



The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4



“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

Matthew 6:9-13



A. W. Pink



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Part One

After all that has been spoken and written by godly men on prayer, we need something better than what is human to guide us, if we are to perform aright this essential duty. How ignorant and sinful creatures are to come before the most high God, how they are to pray acceptably to Him and obtain from Him what they need, can only be discovered as the great Hearer of prayer is pleased to reveal His will to us. This He *has* done—not only by opening up for the very chief of sinners a new and living way of access into His immediate presence, and by appointing prayers the chief means of intercourse and blessing between Himself and His people, but by graciously supplying a perfect pattern after which their prayers are to be modelled. “The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but the special rule of direction in prayer is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called the Lord’s Prayer” (Shorter Catechism).

From earliest times it has been called “the Lord’s Prayer,” not because it is one that He Himself addressed to the Father, but as graciously furnished by Him to teach us both the manner and method of how to pray, and the matters for which to pray. It should therefore be highly esteemed by Christians, for Christ knew both their needs and the Father’s good will toward them, and so He has mercifully supplied us with a simple yet comprehensive directory. Every part or aspect of prayer is included therein. Adoration, in its opening clauses; thanksgiving in the conclusion. Confession is necessarily implied, for that which is asked for supposes our weakness or sinfulness. Petitions furnish the main substance, as in all praying—intercession is involved in the first three petitions, and more definitely expressed in the last four, by them being in the plural number—“give *us*,” etc.

This prayer is found twice in the New Testament, being given by Christ on two different occasions—a hint for preachers to reiterate that which is of fundamental importance. The variations

are significant. The language of Matthew 6:9 intimates that this prayer is given to us for a *model*, yet the words of Luke 11:2 indicate it is to be used by us as a *form*. Like everything in Scripture, this prayer is perfect, in its order, construction, and wording. Its order is adoration, supplication, and argumentation. Its petitions are seven in number. It is virtually an epitome of the Psalms; a most excellent summary of all prayer. Every clause in it occurs in the Old Testament, denoting that our prayers must be Scriptural if they are to be acceptable. "If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John 5:14); but we cannot know His will if we are ignorant of His Word.

It has been alleged that this prayer was designed only for the temporary use of Christ's first disciples, until such time as the new covenant was inaugurated. But both Matthew and Luke wrote their Gospels years *after* the Christian dispensation had commenced, and neither of them give any intimation that it had become obsolete and no longer of service to Christians. It is contended that this prayer is not suitable for believers now, inasmuch as the petitions contained in it are not offered in the name of Christ and that they contain no express reference to His atonement and intercession. But this is a serious misconception and mistake, for by parity of reason, none of the Old Testament prayers, none of the Psalms, could be used by us! But the prayers of Old Testament believers were presented to God "for His name's sake," and Christ was the angel of the covenant of whom it was said, "*My name is in Him*" (Exo. 23:21). The Lord's Prayer is not only to be offered in reliance upon Christ's mediation, but it is that which He specially directs and authorizes us *to* offer.

In more recent times certain "students of Prophecy" have objected to the use of this prayer on dispensational grounds, arguing that it is exclusively a Jewish prayer, and legalistic in its tenor. But this is nothing more or less than a blatant attempt of Satan's to rob God's children of a valuable portion of their birthright. Christ did not give this prayer to Jews as Jews, but to His "disciples." It is addressed to "Our Father," and therefore is to be used by all the members of His family. It is recorded not only

in Matthew, but also in Luke—the *Gentile* Gospel. Christ’s injunction, after His resurrection, for His servants to teach believers “*Whatsoever* He had commanded” (Matt. 28:20), includes His command in Matthew 6:9. There is nothing whatever in this prayer *unsuited* to the Christian today, and everything in it is needed by him.

It has long been a controversial question, which has given rise to much acrimonious controversy, whether the Lord’s Prayer is to be regarded as a form to be used, or a pattern to be imitated. The right answer to this question is, it is to be considered as *both*. In Matthew it is manifestly brought forward as an example or pattern of the prayer which was to obtain under the new economy. “After this manner pray ye.” “With that reverence, humility, seriousness, confidence in God, concern for His glory, love to mankind, submission, moderation in temporal things and earnestness about spiritual things which it inculcates” (Thomas Scott). But in Luke’s Gospel we find our Lord asserting “When ye pray, *say*” (11:2)—i.e., as a formula. It is the duty of Christ’s disciples in their praying not only to always use it as a pattern, but sometimes to employ it as a form.

Unto those who object to the using of any *form* of prayer, let us remind them that God Himself often puts the very language into the mouths of His needy people. For example, “Take with you *words*, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” (Hosea 14:2). Doubtless, we need to be much on our guard against merely *formal*, and still more so against a *superstitious* observance of the Lord’s Prayer; nevertheless, we must as sedulously avoid going to the opposite extreme, and never employing it at all. In the opinion of this writer, it ought to be reverently and feelingly recited once at every public service, and used daily at family worship. That it has been perverted by some, whose too frequent use thereof seems to amount to the “vain repetition” which the Saviour prohibited, is no valid reason why we should be altogether deprived of offering it at the Throne of Grace, in the spirit which the Lord inculcated and in the very words He dictated.

“In every expression, petition, and argument of this prayer, we see *Jesus*: He and the Father are *One*. He has a ‘Name’ given Him which is above every name. He is the blessed and only Potentate, and His ‘kingdom’ ruleth over all. He is the ‘living bread’ which came down from Heaven. He had power on earth to ‘forgive sins.’ He is able to succour them that are ‘tempted.’ He is the angel that ‘redeems from all evil.’ The kingdom, power, and glory pertain unto Him. He is the fulfilment and confirmation of all Divine promises and gracious assurances. Himself ‘the Amen, and faithful Witness.’ Well did Tertullian term the Lord’s Prayer, ‘the Gospel abbreviated.’ The more clearly we understand the Gospel of the grace of God, ‘the Gospel of the glory of Christ,’ the more shall we love this wonderful prayer, and glorying in the Gospel which is ‘the power of God and the wisdom of God’ to them that believe, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable as we offer the Divinely prescribed petitions and expect gracious answers” (Thomas Houston).

Part Two

“Our Father which art in Heaven” (Matt. 6:9). This opening clause presents to us the *Object* to whom we pray, teaches us the covenant-*office* which He sustains, and denotes the *obligation* imposed upon us, namely, that of a filial spirit, with all that entails. All real prayer ought to begin with a devout contemplation and express acknowledgement of the name of God and His blessed perfections. We should draw near unto the Throne of Grace with suitable apprehensions of God’s sovereign majesty and power, yet with a holy confidence in His fatherly goodness. In these opening words we are plainly instructed to preface our petitions by expressing the sense we have of the essential and relative glories of the One we address. The Psalms abound in examples of this: see 8:1 as a case in point.

“Our Father which art in Heaven.” Let us first endeavour to ascertain the general principle which is embodied in this introductory clause. It informs us in the simplest possible manner that the great God is most graciously ready to grant us an

audience. By directing us to address Him as “our Father,” we are definitely assured of His love and power. This precious title is designed to raise our affections, excite to reverent attention, and confirm our confidence in the efficacy of prayer. Three things are essential unto acceptable and effectual prayer: fervency, reverence, and confidence—and these this opening clause is designed to inspire in us. Fervency is the effect of our affections being called into exercise; reverence will be promoted by the apprehension that we are addressing the Heavenly Throne; confidence will be deepened by viewing the Object of prayer as our Father.

Coming to God in acts of worship, we must “believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). And what is more calculated to deepen our confidence and draw forth the strongest love and earnest hopes of our heart toward God, than by Christ’s here presenting Him to us in His most tender aspect and endearing relation?! How we are here encouraged to use holy boldness and to pour out our souls before Him! We could not suitably invoke an impersonal “First Cause,” still less could we adore or supplicate a great abstraction. No, it is unto a person, a Divine Person, One who has our best interests at heart we are invited to draw near—to our *Father*. “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that *we* should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

First, God is the “Father” of all men *naturally*, being their Creator. “Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10); “But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand” (Isa. 64:8). The fact that such verses have been grossly perverted by some holding erroneous views on “the universal fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man,” must not cause us to utterly repudiate them. It is our privilege to assure the most ungodly and abandoned that, if they will but throw down their weapons of their warfare and do as the Prodigal did, there is a loving Father ready to welcome them. If He hears the cries of ravens, will He turn a deaf ear to the requests of a rational

creature? Simon Magus, while still “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” was directed by an Apostle to repent of his wickedness and *pray* to God (Acts 8:22).

But the depth and full import of this invocation can only be entered into by the believing Christian, for there is a higher relation between him and God than that which is merely of nature. God is his “Father” *spiritually*. Second, God is the Father of His elect because He is the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3), and therefore did He expressly announce, “I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (John 20:17). Third, God is the Father of His elect by eternal decree. “Having predestinated us unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5). Fourth, He is the Father of His elect by *regeneration*, wherein they are born again and become “partakers of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4); as it is written, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).

These words, “Our Father,” not only signify the office which God sustains to us by virtue of the Everlasting Covenant, but they clearly imply our obligations: they teach us both how we ought to dispose of ourselves toward God when we pray unto Him, and the conduct which becomes us by virtue of this relationship. As His children we must “honour” Him, be in subjection to Him, delight in Him, strive in all things to please Him. Again, it not only teaches us our personal interest in God Himself—by grace, our Father—but it also instructs us of our interest in our fellow-Christians—in Christ, they are our brethren. It is not merely “*my* Father,” but “*our* Father.” We must express our love to them by praying for them—we are to be as much concerned about *their* needs as we are over our own. How much is included in these two words!

“Which art in Heaven.” What a blessed *balance* this gives to the previous clause. If that tells us of God’s goodness and grace, this speaks of His greatness and majesty; if that teaches us of the nearness and dearness of His relationship to us, this announces His

infinite elevation above us. If “our Father” inspires confidence and love, “which art in Heaven” should fill us with humility and awe. These are the two things which should ever occupy our minds and engage our hearts: the first without the second tends to unholy familiarity. The second without the first produces coldness and dread. Combine them together and we are preserved from either evil, and a suitable poise is wrought in the soul as we duly contemplate both the mercy and might of God, His unfathomable love and His immeasurable loftiness. Note how the same blessed balance was preserved by the Apostle in “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” (Eph. 1:17).

“Which art in Heaven:” not because He is confined there, for “will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the Heaven and Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee” (1 Kings 8:27)—He is infinite and omnipresent. There is a particular sense, though, in which the Father is “in Heaven:” because His majesty and glory are most eminently manifested there. “Thus saith the LORD, The Heaven is *My throne*, and the earth is *My footstool*” (Isa. 66:1), and the realization of this should fill us with the deepest reverence and awe. “Which art in Heaven” calls attention to His *providence*, as directing all things from on High. It announces His ability to undertake for us. Our Father is *the Almighty*—“Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa. 115:3). Yet though the Almighty, He is “our *Father*,” and “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him” (Psa. 103:13), and “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?” (Luke 11:13). Finally, it reminds us that *we* are journeying *there*: for Heaven is our “Home.”

Part Three

“Hallowed be Thy name” (Matt. 6:9). This begins the petitions of Christ’s pattern prayer. They are seven in number, which are significantly divided into three and four: the first three concerning God, the last four (the number of the creature) our own selves.

Similarly the Ten Commandments: the first five teach us our duty toward God (in the fifth the parent stands to the child in the place of God), in the last five our duty toward our neighbour. Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves, and give God the pre-eminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplications. This petition necessarily comes first, for the glorifying of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things. All other requests must be subordinate to this one and be in pursuance of it. We cannot pray aright unless the glory of God be dominant in our desires. We are to cherish a deep sense of the ineffable holiness of God and an ardent longing for the honouring of it, and therefore we must not ask anything which would be against the Divine holiness to bestow.

“Hallowed be Thy name.” How easy it is to utter these words without any thought of their solemn importance! In seeking to ponder them, four questions are naturally raised in our minds. First, what is meant by “hallowed?” Second, what is signified by God's “name?” Third, how are we to understand “Hallowed *be* Thy name?” Fourth, why does this petition come first? The “hallowed” is an old English word, the Greek term is elsewhere translated “sanctified.” It means to set apart for a sacred use. “Hallowed by Thy name” signifies revered, adored, glorified, be Thy matchless name—let it be held in the utmost respect and honour, let its fame spread abroad and be magnified.

“Thy name” is put for *God Himself*, as in “let them that love Thy name (i.e., Thyself) be joyful in Thee” (Psa. 5:11); “the name of the God of Jacob defend thee” (Psa. 20:1), that is, the God of Jacob Himself defend thee; “the name of the LORD is a strong tower” (Prov. 18:10)—Jehovah Himself is such. Again—the Name of God stands for *the Divine perfections*. It is striking and blessed to observe that when He “proclaimed the name of the LORD” to Moses, God enumerated His blessed attributes (see Exo. 34:5-7); so again, when it is said, “they that know Thy name (i.e., Thy wondrous perfections) will put their trust in Thee” (Psa. 9:10). But more particularly, His “Name” signifies God as He is *revealed*, made known to us. It is in such titles as the “Almighty,”

“the Lord of Hosts,” “Jehovah,” “the God of peace,” “our Father,” that He has discovered Himself unto us.

What is intended by “Hallowed *be* Thy name?” First, in its widest sense we ask that *God* “by His overruling providence, would direct and dispose of all things to His own glory” (Larger Catechism). Hereby we pray that God Himself would sanctify His name: that He would cause it—by His providence and grace—to be known and adored, through the preaching of His Law and Gospel. Second, that His name be sanctified and magnified in and by *us*. Not that we can add anything to God’s essential holiness, yet we should promote His manifestative glory—so we are exhorted, “give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name” (Psa. 96:8). Yet we cannot do this of ourselves, and hence the verb is in the passive form. Nevertheless, it is the desire and must be the determination of every Christian’s heart *to advance* the revealed glory of God on earth.

By praying “Hallowed *be* Thy name” we beg that God, who is most holy and glorious, would enable us to *acknowledge and honour* Him as such. As Manton forcefully expressed it, “In this petition the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part; for every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask. Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God’s hearing: we speak to God to warm ourselves—not for His information, but for our edification.” Alas that this necessary implication of prayer is not more insisted upon in the pulpit today, and more clearly perceived in the pew. We but mock God if we present to Him pious words and have no intent of striving with our might to live in harmony therewith.

To “hallow” or sanctify His name means that we give God the supreme place, that we set Him above all in our thoughts, affections, and lives. It is the antithesis of the builders of the Tower of Babel, of whom we read, “let us make *us* a name” (Gen. 11:4), and of Nebuchadnezzar who said of Babylon, “That I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty” (Dan. 4:30). “Sanctify the Lord

God in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15): that the awe of His majesty and holiness be upon you, so that all within may be reduced unto entire subjection to Him. For this we must pray and strive to obtain right views and a deeper knowledge of Him, that we may worship Him aright and serve Him acceptably.

Third, this petition not only expresses the desire that God would sanctify Himself in and through us, and enable us to glorify Him, but it also voices our longing that *others* may know, adore, and glorify Him. “In the use of this petition we pray that the glory of God may be more and more displayed and advanced in the world in the course of His providence, that His Word may run and be glorified in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, that there may be an increase of holiness in all His people, and that all profanation of the names of God among men may be prevented and removed” (John Gill). Thus, this petition includes the asking of God to grant all needed effusions of the Holy Spirit to raise up faithful pastors, to move His Churches to maintain a Scriptural discipline, to stir up the saints to an exercise of their graces.

It is obvious, then, why this is the *first* petition in the Prayer. It must be the basis of all our other requests. The glory of God is to be our chief and great concern. Whatever comes to me, however low I may sink, no matter how deep the waters through which I may be called to pass, Lord, magnify Thyself in and by me. Mark how blessedly this was exemplified by our perfect Saviour: “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name” (John 12:27, 28). Though He must be baptised with the baptism of suffering, yet the Father’s glory was what most concerned Christ.

The following beautifully summarizes the meaning of this petition. “O Lord, open our eyes that we may know Thee aright and may discern Thy power, wisdom, justice, and mercy. Enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify Thee in our affections, by making Thee our fear, love, joy, and confidence. Open our lips that we may bless Thee for Thine infinite goodness; yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see Thee in all Thy works, and incline our wills

with reverence for Thy name appearing in Thy works. Grant that when we use anyone of them, that we may honour Thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof” (W. Perkins).

In conclusion, let us point out very briefly the uses to be made of this petition. 1. Failures to be bewailed and confessed: we are to humble ourselves for those sins whereby we have hindered God’s manifestative glory and profaned His name; by pride of heart, coldness of zeal, stubbornness of will, impiety of life. 2. Earnest seeking of those graces whereby we may hallow His name: a fuller knowledge of Himself, his fear to be more upon our hearts, increased faith and love, and a spirit of praise, the right use of His gifts. 3. Duties to be practiced: that there be nothing in our conduct which would cause His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (Rom. 2:24), and that “whatsoever we do, we may do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

Part Four

“Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10). This second petition is the briefest and yet the most comprehensive one contained in our Lord’s Prayer, nevertheless, strange and sad to say that, in some circles, it is the least understood and the most controverted. The following questions call for careful consideration. First, what is the *relation* between this petition and the one preceding it? Second, *Whose* “kingdom” is here in view? Third, exactly what is meant by “Thy *kingdom*?” Fourth, in what sense or senses are we to understand “Thy kingdom *come*?”

The first petition, “Hallowed be Thy name” concerns God’s glory itself, the second and third respect the *means* whereby His glory is manifested and promoted on earth. God’s name is manifestatively glorified here just in proportion as His “kingdom” comes to us and His “will” is done by us. The relation between this petition and the former one, then, is quite apparent. Christ teaches us to pray first for the sanctifying of God’s great name, and then directs us to the means thereunto. Among the means for promoting God’s glory none is so influential as the coming of His kingdom, and hence it is we are exhorted to “seek ye first the

kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). But though men ought to glorify God’s name upon earth, yet of themselves they cannot do so: God’s kingdom must first be set up in their hearts. God cannot be honoured by us until we voluntarily submit to His rule over us.

“Thy kingdom come.” Whose “kingdom?” Why, God’s, of course, or more specifically, the Father’s; yet *not* as something that is separate from the kingdom of the Son. The Father’s kingdom is no more a distinct one from Christ’s than “the Church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15) is other than the Body of Christ; or the “Gospel of God” (Rom. 1:1) is something different from the “Gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1:16), or than “the Word of Christ” (Col. 3:16) is to be distinguished from the Word of God. Rather does “Thy kingdom” (the Father’s kingdom) point a contrast between God’s and *Satan’s* “kingdom” (Matt. 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder—the opposite from and hinderer of God’s.

The Father’s *kingdom* is, first and more generally, His universal *rule*, His absolute dominion over all creatures and things: “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). Second, and more specifically, it is the external sphere of His grace on earth, where He is ostensibly acknowledged (Mark 4:11, etc.). Third, and more definitely still, it is God’s spiritual and internal kingdom which is entered by regeneration: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

Now, as the Father and the Son are one in nature, so is Their kingdom the same, and thus it appears in each aspect of it. In the kingdom of *providence*: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work” (John 5:17), i.e., in the government of the world (cf. Heb. 1:3). In the *mediatorial* kingdom, Christ has it by the Father’s appointment (Luke 22:29) and establishment (Psa. 2:6). In the kingdom of *grace*, as it is set up in the hearts of the Lord’s people, it is the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 4:20), yet of the Son (Col. 1:13).

In the kingdom of *Glory*: Christ will drink the fruit of the vine, “in My Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29), yet it is also called “The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11). Hence we read of “the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ” (Rev. 12:10).

It may be inquired, *Which aspect* of the “kingdom” is here prayed for as yet future? Not God’s providential, since *that* has existed and continued from the beginning. It must, then, be the kingdom of His grace, which is consummated in the kingdom of glory. There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man—spirit and soul and body—to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. The character or nature of this reign is summed up in three things: “the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). First, Christ’s righteousness imputed, and then the righteousness of a good conscience, the basis of which is our sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Second, peace: peace of conscience toward God, peace with His people, and with all creatures—under “peace” is included all the duties of love. Third, joy: which is a fruit of the other two—a delighting in God in all estates.

“Thy kingdom *come*.” This has a threefold force, for it applies to each aspect of God’s kingdom. First, to the external kingdom of grace: let Thy Gospel be preached, the power of Thy Spirit attend it, the Church be strengthened, Thy Cause on earth be advanced, the works of the Devil be destroyed. Second, to the internal and spiritual kingdom of grace: let Thy throne be set up in our heart, Thy laws be administered in our lives, Thy name be magnified by our walk. Third, to the kingdom of Glory: let the days be hastened when Satan and all his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sin forever, when Christ shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

God’s kingdom “comes” in the following degrees. First, when He gives to men the outward means of salvation: Luke 11:20 and cf. 17:21. Second, when the Word preached enters the mind so that the mysteries of the Gospel are understood. Third, when the Spirit’s regeneration actually bring us into the kingdom or state of

grace. Fourth, at death, when the soul is freed from all sin. Fifth, at the resurrection, when we are fully glorified. “O Lord, let Thy kingdom come to us who are strangers and pilgrims here on earth: prepare us for it and conduct us into it, that be yet outside to it; renew us by Thy Spirit that we may be subject to Thy will; confirm us who are in the way, that our souls after this life, and both soul and body in the day of judgment may be fully glorified: yea, Lord, hasten this glorification to us and all Thine elect” (W. Perkins).

We say again, Though this be the briefest petition, it is the most comprehensive one. In praying “Thy kingdom come,” we ask for the power and blessings of the Holy Spirit to attend the preaching of the Word, for the Church to be furnished with God-given and God-equipped officers, for the ordinances to be purely administered, for an increase of spiritual gifts and graces in its members, for the overthrow of Christ’s enemies—and thus that the kingdom of grace may be further extended till the whole of God’s elect are brought into it. By necessary implication, we pray that God will wean us more and more from the perishing things of this world.

In conclusion, let us point out some of the *uses* to which this petition should be put. First, *failures* to be bewailed and confessed by us. We are to own before God our wretched estate by nature, whereby we are the servants of sin and so under bondage to Satan: Romans 7:14, 24. We are to mourn over the sad state of the world: its woeful transgressions of God’s Law, whereby He is so dishonoured and the kingdom of Satan furthered: Psalm 110:36, Mark 3:5. Second, we are to earnestly *seek those graces* which will influence our heart and lives whereby God’s kingdom is erected and maintained, an endeavouring to be so subject to Christ that we are wholly ruled by Him. Third, *duties* to be performed: we are to “bring forth the fruit” of the kingdom (Matt. 21:43, Rom. 14:17), and diligently use all the Divinely appointed means for the furthering of it. Thus, the sum of this petition is that God, and not sin and Satan, may reign over us.

Part Five

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven” (Matt. 6:10). The

connection between this petition and the preceding ones is not difficult to trace. First must be our concern for God's glory, then our desire for His kingdom, and then an honest endeavour to serve Him. The glory of God is the grand object of our *desires*: the coming of His kingdom is the chief *means* by which it is secured: our personal obedience makes it *manifest* that His kingdom *is* come to us. When God's kingdom really comes to a soul he must necessarily be brought into obedience to its laws and ordinances, for it is worse than useless to call God our King if His commandments are disregarded by us. Broadly speaking, there are two parts to this petition: a request for the spirit of obedience and the manner in which it is to be performed.

"Thy will be done." This may present a difficulty to a few of our readers: is not God's will always done? In one respect, Yes—in another, No. Scripture presents the will of God from two main viewpoints: His secret will and His revealed will, or His decretive and His preceptive will. The former is the rule of *His own* actions: in creation (Rev. 4:11), in providence (Dan. 4:35), and in grace (Rom. 9:15)—this is always unknown to men until revealed by prophecies of things to come or by events which transpire. The latter is the rule of *our* actions, God having made known in the Scriptures that which is pleasing in His sight. The secret or decretive will of God is always done, equally on earth as in Heaven, for none can thwart or even hinder it.

This distinction in connection with God's will is clearly drawn in, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are *revealed* belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may *do* all the words of this Law" (Deut. 29:29). The same is true of His "counsel." "My counsel (His eternal decree) *shall* stand" (Isa. 46:10). "The Pharisees and lawyers *rejected* (margin "frustrated") the counsel (or revealed will) of God" (Luke 7:30). On the one hand we read, "Who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. 9:19), and on the other hand, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3). The revealed or preceptive will of God is stated in the Word, defining our duty, making known the path we should walk in: "that ye may prove

what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

“The will of God,” then, is a phrase which, taken by itself, may express either what God has purposed to do, or what He has commanded to be done by us. With regard to the will of God in the first sense, it is already and always done upon earth as it is in Heaven, for neither human policy nor infernal power can prevent it. The text which is now before us contains a prayer that we might be brought into complete accord with God’s revealed will. We *do* the will of God when, from a regard for His authority, we regulate our hearts and lives according to His commandments. Such is our bounden duty, and should be our fervent desire and diligent endeavour. We mock God if we present this request and then do not make the conforming of ourselves to His will our main business—ponder the solemn warning in Matthew 15:8.

“Thy will be done on earth.” The one who sincerely prays this, necessarily intimates his unreserved surrender to God, and implies the renunciation of the will of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26), his own corrupt inclinations (1 Peter 4:2), and the rejecting of all things opposed to God. Nevertheless, such a soul is painfully conscious that there is still much in him that is in conflict with God, and therefore he humbly and contritely acknowledges that he cannot do His will without Divine assistance, and earnestly desires and seeks enabling grace. Possibly the meaning and scope of this petition will best be opened up if we express it thus: O Father, let Thy will be revealed *to* me, let it be wrought *in* me, let it be performed *by* me.

From the positive side, when we pray, “Thy will be done,” we beg God, first, for spiritual *wisdom* to learn His will: “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts . . . Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:27, 33). Second, we beg God for spiritual *inclination* unto His will: “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart . . . Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies” (Psa. 119:32, 36). Third, we beg God for spiritual *strength* to perform His bidding: “Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word . . . Strengthen Thou me according unto

Thy Word” (Psa. 119:25, 28). “Draw me: we will run after Thee” (Song. 1:4). “Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight” (Heb. 13:21). “Thy will be done *on earth*,” because this is the place of our discipleship, where we are to practise self-denial—and because if we do not His will here, we never shall in Heaven.

“As it is in Heaven”—by the saints and the angels. This is the standard set before us on earth. *How* is God’s will done in Heaven? Not sullenly and reluctantly, not pharisaically nor hypocritically, not tardily or fitfully, nor partially and fragmentally. But gladly and joyfully: both “the living creatures” (not “beasts”) and the “elders” of Revelation 5:8 are pictured with “*harps*” in their hands! Yet humbly and reverently: the seraphim *veil* their faces before the Lord: Isaiah 6:2. With alacrity: “Then *flew* one of the seraphim” (Isa. 6:6). Constantly: “therefore are they before the Throne of Grace, and serve Him *day and night* in His temple” (Rev. 7:15). The angels obey God promptly, wholly, perfectly, with ineffable delight. But *we* are sinful and full of infirmities; with what propriety, then, can the obedience of celestial beings be proposed as an example for us? We raise this question not as a concession to our imperfections, but because honest souls are exercised by it.

First, to *sweeten* our subjection to the Divine will: we on earth are set no harder task than those in Heaven. O my reader, Heaven is what it is because the will of God is done by all who dwell there: and the measure in which a foretaste of its bliss may be obtained by us upon earth will largely be determined by the degree to which we perform the Divine bidding. Second, to show us the blessed *reasonableness* of our obedience to God: “Bless the LORD, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa. 103:20)—then can God require less of us? O my reader, if we are to have communion with the angels in Glory, then we must be conformed to them in grace. Third, to make known to us the standard at which we must ever aim: “That ye might walk worthy

of the Lord unto all pleasing . . . That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 1:10; 4:12). Fourth, to teach us not only *what* to do, but *how* to do it: we are to imitate the angels in the *manner* of their obedience, though we cannot equal them in measure or degree.

“Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven:” weigh this attentively in the light of what precedes. First, “Our Father which art in Heaven:” then should we not do His will? We must, if we are His children—disobedience is what characterizes His enemies. Did not His own dear Son render Him perfect obedience! Second, “Hallowed be Thy name:” does not a real concern for God’s glory obliges us to make a conformity to His will our supreme quest? We certainly must if we desire to honour God, for nothing dishonours Him more than self-will and defiance. Third, “Thy kingdom come:” should we not seek to be in full subjection to its laws and ordinances? We must if we are subjects thereof—it is alienated rebels who despise His sceptre.

Part Six

“Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). We turn now unto those petitions which more immediately concern ourselves: we must labour to promote the manifestative glory of God, advance His kingdom, and do His will before we are permitted to supplicate for our *own* needs. These petitions which more immediately concern ourselves are four in number, and in them we may clearly discern an implied reference unto each of the Persons in the blessed Trinity. Our temporal needs are supplied by the kindness of the Father, our sins are forgiven through the mediation of the Son. We are preserved from temptation and delivered from evil by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit. Let us carefully note the *proportion* which is observed between these last four petitions; one of them concerns our bodily needs; three relate to the concerns of the soul—teaching us that in prayer, too, temporal things are to be subordinated unto spiritual.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Perhaps it will be helpful if we begin by raising a number of questions. First, why does this

request for the supply of bodily needs come *before* those petitions which concern the soul's? Second, what is signified by and included in the term "bread?" Third, in what sense may we suitably beg God for our daily bread when we already have a supply on hand? Fourth, how can bread be a Divine gift if we earn the same by our own labours? Fifth, what is inculcated by the request being restricted to our "daily bread?" Before attempting to answer these queries let us say that, with almost all of the best of the commentators, we regard the prime reference as being unto material "bread," rather than unto spiritual.

Matthew Henry has pertinently pointed out that the reason why this request for the supply of our temporal needs *heads* the last four petitions is, "because our natural being is necessary in order to our spiritual well-being in this world." In other words, God grants to us the outward things of this life as *helps* unto the discharge of our spiritual duties: because given by Him, they are to be employed in His service. What gracious consideration does God here show unto our weakness: we are unapt and unfit to perform our higher duties if deprived of the things needed for the sustenance of our bodily existence. May we not also suggest that this petition comes first in order to promote the growth of faith from strength to strength: perceiving the goodness and faithfulness of God in supplying our temporal needs, we are encouraged and stimulated to ask for higher blessings—compare Acts 17:26-28.

"Our daily bread" refers, primarily to the supply of our temporal needs. With the Hebrews, "bread" was a generic term signifying the necessities and conveniences of this life (Gen. 3:19; 28:20), such as food, raiment, and housing. Yet there is an emphasis in the specific term "bread," rather than the more general "food," teaching us to ask not for dainties or for riches, but for that which is wholesome and needful. "Bread" here includes health and appetite, apart from which food serves us not. It also takes into account our *nourishment*, for this is not from the food alone, nor does it lie within the power of man's will: hence God's *blessing* on it is to be sought. "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 prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4, 5).

In begging God to give us our daily bread, we ask that He would graciously provide us with such a portion of outward things as He sees will be best suited to our calling and station: “Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal” (Prov. 30:8, 9). If God grants us the superfluities of life, we are to be thankful, and must endeavour to use them to His glory; but we must not ask for them: “Having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8). “*Our* daily bread:” not by theft, not by taking by force or fraud what belongs to another—but by our personal labour and industry. “Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread” (Prov. 20:13); “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:27).

How can I sincerely ask God for this day’s bread when I already have a goodly supply on hand? First, because our present temporal portion may speedily be taken from us, and that without any warning: a striking and solemn illustration of this is found in 1 Samuel 30:16, 17. Fire may burn down your house and everything in it: so by asking God for the daily supply of our temporal needs, we acknowledge our complete dependency upon His bounty. Second, because what we have will profit us nothing unless God designs to also *bless* the same unto us. Third, because this petition is more comprehensive than my own personal needs: it is not simply “give me,” but *us*, thereby inculcating charity and compassion to others. God requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves; to be as solicitous about our fellow-Christians as we are of our own needs.

How can God be said to *give* us our daily bread if we ourselves have earned it? Surely such a quibble scarcely needs reply. First, because our right to the creature was forfeited when we fell in Adam. Second, because everything belongs to God: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1); “The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of hosts” (Hag. 2:8); “Therefore will I

return, and take away *My* corn in the time thereof, and *My* wine in the season thereof” (Hosea 2:9). Therefore we hold in fee from Him the portion which He bestows. We are but *stewards*: God grants us both possession and title. Third, because all we have comes *from God*: “These wait all upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good” (Psa. 104:27, 28 and cf. Acts 14:17). Although by labour and purchase things may (relatively) be said to be “ours,” yet it is God who gives us strength *to* labour.

What is inculcated by the request being restricted to our “*daily bread*?” First, it reminds us of our *frailty*: we are unable to continue in health for twenty-four hours and are unfit for its duties unless constantly fed from on High. Second, it emphasises the *brevity* of our mundane existence: none of us knows what a day may bring forth, and therefore we are forbidden to boast ourselves of the morrow (Prov. 27:1). Third, it teaches us to suppress all anxious concern for the future: to live a day at a time—“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt. 6:34). Fourth, it inculcates the lesson of *moderation*: we are to stifle the spirit of covetousness by forming the habit of being contented with a slender portion. Finally, observe that “give us *this day*” is to be prayed each morning, whereas “give us *day by day*” (Luke 11:3) is to be our request every night.

This petition, then, teaches us, first, that it is permissible and lawful to supplicate God for temporal mercies. Second, that we are completely dependent upon God’s bounty for everything. Third, that our confidence is to be in Him alone: and not in secondary causes. Fourth, that we should be grateful and return thanks for material blessings as well as for spiritual ones. Fifth, that we should practice frugality and discourage covetousness. Sixth, that we should have family worship every morning and evening. Seventh, that we should be equally solicitous of others as of ourselves: “Give us.”

Part Seven

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). Let it be duly noted that “Hallowed be Thy Name” is *not* followed by “*And Thy kingdom come,*” nor is that followed by “*And Thy will be done,*” for though intimately related those three petitions are quite distinct. But “Give us this day our daily bread” *is* followed by “AND forgive us,” denoting that there is a close connection between them. Thereby we are taught, first, that without pardon, all the good things of this life will benefit us nothing. A man in the condemned cell is fed and clothed, but what is the daintiest diet and the costliest apparel worth while he remains under sentence of death! “Our daily bread doth but fatten us as lambs for the slaughter if our sins be not pardoned” (Matthew Henry). Second, to inform us that our sins are so many and so grievous that we deserve not one mouthful of food. Each day the Christian is guilty of offences which forfeit even the common blessings of life, so that he should ever acknowledge, “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies” (Gen. 32:10). Third, to remind us that our sins are the great obstacle to the favours we might receive from God: Isaiah 59:2, Jeremiah 5:25. Our sins choke the channel of blessing, and therefore as often as we pray, “give us,” we must add, “And forgive us.” Fourth, to encourage faith to go on from strength to strength: if we trust God’s providence to provide for our bodies, should we not trust Him for the salvation of our souls?!

“Forgive us our debts.” Our sins (Luke 11:4) are here viewed under the notion of “debts”—undischarged obligations, failure to render our dues. We owe unto God sincere and perfect worship, earnest and perpetual obedience. “We are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh” (Rom. 8:12): this states the negative side—positively we are debtors to God to live unto Him. By the law of creation we were made not to *gratify* the flesh, but to glorify God: “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was *our duty* to do” (Luke 17:10). Failure to discharge our debt of the duties of worship and obedience has entailed guilt, bringing us

in debt to Divine justice. Now when we pray, “Forgive us our *debts*,” we do not ask to be discharged from the duties we owe God, but to be acquitted from our guilt, to have the punishment due us remitted.

“There was a certain Creditor which had two debtors” (Luke 7:41). Here God is set forth under the figure of “Creditor” partly in view of His being our Creator, and partly as being our Lawgiver and Judge. God has not only endowed us with talents obliging us to serve and glorify our Benefactor, but He has placed us under law so that we are condemned for our defaults, and as Judge He will yet call upon each of us to render a full account of his stewardship (Rom. 14:12). There is to be a Day of Reckoning (Luke 19:15, etc.), and those who did not repent of and bewail their debts and take refuge in Christ will be eternally punished in the conscious realization of that solemn Assize.

Not only does this metaphor of Creditor and debtors apply to our ruin, but, thank God, it holds good equally of the *remedy* or recovery. As insolvent debtors we are completely undone, and must forever lie under the righteous judgment of God, unless full compensation be made to Him. But that compensation *we* are powerless to pay Him, for morally and spiritually speaking we are undischarged bankrupts. Deliverance, then, must come from outside ourselves. Here is where the Gospel speaks relief to the sin-burdened soul: another, even the Lord Jesus, took upon Him the office of Sponsor, and rendered full satisfaction to Divine justice on behalf of His people, making complete compensation to God for them. Hence, in this connection, Christ is called “the Surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22). As He affirmed, “I restored that which I took not away” (Psa. 69:4), and so God declares, “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found *a ransom*” (Job 33:24).

“And forgive us our debts.” Strange to say, some experience a difficulty here: seeing that God has already forgiven the Christian “all trespasses” (Col. 2:13), is it not needless, they ask, for him to beg God *for* forgiveness? This difficulty is self-created through failure to distinguish between the purchase of our pardon by Christ

and its actual application to us. True, full atonement for all our sins was made by Him, and at the Cross our guilt was cancelled. True, all our “*old sins*” are purged at our conversion (2 Peter 1:9), nevertheless, there is a very real sense in which our present and future sins are *not* remitted until we repent and confess them to God, and therefore it is both necessary and meet that we should seek their pardon: 1 John 1:9. Even *after* David was assured “the LORD also hath put away thy sins” (2 Sam. 12:13), he begged God’s forgiveness (Psa. 51:1).

What do we ask for in this petition? First, that God will not lay to our charge the sins we daily commit: Psalm 143:2. Second, that God would accept the satisfaction for our sins and look upon us as righteous in Him. “But if we be real Christians, He has *already* done so.” True, yet He requires us to sue out our pardon, just as He said to Christ, “*Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance*” (Psa. 2:8). God is ready to forgive, but He requires us to call upon Him. Why? That His saving mercy may be acknowledged, and that our faith may be exercised. Third, for the *continuance* of pardon. Though we be justified, yet “forgive us” we must ask: as in our daily bread, though we have a goodly store on hand, yet we beg for the continuance of it. Fourth, for the *manifestation* or assurance of it: that sins may be blotted out of our conscience, as well as from God’s book of remembrance—the effects of forgiveness are peace and access to God (Rom. 5:1, 2).

Forgiveness is not demanded as a due, but requested as a mercy. “To the very end of life, the best Christian must come for forgiveness just as he did at first, not as a claimant of a right but as a supplicant of a favour” (John Brown). Nor is this in anywise inconsistent with nor a reflection upon our complete justification (Acts 13:39). It is certain that the believer, “shall not come into condemnation” (John 5:24), yet instead of that leading to the conclusion, “therefore I need not pray for the remission of my sins,” it supplies the strongest possible encouragement to present such a petition—just as the Divine assurance that a genuine Christian shall persevere to the end, instead of laying a foundation for carelessness, is a most powerful motive to watchfulness and

faithfulness. This petition implies a felt sense of sin, a penitent acknowledgement thereof, a seeking of God's mercy for Christ's sake, the realization He can righteously pardon us. Its presentation should ever be preceded by self-examination and humiliation.

This petition is confirmed by an argument: "as we forgive our debtors." It may be resolved thus: first, a reason from a like disposition in us: whatever good there be in us must first be in God, for He is the sum of all excellence. If, then, a kindly disposition has been planted in our hearts, the same must be found in Him. Second, from the lesser to the greater: if we who have but a drop of mercy can forgive the offences done unto us, surely God—the ocean of mercy—will forgive us. Third, from the condition of those who may expect pardon: they are such as out of a sense of God's mercy to them are disposed to show mercy to others, hence they are morally qualified for more, seeing they do not abuse it. They who would rightly pray to God for pardon must pardon those who wrong them. Joseph (Gen. 50:17) and Stephen (Acts 7:60) are conspicuous examples. We need to pray much for God to remove all bitterness and malice from our hearts against those who wrong us. But to forgive our debtors does not exclude our rebuking them, and, where public interests are involved, suing them: it would be my duty to hand over a burglar to a policeman, or to go to law against one who was able but who refused to pay me.

Part Eight

"And lead us not into temptation" (Matt. 6:13). This petition also begins with the word "And," requiring us to mark closely its relation to the one preceding. The connection between them may be set forth thus: first, the previous petition concerns the negative side of our justification, while this one has to do with our practical sanctification, for the two blessings must never be severed, thus we see the *balance* of Truth is again perfectly preserved. Second, past sins being pardoned, we should pray fervently for grace to prevent us from repeating them. We cannot rightly desire God to forgive us our sins, unless we sincerely long for grace to abstain

from the like for the time to come, and therefore we should make conscience of begging earnestly for strength to avoid a repetition of them. Third, in the fifth petition we pray for the remission of the guilt of sin, here we ask for deliverance from its power. God's granting of the former request is to encourage faith to ask Him to mortify the flesh and vivify the spirit.

Ere proceeding further it may be best to clear the way by disposing of what is a real difficulty to many. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man" (James 1:13). There is no more conflict between, "Lead us not into temptation," and, "neither tempteth He any man," than there is the slightest opposition between, "God cannot be tempted with evil," and, "they turned back and tempted God" (Psa. 78:41). God tempts no man means that He infuses evil into none, nor is in anywise a partner with us in our guilt. The criminality of sin is wholly upon ourselves, as James 1:14, 15 makes clear. But men *deny* that it is from their own corrupt natures such and such evils proceed, blaming their temptations— and if they are unable to fix the evil on those temptations, then they seek to excuse themselves by throwing the blame upon God, as Adam did.

It should be pointed out that the word "tempt" has a twofold significance in Scripture, though it is not always easy to determine which of them applies to some particular passages: to try, test, put to the proof; and to solicit to evil. When it is said, "God did tempt Abraham" (Gen. 22:1), it means that He tested him, putting to the proof his faith and fidelity; but when we read that Satan tempted Christ, it signifies that he sought to encompass His downfall—morally impossible though it were. To "tempt" is to make trial of a thing or person: what he is, and what he will do. We may tempt God or put Him to the proof in a way of duty, as when we await the fulfilment of His promise: Malachi 3:10. In Psalm 78:41 Israel tempted God in a way of *sin*: acting in such a manner as to provoke His displeasure.

"And lead us not into temptation." Note what is clearly *implied* by these words. First, God's universal providence is owned. All

creatures are at the sovereign disposal of their Maker: He has the same absolute control over evil as over good. In this petition an acknowledgment is made that God has the *ordering* of all temptations. Second, His justice and our ill-desert are tacitly avowed. Our wickedness is such that God would be but righteous were He to now allow us to be completely swallowed up in sin and destroyed by Satan. Third, His mercy is recognized. Though we have so grievously provoked Him, yet He has for Christ's sake remitted our debts, and therefore a plea is made that He will henceforth preserve us. Fourth, our weakness is acknowledged. Because we realize that we are unable to stand against them in our own strength, we pray, "lead us not into temptation."

How does God lead us into temptation? First, *objectively*: when His providences, though good in themselves, offer occasions (because of our depravity) for sin. If we be self-righteous, He may lead us into circumstances something like Job experienced. If we be self-confident, He may suffer us to be tempted as Peter was. If we be self-complacent, He may bring us into a similar situation to the one Hezekiah encountered (2 Chron. 32). God leads many into poverty, which though a sore trial, is yet, under His blessing, often enriching to the soul. God leads some into prosperity, which is a great snare to many, yet if sanctified by Him enlarges capacity for usefulness. Second, God tempts *permissively*: when He does not restrain the Evil One (which He is under no obligation to do), but suffers him to sift us as wheat—just as a strong wind snaps off dead boughs from living trees. Third, God tempts *judicially*: punishing sins by allowing the Devil to lead men into further sin.

And *why* does God tempt His people, either objectively by His providences, or subjectively and permissively by Satan? For various reasons. First, to discover to us our weakness and our deep need of His grace. God withdraws His sustaining arm from Hezekiah in order, "that he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron. 32:31). When God leaves us to ourselves, it is a most painful and humiliating discovery that we make, yet is it needful if we are to pray from the heart, "Hold *Thou* me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa. 119:117). Second, to teach us the need of

watchfulness and prayer. Most of us are so stupid and unbelieving that we learn only in the hard school of experience, and even there its lessons have to be *knocked* into us. Little by little we discover how dearly we have to pay for rashness, carelessness, and presumption. Third, to cure our slothfulness. God calls, “Awake thou that sleepest” (Eph. 5:14), but we heed Him not; and therefore He often employs rough servants to rudely arouse us. Fourth, to reveal to us the importance and value of the armour He has appointed. If we *will* go forth to battle without our spiritual panoply, then we must not be surprised at the wounds we receive; but they may make us more careful for the future!

From all that has been said above it should be clear that we are not to pray simply and absolutely against all temptations. Christ Himself was tempted by the Devil, and was definitely led into the wilderness by the Spirit for that very end. All temptations are not evil, either in their nature, design, or outcome. It is from the *evil* of temptations that we pray to be spared (as the next clause in the prayer indicates), yet even that submissively and with qualification. We are to pray that we may not be led into temptation; or if God sees fit that we should be tempted, that we may not yield thereto; or if we yield, that we be not totally overcome. Nor may we pray for a total exemption from trials, but only for a removal of the *judgment* of them. God often permits Satan to assault and harass us in order to humble us, to drive us to Himself, and to glorify Himself by manifesting more fully to us His preserving power. “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:2, 3).

In conclusion, a few remarks upon *our responsibility* in connection with temptation. First, it is our bounden duty to avoid those persons and places which would solicit us to evil, as we should also be on the alert for the first signs of Satan’s approach: Psalm 19:13; Proverbs 4:14, etc. As an unknown writer has said, “He who carries about with him so much inflammable material, would do well to keep the greatest possible distance from the fire.” Second, we must steadfastly resist the Devil: 1 Peter 5:8, 9. And

that resistance is to be thorough and total: “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes that spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15)—we must not yield a single inch to our enemy. Third, we are to go to God submissively for grace: the measure He grants us is according to His good pleasure: Philippians 2:13. “We are to endeavour indeed to pray, and use all good means to come out of temptation, but submissively—if the Lord be pleased to continue His exercising of you. Nay, though God should continue the temptation, and for the present not give thee those measures of grace necessary for you, yet you must not murmur, but lie at His feet, for God is *the Lord* of His grace” (Thomas Manton). Thus, this petition is to be presented in subserviency to God’s sovereign will.

Part Nine

“But deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13). This brings us to the end of the petitionary part of this prayer. The four requests which are for the supply of our own needs are for *providing* grace—“give us,” *pardoning* grace—“forgive us,” *preventing* grace—“lead us not into temptation,” and *preserving* grace, “deliver us.” It is to be carefully noted that in each case the pronoun is in the plural number and not the singular—“us” not “me,” for we are to supplicate not for ourselves only, but for all the members of the Household of Faith. How beautifully this emphasizes the *family* character of this prayer: it is addressed to “our Father” and it embraces all His children. On the high priest’s breastplate were inscribed the names of all the tribes of Israel—emblematic of Christ’s intercession on High. So, too, the Apostle enjoins “supplication for *all* saints” (Eph. 6:18). Self-love shuts up the bowels of compassion, confining us to our own interests; but the love of God shed abroad in the heart makes us solicitous about our brethren.

“But deliver us from evil.” We cannot agree with those who restrict “evil” here as referring alone to Satan, though doubtless he is principally intended. The Greek may, with equal propriety, be rendered either “the evil one” or “evil things:” in fact it is translated both ways. “We are taught to pray for deliverance from

all kinds, degrees, and occasions of evil; from the malice, power, subtlety, of the powers of darkness; from this evil world and all its allurements, snares, tempers, deceits; from the evil of our own hearts, that it may be restrained, subdued, and, finally extirpated; and from the evil of suffering," etc. (Thomas Scott). This petition, then, expresses a desire to be delivered from all that is really prejudicial to us, and especially from sin, which has no good in it.

It is true that, in contradistinction from God, who is "the Holy One," Satan is designated "the Evil One" (Matt. 5:37), "the Wicked One" (Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:18, 19), yet it is also true that sin is evil (Rom. 12:9), the world is evil (Gal. 1:4), and our corrupt nature is evil (Matt. 12:35). Moreover, the advantages which the Devil gains over us are by means of the flesh and the world: *they* are his agents. Thus, this is a prayer for deliverance from all our spiritual enemies. It is true that we *have been* delivered from "the power of darkness" and translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and therefore Satan has no lawful authority over us, nevertheless he wields a tyrannical power: though he cannot rule us, he is permitted to molest and harass. He stirs up enemies to persecute (Rev. 12, 13, etc.), he inflames our lusts (1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Cor. 7:5), he disturbs our peace (1 Peter 5:8). Hence our deep need to pray for deliverance from him.

Satan's favourite device is to make us live in some one sin to which we are particularly inclined, and therefore we need to be in constant prayer that our natural corruptions may be mortified. When he cannot make some gross lust reign over a child of God, he labours to get him to commit some evil deed whereby the name of God will be dishonoured and His people offended, as he did in the case of David. When a believer has fallen into sin the Devil seeks to make him easy therein, so that he has no remorse for it. When God chastens us for our faults, Satan strives to make us fret against it or else drive us to despair. When he fails in these methods of attack, then he stirs up our friends and relatives to oppose, as in the case of Job. But whatever be his line of assault, prayer for deliverance must be our recourse.

Christ Himself has left us an example that we should pray this

petition, for in His intercession on our behalf, we find Him saying, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the Evil One” (John 17:15). Observe how this intimates to us *the connection* between the clause we are now considering and the one which precedes it. Christ did not pray absolutely that we should be exempted from temptation, for He knew that His people must expect assaults, both from within and from without, and therefore He asked not that we should be taken out of this world, but delivered from the Evil One. To be kept from the evil of sin is a far greater mercy than to be kept from the trouble of temptation. But how far, it may be asked, has God undertaken to deliver us from evil? First, so far as it would be hurtful to our highest interests: it was for Peter’s ultimate good that he was suffered to temporarily fall. Second, from its having full dominion over us, so that we shall not totally and finally apostatise. Third, by an ultimate deliverance when He removes us to Heaven.

“But deliver us from evil.” First, then, this is a prayer for Divine illumination, so that we may be able to detect Satan’s wiles. He who can transform himself into an angel of light is far too subtle for human wisdom to cope with: only as the Spirit graciously enlightens can we discern his snares. Second, it is a prayer for strength to resist his attacks, for he is much too powerful for us to withstand in our own might—only as we are energized by the Spirit shall we be kept from wilfully yielding to temptation or taking pleasure in the sins we commit. Third, it is a prayer for grace to mortify our lusts, for only in proportion as we deny our internal corruptions shall we refuse the external solicitations to sin: we cannot justly throw the blame on Satan while we give license to the evil of our hearts—salvation from the love of sin ever precedes deliverance from its dominion.

Fourth, this is a prayer for repentance when we do succumb. Sin has a fatal tendency to deaden our sensibilities and harden our hearts, and naught but Divine grace can free us from unabashed indifference and work in us a godly sorrow for our transgressions: the very word “deliver us” in this connection implies that we are

as deeply plunged into sin as a beast in the mire, which must be forcibly dragged out. Fifth, it is a prayer for the removal of guilt from the conscience. When true repentance has been communicated, the soul is bowed down with shame before God, and there is no relief till the Spirit sprinkles the conscience afresh with the cleansing blood of Christ. Sixth, it is a prayer that we may be so delivered that our souls are restored again to communion with God. Seventh, it is a prayer that He will overrule our falls to His glory and our lasting good. To have a sincere desire for these things is a signal favour from God.

What we *pray* for we must endeavour to *practice*. We do but mock God if we ask Him to deliver us from evil and then trifle with sin or recklessly rush into the place of temptation. Prayer and watchfulness must never be severed. We must make it our special care to mortify our lusts, to make no provision for the flesh, to avoid every appearance of evil, to resist the Devil steadfastly in the faith, to love not the world nor the things that are in it. The more our character be formed and our conduct regulated by the Holy Word of God, the more shall we be enabled to overcome evil with good. Let us labour diligently to maintain a good conscience; let us seek to live each day as though we knew it were our last one on earth; let us set our affections on things above, and then may we sincerely pray, “deliver us from evil.”

Part Ten - Conclusion

“For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (Matt. 6:13). This model for Divine worshippers concludes with a doxology or ascription of praise to the One addressed, evidencing the *completeness* of the prayer. Christ here taught His disciples not only to ask for the things needful to them, but to ascribe unto God what is proper to Him. Thanksgiving and praise are an essential part of prayer, and particularly should this be borne in mind in all public worship, for the adoration of God is His express due. Surely if we ask God to bless us, the least we can do is to bless Him: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us” (Eph. 1:3)—it is the echo and

reflex of His grace toward us. Devout praise, as the expression of elevated spiritual affections, is the proper language of the soul in communion with God.

The perfections of this prayer as a whole and the wondrous fullness of each clause and word in it are not perceived by a rapid and careless glance, but only become apparent by a reverent pondering. This doxology may be considered in at least a threefold way. First, as the expression of holy and joyful praise. Second, as a plea and argument to enforce the petitions. Third, as a confirmation and declaration of confidence that the prayer will be heard. A further word upon the first. Throughout the sacred Psalter, prayer and praise are conjoined. In the New Testament we are directed, “in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). All the prayers of eminent saints recorded in the Bible are intermingled with the adoration of Him who inhabits the praises of Israel.

In this pattern prayer, God is made both the Alpha and the Omega. It opens by addressing Him as our Father in Heaven; it ends with lauding Him as the glorious King of the universe. The more His perfections are before our hearts, the more spiritual will be our worship and the more reverent and fervent our supplication. The more the soul be engaged with God Himself, the more spontaneous and sincere will be its praise. “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). Ah, is it not our failure at this point which so often withholds blessing from us? “Let the people praise Thee, O God: let all the people praise Thee. *Then* shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us” (Psa. 67:5, 6). If we do not praise God *for* His mercies, can we expect Him to bless us *with* His mercies?!

“For Thine is the kingdom” by which is meant God’s right and authority over all things, by which He disposes of them according to His mere pleasure. God is supreme sovereign in creation, providence, and grace. He reigns over Heaven and earth, all creatures and things being under His full control. “And the power,” by which is meant His infinite sufficiency to execute His

sovereign right and perform His will in Heaven and earth. Because He is the Almighty, He has the ability to do whatsoever He pleases. He never slumbers nor wearies; nothing is too hard for Him; none can withstand Him. All forces opposed to Him and the Church's salvation, He can, and will, overthrow. "And the glory," by which is meant His ineffable excellency: since He has absolute sovereignty over all and commensurate power to dispose of all, therefore is He all-glorious. God's "glory" is the grand end of all His works and ways, and of it He is ever jealous. To Him belongs the exclusive glory of being the Answerer of prayer.

Let us next notice that the doxology is prefaced with "for," which here has the force of *because*. "For Thine is the kingdom," etc., is not only an acknowledgement of God's perfections, but a most powerful *plea* as to why our petitions should be heard. It is the "for" of argumentation. Thou art able to grant these requests, *for* Thine is the kingdom, etc. While undoubtedly the doxology belongs to the prayer as a whole and is brought in to enforce all its seven petitions, yet it seems to us to have a special and more immediate reference to the last one: "deliver us from evil, *for* Thine is the kingdom," etc. The number and power of our enemies is indeed great, rendered the more formidable because of the treachery of our wicked hearts; yet we are encouraged to implore Thy assistance against them, because all the attempts made by sin and Satan against us carry in them an invasion of Thy sovereignty and dominion over us and Thy glory by us.

"For Thine is the kingdom," etc.: what *encouragement* is here! Two things especially inspire confidence towards God in prayer: the realization that He is *willing* and that He is *able*, both of which are here intimated. God is "our Father" which tells of His love and assures of His care for us. God is also the King of kings, possessing infinite power, which tells of His sufficiency and guarantees His ability. As the "Father," He provides for His children; as the King, He will defend His subjects. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him" (Psa. 103:13); "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (Psa. 44:4). It is for God's honour and

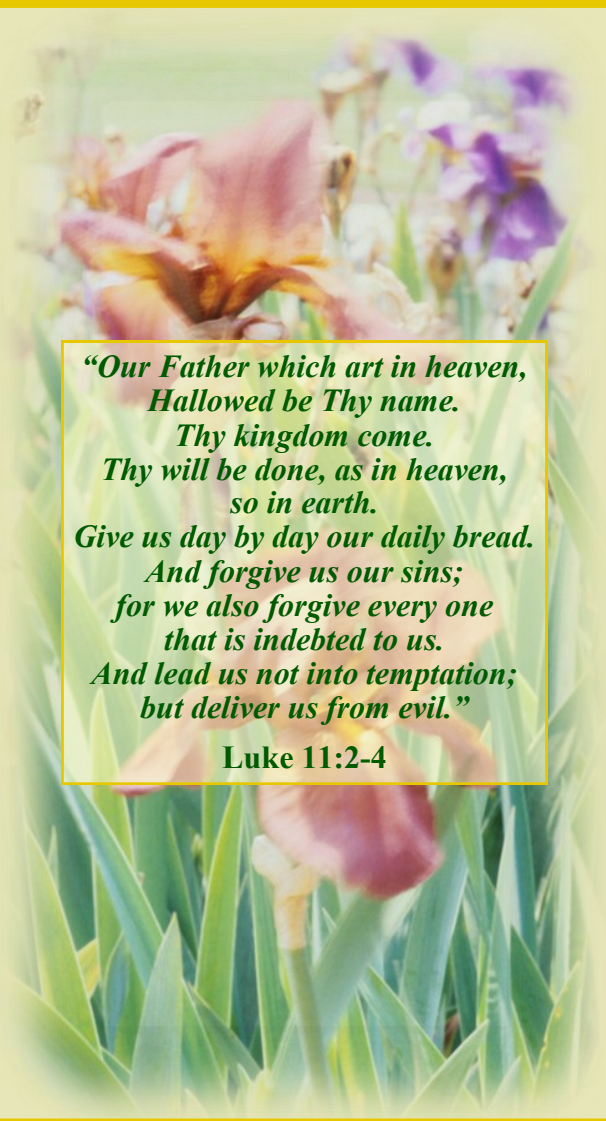
glory to manifest His power, to show Himself strong on behalf of His own. “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:20, 21).

What *instruction* is here! First, we are taught to enforce our petition with arguments drawn from the Divine perfections: God’s kingdom and power and glory are to be turned into so many pleas for obtaining the things required—this is doing as Job said, “I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments” (23:4). Second, it directs us to unite together petition and praise. Third, it intimates we must pray with the utmost reverence: since God is so great and powerful a King, He is to be feared; hence it follows, we are to prostrate ourselves before Him in complete submission to His sovereign will. Fourth, it inculcates full surrender and subjection to Him, for otherwise we do but mock God when we acknowledge His dominion over us. Fifth, it signifies that we make His glory our chief concern, by endeavouring so to walk that our lives show forth His praise.

“Forever:” this is in marked contrast from the fleeting dominion and evanescent glory of earthly monarchs. The glorious Being whom we address in prayer is, “from everlasting to everlasting God.” Christ Jesus, in whom He is revealed and through whom prayer is offered, is the same yesterday and today and forever. When we pray aright we look beyond time into eternity, and measure present things by their connection with the future. How solemn and expressive is this word, “forever!” Earthly kingdoms decay and disappear. Creature power is puny and but for a moment. The glory of human beings and of all mundane things vanishes like a dream. But the kingdom and power and glory of Jehovah are susceptible to neither change nor diminution, and know no end. Our blessed hope is that when the first Heaven and earth have passed away, the Kingdom and power and glory of God will be known and adored in their wondrous reality to all eternity.

“Amen:” which intimates the two things required in prayer, namely, a fervent *desire* and the exercise of *faith*, for “Amen”

signifies both “so be it” and “it shall be so.” This twofold meaning of supplication and expectation is plainly hinted at in its *double* mention in, “Blessed be His glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen” (Psa. 72:19): God has determined it shall be so, and the whole Church expresses its desire, “so be it.” This “Amen” belongs and applies to each part and clause of the prayer: “Hallowed be Thy name—Amen,” and so throughout; expressing both our desire and affirming our confidence. It is itself a condensed and emphatic petition: believing in the verity of God’s promises and resting on the stability of His government, we both cherish and acknowledge our confident hope in a gracious answer.



*“Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be 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.”*

Luke 11:2-4