the elements of his own true inner condition when he came into the presence of God, he would have lost every vestige of the thought of his own moral superiority in the dazzling light of the beauty of God's resplendent holiness; and his childish boast would have died still-born on his lips.

If we are obsessed with the thought of our superior goodness, if we have nothing to talk about to God but our own excellencies, there is but little use of praying. There is nothing for which to ask, and nothing to be gotten if one does ask. One must first learn to say: "God be merciful to me, a sinner" before there can be any opening of the gates of Heaven for the outpouring of Divine blessings.

Aids to Prayer

As pride hinders prayer, keeping one from praying, or leading him to pray amiss, so humility is a great help to prayer. It disposes one to pray, to seek help. And it helps one to a vision of his true condition. The Publican, despised by the Pharisee, is an example of true humility.

The Publican belonged to an outcast, despised class. Many a Publican was all, and more, than the Pharisee thanked God he was not. His occupation put on him the brand of ignominy. The words publican and harlot were linked together in the language of the day. And from being classed together, they came, often, to consort one with the other. Whatever the degree of his

personal guilt, the Publican to whom the Pharisee referred so disparagingly knew his guilt, and regretted it. He came into the Temple humbly. He did not allow himself to be driven away by contemptuous remarks. But he did not crowd up to the front. He was conscious of his unworthiness. This sense of unworthiness was not caused so much by the sneer of the Pharisee, but by his consciousness of God's exalted character. In spite of his feeling of unworthiness, the Publican believed in God's mercy, so with downcast eyes he cried out: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." And God heard his prayer, and he went away justified. So will God hear and answer all who come humbly and believingly.

God wants and honors perseverance in prayer. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." (St. Luke 18:1.) God likes importunity in prayer. He is not like many people, so loathe to part with what they have that one has to pry them loose. God is a ready, a generous giver; more ready to give than we are to ask; but, withal, He wants to be asked for the gifts we crave.

In the succeeding verses of the eighteenth chapter of St. Luke, Jesus illustrates this truth. He tells us that a poor, oppressed widow went to a stern, unsympathetic judge to plead that justice be given her. He had no interest in her case, and wanted to get rid of her; but her importunity won her case.

God is not an unjust, not an unsympathetic judge; but a loving Father. He is jealous of the rights, the success of His children. We do not stand alone in His presence. God's own Son, our friend and Saviour, is our special advocate. Sometimes the Father, for our good, tries our patience and our faith. But when faith has stood the test, and patience has wrought its perfect work, the importunate prayer always wins its case, — what is best.

A similar lesson Jesus gives in St. Luke eleven. Here it is not an unjust judge, not even a stranger, who is importuned; but a dear friend. The time of the request seems to be inopportune. The man of whom the request is made is in bed with his family, and he does not like to be disturbed. But need knows no laws. The asking friend is in need, and will not be put off. Company from afar has come in at a late hour, they are weary and hungry. The necessities of the case, and not merely the dictates of hospitality, demand present help; and the man who has received the company needs help to meet the requirements of his guests. And the insistence of the man who asks causes the sleepy friend to get up and help supply the want.

Jesus Himself draws the lesson for us. "And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened

unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

How these illustrative lessons do clarify and emphasize the Saviour’s words about praying always, and fainting not; and the inspired Apostle’s exhortation to, — “Pray without ceasing.” If the vision tarries, we must wait for it. If the gift asked for is not at once forthcoming, we must continue to ask. But beside the “Asking,” which is the formal presentation of the request, we must “seek,” which is inward and intense search for the thing desired. And in the quest we should, by all means, use the searchlight of God’s Word. If the boon desired is withheld for a time, it is because conditions are not ripe for its bestowal. If it does not come at all, it is because we are mistaken in our supposed need, or the motives prompting the asking are faulty. Here is where the light of God’s Word will keep us right, if we faithfully use it. Let us keep on seeking, seeking to know what to seek, seeking to know how to seek. In all things that are proper, that are for our highest good, and for His glory, God will, God must, redeem His promises.

In His doctrine of prayer, Jesus teaches us that another aid to prayer is joint supplication. He says: “Again I say unto you, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (St. Matt. 18:19:20.)

There is a thought in these words of a concerted coming together for the specific purpose of prayer, joint prayer. The words “where two or three are gathered together” indicate this. It was so that Daniel and his comrades in danger prayed. It was so that the Christians in Jerusalem prayed for imprisoned Peter. (Acts 12:12.) But there is still a stronger emphasis on the word “agree.” The mere fact of being together, of repeating the same prayers, of asking for the same things, will amount to little unless there is an inner spiritual agreement. And this spiritual agreement consists primarily in this that those who pray stand in the same relationship to the Heavenly Father through Christ Jesus the Son. It means that they are alike spiritually minded through the indwelling and ceaseless operation of the same Holy Spirit. Being thus fundamentally spiritually one in that which they, above all things, love and desire; those who pray will, first of all, pray for essentially the same great blessings, for themselves, and for the Kingdom of God in general. And they will do this even though they may be, in the flesh, perfect strangers.

What wonderful possibilities present themselves to the members of God's kingdom, who will come together and plan to unitedly pray for the things they know God wants done in His kingdom! Yea, what wonderful victories have been already won by the concerted, harmonious, persistent prayers of God's people.

Let us forget some of our more or less selfish personal and local conceptions of the needs of Gods Kingdom; and by a closer study of God's Word, and by a more complete surrender of ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, find out what is the great will of the Lord, and carry that as a united army to the throne of grace and power. Victory after victory, of such magnitude as, at first, to startle us would be the inevitable result.

In the Name of Jesus

The great secret of prevailing prayer is to learn rightly to pray in the holy name of Jesus. Here is what He Himself says on this subject: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye ask anything in My name, I will do it." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. ... In that day ye shall ask in My name." "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." "If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." fAnd I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." (St. John, chapters 14, 15 and 16.)

We can scarcely conceive of a more definitely stated, comprehensive, or emphatic series of promises than those of Jesus in which the condition is that if we come to the Father in His name we shall be heard. And it is worth while noting how this is repeated again and again, first in one form, and then in another.

The first vital question, then, is: What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? It means infinitely more than just to conclude our prayers by adding the clause, — "This we ask for Jesus' sake" or, — "This we ask in Jesus' name." We may use these words and not be truly praying in Jesus' name, we may not use this form of words and still be fulfilling the spirit of them:

To pray in Jesus' name means, first of all, that we come to God in prayer relying solely on Jesus and His merits as the ground of our approach to God in prayer. Only through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ do we become God's dear children. And only God's children can pray aright. The one who comes to God full of the pride of the spirit of self-righteousness, conceited and self-exalting, as the Pharisee, does not get into the holy of holies with God, where alone acceptable prayer can be offered.

If I go to a bank with a check signed by myself when I have no account there, or by some one unknown by the bank officials, it will not be honored. If I go with a check duly signed and countersigned by persons well known to the bank, persons having large funds there, it is at once honored. Jesus Christ is the only name honored in the bank of Heaven, because He is the only One who can furnish what man needs. So when we come in His name, it means coming trusting in Him and His work. It means pleading what He has done for us, and His desire to help us, as the only ground of our daring to ask for help. To pray in Jesus' name means to come as those who have been pardoned, cleansed and clothed with that robe of righteousness which makes us beautiful in God's sight. As the high priest could enter into the holy of holies only with the blood of the atoning sacrifice, so can we enter the holy place with God, hold fellowship with Him, and pray acceptably, only as we come trusting in the blood of Jesus, and cleansed by its power.

Still more, to pray in Jesus' name means that between Him and the one who is privileged truly to present His name there is a relationship which, in a sense, identifies the Saviour and His disciple. Jesus speaks of abiding in us, and of our abiding in Him, even as He abides in the Father, and the Father in Him. What a wonderful, what a transporting thought. In all our Christian activities it is the Christ, newborn in us, who acts in us and through us. In our prayers it is the Christ in us who is the real suppliant. And all our prayers prompted by Him must be answered.

This being true, to pray in the name of Jesus means to submit ourselves to the will of God in all things, yes, including our prayers, as Jesus did. We are not praying in Jesus name when, in temporal matters, we come with demands instead of prayers. We have read of people who come to God for a sick person thus: "Lord, we command Thee to heal this sick person. We have fulfilled the conditions, and we demand that Thou shouldst do the work." That was not prayer. It was effrontery, a denial of God's fatherhood, His love and mercy which leads Him to deal in the best possible way with

His children. God has nowhere promised to give us everything for which we ask. He has promised to give us everything which is for our highest good; everything which we can pray for in Jesus' name, which we pray for as Jesus prayed. There was an instance when Jesus prayed for the same thing as the people above mentioned. See how differently He prayed. It was in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was being ground into the dust. Death was stalking his prey. And in His agony Jesus prayed for deliverance. But listen to His prayer: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (St. Matt. 26:39.) In this spirit every one who would pray in the name of Jesus must pray. And God hears them all, and answers them all; giving what His holy, loving will sees is best; best for the one who prays, best for all concerned, best for the glory of God's grace and power.

Oh that the Church of God knew aright the mighty power, so often so sadly neglected, which might be set in motion by the right kind of prayer. Then instead of much intricate machinery of organization, instead of so much exhausting activity so largely purely of the flesh, by prayer we would tap the reservoirs of Heaven's powers, and then in the might of the Spirit do God's work. "Oh, Thou by whom we come to God, The life, the Truth, the Way, The path of prayer Thyself hast trod; Lord, teach us how to pray."

Part 2. The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth.

Give us day by day our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. — St. Luke 11:1-4.

WE HAVE HAD a rather extended series of sermons on the general subject of prayer. There is a widespread need of a larger study of the subject of prayer. Our special object was to prepare ourselves for a better understanding of the Lord's Prayer. We could not well make any kind of a study of this prayer without some benefit. But if we have freshly impressed on our minds what prayer itself is; if we come with a lively consciousness of the glorious privilege, and the weighty responsibility of prayer; if the example of the praying Christ has thrilled our souls, and urged us on to imitation of His earthly prayer-life, and to fellowship in His heavenly prayer-life; if we come to our study with a renewed conviction of the dignity, the exalted privilege, and the blessedness of prayer, we shall profit still more largely by our study of this Christ-taught prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is very brief. It is in the highest sense both simple and profound. It is so simple that the child can understand much of it, and use it with profit. It is so profound that no saintly I sage, with keenest intellectual

and spiritual insight, has ever exhausted its infinite depths. Before taking up for study the separate parts of the Lord's Prayer, it will be profitable for us to view it as a whole. We want to get the general outlook of the prayer, and the spirit of it in its unity. When we have done this we shall be better able to recognize and appreciate the significance of the several parts.

Let us at no time lose sight of the fact that this prayer is Christ's answer to the disciples' direct and specific request that He teach them to pray. Forget not, this is God's own answer to man's oft felt desire to know how to pray, and to understand the nature and content of prayer. It shows us the things which, in the mind of Jesus, come first; and the relation in which other things stand to the first things. It is a never to be forgotten lesson as to the Divine idea of proportionate values. Remembering all this, we will certainly give this prayer all the more careful consideration.

1. The Lord's Prayer And Its Teacher

is the point to which we will first give attention.

There is probably no other single piece of literature in the world which occupies such a place in the thoughts and affections of men, innumerable multitudes of them, as does the Lord's Prayer. For nine-? teen hundred years the ever-growing number of God's children have voiced their adoration, their praises, their petitions, their aspirations, their cries of soul-anguish, in the words of this Christ-taught prayer. It is extremely doubtful whether any other equal number of words have ever so profoundly affected an equal number of people. Through these simple, familiar words untold thousands have drawn Heaven down to earth, and lifted earth and themselves up to Heaven. For wherever one of the children of men can humbly, believingly, lovingly whisper this word Father, and has some worthy conception of the meaning of this holy name, and longs to be more fully identified with His kingdom, and in rapport with His will, — there is the vestibule of Heaven.

This prayer is sometimes called the Model Prayer, not an inappropriate name; for Jesus gave it as a model. He said: "After this manner therefore pray ye." It is a model in many respects, In its brevity, for one thing, it is a model. There are only sixty-five words in it. It can be uttered with becoming reverence and emphasis in less than sixty seconds. In this prayer Jesus

exemplifies His own teaching that in prayer there should be no accumulation of words for words' sake, no vain repetitions.

In this prayer, however, Jesus does not give us brevity at the expense of thought. It is just as comprehensive as it is brief. Just as there is no superfluous word, so there is no word lacking. Every real want of body and soul is expressed.

The Lord's Prayer is also a model of simplicity. Early in life we teach our children to lisp it. And it never seems out of place on the lips of the youngest child. Just as the ideas of fatherhood and motherhood are the first ones on which child-life is led to think, or, rather we should say the atmosphere in which it lives; so here the first thoughts appropriate for the child to dwell upon, whether it be a child in years, or understanding, is the familiar one of Fatherhood, God's fatherhood, and His fatherly superiority, love and care. But while the child may find much in this prayer to which to anchor its inexperienced soul, we make a mistake if we take the word simplicity, as applied to the model prayer, to mean that it is shallow, and easily exhausted. Such is by no means the case. Indeed, only shallow, uninformed minds talk of simplicity anywhere, especially in the sphere of life, as meaning that the things so designated are easily explored to their depths. The simple things of life, the everyday life, all go to depths beyond the reach of any mere human powers of discernment. The Lord's Prayer is an illustration of this. Who has explored to its farthest limits of meaning the word "Father," with its qualifying words "in heaven"? And so with almost every word in the whole prayer. With all the comments and sermons written on this prayer of prayers, a noted theologian says: "I doubt whether the greatest and most learned of us has mastered so much as a fragment of what we may learn from it." It is as high as the heavens, as deep as the fathomless blue sea. It embraces the problems of the Godhead; all those of human life, including the powers of evil, and man's conflict with them; the final victory of the children of God over them.

This prayer is often called The Lord's Prayer. This, however, must not be taken to mean that it was the prayer Jesus used in His own prayer-life. Much of its substance He unquestionably did make the subject of constant and earnest prayers. But one of the petitions of this prayer, the fifth: "Forgive us our trespasses," He never could have prayed for Himself; for He had no sins to be forgiven. This is called the Lord's Prayer because He is the teacher of it. And we ought never forget that this is the prayer taught us

by the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other prayers recorded in the Scriptures. In so far as they meet our needs, we may, with perfect safety and great profit, use them. There are noble prayers formulated by saintly men and women. We can learn much from them as to the form, matter, and spirit of prayer. And we are often able to find among them prayers which seem just to meet our needs. We may formulate our own prayers guided by our knowledge of what prayer should be, and by our own particular needs. But there never has been a prayer formulated in which the whole round of human needs are so tersely and yet so comprehensively set forth; in which the proportions are so nicely adjusted between the spiritual and material needs, between eternal and temporary values. How glad we ought to be that we can come to the mercy seat with the deepest needs and longings of our souls clothed in the very words which the Son of God Himself has put upon our lips.

Think of it humble, and oftentimes, troubled petitioner when you use these words, — they came from the heart and lips of Jesus. No one ever so well knew human need. We do not understand our own needs as He understands them. He came forth from the bosom of the Father. He knows the Father's heart as no one else knows it. As no one else He knows what things it pleases the Father to give. With absolute assurance that the everlasting Father wants to be asked for just such gifts, and is anxious to bestow them, we can use these petitions; they are the words which God's only begotten Son puts into the mouth of God's other sons with which to address their common Father.

If we keep rightly in mind when we take these words on our lips that we are taking them from the lips of Jesus, it will have much to do in arresting wandering thoughts, and keeping us from repeating words without thinking, or really praying. As a rule, people are not inclined to deal lightly with some important message from a dear, absent friend, or relative. The Lord's Prayer is one of the important messages of Him who has bought us with His own blood. He now stands, in His glorified humanity, by the Father's side, and urges us to ourselves draw ever nearer to the Father, His Father, and ours. And one of the assured ways of doing this is by means of the words He, the Son, has put upon our lips.

Another thought in this connection may be generally helpful to us. Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer. He is God. There is no limitation to His wisdom. But every clause in this prayer which bears His name is found, in

practically the same form in which it is given here, in one or more places in the Old Testament. What does this teach us but this that acceptable prayer must be in harmony with the thought of Scripture, and consequently, will be couched largely in the language of Scripture. And why so? Because we can pray aright only to the God who has revealed Himself to us, and only about those things concerning which He has instructed us. And these truths are found in their clearness nowhere but in God's Word. The lesson then is that if we would pray acceptably we must pray Biblically.

2. A Brief Survey Of The Form And General Content Of The Lord's Prayer

is well worth our serious study.

As to form of structure, there is a certain resemblance between the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The Law is divided into two tables. The first one begins with God, and what we directly and personally owe to Him. The second table sets forth the reciprocal obligations which are due from man to man. So the Lord's Prayer starts out with an address to God which implies recognition of His exalted nature, His relation to the children of men, and His attitude toward them. This introduction is followed by three petitions in which the outlook is wholly God-ward and Heaven-ward; — His name is to be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done. But this is not an arbitrary method on the part of the supreme Ruler of extorting homage from his subjects. This, too; this in the very highest sense, belongs to man's good. No greater possible good can come to the children of men than when, among them, God is most truly honored, His kingdom built up, and His will done. Just in proportion as this is done human happiness is secured, and heaven realized on earth.

As men catch the meaning and spirit of the first part of the Lord's Prayer a transformation comes over them. Before this they are self-centered. In his own opinion, the world and all its affairs revolves around the unspiritual man. He conceives that all things exist to minister to him as an individual. And in proportion as he fails to be the beneficiary of every movement of the universe, everything is a failure. But when the significance of the words Father, His name, kingdom, and will begin to dawn on a man, the center of gravitation in his life begins to change. And he soon lives in a changed uni-

verse. God and His affairs begin to take on the primary emphasis. And gradually man begins to realize that just in proportion as God is allowed to have His own way in man's life, and in the world about him, does man himself come into his own, and reap undreamed of harvests, — harvests of peace, of joy, of general well-being.

The one who prays this prayer earnestly for any length of time soon discovers that a strangely warming sense of human fellowship is coming over him. The I and the mine no longer dominate him as before. A common origin, common trials, common hopes and aspirations are opened up to him as the significance of the "our" and "us" are pressed in upon him in their association from "Our Father" down the line to common hunger, and common fellowship in all the perils and hardships of life's journey.

The man who has long, devoutly, and with understanding, prayed this prayer, wakes up, by and by, to discover that the old pride of the natural heart is growing less and less. Oh, it is a great privilege to be admitted to the audience chamber of the King of kings; not only to be admitted, but welcomed; not as slaves, but as children. But after all, we come as suppliants. We come as children who are privileged to say: "Our Father." But we come as those who have been prodigals; as those who are constrained to confess: Father, we are not worthy to be called Thy children. We come as pleaders: Father, give and forgive. Those who must come thus have nothing on which to pride themselves. The privileges of which this prayer tells us, and the blessings it is the means of securing, only magnify the more God's condescending love, and thus tend to keep us humble.

A very important lesson we ought not overlook in taking a general survey of this master prayer is the proportionate values it assigns to things. Let us think, for a moment, of our own general prayers, if we formulate any of our own. What is the burden of them? Are they not, as a rule, taken up very largely with our own personal affairs? And often there is little in them but a round of rather petty, unimportant matters; our own little plans, disappointments, ambitions, ills. In comparison let us note the things Jesus teaches us to stress in this Model Prayer.

They are, first of all, the great things of the Kingdom of God. Not the transient things of a day, but the eternally abiding things; the things which emanate from the throne of heaven, from the bosom of the Eternal Father Himself, and shall endure when sun and moon shall have passed into endless eclipse. And when we follow this august prayer down from the heav-

enly heights, where God has His peculiar throne, to this lower world, where the destinies of men are wrought out in ceaseless conflict with the harassing powers of evil, what lessons in proportion, and real values, are set before us. We are so much worried about what we shall eat and drink, and where-withal we shall be clothed. God does not overlook these things. He values them at their true worth. He wishes us to bring all such matters to Him in prayer. Nothing is beneath God's attention which affects His children. But the very form of the Lord's Prayer shows us that the mere temporalities of life, food and clothing, and kindred things, should not be our greatest concern. One petition only is given to these needs, and in it they are all comprised under the necessities of life. Three are given to those things which predominantly affect the soul. To have food, and clothing, and health, and prosperous days, are things to be desired. And God wants to give them to us, if with them we can remain men and women, unsoftened, and unperverted in our allegiance. But to be a forgiven and a forgiving child of God; to be fighting valiantly and victoriously the good fight of faith; to be keeping one's eye on the final goal, and with manly courage to be resisting the onslaughts of the powers of darkness, and finally to emerge a conqueror, delivered, delivered forever, from all evil; — this is the supreme victory. And it is about this that we should be chiefly concerned. And this concern Christ teaches us to entertain in the most effectual way in the form and content of His Model Prayer.

3. The Confidence This Prayer Is Designed To Inspire

is a point well worth considering.

One evening a little more than a year ago a goodly number of us were much alarmed by the disappearance of a child in which we were interested. He was but a little fellow, perhaps five years old, or less. Starting out in the afternoon to meet his sister on her return from school, as was his custom, he missed her and, becoming lost, wandered for miles, crossing the river, and traveling along unnoticed and unrestricted until weariness and the shades of falling night forced on his child-mind a realization of his condition, — that he was lost. Then his terrified appeals attracted attention. And soon the offi-

cial machinery of the large city was set in motion; and, ere long, the waiting, seeking, almost distracted, father, and the lost child, were reunited.

Is not this child's experience illustrative of the lives of tens of thousands of the children of men? They are grown men and women. They have found a place in the busy activities of this complex life. Many of them are filling their places with credit to themselves. But life itself is to them an unsolved riddle. They are on the way, but they know not whither. So far as having a rational solution of the whence, and the why, and the whither of life they are as absolutely lost as was the little boy of whom we have spoken. Can there be anything worse than such a condition? Gradually the truth begins to dawn upon them that the darkness is gathering around them, that they are lost. Then, generally, the spirit of self-sufficiency which characterized them begins to ooze out of their finger tips. There is a craving for the sound of some familiar, reassuring voice. There is the reaching out into the gathering gloom for the touch of a strong, loving, guiding hand. When these seeking efforts are honest, and earnest, and humble, they are never in vain when directed to God's throne. But unless this voice is answered, unless this outstretched hand is grasped, unless rescue comes, this condition is the great tragedy of life.

This does not apply to those who have learned to know and use the truths embodied in the Lord's Prayer. Knowing the Father in Heaven, knowing His revealed word of truth, we have the key to the mysteries of life; we know whence it came; and whither, if Divinely guided, it is bound, — out from God and back to God.

Knowing the truths of this prayer, we can never feel lost, or even lonely, in this world. There may be difficult, indeed, there are bound to be, difficult paths for our feet to tread; in moments of weakness we may feel that there is no one who cares, no one who can enter into and fully understand, our peculiar situation and needs. But when we lift our gaze from the vale in which we stand, we see "Our Father's" face shining in the heavens above, and we hear His voice saying: Be of good cheer, it is I, your Father; put your hand in Mine, and I will lead you safely. You need have no fear. I am the Father whose is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever.

And as our ears, and our hearts, become accustomed to sounds other than those of the night storm-winds, we discern, more and more, that we are not alone. Having the everlasting Father with us, His arm around us, His

still small voice falling in our ears; more and more perceptible to us becomes the voice of God's other children, who are lisping: "Our Father who art in Heaven." This gives us a cheering sense of fellowship, not only with the unfallen spirits of the unconquered worlds; but with the teeming millions who have walked the same path we are walking, who had to fight the same battles we must wage, and won. What they have done, we, by the same grace of God, can do, and will do! But still more! Not only am I sending up my petitions to this all-glorious, all-gracious, all-loving Father for the grace of endurance, and the conquering power by which others gained the crowns they wear, and the palms they bear; but in every quarter of this earth there are those who are bearing me, and my needs, up to the throne of grace in their petitions. Blessed fellowship! Blessed encouragement!

Lord Jesus, in answer to the earnest request to be taught how to pray, Thou didst give to Thy Church this prayer. Now, Lord, teach us to pray it aright.

The Fatherhood Of God

When ye pray, say: Our Father which art in Heaven. — St. Luke 11:2.

LAST SUNDAY we considered the Lord's Prayer in its entirety. Such a study gives us some needed lessons, and prepares us for many more. But if such a view was all we intended to take, it would be much like a hasty glance at the elaborately bejeweled crown on a monarch's head. The scintillations of the various parts could only dazzle one, and lead to some bewilderment. It is possible to take in, at first, only something of the general effect, the symmetry of outline, and the richness of the parts only in their unity. So it is with the Lord's Prayer. To study it as a whole one gets some sense of its proportions, and marvelous depths. But to really know it, one must study it in its parts, each of which is, in itself, a gem of purest ray; perfect in its nature, exquisitely wrought, and set with unexcelled nicety.

As we follow, step by step, the separate parts of the Lord's Prayer, let us carefully, prayerfully cultivate the disposition of mind and heart which the Lord Himself required should be typified by Moses when He enjoined him to take off his shoes, because the place where he stood was holy ground. Let us join in the prayer that the Lord may give unto us understanding minds, and hearts to appreciate, and appropriate, the precious truths it contains.

Let us, then, in this spirit, take up for our study today the Introduction, or address, of the Lord's Prayer. We shall devote ourselves especially to the second word, — the Fatherhood of God.

1. Father, and Fatherhood

as applied to God, are the precious words to the development of which we shall devote our first efforts.

In the very first place, it is needful for us to know, and ever bear in mind, who it is to whom We are addressing this word "Father." It is not a name for

an ill-defined, or an undefined, something. We are not praying, through this name, to the unknown God of the Athenians, or to some vitalizing principle the operations and results of which we see; but of the nature and ultimate purposes of which we know nothing. When we say: "Our Father," we are addressing the same Father of whose person and work we make confession in the first article of the Apostles' Creed; — the Creator, Governor, and Keeper of all things, visible and invisible. We are praying to the triune God in the name of the One who stands as the first person in the family of the Trinity. We are praying to that God who, as to His existence and attributes, has clearly revealed Himself in His Word. This is the only real God; the only One to whom to pray; the only One who can hear and answer prayer.

"Our Father" is the word of address with which we are taught to come into God's presence. If this was some man's teaching it would be the very height of presumption. But, remember, God Himself has put this form of address on our lips, through His Son.

The salutation, or word of address, with which men come into each others' presence, when rightly understood, and discriminatingly used, is expressive of relationship. There is a proper word of address, for one's ruler, teacher, business superior, friend, and the like. So this word "Father in Heaven" expresses relationship. It is the word of a child addressing a parent, not a mere parent; but a heavenly, a Divine parent. God Himself wants us to so address Him. He does not want us to think of Him, first of all, as a mere Monarch, or a Judge, or the wielder of unlimited power; but as a Father. Even when we think of God as Sovereign, or as Judge, we should not lose sight of the fact that He is still, and always, a Father, our Father.

Father! this word is one of the richest in any language. It is one of the most precious names in the vocabulary of men or angels. We will never be privileged to use anything higher in this world or the next. Midst the glories and joys of Heaven no sweeter, no higher form of address will ever be put in our mouth. Forever God will be "Our Father." Think of the honor placed upon us now by being privileged to use this address, which is not a mere courtly phrase, on the part of those who have the right to use it. It is a blessed truth. A truth, however, which flesh and blood hath not revealed unto us; but the Father Himself, through the Son and by the Spirit.

The fatherhood of God as set forth in this prayer was a revelation to the world, and even to Israel. The Gentile world, as such, knew nothing of God as a father. In all the Old Testament it is questionable whether God is ever

represented as a father in this direct, and personal way. He is certainly not so addressed in prayer. The nearest approach to this is the prophecy that the time should come when it should be so. In the Scriptures of the old dispensation God is sometimes called father; but of Israel as a nation, or of some few representative persons, who were national figures.

What a new world must have opened to both Jew and Gentile when the great truth dawned on them that God is not only a Judge who holds the impartial balance in His hand, not only the Captain of the hosts of Heaven; but a Father, a Father to even the least and the lowliest who will come in lawful way and claim the Father's heritage. What a different vision of the Godhead must have broken upon them when this truth found lodgment in their minds and hearts. Oh, it must have been like the coming of the warmth of spring after the rigors of winter; like the singing of the birds and the springing of the flowers after the passing of the snow and the ice and the blasting winds.

The Israelites knew very well that God was a person. Indeed, they were the teachers of the nations on this and kindred subjects. They did not think of God as so many others did, and do now, as an impersonal principle; simply as a kind of abstract wisdom, or righteousness, or truth; or an all-pervading life-principle. Israel, whatever may have been the lack in her conception of God, knew Him to be a person; a living, feeling, thinking, loving, willing being. A person with all attributes carried to the point of perfection, of infinitude. But with all this. it was a decided advance, the opening of another Heaven into which they had had scarcely a glimpse, when, through the revelation of Jesus' life and teaching, there dawned upon them the truth of God's fatherhood.

Brethren, is not this truth concerning the fatherhood of God one of the lessons we still need to learn? Not as a new revelation; we have lisped the Name, most of us, since our earliest recollection. Oh, but we do need to learn more of the real significance, the richer, deeper meaning of God's fatherhood. There are many mysteries in the wide field of theology. God Himself, as to His person and nature, is one of the greatest of these. And it seems, at times, that with our elaborate dissertations, and hair-splitting definitions, we are in danger of getting farther away from the fundamental realities. These fine spun theories, no doubt serve a purpose. But when they lead into spheres where the common mind cannot follow them; when people are led to rest in the theories instead of the great realities back of them, they are useless. Here is a truth of which we can all get hold. It does not explain all

the mysteries, nothing human can do so, but it gives a blessed point of contact, a truth in which we can rest. God is a father. Higher than the Heavens in all that is great and good is He; but still a father, "Our Father." He looks on us as His children. He feels toward us as a father feels toward his children. He deals with us as a true father deals with his children. His relation to each human being, to all things, is that of a father.

There is a knowledge of God which cannot be stated in the form of theses; a knowledge of which, though consciously possessed, no precise definition can be given. This knowledge is experimental. It is the response of our hearts, our spirits, to the great Father Spirit. And those who have learned truly to say "Our Father" need no other proofs of the existence, and essential goodness of God.

To come, then, to God with the word "Father" on our lips indicates, on our part, a childlike, affectionate, trusting disposition. If we do not truly recognize God as our father, then this word is out of place on our lips. Let us remember, as one of the greatest of Scripture interpreters has shown us, that these words of introduction, "Our Father," are meant as a special invitation to accept the truth that God is truly our father, and that we are truly His children; so that with all boldness and confidence we may approach Him as dear children approach a dear father. Oh that we could more fully understand, appropriate, and appreciate the significance of God's fatherhood.

2. A Precious Thought

The Fatherhood Of God Is An Exceedingly Precious Thought.

We need, however, seriously to consider who it is to whom the privilege and high honor is given of calling God Father.

Honors and earthly gifts are not usually bestowed indiscriminately, if they were we would soon begin to question their worth. The fatherhood of God is the most precious thing in the world. Who has the right to claim it?

There is, in places, a great deal said about the fatherhood of God. And not infrequently the users of the term have very vague, vapory ideas as to its meaning. The principle with which it is usually associated is universalism. It is merely a general fatherhood of all being, in the sense of source, or origin. The fatherhood of God, with these people, is largely of the milk and water kind. It does not vest Him with any decisive authority. By most of

these people who have so much to say about God's fatherhood, if they have any conceptions of His authority over human relationships and conduct, and pay any regard to His expressions concerning them, look on them rather as mild wishes, rather than as commands. And if men fail, though the great Father may gently chide those who do so, He will never hold them to a strict account for their failures. And in the end it will not make much difference one way or the other. Many seem to think that a conception of God like this magnifies His love. The Biblical, and reasonable, conception is that it destroys His character. Such a God would be no God. True love can exist only in conjunction with a holy passion for truth, with a burning zeal for righteousness, with an ardent desire for justice, and a desire for the real good, not a seeming, or a temporary good, of those beloved.

There is a sense in which it is right, because Biblical, to speak of the universal fatherhood of God. "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" asks the prophet. (Mal. 2:10.) And St. Paul affirms that we are all God's offspring. (Acts 17:28.) And this natural relationship, as we may call it, is magnified all the more when we remember that God created man in His own image. He took His own knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and general perfections as the pattern after which to create us. What a wonderful thought this is. What aspirations it ought to awaken, and keep alive, in our souls. How it should keep us on our guard. How it ought to nerve us for action. What strength it ought to give us when the tempters would drag us-down. Some faint remnants of the consciousness of relationship to Deity inheres in all men. They cannot get rid of it. Ages of barbarism cannot wholly eradicate it. It crops out, ever and anon, through the incrustations of unbelief and wickedness. This latent, and largely eclipsed, consciousness is itself often perverted into a thing of mischief which makes men proud, and leads them to attempt things wholly beyond their reach. It is the underlying secret of our soul-longings. It is the mainspring of many of man's actions.

This fatherhood of nature, however, is not the sense in which we are taught to say "Our Father" in the Lord's Prayer. The fatherhood before mentioned is the fatherhood of nature, this is the fatherhood of grace. There was a brief period when the two were synonymous, or, more strictly speaking, when grace, in its present significance, was not needed.

Man is no longer what he once was. A great disturbing, destroying principle has entered into the world. It has largely changed man's nature and his

relationships. This distorting, depraving element is sin. It has vitiated man's knowledge; it has blinded man's eyes; it has hardened his heart: especially with respect to purely spiritual things. Today the natural man, as distinguished from the new man, the twice-born man, the spiritually-minded man; the man who has faith in God, and loves Him, does not any longer truly know God, least of all does he know Him as a Father. Sin has severed the original, natural bond of fellowship. It has dug a chasm so broad and deep between the erring child and the Father that no mere human power can either fill it, or bridge it over. And, indeed, there is little real desire so to do. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

It is said of those whose hearts are filled with bitterness and hatred, and corroded by falsehood and lust, that they have a father; but it is far from being "Our Father." "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (St. John 8:44.) Those who live in, and love, these things cannot say "Our Father." And if they should take these precious words on their lips, while in this state of mind and heart, it would be hypocritical presumption, and a profanation of the most holy of holy things. "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth? seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." (Ps. 50:17.) How much less becoming on the lips of such people, as an address of personal relationship and affection, would be the holy name of the Father Himself?

The fact, then, remains that all men, even the lowest and most depraved, the most hardened and rebellious, may be called the sons of God by nature. But they are not His sons by disposition. It is with them much as it was with the prodigal son during his period of prodigality. During his absence he was his father's son by natural descent. His father's blood flowed through his veins. He carried his father's name. But he did not have the disposition of a son. He was wasting his father's heritage. He was dragging the father's honored name in the mire. Remember, it was the son who was making himself an outcast, not the father. But while he was dwelling in the foreign land of riot and pollution, he could not enjoy either the father's company, or the blessings of the father's house.

It is very much the same way with the Heavenly Father, and the children of men. He has given to all of them life, and all good things. He has a heart

which is truly fatherly toward all the children of men, even the rebels and outcasts. He ever truly yearns for them. He wishes to bless them. The words of Christ, addressed to Jerusalem, as He wept over the city, can be truly ascribed to the Father; for “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” (2 Cor. 5:19.) In like manner Christ’s words, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” is as much a pleading of the Father as of the Son.

In so far as we understand God at all, as revealed in His Word, and in the life of His dear Son, we know just what the promptings of His father-heart to us-ward are; we know how He feels toward us, what He wills for us. We know the blessings He planned for us, and which He sent His eldest, His only begotten, Son to prepare for us. “Our Father” is ready to forgive, anxious to restore, every one to sonship and heirship. But He cannot bestow His blessings on prodigal sons, who are still, in the far country of sin, feeding swine, and oftentimes wallowing in the mire with them. Nor can He bestow His blessings on those, however respectable they may be, who feel that they do not need them, and positively close their hearts against them. Only those are capable of receiving the gift of the new spiritual sonship who return to the Father with the confession: “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.” (St. Luke 15:21.)

“Our Father,” then, in Biblical, and truly Christian literature, is the triumphant address of a redeemed and believing soul. No other can legitimately use it. “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal. 4:5.) All have been redeemed. And in this, above all else, God has shown His father-heart. God really wants all to accept the redemption which Christ wrought, and thus receive the adoption of sons. In this He shows His fatherly good will. But until they do accept Christ, by faith, as their Savior, and are washed from their sins in His blood, and are begotten unto newness of life; the fact of sonship is one only of possibility, not of reality. And until man accepts God’s overtures, and is in possession of His freely proffered blessings, he has no right to lay claim to the glorious heritage set forth in the precious words, — “Our Father who art in Heaven.” “As many as received Him (Christ Jesus), to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (St. John

1:12.) To those words of the Evangelist, St. Paul adds the following affirmation: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3:26.)

The Lord’s Prayer is a distinctively Christian prayer, though some others have appropriated it. The name of Jesus is not specifically mentioned in it. But it is in the truest sense a prayer in His name. We can never forget that He is the one who taught us the prayer. Nor can we forget that His work alone made its use possible. The Lord’s Prayer, therefore, is not a latitudinarian prayer. It is distinctively the glorious heritage of the Christian Church.

The privilege of using the Lord’s Prayer, particularly the words: “Our Father,” confers the highest honor to which it is possible to attain in this world, or the next. But the words “Our Father” are never spoken with a sense of pride, rather with a deep consciousness of unworthiness. We know that while it is all blessedly true that these words express, it is nevertheless a privilege of grace, not of merit. And, as a result, we are filled, whenever we use these words, with a deep sense of gratitude and joy.

If the Lord’s Prayer is the property only of Christians, if believers only have the right to say: “Our Father,” how about the poor distressed souls dwelling on, what we might call, the borderland; deeply conscious of their sins, and almost afraid to claim a privilege so exalted, or blessing so Heavenly? Let them not be afraid. God wants all to come. And just those poor, trembling ones, ashamed of themselves, are the ones in whom God often has most delight; because their condition is often the most hopeful. The word Father on the lips of the poor, abashed Publican is much truer to the facts of human life, and a thousand times more acceptable to the Heavenly Father than the same word on the lips of a sleek, well-satisfied, self-righteous Pharisee. So let no sin-conscious, repentant soul be afraid. Come, all that are tired of sin, and longing for better things; come, all that are soul-hungry. and desirous of having peace; come, accept the freely proffered gifts, and claim the heritage divine of calling God your father. Many are the times when the remembrance of our oft-repeated failures, and our conscious littleness of faith, make us say “Our Father” rather falteringly. It seems to be a privilege, and sets forth a relationship, too good to be true. But when we remember that this is a matter of Divine revelation, and not of our imagination, we take heart. And as faith grows stronger to grasp the truth, as the Spirit of God makes our spirits more capable of receiving the witness that

we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16), the consciousness of sonship grows upon us, and we are able to say, with ever growing confidence, and joy: Abba, Father. (Gal. 4:6.)

What a wonderful privilege it is for us, who are but dust and ashes, to call the mighty God “Our Father.” And best of all, to know that it is not a mere form of words, a privilege granted to cheer us on the way; but a fact, a term expressive of the most blessed realities. We are God’s children, not only by nature, but by grace through faith in Christ Jesus; and we have the right to say: “Our Father, who art in Heaven.”

The Call of God's Fatherhood

After this manner therefore pray ye,
Our Father which art in Heaven. — St. Matt. 6:9.

THERE IS AN APPEAL, a direct, a strong appeal, in the words: "Our Father." The greatest interpreter of these words who has ever lived says: "God would by these words tenderly invite us." An invitation, in proportion to its urgency and sincerity, is an appeal. And God is wholly in earnest when He is trying to get us, with understanding and earnestness, to say: "Our Father." Oh, that we may understand better the father-heart of God as it is expressed in the father-name.

In everything God is appealing to men better to know, and more fully to trust His fatherhood. In sunshine and shower; in singing bird and bursting flower; in the fields rich with autumnal harvests, from the same fields bleak and bare from winters frosts and snow; in our individual experiences of joy and sorrow; in the greater experiences of national and international life; from the starry heights above; and from the restless bosom of old ocean, there comes the appeal to see, better understand, and more fully trust, God's fatherhood. Many of these messages, as to their specific meaning, have become enigmatical to us; because we have lost the key to their interpretation. But wherever we learn to read them aright, we see that they all speak volubly of our God as wholly fatherly.

Every page of God's Word is full of fatherly appeals; appeals to recognize God's fatherhood, and His rights; appeals to trust His promises; appeals to us to accept His fatherhood, and discharge a child's obligations. These revealed, and recorded, appeals, through the Operative presence of the Holy Spirit in the Word, are still being brought home to the hearts of those who will read and hear. But even in Scripture, we do not know of a half dozen words which have the appeal in them of these Christ taught words: "Our Father who art in Heaven." Let us make a further study of them, taking as our subject, — The Call of God's Fatherhood.

1. A Strong Appeal For Confidence In God

The Fatherhood of God, with the fulness and richness of the word, is one of the strongest appeals for confidence on our part in God.

There are many things to try us as we journey through life. The road we are traveling is an unknown one. We have never traveled it before. We do not know what the marrow is going -to bring forth. We only know from the experiences of others, and we soon learn to know from our own experiences, that the pathway of life is strewn, sometimes thickly strewn, with trials, disappointments, and heartaches. What we need to give us a degree of satisfaction, of peace, is the assurance that there is an infinitely wise mind planning our life for us; a sufficiently strong arm on which we may confidently lean for guidance and protection; a warm, loyal heart to love us all the way through. All this we have, in the perfect degree, in the words: "Our Father."

How often the little child needs to be soothed and comforted. Little disappointments and accidents come into its life. And when they come, the first place to which it seeks to flee is into the open arms of father, or mother. There the tears are soon dried, the troubles forgotten. Do not we older children have experiences much like these? Some may hesitate to acknowledge it, but it is true nevertheless. There are times when the strongest feel the need of a stronger arm around them; times when the wisest minds feel the need of a wiser mind to counsel them; times when those marked by the greatest aloofness and self-sufficiency feel the need 'of a truer, warmer heart than beats in any human breast to love them. We find all this to the last degree in "Our Father." Over against the words: "Our Father" there stands these words of our God: My child. And when God says, My child, it means there is no reason for fear. It means that He is with that child, that all His strength is exerted for its good, that not a hair of its head can be touched without His knowledge and consent.

True, many of our experiences in life remain beyond our understanding so far as their specific purpose is concerned. But if we really know God as "Our Father," loving, wise, and powerful, the lack of this detailed knowledge does not trouble us much. Many of the actions of earthly parents their children, especially their younger and less experienced children, do not understand. But where real love exists, and where confidence is built on ex-

tended experience of good will and self-sacrificing care, this lack of specific knowledge is not disconcerting to the child. So if something of the richness of meaning of the words: "Our Father who art in Heaven" has saturated our lives, we rest securely in His care; assured that it will never fail. If troubles come, as we know that some are bound to come in this world of sin and disorder, we know it can not come without God's knowledge and consent. And consequently, according to His promise, it must work us some good. If we ask anything of this Father, we know His fatherly heart prompts Him to give it. If He does not give us the particular thing for which we ask, or in the form we ask it to be given, we know that it is because it would not be good for us. And it would not be true, wise, fatherly love to grant what would be hurtful. The real love is shown in withholding the thing desired. So we rest in God's love, satisfied.

Let us never forget that to the words: "Our Father," there belong also the words: "Who art in Heaven." "Our Father" is not a mere human father, affected by the frailties and shortcomings of humanity. It is God our father to whom we are speaking And He is all-wise, and all-powerful, and all-loving. He sees the end perfectly from the beginning. There are no experiments in His dealings. He makes no mistakes. Let us surrender ourselves unreservedly to His care. Casting all your cares upon Him, for He careth for us. Thus shall we find rest unto our souls.

I seldom think of the Divine fatherhood and what it implies, on both the God-ward and the man-ward side, without recalling the answer made to a question by a little boy, a fellow-passenger on a train. He was only six or eight years old, and very friendly. In answer to some overtures, I asked him where he was going. He replied: "I am going with father." He, probably, had very vague ideas as to the line of travel, the dangers which beset the way, or the destination to which he was bound. But he did have implicit confidence in the wisdom, strength, and loving oversight of his father. How much perplexity we could save ourselves; how much withering pessimism we would ward off; how much peace and joy we would find, if, being God's dear children through faith in His Son, we would just take to ourselves the rich meaning of these words: "Our Father, who art in Heaven," and rest in the confidence that we are being wisely, lovingly, and safely led by "Our Father." Not all things are as we would like to have them. Some temporary harvests of inherent weakness, ignorance, and waywardness have to be gathered. In this world of sin there will ever be some rough, thorny places

over which we will have to make our way. There will be some steep hills to climb, and some dark valleys through which to pass; but “Our Father,” with infinite wisdom, patience, tenderness and love is smoothing down the rough places, and picking out the best path for each one of us, and giving us a lift whenever it is necessary. We do not know a step of the way in advance, but the Father does. And He knows our strength, or lack of strength; and, keeping the goal in view, He selects for us the best way all the way.

2. A Call to Character

The thoughtful, reverent use of the words: “Father in Heaven” is a call to character; an appeal to the user to show himself a true child of the Father.

The very first thought which flashes through the mind, when one hears another use the word father, is here is a child, a son or a daughter. And if the father is well and favorably known, a kindred thought is close at hand, — is this child a credit to the parent? Can the father, without a pang, or tinge of shame, own this child before the world? If ever there is a time when such thoughts should be driven home, especially to the mind and conscience of the user, it is when we take upon our lips the holy, significant words: “Our Father who art Heaven.”

When Jesus went up from Jordan, where He had been publicly dedicated to His great life-work, the first thing He did was to pray. We do not know His words, but He prayed to His Father, and “Our Father.” He had shown Himself, and was ever ready to show Himself, a true Son. And the Father, who ever heard Him with delight, answered with the public declaration: “This is my beloved Son.” There is no such public announcement when we pray; but there is a response nevertheless. Every time we truly say “Our Father,” He says, My son, my daughter.

How often, how reverently, how lovingly Jesus used the name — Father. He always showed that He felt that in being permitted to use this name He was being highly honored. And everywhere there is evidence of the determination, on His part, to make good the honor and privilege by being a worthy and dutiful Son. And in the evening of His earthly life the Son was able to say: “Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”

In this the Apostles followed faithfully in the Master's footsteps. They often, indeed, used Jesus' name in association with that of the Father. But this name, Father, found so seldom in the Old Testament, was found with ever increasing frequency on their lips. Fully two hundred and fifty times it is used in the New Testament. And everywhere there is noticeable the living recognition that it was a privilege for them to do so, and an obligation to live up to what is implied in the use of the words: "Our Father who art in Heaven." And this is the way it should be everywhere. And this is the way it will be, more and more, as we grow into a realizing sense of the high privilege given us in being permitted to use these words — "Our Father," and of the obligation they lay upon us.

Many a young man and woman has been strengthened to resist the stress of temptation, and more fully nerved to fight valiantly the battles of life, by the thought of the shame and heartache which failure on their part would bring to their aged and honored parents. The same principle operates in the minds and hearts of all those who are truly Gods children. If we call God father, we are under obligation to show the legitimacy of our claim both by our confession and our life. And "Our Father" Himself urges this with all possible emphasis. He says: "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy." He tells us to have no fellowship with unrighteousness, and not to be found in the company of those whose deeds are of the night. He tells us that our lives are to be separate from all ungodliness, and unsullied by contact with that which is unclean. Then says "Our Father," "I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God." (1 Cor. 6:18.)

There are few sorer wounds in human life than those made in parents' hearts by disloyal, unloving, rebellious children. The broken-hearted cry of king David, "O Absalom, my son, my son," has resounded down the ages. And in every hamlet and countryside there are Lears driven to madness by the absolute selfishness, and unchildlike conduct of their daughters. How many parents have their heads bowed in shame, and have their eyes swimming with tears, because of the conduct of children who have brought reproach upon them. Among the children of men there are few things more heartless than this, few things so inexcusable. But let us remember we owe no human parent so much as we do the One whose sweetest name is "Our Father."

It hurts the hearts of human parents when they recognize that their children give them no respect; that they are unloved, disowned, and disgraced

by their children. From what is given us to know of the father-heart of God, I am sure we are justified in saying that no human parent can ever feel what the Father in Heaven feels when His love is spurned, His good offices ignored, and the good name He has proffered his children is trampled in the dust. And there is joy, not only among the angels in Heaven; but in the heart of the Savior, and the everlasting Father when He sees His children standing up nobly, and facing with the determination of grace-filled hearts, the battles of a world that would drag them down to ruin, and besmirch the name of Him they call Father.

Every time we say “Our Father,” there ought to be present with us the thought that it is our duty, as the Savior says, to “Let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.”

3. Our Best Service

The Fatherhood of God is a claim on our best service.

The words “Our Father” inspire us with confidence; it is a call to character; it is also a trumpet call to worthy action, not only for self, but for the King and the kingdom. God’s name is to be hallowed, His kingdom is to come, His will to be done. And God is “Our Father.” Are, then, not His interests our interests? Yes, and every time we say “Our Father” it is as much as saying, Father, here I am, by your grace and help, to play a grateful and loving child’s part in all that affects your affairs, and my own.

God’s fatherhood is a call not only to be, but to do. It is impossible to conceive that a drone in action, a careless, shiftless, lazy person can be possessed of the inherent elements of a worthy character. Some people are dreamers. But with the, dreamer of real character the dreaming period is one of incubation from which he emerges to energetically carry into execution his dream plans.

The words “Our Father” are calculated to fill us with mettle, the spirit which alone makes victors of the sons of men. The battle of life is severe, and often it seems to be going against us. But why allow the greatness of the conflict to appall us, or make us feel that ours is a lost cause? He who knows how to say “Our Father” should also know how to say: Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou

in God, and thou shalt praise Him who is the health of thy countenance, and thy God. Our cause is Our Father's cause. We cannot fail, if we are true to Him, unless He fails. Our lives have been planned by Him, planned in the plenitude of His wisdom and love. If, in reliance on Him, we do our best there can be no failure, victory is assured. As men see things, we may have failed, failed with respect to earthly things; but from the viewpoint of Heaven no child of God ever fails, never fails in those higher things to the accomplishment of which all other things are made to be subservient. Therefore let us be of good courage, let us be up and doing with resolute heart. The true child of God should know no such thing as discouragement, much less should he be scared by that coward's bugaboo, — failure.

Earthly parents often make mistakes in dealing with their children. They often make plans for their children which they are not fitted to carry out. They often give their children what they should not have, and withhold what they should give. Not so with Our Father. There are no mistakes in the plans He makes for His children. He never withholds what is really, lastingly good for them; He never gives what proves to be hurtful.

Often life is such a tangle, and so many things seem to be against us, that we feel, not only that it is useless to try to do anything worthwhile, but useless to try to be anything worthwhile. So many are pinched by poverty, and apparently buffeted by all the powers that be, that after awhile they feel like saying, even if they do not say: Oh, what is the use of this ceaseless struggle? let us give up and swim with the tide; let us eat, and drink, and have a good time. The all-sufficient answer to all such tempting thoughts is contained in the two words— Our Father. He knows. He cares. And He wants us to remember that life is not rated in the courts of Heaven by the dollar sign; but by its faith and love, by its appreciation of truth, and purity, and sense of honor; and by the life that rallies to these conceptions, and lives them.

He who says Our Father should know that manhood is not rated by earthly position, not by titles to estates, not by the bubble of popular acclaim. The one who can rightfully say Our Father may not have his name in Bradstreet, or in earth's Who is Who; but he has it in the Lamb's Book of Life. He may not belong to the aristocracy of earth, but he does belong to the elect of Heaven. He may not be so situated here that he can have servants to come at his beck and call, but the very angels of Heaven are his ministering servants. He may not be able, or even have the desire, to dress

in the height of fashion; but he is clothed in the beautiful, and effective, robe of Christ's perfect righteousness. He may not own even a cottage here; but he is an heir, even a joint heir with the Lord Jesus Himself, of mansions in the skies. Such thoughts are eminently calculated to hearten us, to make us feel the worthwhileness of life, and help us, by the grace of God, to do things worthy of our estate as children of Our Father; to give us a saving sense of self-respect because we are the Father's children.

The words Our Father is an appeal of a nature to awaken a certain homesickness in us. Where Our Father is there is home, and Our Father is in Heaven. We are not to understand by this that our God is afar off, that He is not with us here and now. He is ever present with us, nearer than the air we breathe, nearer than hands and feet. But in a sense not appropriate to use of His present presence He is Our Father in Heaven. And when we address Him thus it is a confession that we are not at home here, that we are only on the way.

In the heyday of health and strength, when work is a pleasure, and even conflict, in a sense, an exhilaration, we often feel very much at home here, and not infrequently somewhat disquieted at the thought of having to give it up; but when the shadows have grown longer, and the sand in the glass lower; when our locks have grown thinner, and our strength has much waned; when the conflicts of life have grown burdensome, and so many of the ties which bind us here have been severed, and those on the other side have been multiplied; when material things have lost much of their appeal, and spiritual things have come to be more real, and more and more the only realities; then there are times when we feel very lonely here.

Some of those who are past middle life, and for years and years have been away from the scenes of their early life, may have gone back in recent years to the home of their childhood. What changes have met them. The friends and companions of early youth are no more, or, like themselves, have moved away. Of the older generation very few are left. A new generation has grown up, most of whom are strangers. Under such circumstances, though there are ties which still bind to the old homestead, there is no place where one feels quite so lonely, and out of place, as amid the scenes once so familiar and so dear. So it is with the Christian in the evening of life. But pilgrims of the earth, let us be cheered. Yonder Our Father is beckoning us. There is home, the place which, under His guidance, the Son, our elder brother, has prepared for us. All is ready. And there are the dear ones, loved

and lost awhile, waiting to welcome the weary, belated traveler home; home, sweet home. And there amid all the blessings and glories of that endless, changeless home, the sweetest name will ever be — Our Father.

The Brotherhood Of Man

Our Father —; give us —; forgive us —; lead us —; deliver us. — St. Luke 11:2-4.

WE HAVE SPOKEN MUCH of God's fatherhood. We have seen that there is a sense in which He is the Father of all men. His heart yearns for all men, His love broods over all. We have seen that there is a special sense in which God is the Father of all those who have taken Christ Jesus as their Savior and brother. It follows from this, and the reasoning is so simple a child cannot fail to follow it, that all those who are the offspring of one parent are not only this parent's children, but that they are all brethren, members of one family.

This subject, the brotherhood of man, is one of absorbing interest; one on which volumes have been written. But it has not been exhausted. It never will be. Much of that which is being said about the brotherhood of man is vague and misleading. Much of it is based on faulty principles. In many quarters no distinction is made between the brotherhood of nature and the brotherhood of grace. And many who are of the brotherhood of grace have no adequate conception of what they owe to the brotherhood of nature. But it is in the field of practice where we find the greatest difficulties, the greatest confusion. Many have no inconsiderable knowledge of the principles and obligations of the brotherhood of which they are members, but they have not the feeling of brethren, they do not treat others as brethren. Let us, then, make a further study of this absorbingly interesting and practical subject of the Brotherhood of Man.

1. Membership

Let us consider, first of all, the membership of the brotherhood of which we speak, and of which the Lord's Prayer forces thinking people to take cognizance.

The natural brotherhood of man has always existed as a fact in the mind and purpose of God, but it has been of very slow growth in the mind and practice of man. Man, by natural inclination, is always disposed to entertain the idea of his own superior importance; and then, in proportion to the relative degree of removal, of the superior importance of his family, his tribe, his nation. Personal self-seeking, and then class consciousness, and class legislation, have always largely dominated the world. The might of the class has always largely overruled the right of the mass. As long as they could do so, the learned, the titled, the powerful, held in bondage the ignorant, the unnamed, and the helpless. And when the slow growth of the idea of brotherhood, of an inherent equality, of universal inalienable rights, broke down some of the barriers, and unloosed some of the shackles; the might of superior knowledge, riches, and position of vantage, continued, and still continues, to devise new forms of oppression and servitude, less discernible, and, therefore, less objectionable, to the oppressed and enslaved; but none the less real.

The growth of secular knowledge, the advance of civilization, and the multiplication of the things which make for the general amelioration of human life, have never, in themselves, brought a corresponding advance in the practice of brotherhood. In the ancient world, when it was at the zenith of its glory, when it was producing the masterpieces of literature, and art, which still commands the admiration of the world, a large part of its people were abject chattels, and did not have the care, or the safeguards of law. now afforded our dogs and horses.

A mere humanitarian culture can never produce a brotherhood with ties strong enough to stand the test of selfishness; the lust for place and power and glory. About twenty years ago, when the old century was a dying and the new in its birth throw, much was said, perhaps more than ever before in the history of the world, of the brotherhood of man. - It was boldly affirmed that, to all practical intents and purposes, the millennium had arrived; that the universal brotherhood of civilized humanity was a dream realized. And now what do we see? Hell has broken loose in such an eruption as the world has never before witnessed. And what does it prove? That a brotherhood of man based on a foundation of mere human culture; on a community of social, political, and economic interests can never stand the tests of conflicting interests and passions.

Let us see what some of the things are of which we, as Christians, should think when we speak of the brotherhood of man. We, of course, should not forget that there is a brotherhood by the strain of blood. In spite of the differences of race and condition humanity is one in its origin, and in all essentials. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." (Acts 17:26.) And because of this another inspired Apostle declares: "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common, or unclean." (Acts 10:28.) It matters not how backward, or unpromising a nation, or class of people, may be, no other nation, or class of people, should consider them legitimate subjects for exploitation. God is also their father. He created them. He redeemed them. He is ever desirous of making them partakers of His every blessing. Their present condition is the result of environment, of oppression, of sin, — in themselves and others. And abundant evidence proves that the grace of God, home by those who have themselves experienced this grace, can make the flowers of manhood blossom forth in the lives of the most unpromising material.

In our own land, and among our own people, let us not forget that this same principle is operative. It matters not how undeveloped a man's faculties may be, or how low he may have fallen; how dead, or perverted his moral and spiritual nature; let us not despise him. Let us hear in mind that but by the grace of God we might be what he is. Despise his sins, yes, we may, we should; but remember that under that unpromising exterior there lie the essential elements of humanity, and the potentialities of good citizenship and sainthood. In the sphere of nature such an one is still our brother, he bears our nature of flesh and blood. In that breast it is possible there once dwelt aspirations and how as bright as ours. He suffers as we suffer, probably he has suffered more. And under the uninviting, nay, repulsive exterior, there may be, even yet, feeble pulsations of the hope for better things. Let us not scorn him, but pity him; let us not put our foot on him to keep him down, but give him a pitying, brotherly hand, and help him up.

There is another reason for not despising the lowliest of the lowly which is the strongest of all motives operating in the hearts of those who know the love of God in Christ Jesus. No Christian can despise any human being, however lowly, or encrusted with sin, because he knows that God loved that soul well enough to send His Son to save him; he knows that Jesus loved that man well enough to lay down His life to save him. He may loathe his filth of body and soul; he may hate, with all the virile hatred of a robust

soul, all the evil, perverse things he does; but for the love of the Christ who loves even him, for the sake of the latent possibilities in him, because of that in him which makes him still a member of the larger family of God's children, the Christian's heart goes out to him, and will go out to him to the end. And where a man's heart has gone, there his words will go, and there his outstretched hand will go.

We could not treat of the brotherhood of man, as set before us in the Lord's Prayer, without entertaining such thoughts as those to which we have given utterance. But the real brotherhood of man which the great Teacher of this prayer had in mind, the brotherhood which is the only real hope of better things in the world, is the brotherhood of the newborn children of God. It is made up only of those on whose souls the Spirit of God has fallen as the dew of the morning, awakening them to newness of life; giving them a realizing sense of the repulsiveness, the damnableness of sin; leading them to know, and to love, the Lord Jesus, by faith in whose name they find entrance into the circle of twice-born men. These are the real brotherly men, the men who have a new vision of things, a new set of working principles. With these people self, as the central sun, around which all else revolves as but serving satellites, has been dethroned. Such men see the other man with other, with God-opened, eyes, He is willing, not only that the other man should have his chance; but he is willing to put himself out, to spend and to be spent, to help him get his share of the happiness and the blessings which are the portion of the children of men.

Any other brotherhood than this is a poor make-shift, a feeble substitute for the real article. In lands like ours where, for generations, the renewing grace of the Gospel has been proclaimed, and its principles largely practiced, society in general experiences a gradual infiltration of the practical results of Christianity. But the fact remains that outside of Christ Jesus, outside of the body of those united to Him by the ties of faith and love, there is no real brotherhood; no Christian brotherhood; no brotherhood which travails for the abiding good of humanity; no brotherhood which can stand the tests of conflicting human interests and passions. It is not love for one's city, or love for one's nation, or love for humanity by which the door to the world's heart is to be opened. It is love for Christ, and the love for humanity which the love of Christ begets. The secret of the early Church is revealed in the exclamation of the heathen world: "Behold how these Christians love one another."

The brotherhood of man outside of Christ is a human arrangement, based on merely human principles, and motivated by selfish, at best, only clannish interests. The real, effective brotherhood is never initiated by mere poetic quotations, or oratorical rhapsodies. The brotherhood which the Lord's Prayer has specially in mind is a creation of the Spirit. It is a fellowship of quickened souls based on the fellowship of each with God's only begotten Son. And the redemption of the world is carried forward by those whose hearts and lives are thus united.

Unfortunately not all Christians are real brotherly people, because not all professing Christians are real Christians. And many are weak, poorly nurtured, ill-developed Christians. The real Christian, of full stature, is the one, who, having been cleansed and renewed by Christ, has the mind and the spirit of Christ, and lives it. And it was the brotherhood of those who were in Christ that inaugurated the movement for freeing the slaves; that began to educate the poor and ignorant; that began to build asylums for the orphan, the helpless and the aged; that made provision for aiding the sick; that started the crusade for recovering the rights of those who did not recognize their own rights, or recognizing them were powerless to secure them. And if ever there is to be a larger, and a more real, brotherhood it must be brought about by bringing men more fully under the influence of Christ, and in harmony with His mind and heart.

2. Prayer for the Brotherhood

From the consideration of the subject of the membership of the brotherhood, let us turn to the prayer of the brother for the brotherhood.

In all lands under the broad canopy of Heaven men lift up supplicating hands toward the throne of God. In every language and dialect men raise their voices to plead for surcease of suffering; to be released of burdens; for guidance in life; for strength to live and labor; for removal of the fear of death; for blessedness in the life to come. In no land, in no language, is there another prayer so absolutely unselfish, so brotherly, as the Lord's Prayer. The reason of this is that it was not conceived by a mere human mind, but by the perfect mind of the Son of God.

Take the language of human life almost anywhere, and we find it largely dominated by the big I and little you. Not infrequently even in congrega-

tional and general Church-life there is an unseemly scrambling for position and honor; the worst part of which is the unbrotherly and unjust deprecation, in word and deed, of others. We have learned but little of the lesson of Romans 12, especially that part which says: "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. — Let love be without dissimulation. — Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another."

In public life, in the life of the world at large, there is very little consideration for the interests, the feelings, of others; especially if there is any conflict of interests between the first and the second, or third, person. The world is conducted on the principle of the paramount importance of the I and the my. If there is any thought of the our principle of life it usually includes only the family, the circle of friends, the club, those associated in business life, and the like.

How differently runs the line of thought of the Lord's Prayer. It is not built on the I or the my plan, but on that of the Our and us. It is the world's great brotherhood prayer. In less than three-fourths of a hundred words, one or the other form of the plural pronoun occurs ten times. This is the way Jesus would have us pray. It shows very clearly that if we have the old, selfish, exclusive, accretive heart of the unregenerate world, we are not in the Kingdom, and cannot truly use the great brotherhood prayer. If in this condition we do use it with our lips, it does not avail; for it is only a pretense. Only real children of God can truly pray in the spirit of this prayer.

Oh, there are times when it is perfectly permissible, wholly appropriate, yea, necessary thus to pray; to say I, and my, and me with all the urgency of a soul most deeply moved, and wholly in earnest. We have many Biblical examples of this kind of prayer. David often prayed thus. He says: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hid Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. 51:7-10.) Jesus Himself also prayed in this personal way. And it is very much to be doubted whether one who never feels driven to pray in this way for himself, is in a condition, or knows how, to pray aright for others. And it is certain that those who never feel impelled thus to pray for themselves will feel no irresistible impulse to pray for others. And those who do

thus pray for themselves, impelled by their own wounded and hungry hearts, will seldom fail to pray for the great brotherhood.

In the general prayers of the individual, however, as well as in the prayers of the assembly, it should be our and us, and not merely me, my, and mine. The heart of the true child of God goes out to all men, the stranger never seen in the flesh as well as the acquaintance, for the enemy as well as the friend. And when the Spirit from on high has put something in man's heart which makes it go out to other men in their needs, the petitions which take these needs up to the Father's throne will not be lacking. When we say, "Our Father" we are pleading for the poor, benighted ones who are graping about in soul-darkness over in India, Africa, the isles of the sea, and here at home, that they may find the light, and learn to rejoice with us in a true knowledge of "Our Father." This is all included when we say: "Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." God wants His name to be hallowed by all men; He wants His kingdom to come to, to dwell in the hearts of, all men; He wants His will to be done, not by an elect few, but by all men. And what God wants we are to understand as included in these petitions. In all lands there are moral pariahs, and spiritual lepers, who are wallowing in the mire, and encrusted with sin. God embraced them all in His redemption. And we are taught to embrace them all in our prayers; to pray that they may come to themselves, doff their rags, and accept the royal robe of Christ's righteousness, and come to know the satisfying joys of faith, and love, and service; and the life which is the embodiment of these living graces.

Especially are we praying, when we say "Our Father," for those who are truly the Father's children, our brethren by faith in Christ Jesus. This is, par excellence, the brotherhood. The ties which bind here are those inaugurated and cemented by the touch of the Spirit's hand. It is the brotherhood of renewed souls. It is the brotherhood animated by the loftiest purposes, — the inner regeneration, and the outer transformation, of the lives of men; and by this change in individual lives recreating human society. We pray that each one of the brotherhood may be richly endowed with those spiritual and moral qualities which will enable him to acquit himself valiantly in hallowing God's name, in promoting God's kingdom, in doing, after the pattern of the angels, the Father's holy will. We pray that all these may have enough of this world's good things to secure their own best interests, and minister to others' need; that they may have the grace of repentance, and, enjoying

the blessing of forgiveness, may go and sin no more; and that they may have around them the protecting arm of Him to whom belongs the kingdom and all power.

What an encouragement to struggling souls! Throughout Christendom there are countless thousands who are praying for me, and all things that are good. I am not alone. The prayers of all my brethren bind me with the strong cords of love to “Our Father’s” throne of power and grace. Take courage, downcast brother. You cannot fail. Your, brethren will not let you fail. In the strong arms of prayer they bear you up, and they beer you on. Stand up, be strong, quit you like a man. Amid all the real, and apparent indifference, and opposition of men there is still much to hearten one. You have a Father who loves you, you have brethren who care.

Brethren, let us remember that we are not in the inner circle of the true brotherhood, the Christian brotherhood, of man unless the things of which we have spoken form a large part of the content of the “our,” and the “we,” and the “us” in the Lord’s Prayer. No one can truly say “Our Father” who looks on others simply as pawns to be moved, or ruthlessly brushed aside, as it may happen to suit his purpose, or his caprice. No one can rightly use these words, indicative of childhood relation, and brotherhood, whose heart is poisoned with envy, and corroded with bitterness; and who pass by on the other side of the needy brother, as did the priest and the Levite. Neither are those entitled to use the words, “Our Father” who exalt themselves with pride, and whose tongues spit out venomous words of hate which bite and blight those of tender sensibilities.

The words “Our Father” mean that those who use them recognize themselves as having drawn into n the all-holy Presence; with a sense of awe because of God’s greatness and majesty; made by a sense of their failures; made tender and loving by the consciousness of God’s unspeakably great love and mercy toward them; made to feel brotherly and helpful toward all those equally dear to the Father, and equally needy, with ourselves, of His blessings. How about it, brethren? Is this the way we think and feel when we say: “Our Father, — give us, — forgive us,— deliver us”?

3. Who are The Brethren?

It is well to know who are the members of that circle of brethren comprised in the Heaven-taught words — “Our Father.” It is well to know the compass of meaning in the words when we pray, — “Give us,” “Forgive us,” “Lead us not,” “Deliver us.” It is impossible to understand these things too well. But words which lead to no action are vain. Let us, therefore, consider the practice of the praying brother toward the prayed-for brotherhood.

Do we really mean it when we say “Our Father,” —, “Feed us” —, “Forgive us” —, “Lead us not” —, “Deliver us” —? Are we truly thinking of others as well as ourselves? Are we honestly desirous of their welfare as well as our own? We can answer these questions by a candid examination of our conduct. We are not truly praying “Our Father” when we go forth from the place where we have lipped our prayers and act an unbrotherly part toward others of the Father’s children. We do not mean it when we say: “Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” unless, following this, there is an honest effort to interpret to men, by life as well as word the adorableness of God’s name, the blessedness of His kingdom, and the beneficence of His will. We do not honestly mean it when we say, “Give us our daily bread,” if we, by sharp practices, are keeping daily bread from any of God’s children. Our words never reach, Heaven, except to condemn us, when we say, Father forgive us, we have all sinned and come short of Thy glory, if all the while there is a grudge in our heart against some one, if we refuse to forgive, and, in general, act an unbrotherly part. Do we, really mean it when we pray, Father, suffer us not to be lead into temptation; deliver us from the threatening evils? No, a thousand times no, if we are setting snares for a brothers feet; if we are putting stumbling blocks in his way; if we, in any way, are making it harder for him to be a child of God. We do not mean these words unless we are doing all we can to keep temptation out of the way of the weak. And this means every one, for there is no man but that has weak spots somewhere in his armor.

How much has been spoken and written of late of the new era, at the door of which many fondly thought the world was standing. Manifold have been the conceptions of what this new era was to bring the world. Statesmen, economists, social workers, and labor leaders have each had widely differing ideas. But the event will prove that statecraft, economic principles, and plans of social reconstruction will never suffice to beget a new era which will be a decided improvement over what has been. Improvements are not only possible, but desirable along all these lines? But to accomplish

anything worthwhile and lasting, they must all get their initiative, and their underlying principles from men with regenerated minds and hearts. In other words, we are not going to have a real new era until we have a real brotherhood in Christ Jesus. And this brotherhood must not only come to Christ for a personal salvation. Starting with this, they must be made to realize what the Gospel of Christ teaches, and implies, as to man's relation to his fellow-men, as individuals, and as a society of individuals.

What a different world this would be if each one tried, by the grace of God, to live the prayer he prays: if each man loved other men as members of a great family, if each man sought every other man's welfare as he seeks his own. What a forward step there would be in the development of the kingdom of God. Wars, such as that under which the civilized world now groans, would be impossible. Our criminal courts could, in large measure, be dispensed with. Life would take on a new complexion. Happiness would be given a new birth in the earth, for Heaven would be very near.

When is the glorious day of brotherhood, of loving kindness, of considerate helpfulness, foreshadowed and prayed for in the Lord's Prayer, going to dawn on this withered earth of ours? Only when men learn to walk with the Savior of men, the firstborn among many brethren; only when the self-forgetting, self-giving Christ gets hold of the spirits of men; only when the fire of Christ-love burns out of men's hearts all the ugliness of selfishness and envy and hate. With a larger vision, and with more earnestness than ever before, let us pray the brotherhood prayer. That will mean that we are praying to be made more brotherly in word and deed. The word tells us that Jesus, the elder brother, seated on the throne of glory, is constantly praying for us. What is He praying for more than this that we may more truly know His Father as "Our Father," that we may better know Him as our Savior and Friend, the source of our power. And what does all this mean but that we shall better know men as our brethren, and treat them as such.

The Hallowed Name Of God

Hallowed be Thy name. — St. Matt. 6:9.

WHEN GOD SPEAKS to the children of men, either directly or through his servants, He never multiplies words. But He says a great deal in a few words. He evidently wants us to ponder well what He says. Just think of the brevity of God's great deliverances. His moral law is summarized in ten short commandments, ten words they are called. The heart of the Gospel is set forth, in the Apostles' Creed, in little more than a hundred words. Christ's sayings are all brief. But He usually sets forth a sermon in a sentence. His parables are nearly all of but the length of a short paragraph or two. His sermon on the mount, the longest of His recorded discourses, contains a summary of the whole theology of the practical life; but, as sermons go, even in our day, when a half hour is long for most people, it was very brief.

The Lord's Prayer is the soul of brevity. But how comprehensive. The words "Our Father" are in themselves a compendium of theology. And about all else that can be thought of in the realm of theology, as to its source, nature, or practice, is contained in the Name, the Kingdom and the Will of the heavenly Father as set forth in the first three petitions.

Let us keep fresh in our minds the thought of God's fatherhood; the fatherhood of Him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain; the fatherhood of Him who is our Father by the manifold ties of creation, redemption, regeneration, and the tie of conscious fellowship on the part of the renewed child with the renewing Father. In reality the introductory words, "Our Father," belong to every one of the petitions. Bearing this in mind, let us take up the first petition, Hallowed be Thy name. We are going to confine ourselves, however, at this time, to considering the meaning of the Name of God, and the call it makes on those who use it.

1. The Meaning of the Name of God

As the first step in our meditation, let us consider the meaning of the Name of God. Of what should we be thinking, what should form the ground-work of our consciousness, when we pray — Hallowed be Thy name?

A name may mean very little to us. It may, and sometimes should, mean very much, indeed. The general practice among men of bestowing names un— thinkingly, or actuated by the merest whim or caprice, has had much to do with our confusion on the subject of names. There are not only common people, but kaisers, kings, and potentates whose names are as far as possible removed from that which their names signify. All kinds of liberties are taken with names. We recently read of several of the red-handed, cut-throat bandits of Mexico who bore the name Jesus. There are names which, in themselves, stand for that which is pure as the unsullied dew of morning; but, by association with those who have borne them, have become as black and bitter as double-distilled poison. There is something which makes us instinctively recoil from associating such noble names with such evil persons. We find this feeling of repugnance expressed in Scripture. In the midst of one of Christ's most comforting messages to His disciples, one of them interrupts Him with a question. Knowing full well the soul-revolt which all reverent people would experience whenever this name would be mentioned, the inspired writer hastens to add — “Not Iscariot.”

We ought to be very careful in our use of names; indeed, in our use of language in general. Names stand for things. Carelessness in the use of names indicates a general flabbiness in the ethical standards of the user. Corruption of language is the outward and visible sign of the ignorance, or corruption, of the user of it. Delicacy and sincerity in the use of language is, generally, a sign of a similar character in the user.

According to present practice, it is impossible to avoid some incongruous, infelicitous associations of names and persons. Names are now given in infancy; and can, therefore, at best, express only a hope. In an earlier age, when the given name was generally taken from a person's occupation, or was suggested by some trait or disposition of the person himself, it was different. Then more frequently the name was the outwardly borne sign of an inner reality; it was a testimonial as to place of residence, occupation, or character.

This ought to help us appreciably in coming to an understanding of the first petition: Hallowed be Thy name, God's name, the name of “Our Father.”

Who is God? What is God? What is God's disposition? There is no one word, there is no combination of words, which can express more than a minute fraction of all that God is; hence we have a multitude of names of God. Every attributive word which tells us something of God's nature, His disposition, or His works, is in reality a name of God. The same is true of every revelation which God has made of Himself in His Word, and in His works. And it is only by compounding all these names, and revelations, of God, and remembering that they all belong to one and the same person, that we are able to get the largest possible conception of God. And even then our understanding is, of necessity, but fragmentary; fragmentary just as our view of the universe is fragmentary, not because it is not there, but because our restricted vision cannot take it in.

God is called creator because all existence outside of Himself owes its being to His creative word. He is called Father for the same reason; and because of His fatherly disposition, and the fatherly provision He made, and makes, for all His children, especially His newborn, spiritual children. God is Called eternal, almighty, all-wise, all-powerful, merciful, truthful, patient, loving, and a thousand other things; because they express what He is and what He does. The Son of God is called Christ because He is the anointed one, Redeemer because He has redeemed the son of men, Savior because He saves, King because He rules, Judge because He judges, Friend because He befriends, Life because He is the life and gives it, the Way because only through Him can men reach their heavenly goal. The third person of the Godhead is called the Spirit because, in a special way, it expresses His nature, and the character of His work; the Holy Spirit because He is holy and makes holy; the Enlightener because it is His mission to open blind eyes, and give understanding minds and hearts; the Comforter because He came to raise the fallen, to give peace and comfort.

God's name, then, means more than a mere title, or a designation by which He is known. God's name stands for God Himself, with all His holiness and glory, all His love and truth, all His justice and judgment. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth's sake." To honor the name means to honor the being to whom the name belongs. "Hallowed be Thy name" means, then, the same, — hallowed be God. The Psalmist says: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Ps. 124:8.) This does not mean that our help comes from God's name used as a charm, or magic formula; but

from God Himself, who is the maker of heaven and earth, and on whom we call through His name. In His high priestly prayer, St. John 17, Jesus says to the Father: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men Thou gavest me out of the world." This means that He had revealed the Father's nature, His disposition, His will, His plans. In the same chapter Jesus says: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me." There is no magic even in the name of God when it is written down on a piece of paper, or carried as a charm on the body. Men are kept by God Himself when they humbly, reverently and believingly approach Him through His name. The same is true of the name of Christ. The Apostle says: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21.) But never unless through the name they approach, and lay hold of, the living Christ Himself.

The word "mother" has come to be a sacred name in the thinking and feeling of all intelligent, rightly disposed people. But it would not be so if it was not for the association of this name with the person for whom it stands. To each one of us the name mother calls up some particular woman, one of the dearest in all the world, one to whom we feel that we owe a debt of gratitude which can never be fully discharged; one, it may be, who, for a time, has vanished from our presence, but who is yet very near and very dear. So it should be with the name of God, whatever the form that name may take—God, Father, Shepherd, Christ, Savior, Comforter, or anyone of the hundreds of other names. The name must serve simply as a help in lifting our thoughts from the name to the Divine Being to whom it is applied; from the shadow to the substance.

In the second Commandment God bids us not to use His name in vain. This means that we are so to reverence the bearer of the Divine name that we use the name, indeed; but use it with such circumspection as becomes the One who bears it. In the first petition we make our own plea that which the first Commandment requires. Having become God's dear children, who have learned to say: "Our Father," we plead for such a measure of grace that His will may become ever more fully our own, and all that glorifies Him our earnest endeavor.

2. On Our Hearts and On Our Lips

Having seen what is meant by the name of God, let us meditate for a moment on this hallowed name, and see what it means to have this petition in our hearts, and on our lips.

The primary purpose of this first petition, "Hallowed be Thy name," O Father, is to aid in changing the center of gravity in the lives of those who pray it. Now, in the natural man, the center of gravity is in his own breast, his own life. His desire is that everything shall be coming his own way. His own life is the axis around which he wants all to revolve. His own honor, his own welfare, the prosperity of his own affairs; these are the all-absorbing interests in the life of the self-centered, the unrenewed man. The first petition, when men realize its meaning, and catch its spirit, changes all this. When Christ puts this prayer in a man's heart, and on his lips, it is a direct invitation, and a working force, to draw him into the holy of holies, there to ponder, long and lovingly, the surpassing beauties and the wonders of God's nature, His works, and the blessings which come to men only as they lose themselves, and their petty and selfish ambitions, in Him.

The chief end of man is to know God, and to enjoy and glorify Him forever. This being true, man can come into his own, attain to the highest of which he is capable in this world, and finally reach the goal for which he was created, only as his highest powers are put to the task of hallowing God's name. This is true not only of man's individual life, it is true of his communal life. Let us imagine for a moment a community, a nation, where each person, with a humanly perfect understanding of its meaning, and with the full determination of a renewed and Spirit-filled life, prayed this prayer: "Father, — hallowed be Thy name." Need I spend any time in attempting to tell you what kind of a community that would be, so far as the temper and the conduct of its people was concerned? Selfishness, self-seeking, and self-exaltation would be eliminated just in proportion as the spirit and intent of this petition was realized in the lives of the people.

"Our Father, — hallowed be Thy name." When these words come out of a soul on which has dawned an ever-deepening consciousness of the richness of its meaning, it is as if one, with his whole being, followed the words into the very audience chamber of the Most High. And it is not all a seeming. Always the humblest Christian on his knees before the truth of God sees farther, and beholds more, than the wisest philosopher of the world as he stands on the mountain top. And here is one of God's own truths, formulated by God's own Son, for the very purpose of bringing us into God's own

presence. Here the soul does meet God. Now, more and more, He reveals Himself to it. And this is the first thing this petition is meant to accomplish, to make God Himself more real to us, the all and in all to us. Heaven is a place of worship where the angels fall down before the throne of God to hallow His name. The universe is a great cathedral where all creatures are constrained to sing His praise. On earth we have many churches where God's people lift up their voices in songs and prayers of praise. But the place above all where God wants to be glorified, to have His name hallowed, is in the heart of the man who prays. And, God's name is hallowed when He Himself becomes more real, more precious, more indispensable to us.

How absorbed so many people are, even professing Christians, in the things of this world. They apply themselves to them as if they were the only things worth getting, as if they would make them eternally rich. Men often carry this spirit with them into their prayers. They are concerned about, and ask for, scarcely anything else than house and home, food and clothing, and for relief from the little ills and perplexities of this every day life; yes, even when on their knees in the closet before the throne of grace. God does not fail to consider all our real needs. He is Our Father. He knows our frame. He knows what is good for us. He is not unmindful of our smallest ills. He knows what the results of them in our lives will be. And assuredly He who looks on with fatherly solicitude when one of the little feathered songsters gasps its life away, and notices our falling hairs, cannot be unmindful of the least real need of ours. But why fasten our eyes wholly on the little things? why concentrate all energies on them? Why become so absorbed in these little things that we miss the larger vision, and fail to get a grasp of the things really, lastingly worthwhile? There is something worth more than gold coins, than fine raiment, than palaces; it is the soul, the life. There is something worse than the pinch of poverty, than the griping pains of bodily ills; it is to have an anemic, or a paralyzed soul. So this first petition is one of the guardian angels placed at the gateway of the citadel of the soul to keep out the despoilers, and help gain admittance for the a things that enrich. It puts the first thing first. And the first thing of importance to human life, in the whole round of its activities and potentialities, is God; the triune God. Jesus would teach us that all secondary things are included, and are bound to be bestowed, in needful measure, when we own God's fatherhood, and put ourselves in the way to claim, rightfully claim, His fatherly care.

We are not advocating, because Jesus Christ never advocated, a nerveless, an ascetic religion. The hermit, who withdraws from human fellowship, and the usual activities of life, is not the highest type of Christian. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" There is much to be done, everywhere, always. But in all our thinking, in all our planning, in all our doing, we are to put God first; realizing that in Him we live and move and have our being. This prayer is to help us to do this. And gradually we shall learn, to our increasing satisfaction, that when God's honor is our supreme concern, to do His will our greatest aim, and the furtherance of His kingdom our earnest endeavor, there can be nothing higher, or better for us. The possession of the highest blessing is the pledge guaranteeing all lesser ones.

How many of us can unreservedly say with the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1, 2.) Most of us cannot honestly say this because we have not sufficiently cultivated acquaintance with Him. If we knew God as He has revealed Himself, His works, His plans, His will, and His ways for our knowing; and loved and trusted Him as these things invite us to do, then we could all say it. There is such a thing as tasting and seeing that God is good. (Ps. 34:8.) And to such a blessed experience this first petition is an invitation, and an aid.

3. The Practical Effect

And now what think ye, my brethren, will be the practical effect on men's lives of such a living in the presence of God, of such a realization of His greatness and goodness, of such a hallowing of His name?

One of the first results of such a realizing sense of the Divine presence; of God's power and majesty, will be to produce a much-needed and becoming humility on man's part. It will help to take much of the pride and conceit out of him. Man is vain only because of his essential blindness with regard to the great things in the universe. He has compared himself only with his kind. Some of man's experiences do serve, in a measure, to disillusion him. But nothing can do this so effectually as to have the eyes of the mind, the soul opened actually to begin to see and know God; and to begin to realize and appreciate His place, and His activities, in the universe, and the re-

lation and dependence of human life on Him. As this takes place, man begins to shrink as he stands in the presence of God, His measureless greatness, and His matchless goodness. Man recognizes that he is but dust and ashes. And the fuller man's knowledge of his own sin-made scars and disfigurements, as he compares them with the matchless perfection and beauty of God, the more humble and sincere will be his prayer: "Father, — hallowed be Thy name."

A concomitant of this spirit of humility, born of a Spirit given vision of God, is a growing sense of the proportionate values of things. The man who once thought a dollar bigger than a soul; a house, a store, a farm more valuable than the whole world of truth; that material entities were the only worth while things, and souls, and spiritual entities as vague, shadowy things little worth bothering about; now has a changed perspective, because he has had a change of heart, — he has had a vision. He has dwelt in the ineffable Presence. He has learned knowingly how to pray: "Father, — hallowed be Thy name." This man now lives, not for things, he only uses them as helps on the way; he lives for God. Living for God, he lives, not to get, but to give. He now understands that it means much to help bind up a broken heart; to give hope to one who was hopeless; to bring joy and gladness where before there was gloom; to reveal God, God as manifest in Christ Jesus, to one who was without Him, than to gain all the wealth, and honor, and power this world can give. Oh, this is what it means to have a realizing vision of God, and to hallow it.

We see, then, that to pray this petition means that the prayer becomes a worker for the cause to which he has given his affections. No human soul, truly illumined by the knowledge of what God is, of, what He means to man, of what He wants to do for man, can stand idly in the market place, indifferent to the needs, especially the spiritual needs, about him. He becomes an Andrew seeking to bring his brethren to become possessors of the blessings he enjoys.

A strong infusion of courage is another of the blessed results of living in such realization of God's nearness, and perfections, as we pray for when we say, hallowed be Thy name, O God.

Much of our courage is spurious, built on a false conception of our own wisdom and strength, of what we can do and escape. Our fears come very largely, come chiefly, from the failure to understand God, and the part He is pledged to play for the good of His children. But when the knowledge of

God, His will and His ways, begins to dawn upon us; when we have begun to understand the absolute, but gracious sovereignty, pledged to those who pray, and work, for the hallowing of His name; then we begin to understand also that nothing can happen to us apart from His active, or permissive, will; and that all that befalls us must leave a blessing in its wake. God hallows His own name by proving His fatherhood in the care of his children. Can anything be better calculated to awaken and sustain courage? We belong to the army of the Lord, we cannot be defeated, victory is sure. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord." (Ps. 27:14.)

And now we are prepared for the incoming of some satisfying measure of the peace and joy for which every human soul longs; but seeks for in vain away from God, away from Christ Jesus. When man has hitched his destiny to God's chariot, not in a blind, fatalistic fashion; but with eyes opened to a realization of what God actually is, and is doing for him; then his fears are drowned, the old accuser has lost his power of terrifying him; he has the calm, the rest, the peace, the joy of divinely given safety.

"Father, — hallowed be Thy name." The man who prays thus, realizing God's all-embracing presence, and that all his own highest interests are an integral part of the Divine plan, has surrounded himself with a new environment. He is actuated by the propulsive power of a new affection. And he cannot be anything but a growing, a God-ward growing, man.

It is said of one of the saintliest saints of the middle ages that the Lord appeared to him in a vision, and inquired what good thing he desired to ask of Him. The answer of the aged saint was: "No other gift than Thyself, O Lord." This is but a legend, no doubt; but it embodies the principle out of which grows all real saintliness. To know God, to live in vital fellowship with Him, to enjoy the beatific vision; this is the secret of the willing renunciation of all that opposes God, or would crowd Him out of life. It is the secret of the victorious life.

"We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory." (2 Cor. 3:18.)

Hallowing God's Name

When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. — St. Luke 11:2.

GOD'S NAME is indeed holy in itself. It is as holy as holiness itself can be. God is the fountainhead of all holiness, of all purity. All other holiness is but a reflection of that which is inherent in God. And the holiness of the name of God is but the holiness of the God who bears the name.

Heaven continually resounds with anthems praising God's holiness. The Seraphim and the Cherubim, assisted by the lesser orders of angels, and the innumerable hosts of the saints made perfect, make Heaven ring with responsive choruses, the refrain of which is: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." And everything in creation, not directly and wholly under the dominion of sin, joins in the chorus of praise of God's holiness. The myriad spheres which inhabit space, and move in ordered sequence, form each a part of that orchestra of nature which, as a harp of ten thousand strings, has caught up the glad refrain: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

What, then, can we poor sinful creatures do, as individuals, or collectively, in the way of adding to the sum total of the honor given to God? It should be self-evident that no creature, nor yet a combination of all creatures, can add one jot or tittle to the intrinsic holiness of God, or His name, which is the same thing. God is perfect in holiness. With all His power and wisdom He cannot make Himself one whit hollower. How much less could any creature, or all creatures combined, for that matter, do this. What, then, is the force of this first petition: Hallowed be Thy name? It means just this, we are to seek, more and more fully, to come to an understanding of how holy God is, and give Him the reverence, the adoration, due His exalted character. And it means to use every legitimate means at our disposal to get others to know Him as He is, and to give to Him the honor due Him.

Here is a condition of affairs among men that will help to illustrate our point. Let us suppose that in an adjoining state there is a man who is a paragon of human virtues. He is possessed of encyclopedic knowledge, of vast wealth, and philanthropic disposition. He dispenses his knowledge and his wealth liberally for the good of others. Would not such a man deserve to be known? The world is better off for knowing such men where they exist. They are entirely too rare. But if men never hear of such a man they cannot appreciate him, they cannot render him his due. When some one comes and tells us, then we also are in a position to sing his praises. Something like this is the meaning of the first petition. God is all that He is whether there is a single creature in all the universe has authoritative knowledge of Him, and sings His praises, or not. But God created man to bless him with the riches which flow right out of His own being. God is there to bless. There are blessings which all have received. There are higher blessings which millions upon millions have received. But there are many other millions who do not know God, or recognize the source of all the good things they have received. It is the business, and the highest privilege, and honor, of those who do know Him to tell those who do not about Him; to get them really to know Him, and join in singing His praise. And every additional soul brought to know God, to bow at His throne, to receive His higher blessings, and to join in singing His praise, increases just that much the circle wherein God's name is hallowed. This is a big subject, a worthy subject; let us more fully still ponder this petition which treats of the hallowing of God's name.

1. Reverence and Worship the Person

We hallow God's name when we reverence and worship the Person who bears the name.

God is not known, not revered, not adored on earth as He deserves to be; not even by His best children. How many know the minimum about Him, and give Him scarcely no reverence. There is a confession contained by implication in the first petition; for we are asking God to give us a more adequate knowledge of Himself, and then the ability to turn our knowledge into action, into worship.

As the tiny pail of water, which the child dips up by the sandy beach, is to the content of old ocean, so in comparison is our knowledge of God by

the side of what there is to be known of Him. So the very first step in the hallowing of God's name is the getting of a clearer vision, a more sympathetic knowledge of God Himself, His nature and attributes. Before we can even begin adequately to hallow God's name, by word, or in deed, we must bask in the mellowing, transfusing, transforming light of His presence. God is known not only by intellectual effort, but by spiritual contact.

In the very nature of things, our understanding of God is largely determined by the image of Him which our intellectual processes present to the inner self. But by natural endowment alone man's understanding of God is grossly perverted. And all the culture of human life, not breathed upon by the Spirit of God Himself, is inadequate to give a right understanding of God. This is the reason the heathen conception of God, even under the most favorable conditions, comes far short of the truth; is often ridiculous, and not infrequently monstrous. Instead of seeing in God the sublimation of all that is beautiful, their vision of Him is distorted, and often positively repulsive. Instead of regarding Him as the all-holy, God is often thought by them to be indifferent to morality, if not the patron of immorality. Instead of finding the basis and standard of all the virtues in God, they have taken themselves as the pattern in the light of which they conceived their God, consequently their idea of Him is usually that He is a kind of despot, heartless with respect to man's fate, and rather favoring, than otherwise, the iron rule of the strong and heartless over the weak and unfortunate.

It is needless to say that such a conception, or anything like it, of our God, the triune God of Heaven, not only does Him no honor; but dishonors Him. We can honor God only when we know Him as He is, that is, when what we know is true to the facts. Not that we can know more than a fraction of all that God is, but what we do know must be correct. And just because the knowledge even of those who have begun truly to know God is narrow, starved and stunted, their efforts to hallow His name are correspondingly feeble. The fuller and richer man's knowledge of God, the larger the measure of his capability of hallowing His name, if the intellectual knowledge is permeated and strengthened by the knowledge which comes from the contact of spirit with Spirit.

When a man truly knows God, not as a monster of power; but as a Father, wholly loving, patient, and merciful: when men know God in His Son, Christ Jesus, a brother to men, weeping with those who weep, rejoicing with those who rejoice, going down into the valley of humiliation carrying

man's sin and shame and sorrow; going up the steep and thorny way to the mount, bearing the cross heavy with humanity's sins, and giving Himself to be transfixed on that cross, that men might escape sin's just fate; when man knows God as the Spirit of light, of holiness, and peace, brooding over man's reluctant spirit, seeking to visualize God to it, to make his heart glow once more with the returning tide of life and love divine, and to breathe upon man's troubled soul the peace which passeth understanding; when a man thus begins to understand God, as to His nature and relation to the children of men, but at the same time knows that He is ten thousand times more perfect, holy, and merciful than the farthest stretch of any man's imagination can conceive, then the foundation has been laid, then the first essential step has been taken, in truly hallowing God's name.

In what we have just said there is implied a truth which needs a larger emphasis. The name of God can never be truly hallowed save in connection with, save through, the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, I and my Father are one, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. Jesus Christ is God's only begotten, His eternally begotten Son. He is God's messenger, God's ambassador to mankind. Jesus Christ is God's greatest, most perfect, final revelation of Himself to the children of men. More than this, He is the mediator between God and man. Man is a sinner, an offender, a grievous offender. God's love overcame God's justice only in so far as to lead Him to find a substitute in whom man's sins could be punished. Jesus Christ was this willing substitute. He took man's place. He paid man's debt. He satisfied Divine justice. And now, as never, men cannot honor God and ignore, or discredit, Jesus Christ. He is the door by which men must pass if they would have audience with the occupant of the throne. "All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him." (St. John 5:23.)

The way, then, to hallow God's name is to begin by ever basking in the sunshine of God's presence by making Jesus our friend and companion; to have our whole being saturated, more and more, with a sense of God's measureless beauty and goodness. Then our whole lives will be lived in the attitude of adoration. Our souls will be enraptured with the thought of God's perfections. In spirit we will be continually on our knees before His throne. Something like this the great apostle is advocating, when he says: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you,

according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Eph. 3:14-19.)

2. Honor and Use God’s Word

We Hallow God’s Name when we Honor and Use God’s Word wherein God most clearly Reveals Himself.

In order that we may come to know God aright, and thus be prepared to reverence and adore Him as is His due, we must have a teacher. For a brief period, Jesus Christ was the world’s great teacher about God, and the things of God. And we still have His teaching. But He told us that after His departure He would send the world another teacher, who would lead all seeking souls into the knowledge of all truth. This abiding teacher of Divine truth is the Holy Spirit, and His textbook is the Bible, the book which He indited, and which He alone can rightly interpret. This is in accord with the thought of the greatest of all expounders of this petition, when he says: “God’s name is hallowed” — “when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity.”

The Bible is God’s book. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The books making up the Bible were written by men. But these men spoke, and afterwards wrote, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The primary content of the Bible is the revelation of God’s will for man’s salvation. God has made, and He is still making, other revelations of Himself. But this is the only revelation which tells us of His plans for our salvation; the only revelation from which we, with our present knowledge, are able to read the story of the Savior, who He had to be, and what He had to do, in order to be our Savior. And it is only as we accept this Word, recognizing its nature and purpose; using it as its character demands, and thus honoring it, that we honor its Author.

Suppose the Governor of our state issued a proclamation, wholly in keeping with the dignity of his high office, and recognized by a large part of the best thinking people of the state to have as its object the general good of

the citizens of the commonwealth, would it be honoring the chief Executive to pay no attention to his published will? Would it not be casting reproach upon him, and his office, to trample it underfoot, to violate its expressed wish? This would be the very height of indignity.

So it is when men neglect, despise, or pervert God's holy Word. There is no possibility of hallowing God's name apart from a right use of God's Word. It is impossible to truly honor the giver of a message, and insult his message.

All sin is the result of a perverted nature. Much sin is committed that is not wholly the result of ignorance, rather of a perverse, unregenerated heart. Some men know what is right and still do what is wrong. But there is also much that is wrong in the world which is the result of ignorance. Much that is wrong with the religious world is the result of neglect of the truth which God has given for man's guidance. Men follow their own opinions. But Jesus says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Again He says, Search the Scriptures, they testify of me. This is the reason we stick to the old Word. This is the reason we begin with our children in their tender years to teach them God's truths, as revealed in His Word. It is the only way to prepare people intelligently to hallow God's name.

Let us note a few of the flagrant examples of the way in which God's name is dishonored by denials and perversions of the teaching of His Word; by those who may think they are honoring Him.

There is nothing which does so much to emphasize God's fatherhood, to magnify His love and mercy to the children of men, as the conception and execution of His wondrous plan for man's redemption. And this story, the coming of the Son of God to become the Son of man, His giving of His life in atoning for man's sins, His resurrection for man's justification, His return to glory to spend His life in activity having as its object the application of what He has done to man's needs, this is the golden thread running through the sacred volume from beginning to end, it is the key which unlocks this treasure house of Divine riches.

How do many, who profess to be teachers of God's Word, treat these cardinal truths? They deny the divinity of Christ. They deny the necessity and validity of His atonement. They set up other plans by which men are to secure their salvation; namely, their own unaided efforts. And they seem to be oblivious of the fact that by these methods of theirs they are setting up the

premise that God either did not know the true way of salvation, or purposely left man in the dark with respect to it.

The Lord God is very outspoken in His denunciation of those who dishonor Him by dishonoring His Word. In the first chapter of Galatians, He speaks of those who follow another Gospel, a human invention, a Gospel which comes by the will of man; and of those who pervert the Gospel which came by the revelation of Jesus Christ. And He says, by the word of the apostle: Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed. The prophet Ezekiel, in chapter twenty-two, says: “Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths.” Now what is the result of such violation of God’s laws? of such corruption of the ordinances of His kingdom and house? God Himself says, “I am profaned.”

The Word of God tells us many things which hurt our pride, such as our spiritual deadness, and the weakness even of the regenerate; it tells us many things which the natural man resents, and would like to deny, even though, in heart, he knows they are true, — such as our covert faults, our foibles, our spiritual lethargy, and the like. And very often when the teacher of God’s Word is true to his calling, hews to the line, denounces sin, and insists on righteousness, he falls into disfavor. But for both teacher and pupil in God’s school there is only one thing to do if God is to be honored, and that is to recognize and accept the Master’s Word as authoritative and final. And to recognize that the giving of this Word was dictated by highest love, the desire for our highest good. Thus shall we hallow God’s name.

3. Honor the Person who Bears the Name

God’s name is hallowed when the person who bears the name is honored. God’s name is hallowed when His Word is recognized and accepted as the revelation of all needed truth. Finally, God’s name is hallowed when the example He has given us is imitated, and the precepts contained in His Word are fulfilled.

Christianity, in its final analysis, is not a theory, but a life. God has given His Word not that men may be able to say, here is a wonderful system of

philosophy; here is the explanation of the origin, the ordered existence, and the final goal of all things: the real object of it all is to tell men how to live.

Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to do a specific work; but in doing that work to set us an example, to show us how to live. He hated wickedness because it is something antagonistic to His very nature. He loved righteousness because it is the expression of His own inner life. And He shows us that living, as nearly as man can live, the way He lived means ultimate glorification and beatification. As He had to do, so we also have to walk a path more or less thorny; we will have burdens that are more or less heavy; we will have days that are cloudy, sunless and stormy; but the end will be restoration, perfection, Heaven. And now the Spirit of the most High whispers into our ears, through the Word: "Be ye imitators of God as dear children." Not to be thus minded, not to struggle toward this realization, is to dishonor the Father who sent the Christ, the Christ who came, and the Holy Spirit who comes, through the Word, to lead us to appreciate Himself and them.

We may rest assured that God would never have had His truth revealed in the Bible as a mere compend of theology, irrespective of its effects on human life. It is a book of instructions for life; laying down the principles broad and deep, and indicating very clearly what the practice of these principles is to be in the everyday life. My words, says Jesus, are spirit and life. They give life. And life is action. And the Christian life is first of all believing something, and then it is practicing what is contained in those truths which we believe.

Too many people seem to think that Christianity is the passive acceptance of a certain body of truths; and that they have discharged the sum total of their Christian obligations when they have listened respectfully to a disquisition on the two natures, the theory of the atonement, the sacraments, or the like. This is only the beginning. And a fruitless beginning unless something follows. And that essential something is to work these lofty principles into life, and make them bear fruit in the living. "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father in Heaven," says Jesus. The one who has Jesus Christ enshrined in his heart by faith, who believes in the efficacy of His blood, and all the other great truths; and then goes forth in loving gratitude to live the life that is in keeping with these truths, is hallowing God's name not only when he is gathered in some place of worship singing hymns,

praying, and reverently listening to the Word, read and preached; but when, in the spirit of the sacred service, he goes to the commonplace duties of the week.

On the other hand, no mere intellectual admiration of theological truths, no formal participation in religious service, no mere profession of adherence to Christianity, is a sufficient hallowing of God's name. The time never was when a man could acceptably worship the Christ on Sunday, and then by essentially unchristian conduct crucify the Christ during the other six days of the week. A man cannot hallow God's name by being a deacon on Sunday in the church, and a Shylock in his place of business on Monday. A man cannot drive a sharp bargain on Friday to the disadvantage of his neighbor, or collect rent from a house of prostitution on Saturday, and hallow God's name on Sunday by putting a part of his ill-smelling gain on the plate in church on Sunday. To hallow God's name we must, indeed, recognize our many imperfections, and depend much upon forgiveness, and wholly on Christ's merit; but also, by God's grace, make our lives square as nearly as possible with our profession.

Every time a man, and especially a professing Christian man, breaks one of God's Commandments he dishonors God's name. The man who is elsewhere when he ought to be in the assembly of God's people, worshiping God; the man who curses, and is vulgar, and otherwise profane; the man who is unbrotherly enough to tell tales about a neighbor to his detriment; in all these and still other ways men dishonor God. "Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonorest thou God. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you." (Rom. 2:23:24.)

How often earthly parents go through life with their heads bowed with shame, their hearts bleeding with grief, their whole life crushed and made drear and heavy by the unfilial conduct of children. It may not be the parents' fault. Right thinking people may lay no charge at their door because of conditions. But they cannot help but feel it. It is their own flesh and blood. They had reason to hope for better things. And the unthinking and unknowing will lay much of the blame on them. There is an analogy between the earthly parenthood and the Heavenly. God is our Father. He loves his children with an everlasting love. Among men His name is bound up with the name of his children. As men are constituted, many will reason from the character and conduct of the children to the character of the Parent. And

when children of His disgrace and ruin themselves God does actually feel it. So if we desire to hallow God's name we must do it not only with our lips, but with our lives. There is jubilant joy in Heaven over the sinner snatched as a brand from the burning. The joy over those children of God which, in word and work, live as God's children ought to live may not be accompanied with so much acclaim; but it is just as genuine; and it is the joy that abides undiminished.

Many of us ought to pay much more attention to this way of hallowing God's name than we do. When Jesus was near the end of His earthly life, He could look back over His career, and then look up into His Father's face and say: Father, I have glorified Thee in the earth. We reject, as unbiblical, any claim of meritoriousness. Jesus Christ is our only Savior. We cannot save ourselves. But forgiven, born again, saved, brought into living relation to all the power of Heaven, we should show our breeding as sons and daughters of the King. And this is everywhere urged upon us in the Scriptures. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. 10:31-33.) Here we have the twofold object of all such striving: the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

A consecrated life; blameless in the way of grievous offense; gentle, easily entreated, full of kindly, helpful deeds; is an argument for Christianity against which no valid counter argument can be brought. Jesus Christ came to show the world what God is, as to His nature and disposition. He could say, I am the Light of the world; look at me and know God. Now Jesus sends those in whom He has been born again out into the world that men I may see in them what He is, and what He can do for men. What kind of an impression of Jesus Christ, I of His power in the lives of men, is the world getting from us, my brethren?

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:13-16.) Thus shall we effectually hallow God's ever holy name.

The Father's Kingdom

Father, — Thy Kingdom Come. — St. Luke 11:2.

IF we have really caught something of the vision that may be caught from the mountain top to which the first petition invites us, and helps to lead us; if the beauty of the perfect holiness, which is God, and in the face of which the angels prostrate themselves and cry out: Holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, stands revealed to the gaze of our enraptured souls; if we have actually been caught up into the new Heaven which comes from a realization and a soulful appreciation of God's nature, then there will be no petition which will spring more eagerly to our lips than this second, — Father, — Thy Kingdom come.

What is the great trouble with the kingdoms of the earth, and their governments? What is back of the Wholesale murder of warfare, the animosities, the revolutions, the dissatisfaction, the anarchistic tendencies, which mar human affairs, and perplex the children of men? The condition in the outward lives of men is but an index of what is in the minds and hearts of men. Where there are honest men, good men, men who are lovers of righteousness and of their fellowmen; where there are men at the head of affairs who not only reflect the principles and sentiments of the masses, but are leaders in developing and applying these principles to the affairs of government, there things will move along peaceful lines, along lines of progress. Obsolete laws will be repealed. Good laws will be enacted. And these laws will be interpreted and applied in such manner as to serve the best interests of all the people. Men everywhere are dreaming, striving, fighting to realize some measure of this ideal. Why has it not been more fully realized? Because men generally have not yet realized that human affairs can never be what they ought to be till Divine principles become the foundation on which the superstructure of all human institutions are built, and the permeating force leavening all man's actions. When the powers that be become in reality the powers that ought to be, recognizing God Almighty as the true

over-Lord; when those subject to authority recognize that the powers that then be are of God, and deport themselves accordingly, then we will have a better condition of things in the world.

Only when the Fatherhood of God is recognized in such a realistic sense that it results in an actual brotherhood of man, a brotherhood which puts the banner of Jesus Christ at the pinnacle of the mast above the flag of empire; only when the kingdom of God becomes a kingdom within the kingdoms of the world, giving to them, however diverse may be their names and human forms, their underlying principles, and the spirit in which they are administered; only then will the affairs of men take on something of the shape, and effectiveness, which will cause Heaven to smile in approval, and men to bless the day in which they live.

How eagerly, how earnestly, then, should those who have caught the vision join in this Christ taught petition: Father, — Thy kingdom come.

That our vision may be still further clarified, our hope become still more hopeful, and our prayer be wrought into unflagging working energy, let us make a partial study of this second petition, taking as our subject, — Our Father's Kingdom.

1. Thy Kingdom Come

The existence of a kingdom implies kingship. As God has a Kingdom He must be a King. And we may profitably spend a few moments in considering the fact of God's Kingship.

This prayer is addressed to our Heavenly Father. We have considered His fatherhood. It is one of the most precious truths of our holy faith. It is the source of incalculable strength and peace. When man has come to know the fatherhood of God in the light of the redemptive work of His Son our brother, he has struck, so far as his practical needs are concerned, the richest vein in all the mines of God's truth. But fatherhood is also something human. This unquestionably helps us better to understand God's fatherhood. The known should always be a guide in the investigation of the unknown. But in this instance there is a danger present. Human fathers have their weaknesses. They are sometimes over-indulgent, sentimentally weak; they often fail to make their authority felt as their position of responsibility, and the good of their children, require. When their authority is disregarded, or

their commands openly disobeyed, there is frequently either a temporary violent explosion of anger, which brings neither respect nor lasting obedience, or but little attention is paid to the act of disobedience. Sometimes it is weakly, but ineffectually, chided in an effort to save the face of the parent who has given the commands. These failures on the part of human fathers are often consciously, or unconsciously, transferred to the heavenly Father. Men often think of Him as One who commands, but does not insist on the fulfillment of His command; as One who scolds transgressors, but never punishes more severely. Because of this inherent human tendency, it is necessary for us to keep well in mind the fact that while God is a Father, with a true father's heart, He is also a King, with all the authority, power, and positiveness which a king, of necessity, must have in order to be a successful ruler.

The Lord is King, the King of all kings. He has absolute dominion over all things. It is inherent, not acquired, or delegated. There is not a being on earth, or in the nether regions, or in the highest Heaven over which God does not extend His kingly prerogatives. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Ps. 24:1.) "He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou." (Dan. 4:35.) Nature hints at God's kingship, Revelation confirms it. And from it He can never be deposed.

As king God lays down laws, beneficent laws, for the guidance of all His creatures. There are laws of nature, so-called, for the material universe, and man's physical being. There are moral and spiritual laws for man as a rational creature, made in God's image. And God is not going to forget any of these laws. They are but the operation of His perpetually forth-going sovereign will. There is not going to be any weak yielding to stubborn children. On God's part there are never any tempests in a teapot, and nothing more, when His children transgress. He is King. Obedience must be rendered, or the consequences taken.

For those who have the believing, loving, confiding heart of spiritual childhood; who are really desirous of doing the Father's will, but find themselves weak and forgetful, and, often, in the very attempt to do the Father's bidding, reveal their clumsiness and lack of knowledge, and, as a consequence, get themselves into all kinds of trouble; to all such the Father-King is very, very tender. He is the gentle Shepherd who takes up the weary,

straying lambkin and carries it on His own shoulder. He is like the loving mother who takes up her sick, feverish, fretful child, presses it close to her throbbing bosom, soothes its burning brow with the magic touch of her mother-hand, and calms the troubled heart with her softly spoken words of love. Yes, more than all this the Heavenly Father does for all those who are desirous of doing His will, but make partial failure because of lack of understanding, and weakness. He has given us a Savior to atone for our sins, to make good our failures. But let us not forget, my brethren, that He who is so patient, so tender, so forgiving, is, at the same time, our King, the King of kings.

As King the Lord exercises all possible patience, not only in seeking to correct the failures of the well-disposed, but to win even the willfully disobedient. But where patient love fails to win, there judgment will be visited without weakness. God is King, His sovereignty cannot be continually abused.

Oh let us not forget, brethren, that we are dealing with a King, a King who has an absolutely infinite authority, a King who fulfills every word He has ever spoken, whether it be a promise of love, or a declaration of justice. And let us not forget that when we pray the second petition we are praying to the Father who is at the same time a King, and that we are praying for Him to come as a King as well as a Father. And when we, as the King's subjects, speak to others, bearing the King's message, we cannot, of course, forget to tell them of the Fatherly love and mercy, the eager desire to save, which burns in the King's breast; but let us not fail, it would be loveless to do so, to impress them with the fact of His Kingly power, and His Kingly wrath against all lovelessness, uncleanness, and rebelliousness against His blessed reign.

2. God Has A Kingdom

God is a King, and He has a Kingdom.

Do we understand, as we should, the nature of the Kingdom for the coming of which we pray in the second petition? Let us now consider this point.

Father, — Thy kingdom come. No man is going to pray very earnestly, or work very hard, for something concerning the nature and purpose of which he is largely in the dark. Of course, if we have reasonably adequate

conception of the Father-King, His personal nature and His plans, we cannot fail having some understanding of the general nature of the work He is doing. And that might suffice to satisfy us that whatever He does is well done, and that only good can come out of it for all His children. Nevertheless we should endeavor to know all we can about this Kingdom, what it is, what its purpose is, and how it is ordered. All the more so as we are taught to pray and work for its prosperity.

The term, Kingdom of God, or of Christ, is used in Scripture with different significations. There is a sense in which God's Kingdom is one. He is King over all things. And probably from His great throne He looks out over all His handiwork, and regards each sphere of activity and influence as an integral part of the great whole. When God is sending the planets on their course, and assigning to them their functions; when He overrules the tempest and the earthquake. and the devilish deeds of men, and makes them all bend to His purpose so that in the end they further His plans, and good comes out of them for His elect, it is all a part of His general kingship. When the great Father stoops to comfort a bruised heart, and makes plans for man's salvation which compass Heaven and earth, it is a part of His universal Kingship. When God sits on His central throne of power, from which reach out to the farthest confines of space the reins which, in His hands, guide the functions, and decide the destiny, of all being; when He gathers about Him the angels and the saints made perfect to do Him homage, it is all a part of His general Kingship. Still, more perhaps for our guidance and convenience than any other purpose, the Word of God divides His authority and the spheres of influence into three different kingdoms; the kingdoms of power, grace, and glory.

First of all, there is the kingdom of power; from the throne of which all things are directed, or overruled, in Heaven above, and on the earth. This is the kingdom, and the Divine kingship, of which such passages as this speak: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the Heaven, and in the earth, is Thine: Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all." (1 Chron. 29:11.) And again, "The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is His also. The sea is His, and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land." (Ps. 95:4, 5.)

In the kingdom of power God has always exercised His kingship. Here He is king for ever and ever. He could not be God if He did not have and exercise this power. But there is another kingdom which is of time, and has to do especially with the affairs of sinful men. It is called the kingdom of grace. This kingdom also is ruled from the throne of Heaven. It is a kingdom in which God alone is King. But in this kingdom His sphere of activity is chiefly in the hearts and lives of mankind. Its purpose is, through the activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, to make men heavenly minded here in this world, and, having thus fitted them for Heaven, to finally lead them to it as their permanent home.

For the establishment of this kingdom of grace God the Father sent down His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to assume into indissoluble union with His Godhead a human nature, in order that He might perfectly fulfill for us God's holy Law; that He might suffer and die and thereby make satisfaction for the sins of all mankind; to give an example of what human life once was, and what it may again become if it suffers itself to be renewed into the image of God; to give to the world the Gospel message of God's love and mercy as exhibited in the life and work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus had completed His work on earth, He went back to Heaven in order to send the Holy Spirit, who, through the Word and Sacraments, works to bring men into a realizing sense of the true nature of sin, a sorrow for sin, and to faith in Jesus as their Savior. Wherever there are those who have thus become new creatures in Christ, there we have the Church of God, there is the kingdom of grace.

There was such a kingdom of grace ever since the dawn of human history. To the progenitor of the race; to the patriarchs, in the giving of the Law itself, and in all their prophetic utterances, there were promises of grace. They all centered in Christ, then as now. Before His incarnation men trusted in Him as the Christ to come, just as we now trust in Him as the Christ who has come, the Christ of history.

The kingdom of grace, the Christian Church, having its being in a material world; having as its constituency human beings with a physical nature; has to deal somewhat with material things. We have Church buildings; external organizations, with expressed constitutional provisions; even the very gifts of Heaven are administered through material vehicles. But fundamentally, the kingdom of God known as the kingdom of grace is a spiritual entity. The materialities are but the visible signs of the soul within. Certain

Pharisees once came to Christ and demanded of Him that He should tell them when the kingdom of God was going to come. He replied: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (St. Luke 17:20:21.) Our knowledge of God, our trust in Him, our love for Him in the face of Jesus Christ; our love for the things which God loves, truth, justice, righteousness, holiness, purity; and the practice of these virtues in our intercourse with our brethren of mankind; and then the result of the practice of these virtues in our own souls, — peace, hope, joy; these are the things of which the kingdom of God on earth consists. This is what the great Apostle means when he says: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.)

Finally, this kingdom of grace, buffeted much in the world; weak in itself, strong only in Christ; shall lay aside its swaddling clothes, and unfold into the kingdom of glory. Indeed, this process of transition is constantly going on.

The Christian Church, the kingdom of grace, has been scoffed at by many. There are many today who are asking whether she has not failed in her mission. The Church has not been all that she might have been, she has not done all that she should have done; not because her great Captain is not perfect, not because the means given her with which to work are not perfect; but because we ourselves are not perfect, we have not followed our Captain, Christ Jesus, as we should have followed Him, we have not used the means He has put into our hands as we might have used them. But the Church of God has not failed. No, a thousand times no. The Church has won splendid victories. She is still winning victories. Everything which is best in human life, the things really worth while, the things destined to endure, have come, directly or indirectly, from God's Church as its fostering mother. And in spite of the devil's malignant power, she is going to keep on winning victories even to the end. But the time will come when her work will be done, when the last possible improvement will have been made in the affairs of men, when the last soul will have been won as a brand from the burning, "Then cometh the end, when He delivereth up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet." (1 Cor. 15:24:25.) Then there shall be but the Church triumphant, perfected; the kingdom of glory.

Now for which kingdom are we praying when, in these Christ taught words, we say: Thy kingdom come? It would not be true, at least not safe, to say that any phase of God's kingdom, or kingship is excluded. We adore, we praise and glorify Him because He is king supreme over all things. We rejoice because all of us, and all things, come within the scope of God's almighty and beneficent rule. But it seems very clear from the teaching of Scripture that it is the kingdoms of grace and of glory, the Church militant and the Church triumphant, which we are to have specially in mind and heart when we pray, — Thy kingdom come; for the extension of the one, the final, full realization of the other. This is the kingdom, for the two are but different phases of the same thing, in which all man's highest interests are involved; as this kingdom comes into its own all other interests, all other kingdoms with which men have anything to do, are blessed.

3. Father, — Thy kingdom come

We have together pondered some thoughts concerning God's kingdom, its nature, and its significance to the children of men. Let us yet, for a moment, cast the searchlight of God's truth on our own inner lives, that we may discover whether the interests of this kingdom are resting, as they should, on our hearts.

The kingdom of God; a kingdom of faith, of love, of truth, of righteousness, of service, of peace, and joy. Assuredly, then, much of that which we see around us is not of God's kingdom. Everywhere there is that which is rampantly selfish and sottish; greed is trampling ruthlessly on the rights of others, and seeking to throttle those who ought to be esteemed as brothers; godless rivalry and ambition vaunt themselves, and water God's fair lands with streams of blood; drunkenness and lust are prevalent; and the mad, insatiable chase after pleasure is ruining not only the morals of many, but unfitting them for any serious contemplation, or occupation in life. These things are not of the kingdom of God. They are not only not of God's kingdom, but with their serpentine folds they are seeking to crush the life out of His kingdom.

In spite of all of which we have spoken, and much more which might have been mentioned, there is a kingdom of God on earth. And God's heart is in it. It is precious to Him. It was bought with the precious blood of Jesus

Christ. The dangers of those who ought to be in this kingdom, but refuse its refuge, once brought tears to the eyes of God's own Son. Who will say that the same feeling is not in the heart of God still? The labors and perils of those who have been born again, who have caught glimpses at least of the vision of better things, and are trying to realize them in their own lives; but are sore beset by the beasts which spring from the pit, are noted in heaven; for them Jesus ever intercedes by the Father's throne.

Do these things mean anything to us? Do conditions in the world never appall us, conditions in the Church never distress us? Does the sight of those bound with the fetters of sin, ignorantly it may be, but; nevertheless, bound by the corroding and destroying chains of sin, never stir our hearts, and stimulate us to aid in their rescue? Do conditions in the Church, the lethargy and somnolence of so many who ought to be wide awake, and energetically active, never make us feel that we must redouble our efforts so as to counterbalance their indifference? Has the thought of what the world is missing by not allowing the Christ to reign over it in all the healing plenitude of His love and grace imbued power never fill our hearts with an inexpressible pity? There are times at least when all who are, in any real measure, God's enlightened children feel something of these emotions. How often, then; how regularly, too, this should drive us to our knees. How earnestly it should lead us to pray: Father, — Thy kingdom come. The coming of God's kingdom; the coming of God Himself; the soul-thirsty appropriation of all His gifts of grace, is the only salvation for any of the world's wounds.

"Father, let Thy kingdom come, —
Let it come with living power;
Speak at length the final word,
Usher in the triumph hour.

"As it came in days of old,
In the deepest hearts of men,
When the martyrs died for Thee,
Let it come, O God, again.

"Break, triumphant day of God!
Break at last, our hearts to cheer;
Eager souls and holy songs
Wait to hail Thy dawning here."

The Coming Of God's Kingdom

When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in Heaven, — Thy kingdom come. — St. Luke 11:2.

THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM! What does this mean? To understand this we must recall what God's Kingdom is. Specifically it is the Kingdom of grace and of glory. It is the institution, the sphere of influence, in which, and by which, God works for man's good, and his ultimate perfect salvation. As this work prospers, as the things of God get hold of larger numbers of men, and fuller hold of those it has already embraced; as men, individually, and collectively, are truly lifted God-ward, the Kingdom of God comes among men.

Let us think of the countless souls brought into living relation to God through faith in Christ Jesus, repentant, forgiven, cleansed, strengthened, living in the light of new ideals, possessed of a power increasingly making for righteousness; let us think of all the conflicts against sin which these newborn children of God have precipitated, in their own inner lives, in the world about them, and of the victories they have won, the blessings of which remain to enrich the world; this is the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Who can count the number of those who, since time began, have learned to know God, the true, the living, the triune God, as their Father; Jesus Christ as Savior and friend; the Holy Spirit as their enlightener and comforter? Who can properly estimate the value to the world, in every department of its multiplied activity, of the influence of this seed of Heaven? Who would attempt to enumerate a thousandth part of the peace, the courage, the hope, the joy which has filled the souls of men as a result of this indwelling of Divine grace? This is the coming of the Father's Kingdom.

Eventually there is going to be a great day of clarification and restoration. The moral and spiritual atmosphere is going to be cleared up. Not all men are going to become saints, but wickedness is going to be put down

with an irresistibly strong arm. God is going to testify unmistakably in action the truth of His oft proclaimed Word. The forces of righteousness in this world will be enabled to lift up their heads, because the day of their complete triumph is at hand. God and His people will have unhindered sway. This is the ultimate goal which the Savior had in mind when He taught us to pray: Father, Thy Kingdom come.

At no time as yet has God's Kingdom come in all the plenitude of its conquering power. There has never been a time when improvement was not possible. There never will be such a time till the day of final, complete reparation and restoration breaks. This is not because God lacks in power. He has the power to crush all opposition. But people crushed into submission are not necessarily saved, because they may not be inwardly changed. This Kingdom of God is one of moral suasion, therefore built up by a process of enlightenment, and inner change. As men have the power of resisting all overtures and influences, even of God Himself, the time will never come, while the present order obtains, that the petition will not be in place — Father, Thy Kingdom Come.

1. Father, Thy Kingdom come

This prayer is a confession; a confession of weakness and need.

It will take little argument, I think, to convince the majority of men that things in this old world, in general, are not what they should be. We are very far from an ideal condition, even as the better part of mankind are capable of conceiving of ideals. Yea, we can see that the very ideals of a large part of the world are gross, temporal, materialistic, sensual. To get power, honor, prestige; in any way, at any price; to enjoy one's self in the flesh, eating, drinking, indulging the senses; these things about cover the ideals of very, very many. And there are very many who live below the line of a somewhat refined animality.

The ideal of God's Kingdom is peace. Peace, within, or without; the world at large has, in large measure, lost the meaning of this word. Cyclones of passion are devastating the world. The clove of peace has flown to the mountains and hidden herself. Death, sudden death, death to the young and vigorous, stalks as the haunting, taunting, beckoning specter of every land. Murder and rapine are the order of the day. Streams of blood deluge

the lands. The press, that mighty molder of public opinion, carries on a never ending propaganda of hate. A fever of unrest, of growing dissatisfaction, foreboding widespread revolution, throbs in the temples, and parches the hearts of the peoples of the world. Surely there is need of the prayer, Father, Thy Kingdom come. May the throes of the present be the birth-pains which shall usher in a new day of a larger peace.

The ideal of God's Kingdom is a reign of love. God is love. All His deeds are prompted by love. All who are begotten of God in the second birth are born to a life of love. Love is the fostering mother of peace, and all the benevolent virtues. But who preaches love today? Only a few who are considered relics of a bygone age, or dreamers of an impossible, at least a far-distant, future. Who practices love today outside of the professions of the sanctuary? An elect few only. Not love, but the Moloch of greed stalks the land; big, hungry, insatiable. With ogre eyes and octopus arms, he seeks to embrace the world; not to nourish and bless, but to squeeze dry for his own delectation. This monster sups, with gusto, on the tears and blood, not only of manhood, but of widows and orphans. And this fiend is incarnate not only in capitalistic corporations, this virus has become impregnate in the blood of all classes. Even on the part of those who would scorn to stoop to active deeds of violence, or spoliation, how little moved they are at the sight of the miseries of others. We have become calloused at heart. We palliate our consciences by a little sentimental vapping, and excuse our inertness by saying, nothing can be done about it. How much the world needs a new baptism of love, that we may pray more fervently, and work as we pray: Father, Thy Kingdom come.

Righteousness, justice, the rule of the golden rule, is one of the ideals of Our Father's Kingdom. The idea of Divine fatherhood, and human brotherhood, which permeates and dominates the whole of the Lord's Prayer, are the premises out of which have been derived the principle of human solidarity; the principle that all men are brethren; the soil out of which has grown the stately tree of democracy, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These related words have become slogans with many, but they represent a beautiful theory vaunted by the many, observed by the few in practice. The spirit of exploitation is abroad in the world. Weak nations are taken advantage of by the stronger, just as the weaker individuals are taken advantage of by stronger men and organizations. Knowledge is cornered, and made to serve the selfish purposes of the rich and grasping. Sabotage, riot, and cruelty are

employed on the other side. Justice is well represented by the blinded goddess with the balances; for it is a stranger to most living breasts. Father of all righteousness, and love; Dispenser of justice, the healer of wounds, Thy kingdom come.

A state of society where purity is one of the priceless possessions of all classes is another of the ideals of God's Kingdom. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. According to this standard, how many shall see God? how many are in His Kingdom? Purity! with fifty-three out of every hundred of our young men, and more than twenty out of every hundred even of our young women of our whole land venereally diseased, how many are pure? With the screen, and the novel, and a dozen other agencies, vying with each other in pandering to the lowest in human nature, how many remain pure in thought? With fashion, the tyrannical dame, whose dictates, however foolish, few seem strong enough to resist, insisting on dresses abbreviated at both ends, and what remains largely of transparencies, who remains pure, at least in heart? With young men and women riding around in automobiles through secluded lanes and sylvan retreats till twelve and one o'clock at night unattended, who remains pure? Down upon your knees, ye people of God, ye little remnant, and pray: Father, Thy Kingdom come.

Even in the Kingdom of God specifically speaking, that is, in the Church, there is plenty of room for the prayer, Father, Thy Kingdom come. Much, of God's truth, on which His Kingdom is built, is perverted; more of it is faultily understood; many of God's truths where not perverted, have but a feeble hold on many of us; and there is no little room for improvement on the part of the best of us. There is a strength of faith, there are heights of devotion, there is a measure of Christian attainment, visions of which we have caught, aspirations for which we have entertained; but, alas, our progress in attainment is slow and painful. We are the victims of such conflicting emotions. The urge of the Spirit is strong in us today. Tomorrow the flesh is in the saddle, and pulls us strongly in the opposite direction. Today the will seems to be largely liberated and dominant, tomorrow it is in bondage, and seems incapable of asserting itself. O wretched people that we are! Father, Thy Kingdom come. The work is Thine. Pity us, Thy children in our weakness, the world in its blindness. Anoint the blind eyes that they may see. Tear off the shackles that we may be strong. Come with a larger power, break down the evil, build up the good.

2. The second petition, — Father, Thy Kingdom Come

The second petition, — Father, Thy Kingdom come, is not only a confession of failure, of need, on our part; it is also an expression of our hope, a statement of our faith. God's Kingdom is coming, it is going to continue to come, it is going gloriously to triumph.

Father, Thy Kingdom come, is a sigh when we look at ourselves, and conditions in the world; it is a confession of partial failure when we measure what is with what might be, what ought to be; but it is a prayer of hope and faith when we look up into the face of God, Our Father.

Jesus Christ put these words about the coming of the Kingdom on our lips. This fact alone, in spite of all apparent evidence to the contrary, satisfies us that God's Kingdom is going to continue to come, and that a larger coming is possible, that a final triumph is on the way.

Conditions in the world are not what they should be, no one questions that; but what would they be if it: was not for the leaven of God's Kingdom? The best answer to this question is simply to compare conditions in lands where, for generations and ages, the Kingdom of God, as represented by the Gospel dispensation, is not known; and then to witness the change which the coming of the Kingdom produces in the whole round of human life, from the expression of the countenance, to the mode of daily living.

The history of nineteen hundred years is the indisputable witness not only to the existence, but the worth, of God's Kingdom. Jesus came to give the Kingdom of God, which had existed from the beginning of human history, a new form; to give substance to the shadows, to change prophecy into history. His Kingdom began in a very small way, like a grain of mustard seed. His Apostles were taught to pray, and all disciples since have been taught to pray — Father, Thy Kingdom come. And it has been coming all these years, not only in the sense of being passed on from generation to generation; but in the sense of being a growing Kingdom. It has been changing for the better all human institutions. It has transformed all parts of the earth where its banner has been planted. And when we pray this petition aright, in the light of our knowledge of the King and the history of His Kingdom, it is expressive of the faith that the Kingdom is still going to come, come till it finally triumphs.

There are those who speak much of the coming of the kingdom of God, but have in mind only improvement in the material, intellectual, and social spheres of life. As working conditions are improved, as poverty gives place to the comforts of life, as the hours of labor are reduced and the wage increased, as slavery gives way to freedom, as the oppression of the class gives way to the equality of the mass, as causes of suffering are reduced and the proportion of ease and well-being increased; many will speak of this as the coming of the Kingdom of God. These things are the concomitants, the inevitable results, of the coming of the Father's Kingdom; but not the coming of the Kingdom itself, specifically speaking. We might have a material Utopia, a political and social paradise, where all institutions were fostering parents of man's material well-being; where capital and labor worked sincerely for mutual interests, where science worked, disinterestedly, and successfully, for the elimination of all possible human ills, and still not have a kingdom where men are right with God, and right with men because they are first of all right with God. There may be a decent state of society without faith in Jesus Christ as man's only Savior, which is the absolute requisite of the Kingdom of God, specifically so designated.

No political order is ever going to banish war and give us universal and abiding peace. No mere humanitarian brotherhood is going to banish autocracy and national and international jealousies. No mere economic system is going to be devised which will destroy selfishness and its rapacity. It takes men with changed hearts to make these principles effective in practice. And a fundamentally changed life is brought about only by the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, leaders of the Church have often failed to effect by preaching of God's Word what should have been effected, by not proclaiming, with clearness and emphasis, that the truth of God is a practical discipline, having its effect upon every relation of life. Our preaching has often been too individualistic and parochial. The principles of the Divine economy are for legislative assemblies, for executive chambers, for those who wear the judicial ermine, for those in charge of the world's great affairs, the laborer at the bench. When we have put these principles in the minds and hearts of men, and impressed them with the truth that they must be put into practice everywhere we have done the most and the best possible for the coming of the larger Kingdom of God.

The best in human life for this world always accompanies the establishment of the real Kingdom of God. And the members of this Kingdom

should be, and generally are, the foremost and most effective workers for the general good of humanity. And when we get God's truth to functioning as it should in all the relations of life on the part of its professors, this is going to be still more fully the case. But we must nevertheless not fail to distinguish between that which constitutes the essential Kingdom of God, and that which is the logical and inevitable result of the working of Divine principles in the lives of the citizenship of God's Kingdom. In this direction, too, we have faith that God's Kingdom is coming. God is working here also, and He is not going to fail.

The second petition is essentially a missionary prayer; a prayer that those still dwelling in spiritual darkness, prostrating themselves before dumb idols, macerating and lacerating themselves in hope of obtaining merit, crying out in fear, striving for peace and finding it not; that all these may be given the Gospel, may learn to know God's fatherhood in the face of Jesus Christ, and find pardon and peace for their souls. As we love our own souls; as we learn, in the light of our Savior's passion, the value of human souls everywhere, more earnestly, more frequently, more in the spirit of Jacob wrestling with the Lord, and refusing to let go till he received the desired blessing, we will pray the Church's great missionary prayer, — Father, Thy Kingdom come. And it must be with the faith that God will never fail to do His part in the coming of His Kingdom.

3. Father, Thy Kingdom come

This petition, rightly understood, is an expression of determination, on the prayer's part, to do his part in furthering the coming of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom for which Jesus taught His followers to pray is the Father's Kingdom, God's Kingdom. He established it. He controls it. The means by which it is furthered are of His ordination. Their efficacy comes wholly from Him. Man, with all his knowledge, with all his inventive genius, with all his conquering skill and power in many directions, cannot, of himself, by any means of his own contrivance, bring about the coming of God's Kingdom, no, not so much as a hair's breadth. Though all the wisdom of the world, and all the effectiveness of all the oratorical genius of all the world, backed by all the means of all the millionaires of the world, were reproduced in one man, or a company of such men, they could not, un-

equipped by Heaven, bring one soul into God's Kingdom. It is God that worketh in man both to will and to do of His good pleasure. But God has chosen to use men, regenerated, Spirit-filled men, not mere material agencies, not angels from Heaven, to usher in the continued and enlarged coming of His Kingdom. By the preaching of His Word, the Law and the Gospel, by the administration of the Sacraments, God wins men and women for His Kingdom. With the winning of each additional soul there is a new coming of God's Kingdom. With each step in the enlightenment and consecration of those already won for the Kingdom there is a larger coming of God's Kingdom. And God takes those whom He has thus won for His Kingdom, and made over after His own heart, puts His agencies in their hearts and in their hands, and sends them forth to win other souls for His Kingdom. This is exactly what Jesus means when He says: Go ye into all the world, preach the Gospel to every creature, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you even to the end of the world. And again, Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

No one intelligently, or consecratedly, prays this prayer who is not willing to be used of God in furthering His plans, of building up His Kingdom. How often do we directly and specifically think of the poor languishing, famishing souls outside of God's Kingdom, at home or abroad, when we pray this petition? To how many of these people at home have we spoken of the Kingdom, and offered to break to them the bread of life? What efforts are we willing to make, what sacrifices, to lay upon God's altar, that the Gospel may be carried to the destitute heathen abroad? Do we ever think of giving our sons, or daughters, for this work? of suggesting to them the blessedness of this work? How many of our young men and women, when thinking of the choice of a life-calling, take this field of activity into consideration? All these things are upon the very surface of the petition, Father, Thy Kingdom come.

Christianity is the most unselfish religion the world has ever seen. It never has been content, it never can be content, to absorb all the blessings and enjoy them, thoughtless of the needs of others. Jesus came as the result of God's love for the world. He died for all. His disciples began the work in Jerusalem, but — they could not remain content to confine their labors there. Their love for Christ, their love for souls, impelled them to carry the

Gospel message of love to the ends of the earth. How is it with us? The world is open to the messenger of the cross of Christ as it was not in Apostolic days. Are we as eager to have the saving truth carried to them as the manufacturer and the merchant is to have their wares conveyed to them? Are we as desirous of winning their souls as the trader is to win their ivory, balsams, and other salable commodities? God measures our standing in His Kingdom very largely by the way we pray, — Thy Kingdom come; and by the way we lend ourselves to the answering of this prayer.

One may say, but I have not got this desire for the good of other souls; I am not impelled to do these things which God's Word prescribes, and their good requires. This is no excuse, but a condemnation of self. God has given us the means for soul culture; for enlightening the mind, and warming the heart. And one of the first evidences of this culture is concern for our own and others' souls.

One of the greatest human interpreters of the second petition tells us that it is, primarily, a prayer that the Kingdom of God may come to us, come in an ever increasing measure, with an ever larger compelling power. This is not that we are to be concerned only about ourselves; but because only in this way can we possibly have the interests we should have, and be equipped for the work we ought to do. How about it? Are we nurturing our spiritual life as we should? Are we living in the Word? Are we asking God's Spirit to lead us into all truth?

Assuredly, as Christians, we pray, with some unction and enthusiasm: Father, Thy Kingdom come. If this is a real prayer, and not a mere form of words, then we must use the means of grace that we ourselves may grow in knowledge and power, so that, by precept and example, we may be effective workers for the coming of God's Kingdom into the lives of others. As the truth of God is revealed to us from the Word in larger measure, we must live it, put it into daily practice so that we shall not, by and by, be merely the possessors of a dilettant knowledge; but efficient workers with the tools the use and power of which we know and appreciate.

Father, Thy Kingdom come. In praying this prayer, and practicing its precept, we will meet with disappointments and discouragements. That is to be expected in a world like this. But we must not allow ourselves to become cast down. Faint hearts never accomplish anything. Let us take our troubles to the Lord. He it is who must break for us every evil counsel and purpose. And He will do it. There is not a single thing God wants done, that He

wants men to do, that they cannot do; if they will go about it in God's way, with God's means.

In Christ's own day He said: The fields are ripe to the harvest, but the laborers are few. It is so still. And many who are laborers are dilatory, and clumsy. Meanwhile the Kingdom of God is retarded. Let us to our knees; let us pray from our hearts, — Father, Thy Kingdom come; let it come to us with controlling power, let it come with converting power to all the world; and then let us work with our hands, our lips, our whole lives, that God's Kingdom may come.

The day is coming, it may be near, when all opposition to God's Kingdom will be brought to bay and overcome; the blinding lightning flashes will cease, the rolling thunders will die away; and the darkness will give way to splendid day. Then He whose the Kingdom is will come. That which molested and retarded the coming of the Kingdom will be put in chains forever. And the members of the Kingdom, even the poorest and weakest of the true members, cured forever of all their ailments, will triumph with their Lord forever. This is the end to which we look when we pray, — Father, Thy Kingdom come. Lord Jesus speed the day of our triumph in Thine.

God's Holy Will

Father, — Thy will be done. — St. Luke 11:2.

This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life. — St. John 6:40.

THIS THIRD PETITION is the last one which looks directly God-ward. We must look Heaven-ward before we can get the right setting, and the proper coloring, for the things of earth. Only as we learn to know the Father in Heaven; the holiness, the glory of His name; the character and purpose of His Kingdom; and the gracious perfection of His will, can we pass from the white light of Heaven, past the penumbra, into the dark and troubled shades of earth, and have a proper valuation of the things of time and sense. It is only in the light of Heaven that we can form a proper judgment of the things of earth. We must turn from the presence of God if we would know man and his needs aright.

In the first three petitions our thoughts are directed, primarily, Heavenward; but we are not on that account unmindful of our own good, and the good of our fellowmen. Indeed, is not God our Father? When the Father's name is hallowed, are not the children blessed and honored? When the Father's Kingdom comes, are not His children the beneficiaries of His estate? When the Father's will is done, in us, by us, among us, does not that mean that by just so much we are becoming more godlike, and realizing in so far the harmonies, the beauties, the blessedness, and the glories of the Divinely ordained order? There is no more direct, no more certain, way of praying for our own good, and the good of all, than by the use of the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer. And there are few things more needed in our lives than the realization of this truth.

These three petitions, dealing with the Name, the Kingdom, and the Will of the Heavenly Father, are closely related; indeed, they are interpenetrative: but they are not merely verbal variations of one and the same thought.

Hallowed be Thy name, O God, the Father, is the petition the God-man puts into our hearts, and upon our lips, as a plea that we may come, more and more, to think less of things, less of self and our mere material welfare, and more of God. It is a prayer that God may come to occupy, as He deserves, the supreme place in our thoughts and affections. Thy Kingdom come is the prayer that in us, and through us, and all around us, in all human affairs, God may, more and more, have His way, not by force, but by intellectual enlightenment, and moral and spiritual suasion, and the willing obedience of newborn creatures. In our present lesson, Thy will be done, we are asking for that which alone makes possible in us the realization of the first and second petitions; namely, the understanding of God's will, and the complete surrender of our wills to His will, the conformity of our wills to His.

For further consideration, let us take up this third petition; Father, Thy Will be done.

1. What Is The Will of God For Which We Are Asked to Pray?

As we stand face to face with these words, it seems that the first natural question to ask is as to the nature of God's will. What is the will of God for the doing of which we are asked to pray? No one can do, save by accident, the will of another without being informed as to what that will is.

There is a supreme will; an intelligent, personal will, which governs the universe. This absolute will is that of Our Father in Heaven. It is possible for creatures, for a time, and to a certain extent, to raise their wills against this central, supreme will; because, being rational, responsible creatures, they were themselves given a certain amount of freedom of will. But all things must, in the course of time, be brought into subjection to God's will. What this will is, so far as we are concerned, has been clearly revealed to us; for it would not seem right to hold us responsible for that concerning which, at some time, we had not been enlightened.

In discussing the nature of God's will, we are not going to pause to consider, at any length, what God's will is in the realm of nature. Not because this phase of the subject is without interest or profit, not because there is nothing revealed concerning His will in this sphere; but because it would take us unnecessarily far afield. It will suffice to recall that we are assured

that in every sphere that can have any possible bearing on the welfare of His children, the Father's will is dominant for their good. And that in every sphere, to the farthest boundaries of boundless space, God's will rules, and overrules, for the vindication and glorification of all the attributes which make up the being of God, — such as truth, honor, purity, righteousness, justice, mercy and love.

Now what is God's will with respect to us, the children of men, individually and collectively? This is the subject of paramount interest to all of us, whether we recognize it to be so or not. With what interest we should seek this knowledge! With what a passion we should pursue it!

Naturally, the special revelation of God's will has to do chiefly with our salvation. We are poor, sinful, lost creatures. The poison of death, physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal, is working in us. This is the underlying cause, the final explanation, of all our ills. And what God reveals to us of His will has to do, primarily, with the cure of these ills. He tells us what His disposition toward us is; what plans He has formulated and executed for our good; the means He has provided for making effective in us what He has done for us; what the requisite conditions on our part are, if we would have what God has done for us become effective in us; and what He expects of His reclaimed, and, at least partially, reconstructed, children. These, and kindred, subjects form the burden of what God tells us in His revealed Word, of His will.

God's will with respect to the children of men is a good will; it is a will characterized by graciousness, by compassion, by longsuffering patience. Even when God must reprove and punish, for our own and the general good, it is with the tender, yearning heart of a Father perfect in love; and as long as it possibly can be, with the aim of reformation and restoration.

Even in the olden time, during the reign of the Law, when the incarnate Christ was seen only afar off, and the Gospel was contained only in prophecy, God was known as One ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; One who never forsook His people. (Neh. 9:17.) In spite of His people's provocations, in spite of the strong restraining hand He oft had to lay on them, the Lord God assured them:

“In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. ... The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall

not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” (Isa. 54:8, 10.)

And those people who gave God a chance to prove Himself to them came to know, from inner experience, that God was all He claimed to be, and did for them all He promised to do. David was one who had been signally blessed. He was raised to shining heights. And being himself blessed he became a blessing to many. But he forgot himself. His hand, for a time, let go of the hand of God. He fell. And great was his fall. He was in the depths. The vulture of remorseless remorse gnawed at his Vitals. But God did not forsake him. Crushed, humbled, repentant, he came to the mercy seat. And God showed to him the warmth of His fatherly heart. He cleansed the penitent. He raised him up. He restored to him his sense of manhood. He planted hope anew in his breast. And put a new song upon his lips. And David never tired henceforth of singing, in raptured phrase, of God’s good will. “How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of light: in Thy light shall we see light.” (Ps. 36:7-9.)

In the New Testament time we have the historic realization of all that the Old Testament prophetically proclaimed. God was gracious then. His will was to bless. And what that gracious will then planned was, in the fulness of time, carried to completion. From the beginning God so loved the world that when the proper time came He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. This is one of the most pregnant statements the Word of God contains respecting the graciousness of God’s will. It tells the extreme lengths to which God will go in providing for man’s wants. Here, and in many other places, we are told that God’s love is an all-embracing love; the whole world of humanity being the object of it.

The world’s great teacher of religion, the Divine-human Savior, tells us, in unmistakable language, what the Father’s will is. “This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.” (St. John 6:40.) God’s compassion, His love, embraced all. This universal love led to the formation and execution of a plan for saving all. It was the best plan, probably the only plan, that even Divine wisdom and love could devise. It is a plan efficacious for all. And

God wants to make it effective in all. He has provided means which, if used as they should be used by those to whom they are entrusted, and allowed to produce their legitimate result on the part of those for whose good they are used, would result in accomplishing this purpose. This is the only plan by which the salvation of any can be effected. Jesus Christ is the stone that was set at naught by the would be builders, but He became the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12.) This is the reason God's universal gracious good will becomes specific and contracted. He says, I have a fatherly heart for all the world. I want to save all the children of men. I have made abundant provision for saving all mankind. But there is only one way in which I can do it. It is through Jesus Christ. He has fulfilled your Law for you. He has died for the taking away of your sins. He is ready to give you of the fulness of His own life. He has opened Heaven for you. He stands ready to give you all needed help on the way. You can have it all without money and without price. All my grace, all my love, all my power is at your disposal. But this is the only way I have to offer you, for there is no other way. If you want to get the prize you must accept it on the only available terms. This is My will, my inexorable will. I have nothing else to offer you.

We see, then, that so far as God's will concerning our salvation is concerned, it is very clearly revealed. There can be no mistake about it on the part of anyone who will allow God to speak for Himself. And here we must rest. In all the centuries there has been no change. In all the centuries to come there will be no change, because there can be none. The one way stretches out before mankind. God has spoken. We must accept His will.

With respect to the general course of our life in this world there are a good many things concerning which God has not, and may never in this world, reveal the specific purpose of His will, or the details of the way He works it out. You and I do not know, in detail, what God wills to accomplish by this, that, or the other experience which comes to us. The course of our external affairs sometimes completely change their complexion. Sometimes it is like the rising of the sun, sometimes like its setting. It is the same way with the affairs with which we are connected in the community, state, and nation. It is not necessary that we should know God's specific purpose in all the intertwining minutiae of life's affairs. The general principles and purpose are sufficient, and these are clear. God loves us and seeks our good.

His will is to bless. To this end He overrules all our experiences so that for the child of God, humble and believing, they help him on his heavenly way. "All things work together for good to them that love God." How many a child of God has learned to know that some cruelly heavy cross was the experience which God used to raise him to heights of faith, and hope, and love, and service never before attained; which probably never would have been attained in any other way. It is true whether, in this world, we ever come to recognize it or not. This should suffice to satisfy us. It does satisfy every truly believing, loving, trusting child of God.

There is one point in the daily life concerning which God has clearly revealed His will; it is that our whole life, in things small as well as great, are to be, increasingly, conformed to the pattern He has presented to us in precept and in example. "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. ...For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thess. 4:1-3.) And then follows a long list of specified instances in which it is to be the studied aim of the child of God to daily grow more Christ-like in spirit and in conduct. And statements of like import may be multiplied a hundredfold from every part of God's revealed Word.

We see, then, that in the two great spheres of the Christian life, that of theory, of doctrine, the things to be believed; and in that of practice, the things to be done, we have an unmistakable revelation of the nature and content of God's will. The great trouble is not that God's will cannot be known with sufficient clearness; but that men are not at pains to know, as they should know, God's holy will.

2. What is it that Jesus Christ desires and requires of us when He teaches us to pray: Father, — Thy Will be done?

"Father, — Thy will be done." Yes, this is a Christ taught prayer. This is proof sufficient that it has a very deep-seated bearing upon our life, its welfare, present and future.

God has a will with respect to His will. He wants us to make His will our will. His will is supreme. It is supreme in nature. His will is done so regularly and invariably here that men call it the law of nature. In reality it is only the continual going forth of the potent will of the Creator. But God wants His will to be supreme with us in another fashion. He does not want us to do His will mechanically, but as children, lovingly, reverently. He wants us to be subject to His will not simply that He may be sovereign; but because His is the only perfect will. Only as we make His will the rule of our life can we live in harmony, have happiness, and attain the end for which we were created. Just as the world of matter, to the last minutia of detail, must move in accord with the will of God in order to accomplish the end of its creation.

One of the very first steps, then, which this petition makes obligatory on us is this that we learn to know God's will; that we follow God's leading in the revelation of His will, that we diligently put forth efforts to learn it. To know God's will is not natural to man, to learn it is not easy. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them (by natural intuition, or processes of merely human reasoning) because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

If we are to do God's will, we must know God's will; if we are to know God's will, we must be taught of God, we must go to God's school. And God's school house is the Bible, and God's school teachers are Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Let us remember, however, that knowing God's will includes more than the mere reading, or conning, of certain portions, or even all, of God's Word. There must be, so to speak, an acclimatization of our nature to God's nature, of our wills to His will. There must be an impregnation of our spirits with His Spirit. We must be weaning the soul from the ties, the attractions, and the objects dear to our old nature, the while the Spirit of God builds up in us new ties, new elements of attraction, new objects of endeavor. This is one of the most difficult of processes, that of unlearning what we know, or think we know, and replacing it with something new and foreign to the old. It means to have a certain distrust of all merely human, all self-knowledge; and, from the rudiments on up, gaining an education of a different kind, along a different line. In any direction this is one of the most difficult in the whole wide field of mental culture. When it includes moral and spiritual culture it is doubly difficult. It takes prayer; it

takes wrestling, oft in agony, at the throne of grace, to have this result satisfactorily achieved.

How diligently, determinedly, some people work to increase their knowledge of secular things, moved by the desire to become more proficient in their work; or to be able to appear to better advantage in their intercourse with their fellowmen; or, it may be, just for the satisfaction of having a better knowledge of things. How much more eagerly and diligently we should apply ourselves in God's school. How much better it pays. Eternal issues are at stake. Life and death are the issues involved. How we ought to pray: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law."

We shall never grow into the knowledge of God's Word, of God's will, by waiting for some new gift of discernment; or the touch of some magic wand; but by diligently using the means and opportunities placed at hand. By diligent study of God's Word, by faithful attendance upon those services where God's Word is expounded and applied; by fervent prayer; and by putting into practice what we learn, as God gives us the light to see the truth, and the power to live it; thus do we grow in the knowledge of God's will. Especially so when, after having done the best we can, we confidently trust the great Enlightener to put the potent clay upon our eyes that will remove our blindness. "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; yea, if thou seek Him with thy whole heart."

One reason, perhaps the chief reason, why the making of God's will our own is so difficult is that we have a will, that is, the unregenerate man has a will, that runs counter to God's will. And even the regenerate man still has many of the elements of this unregenerate will clinging to him. The things a part of ourselves, and often a big part of ourselves, wants to do, God wills that we should not do. And the things God wants us to do, we are often loath to do, or rebel against doing. There is a kind of double will in us. The will that is the will of the Christ formed in us, and the will of that part of us not entirely surrendered to the Christ. And there is a pulling back and forth of these two wills. But whatever our feeling may be, whatever the will of the flesh, this third petition is a prayer that God's will may be made our will. To accomplish this our will, at times, may have to be, as it were, pulled up by the roots from the quivering flesh, as we do a bad tooth; it may be that, through a long period, we oppose it, refusing it nurture and exercise, and thus kill it out by a process of inanition. But whatever the price we may

have to pay, however strong the pull of the flesh, any will of ours which contravenes God's will must be sacrificed. Jesus taught us to do this not only in words, but by His own example. In the face of taunting and shame, when the course open before Him meant cruel suffering and bitter death, when every fiber of His flesh cried out against it, He prayed, and lived as He prayed: "Father, not My will, but Thine be done."

Father, — Thy will be done. In this is our only blessedness. But it is difficult to have this result brought about. There are a trinity of evils always arrayed against us; the devil, the world, and our own flesh. And they are always attacking us; singly, and in unison; in frontal attack, and from every possible angle. But it is not a hopeless fight, if we never give up, and just let God have His way. The only successful place to have God's will become more and more our own is in the school of Calvary. Men may try to reason themselves into resignation to God's will; they may try all the fine philosophy in the world; but largely in vain. They may cultivate a certain degree of stoicism, and gain an increased degree of calmness and self-control. But that is not the same as oneness with God's will. When we have actually been crucified with Christ, when we have entered into the spirit which led Him to the cross; when we have entered into the glorious heritage which comes to us from the cross; then selfishness and self-will begin to die, and we, at the same time, begin to enter into the peace and joy of walking with God, even though it be over a rough and thorny road.

"Not as I will"; the sound grows sweet
Each time my lips the words repeat.
"Not as I will"; the darkness feels
More safe than light when this thought steals
Like whispered voice to calm and bless
All unrest and all loneliness.
"Not as I will", because the One
Who loved us first and best has gone
Before us on the road, and still
For us must all His love fulfill,
"Not as we will."

If we, by God's grace, will but resolve to surrender our wills to Him; if we will but start by saying: Lord, I want to do Thy will, to make Thy will my own; help, Thou, my unwillingness; and then put ourselves under the dew, and the rain, and the sunshine of God's grace, as showered upon men in the

Word and the Sacraments, He will lead us, in paths all His own, to an ever growing acceptance of His will as our own. He will teach us to cling less tenaciously to our own likes and dislikes. We shall gradually become less affected by the vicissitudes of fortune.

The real secret of making God's will our will is this, to make God Himself the great object of our affections. Once we have caught a real glimpse of God; His greatness, His wisdom, His goodness, the beauty of His perfections; and come to have some commensurate understanding of what He means to us, and the destiny of the world, we shall be freed from much of the conflicting desire which vexes us by the One Mastering Magnet. When we possess God, and God possesses us, all other objects are put into their proper places. Just as the twinkling stars, beautiful in themselves, and provocative of profound meditation, and peaceful emotions, pale into indistinctness when the full moon rides in majesty through the night sky; so, when the light of God surrounds us, all other lights fade into the proportions of the tallow clip. You have probably stood on the banks of Niagara above the falls and noticed that eddies, and side currents, and backwaters are overcome and effaced by the irresistible pull of the current as it rushes on to the fall: so when God gets a grip on our lives He draws us away from the counter currents of worldly things. This does not mean that we must become indifferent to the gifts which God has placed all around us for our use and enjoyment. Indeed, we shall enjoy them all the more because they are viewed in their proper relation, — subordinated to the one great object of desire — God Himself. When God has thus become our all, we can say, from the depths of hearts enriched, and made strong, calm, and joyous:

“Give what Thou wilt, without Thee I am poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.”

What a splendid picture is this, that of a man in whom antagonism to God's will has largely vanished; that of a man so united with God the Father that His will has become the controlling, guiding will of the child; that of a man so sympathetically in accord with the Father's will that it flows over into the child's will, and fills it out, and controls it without destroying its individuality; this is what we pray for in the third petition.

Lord, open Thou our hearts for Thine own incoming. Fill us with Thyself. Teach us so to prize Thee, and love Thee, and trust Thee, that we may

still feel that we are rich whatever Thou mayest see that it is for our good to take away; that we may be willing to follow Thee, even though we do not know all the path along which Thou leadest; that we may be willing to take up the tasks Thou givest us, even though we do not understand, as yet, the full significance of all Thou requirest. Thus shall we grow stronger, as the days go by, to do Thy will after the pattern set for us in Heaven, by the angels and saints made perfect.

Man As A Doer Of The Father's Will

Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so in earth. — St. Luke 11:2.

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. — St. John 4:34.

WE HAVE PREPARED THE WAY, we believe, for the meditation of today by the lesson of last Sunday. Our aim then was to show, in a general way only, what God's will toward man is; that it is a benevolent will, seeking our good. We saw that this is a clearly revealed truth, abundantly substantiated by what He has done for us.

The third petition speaks of doing God's will. His will is an active one. And the first doing of God's will which we considered was an action upon us, in us. It is the Spirit wrought process of awakening us, and bringing us into harmony with God's will. Before this has been done man has but one will with respect to God, an antagonistic one. But when the breath of God has vitalized our souls, and opposition ceases, and we begin, however feebly, to respond to God's will, then we begin actively to do God's will. And the first feeble volition God-ward is an act of doing God's will. And then the Christian life goes on, from step to step, in the love of the things God's will prescribes, and in the doing of them in the affairs of the daily life. Of this we spoke also in a very general manner.

Today we are going to devote our attention almost wholly to the practical side of the third petition. Father, — Thy will be done, in earth. It is God's will that is to be done. And God must not only tell us what the things are which He wills done, He must ever stand by our side, give us guidance, and the strength to do His will; but man is to be an active agent in doing this will. We are not praying here particularly that the sun and moon may keep on performing their Divinely appointed functions; that the seasons may continue to run their courses; that day may follow night: we are not asking

that God's will may be done by the angels. They are ever doing it; all doing it, joyously doing it. They are doing all God wants them to do. And there is no slackness in their doing it. In our prayer we are taught to remember them as an example, not to put on them our duties. This prayer is for ourselves, and the remainder of mankind. So today we shall focus our attention to this point, and seek to give it emphasis, — man as a doer of God's will.

Learning to Know God's Will

We have previously seen what God's will is with respect to our relationship to Him, and our consequent welfare; and also, in a general way, what His will is with respect to our conduct. We went to the Word of God to find this truth. We must do the same when we wish to know the principles on which all the practical life is built. And when we do this we find there detailed directions for very much of life's activity.

There was a time when man did not need a written word to direct his actions. He intuitively knew God's will. It was written in his heart. In that day for man to respond to the call of God's will was, at the same time, a response to the promptings of his own inner life. At that time man not only knew the Divine will; but to do it was not only a duty, but the source of highest pleasure; for it was the harmonious expression of his own soul. But all this has been lost. Man's mind has become darkened. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." (Eph. 4:18.) Where is this ignorance to be dispelled? this darkness to be turned into light? We answer, as before, through the study of God's Word. "To the Law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in them."

God has given expression to His will, so far as it refers to the regulation of our own personal lives, in summarized form, in the Ten Commandments. He tells us that He is the only God; that we are not to give to any other object, image, possession, pleasure, the honor, affection, or service which we owe to Him. We are not to take His name in vain. We are to have undefiled thoughts, and clean lips. We are neither to teach, nor accept, falsehoods, per-versions of God's truth, or substitutions for it; but hold it sacred, and gladly hear and learn. We are not to profane, but sanctify, God's holy day. We are, in so far as it is possible, to observe it as a day of rest for the body

that it may be a day of rest and refreshing for the soul; a day when not temporal but eternal, not material but spiritual interests are seriously contemplated; and God, the giver of all good gifts, reverently worshipped. God's Law tells us that there is a respect, a service due from children to their parents and all elders and superiors; from citizens to all in authority; and He makes the discharge of these duties incumbent on us. Man's body and physical life is a gift of God. He is to take care of it himself, so that it will be a fit instrument for carrying out God's commands and the dictates of his own enlightened mind. And we are to recognize the same right on the part of every other man, and we are not only not to injure him in his body, but be quick to go to his assistance, if needed. This same Law tells us that we are to be pure in our relations to those of the opposite sex; that we are not even to entertain lascivious thoughts, much less utter foul words, or be guilty of lustful acts. And that as an aid to this we should be modest in dress and department. We are to respect the property rights of other people, and aid them in maintaining them. The worth of a good name is to be recognized, and we must exert ourselves in helping our neighbor to keep his. And we are to watch carefully over the citadel of the heart so that unlawful desire, one of the underlying principles of all evil, is kept in subjection and eradicated.

Here we have a resume of all the principles of right living, so far as actual conduct is concerned. How much are we concerned about getting a better understanding of it? not only so far as words are concerned, but about the practical application of these far-reaching principles to conduct? This is what, in large part, we are praying for in this third petition.

There is, however, still much more contained in God's Law than we have so far mentioned. Jesus Christ compressed all the duties of the Law in the one word, love; love to God, and love to man. And love means service. We have previously shown the service God demands toward Himself. We are now going to show, in barest outline, the service God reveals that it is His will that we render our fellowman. God is not satisfied that we simply walk the path of rectitude and justice. Love demands more than this, that we go to a man's assistance according to his need.

The best, the perfect, example of the fulfillment of God's higher Law, the law of kindness, of mercy, of love, we have in our Savior. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." His joy, His delight, was to do this kind of work; His Father's will, His Father's work. After being physi-

cally hungry, probably faint for want of food, and than spending hours in speaking to needy souls, giving them new visions, new life, new hopes, He appeared as if He had feasted.

Now what were some of the things which it was God's will that Christ should do? that He was specifically sent to do? Jesus Himself tells us: "He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted." Yes, Jesus came to be a physician; a physician to the whole man. He came, of course, primarily, to heal men's souls; to make forgiveness possible, to lead men to accept it, to bring them, through much travail, into a new life; to build them up in all the things that are God-like. But this work, rightly understood, includes every other service that a man may need in this world. So when occasion demanded, and the cause could be furthered thereby, Jesus became a healer of men's bodies, a correcter of abuses, a remover of difficulties, a teacher of economics, a general emancipator. There was not a thing that could make men better or happier that was foreign to the interests of Jesus Christ. But, you may ask, what has this to do with us, who are striving to find out what God's will is for our activities? I answer, very much in every way. Jesus Christ had a mission. He was sent to do these things. It was God's will that He should do them. Now listen to what Jesus says. It is in that great prayer in which He briefly recounts His work, and its results. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." Jesus Christ did what none of us can ever do; but having done the humanly impossible, there is a sense in which His mission is transferred to us, to every Christian. Like our Savior we are to be heralds of the Gospel. We are to seek to win men for God and Heaven. We are to do what we can for the relief of human suffering everywhere. We are to be emancipators for all the oppressed and depressed, whether by outer bonds, or inner incapacity. We are to help wipe the world's tears, we are to help ignite the spark of hope, we are to help sow the seed which bears the precious harvest of peace, we are to help dig deep in the enduring rock the wells of human joy. This, too, is God's will. And it is His will for our doing. Are we interested in it? Are we trying to learn it more fully? Are we seeking to get the power which puts vim and energy into the doing of God's will, so that the very doing itself becomes a pleasure?

There is one point yet to which we desire to give a special word of emphasis, because in speaking of doing God's Will there are many who feel that there is nothing which they can do, which some, indeed, are actually incapacitated for doing, in the sense of action. Some there are who are privi-

leged to live in quiet, uneventful spheres. There is very little call for the direct doing of the things which make the great appeal, there is no tinge of the heroic. Ah, but there is no place where there is not plenty to do that it is God's will that we should do. In the home, in social intercourse, in business life, everywhere, there is room for doing God's will. And He tells us what His will is: if there is no striking need, there is still need of patience, gentleness, kindness, love; and to practice these things is to do the will of God. Even the invalid, incapacitated for any activity, has plenty of room for doing God's will, in a quiet, passive way. By recognizing God's presence, and His providence; by drinking deep of the wells of His love, and showing it; by uncomplaining patience; by the strength of resolve, of calmness and self-mastery exhibited in contrast to the physical weakness, the invalid, or semi-invalid, often teaches lessons the marvel of all observers. They are doing God's will, doing it gloriously; for they have learned to live in this spirit:

"I have no cares, O Blessed Will,
For all my cares are Thine;
I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou
Hast made Thy triumph mine.

"And when it seems no chance nor change
From grief can set me free,
Hope finds its strength in helplessness,
And patient waits on Thee.

"Ride on, ride on, triumphantly,
Thou glorious Will, ride on:
Faith's pilgrim sons behind Thee take
The road that Thou hast gone."

Willing to Do God's Will

The first necessary step is to know God's will. The next step is to make that will our own. We entertain no erroneous notions about the ability of the human will. The natural man has no will in matters purely spiritual and Divine. He has a will which can exert itself in secular and social affairs. From motives of self-interest, a man can will to be externally clean and square in his dealings; to be a good citizen; true to his family and friends. But when it

comes to loving God and trusting Him, man cannot say of himself, and put it into effect: I am going to do these things. Here the word stands: "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13.) In first Corinthians twelve, which starts out with these words: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you to be ignorant"; and in which chapter the whole category of spiritual gifts are mentioned, directly, or indirectly, including faith, we find these words: "But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

But when a man is born again the regenerating process takes in the whole man. He is given a new intellect, in so far as it is the seat of spiritual processes; new affections; a new power to the will. The Creator of the will has reached it, the Savior of man has cleansed it, the Spirit has breathed upon it and revitalized it. Now, by continued Divine assistance, man can begin to will the things God wills. And the power of the will is cultivable, spiritually, just as every other faculty which God has given to man.

One of the great causes of failure in the sphere of earthly affairs is the lack of sufficient will-power; so many do not have that crown of manhood power which enables them to say: "I am resolved what to do," and then stick to it with persistence which never lets go until they have either succeeded, or died in the attempt. Some people are endowed by nature, it seems, with a larger measure of this resoluteness of will-power than others. There are many whose wills are pitifully weak, flaccid.

I have a friend who recently had a badly fractured arm. It was held tightly in splints for a number of weeks. The fingers at first became swollen, and then paled and became thin and weak-looking. When the bandages were first removed, the fingers moved very feebly in answer to the call of the will; but, as a result of massage, and exercise, they were gradually brought back to normal condition. The will of the man who has become a child of God is often much like this. It is often a great effort to pull the powers of the soul together sufficiently to produce an active volition. And even after we have willed, we find a sluggishness, a clumsiness, yes, a stubbornness, which makes us great bunglers in carrying out what has actually been willed. This is not something new. It is as old as the race. David knew it. John the Baptist knew it. Luther knew it. You and I know it if we have ever given enough thought to the interests, and the workings, of our inner man to observe the processes. The best description of this condition has

been given us by the greatest luminary in the spiritual world, St. Paul: "That which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." To an earnest soul this can mean only wretchedness. But still blessed is the one who can honestly say: It is no more I that does this evil, but sin that dwelleth in me. And where there is this better self which is on God's side, and wills to do God's will, it can be cultivated; the evil can be increasingly overcome, its power broken; the strength of the will increased, the power to carry out its dictates made more effectual.

The will, like other human faculties, grows by healthful exercise. Unused muscles grow flabby. The student who lays away his books for months, who does not keep up the practice of thinking consecutively, and with concentration, finds that it is more difficult when he again attempts to think to a purpose. It is not different with the will. When a person floats with the current; when he recognizes that here he ought to bestir himself, but slumbers along complacently, or at least trying to excuse his inertness; when he recognizes that this should be his course of conduct, but allows the spirit of ease, or his passions, to carry him in another direction; this man will awake some day to find that the power of resolutely willing is gone. He has become a moral and spiritual jelly fish. He has no backbone. His moral muscles have become withered. The reverse of this is equally true. When a man cultivates the will by prayer, and recourse to the fountains of Divine grace; when he wills, and follows it up, whatever the cost; when he begins with the smaller things, and, as proficiency comes, goes on to more difficult things, he will find that his ability to will to do God's will grows.

Let us not forget that our prayer is that God's will may be done. The first step is to know the will of God. The next is to will to do His will. And then comes the doing itself. And without this final step the other two are largely nullified. So we pass to the wholly practical side of this problem.

The Doing of God's Will

Doing God's will! Why, God's will is being done. All nature is doing His bidding. In Heaven it is being done perfectly. Tens of thousands of God's twice-born children are striving to do it. In the darkest nights of apostasy, in the fiercest storms of persecution, there have been those whose souls were

surrendered to God, those who walked, as best they could, in God's ways. But this third petition is a prayer that we, each one of us, may become actively, whole-heartedly, engaged in doing God's will. This prayer may go up like the wail of a child, lost in the night, seeking for a voice to cheer, and a hand to clasp and guide; it may come as the troubled cry of a soul torn by conflicting emotions, but wishing, feebly Wishing, the triumph of the better part. On the part of the purest and strongest saints, who still wear the garb of flesh, and walk the earthly way, it is a prayer expressive of the recognition that there is still a great contrast between God's will, and the way it is fulfilled by God's perfect beings and ourselves.

There is much to be done in the way of doing God's will in helping destroy the evil rampant in the world. God's Kingdom can grow only as evil is destroyed. God is always thwarting, overruling, destroying the works of the devil, in whom we are old-fashioned enough to believe. And we are to be workers together with God. The grip of this old sagacious enemy has, to a certain extent, been loosened on us. But he never lets go. He is a malignant and persistent enemy. He hates God. He hates men, especially those who love God. And to spite God he Seeks to destroy men. He is always busy trying to steal away God's truth, lest men should believe and be saved.

The primary aim of the devil, of the world he has perverted, and the flesh he has corrupted, is to rob souls of God's grace, of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. He makes the Gospel appear too simple, he makes it hurt the pride of men, he belittles it, gets men to rely on their own strength, he makes them heady and high-minded, he fascinates them by luring them into the paths of fruitless speculation.

We are to be God's soldiers, tried and true, fighting against all these machinations of the artful old adversary. God's soldiers! Oh, that we fully realized the meaning of this term, and lived up to it. There have been noble deeds of valor done on fields of blood. There is room for all of them to be duplicated on spiritual battle fields where God, and God's people fight that the Father's will may be done.

The devil is wise, much wiser than many people think. He knows that a good many people would be shocked if he proposed to them to outright deny God's Word, so he attacks them from another angle. He gets them tangled up in worldliness, or in a personally impure life. He comes with a varied assortment of appeals; honor, the power of place, the glitter of equipage, the jingle of coin; knowing man's weaknesses, he approaches him by the

route of the insidious, and oftentimes imperative, urge of appetite, and in the delirium of the fever of passion God is crowded out of the heart, and faith dies. God does not want this. The Son of God died that this might not be. And this is a prayer that it may not be, that God may have His way in our lives; that the evil may not triumph over us; that like Moses we may be able to withstand the appeal of the life of splendor, that like Daniel we may spurn the mandates of those in power, that like Joseph we may be men of God able to shake off the serpent-like coils of the enchantress. But what a battle it takes! What soldiers we must be! Only those who stand close by the beating heart of Jesus can have the courage, the patience, and the faith to keep on fighting the enemy every time he dares to lay a withering, destroying hand on the bodies or souls of a man made in the image of God. But this is what we obligate ourselves to do every time we pray, Thy will be done.

The doing of God's will is by no means all exhausted in work of a negative character, destroying the evil. We are to build up the good. We may not be able at once to rise to the heights of glorified action. Well, then, let us begin on the lower plane of the simple and possible things. God says we are to read, study, meditate upon, and pray over His Word. We can do this. Then let us do it. We may not find at first, or always, the pleasure in it that we expected. But we can do what God bids us do. Let us do it the best we can. And leave the result with Him. God tells us to go to His house to worship Him. There may be temptations to go elsewhere, to engage in other things. We can refuse the one, and do the other. Let us do it. It takes, generally, a long time; and always a mighty outpouring of Divine grace, to get the egotism and selfishness out of a man's heart so that he loves his neighbor anywhere near as he does himself. But a neighbor is ill, or in distress, he needs the touch of a friendly hand, the cheer of a kindly voice; and the Father in Heaven says, go and help him. And we can say, I will, and do it. A neighbor may have offended us, and not have Christian character enough to come and say, brother, I have sinned, forgive me; but the Father says, go, hunt him up, and win your brother, if it can be done. The offense may still rankle in our hearts. And though we may not yet be complete masters of our own feelings, we can take them captive, and do our Father's bidding. And if we would do His will we must do it. Or the case may be reversed. We may have offended some one. Pride may rebel against the acknowledgment of the; offense. But God says, confess your faults one to another. And a sancti-

fied sense of duty can bring the recalcitrant feelings into subjection to the dictates of conscience, and though our speech may falter, and our cheeks burn, we can say, brother, I have done you a wrong, forgive me. And if we would do God's will we must do it.

These words are addressed to Christians, to the newborn children of God. We can do these, and other, things if we will to do them. We must learn to say with the Apostle: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) The recognition that we ought to do the things which God wills us to do, and then not attempting to do them is responsible for very much of the inertness and flabbiness of will we find in so many Christians.

It is better, a thousand times better, to say: By Gods grace I will do this thing, because I know it is God's will, and then honestly attempt to do, and partially fail, than it is not to make the attempt. One of the greatest of God's children had to say, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good"; that is, with the degree of perfection which ought to mark such undertakings, "I find not." The flesh is always a drag to the spirit. The vision of the renewed spirit is always in advance of the power of performance. But the will to do the right, to fight for the right, to fight part of our own selves for the power to do the right, to be battered and suffer for the right; even though the clogs and impedimenta of the flesh do not enable us to accomplish all that a Spirit-clarified vision enables us to see, and lead us to desire to do; this, too, is victory, yes, glorious victory.

Our Ideal in Doing God's Will

Father, — Thy will be done, as in Heaven, so on earth. This is the ideal set before us. We are to try to learn to do God's will as Christ and the angels do it. While traveling the heavenward way, this will never be done by us perfectly; but it is possible to keep on growing in the power to do it a little better, and still a little better.

The Word of God is full of references to the ministries of the angles. The celestial beings, who kept their first estate, find their delight in serving the author of their being. They encamp round about the dwellings of the just. They are ministering spirits busily engaged in serving the heirs of salvation. And they rejoicewith the Lord of glory when a straying sheep is brought

safely to the heavenly fold. In the great assembly in the new Jerusalem, as they encircle the throne of God, they sing with one voice: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts.

The service of these ministers of God is wholly voluntary. They do not need to be constrained. They find their highest joy in their service. It is the harmonious expression of their lives. And their service is just as whole-hearted as it is voluntary. There is no divided service, nothing they want to hold back. They give to God the best that they have. To do less would mean that they would become less than they are. Other characteristics of the service rendered in Heaven is that it is unquestioning. There is no doubting of God's wisdom and goodness. His will is supreme, they know there can be no mistake in doing it. Wherever sent, on whatsoever mission, the angels go with joy. They know that whatever God wills to be done is the very best that can be done both for the servant and the served. They serve God zealously, His honor and glory rest upon their hearts. And, finally, the service the angels render is harmonious. There are no petty jealousies, or bickerings among them. What God wants one to do, they all want that one to do. What God prefers they all prefer. This is but a rough sketch of the ideal which, by precept and example, is set before us for our imitation in doing the will of God.

Let us not forget that the highest example of doing God's will which Heaven itself can afford was once given here on earth, in the presence of men, that they might see and understand. It was in the person of The Angel of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. After one of His humble services, He said to His disciples: "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"; as to the spirit and import of His service: humbly, lovingly, to bless. And the Apostle tells us that in all the Savior's suffering service He left us an example for our imitation. Yes, here especially is where we need Christ's example. We know the difficulties He had to meet, and they are right along the line of those we have to meet. We can meet them successfully only when we are standing by His side, strengthened with His strength. Especially must we learn of Christ how to lay our wills on the altar of the Father's will.

Every true child of God must learn, it matters not how falteringly at first, but learn by all means, to pray with the teacher and example of prayer: "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done." It may be, at times, like cutting the heartstrings, but we must learn to say it. When instead of the health

and strength for which we have longed, God sees that suffering and enforced inactivity are the conditions under which alone our spirits can ripen for Heaven; when we have longed for power and influence, and God sees that the contracted sphere, amid toil and privation, is the only way that the fragrance of Heaven can be brought into our lives; when we have dreamed dreams of honor and influence in the field of law, or medicine, or literature, and God comes and says, I want you to be an unheralded herald of My Gospel, I want you to spend your life in caring for My unfortunates; we must learn to say, Father, I am greatly honored, I bring my plans and lay them at Thy feet, at Thy bidding I will take up Thy task, and make it mine: Thy will be done. This is what Jesus taught us to pray for in the third petition. He set us the supreme example in the way of doing it.

“May we Thy precepts, Lord, fulfill,
And do on earth our Father’s will,
As angels do above:
Still walk in Christ, the living Way,
With all thy children, and obey
The law of Christian love.”

The Prayer For Daily Bread

Give us day by day our daily bread. — St. Luke 11:3.

HOW GREAT the difference between the three H petitions we have been considering and the one now claiming our attention. Father, — Thy name be hallowed; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done as in Heaven so on earth. By these words we are taken out of, and far away beyond, mere self. Here we move among the sunlit mountain tops of thought. By these petitions we are invited to forget our individual littleness in God's greatness, and the contemplation of super-mundane affairs. No, not exactly to forget ourselves; to really find ourselves, and our proper relationship, and our highest interests; and to learn how, by proper contemplation and intercession, some of that greatness, glory and blessedness may become ours. In the shadow of the Father's presence; in the nurturing care of His Kingdom; in the learning, and doing of His gracious, but sovereign will, here alone do we attain to anything that is eternally worth while.

From the will of the Sovereign of all sovereigns; from the Kingdom of the King of all kings; from the name of the All-Father to daily bread; how great, how sudden the descent. Outside of the realm of God's own affairs, expressed in His own terms, such a transition would be from the sublime to the ridiculous. But not so here. From the sovereign will of God to daily bread, when He leads the way, is but going from the sublime general to the gracious particular. That we, God's own children, should have our daily bread, in such measure as furthers our highest good, and brings us that much further on the way toward our ultimate destiny, is as much a part of God's will and plan as that the mighty planets should move in their prescribed orbits, the seasons follow in their predetermined order, and the nations of the earth, amid all their vagaries and excesses, fill out the blank which God has charted as the circles in which they must move.

If we knew no other prayer than this for daily bread, if it was only a hunger-cry for something to eat, then it would be but little, if any, higher

than the cry of the beasts that raven in the wild, driven by the pangs of hunger. As it is, coming after the first three petitions; offered at the Father's suggestion, as we stand in the light of His countenance, in the interests of His Kingdom, and in harmony with His will, it is not a discordant note, not an unseemly interpolation.

We are not disembodied spirits. We are spirits dwelling in tabernacles of flesh. We have bodies which God has given us as the means of coming into contact with a material world, and of carrying out the plans for which God has put us here. We have bodies, and God Himself is concerned about their welfare. And the very Son of God has Himself put this prayer upon our lips. So we need not be worried about any apparent incongruity in taking this fourth petition upon our lips, and breathing it from our hearts. Only let us put first things first. First of all let us bask in the sunlight of Heaven, let us bow in adoration before the Throne, and make our obeisance to the great Father; let us survey, with wonder and admiration, His Kingdom, learn what it means to us, and daily renew our allegiance to it; let us learn to know God's sovereign and all-embracing will, and, with aid from the Throne, make it more and more our own; then we can safely pause, catch our breath, and find our feet again on the solid earth; and go about our daily task of getting bread for sustenance while, in all things we hallow the Father's name, train in and for His Kingdom, and do His will.

This prayer for bread is brief, and it seems to be commonplace; but it comprises very much of great importance. Let us, then, for further consideration, take up this prayer for daily bread.

The Bread for Which We Pray

Let us, first of all, inquire into the meaning of the word bread as used in this fourth petition. At all times we should have enough respect for our own God-given powers, and for those with whom we hold intercourse, to use words with some degree of clearness and exactness. Only thus can we lead others to understand us, only thus can we really understand ourselves. With what multiplied emphasis should this be true when we, who are but dust and ashes, take it upon ourselves to speak to God, to plead with Him. What do we want when we pray for bread? What do we want God to understand that we are praying for when we ask for bread?

The word bread is the name of an article of food known to every child, in every part of the world. But, like many other articles of speech, the word bread is often used figuratively. At times it is used generically for any kind of food, because bread has long been regarded as the staff of life; it is a general, a staple article of food. Bread, in the general sense of food, is often used in the Scriptures, and religious writings, to express that on which our souls live and thrive. It is in this sense that Jesus calls Himself the bread of life. Now what is it that we mean when we here pray for daily bread? Do we mean bread for the body, or bread for the soul?

There have always been those who have understood this fourth petition to be largely, if not exclusively, a prayer for bread for the soul, for spiritual bread. In the early Church many understood it to be a prayer particularly for the blessings of the Lord's Supper. It is impossible to be too much interested in the bread for the soul. We can not pray too often, too long, or too earnestly for that which is, supremely, the food of the spirit; the indwelling, the fellowship, of Jesus Christ; and the understanding, and appropriation, of the Word and the Sacraments, through which Jesus Christ is made known to us, offered, given, and sealed to us. But we ask, is not this exactly what we have been praying for in all the petitions preceding this one, and, indirectly, in all the petitions following? Would it not be tautological, wholly out of keeping with the whole structure, and tenor of this prayer, to make of it another form, a figurative form, of asking for the same things we have, considering the brevity of the prayer, so fully asked for in the other petitions? God's name can be more fully and truly hallowed; His Kingdom come to us, and through us; and His will be done by both patient endurance, and active effort, only as our strength becomes adequate to the tasks imposed. And our strength can increase only as we are fed with the bread of Heaven. But this is the very thing for which, first and last, we are taught to pray in the Lord's Prayer. So we abide by the natural, and generally received, interpretation of the word bread in the fourth petition; that it means natural bread, food for the body, that which is needful for the maintenance, and the best interests, of the physical life.

We feel, however, that it is not only not doing violence to the words of the fourth petition, but wholly in keeping with the import of the entire Prayer, to claim that the word bread is comprehensive, including all bodily needs. How few and simple, in statement at least, are the six petitions dealing with our Spiritual interests. There are a hundred other things which

might have been mentioned, but we all believe that Christ did not leave anything uncovered. The universe of our need, and our profit, is included in these few sentences. So we believe it is with the fourth petition and our temporal needs. It is all-inclusive: "Everything that belongs to the support and wants of the body; such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, fields, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, discipline, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

Give us this day our daily bread. This has been, I trust, our daily petition since early childhood. But comparatively few of us really know what the cry for bread means. Few of us have been cradled in the lap of luxury, it would not have been good for us had we been; many of us have eaten the daily bread gotten by hard daily toil, which for most of us is the best thing that can happen; some of us, as a result of adverse circumstances, have known, at times, the pinch of want, and have felt the pang of solicitude for the others around the fireside. But as a people we have always lived in the midst of plenty. Many of our people live much of the time in sinful extravagance. And most of us waste more than the rank and file in many lands have to use. When men are held in the grasp of unremitting toil, and when even this gives them no hope but that of satisfying the most pressing needs of themselves and dependents, then they know what the cry for bread means.

Personally, this fourth petition is largely but the occasion of reminding us of the Heavenly giver of our material wants, and eliciting from us our acknowledgment of the same, and the prayer that the same bountiful hand will continue to provide for us in the future as in the past. It is only as we come to realize that there are actually millions Who are absolute strangers to the bounties we possess; that they are actually feeling, most of the time, more or less of the pangs of hunger; that they stand in constant dread of the spectre of starvation; only thus can we come to appreciate the significance of the prayer for bread, the simple necessities of life. And we should bring ourselves to realize these facts. It will heighten, and make still more real our thanksgivings. It will make this petition a real prayer, a heartfelt prayer, — for others. This is a brotherhood prayer. It says give us, not me, this day our, not my, daily bread. If this is a prayer, and not a formality to ease the conscience, it is a prayer for the struggling widow, and the pinched orphans, in the dilapidated tenement; it is a prayer for the strangely featured Chinese

coolie, the still more strangely featured Kaffir bushman, and the lowly Pariah of India, as well as for myself and my well-to-do neighbor.

A Reminder and Pledge of God's Care for Our Boise

Father, — give us day by day our daily bread. This petition put, upon our lips by the Lord Himself is an unmistakable lesson in the care of our Heavenly Father has for our bodies, and general temporal welfare. Parents who love their children are careful of their children's interests not only in one or two directions, but in all directions. So it is with our Heavenly Father. only because of His perfect knowledge and love He is not, as are human parents, liable to overlook any of our interests, or mistake their relative values.

Dwelling in the upper regions into which the first three petitions lead us, the impression might be made that God is so exalted, His affairs so absorbingly great and intricate, His interests in man's spiritual needs so high above all our other needs, that He can not have any real interest in our little round of daily temporal necessities; that He is above such little things. And there are those who so believe. But in this petition Jesus clearly and forcefully teaches us otherwise. There is no need of our physical and temporal life too insignificant for God to be concerned about it. He who is not unconcerned about the fate of the Wren which chirps happily in the hedgerow by the roadside, He who notes our fading and falling locks, cannot be unmindful of anything which has to do with our welfare. And God's goodness all the more magnifies itself by its gracious condescension to these little wants of ours.

The subordination of the physical and temporal to the spiritual and eternal is right and proper. God does this in His dealings with us. He wants us to do this in all the affairs of life where there is any opposition between the two. This truth is brought home to us with force in the very construction and content of the Lord's Prayer. Five of the seven petitions in this Christ-taught prayer deal only with the needs and blessings of the soul. Only this one deals solely with the needs of the body. And the final one, the prayer for deliverance from evil, includes, probably at least, the body as well as the soul in its scope. But while the interests of the soul are the supreme interests, while the body must be held in check, and suffer and decline, if

thereby the interests of the soul can be made to thrive; still God gave us our bodies, and He is interested in them. He made their welfare dependent upon the fulfillment of certain conditions. He gave to our bodies their legitimate cravings. And if we will permit Him we have the assurance that He will do that for them which is best. The Son of God glorified our human nature by taking it up into indissoluble and eternal union with His own Divine personality. And He redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies, our whole life. And though flesh and blood, as now constituted, sinful and unclean, cannot enter Heaven, our purified, spiritualized, and glorified bodies are to enter Heaven to be forever with the Lord, just as Jesus Christ took His own resurrection body into Heaven. Thus it appears that God's interest in our bodies is of more than a temporary and casual nature, it is based upon other and deeper reasons than this that our bodies serve as a means to an end.

If God created our bodies, redeemed them, cares for them, is going to purify, glorify, and eternally save them; then we have no right to despise, neglect, or abuse them. The body should be trained to be the obedient servant of the dominant spirit, but there is no virtue in its needless mortification. The body should not be vitiated by pampering, or indulgence; it should not be injured by excesses. This petition itself, which asks only for the simple necessities of life, is a warning against injuring the body by the mad chase for the glitter and pomp of the mere paraphernalia of life.

“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” In these words Jesus tells us which is the great primary interest of life, and which are the secondary things, and how the one is to be subordinated to the other. But even secondary things are often of much importance. The body rightly appreciated as a gift of God, and cared for as such; all the affairs of the temporal life rightly attended to, religiously attended to, and made to subserve their God-designed functions; do not interfere with the interests of the soul, but rather further them. Let us not think, then, for a moment, that daily bread, all the needs of the physical life, are too unimportant for God to concern Himself about, or too commonplace for Him to bless. Were not many of Christ's miracles wrought for the express purpose of relieving bodily distress? for supplying the temporal needs of the poor and hungry? Did He not say of the footsore and hungry multitude, just in view of their physical condition, — I have compassion on them? Let us not for a moment doubt that all our troubles, all our needs,

down to the very least that are real, are subjects of God's considerate care. He means it when He says, Cast all your care upon Me, for I care for you.

A Series of Related Lessons

After learning just what it is for which this petition teaches us to pray; and the fact that it is a Divine warrant for making a subject of prayer everything which has to do with our physical welfare in this world, and the assurance that God watches over, and cares for every detail of our everyday life; this petition presents for our consideration a series of related and important lessons.

This fourth petition begins with the word, give; — give us our bread. This is a confession, when we understand it aright, of dependence. In spite of the pride and spirit of self-sufficiency which many exhibit, our very existence, and our every blessing, depends on God's favor. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. Even some Christians seem to think; yes, we have to depend on God for the salvation of our souls; but when it comes to taking care of our bodies, and our temporal affairs, we have to do that ourselves. This is a great, a dangerous, mistake. We owe everything to God. "Every good and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights." Not to recognize this, and to render appropriate thanks for it, is just as much a result of ignorance, or pride, and just as culpable, as it is in spiritual things.

The fact that, ordinarily, and according to God's plan, we have to work for our daily bread does not invalidate this truth. God has planned what we call nature. He gives the changing seasons. He causes the rain to fall. He has given the fertility to the soil. He causes the seed to fructify. He is back of that wonderful process which begins with the decomposing seed in the ground, through the various stages, all so admirable, till we come to the ripened grain in the ear. God has given us our minds, by which we understand all these processes, and take advantage of them to our own benefit. He gives us our health, and our strength. And honors us by making us coworkers with Him. Oh, that we might have our eyes anointed to see this truth in its clearness, and our hearts touched to render adequate thanks for it. Then we would walk more as with God, partners with Him; then our daily toil

would verge toward the creative, and the sacrificial; and our daily fare, however simple, approach the sacramental.

When this great truth is learned that God is in: truest sense the giver of all good, then no one will think of sitting down to a table laden with the gifts of God's bounty without returning thanks to the kind heavenly Father for His unfailing goodness. Many who call themselves Christians never do this. Let it not be said of us. Let us not be like the swine which look only into the ground in which they root. How much more becoming is the spirit of the Psalmist: "O Give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. He giveth food to all flesh; He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry."

The fourth petition is a brotherhood prayer, we say — Give us our daily bread. We are not only to pray for ourselves; but for others, for all men. And it is to be a prayer which comes from the heart. The man who voices petitions only for himself, or his own little circle, never reaches the heart of God. His selfish petition rebounds to stultify the words of his lips, and to make still more callous his hardened heart. This is a prayer intended not only to Widen one's vision, but his sympathies; it means, Lord, give to my brother, not only my brother by the tie of ancestral blood, but my swarthy skinned brother to the ends of the earth, give them all their daily food; help me to make their burdens and their joys my own.

Give us this day our daily bread. Rightly understood this is a prayer which is intended to be an antidote to worldliness. In many things we do have to use forethought, and plan, and work, for the future; but we are not to be too greatly concerned about it. Only today is ours, tomorrow is the Lord's, and may never be ours. Today I am living, my great concern is to live right, to walk with God, to draw from Him the power to develop my life, my character. I am to be concerned about temporalities only as they may serve my higher aims. When one devoutly repeats this petition he instinctively feels that it is not in keeping with the feverish, exhausting, deadening chase after mere things.

Give us bread. This is a prayer which contains a warning against effeminacy; the mad, and still maddening, desire for luxury; gluttony, and the like. The world has gone stark crazy. The days of ancient Rome have come again. Eating and drinking, and indulging the passions; making a show, winter gauze and summer furs, these things show the current, the mad, raging torrent, with which we are drifting; whither, oh, whither? onward, on-

ward to destruction. Lord, give us bread. Make us to want bread; the things on which the life may thrive. - Bring us back to sane, high thinking, and plain living. Help us again to realize that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth, and his flesh enjoys.

In spite of the fact that the fourth petition encourages plain, upstanding, manly living; and is a shoulder thrust against worldliness, it encourages the virtue of thrift, economy, and honesty. We pray that God will give us our bread, the bread which, in the face of all the world, we can call our own. No man can truly pray this prayer, and then ask God to bless that upon which he lives when he has gotten it by sharp practices, by pressure brought to bear upon the widow and the orphan, by the bloody sweat of the brow-beaten artisan, or by shoddy work glossed over so as not to be seen. The man who prays this prayer obligates himself to be able to look God and all the world in the face, because, if he is a well man, he puts honest effort into his calling, a calling useful to humanity, and as a consequence he is able to provide for his needs without any twinges of conscience, without feeling that what he uses rightfully belongs to some one else.

To pray this prayer, and live it, will do much toward destroying the feeling of resentment so prevalent when men see others possessing and enjoying more than they themselves possess. God does not give to all men alike. Why, is often not at all clear to us. Here as elsewhere his ways are often inscrutable. But He always acts wisely, for our good. And when we have asked His blessing upon our efforts, and then do the best we can, and take the proper care of what He gives us, we should rest satisfied that what we get is the best that, under existing circumstances, God can give to us.

In the Holy Land, as one travels through towns and villages, he will often meet vendors of bread carrying their wares in large trays. As they go along the streets they keep crying out: "Ya Karim! Ya, Karim!" Now this is not, in reality, a name for bread, but an attribute of God: It signifies the bountiful, or generous. So let us go about making our living. We put forth our efforts of mind and body, but what we get is the gift of the Generous One. As we enjoy our homes, our clothing, our food, any and all the good things of life, let us remember that it is all of God's bounty. "Know ye that the Lord He is good, — be thankful unto Him, and bless His name."

The Answer To Our Prayer For Bread

Give us for the day our daily bread. — St. Luke 11:3.

The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. — Ps. 145:15-16.

FROM THE FOUR QUARTERS of the earth goes up the cry for daily bread. Everywhere there is a deep-seated consciousness that we are all dependent for our daily sustenance on a power beyond ourselves. To this Being, or Power, voices are everywhere raised in entreaty, and hands outstretched in supplication. This is often done ignorantly, and in the spirit of despair, rather than with the assured hope of receiving personal consideration and help.

It is not so that the true Christian prays. He knows to whom he prays; not to some far-off, unknown being; but to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In this prayer we are taught to pray specifically to “Our Father,” who invites us to come as dear children to a loving, considerate parent, ever interested in all that pertains to the real welfare of his children, whether it be spiritual or temporal good. But do our prayers really avail anything in the sphere of the temporal and physical? Do our prayers for good things; for clothing, for the necessities of life, really get us anything? If so, how is all this brought about? These are the questions with which especially we shall interest ourselves today, as we discuss — the answer to our prayer for daily bread.

1. God Answers the Prayer For Bread

God does answer the prayer for bread.

So we unhesitatingly, whole-heartedly answer those questions. He gives us daily bread out of His own rich store.

God can, and at times He has, provided daily bread for his people directly; without waiting for the processes through which channels He ordinarily provides these things. When His chosen people were cut off from the rich, but hard earned flesh pots of Egypt, God gave them, like the dew of the morning, Manna, — which He caused to fall from Heaven. And when this did no longer satisfy, He caused the east wind to bring into camp feathered fowls like the sands of the sea. When the Tishbite had by his faithfulness incurred the wrath of the godless Ahab, and had to flee for his life, God sent the ravens, as winged messengers, to bear him the necessities of life. And when the brook dried up, the widow's barrel of meal, and cruse of oil, proved an unfailing supply.

I need not tell you how, when the need was great, the mighty Son of God readily and generously multiplied the slender store at hand till all the multitude was fully satisfied, and had much more in hand when the feast was ended than when it began. And Gods hand is not shortened. What God has done God can do; and, where the need exists, will do. We say the age of miracles is past. In a sense this may be so. But they have not ceased because they are not possible.

God has not forsaken His people, His love has not grown cold. It is as warm as it ever was. And He is just as much concerned about His people as He ever was. If Gods honor demands it, if the need of His people require it, God can and will again send Manna to supply the wants of His people, or ravens to feed them. And, remember, this does not refer alone to food; but to all the actual needs of life.

The necessities of our bodily life do not ordinarily come by way of what we call the miraculous; which is only a temporary Divine contraction of the ordinary processes of nature. There is a well-defined method by which our material needs are usually supplied. A fruitful earth, teeming oceans, changing seasons, light, warmth, moisture; appraised by human brains, and manipulated by human muscle, are the raw materials out of which the physical wants of the children of men are chiefly supplied. With these primary elements and laws of nature man has to cooperate. For it is written, — in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread. But does this mean that God is eliminated as the real provider of our wants? Not in the least. Who but God gave us nature? What are the laws of nature, from the least to the greatest, but the

steadfast going forth of the will of God? “When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord Thy God for the good land He hath given thee.” (Deut. 8:10.) “God hath not left Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:17.)

Science has done much in helping us master and apply the laws of nature. But science has created nothing, it has only helped us to discover and apply what God has created. It has helped us to enrich the soil, to grow two stalks of grain where one grew before; by wise selection, and other devices, it has helped us to multiply and improve our varieties of grains and fruits. When we wonder at the things in the sphere of nature which science has enabled those to do who have sought and applied her secrets, how much more should we be led to wonder and adore as we contemplate the real author of all these things. — How close it brings us to God when we fully realize that all these wonders were contrived by His omnipotent power, under the control of His fatherly heart, for the good of us His children. All true science only makes us the more truly humble, recognizing as we do the truth of the Apostle’s words, in the sphere of nature, as in the sphere of grace: “Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” (1 Cor. 3:7.)

It is an exhilarating thought, a thought which should bring us to our knees in reverence and thankfulness, this, that God has taken us into partnership with Himself in the practical working out of His wondrous plans for providing the teeming millions of the earth with those things which minister to their material well-being. Not only the husbandman who goes forth to plow, and sow, and reap; but every man, and woman, and child, who puts a courageous hand to an honest day’s work, in a helpful calling, whereby the children of men are enabled to live better, stronger, more useful lives, is a worker together with God in that marvelous economy of His whereby He provides for the wants of the children of men. Every such person is helping God to feed, and clothe, and house the world of humanity.

This is one of the reasons why God does not want, and can ill endure, drones and dullards in His great workshop. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” said the Christ. “And I work” is the refrain of every able-bodied man who has found God’s niche for himself in the world.

A truth like this, and it is God’s own truth, ought to do very much toward taking the sting out of human toil. And it does, for all those who truly

catch its meaning. It lifts it out of the sphere of drudgery, and gives the unmistakable hallmark of nobility.

Sin and its consequent weakness and perversity has affected every sphere of human life and activity. Man now labors under many, and often serious, handicaps. Weakness causes us soon to grow weary. Repeated failures in our efforts cause us to lose heart. But there are compensations. God does not spurn us. He does not despise our weakness, or our defective efforts. He does not use us as mere pawns in achieving His results. He makes us members, yes, each of us a member, of His official staff. He puts His agencies into our hands. He says to each of us, here are my plans, help me carry them out, be a worker with me. And He gives us, yes, He gives us, the powers of mind and body by which we may take our place, and do our part, as efficient workmen in His great, fruitful world-garden.

These, then, are not meaningless words, — Father, give us our daily bread. God does give us all that is comprised in this term daily bread. He has given us the earth, and the conditions which make it fruitful. He has placed within the seed the germinating principle by which, under the benign influences of soil, and climate, and light and darkness, and heat, and moisture it multiplies, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold. He has given us, put under our dominion, the animal kingdom, with the perpetual miracle by which the products of earth and air and water are transmuted into the higher forms of life. He has put us here, given us our powers of mind for the understanding of the needful measure of His plans, and the power of putting them into action for the carrying out of His plans for human happiness. How wonderful are Thy ways and works, O Lord; the whole earth is full of Thy glory. Truly Thou givest us our daily bread. Thou givest food to all flesh; Thou givest to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. Thou givest them their meat in due season; Thou openest Thy hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

2. Man Often God's Steward

Man is often to be God's steward in answering the prayer for daily bread.

The points made above as to the fact that our daily bread does come from God, and how He ordinarily provides it, are, beyond question, the primary lesson we should learn in considering the answer to this fourth peti-

tion. But there is another lesson to be learned which we would be recreant to God, ourselves, and God's other children, not to learn and practice. This lesson is that while God is the first great giver of all good, He designs often to answer the cry of His children for bread through us, out of the storehouse which He has entrusted to us as His stewards.

How does God answer the prayer of your little child when it, in its simplicity and weakness, lisps this prayer for daily bread? There is no hesitancy in your answer. You say, God has blessed me, He has given me strength to work, a mind to wisely and effectually employ my strength, and He has blessed my labor. Out of the store God has given me I provide for those dependent on me. Next to God, I live for those whom God has given me, and over whom He has set me as guardian and provider. I am willing to give, I joyously give, my strength, if need be, my life, for those I love. The man, or woman, in whom this spirit does not live has lost that which is finest, and most ennobling, in human life. But, my brethren, this does not exhaust the responsibility of human stewardship. Remember, we have heard that this is, throughout, a brotherhood prayer. And it is enlarging the circle very little to include only our own dependent loved ones.

There are those of whom it may be said, without being misunderstood, that they deserve no help. The lazy man, the one who answers to all solicitations to be up and doing: "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep"; the one of whom it is said: "So shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as an armed man," (Prov. 6:10-11.) those who are determined to live by their wits at the expense of others, rather than by honest toil, do not deserve help. God Himself says, — if any will not work, neither shall he eat. (2 Thess. 3:10.) They should be compelled to work, or allowed to come to such straits that they will be willing to work. But there are those who, by no fault of their own, are prevented from taking their place in the busy line of human activities. There are times when those who are not only willing, but anxious, to work must stand idle in the market place. There are those who are mentally, or physically incapacitated; or both. There are those whose responsibilities are so great, whose misfortunes are so multiplied, that, with best intentions, they cannot possibly make the income cover the required outlay. There are those who, by inscrutable providences, are deprived of their natural guardians and providers, our widows and orphans. How about these? Who is to give them their daily bread? Are we to wait for God to send ravens to feed them? or

expect God to work another miracle by giving multiplying properties to the slender store of supplies? God can do this. And what is more He is doing many things in this line which are just as wonderful. But ordinarily God wants us, His children, the recipients and administrators of His bounty, the executors of His will, the members of His brother- hood, to be the dispensers of His good things; to provide the necessities of life for those who cannot do this for themselves. And when the children of God, out of love for their Lord, become His almoners, it is still God who is giving His children their daily bread. He provided it in the first place. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? He asks. He prompts the giving. The godless world knows nothing of such loving cooperation with God. It is a , blessed service, blessing the giver as well as the recipient, taught only by the Spirit of God.

The Church of God has ever recognized that this is one of God's ways of answering this prayer for f daily bread. This knowledge, and the spirit back of it, led the very first Christian congregation to establish a special office, the diaconate, the particular purpose of which was that of providing for the wants of the poor and needy. And ever since that distant day, whenever the Church has been true to her Lord, she has been a ministering Church in this sense. This is the reason we have our orphanages, and Old Folks' homes. And better still, why Christian people of the right spirit, who have the means, take these unfortunate little ones into their own homes, and provide for them as their own. All that the state and the world are doing in this line are but reflections of the lessons they have learned from the conduct of the newborn children of God.

Not only has the Church, as such, a call to help God answer the prayer of the needy for daily bread; but as individuals the opportunity is often presented of being thus workers together with God. We believe that the state, as such, should assume even more responsibility in this direction than it has. By what the state often allows and licenses it indirectly, if not directly, makes a contribution to pauperism and crime, and should take care of her illegitimate progeny. But the Christian, with a conscience made keen, and a heart made tender, by the Spirit of God, should ever have present with him the question, when brought into contact with cases of need: Does God not want me to be the dispenser of His bounty, out of the store He has provided me? does God not want me to answer this person's prayer for daily bread?

The Apostle says, in his striking way: “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (Jas. 2:15-16.) Whether one says these hollow words, or not, the needy are not profited. And by the same token, those who refuse to help the needy, when it is in their power to do so, show that they have not profited by the abundant proffers of Divine grace; for it is written: “Whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17.)

Those who have never seriously set themselves to cooperate with God in the matter of helping the needy, by taking a reasonable portion of the bounty God has first given them, and using it in answering the prayers of the needy for food and clothing, do not know the joy they are missing. The sweetest and most lasting joys this world affords come from giving joy to others. The selfish man’s joys are cankered joys. Greed kills real love, it blunts the finer sensibilities. Even the birds do not sing so sweetly, or the sun shine as brightly, for the greedy, self-centered, callous-hearted man. His own spiritually bilious nature casts a dark shadow over everything.

Brethren, if we want really, and fully, to enjoy what we have, let us learn more fully to recognize it all as the gracious gift of our Heavenly Father, to be held in trust for Him, and a liberal portion of it to be used in helping the less fortunate in getting the answer to their prayer for daily bread.

3. Gratitude and Thanksgiving

Finally, the recognition, in anything like an adequate degree, of the fact that God is, indeed, the giver of our daily bread will lead to gratitude and thanksgiving.

This petition is a real prayer. It is an acknowledgment of dependence, of need. It is a cry for help, and a recognition of our Heavenly Father as the Helper. He who prays this petition aright looks to God for the proper supply of all his temporal wants, and recognizes every good thing as God’s gift. The use and enjoyment of them, then, should naturally lead to thanksgiving.

Before there can be true thanksgiving, however, there must be thankfulness, gratitude. One of the great needs of human life is a larger sense of

gratitude. Comparatively few men have an habitually adequate feeling of appreciation for what others do for them. Children are often ungrateful. In the business world it is very often lacking. Even friends often take for granted, as if it were their due. what others do for them, it may be at no little sacrifice. But God is the one whose ever abounding goodness is repaid with the grossest ingratitude. We take His gifts as if He owed them to us; indeed, sometimes, as if He should be very much flattered that we accept them at all.

Perhaps one reason why so many professing Christians receive God's many good gifts without special feeling of thankfulness is the fact that His goodness of heart leads Him to bestow His temporal blessings, for the physical life of man, on all men without distinction. As it is written: "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (St. Matt. 5:25.) God does this because it is the one form of blessing He can give to all men. It takes no special fitness to receive them. He cannot bestow spiritual blessings on men unless they are willing to receive them. And God bestows these gifts for the body, which He can give to even the wicked, to impress them with His generous goodness, so as to win them to think of His spiritual gifts, and accept them. Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

This petition is almost as much a prayer for eyes to see, and hearts to appreciate, God's bounties as it is a prayer for the bounties themselves. Without the recognition of God's goodness in providing us with the necessities, without the gratitude this recognition should awake, without the thanksgiving true thankfulness is ever led to render, we would probably, most of the time, receive these gifts in just as full a measure. But under such condition they can never bring the happiness they are intended to bring. Why is it that two gifts, of equal value, often bring such a difference in joy? The one is given as a formality, as the result of a sense of obligation, to discharge a debt. We appreciate it but little. The other comes from a dearly appreciated friend. It bears the message of a heart aflame with love and good will. This is the gift we treasure. We love to fondle it. It seems to be almost sentient with life. This is the result God desires to produce by His gifts. And when they are thus received they bring tenfold the happiness they possibly can under any other condition. They bring the blessed spirit of contentment. We know that, be the gift great or small, it is the best that infinite wisdom and

love can provide, taking into consideration our condition. And we rest, contented and happy, in the embrace of Him of whom we know that He withholdeth no good thing from them that love Him.

And thus the way is prepared for the bestowal of the richer gifts of the Spirit for the spirit. Indeed, the commonest gift of God, if it is proper to speak of any gift of God as common, is meant to be the occasion, or the vehicle, for conveying to us some still richer blessings for the mind, the heart, the soul. St. Paul clearly shows us that there is something, directly, or indirectly, conveyed to us, over and above the merely material, in every one of God's gifts, when he says: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God, and with prayer." (1 Tim. 4:4, 5.) And the man of many experiences, of the old covenant, was taught, and teaches us, the same truth when he says: "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures and trouble therewith." (Prov. 15:10.)

This thankfulness, if it is genuine, must find expression. It should find expression in our whole attitude of life. The lips of the thankful man become, more and more, a stranger to complaints. The thankful man walks through the earth with the uplifted, and uplifting, attitude of one emancipated. His life is a commentary on the Apostle's words, — "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." He has the calmness and the courage of one who knows that he is safe, of one who knows that his destiny is settled, that nothing can keep him from it.

A man like this will joyously observe the forms of thankfulness. He worships as he works. But often he pauses in his work to worship. You have often seen at least reproductions of Millet's celebrated picture, "The Angelus." It gives a farm scene. In the forefront are two figures, a stalwart peasant and his wife. It is the evening hour. In the gloaming, against the sky-line, may be discerned the outline of a Church. From the steeple floats forth the sound of the vesper bell, calling the countryside to worship. The picture represents the two workers as having laid down the implements of toil. With bowed heads, and folded hands, they stand for a moment in silent prayer. This is a picture of what every life should be, a picture of what the life will be which is lived in the spirit of the fourth petition.

True prayer strengthens the hand for work. Work, steady, honest, upward looking work impels the soul to pray. In the truly enriched life the two go together.

When people pray the fourth petition, and live in the spirit of it, they will never sit down at table to partake of the gifts of God's bounty without praise and thanksgiving. In ancient times, the children of Israel before each meal repeated these words: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth." And as early as the time of Moses, they received the admonition, — "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord Thy God for the good land which he hath given thee." (Deut. 8:10.)

Let us cultivate the spirit of gratitude. There should not be so much frost-bound piety, or impiety. Our hearts should be bubbling over with genuine gratitude for God's unnumbered benefits. And as we travel along life's pathway, our hearts should be filled with sweet songs of praise inspired by His largess.

A heart truly permeated with gratitude for God's innumerable and unmerited blessings, as they are revealed to the growing discernment of Spirit-taught souls, loves to turn these blessings over and over, it loves to meditate on them, and still more on the Giver of them, as the miser nloats over his treasures, as the lover on the token of affection he has received. And as he does this the stream of gratitude and thankfulness widens and deepens. And from the gift the grateful soul goes ever back to the Giver; the contemplation of His divine, all-glorious nature; and to man's riches in Gods grace.

There is an eternal steadfastness in God's goodness. His loving kindness is from everlasting. His compassions are new every morning. At the same time there is an infinite variety in its manifestations. Let us keep our gratitude green. Let us keep our thanksgiving from falling into decay. Thanksgiving grounded in true gratitude never tires of repeating its acknowledgments. And the most musical voice in all the world is that which is tuned to melody by heartfelt gratitude toward God for His lovingly bestowed gifts.

Man's Cry For Pardon

Father, ...forgive us our sins, — St. Luke 11:2, 4.

AS YOU RECALL, we have reached that part of the Lord's Prayer which deals directly and specifically with human needs. This is contained in every part from the Introduction to the Amen. The prayers that the Father's name be hallowed, His Kingdom come, and His will be done, all have reference to earthly conditions. They are all a confession that these things are not done as they should be, and that things would be better here if they were so done than they are now. Man's very highest interests are contained in these first three Heavenward looking petitions. And not only his purely spiritual welfare; where God's name is hallowed, His Kingdom supreme, and His will done, there man's interests, both of body and soul, are best served.

With the fourth petition we begin to specify our needs. Here the cry is, — Father, give us. It is the cry for sustenance. It is the cry which goes up wherever hunger and thirst pangs lay hold of man's Vitals. It is the cry which goes up wherever men begin to recognize that all good gifts come down from the great God.

Let us not forget, as we pass on, that Jesus gave us but one petition which deals exclusively with our bodily needs; but six which deal primarily with the needs and blessings of the soul. Where do we put the emphasis in our prayers, in our life? Do we put it where God puts it? When we formulate our own prayers, what is the burden of our prayer; things for the body, or things for the soul? When we pray the Lord's Prayer, of what do we think most, blessings for the body, or the soul? Whichever it may be, one thing is sure; we cannot have God's richest blessings till we begin to think for ourselves as God thinks for us, to desire for ourselves the things God desires us to have.

The fifth petition, of which we begin to treat today, continues the cry for help; but it is for help of a different kind. In the fourth petition we present ourselves as humble supplicants, asking for the necessities of our physical

life. In the fifth petition we confess a deeper humiliation; not only that we are poor beggars, who can live only by God's bounty; but that we are rebellious children, deserving only His displeasure. The fourth petition might have been prayed, and, in substance, at least, undoubtedly was prayed, by our first parents in the innocence and blessedness of Eden. The fifth petition has meaning only on the lips of a fallen, a sin-sick, a condemned race.

Let us today consider but the first part of the fifth petition; forgive us our sins. There are only a few words, but it is a big subject. We will make a study of: Man's cry for Pardon.

1. A Cry of Distress

The cry, Father, forgive us, is a cry of distress, and a confession of its recognition.

Father, forgive, is a cry wrung, often from reluctant hearts, by the ever-pressing consciousness of man's loss, his need, his guilt.

The cry, Father, forgive, is, then, first of all, a confession; a confession of soul need, a confession that something is wrong within. And it is practically a universal confession. We do not mean to say by this, however, that all have the same consciousness of the nature of their trouble, or the same clear conception of the nature of the One to whom they cry. With many the cry is just forced from them; they know not the nature of their ailment, they know not the real nature of the One to whom the agony within forces them to cry.

It has often been asserted that the consciousness of sin and guilt, and consequent retribution; and the cry for help, for pardon and peace, which this consciousness impels, is all the result, a depressing, unmanning result, of the influence of Christian doctrine. Nothing is farther from the truth. All the monuments of antiquity, all history, all literature, all that we know of the less fortunate races of today, proves the falsity of this claim. Father, forgive, is a cry which goes up around Christian altars with more knowledge, with more hope, with more results, than anywhere else. But in some form, with some little gleam of hope, or as a cry of despair, the cry of distress, caused by the intolerable soul-burden, is heard in every land. From the igloos of the frozen north, from the leafy shelters of those who dwell where summer breezes blow; from old and young; from the more fortunate, and the less

fortunate; from the sage and the illiterate, there goes up the cry of soul-pain, expressive of the sense of loss, of guilt, of deserved impending punishment. Men quite generally have a feeling that they are no longer what man once was; that they are not what they would like to be; that they are not what they hope, in some way, to become.

This practically universal experience of conscious loss and guilt explains also the conduct to be witnessed all over the world. In all ages, and in all parts of the world, men have sought relief from this crushing burden of conscious guilt. This is the explanation of the prostrations; the outstretched, imploring hands; the entreating voices, heavy with tears, which are a part of the history of the race. This explains the mortifications, the tortures, men have practiced on themselves. It is man's own devised way of trying to make amends for his faults. This universal consciousness of guilt explains the innumerable altars which have burned in every clime, and in every age; altars on which men have often offered their best, even their nearest and dearest, their own flesh and blood. It is poor, deluded man's way of trying to pay his debt.

Every now and then a man of Pharisaic spirit arises, who thinks so well of himself that he feels no need of joining in the great cry for pardon. He rejoices, a poor, blind kind of rejoicing it is, that he is not as other men are. All of which is true; he is not like a Christian, he compares unfavorably with the ordinary heathen. He is conscious of no loss, of no guilt. He has, as he thinks, only a superfluity of good deeds of which to boast. Poor man. His disease has blunted his conscience, blurred his vision, dulled his sensibilities; he is affected by unconscious spiritual paralysis. This is the man who is suffering from the effects of faulty education; he has been educated out of the truth.

There are a great many in our day like this man, and many of them are professedly in the churches. They have no thought of how needy they are, only of how good they are; no thought of how much they are indebted to God, only of how much they can get God indebted to them. Some even have the idea that by a certain course of external conduct they are capable, not only of satisfying all of God's righteous demands; but of acquiring a treasury of good deeds, of which the Church may take possession, and transfer them to others not so fortunate.

We are inclined to the belief that the poor, benighted heathen, who, in his ignorance, prostrates himself in the dust, holds out dumbly pleading hands,

and lifts up his voice, wrung from a heart filled with agony, to the dimly conceived Being whom he feels himself to have grieved and offended; I affirm my inclination to the belief that such an one comes nearer the heart of God than the sleek, complacent man who professed to believe that God ought to be proud of such a man as he is.

There are others, unquestionably many of them, who pray the fifth petition with more or less regularity. They say, Father, forgive; but the prayer does not mean much to them. They have never known the dreadful thing which grips a man's soul, and twists it in spasms of agony. They have never had anything like the experiences of David, Paul and Luther. Sin has never really appalled them. They pray, Father, forgive, chiefly because it is a custom; because others do so; not because they are driven thereto by the exigencies of their own soul life.

Some of the reasons for this condition are not hard to find. Inherently the human soul is inclined to be proud, self-sufficient; it does not like to acknowledge dependence. This spirit is fostered by much of the scientific and religious teaching of the day. Some actually deny the existence of anything deserving to be called sin. To many others, sin is only the remaining weaknesses and deformities not yet worked out of man's nature by the upward push of human development, something to spur him on to greater effort. Much of the theology of the day does not picture God, loving his children in deed; but abhorring all sin and uncleanness; but rather a soft and indulgent Father, who cannot bring Himself to speak severely, or punish adequately.

The whole Church of God needs to make a new and thorough study of the subject so briefly set forth in the fifth petition. And every added ray of light which reveals God's nature more clearly, and our own as it is, will give us just that much of a clearer understanding of the nature and consequences of sin; a deeper conviction of the fact that God cannot be otherwise than grieved and offended at all sin, and led to punish it; and a deeper consciousness of our own deep-dyed guilt, and deserved punishment.

2. The Nature of Evil

Let us now look a little more closely at the nature of the evil we confess in the fifth petition.

Father, forgive! Yes, most of us are ready to join in this petition. But what do we mean by it? With many it means but little more than a traditional confession; a confession that a discordant note has crept into the harmony of life; or that we have not yet quite attained. When such, or kindred, conceptions of our human ailment prevails, there will not be much eagerness, or yearning in the prayer, Father, forgive.

One of the great needs of our so-called Christian civilization, one of the great needs of our Church life, is a more adequate knowledge of the nature of sin. No real advancement in the development of human life can come ere this is rightly learned. Before Moses was fitted to receive the Law of God, and become the leader of God's people, he had to learn to know what sin was. Before David could become the sweet singer of Israel, the great type of the Messiah, the man who could move and mold men's lives, he had to be bowed into the dust by a poignant sense of unworthiness, his heart crushed and distilled into streams of repentant tears. Before Paul was fit to bear the sweet evangel of a Savior born, crucified, risen and glorified, he had to be borne to the earth, not only by a glorious revelation at mid-day, but by a sense of sin which compelled the agonized cry: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Before Luther could be the fearless and forceful bearer of a new-found Gospel to a famishing world, he had to know the more than purgatorial fires of a tender conscience oppressed by sin. Never has there been a really great movement in the Church of God, a movement which gripped men's souls, and made them really zealous and self-sacrificing in doing God's work, which was not antedated, and accompanied, by a spiritual quickening; a quickening which started with a clear, and ever-growing, conception of sin, the havoc it has wrought in human life, the grievous way it offends God, and thwarts His plans. True, before they could become the brave, strong men they became, they had to know not only sin, but God's grace, and the peace and strength which comes from assured forgiveness.

What is sin, this dreadful thing of which we speak? We are not disposed to dispute about names, or quibble about non-essentials; but until we get into the clear about the nature of sin, not much is going to be accomplished in any other fundamental sphere of religion. It is largely because sin is misunderstood that the atonement has been vitiated, and so much of Christianity has become of a milk and water kind.

Sin may be spoken of in the terms of philosophy, of science, of history, of human experience; we prefer to speak of it in the old terms of Scripture. The Lord's servants, by the Master's guidance, have used a mournful list of words and terms to express one or another phase of what we ordinarily call sin. The word most commonly used means missing the mark. This word gives emphasis to the fact that sin is a colossal blunder, that it spells failure; that the life spent in sin, and ended in sin, misses the goal for which it was created. Another word for sin really means lawlessness. The presupposition of this word is that there is One who has authority to set a standard to which human life is to be conformed. Sin is the failure to meet these requirements; it is a going contrary to the Divine will, it is being something else than the Creator wants us to be; it is anarchy in the moral and spiritual world, an anarchy which has made itself felt in all creation. There is a word for sin which bears the particular significance of failure to hear aright. It indicates deadened sensibilities to all that is good and true, to all of God's revelations of Himself. There is a word for sin rendered trespass, which means overstepping a boundary, wandering into forbidden pastures, plucking forbidden fruits and flowers. Another word means limping, stumbling, falling by the way; indicating inability to walk in the right path, curtailment of ability. Still another word for sin has the meaning of being discomfited; the meaning being that life and its efforts are hurled back on itself, that life is without victorious issue. And still another word for sin, and even this does not exhaust the list, means disharmony. The sinful life is out of tune, it gives forth no sweet music, it is like a cracked, discordant bell. I have called this a mournful list of words. It is so because it emphasizes in so many ways how sin has robbed us, weakened us, foiled us, befuddled us, and perverted us. It has set life on a blind alley which leads nowhere but into ever-increasing darkness, perplexity and ruin.

The word sin which Christ used when He taught us to pray for forgiveness, as it is given by St. Matthew, is debts; forgive us our debts. I need not tell you what grievous, vexatious, and oftentimes wicked things debts are. Sometimes lightly contracted, they become the burden of the debtor's life. Debts are often the fruitful parents of many sins; they often lead to deceit and falsehood; they have driven thousands to disgrace and ruin and death.

Sins are all of the nature of debts. God has given us our whole being. Our bodies were to be temples for the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. Every member was intended to perform some service for the glory of God the cre-

ator. The powers of mind, originally so noble, so God-like, and still capable of such wonderful flights and achievements, was to be the reflection of God's mind. But all our members, with all their powers, have been prostituted. Reason has been blinded and sadly perverted; the whole physical frame enfeebled, and filled with the poisons which produce final decay and death; — and the members that were to render such God-like service have been largely prostituted to the service of Satan. Walk the streets and look into the leering, sin-hardened faces of men and women; listen to their ribald talk, their curses and their vulgarity; read the newspaper accounts of crime and cruelty; of filthiness and bestiality which can only be hinted at; and think of the debts they have piled up, debts against themselves, against nature, against their fellowmen, against God.

Sins are not only debts, multiplied, incalculable debts which men have piled up against themselves by way of the neglect, misuse, or abuse of their own bodies and powers. Sins are often debts owed to others. How much oppression has there not been in the world? For how many widow's sighs and orphan's tears will men not have to answer? How many aching, breaking hearts thoughtlessly, viciously wagging tongues have made! Some coterie, or eateries, of men will have to answer for the orgies of blood and lust which has driven a large part of the world into a state bordering on moral insensibility, and another part into paroxysms of grief and protest.

Not one of us need go very far, or spend much time in examination, if he will conduct his quest with the searchlight of God's holy Word thrown on his conduct, to find some of these debts owed the neighbor. Is there a single person who will dare to say that he has never added anything to the burden of any fellow human being?

And let us remember that things done amiss do not exhaust the list. Sins of omission, the failure to help smooth the way for another, or to help lighten his load, may also be a very serious debt we owe.

The nature of sin can never be fully defined till man, with all the intricacies of his composite being, has been fully catalogued; and his full history written. To do this fully sin has made impossible for man. But we have not said all that can be said, and should be stated, till we have gone beyond man's deeds to his nature. Man is not only a sinner, he is sinful; he not only does that which is wrong, and fails to do that which is good; his nature is evil, corrupted, vitiated, prone to choose and do the evil. Sin is not only an act, or a series of acts; it is a state, a condition. It is because of this that the

greatest of all Teachers declared: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." (St. Matt. 15:19.) It is because of this that the same exalted Teacher declared to all those who would enter into life eternal: "Ye must be born again." (St. John 3:7.)

Goethe was speaking nearer God's own truth than, possibly, he himself realized when, in giving the Confessions of a Beautiful Soul, in Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre, he says: "For more than a year I was forced to feel that if an unseen Hand had not protected me, I might have become a Girard, a Cartonche, a Damiens, or almost any moral monster that one can name. I felt the predisposition to it in my heart. God, what a discovery!"

It was the recognition of the same fundamental truth which led John Bunyan to exclaim, as he looked out of the window of Bedford jail at a condemned prisoner being led to execution: "There goes John Bunyan, but for the grace of God."

Every sin, then, though it may injure self and the neighbor, is also, and primarily, a sin against God. David recognized this. Feeling, deeply feeling, his self-contamination; torn with remorse at the thought of the harm he had done others; he was constrained to cry out: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight." (Ps. 51:4.)

All sin is rebellion against God, a denial of His authority, a contravention of His will. It robs Him of His honor. It prevents the full accomplishment of His will.

We do not fear, love and trust God above all things. This is sin, the sin of all sins. Our eyes have been blinded, our minds confused, our souls seared; we do not know God aright; not knowing Him aright we fear Him, refuse to give Him the place in our lives which He wants and deserves; this is sin.

Great, indescribably great, is the debt we owe God. It is like unto ten thousand talents, a million or two of dollars, when a man has not even a penny with which to begin payment.

What the world needs, yes, and what the Church of today, in large measure, needs, is a larger knowledge, a quickened consciousness, of sin. We need to go to school; we need to give ear to the stern denunciations of the prophets, of John the Baptist; we need to pay more attention to the uttered woes of Jesus Himself.

The one place where we get the best understanding of the enormity of the debt of sin as a disease in its seat in man's nature, and of sin in all its

manifestations, is to follow Jesus into Gethsemane, and to stand beneath the cross on Calvary. Lord, teach me to know sin, my own sin; sin as it has ravished my soul, weakened my body, dulled my mind, and perverted my powers; sin as it has led me to think and say and do many things contrary to Thy most holy will.

3. Consequences of The Sin

Let us now turn to the Consequences of the sin to which we confess in the fifth petition.

We have not been able entirely to disassociate the consequences of sin from our discussion of its universal presence, and its nature; but we need a fuller statement.

Naturally, the view we take of sin itself is going to determine, or at least largely modify, our conception of the consequences of sin.

The way some few philosophize about sin, it would seem to be a help to human life rather than a hindrance. To them sin in human life is the lingering remnants of imperfections not yet outgrown, it is the uneliminated brute inheritance; it is an obstacle which is to serve as a stimulus to renewed activity in the effort to throw off an incubus.

Does such a theory explain, satisfactorily, the effects of sin we see all about us in the world?

Let us look first of all at the individual; the natural man, the man not newborn. Does all his vaulting ambition make him a better man? Does his striving to better his own condition make him more considerate of the welfare of others? Is it not true that much of this energy is still expended in devouring the widow's home, and the orphan's patrimony? in taking advantage of the gullibility of the ignorant, and the defenselessness of the weak?

Does this much-vaunted upward urge of evolution really make men better at heart? Does wealth, education, social position, and all the advantages of advancing civilization keep men from being licentious, selfish, revengeful, and brutal? Where it does it is the result of the softening, restraining influence of Christian civilization, and not merely of the desire to get up and on in the world.

Look out into the world, and you do not need a magnifying glass, just look out on the world of human beings: hear the cries of pain, the sighs, the

moans coming not from a few, but, sooner or later, in greater or less degree, from the lips of all; this is a consequence of sin in the individual.

Stand by the bedside of the sick; visit our hospitals, look at the distorted limbs, the emaciated bodies, the pain-wearied faces of the inmates; as you walk the streets count the maimed, the halt and the blind; watch the steady stream that goes into the physician's office, and take note of the hurried and frequent visits made by these men to all parts of the community, the palace as well as the cottage; all this is the direct or indirect consequence of sin.

Read the daily paper, much of it is made up of the stories of murder, arson, theft, debauch, scandal and intrigue; in high life and low, among capitalists and artisans, among the educated and the ignorant, the well known and those unknown till their evil deeds gave them a transient notoriety. This is the consequence, the ever-working, never failing, consequence of sin.

Turn to the pages of history, from the first page, dim and indistinct with age, to the last on which the ink is scarcely dry, fully half of it is red with the tinge of blood; green with the gall of jealousy, rapacity and revenge; yellow with bluster, unbridled ambition, and godless exploitation; and black with decay and death. And all these pages have been faded by rivulets of tears. This is the consequence of sin.

Emerson was not a very orthodox theologian. But he saw, and described, in "The Sphinx," this thing we call sin.

But man crouches and blushes,
Absconds and conceals;
He creepeth and peepeth,
He palter and steals;
Infirm, melancholy,
Jealous glancing around,
An oaf, an accomplice,
He poisons the ground.

Outspoke the great mother,
Beholding his fear; —
At the sound of her accents
Cold shuddered the sphere;
Who has drugged my boys cup?
Who has mixed my boy's bread?
Who, with sadness and madness,
Has turned my child's head?

We have these manifestations in man's outer life, in all his relations and activities; because there is something wrong within him. We call it original sin. Not because it was a part of his original nature, but because it is now born with him, and has been since the fall. It is a state of life emptied of goodness, predisposed to evil. It has robbed man of his knowledge of God. It has blinded him to the true nature of his own condition; and drives him to all kinds of vain, and often foolish, expedients to better it, the futility of which, if he does not understand, he still feels. As a result of this inner disease, man is hectic, confused, and full of fears; he is bewildered, lost, and full of wretchedness.

Sin has terrible consequences here on earth; but this is not all, it has consequences in Heaven also. Sin, as we have seen, is not only against self, and our fellowmen; it is first of all against God, the creator of the universe, our own Father. And God is not, He cannot be, indifferent to sin. When rebellion broke out in Heaven the rebels were cast out. And God cannot be true to Himself, or His children, and overlook the sins of men. God is angry with the wicked every day. (Ps. 7:11.) Sin is an abomination which He hates. (Jer. 44:4.) Sin is something foul, malignant, repulsive, hateful in its manifestations, — and ruinous in its results. It not only may be punished, it must be punished. Man, even the natural man, has a dim consciousness that sin is a thrust at the holiness and sovereignty of God, makes the sinner guilty, and subjects him to punishment. This adds to his misery.

This points to the final consequence of sin. It does not stop with time and the present life. After it has destroyed man without, and consumed him within, it still goes on, and on forever. When sin remains uncured, the beginning of the final chapter is written when the Son of God, as the final Judge, shall say to the finally impenitent and unforgiven: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

This fate may be escaped; God wills that we should escape it, has prepared the way by which we may escape it. The one way to escape is the way of true repentance, confession, faith, and forgiveness. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8, 9.)

The Father's Forgiveness

Father, ...forgive us our sins, — St. Luke 11:2, 3.

THERE IS SOMETHING radically wrong in human life. This deep-seated evil is universal, and universally recognized. It is known to sage and sciolist; yea, to the most unlettered of men. This condition should lead men, indeed, in all ages it has led men, to seek a remedy. And the search has led to many, and diverse, attempts to cure the evil. There is only one real remedy for the effects of sin; it is not man-devised, but God-given.

When a human being becomes ill, when a specific disease breaks out, because his whole system has become vitiated, his blood poisoned, his power of resistance weakened, a little salve smeared on some affected member, is not going to cure the trouble. The whole system has to be renovated, the blood must be purified, the poison purged away, the corpuscles built up, the whole system given a new tone.

So it is with this universal, all-pervading human ailment; this fruitful mother of all ills, — sin. A few legal enactments, a few observances, a few ablutions, are not going to cure the trouble. The cure must go to the seat of the disease. A new life must be begotten. God must fill us anew with His Spirit. The power of sin must be broken. The new life must direct the current of affairs. The poison must be, more and more, eliminated. The life must become less and less sinful. But for the guilt of the old transgressions; for the weaknesses still inherent in human nature, for the failures to which this still leads; for all this, there is but one cure, — forgiveness, God's forgiveness.

Let us, then, today, consider this vitally important subject: The Father's Forgiveness.

We speak of God's forgiveness, the forgiveness which God gives to man, because there is a forgiveness which man grants to man, of which the fifth petition speaks, and which we shall treat at another time.

1. The Ground of God's Forgiveness

In speaking of forgiveness, let us, first of all, consider the ground of God's forgiveness.

The ground of our forgiveness on God's part is not, as men are so ready to think, our own desert. We do not only not deserve forgiveness from God as a result of anything we have done, or can do; we do not deserve any good thing at His hand. "We are" worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them." We do not deserve God's blessing on our daily toil. We do not deserve any of God's rich provision for our bodies or souls. Much less do we deserve, because of any efforts of ours, that God should blot out the grievous sins whereby we have sorely offended Him. "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity," if Thou shouldst deal with us according to our deserts, "O Lord, who shall stand?"

The truth that only God can atone for sin is not only a Biblical doctrine. It is a truth felt, and oft expressed, by the human heart in all ages. Says Hermes, in *Prometheus Bound*:

"Do not look
For any end moreover to this curse,
Or ere some God appear to accept thy pangs
On his own head vicarious, and descend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus."

There is a contradiction in terms when men speak of obtaining forgiveness by means of what we are capable of doing. We owe God perfect actions, a perfect life. The word forgiveness indicates an imperfect life, faulty actions, perverse actions, omissions in the way of good actions. So we have nothing with which to pay that God can accept. Even our righteousnesses, the good things which those who are already God's children can do, are, according to God's own Word, as filthy rags; flecked with imperfections, sin-stained.

There is one thing we have all deserved at God's hand; not goodness, not mercy, not forgiveness; but punishment. Sin in its very nature brings retribution. God is our Father. His fatherhood is expressive of His inmost nature with respect to man made in His image. But God's fatherhood does not tell all of the truth of His relation to mankind. He is also man's Ruler and

Judge, the Upholder and Vindicator of the moral order to which our consciences, and the whole constitution of things, bears witness. Because of this, though God is our Father, it is written: "The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Rom. 1:18.) And the holy wrath of God brings punishment, as the Word of God, and the experience of men abundantly prove. This is man's due, and there is only one way of escaping it; to flee to the holy, but loving, Father with penitent confession, and find pardon.

How necessary that, instead of trying to justify ourselves, or come with self-devised expedients, that we prostrate ourselves before the mercy-seat of God, and plead for leniency; how necessary that we learn truly to pray; Father, forgive us, or we perish.

The original, underlying ground of our forgiveness is the love and mercy of our Heavenly Father. Seeing His children fallen into misery, and become heirs of death, temporal and eternal, He pitied them. There was nothing in man which necessitated this. There was nothing in God which necessitated it, but His loving heart. It was all of His own free will and good pleasure, according to the riches of His grace. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy; forgiving transgressions and sins." (Exod. 34:6,7.)

This grace of God is all-inclusive, it is as wide as the reach of human sin. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.)

The very purpose, the specific object, of the operation of all this grace was, and is, primarily, to give to the children of men the forgiveness of sins. This fact should be impressed, as with a branding iron, on the minds and hearts of all men. God thought of us. He beheld us in our wretchedness. He loved us in our unloveliness. He made the supreme sacrifice for us. He gave Himself, in the person of His only begotten Son, for us. If there is no power in this to bring us to His feet, to hold us in check, to bring out the best that is in us, then we are hopeless.

That God should pity man as he lay in the squalor and wretchedness of his sins did not suffice, however, in itself, to give us the forgiveness of sins. "The soul that sinneth it shall die... The wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezek. 18:20.) "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the

Son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19.)

Our sins, as we have seen, are debts; debts owed to God; they are violations, not only of natural laws, but of the very nature of the Godhead. Among men it is possible for one to say to another, — "You need not pay the debt you owe me. We will let it go as if it had never been incurred." Men may speak and act thus where injury has been done by one to another. But God cannot do this with man's sins without doing violence to all those elements which make Him God. He has spoken against sin, and decreed its punishment, not simply because He has the power, and desires to take revenge; but because it is a violation of the moral world-order, of His all-pervasive will, of His inmost being. God's truth has to be fulfilled. Justice must be vindicated. Righteousness must be upheld. But God's loving wisdom found a way in which He could still be true to Himself", vindicate His justice, maintain His moral world-order, and still forgive the poor sinner.

We know how this was done. It is the old Gospel story. The Son of God became one of us, a man, only without sin. As a man, the God-man, He became our substitute. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us. By His life He fulfilled our broken obligations, satisfying God's holiness. By His death He atoned for our sins, satisfying God's justice.

This redemptive act, the culmination of a redemptive force Operative in all ages since the fall, includes all the children of men; not one is outside its all-inclusive scope. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38:39.)

2. The Conditions Needed

Let us now consider the conditions which man must meet to actually become possessed of the Father's forgiveness.

God has done all that even God can do that man may have forgiveness. Forgiveness has been made possible. God stands ready, His heart yearns, to bestow it. But God does not, He cannot, forgive man against man's own will. He offers forgiveness. He gives the power to accept the proffered forgiveness. But man has the power of rejecting what God wants to give. This

is the reason we speak of certain conditions which man must meet before forgiveness can actually be given him.

Before a man can be forgiven he must know his condition, that he needs forgiveness. The eyes that have been blinded by sin must have at least begun to lose their scales. The heart that has been lying fallow and hardened in sin must feel the plowshare of God's law, and the mellowing touch of the dew of God's grace. This knowledge of sin must be altogether personal, — God be merciful to me, a sinner.

Recognizing the fact that he is a sinner, that it has ruined him, that his condition sorely grieves God, that it is constantly dragging him down still lower and preparing him for eternal misery, man, before he can be forgiven, must truly repent.

Repentance is not mere remorse, a feeling of intense regret for some misdeed. It is not sorrow caused by the fact that one's sin has become known, and hurts one's prospects. Repentance is not mere fear of consequences, present or future. A great many people get very pious when they get sick and think they are going to die; but as soon as they get better they lose all this feeling. It is not true repentance.

Repentance, when it is of the right kind, means that we are sorry, heartily sorry, continually sorry, not so much that we have, possibly, brought shame and confusion of face on ourselves, or others; not that we have sown a harvest of seed which is bearing a harvest of physical ills, or mental distress; but that we have, first of all, grieved and offended the Lord our God, that ours was part of the burden of the crucified Saviour; that we have helped to deface and deform God's handiwork. The true penitent is hurt more by his sins than by his sufferings; more by the thought of his hurting God than of his hurting himself. There is distress of soul at the thought of every drop of rebellious blood — "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Where there is genuine repentance there must be confession of sin. "He that covereth his sin shall not prosper." If we have sinned against men we must confess it to them. "Confess your faults one to another." And all sins must be confessed unto God. "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sins." And "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9.)

Included in all we have said, but deserving of special mention, is the truth that if we are to have forgiveness of sins we must have faith. Faith is the hand which appropriates all God's gifts. We must believe in the reality of God's love and mercy, in the truth of His promises, in the all-sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for our sins. All these blessings have an actual existence, they were prepared for us, and just as soon as we believe it, they are ours.

Ordinarily all these blessings are ministered to us through the ministration of the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments. Here is where we really learn to know sin, get the courage to confess it, have faith awakened, which lays hold on Christ as sin's only cure.

Yes, our Father does forgive sins. There are no sins too great or grievous for Him to forgive. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. 1:18.) It matters not how many they be, God can, and will, forgive them. "I, the Lord, am He that blotteth out thy sins; yea, though they be as a thick cloud, I will blot them out."

3. The Results Which Must Follow

There are some results which must follow when our Father forgives us. Some of these let us now consider.

Because of human conditions, people often get the idea that God's forgiveness is something like that of a culprit who comes abjectly, tremblingly into the presence of an austere earthly judge who, after finding some mitigating circumstances for a minor offense, says: "Your fine is remitted, go; and do not be seen back here again." Not so with God. He is a Father, He forgives as a Father. When a poor sinner comes penitently to Him, His Father-heart goes out to him, even though he have nothing but the prodigal's rags upon him.

You no doubt remember the story of the prodigal son. Well, it is just as much the story of a faithful father. That father never failed to watch the road to see whether his boy might not be coming home. His heart was always yearning for his wandering boy. When the wanderer came to himself, got his right senses, and found his way back home, the father was watching for him; knew him afar off, and went to meet him. The boy was travel-stained,

his garments were in tatters, the smell of the pigsty was still upon him; but the father took him to his heart, forgave all his past, met all his present needs, provided for his future.

In our translation of the story of the returned prodigal, it says the father commanded the servants to bring forth from the father's house "the best robe" for the son. Some render this "the first," or "the former" robe. This probably means the son's own former robe that he had left behind when he went away. The father had kept it. He had often lovingly looked at it. Now it is restored to the one who was lost, but is found again. It symbolized the fact that the old relations, and privileges, and blessings were restored. So it is when God forgives. He takes those whom He forgives back to His home and His heart. He gives them, in Christ Jesus, the robe of the first relation before sin entered the world.

So God treats people when they come in the right way for forgiveness. The prodigal is a picture of you and me as we are by nature; the father represents God. He loves the children of men, and loving them He bestows on all who will receive them the gifts of His love. God never says, "Now you are forgiven, begone." He puts His arm around us, He leads us into His royal chambers, and here and there He bestows favors as we are able to receive and appreciate them.

Now the pardoned sinner has peace. He is assured of God's love, fear is removed; he looks into the future without being terrified by the spectre of past failures and misdeeds.

The pardoned has learned an important lesson; the lesson which teaches him his own weakness, that all his strength lies in dependence on God. Despair of self is the fostering mother of confidence in God. And as man flees from self-confidence to the refuge offered in Christ, a new source of power is opened to him. and a transformation begins in his life; the old sinful things begin to pass away, and all things become new.

To truly ask for forgiveness means that we recognize in our life the presence of something wrong. So the asking for pardon is itself a pledge, expressed or implied, that we are going to try, by God's grace, to avoid that offense; that there is going to be a new and more earnest pursuit of holiness.

The mistake is often made of looking on Jesus as a Saviour from the guilt, the consequences of sin. He is this, but He is more; He is a Saviour from the power of sin. Just as we allow Him to come into our lives, warm us with His love, inspire us with His ideals, energize us with His power, the

power of sin in us is broken. This, however, comes only when there is, what the presence of Christ constantly increases, a real, deep-seated loathing of sin, and an honest desire and effort to be freed from its tyranny.

Saint Augustine tells us that in his earlier years he prayed that God would free him from certain sins, but that down deep in his heart he secretly hoped that God would not do it yet a while; because he loved those sins. As long as that was the case he never did get rid of them. No doubt a good many of us pray in the same way. And as long as we do we are not going to make any progress in the Christian life. And we are not going to have any assurance of forgiveness. To fight sin, down to its very roots, in the inmost recesses of our nature, is a necessary result of true repentance, and forgiveness.

Again, when we pledge ourselves to fight sin, not only without but within, as we in reality do whenever we ask for forgiveness, then we obligate ourselves to use the means which God provides to help us battle successfully. We must put on the armor, offensive and defensive, which He places at our disposal. We must use the medicine, the food, He provides to make us strong and of good courage. We must avoid the temptations of which we have knowledge. We must keep company with all that will act as an inspiration to what is true and of good report.

Our Father, we thank Thee that the world's cry for pardon need not be in vain, that we have found this forgiveness and the peace and courage and power which it brings. We thank Thee for the love, and the Gift of love, which made this possible. Help us to live the life which testifies to the worth of forgiveness; make us, in word and deed, preachers of the Gospel of forgiveness to all the world. "Lord, there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared."

Man's Forgiveness Of Man

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. — St. Matt. 6:12.

IN THE MOST ANCIENT SYMBOL of the Christian Church, the Apostles' Creed, we affirm our belief in the forgiveness of sins. That there is forgiveness for sin is one of the most clearly taught truths of holy Scripture. It is one of the fundamental truths of our Christian faith. To procure forgiveness for us, and make it effective in us, was, and is, the object of a very large part of God's work for us.

The confessional statement of the Creed has reference, of course, primarily, to God's forgiveness, the forgiveness prepared for man by the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ, and made possible for us to receive by the ministry of the Holy Spirit operating through the Word and the Sacraments.

In the Church's great prayer, the prayer still older, by several centuries, than the Apostles Creed, the prayer taught by the Son of God Himself, we have learned to pray for the forgiveness of our sins. True prayer for something is the outgrowth of the faith that the thing prayed for will be given, the proper conditions being met, and the circumstances, in the judgment of Infinite Wisdom, justifying it.

Notice, we have been taught to pray for forgiveness; this means to be deeply concerned about receiving forgiveness. God wants us to have it. At inconceivable cost He prepared forgiveness for us. And He wants us to be deeply anxious to have what He has prepared for us. Forgiveness is the primary blessing of the Christian life. Without it no other spiritual blessings are possible. Indeed, the one who is not deeply interested in being forgiven cannot be vitally interested in any other real spiritual blessing.

Let us not forget that the spirit of brotherhood still runs through this fifth petition. We pray not only that we, but all men, may have the blessing of forgiveness. And the better we understand, and the more we appreciate, the importance of forgiveness for ourselves, the more real intercession there will be that others also may have the same vital blessing. This petition is

one of the fundamental considerations in all true missionary work. The object of missionary work, as God wants it done, is not, primarily, to fill up the ranks, to swell the statistics of religious organizations, or get larger contributions for the Church's various treasuries; the real purpose, God's first purpose, is to have men made possessors of His pardon, and its resultant peace; to have them relieved of the crushing burden of sin, its guilt, its curse, so that they may stand upright before Him, breathe the free air of God's gracious heaven, and look into God's face as his newborn sons and daughters, and feel coursing through their souls the spirit of adoption.

We dare not lose sight of the fact that an integral part of this fifth petition, older than the organized Christian Church itself, is that clause which treats of man's forgiveness of man. The same Divine Master taught it. We repeat it every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. Indeed, from every point of view, it is evident that there is a very close relationship between man's reception of forgiveness from God, and his own forgiveness of his fellowman, who may have offended him. This truth is clearly taught, not only by the words of the petition itself; but by the unmistakable statements of other Scripture as well. Still, this part of our petition does not seem to have gotten the grip on many of us that it ought to have. Not a few seem to think that the words "Forgive us" are very necessary: but that the other words, "As we forgive every one that is indebted to us," are not especially obligatory. Let us make a special study of this important subject, a study made in the light of God's holy Word. We will take as our subject —

Man's Forgiveness of Man

1. The Necessity

First of all, let us consider the necessity of forgiving our fellowmen if we would ourselves have God's forgiveness.

At this point we are not going to define the nature of this necessity. We are not now going to attempt to tell why we must forgive if we would be forgiven. What we are going to do at present is just to let God speak through His Word, and drive home to our hearts, as well as our minds, that God demands, repeatedly and emphatically demands, that we forgive those

who trespass against us, and that unless we do thus forgive we cannot be forgiven, or enjoy God's favor in any other direction.

The necessity of our forgiving others, if we are to hope for forgiveness for ourselves, is clearly taught in the fifth petition itself. As this petition is rendered more literally in the revised version, it reads thus: "And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." And as the petition is given by St. Luke, the same authorities render it in this form: "And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive every one that is indebted to us." These renderings of the original, which give but a just interpretation and emphasis to it, show more emphatically still than our authorized version, that not to be willing to forgive men when they sin against us means that we cannot be forgiven of God. There is a relationship between the spirit willing to forgive and the spirit capable of receiving God's forgiveness, a relationship so close, so vital, that the lack of the first precludes the possibility of the second. We simply cannot have God's forgiveness and refuse to forgive those who sin against us. We may discuss theories till doomsday, we may befog the issue by raising the dust of human subtleties, the fact remains forever the same. And here is the clincher for it from Jesus' own lips: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (St. Matt. 6:14:15.) And bear in mind, these are the words immediately following the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. They seem to be given purposely to serve as an interpretation of the fifth petition. And mark well the clearness, the unmistakable emphasis, of these words of the Christ Himself: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Could anything be clearer, or more forceful?

You no doubt remember the graphic portrayal given in the parable of the unmerciful servant as it is told us by Christ Himself in St. Matthew sixteen. A certain king had a servant who, somehow, by chicanery no doubt, came to owe his master ten thousand talents. The king demanded settlement. When it could not be made, the king ordered the servant sold, his wife and children, and all that he had; the proceeds to be used toward the payment of the debt. Such was the custom of the time, and of later times, and in other lands. On hearing the demand, the servant fell down at the master's feet, and plead for mercy, promising full payment, which he, probably, never could have made. But the king was moved with compassion, and forgave

him the whole debt. What gratitude, we think, must have filled the man's heart. How merciful and generous he would now be to anyone who might happen to owe him some paltry sum. Songs of gratitude, we should judge, would daily fall from his lips, prompted by a heart from which had been lifted such a grievous burden. But listen to the sequel. As the forgiven man went out from his master's presence, so soon after his pardon was it, he met a fellow-servant who owed him a pittance. As soon as he saw his debtor fire flashed from his eyes, and maledictions fell from his lips. He went and laid violent hands on his fellow-servant, and demanded instant payment. With the same humble demeanor, and the same words of entreaty, which the servant had used toward his king the fellow-servant now entreats his equal. But without avail. There was no fount of mercy in this man's heart. He had learned no lesson of patience. He wanted payment, payment on the instant. And when it was not forthcoming the servant haled the fellow-servant off to prison. And now let us listen carefully, and take to heart the lesson of the finale. There were fellow servants of both these men who were witnesses of this scene. They were more generous than the one, and pitied the other, and went and reported the matter to their common king, who became justly angry. Having called the unmerciful servant into his presence, he said: "O, thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors."

What now is the specific purpose of this parable? This is not hard to discern, for Christ makes His own comment on it. It is to teach the necessity of the forgiven man's forgiveness of his fellowman. Mark well Christ's own words: "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

We may have been God's children. We may have, at one time, enjoyed the king's favor. We may have been forgiven. But it all goes for naught if we develop, and foster, a loveless, unforgiving disposition. I would not say that God recalls the past sins, once forgiven, and holds them against us. The present sin of unbelief and lovelessness is enough to condemn. And let us not forget that, according to Christ's own words, a mere formal forgiveness is not enough. It must be not only in words; it must be genuine, from the heart.

It is a matter of such primary and vital importance that we forgive our fellowmen that Jesus tells us that if we have come into Gods holy temple, before the very altar itself, and are ready to offer the sacrifice of our worship to almighty God, or lay some gift on the altar for the use of His kingdom. and there remember that a brother has something against us, we should, forthwith, leave there our gift, go and seek out our brother and be reconciled to him, then come and offer our gift, and complete our devotions. (St. Matt. 5:23ff.)

In this passage Jesus speaks of our remembering that some one has something against us. This indicates that we are the offender. And commands that the offender go and seek reconciliation. This is the way it ought generally to be. When one has given offense he ought to be man enough to confess it, and seek to make it right. But let no one try to hide behind this saying of Jesus, as many do. We often hear people say, when remonstrated with for not forgiving: "Well, he is the offender. I never did him any wrong. If he comes to me, confesses his wrong, and makes amends, I will forgive, otherwise I will not." Not so fast, my friend, and not so positive. In another place Jesus says, with great clearness and positiveness: "If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." (St. Matt. 18:15.) If the offender is unconcerned about his sin, or if he is ashamed to come, or even too proud, we are to go to him. And, of course, we should not go with blood in our eyes, and thunder in our tones, or shaking clinched fists. We are to go, Jesus says, "for the purpose of winning him." And our aim is to be not only to win him again to be our friend, but, above all, to win him for Jesus and His kingdom. To this end, we must go with the spirit of Jesus in our hearts, and with a prayer for the success of our mission. Some think that such a course is belittling to a man. Nothing is farther from the truth. This is the way God does in His dealing with the children of men. And no nobler man walks God's earth than the one who can rise above insults and injuries, and turn round and do kind and helpful deeds for the one who has injured him, doing this for the purpose of winning him for better things. Such a man is a nobleman after Christ's own pattern.

How about those people who trespass against us, and do not want our forgiveness; some of whom, indeed, seem to delight in piling indignity on indignity, and injury on injury; and, apparently, delight the more as they are able to increase our injury and our wrath? There are those who argue that

forgiveness in such case is not required. That depends on what we understand by forgiveness. We cannot bestow forgiveness on them, we cannot make them to be forgiven people; for they are not in a condition to receive it; that takes penitence and confession. But in our hearts there must be the spirit of forgiveness, the willingness to forgive. Here is the word of Jesus which applies to this case: "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." (St. Matt. 5:44.) Jesus does not here use the word "forgive"; but he who has the spirit here inculcated will forgive, is always ready to forgive.

God cannot actually bestow forgiveness on the unbelieving, the impenitently wicked; but He prepared forgiveness for all men while they were in this condition. His love for them was real. His desire to forgive, to save, was sincere. He has forgiveness for all, and is anxious to bestow it. And He is constantly doing all He can to get men to accept it; "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) Such must be our disposition toward even the most willful of those who sin against us, if we would continue to enjoy God's forgiveness.

Furthermore, if we would have our trespasses forgiven by our Heavenly Father, we must forgive our brother as God forgives us, not once, or twice, or a dozen times; but continuously. Peter once came to Jesus with this question: "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" The answer of Jesus came swift and clear: "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but, until seventy times seven." (St. Matt. 18:21:22.) Forgiveness is not a matter of arithmetic, but of the spirit. And when the spirit is right, aflame with faith and love, it does not act in accordance with contracted rules; its acts are determined by the need it finds.

2. Its Nature

Let us now consider the nature of the necessity of forgiving those who trespass against us if we would possess God's forgiveness.

We have been repeating the statement, abundantly verified by words of Holy Writ, that our forgiveness of our fellowmen is a necessity. It is now time that we inquire into the nature of this necessity.

Our forgiveness of a brother is not a necessity of constraint. God does not compel any man to forgive any other man. He asks us to forgive, but as it is with all the other requirements He makes of men, we may persistently refuse. Of course, this means penalty; but the penalty is more for the antecedent condition than the mere fact of refusing to forgive.

It is evident that forgiveness on man's part is not a necessity existing in the nature of the unregenerated man. Indeed, everything in the natural man prompts him to continued resentment, and to the exaction of the last fraction of the debt others have incurred; not to forgiveness.

Again, our forgiveness of our fellowmen is not a necessity in the sense that it then becomes the cause on account of which God forgives us. This would be equivalent to saying that we purchase God's forgiveness of our sins against Him by our forgiveness of our fellowmen. We grant that, if there were no other statements in the Scriptures on this subject save the fifth petition, this view would not be without considerable force. That seems to be a natural inference to be drawn from these words: Forgive us, ...for we have forgiven. However, there are so many other Scripture statements bearing directly on this subject, and so unmistakable in their meaning, that no one acquainted with God's Word, and ruled by it, can, for a moment, entertain this thought. There is nothing we have done, nothing we are capable of doing in a thousand years of unremitting toil, by which the forgiveness of one sin against God can be purchased. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." (Titus 3:5.) And the first step in our salvation is forgiveness. We have no self-wrought righteousness which we can present as a purchase price for our forgiveness. Until we have a freely given righteousness, that of Christ, we have nothing to bring to God but sin. Even when newborn and Spirit-moved, our righteousness, in the sight of the all-seeing God, is tattered and torn, like a filthy rag. By grace, by God's unmerited love and mercy, we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8.) When we come into God's presence, for forgiveness, or any other blessing, we must confess, each and every one of us: "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." The unbiblical idea that we can merit God's forgiveness of our sins by forgiving some one who sins against us unduly exalts man's power, and dishonors God. It minimizes the greatness and freeness of God's unpurchased, and unpurchasable, love for man; and the efficacy of Christ's atonement, the only remedy for sin.

But we cannot get away from Jesus' words declaring that if we do not forgive we cannot be forgiven. There is a necessity here, but it is a necessity of condition. The man who obstinately refuses to forgive his brother when he has sinned against him is in such a spiritual condition that it is impossible for him to appropriate to himself God's forgiveness. To receive God's forgiveness one must know and loathe sin, he must confess it, have confidence in God's love and willingness to forgive, and faith in the efficacy of the remedy God has provided for sin, — Jesus Christ. In other words, forgiveness is possible only to those who can truly say: "Our Father who art in Heaven." Forgiveness can be had only by those who are members of God's family, that means members also of a brotherhood. They have love for the heavenly Father, and also for the earthly brother, the Father's other child. To such a child of God the forgiveness of one's fellowman is a necessity, a necessity of the new life, not of inexorable law. Just as long as the new life exists, just as long as a man lives in Christ, and Christ dwells in him, he must forgive; it is the result of an inner necessity. Just as a man naturally breathes while he has physical life, so he forgives as long as he has any degree of spiritual life. When a professed Christian refuses to forgive it is an evidence that he has lost the fine edge of the spiritual life, the close contact with Jesus, the source of life. And the continued refusal to forgive means a rapid decline of any vestige of spiritual life one may yet retain. And when a man will no longer entertain the thought of forgiving his erring brother his Christ-life is dead.

When a man forgives because the Spirit of God has touched and renewed his heart, he does not only forgive a few people who especially appeal to him; he forgives all, and not once, or twice, but as often as necessary. His forgiveness is not a mere matter of temperament; not simply because it is hard for him to hold a grudge; not because he feels that he is a being of superior parts, and cannot afford to wrangle and stoop to retaliatory measures. No, a Christian man forgives for Christ's sake. He wants to please his Saviour. He wants to show his gratitude, and give his Christ-life opportunity, to express itself. We must not expect that this is always going to be easy. Indeed, it is seldom going to be easy. We have not yet become disentangled from our flesh and blood. The elements of sin are still there. And it will sometimes assert itself, and cause our blood to boil. But the spirit ever strives to keep the flesh in subjection, and what it often does not

want to do we compel it to do. Here, too, it is true that the love of Christ constraineth us.

3. Blessedness

And now let us dwell for a moment on the bane of the unforgiving, and the blessedness of the forgiving spirit.

Forgiveness is man's fundamental blessing, because sin is his fundamental ill. Sin is the source of all human misery and sorrow. And but miserable comforters are all those who would bolster up man's hopes, strengthen him in his weakness and fortify him in his hours of travail by the application of superficial remedies which do not go to the root of the trouble. It is like smearing the body of a man with some mild soothing ointment when he is dying of malignant cancer. No man can be on the road to spiritual health, and consequent happiness, till he is forgiven. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." (Ps. 32:1.)

The unforgiving man can never be truly happy. He is living out of his true environment. His life forces do not run smoothly in the channels for which they were created. He is at odds with himself and all the remainder of creation. He has a swollen ego. He is stung with pride. He thinks himself of much more importance than anyone else. He thinks much of his rights, but little of his duties. He carries a grudge for years. Bitter words generally fall as naturally from his lips as snarling from the mouth of a dog. He will often scheme for months to get revenge. And this unregenerate, unforgiving spirit becomes the fruitful parent of many sins, and of an ever-increasing misery.

Many boast of the fact that they are unforgiving. They regard it as a sign of superiority. It is, in reality, something of which to be ashamed. It is the poor, little, starved soul which harbors, broods over, and dilates upon little slights and offenses, real or fancied. It is the lean, ill-developed soul which feeds on these things, will not forgive, but finds a certain fiendish delight in paying back, in kindred coin, the evils it has been made to bear. This spirit is more devastating than the raging fever. It poisons the whole inner life, and makes it as bitter as the waters of Marah.

The person who would like to be a Christian, but balks at forgiving an offending brother, has a specially difficult burden to bear. There will be times when he feels like crying out: God be merciful; Father, forgive. But

every time he tries to pray the Lord's Prayer, the fifth petition sticks in his throat. It recoils upon him, and cuts like a dagger into his own heart; for does not Jesus teach him to say: Father, forgive me as I forgive others? Refusing to forgive but praying the fifth petition, he is, in effect, saying: Father, I have a stony heart, a bitter, resentful, unforgiving spirit; I wish evil to those who offend me. Now, O Lord, treat me in the same way; close your ears to my plea, turn in loathing away from me, have no pity on my necessities, turn your love into hate; wreak vengeance on me. This is what it means not to forgive, and then to pray to be forgiven as we forgive. Indeed, it is a very serious thing to thoughtlessly pray the fifth petition. But whether one is fully conscious of its significance or not, the unforgiving man can have no real spiritual joy; he must continue to be a stranger to all soul peace; for he has no fellowship with God; he carries about with him a cold, clammy, unresponsive, spiritually-dead heart.

For the forgiving man there is a joy, a blessedness the like of which the unforgiving man has never even dreamed. We are told that there is joy in heaven, when men repent and are forgiven. When a man has himself been forgiven, and has learned how to forgive, should that not bring him joy? We all know that it does, some of the sweetest joys this side of heaven.

To start out with, there is the joy of sonship of which the man who is willing to forgive for Christ's sake is certain. He is in possession of a new life. He has a new outlook. Love reigns in his heart. He has learned the superior joy of helping others. And as forgiving and helping one who has failed in his duty toward us, or has positively injured us, in the most unselfish service which it is possible to render, it brings to the one who gives it a sweet, solemn joy, like unto the joy which must fill the heart of the Saviour when He is permitted to pardon people and send them on their way toward better things.

The joy of the forgiving person comes from two sources. He is a forgiving man because his heart is open heavenward, because he walks close by the side of Jesus. From this side peace and joy comes continually. But, as he practices the virtues heaven has begotten in him, earth, in spite of its sore spots, and its trials, becomes full of beauty and ministers much joy.

Heaven is in such a man's heart, and as he goes about doing the will of his heavenly Father he finds heaven every place.

Father in heaven, help us ever to pray confidently: Forgive us our trespasses. And may we ever be able fearlessly to add: As we forgive those

who trespass against us.

Temptation

Father, ...lead us not into temptation, — St. Matt. 6:13.

Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and He Himself tempteth no man, — Jas. 1:13.

WE HAVE CONSIDERED, we have often uttered, the cry, Father, forgive us. No one can truly pray thus till he knows what a terrible thing sin is, till he loathes it, till he desires to be freed from its tyranny. Till we pray thus there can be no thought of forgiveness, for without this repentance is not genuine.

That the desire for forgiveness includes the honest desire for reformation is the teaching of all Scripture. Whenever God says: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee,” there is expressed, or implied, the admonition: “Go; sin no more.” The same truth dwells, more or less clearly, in our own consciousness. When we say: “Father, forgive us,” we recognize that the logical sequence of that plea is: Father, keep us from temptation.

How we need to pray: Father, save us from temptation. When we look back over the road we have traveled, and recall its experiences; when in the light of the past we scan the path stretching out before us, with its steps and its deeps, with its evidence of lurking enemies, our knees begin to tremble, our steps to falter. We recognize that, of ourselves, we are not equal to the task.

We need both of God’s hands if we are to get over the road safely. We must have one hand resting on our heads, bestowing the ever-necessary blessing of pardon; we must have His other hand holding ours, bestowing the blessing of strength.

The time will never come in this world when we shall not need this sixth petition: “Father, suffer us not to be led into temptation.” If we should live to be as old as Methuselah, and gain as much strength every day as most of us gain in a year, we would still need to pray: Father, keep us from being ensnared, from being taken unawares, from falling into sin.

Let us, then, with all earnestness, begin our study of this sixth petition: Lead us not into temptation.

The Nature of Temptation

The universality of temptation appalls us, and fills us, at times, with a feeling bordering on despair. No human being is exempt from hearing the siren's voice. No saint in this world ever becomes so filled with Christian graces; so panoplied with the armor of Heaven, that the great enemy will not be able to find an unguarded moment in which to pierce some weak spot in his armor with the bearded arrow of temptation.

As long as we have ambitions to accomplish something worth while in the world, to play a manly part in the affairs of men, to win victories, the tempter will find a way of approaching us through these desires. As long as we have a social nature which seeks the fellowship of kindred spirits, which forms relationships with them, and expresses itself, in part, through the medium of this tabernacle of clay, temptations will come. As long as we have thoughts to express, and tongues with which to utter our thoughts, this will be a source of temptation. As long as men have the desire for possessions; as long as they have money and houses and lands; as long as men buy and sell; so long will both the possession and use of these things present temptation.

Everything in God's creation is in itself good, and nothing to be refused; if it be received with thanksgiving; but the holiest functions, the most sacred relationships, the most innocent diversions, present the occasions, the opportunities, for temptation. Because we are here as we are, because sin is here with us, a part of ourselves, we must expect to be tempted. There is no escaping temptation. We will be tempted not only as long as we are out in the busy, throbbing world; if we should retire to all but inaccessible mountain fastnesses, if we should immune ourselves behind thick, bolted doors of some cloistered cell, we should still be tempted. We carry the seeds of temptations in us, in every corpuscle of our blood, in every atom of our flesh. Temptation came into Paradise where dwelt those children of God who bore the Father's untarnished image. Yes, mystery of mysteries, temptation came to those celestial beings who dwelt within the inner circle around the throne of God on high. Yes, when the eternally begotten Son of

God assumed human nature temptation came to Him. It is fatuous, then, for you and I to dream of escaping temptation.

Oh, the hold, the stranglehold, which temptation often gets on men! It seems to hold them, to drag them, with a strength stronger than chains of iron. We have seen men weep, and toss restlessly all through the night, because they felt the urge of temptation. We have heard them resolve, and vow to holy God, that they would fight and overcome it; and before they knew it, they were carried off their feet as if they were men of straw. And it is not" only the big temptations which succeed in doing this. The little foxes which but nibble the vines, the little foibles, habits, desires often do it, and cause men to cry out: "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me."

We know that there is something all around us, working on us, working in us, called temptation. We know it by what we have seen it do with other people. We know it by the scars we ourselves bear. We have seen the heights from which it pulls men down, the depths to which it plunges them. We know that it can purr like a cat, and claw like a tiger. Now what is this thing we call temptation?

The sixth petition, and other similar passages of Scripture, perplex many people. They seem to imply to them that God does something to draw men into evil. hurtful things. This is the result of a misunderstanding of what temptation means. The popular understanding of temptation is that it is something, within, or without, or both, which entices, allures, pulls, men toward that which is wrong and hurtful. This is only one direction in which temptation works. It works also in exactly the opposite direction. To tempt, in itself, means only to try, to test, to prove.

The temptation which pulls us toward unholy things is the operation of sin in us and in the things around us, and the incitation of the devil, the father of all sin. God never does this. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God is untempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man." The whole force of His teaching, and His nature, is opposed to this. All the safeguards loving wisdom can devise He throws around us to keep us from this.

Lord, with what hast Thou begirt us round!
&esmp;Parents first season us, then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us bound
&esmp;To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
&esmp;Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
&esmp;Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
&esmp;The sound of glory ringing in our ears,
Without our shame, within our consciences,
&esmp;Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears."

In the sense of testing and proving us, God does not only allow us to be tempted; but often does the testing and proving Himself. So He did with Abraham, and others. He does this to reveal to men their weakness, or their strength. Indeed, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and trieth every son whom He receiveth.

The Sources of Temptation

The testing and proving which has as its object to reveal to men their weakness, and thus lead them to arm themselves against it; or to reveal to them their latent, God-given strength, and serve as an inspiration to nobler effort, or to calm their fears, comes from God, or is permitted to come by Him. He thus tempts men and nations. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldst keep His commandments." (Deut. 8:2.)

The temptation which pulls us toward evil, toward rebellion against the laws of God and man, is not of God. " We speak .of many of our temptations as coming through the things of the world. There is a sense in which this is true. The curse of sin has permeated our whole world. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." "The whole world lieth in wickedness." However, position, power and wealth, and other things of time and sense are only exciting causes of temptation. If we were entirely pure these things would attract us only that we might use them to the glory of God. Now they excite us to cupidity because the source of temptation is within us, in the subject, not in the object.

Much, very much, of our temptation to evil comes from within. "Every man," says St. James, "is tempted when he is drawn aside by his own lust and enticed." Man's nature, by the first transgression, became corrupted, weakened, prone to evil. He now sees things as through a glass darkly. His perspective has been distorted, his sense of values perverted". False appetites largely rule him. Now the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, sit in the saddle. This is the present source, agency, and instrumentality which accounts for our temptations. What a stroke of satanic genius it was when God's foe, and mans, felled our common parents!

To what self-examination, to what watchfulness, to what guarded action, to what earnest prayer, should this knowledge lead us!

Because men are in the inmost recesses of their nature all alike, the difference, where there is a difference, being only one of degree, temptation comes not only from our own lives; but from the lives and actions of other people. Joseph was comely, a valiant young man, discreet in word and deed; but his very presence in the house caused Pharaoh's wife to offer to become his mistress. Bethsheba was no doubt good to look upon, and her ablutions probably in accordance with the customs of the day; but the sight of her awakened David's lust. Judas was covetous at heart, and sullenly inclined toward the Master; but the offer of thirty pieces of silver spurred him on to action. And so it goes along the whole round of human activities. Actions in themselves innocent and without ulterior motive awaken trains of sinister thought in others which eventuate in still more sinister actions.

The great original source of temptation is the Devil. An angel of light, unseduced by any allurements from without, he was led by some power mysteriously awakened within him, to rebel against God's sovereignty. And since that distant day he has been constantly and actively engaged in seeking to thwart God's plans, and wound His fatherly heart, by endeavoring to lead His children astray. With what success we all sadly know.

Many people profess not to believe in a personal Devil. If we could be convinced that there is no Devil in the sense in which we always have been taught, then we would be forced to the conclusion that the world around us is full of devils; for the world is full of devilish actions. But God's Word settles this question for us. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.)

The presence of evil in the world is evidence that somewhere there is a personality exciting and directing it. We know of no power entirely apart from a personality. There may be power manifested without a person being seen or recognized. But we know of no power apart from a personal intelligence originating and directing it.

Man's own experience is proof positive of the existence of some kind of an adversary. We know there is a something often pulling us in ways we would not go. And when a man has gotten entangled in the nets of sin, he knows there is a real power drawing him as with hempen ropes. No power but God's grace can set him free. The man who has been through the fires, and, by God's grace, has escaped, never questions the existence of a Devil.

The Devil comes to tempt clothed in various guises, — even as an angel of light when necessary. He comes with great pretenses of wisdom, but his purpose is to deceive. He comes with proffers of help, as a friend in need; but his aim is to destroy.

He offers to serve as a guide, but he leads into snares and pitfalls. Thus did he rob our first parents of their God-given image. Thus did he lead David astray. Thus did he try our blessed Lord.

Such, my brethren, is the world in which we live. All around us we see those who are taken, body and soul, in the snare of the fowler. So completely are they often in the power of the tempter there is scarcely a flutter of opposition. We are Christians, we have felt the reviving, strengthening power of the breath of the great Spirit on our souls; but we, too, have known, and still know, the pull of temptation. And we shall continue to know something of it till we yield our last feeble breath. How needful, oh, how needful, is the prayer: Father, lead us not into temptation. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

The Purpose of Temptation

The purpose of a temptation depends on the source from which it comes. When the Devil tempts it is only for the purpose of weakening and destroying God's handiwork, and dishonoring God. His object is to lead men into unbelief, especially unbelief of God's love and mercy, of His fatherly care, of His provision for our salvation, and of the efficacy of the means whereby it is administered. The Devil tempts men in order to blind them to the nature

and consequences of sin. And by and by to drive them to despair of ever being extricated from the complicated network of snares and pitfalls with which he has surrounded them.

The result is the same, because Satan's purpose is the same, when the temptation springs directly from the seed lying in our own nature. It was put there, originally, by the prince of darkness. And he is watching all the favorable opportunities for its development. And he is doing the same with each and every human being. So after all, the great master of temptation is the Devil. And he has only one aim, to destroy. He may dress up temptation so as to make it appear as man's best friend, the only giver of pleasure, the only alleviator of pain, a guide to the gardens of Hesperides; but the Devil's one object is to destroy; to gradually prepare men to be swallowed up in the perdition coming upon the ungodly.

How sedulously, then, we should guard ourselves against temptation. How we should watch every step. How we should calculate the probable result of every action. How we should pray, — Father, lead us not into temptation.

When God allows temptation to come, when He permits us to be tested, when He Himself proves us, the purpose is not to hurt, not to destroy us; but to purify and strengthen us. And let us not forget that God does, at times, so lead us that the path brings us to where there is temptation. The Gospel tells us that Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. God did not do the tempting, but He did the leading to the place where the old tempter would be, and do the tempting. There is everything to indicate that it is much the same with all of us. Let us see what some of the lessons are which God wants to teach us.

Our moral nature grows only as we cultivate, by God's grace and help, the ability to choose, for ourselves, the good. A person who could not be tempted could have no virtue. Such a person would be an automaton, a mere machine. God wants us to prove that we are strong in His strength, stronger than any and all of our enemies. The storm breaks off many rotten limbs in the forest; but the sturdy oak only has its fiber toughened and made finer by that same storm, and its roots are caused by it to strike down deeper into the sustaining soil.

Man is inclined to pride, in things spiritual as well as otherwise; and the power of temptation is allowed to exert itself just to keep us conscious of our dependence on God. We talk much of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh. We

often wonder what its purpose could have been. He tells us. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (2 Cor. 12:7.) The same lessons we have to learn, and often in the same way.

At times we feel so strong that we think there is not anything which could swerve us from the path of rectitude; so the Father permits the tempter to exert some of his power against us. And so all along the line of our experiences But they are all to build up, not tear down; to save, not destroy. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange things happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are made partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12,13.) And again, "Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience." (Jas. 1:2, 3.) And once more, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." (Jas. 1:12.) It is useless for any man to attempt to explain, in detail, all the uses of temptation, or to try to make clear the mysterious elements always associated with it; but one thing is made clear to the child of God, that temptation, like all other evils, when met aright, must help us, on our heavenward journey; make us stronger by driving us closer to Christ's side. Father in Heaven, we recognize that the nature of life makes it impossible for us to escape temptation while living in this world. We thank Thee for the assurance that they shall not be permitted to try us beyond our strength; that we are always perfectly safe when we have sought and found refuge with Christ our friend and Saviour. Father, suffer not the Devil, the world, or our own flesh to deceive us, or lead us into unbelief, or misbelief, despair, or any kind of shame or vice. In all assaults, Father, be with us that through Thee we may finally prevail, and gain the victory.

Overcoming Temptation

Father, ...lead us not into temptation, — St. Matt. 6:13.

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.

MEN SOMETIMES SAY, the past is past, what has been done cannot be undone. This is one of Satan's falsehoods, and many a man has been undone by it. A man cannot be rightly courageous and efficient for the present, and the future, who is haunted by the ghosts of vanished days. The past must be rectified if the future is to be safe. We cannot be indifferent about the past, and have the right kind of concern about the present and the future.

The past can be made right. Things done are never as if they had not been done. And we cannot just reach back and erase, or change, the record of the things done in the days gone by. That record stands; and it stands just as we wrote it. If it is a record of good, we want it to stand, and God wants it to stand. But if it is a record of mistakes, of sins, we do not want it to stand, and God does not want it to stand. And God can, and does, correct the past, so far as consequences and influences are concerned, where men will allow Him to do so. And the secret of making conquest of the evil past is the one word; — penitently, believably spoken: Father, forgive; for Jesus sake forgive.

Because the mistakes of the past may be made right is no reason why we should be satisfied to continue to make the mistakes. When Jesus taught us to say: Father, forgive us; in the next breath He taught us to say: Father, lead us not into temptation. The only real Christian is the one who hates sin, and is determined, as completely as possible, to overcome sin.

The great foe of Christian progress is the tempter. And the temptations he puts before us are as varied as the moods of an April day. He knows all our weaknesses. He knows from just What angle these weaknesses may be

most successfully approached. The tempter knows how to vary his lines of approach so as to get the advantage of our changing moods, or changed circumstance. There is only one thing the tempter never does for any length of time, that is to leave the children of men undisturbed. When he does do this for a season, as he does, it is still a temptation. He is trying to get us to cease being watchful, to lay aside our armor; and then, some day, he will catch us unawares.

Our Father wants us to be living overcoming, victorious lives. We know something of the thrill of Winning victories in various lines of earthly endeavor. He wants us to know something of the thrill, the joy, of winning victories in the sphere of life, of character, of truth and righteousness. This is the reason Jesus taught us to pray: Father, lead us not into temptation. And this is the subject of which we are now going to make a study, — the problem of overcoming temptation.

1. The Will to Victory

If we would successfully meet the temptations of life, we must cultivate the will to victory.

Man's very nature makes him a creature of aspiration. It is the vestige of the image of the Godhead in him which makes him want to soar, to overcome difficulties, to win victories. And not only to want to do these things, but to do them. How many wonderful things men have done. How many monuments they have erected. What great things men are doing in our day. They have conquered the air and the depths of the sea. Everywhere they are forcing nature to give up her secrets, and harnessing them for new achievements.

Some victories that men have won, and are winning, are not worth winning. They do not make anybody wiser, better or happier. And there are victories that are turned into mourning, which have a hurtful influence on all concerned.

We all like to see people filled with the spirit which brings victory, whenever they are engaged in any good cause. It takes many of the finer qualities to make men victors, such as courage, determination, patience, willingness to labor, and make sacrifices.

There ought to be very much more of this will to victory in our efforts to realize the higher life; in our efforts to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Too much, entirely too much, of what we are pleased to call our efforts to cultivate the Divine ideals, in our own lives, and in the world, are, in reality, but little more than weak wishes.

In the fight against sin, in the pursuit of holiness, and all the virtues which should adorn the life of God's child, let there be more resolute forth going, more determined action. The Lord Christ Himself said, the children of this world are wiser than the children of light; and just because many of them have learned more effectually to say: "I am resolved what to do." And with it all, there must be unwavering confidence in the possibility of growth, of victory. There must be more looking of the Devil squarely in the eye, and saying: "Get thee behind me, Satan." There must be no underestimating of the magnitude of the tasks awaiting God's people; but to discharge them as they should be discharged, there must be more of the Apostolic heroism, which could declare: "I can do all things, through Christ who strengthened me."

This is exactly what we are praying for in the sixth petition, so far as mastery over evil is concerned. It implies that victory is possible. And there is an implied pledge on our part that we will be soldiers tried and true, with Gods help to fight the battle through to victory. We must learn to say: In Christ I am a victor, and am going to continue to be a victor, and by His help, I am, myself, going to become, more and more, a victor.

2. An Overcoming Life

Let us see what it is we must ask God to help us do if we would lead an overcoming life in the battle with temptation.

In the first place, we must not underestimate the seriousness of the conflict we have on our hands. It is the height of folly so to do. The angels in Heaven fell before the assaults of the mystery of iniquity. Our first parents, while in the full enjoyment of the perfect image of God, fell before it. Moses yielded to it. David succumbed to it. Peter could not withstand it when he proceeded unwisely. No human being has ever gone entirely unscathed.

But it is possible for every one to eventually win in this battle. How often the Lord speaks of our overcoming, and wearing the Victor's crown. Yes, Jesus tells us "we shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

As we should ask the Lord to keep us from under-estimating the power of the enemy who is going to tempt us, so we need to be kept from over-estimating our own strength. There are some things which we, Gods children, can do. But if we think that we can, of ourselves, wage this conflict to a victorious conclusion, then we have lost the battle already.

A wise soldier in time of war carefully studies the movement of his Enemy, and his resources This is what we must do. And we have the maps, charts, and statistics all before us for this purpose, — in God's Word. There all the Devil's cunning is unmasked, his plans laid bare.

The wise fighter studies his enemy; but he does more, he studies himself, his power of resistance, his power of offense, his reserve force. It is inexcusable if we do not do this, do it conscientiously, face the facts, and profit by the knowledge. Man, know thyself. In no sphere is this more imperative than in the battle against temptation. When, in the light of God's Word, and experience, we know ourselves, we will know when it is the part of valor to stand and fight, and we will know when it is the part of wisdom to meet temptation, so to speak, by running away from it. How often Jesus urges us to flee from evil. There are some things so sweetly seductive, so alluring to the senses, exerting such an opiate effect on the conscience, that the only safe course is to tear oneself away from them.

How foolish, how wicked, for those who know that their passions are easily aroused to read books or dwell on pictures of a nature to lead their thoughts to such things, or to keep company with those whose conversation, or conduct, is of a nature to arouse the tiger drowsing within? If money arouses the uncontrollable desire for possession, by any means, then we should not put ourselves in a position where we will be called on to handle other peoples money. "Can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?"

If we wish to overcome in our fight against the tempter, we must not, as already warned, underestimate our task; we must not close our eyes to the fact that there is a tempter, who is cunning and powerful. But on the other hand, we must not entertain the thought of being hopeless in this struggle, and thus give up without an effort. We are bidden to resist the Devil. He is

too powerful, cunning and tireless for us to match him alone. Oh, but we are not alone. We never need to fight alone. We would not be a match for Satan. But Jesus is ever ready to be our side partner in resisting the Devil. And whenever the Devil sees a man in company with Jesus the old enemy is soon ready to give up. "Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." (Jas. 4:7, 8.)

Eternal vigilance is the price of success in fighting the tempter as well as in all other things worth while. It is a perilous thing to go to sleep while on guard duty. And the Christian life is, while on earth, a never-ending round of keeping watch. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

This vigilance of ours, to be effective, must be wisely directed. We must know how to support our advances, to cover our weak places. The Devil tempted Christ at His weakest point. After long fasting, he tempted him along the line of food. So he attacks us at the most vulnerable point, using all our natural and proper appetites, all our legitimate relationships and activities. Let us give much thought to our lives and affairs.

Let us be candid, impartial, unsparing to our- selves. And in this let us remember that prayer plays a very important part.

"Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees."

And then, by the use of the Word and Sacraments, and by more prayer, let us strengthen the weak places in our lives, and everywhere stand guard.

Let us not anticipate temptations. Let us not fight tomorrow's battles today. We have enough to do each day. Let us not borrow burdens. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Besides, there are temptations that grow upon us as we dwell upon them. Ever alert, watchful, prayerful, let us wait till tomorrow, when we are rested and strengthened, to meet tomorrow's duties and conflicts.

I have spoken somewhat as if victory over temptation depended wholly on our own conduct. In a sense it does. Those who pray this sixth petition are God's children. To them has been given a power which they are to use. If they do not use it they need expect nothing but defeat. But after all, no

mere human being is sufficient, of himself, to fight to a victorious issue the battle against the tempter.

One of the best helps in overcoming temptation is to be so busy doing good things that we have no time for evil thoughts and actions. This is one of the latest principles in child training. Keep the child out of mischief by keeping it occupied with something — and useful. It is a good principle for God's older children. Banish suggestive books, use good ones. Keep away from evil companions, seek good ones. Keep watch over your thoughts, have something profitable on which to concentrate your thoughts. Always have some plans on hand which will help you, or some one else.

3. What God Will Do For Us

So let us consider what we must allow God | to do for us if we would win in the battle with temptation. We admire courage in men. High determination is a virtue not to be despised. We like to hear men say, — “I will”; or at least, “I will try, sir.” There is something inspiring in the sight of a man who has failed rising to his feet, and tackling his task anew. But in the fight with temptation it is folly to fight alone. In many spheres of life it is true that “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” In the sphere of the spiritual it is unfailingly true. And the last place for a spirit of pride is in the fight with the enemy whose own first fall was caused by pride.

The Christian who would be the victor in the fight with temptation must be armed with God's armor. “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Eph. 6:11:12.)

David could not fight in Saul's armor, or with Saul's weapons. The armor did not fit him, he was not accustomed to the sword. Every man must make use of his own individuality. But God's armor is made to suit everyone's individual requirements and capabilities. And we must use it if we want to succeed. And the armor God gives us is Jesus Christ; His righteousness, His love of truth, and purity; His courage and strength; His life.

God does not only equip us so that we can fight more successfully against the tempter; He Himself fights for us, and fights with us. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." (2 Pet. 2:9.) "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.)

Here we have the very purpose of our praying the sixth petition. It is to enlist God's help. He is ever ready to give it, but we must show that we recognize our need of it, our desire for it. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the bills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord."

Let us not for a moment think that we are ever going to win such a victory that the tempter will in the future leave us unmolested. Every new victory gives us a decided advantage for the future, but the Devil is not going to let us alone. When Jesus gained the victory over the old enemy in the mount, it is said, Satan departed from Him for a season; yes, only for a season. He was being tempted the greater part of the time.

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

But what of it that the fight with temptation is going to be a long drawn-out battle? It is not the only battle of life that is long continued. And when a man gets the spirit of the true Christian soldier, there is a deal of satisfaction in giving the Devil a good stiff blow, even though the sword-point pierces our own skin.

Let us bear in mind that the being tempted is no sin. Jesus was tempted, but He knew no sin. Sin enters only when one has yielded to temptation.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin; Each victory will help you
Some other to win."

Let us cultivate the optimistic way of viewing the Christian life. We must get the consciousness, the feeling, the assurance of being victors. We are, there is no question about it. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And God is for us. Listen to the voice of our Captain: "Be of good cheer; I

have overcome the world.” And His victory is our victory. In Him we are already victors. Through Him we are going on from victory to victory. If Jesus had failed it would have been impossible for us to win. Because He has won it will be impossible for us to fail if we fight by His side, under His banner. The enemy may swarm like the locusts of Egypt, they may come swift as troops of horsemen; but taking our stand on the Rock of Ages we shall still be safe.

Let us remember and emulate the example of David when he met Goliath: “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts,” and victory is assured.

"Hold on, my heart, in thy believing!
&esmp;The steadfast only wear the crown;
He who, when stormy waves are heaving,
&esmp;Parts with his anchor, shall go down;
But he when Jesus holds through all
Shall stand, though earth and heaven fall.

Hold out! There comes an end of sorrow;
&esmp;Hope from the dust shall conquering rise;
The storm foretells a sunnier marrow;
&esmp;The cross points on to Paradise.
The Father reigneth, cease all doubt;
Hold on, my heart, hold on, hold out."

The Problem Of Evil

But deliver us from evil, — St. Matt. 6:13.

We have come to the consideration of the final petition of the Lord's prayer. Indeed, there are those who do not regard this as a separate and distinct petition; rather the completion of the thought of the sixth. We, however, with the great body of interpreters, regard this seventh petition as presenting an additional thought.

The prayer that we may not be permitted to be tried beyond our strength, that our testings may prove only beneficial; revealing to us our weaknesses, and developing our strength — this is one thing: the petition that the snares set, and the pitfalls dug for our undoing may not succeed; that we may be shielded as much as possible from the darts of the wicked; that we may escape, as much as is consistent with our need of development by conflict, the pains and losses which come to all in this present condition of life; and that the gracious and loving Father will finally, when His own good ends have been wrought in us, take from us all things that hurt and harm, this is another thing easily to be distinguished. It is for this latter that we especially pray in the seventh petition.

The Lord's Prayer, in its construction, seems to be an anti-climax. First, it leads us up into the heights; it shows us the great Father, and paints the beauties and glories of His throne, the spread of His kingdom, the majesty of His will. And then, all at once, we drop down to earth, to daily bread, and the conflicts of the daily life. It was best so to do, or Jesus would not so have ordered it. And a little reflection gives us a hint of the purpose. We are led to contemplate the glories of the all-holy Name, the splendor of the imperishable Kingdom, the graciousness as well as the majesty of the Divine Will, so that we may be imbued with confidence, and our souls be set aflame with a holy desire to be identified with these things of God; thus are we heartened to meet the difficulties of life's oftentimes steep and thorny pathway as it is set before us in the succeeding four petitions.

We are in the kingdom militant, we have our eyes set on the kingdom of glory; we have learned to adore the holy name, we are looking forward to the time when we shall be able to do this in unison with the angels and saints made perfect; we have received such gracious help that we have begun to do the Father's will, we anxiously await the day when we shall be able to do this will as the angels do above. And our final word of petition is: Father, deliver us from evil.

There are just four words in this petition, not counting the connective; but what a subject they present. All the petitions are marvels of condensation. All the major words are sermons in themselves. But aside from God Himself, and the marvels of His Kingdom and work, there is no greater subject, no subject which comes closer home to our

everyday lives while we live in this vale of tears, than that which is presented in this one word — evil, and the problem of deliverance from it: So let us take up as the subject for our consideration, the Problem of Evil.

I. Let us consider the universal prevalence of evil.

One does not need to be either a theologian or a philosopher to be able to recognize the presence of evil. All that we need is just to be men and women with human powers and susceptibilities. If we have seen the merest segment of human life at any time or place, or under any conditions; if we have bodies which can know the wrack of pain; if we have sensibilities capable of appraising others' woes; if we can appreciate what it means to have hopes crushed to the earth; if we have consciences capable of comprehending the significance of the conflict

, between truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, virtue and vice, right and wrong; then we are not, we cannot be, strangers to evil. We have felt its hot breath on our brow. We have felt it as it clutched at our hearts.

Evil is found in every known sphere of existence. Nature in all its forms shows its presence and blighting touch. Tornado and earthquake, raging floods and consuming fires, consuming insects and scorching drouths; the chilling, stunting, killing boreal blasts of winter, the torrid, scorching breath of the summer; these, and many other things, are evidences of the truth of the Apostle's declaration: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Rom. 8:22.)

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In the sphere of human life the same is true,

evil is everywhere present. From the first page of human history down to the one on which the ink is not yet dry, we have a continuous record of failures most disastrous in their results. Almost every page has been befouled, and stained with blood. Ten thousand fields have borne on their purple-hued breasts the bleaching bones of millions fallen in battle.

Even sacred history has the same dark, sad story to tell of human imperfections and conflicts. The first couple of whom it tells fell from their lofty pedestal of purity, perfection and obedience, and were barred from Paradise by the flaming sword of God's wrath. And as a result they were forced to wrest their bread from a reluctant soil by the sweat of their brow, and at the price of weary

. and aching limbs, and many bitter disappointments. The first born of the sons of men became a murderer, the second his victim.

Even in the very Church of God on earth, the object of which is to fight, and overcome, moral evil, this hydra-headed monster, evil, ever and anon, rears its head. There are hypocrites, dissensions, and unholy rivalries. Engaged in the holiest of services, wearing the very livery of Heaven itself, it has shown, at every step, the weakness of its human agents.

There is no way by which we can escape evil while we live in this world. It stares at us at every turn, it beckons to us at every corner. Evil is at home in the jungle, it camps with man in the most improvised lodge of the most primitive of men. It is equally at home in the greatest centers of culture. Evil is no respecter of persons. It is no more afraid of the palace than it is of the thatched cottage. The king is as susceptible to its wiles as the pauper. Hard by the Church in most localities there is a temple dedicated to bacchanalian revelry. - Not far from the imposing palace of Mr. Dives there is usually a but where children are insufficiently fed, poorly clothed, with little chance for an education; with but little prospect save to be stunted in body, dwarfed in mind, and constantly awed by the spectre of inferiority.

Does evil abound? Take up your daily paper. What is the background of it all? Is there a page, a column, which does not flare forth the presence of evil? And not only so in these war-ridden times, when the very air is filled with insane cries, and men have gone mad with the desire for ill-gotten gain; not only in these days when hate, and the prejudice born of ignorance, are fostered by those who should be the guardians of truth and honesty and the unprejudiced view; but instead have been subsidized to suppress truth,

and spread lies; not only now, but at any time, take up the newspaper; not only now, but at any time, is there an issue

. without its story of seduction, debauchery, robbery, fraud, murders, scandal, in high life, or low.

Think again, will you, of the evil in the world in the form of physical and mental suffering. Oh, the agony, the bitter, gripping agony of a mind, it may be a scintillating mind, just slightly unbalanced, just enough to leave its possessor conscious of his condition, with the threat of collapse hanging over him like Damocles' sword. And then agony, possibly the still worse agony, of his kindred and

friends. Have you ever walked through one of the big state institutions for this class of people? Have you ever visited the patients? Were you ever able to do it without being impelled to thank God that you were spared this evil, and at the same time with deep-seated feeling of the magnitude, and appalling character, of this evil?

Have you ever thought of the hospitals in every populous center, and always full? Have you ever thought of the many [physicians of every school, the surgeons, dentists, oculists, and the like; and all of them:busy. And in spite of all that can be done, we are gradually overcome, and pressed down into the receptive bosom of mother earth. Earth has become a graveyard, the sea a charnel house. It is impossible, as we contemplate all this, to keep from heaving a sigh, and entertaining a feeling of pervasive sadness. All around us is the iron circle of evil. And, it is closing in on us; slowly, but surely, getting us in its deadly embrace.

The very Son of God, when He tabernacled in the flesh, wept when He contemplated the ruin of Jerusalem, when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. He sighed when He beheld the troubles of the afflicted, He groaned at the thought of the perverseness of men's hearts.

II. Let us now consider the nature of this allembicing evil of which we have been speaking.

Evil is everywhere with us. There is no escape from it. Much thought has been expended on it;

410 SERMONS ON THE Lonn's PRAYER as much, possibly, as on anyone subject with which men have to do. Philosophers have brooded over it. Scientists have tried to cope with it. Sainly theologians have thought,

and prayed, and wept over it. But very little progress has been made in solving the problem of evil. It is still one of the great mysteries of existence.

Evil is here, no one can deny it. Men may try to belittle it, to forget it, to treat it as if it was purely imaginary; there are men, and not a few, who assume this attitude; but the grim reality keeps on asserting itself, and compels the eventual acknowledgment of its existence, and its destroying power. But the acknowledgment of the existence of evil is but the beginning of the enigma. Whence did it come, how did it originate, what is its nature, why did an all-wise, all-loving, and all-powerful God permit it? These are some of the questions this problem naturally suggests.

The final petition of the Lord's Prayer is allinclusive in its scope; it covers "every evil of body and soul, property and honor". But a distinction is usually made between evil in general as it affects all the affairs of the world in which we live, and moral evil, usually called sin. This latter is the most difficult part of the whole subject. Sin is that which ought not to be, which never should have been. It had no place in the beginning. Then why did God allow it? How can we reconcile its presence, and the results of its presence, with the infinite goodness, holiness and love of God?

Holy Writ gives us an account of the origin of evil; but it does not answer the question, how

could evil originate in a perfect world? Or why the omnipotent King permitted it. About all we can say is that it is the great tragedy of God's universe. About all we can conjecture is that God's higher creatures, endowed with intelligence, and the power of choice, needed some such course of discipline as this for their moral development. We can only believe that, in some way, in spite of the havoc wrought by evil, the ultimate solution of the dark problem of evil shall eventuate in a larger glory for God, and a larger good to man; to those men whose exercise by the powers of evil leads to the attainment of a nobler virtue, a loftier holiness, a closer walk with God, and, consequently, a higher crown given to those who overcome.

The heart of the problem of evil is that it consists of alienation from God. There is a rift in the lute. The original harmony between God and His world has been destroyed. And the conflict of ill adjusted, and conflicting elements is what we know as evil.

III. The end of evil, what shall it be? Evil is not a substance. It does not exist as a separate entity. Evil is primarily a will perverted, a life dis-

torted. Evil is centered in personal agencies. Evil, then, does not end when it has run its course like a mountain, or a prairie, fire. You might ask of such a fire, that has consumed everything in its path that was combustible, where is it? It has disappeared. Only the marks of devastation are in evidence.

Today the wind rages tempestuously. With its cyclonic force it wipes out a town; it lays forests and orchards low, waving grain fields are devastated; but when its force has been spent, and the morrow's sun arises, that same air is a gentle spring zephyr which sets the birds a-singing, and makes the flowers smile.

The evil is not in these things themselves. They are but used as instruments. The real evil is personal. And though evil is something foreign to every creature God made, there are those to whom it has become a second nature, and the controlling element. - And it shall be their characteristic forever to be evil, to love evil, and to do evil.

Thus it comes that evil never burns itself out. And it never changes its character, though it may, and often does, change its method of operation.

As for man, while he will ever be, as long as he lives in this world, subject to the Operation of the forces of evil, and made to suffer from them, he may have the power of evil broken in his own life, and ultimately be entirely delivered from its influence.

May this study of the seventh petition, if it does nothing else, serve to arouse us to a keener realization of the universal presence of evil, as well as of its far-reaching, demoralizing, destructive power, and give emphasis and a more heartfelt earnestness to our cry for deliverance.

Deliverance From Evil

Father, deliver us from evil, — St. Matt. 6:13.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. — Rom. 12:21.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL! There never has been a human being who has not, in one form or another, uttered this cry. With many it is a daily cry. Every cry of distress, every tear which falls, every complaint uttered against unjust conditions, in a cry for deliverance. The inarticulate cry of the babe of a span, the cries and sighs of those tossing on beds of sickness, the moan of the feeble patriarch as he trembles on the brink of eternity; all these are cries for deliverance. But there is a difference in the way in which people cry for deliverance. To those who know not our Father, it is but a cry of pain, of fear, of anguish.

It is with a deeper meaning that the cry of deliverance falls from the lips of Gods children. They, too, have their cries of pain, of disappointment, of mental and physical anguish. They also have their problems to face, their burdens to bear.

But this is not all of the troubles of God's children. There are ills beyond those of tingling nerves, and sore muscles and bleeding wounds. We are conscious of the failure to realize our ideals. Infirmities have shown themselves here and there in our temper and conduct. We feel that there is some kind of a restraining, constricting force keeping us cribbed, cabined, and confined. There are weights keeping us down. There are temptations pulling us hither and thither. There are unrealized aspirations. There are fears about the future.

Feeling the pressure of evil on both his physical and spiritual life, the cry for deliverance means very much more to the child of God than it does to the one who has blinded himself to all but the presence of physical evil.

In our former address, we dwelt chiefly on the universality and all-pervasiveness of evil; that no one is beyond its reach, or spared its ravages. To-

day we shall put the emphasis on the word deliverance. Our Father promises His people deliverance from evil.

A Confession

Father, deliver us from evil. This prayer is, first of all, a confession. A confession not only that we have been forced to recognize the presence of an all-pervading evil, something that has weakened us, and now often thwarts us, and aims to finally destroy us; the call for help is a confession of helplessness on our part. To say, Father, deliver me, is the equivalent of saying: Father, I am not capable of extricating myself. And this is one of our most needed lessons. Till we have learned this lesson even God cannot do very much for us.

Evil in itself would not necessarily mean, under all circumstances, helplessness. Before evil can hurt there must be something within which responds to the pressure from without. When evil first came to man he could have scorned, even defied it. All the allied forces of evil, concentrated on one person, could do no harm if that person was perfectly pure and holy, and was determined to remain so.

There is now, however, a very different story to tell. No one has this original perfection with which to combat the forces of evil. On the contrary, we are all weakened, and largely under the influence of evil. "And you ... were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Eph. 2:1-3.)

And even after we have been born again from above, there is, as we know by our own constant experience, and by the reiterated statements of God's Word, so much of the old nature, so much of weakness, so much of that to which various forms of evil make a strong appeal, still clinging to us, that we constantly need help. It was because of this that Jesus says to us: "Without Me ye can do nothing."

It is well for us to have this truth impressed upon our minds and hearts anew frequently and forcibly. We should remember that this is part of the

purpose of this petition. We need this because we are naturally inclined to feel self-sufficient, and independent, and to boast of what we can do. We so easily forget that this is generally but the prelude to a humiliating fall. To remember our helplessness and our Helper, this is the way to be strong.

This is the meaning of St. Paul's seeming paradox: "When I am weak, then am I strong." When he recognized his own personal insufficiency, and fled for help to Christ, then he was strong, strong in Christ's strength.

May this seventh petition accomplish this same end for us. May we not only say every day, Father, deliver us from evil; but may we be reminded thereby of our need of deliverance, our helplessness to deliver ourselves. Our own wisdom is no match for the craftiness of the powers of evil. Our strength is but as flaxen cords on coals of fire when the prince of darkness assails. To Thee, O Lord, do we flee; with Thee is abundant help.

A Hope Expressed

Father, deliver us from evil. This is a confession, but it is more. It is the expression of a hope.

God does not want us to live our lives under the obscuring cloud, and the emasculating impression that there is nothing left for us but weakness, and failures increasingly repeated, till we are finally and irretrievably swallowed up by it.

God wants us to look up at the sun-kissed mountain top and take heart. There is hope set before us. This tangled skein of life is going to be unraveled. The crooked paths are going to be made straight.

God is our Father. He lovingly invites us to bring our troubles to Him. Jesus is our Redeemer, our friend, our helper. All the resources of Heaven have been marshalled for our good.

Hope! The meaning of this word, the vision it opens to us, the sustaining power it is calculated to give, few of us have adequately learned.

Paganism knows little, if anything, of hope. Their systems of religion present but little more than a kind of philosophic pessimism. They show us a world which is, at best, but an illusion; at its worst, but a passing show of misery, disappointment, and vexation. You remember how St. Paul speaks of these people as having no hope, because they are without God in the world. As a consequence, they are weak and decadent.

Christian hope is the assurance of blessings for the future, based on the experiences of the past. It is the result of our faith in God, and our experience.

Hope is in large measure the secret of all the world's successes. Christian hope is one of the great secrets of all Christian progress, in the individual, and in the church at large.

With the eye of hope the Christian sees the victory from afar, and is thus nerved for every conflict. Christian hope does not build castles in the air. It is built on God, as He is revealed in His Word, and in His accomplished work. The triumph of the risen Savior is the heart of our hope. In our hours of weakness and self-reproach, we turn to Him and His victory. We remember that we are not fighting alone. The crowned victor is with us. We are not simply struggling, with unaided strength, to follow His example, and wrest victory from adverse conditions. His victory is now our victory. And by His help we know that we shall gain victory after victory. And we see through the years, beyond the partial and temporary failures, to the perfect, when there shall be no more curse, and our whole life shall be crowned with complete victory. This is what we see by hope when we pray: Father, deliver us from evil.

The Meaning of Our Prayer for Deliverance

We pray often for deliverance from evil. Just what do we mean by it? Perhaps I should rather ask, what ought we to mean by it?

People no doubt often mean by the prayer for deliverance no more than this: Lord, take away my pain, take this burden from me, remove these hindrances in the way of what I want to accomplish, help me to get rid of my poverty; give me health, and strength, and the good things of life.

It is permissible to take all these things to the Lord. He wants us to do so. When David was harassed, he cried out in prayer: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord. Consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me." And under somewhat similar circumstances the faithful prophet, Jeremiah, prayed: "Remember, O. Lord, what is come upon us; consider and behold our reproach." The Lord God invites all this. He says: "Call upon Me, and I will answer thee; I will be with thee in trouble; I will deliver thee, and honor thee." (Ps. 91:15.)

But we must not make God's deliverance altogether synonymous with the removal of these difficulties. All these things are evils, or the results of evils. But in God's hands these things become blessings in disguise. He sometimes has a lesson to teach, or a grace to impart, through these lessons, that we would not otherwise be qualified to receive.

You remember St. Paul's thorn in the flesh. No one knows just what it was, or the exact purpose it was to serve. But God had a purpose in permitting it to come. And He would not take it away; though; He gave grace to bear it, and for the learning of the lesson.

When the evils of this world, which sin has introduced, and perpetuates, are being overruled of God to accomplish a good for our souls, the true child of God does not want them removed till they have accomplished their purpose. The flesh may wince, there will always be something in us not fully reconciled to suffering; the very Christ recoiled at the thought of it; but down deep in the heart of every true child of God there is that which says: Lord, give me grace, give me strength and courage; and then, as a faithful surgeon, use the knife; cut out the tumors of false trust, cut out the cancer of unholy pride, drain off the corrupted blood. Father, hold my hand, then do not spare me the battles which I need to temper my soul, to wean me of overconfidence, and to develop my powers. Are we willing to put all this in the words when we pray: Father, deliver us from evil?

If health, and strength, and the power to do things, and worldly success, will make us proud, and independent of God, and forgetful of Him, and bind us up too closely to the things of this world, then, my brethren, these things become evils, the worst of evils, and are included in that deliverance for which we pray in the seventh petition. Have we the courage, the confidence in God, the love for Him, the desire for Heaven, sufficiently developed in our hearts to include this when we pray: Father, deliver us from evil?

Ancient Israel turned away from the living God to serve the vanities of the heathen. As a punishment, as a natural result of their course of life, God allowed them to be carried away as a nation into captivity. They began to wonder why it all happened. Their self-appointed teachers suggested all kinds of foolish causes (Sam. 2:14). But the prophet Jeremiah said to them, you are wrong. You have sinned against God. Repent, give up your idolatrous ways, and you will be restored. It took Israel seventy years to learn the lesson; but when they truly learned it they were privileged to return with joy

to their native land. Sin is the root of all evil. And God often uses its evil consequences as a bitter medicine to effect a cure: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. 12:11.)

Sometimes it is not given us to understand, in more than a general way, the good to be wrought by 'a given visitation. Sometimes one is given to understand. Milton was one of those who could find the blessing in his blindness. In his later years he wrote these words:

On my bended knee,
I recognize Thy purpose, clearly seen;
My vision Thou hast dimmed
That I may see Thyself, Thyself alone.

How enriched is he who, through his affliction, learns to know God better; God in the greatness of His considerate love.

Our prayer for deliverance, then, is not an insistent cry for relief from pain and perplexity. As life now is, we need the purging, self-revealing, faith-enkindling, soul-expanding, sympathy-begetting, earth-releasing, heavenward-leading ministry of pain and trouble.

The cry of man's anguish went up unto God: “Lord, take away pain —;
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made; the close-coiling chain,
That strangles the heart, the burden that weighs on the wings that would soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made, that it love Thee more!”

Then answered the Lord to the cry of His world: "Shall I, take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure, made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart and sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire white brows to the sky?

“Shall I take away love that redeems with a price and smiles at its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would climb unto Mine the Christ on the cross?”

The sense of our cry for deliverance, then, is this: that we may be spared all possible evil in body, in mind and heart, and possessions; that we may be spared the so-called good things that would hurt our souls; that we may be able to take to our bosoms, like strong men and women, the chastisements

which purify and strengthen; and that, at last, we come out complete victors, forever delivered, perfected, glorified.

The Victory, and How It Comes

The great truth, never to be forgotten, or overlooked, is contained in the words of the petition itself. Father, deliver us. The victory is not the result of our own strength and valor. It is God-given. He eases our burdens. He gives us power of endurance. He has put the enemy in chains, so that he cannot throw his full force against us.

But there is something we can now do, which God expects us to do, in helping to win the many cumulative little victories which are to eventuate in the final and eternal victory.

The Lord Christ said while in the world: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." This is Christ's victory for us. Later, through the lips of His inspired Apostle, the Christ said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." This indicates the victories of the Christ in us.

As God's children we are possessed of a new life and energy. We are now to be not only recipients from God's bounty, but cooperators with God. He has clarified, to some extent, our vision, we are to use our eyes in discerning the good and the evil, choosing the one, and avoiding the other. God has given us new affections, which begin to reach out for the good, to recoil from the evil. We are to nurture this, and follow its leading. We have been given a new strength. We are to use it, develop it by use. With no undue confidence in ourselves, but with some of the confidence of Him who taught us to say: I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me, we will dare to cross swords with the: devil himself, and come off the victors. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, armed cap.a pie in His armor, we shall grow stronger with our years of service, add victory to victory with the passing days; and finally, when life's race is run, and life's work done, our great champion shall relieve us of all fears by going with us through the valley of the shadow of death, and thus finally, and forever, delivered from all evil, with the crown of victory on our brows; and eternal life, and perfection, and glory, as our portion.

The Ground Of Our Assurance

For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. — St. Matt. 6:13.

WE HAVE NOW come to the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. In the seven brief petitions of this prayer, we have covered the world of human need and responsibility. Of course, we have considered these things only very briefly; we have touched only the points of articulation; the great fundamentals.

We began with a look heavenward, — at God, His name, His kingdom, and His will. Then we came down to the every day wants of the every day life, and followed them to the plea for full and final deliverance. But the Lords Prayer, while leading us through the whole domain of human necessities, begins and ends in Heaven. In the introduction the prayer turns his gaze heavenward, that he may look the author of his being in the face, and say: Our Father who art in Heaven. Then, after recounting our wants, we return again from our excursion through the realm of human perplexities to our Father, to say: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for ever.

We now come to consider these closing words of the Lord's Prayer, called the conclusion, or doxology. These words are not found in the Gospel according to St. Luke. And there are those who insist that they do not belong to the original of the Gospel according to St. Matthew; being a later liturgical addition. There is strong evidence in favor of the genuineness of this conclusion, so far as the Gospel according to St. Matthew is concerned. But even were it true that these words are a later churchly addition, they are so thoroughly Biblical, and in keeping with the spirit of the Lord's Prayer, that they make a fitting close for the prayer of prayers.

We have been asking for much in the few words of this greatest of prayers. The deepest needs of our lives, the unsatisfied, or only partially satisfied, longings of our souls, our hopes for time and eternity, have all been wafted Heavenward in these simple words. But what is it going to avail? Is there a listening ear? Is there a heart that feels for us? And more, has the

one who has the listening ear, and the sympathetic heart, the power to meet our needs? This conclusion is to be the answer to any questions, on this score, that may agitate our hearts. It is the reminder of God's infinite sovereignty. He can do all things. His honor, His glory, is at stake. He must do all that is good for us. All things are held in the hollow of His hand. His is the Kingdom, His the Power, His the Glory, for ever and for ever.

Let us, then, consider the ground of our Christian assurance; the assurance of our prayers, particularly this prayer, being heard.

The Personal Address

For Thine, O our Father, is the Kingdom; Thine the Power; Thine the Glory. We need to go back, in all our perplexities, weaknesses, doubts, we need imperatively to go back to the heart of things. We need to keep alive our God-consciousness. If ever we are to be really at ease, if ever these agitated hearts of ours are to find peace, if ever our hopes are to be securely anchored, it must be in God. And He must cease being a mere dream, a shadow to us. God must become to us, as He is in fact, the reality of all realities.

Brother, sister, have we, have you, actively, or passively, conceived of your life as lived apart from God? Have you, by rebellious thoughts, by perverse deeds, divorced your life from God? Have you, by impenitence, by unbelief, by an unfilial spirit, refused to let God bring you back into fellowship with Him? Ah, this is the real secret of our disquietude, our doubts, and fears. The life that is lived apart from God, shut off from the warm radiance of His loving fellowship, from the conscious enjoyment of His benediction, never can be other than ill at ease, dissatisfied; because spiritually orphaned and starving. The Introduction, and the Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer both serve to impress us with the truth that we are the children, the beloved children, of such a Father; the subjects of such a King; that He is desirous of our constant intimate approach to Him.

Thine is the Kingdom

We are familiar with the words kingdom and king, empire and emperor. But we have not familiarized ourselves, as we should, with the thought that all kingdoms and existences are but parts of God's universal Kingdom. We have not been gripped, as we should be, with the idea of God's super-kingship, His all-inclusive kingship. He is the Lord of lords, the King of kings.

"For Thine is the Kingdom." Probably the first thought that comes to mind in repeating this clause of the Conclusion, coming as it does immediately after the petition, deliver us from evil, is something like this: Well, here there is a great deal of trouble; this is an evil old world, full of disappointments, and suffering. But God has another, a better, kingdom. And one of these days there is going to be for us a transfer of membership.

This is true. But it is not all the truth. The words, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory", apply to all the petitions, as does the Introduction: "Our Father." God's kingdom is not only in Heaven, it is here; it not simply is going to be; it is now. God's kingdom is universal, it is all-inclusive. It includes my present life. God overrules all things. And as I am His child beloved, my interests are being taken care of by Him.

We often forget that God has not abdicated His throne. He is King forever. From His throne go forth the reins which control the universe. There are all kinds of conflicts going on. Evil often seems to be in the saddle. Goodness often seems to be forever on the scaffold. The way things often turn out, it would seem as if there were no concern, no pity, no love, for the children of men anywhere. But it is so only in seeming. The heart of the universe is the heart of God. And love and goodness are not only going to triumph, but are now triumphing. God's Word explains all this seeming contradiction.

When Jesus dwelt on earth, the Devil claimed to be the possessor and ruler of all the kingdoms of the earth. He had much power, but could go just so far. And when he thought he was accomplishing his master stroke, he overreached himself, and accomplished his own undoing, and God's work was eternally crowned.

Every student of history knows how conclusively it proves that godlessness prepares the way for its own downfall. And that righteousness exalts men and nations. Babylon, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and many other nations are examples of this universal and inevitable law.

Oh, that we might keep fully conscious of the great truth that to God belongs the kingdom; and that our safety and happiness are forever secure

when we are members of God's kingdom. Distress us the enemy may, bring us suffering he may; take our life, at times, he may; but keep us from our ultimate goal, no, not for a moment.

Thine is the Power

The time was when the word King was uttered reverently; it awed men into subjection. The king was the human embodiment of all power. But the word is now much discredited.

When this revolt against imperialism has demolished the power of a great many who have it: never worn the crown of state; when the robber barons, and the heartless exploiters of their fellows, have all been dethroned, the world will have occasion to rejoice still more.

As this takes place, the King of kings must be exalted more and more. And a real democracy, the brotherhood of man, is not going to exist in much more than name, till the sovereignty of God, and the kingship of Jesus Christ, becomes the accepted principle of a working majority of the people in any given land.

Only as Jesus Christ becomes King in men's lives, as He is king in fact; as His principles of truth, justice, and love, become operative in men's lives; do the little pettifogging human kings, who think the universe revolves round them, get the crowns jolted from their receding brows; and their villainies destroyed.

The word of the Conclusion, For Thine is the power, is but an explanation, a strengthening qualification of the ascription to our Heavenly Father of kingship. He is king, not of some little corner of the earth; He holds, not a shaking authority over a few millions of rebellious subjects, God's kingdom is not only universal, but of absolute and infinite power.

We are fascinated by an exhibition of power. We stand by the side of a great invention contrived by the inventive genius of man. We see it do his bidding like a lamb for gentleness; but when we see the loads it lifts, the power it develops, we are astonished. We stand on the bank of Niagara; we feel the resistless pull of the mighty, tumbling, seething, boiling mass of water, with its thousands of horsepower developed every moment; and we stand in amazement too great for words to utter.

We stand hard by the path of a shrieking tornado. Little that man has done can stand in its way. In the distance some volcano belches forth its huge, dense volumes of smoke; its streams of hissing, engulfing, consuming lava. The very earth trembles from the fierce convulsions within.

In the presence of such manifestations of power, how little, how impotent, does man feel himself to be.

There are other manifestations of power which, viewed aright, are just as wonderful; yea, more wonderful. The meadow, carpeted with its award of green and gold, woven in the loom of the Almighty; the sun smiling in the heavens, set like a gem in the midst of space peopled with teeming worlds; the flower blooming at our feet, in which there is exhibited all the symmetry and grace of the universe, and in the coloring of which the artistic sense of Omnipotence might seem to have exhausted itself; in all this there is a mysterious power working. It is life. The same power which fashioned the universe is the power which controls the development of the pink-checked cherry in your garden, and of the flower that blossoms by its walks.

The point where power is most coveted by man is the place where he has least of it, — the sphere of life. Life is man's dearest treasure. It comes to him without solicitation. And when it is ready to depart he is powerless to hold it.

History tells of a king who visited a faithful servant of his in his mortal illness. The monarch asked whether there was anything he could do for him. "Yes," said the dying man, "give me just a few more hours of life." Ah, here is where all human power fails.

Our King, our Father-King, has all power. He is the author of life. He controls all things. In Him we are going to live forever. He makes even the stupidity, and the wrath of men to praise Him, and to further the good of His children.

For Thine is the Glory

In many minds power and glory are practically synonymous terms. To have station, wealth, power, is considered by many as the acme of glory. Many are satisfied with the most shoddy kind of an imitation of the glory of power. If they can have only a few of the trappings of wealth, it matters little how cheap the tinsel, they are satisfied.

God's glory is not the glory of mere vulgar force. His power is infinite. And this is part of His glory. By His very nature all power centers in Him, proceeds from Him. It did so before all worlds. Creation as we know it is but a faint exhibition of the wisdom and power of the supreme Architect and Builder, — the Lord God. And He is going on ruling, and overruling, all things till finally there shall again emerge a perfect world, the outer expression of His inner thought and will.

The glory of the Father to which this conclusion refers is undoubtedly the glory of His own inherent nature, the glory of His character, His honor. Just what this is, in its entirety, no man can say. The primary meaning of glory is brightness, Splendor, light. And we have been given, so far as we are able to receive them, evidences of what it means with respect to God. And the clearest of all knowledge on this, as all other points, we get as we look at God in the face of Jesus Christ, — a glory of infinite might and majesty united with more than womanly love and tenderness.

One of the great glories of a man, whether king or subject, is that he keeps his word. This is one of God's great glories. He keeps His word, He fulfills His promises. When He hears our prayers, and gives us what is good for us, He is redeeming his pledge, and glorifying Himself. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and Thy truth's sake."

Remember, you who pray the Lord's Prayer, that our Father, His universal, all-inclusive kingdom, the sweep of His infinite power, and the full scope of His Heaven-overflowing glory, are all pledged to us; because God is what He is; because His kingdom is what it is, His power is what it is, His glory is what it is, He must hear our prayers

The Perpetuity Of Our Father's Sovereignty

Our father, ... forever. Amen. — St. Matt. 6:9, 13.

WE GO TO OUR FATHER in Heaven for many things; for the greater and the lesser things of life. And we know that we are going to the right person; for He is our Father. He loves us. He is interested in our welfare. But more than this, He is fully capable of doing for us all that infinite wisdom and love tell Him is for our good; for His is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.

What these words kingdom, power, and glory mean, we have briefly considered. We have some faint, very faint, conception of their content. That is all that is possible for us, for we are only human. These words set forth Divine attributes. They are human words which represent thoughts in which dwell the fulness of the Godhead. The best that we can do is to dwell on the outer circle of the world of truth which these words represent, and contemplate their incomprehensible depths; and admire, and glorify, and praise Him in whom these truths center.

Father, Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Have you never caught yourself stopping, in sheer astonishment, when you came to these last four words? For ever and ever! Did you never have to stop to catch your breath as these words fell from your lips? Did you never feel faint, and find your heart all aflutter, as you dwelt upon the incomprehensible significance of these little words, — For ever and ever? If you have never had any of these experiences, if these words have never frightened you, if they have never sunk you into regions of despair, if they have never raised you to the third heaven of hope and joy, then they have been mere words to you, you have never caught their full significance.

Father, Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Thy kingdom shall never be taken from Thee. Thy power shall never be diminished. Thy glory shall never fade. They are Thine forever. This is

the last word in attributing praise to our Heavenly Father. Nothing can go beyond this. And it is the last word in the way of encouragement for those who pray. It assures us that nothing can prevent our prayers from being heard and answered.

Lord, give us understanding minds, and believing hearts, that we may profit by the lesson of the words forever and ever, — the lesson on the perpetuity of our Father's sovereignty.

The Things Which Perish

Some of our best, most lasting, lessons are presented by way of contrast. This contrast is contained in the very words of the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. When we speak of the things which are going to endure it is clearly implied that there are things which are not going to last, which are going to perish. We would be almost sure to fail to realize the full import of the lesson of the things which last if we did not have borne in upon, us the every day lesson of the things which pass away. This lesson is one written large on most of the things all around us. It is, nevertheless, a difficult one to learn. Our senses are earth-bound. And, besides, we are not very anxious to learn the lesson of the fatuity of being absorbed in earthly things. We get so much of our present pleasure out of them. Our physical life is sustained by them. As to the future, and the things with which we shall then be concerned, many are inclined to let that take care of itself.

Father, Thine is the kingdom forever and ever. Who would dare apply these words to any earthly kingdom, or any earthly king? There are kingdoms which have endured for centuries. But the history of the kingdoms of earth is, nevertheless, one of continual change. Many of the greatest empires of the world have fallen into the dust. Some of them are but little more than names even to the students of history. The names of some of them are doubtless unknown to even the most painstaking searchers of dusty and crumbling tomes. And as to the rulers of these kingdoms, here there is even more change, and more uncertainty. Some dynastic families have managed to hold the reins of power for centuries. But usually even the dynasties are comparatively short-lived. Human jealousy, and ambition, and intrigue attend to all this. As to the individual rulers, they have their little day, then the

crown falls from the brow, the scepter drops from the hand, and the glory fades away.

Once a great king was being inducted into office. The royal procession was imposing. All the wealth and trappings of royalty were on display. The admiring multitude stood agape. Flattering courtiers were constantly making obeisance. The soul of man easily becomes intoxicated with the incense of adulation; but this monarch, in some measure at least, kept his equilibrium, and a sense of the real values of things. One of his courtiers, desiring to please and flatter, whispered into his sovereign's ear: "What is wanting here?" With a sigh the monarch answered, "Continuance." O, the pathos, the anguish, of that word — nothing earthly lasts. This is the fly in the ointment of human glory, this is the worm that gnaws at the heart of the rose of earthly pleasure. Build your empires, oh ye mighty of the sons of men! Make secure the foundations of your thrones! Adorn your royal temples! Have your gorgeous pageants! But put on all of this the label — continuance lacking.

Father, Thou art the King forever, and of Thy kingdom there shall be no end. Compare with this the bare, every day facts of history, past and contemporaneous. There was a time when there were fourteen dethroned kings in Europe. How many have been dethroned in the past few months! How many more are mere puppets in the hands of those who still have a measure of temporary power! How many others are trembling on their thrones! And it is a growing conviction that the revolution has but begun; that a thousand other tyrants, some of them never having worn a crown, shall be hurled from their seats of power. Our Father's power is the only one that shall hold the throne forever. His the only glory that shall remain undimmed.

We must not, however, by fixing our thoughts too intently on the world's tottering thrones, forget the still nearer lessons. Thrones are only for the few. There are other things which touch us more closely. There are many who have never been aspirants for the few tottering thrones of government. But they are aspirants, nevertheless, seekers after the world's positions of power and influence. Let men who are qualified take the lead in all great movements, not for the sake of what they can get, but of what they can give to the world. But let them never forget that all over these things, also, is written the words — change and decay.

How many great men, who have risen to eminence by hard toil and the honest effort to render service, have died of broken hearts; because they

were the shining marks for the poisoned darts of envy and malice?

How many have gained a coveted post only to feel as did one of England's great Archbishops of a former generation. He said to one of his intimates: "I look not for many days, for I am not well; nor for happiness, for ever since this honor has come to me I have felt a kind of sadness upon me." How many a man and woman, whose name shines brightly in the galaxy of the notables of earth, if they expressed their true feelings, would say as did the poet Petrarch: "Some can still rejoice; but for me, I see not what anything in the world can give me save tears." It cannot be otherwise, at times at least, with anyone who thinks seriously on human affairs, and has a heart to feel keenly the burden of human sorrows.

That which captivates the greatest number of people is the glamor of wealth, with the power, freedom and ease which it brings. A measure of it we all need. And men can carry on business, yes, even big business, to the glory of God. But how foolish to live in and for these things alone. If a man had the fabled wealth of a Greens, and was going to take a trip across our country, we would say that he was a fool if he went to the trouble and expense of building a palace for himself at every place he was going to spend a night. Much like this are the people who are struggling, fighting, betraying their friends, selling their birthright, bartering away their souls, for houses, and farms, and bonds; soon, very soon, they have to leave it all, and move on. Toward the close, the longest lifetime seems short. It is very short in comparison with the eternity toward which we are all hurrying with tireless feet. Put up, side by side, these two thoughts: the average length of human life, and the "forever and ever" of God's kingdom and glory. For which are we living?

If we live only to manipulate and accumulate earthly treasures we are selling our souls for a mess of pottage. And the prophet Jeremiah thus characterizes the one who lives thus, and adds unrighteousness to his methods: "He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end shall be a fool." (17:11.)

I read the other day with sadness, and much serious reflection, the story of the plight of the great iron master of Pittsburgh and Scotland. He got his wealth, I suppose, as honestly as a man well can in a great world of competitive business. He was a shrewd Scotchman. And this is a compliment, there never was any great personal ostentation about him. He has been the author of many benefactions far-reaching in their benefits. He dotted the land with

libraries. He conceived and built the celebrated Hague peace temple. And the other week they brought him home, a complete mental wreck. What mean now, to him at least, his justly celebrated manufacturing successes? What mean now, at least to the man himself, those monuments of his genius? What mean now, at least to Mr. Carnegie, the honors men have heaped upon him? He no longer knows the meaning of any of these things. If men live Only for these things, is the game worth the candle?

Pile up fortunes, if you will. Immerse your soul in piles of masonry, in business enterprises. Establish your supremacy, be known as a king in some line of business, or a profession. Make men bow the knee to you. Live only for these things. And then what? Then hear the King of kings say to you: "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?"

After all, why pick out the exceptional life? Let us bring the matter down to the measure of your own life and mine. How brief, how evanescent, is human life! Like a flower it springs up.- Like a vapor it passes away. Think of the never ceasing procession of humanity marching over the earth, here today, gone tomorrow. Can one contemplate the fact without a strain of sadness? There are now on the face of the earth some fifteen or sixteen hundred million of people. Yesterday they were not. Tomorrow they will have gone westward, and others will follow in their train. Such it has been for all the long drawn-out centuries. Such it will continue to be. Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

This condition of things would be more tolerable if we were not what we are. If we were mere animals we, probably, would not be troubled about this ephemeral life. But we are, because we have the assurance, an assurance from without, and the assurance of ineradicable testimony born and nurtured within, that the present is not our natural state and condition, that we were created for another and a better fate. Where shall we turn to find the comfort and cheer which our souls crave? To

The Things That Endure

We have spoken of changing dynasties, of thrones overturned, of kings dis-crowned; of the kingdoms which have passed away, of those the boundaries of which no man longer knows with any degree of certainty. From this

scene of change and decay, let us look away to that King of whose reign and kingdom it is said: "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

"Forever and ever." The prosaic mind has no conception of such magnitudes. And the soul which has best entered into the meaning of this term staggers at the immensity of that little measure of understanding which it is enabled to grasp. For ever and ever. Almost four thousand years ago, the man of God wrote: "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." (Exod. 15:18.) Looking back from that point along the endless vista of the past that was true. God had reigned for ever and ever. It is true still. After all these centuries we are not the smallest possible conceivable fraction of time nearer the end of His reign. God's reign is not measured by time. Time is a contrivance for helping the comprehension of poor finite minds. With God a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as but one day. He lives above and beyond the ages of time in the timeless age.

And God shall not only be a king for ever, but His power and His glory shall continue for ever. Human contrivances of power soon wear out and go to the scrap heap. Power which is personified in some man, or coterie of men, is also short-lived. The power wears out, the glory fades. The inventions of yesterday which startled the world, had to be superseded by those of today. And those of today will be surpassed by the greater things of tomorrow. But it all goes the way of the dust. God's power and glory cannot be exceeded. It is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. And as the world's central and all-powerful magnet, He is drawing all kindred things in concentric circles around Himself, and shaping them for final participation in His endless reign of glorified power — the uninterrupted reign of the eternal and all glorious Father.

And what does this mean to us? Much, very much, indeed. In fact, so far as the inspired statement is concerned, and its iteration, and reiteration, it is all for our encouragement. It means that the hopes and aspirations of God's children shall be fulfilled. Here everything is piece meal. Our plans fail. Sufferings rack our bodies, and often worse sufferings torment our hearts, and vex our souls. Friendships are severed. The darkness out of which we came, and the humanly speaking, equally impenetrable darkness toward which we hurry, frightens us. And after a few years of feverish hurry, and weariness, and strife, and heartache come the closed eyes and the folded hands; the shroud, the pall, and the silent tomb. And is this the end? No!

And of the fact that it is not the end this conclusion is to keep us constantly reminded. God has a kingdom where His name is hallowed, and the outlying provinces, like this earth, are coming to the time when they are going to join, with perfect voice, in this chorus. God has a kingdom, and, in spite of all the darkness and deviltry which prevails, things are moving on so that all that is good and pure shall be perfectly merged into this kingdom. God has a kingdom where His will is done perfectly, joyously, out of the depths of the nature of God — like beings. In spite of all opposition, of demoniac explosions which seem to shake this world to its very foundations, the sovereign will of the King of kings is bringing, it may seem slowly, but nevertheless surely, all things into harmony with His will. And this new order of things is to be “forever and ever.”

“Forever and ever.” And during all this for: ever and ever God is our God. And this for ever ’ and ever kingdom is to be our kingdom. This King’s great Son said of all those who have named “ His name, are cleansed by His blood, renewed by His life, and moved by His Spirit — “I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (St. John 14:2, 3.)

In that forever and ever kingdom, we shall not be serfs; but sons, daughters; not merely by a condescending adoption, but by a new and royal birth, begotten by the incorruptible seed of God’s eternal Word and the washing of regeneration. In that Kingdom, strange as it seems, all undeserved as it; shall be, we, the sons of time, shall be joint heirs: with God’s only begotten Son who was before all time. And, think of it, this shall be “forever and ever.”

“Forever and ever.” The tangled skein of life unraveled. Its torn and scattered ends gathered up and mended. Life’s wounds healed. Its sorrows assuaged. No more, for ever, to be perplexed about the problem of sustenance for self, and still more about those the tendrils of whose lives have become intertwined with ours. No more, “for ever and ever,” to know the bitterest of all bitterness, the anguish of soul caused by the consciousness of sin and guilt; pardoned, perfected, the image of God restored, raised, for ever raised, above the possibility of sin; the power of temptation gone, because delivered, finally, for ever, delivered, from all evil, within and without.

There are times in life, some few fortunate days, when we are, in a measure, lifted above our sin-caused human limitations. Health makes life pleasurable. Love smiles upon us. With dilated nostrils we walk forth as princes

and breath in the ozone of God's pure air. Nature seems to be pregnant with the desire to minister to our pleasure. And we live in an Elysium of delight. We feel ourselves a part of a great universe pregnant with benevolent purposes. And then we awake with a start and a shudder. A pain comes to our heart like the thrust of a dagger. The ruthless reality is thrust upon us that this cannot last; that this is but the momentary experience of an animated atom of perplexed dust. But, my brethren, if we are God's children this is not a mere phantasmagoria. It is a little vista of light which God lets in from the region beyond the veil, a little rift — the obscuring clouds admitting the sunshine of heaven, a little diluted premonition of the ten thousand times better things which God has in store for them that love Him. And remember, brother, sister, remember, they are "forever and ever."

Brethren, there is no uncertainty about these things. The only uncertainty is in our minds. There is a King who is king for ever and ever. He has an everlasting kingdom over which He is going to reign for ever in infinite power, and inexpressible glory. He wants us to be citizens of His kingdom, citizens who are sons and daughters, the beneficiaries of His power, the sharers of His glory; and this "forever and ever." Which have we made as our great choice in life, the momentary, the elusive, deceptive, fading things which perish? or the abiding, satisfying, ever-increasing things of God, — the things which last? Father, Thou hast chosen us, and now, by Thy grace, we have chosen Thee; and with Thee shall inherit all things; "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

Amen

AFTER this manner therefore pray ye: Our father, ...Amen. — St. Matt. 6:9, 13.

WE ARE GOING to consider today, in reality, but one little word, the word amen. Some may think that it is straining a point to build a sermon on so small a foundation. But the truth of the matter is, there is an abundance of material here for a profitable sermon. If we do not prove this as we proceed, the fault will be in the preacher, and not in the text.

What does amen mean? Probably to many people it means little more than the announcement that we have come to the end of our sermon, or prayer. With respect to the Lord's Prayer, then, according to this, it would mean, our prayer is ended; we have done our part, we will now see what the outcome is going to be. This is a very commonplace, inadequate, and trivial, conception of the meaning of the word amen; Many of you know better than this. You have not forgotten your Catechism. You remember the answer to the question: "What does amen mean?" The answer is: "That I should be certain, these our petitions are acceptable to our Father in Heaven and heard by Him; for He has commanded us so to pray, and has promised to hear us. Amen, amen, that is, yea, yea, it shall be so."

The amen is a very important part of a sermon, or prayer. The man who is not certain about his amen, is not certain about his sermon. The man who cannot put a positive and resounding amen to his prayer is not certain about his prayer, whether it is what it ought to be, or how it is received.

That we may still more fully understand, and that, understanding, our confidence may be strengthened, let us make a further study of this little word amen.

The Amen Defined

Early and long continued use of words gives us; a certain familiarity with them without always increasing our understanding of them, at least as to their deeper meanings. It may even happen that the knowledge we once had grows dim. Because a thing is familiar we think we grasp it, and let slip: its profounder significance. It is so with many: things in the every day life. We are accustomed to them. They are a part of the routine of life. if We take their meaning for granted. If we were asked to pause and explain we would probably be surprised and shocked at our lack of understanding. It is unquestionably so in our religious life.

Let me illustrate. In every chief service we use the Gradual; which was so called because it was a part of the service which, in ancient times, was rendered while the officiating clergyman was ascending the steps of the sanctuary. After the versicle, or little verse, has been spoken by the minister, he concludes with the word, hallelujah. Then the congregation takes up the antiphon, the musical response; the hallelujah thrice repeated. And this is usually sung very heartily by all. I wonder how many of us know, or always remember, just what this word hallelujah means? Without doing so, how can we put our whole heart into it? It means: Praise the Lord. In the versicle the minister gathers up, in a sentence or two, the leading thought of the day; and closes it with hallelujah, a prayer of thanksgiving. Then the choir and congregation catches up the refrain and makes it the prayer of the assembled audience. How much richer, how much more fruitful, would be our worship if this, and other things, was remembered by all of us. This is true of the word amen.

It will help us, at the outset, to appreciate the depth and comprehensive-ness of the word amen to remember that it is one of the names by which God calls Himself. If we turn to Isaiah 65, we read: "He that blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth, and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth." The word here rendered truth is in reality our word amen; the God of the amen. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is called the amen. In Revelation three, it is written: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the creation of God."

The word amen is an adjective. It means firm, true, reliable. When God says that He is the God of the amen, it means that He is the true and only God, that His statements, His revelations of Himself, are absolutely in accordance with facts, trustworthy in every detail. In this latter sense Jesus uses the amen very frequently in the Gospels, more than a hundred times, in

fact. In the Gospel according to St. John, more than a score of times He uses the double form: Amen, amen; verily, verily. This is the strongest possible way of certifying to the truth of that which He is going to say. It is the inviolable seal of Heaven, the oath of the King of Heaven on His throne, that the message He is going to deliver is the truth. God is the truth. Jesus Christ is the truth. When they speak there can no longer be any question.

When the Son of God put the amen to the Lord's Prayer, it surely means something. It means that everything therein set forth, and promised, on the God-ward side is true in its entirety. We are here dealing with the great enduring realities of life.

But the amen has a big significance on the man-ward side. This word, as the remainder of the prayer, is put into man's mouth. And here the amen is the response of man's faith to God's faithfulness. It should be a constant reminder to us that we are engaged in this great religious exercise of prayer, not as a form, not as a concession to custom, but with all our hearts. When we use the amen aright it signifies that the deepest truth of our nature is going out on the wings of this prayer, to the great central truth of the universe, — Almighty God.

The amen, then, and nothing connected with the amen, can ever be used lightly. This word should not cross our lips unless it comes from the heart. It is sacrilegious to have the amen on our lips, without expressing the convictions, and the faith, of the heart.

God's Amen to Man

From what we have seen it is clear that our Christian amen is rooted and grounded in the very nature of God. If we had no such God as we have, we could have no such amen. An unbeliever might adapt the Christian's amen, as to form and use, as they have outwardly adopted a good many things which, in reality, can not be transferred from God's Kingdom. But in so far as a man is an unbeliever, a stranger to God, and His Kingdom, he can have no amen.

The amen is God's amen because He is the ground of truth on which it rests. The amen is God's amen because He has put it on our lips, and in doing so has pledged Himself, His truth, His honor, His all, to the proper ful-

fillment of the promise contained, or implied, in the petitions He has taught us to present, and to which He has taught us to attach, as a seal, His amen.

God has made us many overtures, many promises. Jesus but gathered together in the Model Prayer, a number of the truths concerning God's relation to us, His promises to us, and put them as petitions on our lips. There is the first great word, Father, our Father. That is Jesus' word. He wants us to know, and keep consciously mindful of the fact, that God is, has ever been, our Father; but that now in a newer, richer sense He is our Father through Christ, our merciful, forgiving Father; the giver of all good, of good for the body, of good for the soul in just such measure as we need them, and are able to use them. Oh, the richness of what is expressed, and implied, in this word Father. And remember, under this word Father, and all it expresses for our good, the Lord Christ has Himself written God's amen.

When our faith trembles, when our weakness makes us feel insecure, when our unworthiness makes us feel the improbability of God's willingness to be known as our Father, or to treat us as His children, let us remember that God Himself has sealed it all with His amen. There can be no question about it. God has sworn by Himself. He has put His amen to the document, it shall be so.

In three petitions we have been looking Heavenward. We have asked for the hallowing of the Father's name, in the honoring of which our highest if good, for time and eternity, is bound up; we have asked for the coming of the Father's Kingdom, that great Kingdom the home province of which is Heaven, the scene of activity of which, for us mortals in our earthly life, is the Church of Christ, but the government of which goes out to the outermost bounds of existence; we have asked for the doing of the Father's will, that will so sovereign that all the combined forces of opposition in the universe cannot hinder its ultimate plans for a second, or swerve it to the extent of a hair's breadth; that will so solicitous, so careful of the good of the least and lowliest of His children that it took from Heaven's central throne the only begotten Son to provide a sufficient sacrifice for their lasting good. When we see the contending forces around us, when we see the contradictions which fill human life, when we witness the temporary defeats which the things of God seem at times to suffer, we wonder at times whether God's plans and our hopes are going to be realized. Why be of little faith? Why be cast down? God has put to all this His seal, the pledge of His truthfulness, His great amen.

We have been created with physical needs, the natural channels through which these are ordinarily supplied have become disturbed, our best laid plans often fail, our best efforts bear little fruit; but the invitation is, Come to your Father, make your wants known, and what is best, best not only for this little day, but best for the whole way, and life's complex interests, I will give you. And to this promise God has written His amen, it shall be so.

We are in every sense frail creatures. We are not ourselves. We lack self-mastery. When we have become newborn creatures our vision runs in advance of our powers of achievement. Not only do we often forget; but what we have come to love, and resolved to do, we often fail to do, or do very imperfectly. What we have been taught to loathe, and have declared by all that is holy that we will not do, we often awake to find ourselves doing. We become disgusted with ourselves, and wonder whether there is still any help, or any hope. Our Father says, Come to Me, I am patient and long-suffering. I will forgive, today, and tomorrow, and as long as the need lasts. And to this promise God has written His amen. His personal honor, His very nature, is pledged.

We have not only deep-seated elements of evil within, we are surrounded by all kinds and degrees of malevolent forces. These seek our hurt, trying to lead us astray, and entangle us in the dragnet of unbelief and sin. There are dark problems all around us, some touching our own lives, touching the lives of all around us, touching all things. As we grope amid these things, as we fight against them, we feel our own inadequacy, and we cry out: Lord, help, shield us from the tempter, draw out his fangs, clip his claws. And in our weakness we sometimes ask ourselves, — will it do any good? can we overcome the temptation? shall we ever be delivered from the encompassing evil? The Father says, Come to Me, I will be your all-sufficient refuge; not from all the enemy's assaults, not from all wounds; but your final deliverer, and your eternal recompense. And to all this the great Father has put His amen, it shall be so.

And God has put His amen not only to the Lords Prayer, and all its parts; but to all our prayers. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him." (Ps. 91:15.) "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isa. 65:24.) And these promises are, if anything, still more numerous and emphatic in the New Testament. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto

you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” (St. Matt. 7:7, 8.) And again, if possible, with still more emphasis: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.” (St. John 16:23.) Here we have an instance of the actual use, in words, of the double amen, — verily, verily, as God’s pledge to hear and answer. When we have asked what is for our good, it will be given; God has put His amen to it. It must be so.

Let us remember that when we pray the Lord’s Prayer, with the right understanding, and with the right spirit, there can be no mistake. God Himself has put these petitions on our lips. And He has sealed them all with His great amen. God is not God if, in the right time, and in the way that is best, He does not answer these petitions.

Man’s Amen to God

There is a sense in which God’s amen to man is to become man’s amen to God. In the first place God speaks His word, He makes His promises, and to them adds His amen, which means: I, the great God, tell you this is true. Then it becomes man’s duty to take up the amen, and on his part it means: Because God has spoken it, this is so, it will be performed. God’s amen of asseveration and confirmation, becomes the amen of our acceptance. God’s truth should ever be met by our confidence, His faithfulness by our faith. And the faith which grasps the truth which is certified and sealed by that great little word, amen, should exhibit much of the firmness and certainty of the truth by which it is begotten. In other words, man’s amen should be patterned after God’s amen.

From very early times, God’s children, catching the eternal significance of God’s amen, have taken up the word, and made of it an answer to His amen. Already in first Chronicles, we read that at " the close of a joyous festival service, “All the people said, amen, and praised the Lord.” (16:36.) After many of the most joyous expressions of faith and hope in the Psalms, the singer reassures himself by, saying: Amen and amen. Throughout the New Testament we find God’s children using, again and again, the amen as the expression of their faith and hope.

In the early Christian Church, too, the amen, was much used by the people. Jerome tells us that at the close of the public prayers and hymns of praise, the amen of the people sounded like the loud murmur of the sea, or the voice of thunder. In those early days, the consecration of the elements in the Lord's Supper was not considered complete till the whole assembled congregation had ratified the act, and expressed their faith in the fulfillment of Christ's promise, with a resounding amen.

We have something of this still in our own services. And it would be well for us to remember that this use of the amen is not a mere liturgical form, not a mere beautification of the service. It is man's amen of acceptance and confidence in response to God's amen of promise.

Now let us apply these thoughts to the amen of our prayers, more particularly to the Lord's Prayer. What does it mean when we put the seal of amen to our prayers? Just as God's amen means that He is true, that He speaks the truth, that His promises are yea and amen; so man's amen is a pledge of sincerity. My amen is the certification that my prayer is from my heart, that I have honestly asked for the things which I am convinced that I need.

This being the case, how often our amens convict us of lack of earnestness, if not of real insincerity. How often we have prayed, especially the Lord's Prayer, without really entering into the meaning of its several parts; without any real longing for the blessings they express. How often our lips have repeated these petitions, while our thoughts, yes, we will have to confess it, while our thoughts were wandering elsewhere.

But our amen is more than the seal of our own sincerity in prayer. It is the seal of our faith in the God to whom we pray. Faith is the indispensable condition of prevailing prayer. The Son of God says: "Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (St. Mark 11:24.) If we do not believe that God is, that He is good, that He is desirous of helping us, that He is fully capable of helping us, and that He is going to do for us what is best, we might as well not pray. Our amen means all the former.

True faith prays in this wise: Heavenly Father, undeserving as I am, I know Thou lovest me; Thou hast abundantly proven that Thou hast my welfare at heart, my present physical welfare, still more my spiritual and eternal welfare, to the securing of which the present must be made to serve. I know that all things are possible with Thee, and that Thou overrulest all

things for my good. In spite of the difficulties of my own experience, in spite of the sneers of the unbelieving, I hold to this. In spite of my imperfections I know that Thou hearest my prayers with pleasure, and givest me what is best for me. If after this fashion we pray, then we have the right to seal it with God's amen and make it also our amen.

If such a great subject could be well summarized, it might be done after this fashion: Amen means, God is true, in His person, and in His promises; we, by His Grace, try to meet His truth with our confidence, His faithfulness with our faith.

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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