

The Lord's Prayer

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter I The Address.....	5
Chapter II The First Petition.....	7
Chapter III The Second Petition.....	10
Chapter IV The Third Petition.....	13
Chapter V The Fourth Petition.....	16
Chapter VI The Fifth Petition.....	19
Chapter VII The Sixth.....	22
Chapter VIII The Seventh Petition.....	25
Chapter IX The Doxolo.....	27

Introduction

After all that has been spoken and written by godly men on prayer, we need something better than that which is of mere human origin to guide us if we are to perform aright this essential duty. How ignorant and sinful creatures are to endeavor to come before the Most High God, how they are to pray acceptably to Him and to obtain from Him what they need, can be discovered only as the great Hearer of prayer is pleased to reveal His will to us. This He has done:

- (1) by opening up a new and living way of access into His immediate presence for the very chief of sinners;
- (2) by appointing prayer as the chief means of intercourse and blessing between Himself and His people; and
- (3) by graciously supplying a perfect pattern after which the prayers of His people are to be modeled. Note the wise instruction of the Westminster divines: "The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called The Lord's Prayer" (The Westminster 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 because it was 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. Christ knew both our needs and the Father's good will toward us, and thus He has mercifully supplied us with a simple yet comprehensive directory. Every part or aspect of prayer is included therein. Adoration is found in its opening clauses and 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 and supplication on behalf of the glory of God and for the triumph of His Kingdom and revealed will are involved in the first three petitions, whereas the last four are concerned with supplication and intercession concerning our own personal needs and those of others, as is indicated by pronouns in the plural number.

This prayer is found twice in the New Testament, being given by Christ on two different occasions. This, no doubt, is a hint for preachers to reiterate that which is of fundamental importance. The variations are significant. The language of Mat 6:9 intimates that this prayer is given to us for a model, yet the words of Luk 11:2 indicate that it is to be used by us as a form. Like everything in Scripture, this prayer is perfect — 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 and 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. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1Jo 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 gives any intimation that it had become obsolete and no longer of service to Christians. It is contended by some that this prayer is not suitable for believers now, inasmuch as the petitions in it are not offered in the name of Christ, and contain no express reference to His atonement and intercession. But this is a serious misconception and mistake; for by parity of reasoning, none of the Old Testament prayers, indeed 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 23:20-21). Not only is the Lord's Prayer 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 nor less than a blatant attempt of Satan 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 is therefore 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 disciples to teach believers to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them (Mat 28:20) includes His commandment in Mat 6:9-13. 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 matter of dispute, 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 that it is to be considered as both. In Matthew it is manifestly brought forward as an example or pattern of the kind of prayer that is to be offered under the new economy. "After this manner therefore pray ye." We are to pray "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 Luk 11:2 we find our Lord teaching this: "When ye pray, say. . .," that is, we are to use His words as a formula. It is, then, the duty of Christ's disciples in their praying both to use the Lord's Prayer continually as a pattern and sometimes as a form.

As for those who object to the using of any form of prayer, let us remind them that God Himself often puts into the mouths of His needy people the very language that they are to employ in approaching Him. For example, the Lord says to Israel, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hos 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 repetitions" that the Savior prohibited (Mat 6:7), is no valid reason why we should be altogether deprived of offering it at the Throne of Grace in the spirit that our Lord inculcated and in the very words that 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 fulfillment 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).

Chapter I The Address

Mat 6:9 "Our Father which art in heaven"

This opening clause is a suitable preface to all that follows. It presents to us the great Object to whom we pray, teaches us the covenant office that He sustains to us, and denotes the obligation imposed upon us, namely, that of maintaining toward Him a filial spirit, with all that that entails. All real prayer ought to begin with a devout contemplation and to express an acknowledgment of the name of God and of 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 whom we address. The Psalms abound in examples of this. See Psa 8:1 as a case in point.

"Our Father which art in heaven." Let us first endeavor to ascertain the general principle that 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, it definitely assures us of His love and power. This precious title is designed to raise our affections, to excite us to reverent attention, and to confirm our confidence in the efficacy of prayer. Three things are essential to acceptable and effectual prayer: fervency, reverence, and confidence. This opening clause is designed to stir up each of these essential elements within us. Fervency is the effect of our affections being called into exercise; reverence will be promoted by an apprehension of the fact that we are addressing the heavenly throne; confidence will be deepened by viewing the Object of prayer as our Father.

In 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). What is more calculated to deepen our confidence and to draw forth the strongest love and earnest hopes of our hearts toward God, than Christ's 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 to a person, a Divine Person, One who has our best interests at heart, that we are invited to draw near, even to our Father. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1Jo 3:1).

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 the 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 the ravens (Psa 147:9), will He turn a deaf ear to the requests of a rational creature? Simon Magus, while still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," was directed by an apostle to repent of his wickedness and to pray to God (Act 8:22-23).

But the depth and full import of this invocation can be entered into only by the believing Christian, for there is a higher relation between him and God than that which is merely of nature. First, 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). Thus Christ expressly announced, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (Joh 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" (2Pe 1:4). It is written, "And 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 that God sustains to us by virtue of the everlasting covenant, but they also clearly imply our obligation. They teach us both how we ought to dispose ourselves toward God when we pray to Him, and the conduct that is becoming to us by virtue of this relationship. As His children we must "honor" Him (even more than our human parents; see Exo 20:12; Eph 6:1-3), be in subjection to Him, delight in Him, and strive in all things to please Him. Again, the phrase "Our Father" not only teaches us our personal interest in God Himself, who by grace is our Father, but it also instructs us of our interest in our fellow Christians, who in Christ are our brethren. It is not merely to "my Father" to whom I pray, but to "our Father." We must express our love to our brethren 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 phrase. 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 the words "Our Father" inspire confidence and love, then the words "which art in heaven" should fill us with humility and awe. These are the two things that should ever occupy our minds and engage our hearts: the first without the second tends toward unholy familiarity; the second without the first produces coldness and dread. By combining them together, we are preserved from both evils; and a suitable equipoise is wrought and maintained 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 Paul, when he employed the following words to describe God the Father: "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (Eph 1:17).

The words "which art in heaven" are not used because He is confined there. We are reminded of the words of King Solomon: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1Ki 8:27). God is infinite and omnipresent. There is a particular sense, though, in which the Father is "in heaven," for that is the place in which His majesty and glory are most eminently manifested. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool" (Isa 66:1). The realization of this should fill us with the deepest reverence and awe. The words "which art in heaven" call attention to His providence, declaring the fact that He is directing all things from on high. These words proclaim His ability to undertake for us, for our Father is the Almighty. "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psa 115:3). Yet though the Almighty, He is "our Father." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Psa 103:13). "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?" (Luk 11:13). Finally, these blessed words remind us that we are journeying thither, for heaven is our home.

Chapter II The First Petition

Mat 6:9 "Hallowed be Thy name"

"Hallowed be Thy name" is the first of the petitions of Christ's pattern prayer. They are seven in number, and are significantly divided into two groups of three and four respectively: the first three relate to the cause of God; the last four relate to our own daily concerns. A similar division is discernible in the Ten Commandments: the first five teach us our duty toward God (in the fifth, the parents stand to the child in the place of God); the last five teach us our duty toward neighbors. Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves and to give God the preeminence 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 honoring of it. Therefore, we must not ask God to bestow anything that would contradict His holiness.

"Hallowed be Thy name." How easy it is to utter these words without any thought of their solemn import! In seeking to ponder them, four questions are naturally raised in our minds. First, what is meant by the word hallowed? Second, what is signified by God's name? Third, what is the import of "hallowed be Thy name?" Fourth, why does this petition come first?

First, the word hallowed is a term from Middle English used here to translate a form of the Greek verb *hagiazō*. This term is frequently translated "sanctified." It means to set apart for a sacred use." Thus, the words "hallowed be Thy name" signify the pious desire that God's matchless name might be revered, adored, and glorified, and that God might cause it to be held in the utmost respect and honor, that its fame might spread abroad and be magnified.

Second, the name of God stands for God Himself, calling to the mind of the believer all that He is. We see this in Psa 5:11 : "Let them also that love Thy name [that is, Thyself] be joyful in Thee." In Psa 20:1 we read, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," that is, may the God of Jacob Himself defend thee. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Pro 18:10), that is to say, Jehovah Himself is a strong tower. The name of God stands for the Divine perfections. It is striking to observe that when He "proclaimed the name of the Lord" to Moses, God enumerated His own blessed attributes (see Exo 34:5-7). This is the true significance of the assertion that "they that know Thy name [that is, Thy wondrous perfections] will put their trust in Thee" (Psa 9:10). But more particularly, the Divine name sets before us all that God has revealed to us concerning Himself. It is in such appellations and titles as the Almighty, the Lord of hosts, Jehovah, the God of peace, and our Father that He has disclosed Himself to us.

Third, what thoughts did the Lord Jesus intend for us to entertain in our hearts when He taught us to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name"? First, in the widest sense, we are to plead thereby that God, "by His overruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to His own glory" (The Westminster Larger Catechism). Hereby we pray that God Himself sanctify His name — that He cause it, by His providence and grace, to be known and adored through the preaching of His Law and Gospel. Furthermore, we pray that His name might be sanctified and magnified in and by us. Not that we can add anything to God's essential holiness, but we can and should promote the manifestative glory of His holiness. That is why we are exhorted thus: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name" (Psa 96:8). We do not have the power within ourselves to hallow the name of our God. Yet Christ instructs us, by putting an imperative, passive verb in our

mouths, to command our Father, saying, "Let Thy name be hallowed!" In this mandatory petition, we are taught to call upon our Father to do what He must do, according to the tenor of the words that He spoke through Isaiah: "And concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isa 45:11)! It is because God's name must be hallowed among His creatures that our Master instructs us so to pray. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1Jo 5:14). Since our God has so clearly stated His mind, every true believer must desire the hallowing of God's name among men and must be determined to advance the revealed glory of God on the earth. We are to do this especially by prayer, since the power to accomplish this great end resides only in God Himself. By prayer we receive the empowering of the Holy Spirit to hallow and glorify God in our own thoughts, words, and deeds.

By praying, "hallowed be Thy name," we beg that God, who is most holy and glorious, might enable us to acknowledge and honor 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 warn 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 intention of striving with our might to live in harmony with them.

For us to hallow or sanctify His name means that we give God the supreme place, that we set Him above all else in our thoughts, affections, and lives. This high purpose of life is antithetical to the example of the builders of the tower of Babel, who said, "Let us make us a name (Gen 11:4), and of Nebuchadnezzar, who said, "Is not this great 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). The Apostle Peter commands us to "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts" (1Pe 3:15). An awe of His majesty and holiness should so fill our hearts that our whole inner beings bow in entire and willing subjection to Him. For this we must pray, striving to obtain right views and a deeper knowledge of Him, that we may worship Him aright and serve Him acceptably.

This petition not only expresses the desire that God sanctify Himself in and through us, enabling 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 name 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 Spirit, to raise up faithful pastors, to move His churches to maintain a Scriptural discipline, and to stir up the saints to an exercise of their graces.

Fourth, it is now obvious why this is the first petition in the Lord's Prayer, for it provides the only legitimate basis for all our other requests. The glory of God is to be our chief and great concern. When we offer this petition to our heavenly Father, we are saying, "Whatever comes to me, however low I may sink, no matter how deep the waters be through which I may be called to pass, Lord, magnify Thyself in and through me." Mark how blessedly this spirit was exemplified by our perfect Savior: "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" (Joh 12:27-28). Though

it was necessary for Him to be baptized with the baptism of suffering, yet the Father's glory was Christ's great concern.

The following words beautifully summarize 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; and enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify Thee in our affections, by making Thee our fear, love, joy, and confidence; and 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, and grant that when we use any one 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) Our past failures are 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, such as pride of heart, coldness of zeal, stubbornness of will, and impiety of life.
- (2) We are to earnestly seek those graces whereby we may hallow His name: a fuller knowledge of Himself, an increase of holy fear in our hearts; increased faith, hope, love, and worship; and the right use of His gifts.
- (3) Our duties are to be faithfully practiced, that there may be nothing in our conduct that would cause His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (Rom 2:24). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31).

Chapter III The Second Petition

Mat 6:10 "Thy Kingdom come"

The second petition is the most brief and yet the most comprehensive one contained in our Lord's Prayer. Nevertheless, it is strange and sad that, in some circles, it is the least understood and the most controverted. The following questions call for careful consideration. First, what is the relationship between this petition and the one preceding it? Second, whose Kingdom is here in view? Third, exactly what is meant by the words, "Thy Kingdom"? Fourth, in what sense or senses are we to understand the words, "Thy Kingdom come"?

The first petition, "Hallowed be Thy name," concerns God's glory itself, whereas the second and third have respect to the means whereby His glory is to be manifested and promoted on earth. God's name is manifestatively glorified here only in the proportion in which His Kingdom comes to us and His will is done by us. The relationship 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; then He directs us to pray subsequently for the means thereto. Among the means for promoting God's glory, none is so influential as the coming of His Kingdom. Hence we are exhorted, "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Mat 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 honored by us until we voluntarily submit to His rule over us.

"Thy Kingdom come." Whose Kingdom is being referred to here? Obviously, it is that of God the Father, yet it is not to be thought of as something separate from the Kingdom of the Son. The Father's Kingdom is no more distinct from Christ's than "the Church of the living God" (1Ti 3:15) is something other than the Body of Christ, or than 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. But Christ does mean, by the words "Thy Kingdom," to distinguish sharply the Kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan (Mat 12:25-28), which is a kingdom of darkness and disorder. Satan's kingdom is not only opposite in character, but it also stands in belligerent opposition to the Kingdom of God.

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" (1Ch 29:11). Second, and more specifically, it is the external sphere of His grace on earth, where He is ostensibly acknowledged (see Mat 13:11 and Mar 4:11 in their contexts). 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" (Joh 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 of its aspects. Concerning the aspect of providence, we read, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (Joh 5:17), signifying cooperation in the government of the world (Heb 1:3). Christ now holds the mediatorial office of a King by virtue of His Father's appointment (Luk 22:29) and establishment (Psa 2:6). When the Kingdom is viewed very specifically as a reign of grace set up in the hearts of God's people, it is rightly called both "the Kingdom of God" (1Co 4:20) and "the Kingdom of His dear Son" (Col 1:13). Viewing the Kingdom in regard to its ultimate eternal glory, Christ says that He shall drink the fruit of the vine with us "in [His] Father's Kingdom" (Mat 26:29), yet it is also called "the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ" (2Pe 1:11). Thus it should seem perfectly natural to us when we read these words: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Rev 11:15).

One may ask, "Which aspect of the Kingdom is here prayed for as yet future? Certainly not its providential aspect, since that has existed and continued from the beginning. The Kingdom must, then, be future in the sense that God's reign of grace is to be consummated in the eternal glory of His Kingdom in the new heavens and new earth (2Pe 3:13). There is to be a voluntary surrender of the whole man — spirit and body — to the revealed will of God, so that His rule over us is entire. But if we are to experience and enjoy the eternal glory of God's Kingdom, we must personally submit to His gracious reign in this life. The nature of this reign is summed up in three characteristics: "the Kingdom of God is... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom 14:17). A person experiencing this present reign of grace is characterized by righteousness in that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him as one who, by faith, has become His willing subject; furthermore, he also possesses the righteousness of a good conscience because the Holy Spirit has sanctified him, that is, has set him apart to a new life of holiness to the glory of God. Such a person is also characterized by peace: peace of conscience toward God, peaceful relations with God's people, and the pursuit of peace with all his fellow creatures (Heb 12:14). This personal, godly peace is maintained by attention to all the duties of love (Luk 10:27; Rom 13:8). As the result of righteousness and peace, such a person is also characterized by joy in the Holy Spirit, a delighting in God in all the states and vicissitudes of life (Phi 4:10-14; 1Ti 6:6-10).

There is a threefold application when we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." First, it applies to the external sphere of God's grace here on earth: "Let Thy Gospel be preached and the power of Thy Spirit attend it; let Thy Church be strengthened; let Thy cause on earth be advanced and the works of Satan be destroyed!" Second, it applies to God's internal Kingdom, that is, His spiritual reign of grace within the hearts of men: "Let Thy throne be established in our hearts; let Thy laws be administered in our lives and Thy name be magnified by our walk." Third, it applies to God's Kingdom in its future glory: "Let the Day be hastened when Satan and his hosts shall be completely vanquished, when Thy people shall be done with sinning forever, and when Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:11).

God's Kingdom comes progressively to individuals in the following degrees or stages:

- (1) God gives to men the outward means of salvation (Rom 10:13-17);
- (2) the preached Word enters the mind, so that the mysteries of the Gospel are understood (Mat 13:23; Heb 6:4-6; Heb 10:32);
- (3) the Holy Spirit regenerates men, so that they enter the Kingdom of God as willing subjects of His gracious reign (Joh 1:12-13; Joh 3:3-5);
- (4) at death, the spirits of the redeemed are freed from sin (Rom 7:24-25; Heb 12:23); and
- (5) at the resurrection, the redeemed shall be fully glorified (Rom 8:23).

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 of 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 that, though this is the most brief of the petitions, it is also the most comprehensive. In praying, "Thy Kingdom come," we plead for the power and blessing 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 Christ's members, and for the overthrow of Christ's enemies. Thus we pray that the Kingdom of grace may be further extended till the whole of God's elect are brought into it. Also, 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, we ought to bewail and confess our own failures to promote the Kingdom of God, and those of others. It is our duty to confess before God our wretched, natural depravity and the awful proclivity of our flesh to serve sin and the interests of Satan (Rom 7:14-24). We ought to mourn the sad state of the world and its woeful transgressions of God's Law, by which God is dishonored and the kingdom of Satan furthered (Psa 119:136; Mar 3:5). Second, we are to earnestly seek those graces that will make our lives a sanctifying influence in the world, in order that God's Kingdom might be both built and maintained. We are to endeavor to so subject ourselves to the commandments of Christ that we are wholly ruled by Him, always ready to do His bidding (Rom 6:13). Third, having prayed for God's enabling, we are to perform all the duties appointed to us by God, bringing forth the fruits that pertain to God's Kingdom (Mat 21:43; Rom 14:17). This we are to do with all diligence (Ecc 9:10; Col 3:17), using all the Divinely appointed means for the furthering of God's Kingdom.

This second petition is well summarized in The Westminster Shorter Catechism:

In the second petition. . . we pray, that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the Kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the Kingdom of glory may be hastened.

Chapter IV The Third Petition

Mat 6:10 "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"

The connection between this third petition and the preceding ones is not difficult to trace. The first concern of our hearts, as well as our prayers, must be for God's glory. Longings after God's Kingdom naturally follow, as do honest endeavors to serve Him while we remain on this earth. The glory of God is the great object of our desires. The coming and enlargement of His Kingdom are the chief means by which God's glory is manifestatively secured. Our personal obedience makes it manifest that His Kingdom has come to us. When God's Kingdom really comes to one's soul, he must, of necessity, be brought into obedience to its laws and ordinances. 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:

- (1) a request for the spirit of obedience; and
- (2) a statement of the manner in which obedience is to be rendered.

"Thy will be done." This clause may present a difficulty to a few of our readers, who may ask, "Is not God's will always done?" In one respect it is, but in another respect it is not. Scripture presents the will of God from two distinct viewpoints: His secret will and His revealed will, or His decreative and His preceptive will. His secret or decreative will is the rule of His own actions: in creation (Rev 4:11), in providence (Dan 4:35), and in grace (Rom 9:15). That which God has decreed is always unknown to men until revealed by prophecies of things to come or by events as they transpire. On the other hand, God's revealed or preceptive will is the rule for our actions, God having made known in the Scriptures that which is pleasing in His sight.

The secret or decreative will of God is always done, equally on earth as in heaven, for none can thwart or even hinder it. It is equally evident that God's revealed will is violated every time one of His precepts is disobeyed. This distinction was clearly drawn when Moses said to Israel, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law" (Deu 29:29). This distinction is also found in the use of the word counsel. "My counsel [God's eternal decree] shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isa 46:10), says Jehovah. But in Luk 7:30 we read that "the Pharisees and lawyers rejected [that is, frustrated] the counsel [or revealed will] of God" as to themselves, being not baptized by John. On the one hand we read, "For who hath resisted His will?" (Rom 9:19). On the other hand we are told, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1Th 4:3). The revealed or preceptive will of God is stated in God's Word, defining our duty and making known the path in which we should walk. God has provided His Word as the appointed means for the renewing of our minds. A laying up of God's precepts in the heart (Psa 119:11) is essential to the transforming of one's character and conduct; this vital discipline is an absolute prerequisite to our proving, in our own Christian experience, "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2).

The will of God, then, is a phrase that, 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 always is, always has been, and ever shall be done upon earth as it is in heaven, for neither human policy nor infernal power can prevent it. The text 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, out of a due regard for His authority, we regulate our own thoughts and

conduct by His commandments. Such is our bounden duty, and it should ever be our fervent desire and diligent endeavor so to do. We mock God if we present this request and then fail to make the conforming of ourselves to His revealed will our main business. Ponder our Lord's solemn warning in Mat 15:1-9 (cf. Matthew 25:31-46 and Luk 6:46-49).

"Thy will be done in earth." The one who sincerely prays this necessarily intimates his unreserved surrender to God; he implies his renunciation of the will of Satan (2Ti 2:26) and of his own corrupt inclinations (1Pe 4:2), and his rejection 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. He therefore humbly and contritely acknowledges that he cannot do His Father's will without Divine assistance, and that he 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, and let it be performed by me.

From a positive perspective, when we pray, "Thy will be done," we beg God 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, Psa 119:33). Also, we beg God for spiritual inclination toward 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). Furthermore, 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; cf. Phi 2:12-13; Heb 13:20-21). Our Lord teaches us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth," because this is the place of our discipleship. This is the realm in which we are to practice self-denial. If we do not do His will here, we never shall in heaven.

"As it is in heaven." The standard by which we are to measure our attempts at doing God's will on earth is nothing less than the conduct of the saints and angels in heaven. How is God's will done in heaven? Certainly it is not done reluctantly or sullenly, nor is it done hypocritically or Pharisaically. We may be sure that it is executed neither tardily nor fitfully, neither partially nor fragmentarily. In the heavenly courts, God's will is performed gladly and joyfully. Both the four living creatures (not beasts) and the twenty-four elders in Rev 5:8-14 are depicted as rendering worship and service together. Yet heavenly adoration and obedience are rendered humbly and reverently, for the seraphim veil their faces before the Lord (Isa 6:2). There God's commands are executed with alacrity, for Isaiah says that one of the seraphim flew to him from the Divine presence (Isa 6:6). There God is lauded constantly and untiringly. "Therefore are [the saints] before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev 7:15). The angels obey God promptly, wholly, perfectly, and with ineffable delight. But we are sinful and full of infirmities. With what propriety, then, can the obedience of celestial beings be proposed as a present example for us? We raise this question not as a concession to our imperfections, but because honest souls are exercised by it.

First, this standard is set before us to sweeten our subjection to the Divine will, for we on earth are set no more demanding task than are those in heaven. Heaven is what it is because the will of God is done by all who dwell there. The measure in which a foretaste of its bliss may be obtained by us upon earth will be determined largely by the degree to which we perform here the Divine bidding. Second, this standard is given 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? If we are to have communion with the angels in glory, then we must be conformed to them in grace. Third, it is given as the standard at which we must ever aim. Paul says, "For this cause we... do not cease to pray for you. . . . 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 1:9-10; Col

4:12). Fourth, this standard is given 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, we are taught to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven"; then should we not do His will? We must, if we are His children, for disobedience is that which characterizes His enemies. Did not His own dear Son render Him perfect obedience? And it should delight us to strive to render Him the quality of devotion to which He is accustomed in the place of His peculiar abode, the seat of our future bliss. Second, since we are taught to pray, "Hallowed be thy name," does not a real concern for God's glory oblige us to make a conformity to His will our supreme quest? We certainly must if we desire to honor God, for nothing dishonors Him more than self-will and defiance. Third, since we are instructed to pray, "Thy Kingdom come," should we not seek to be in full subjection to its laws and ordinances? We must, if we are subjects thereof, for it is only alienated rebels who despise His scepter.

Chapter V The Fourth Petition

Mat 6:11 "Give us this day our daily bread"

We turn our attention to those petitions that more immediately concern ourselves. The fact that our Lord placed three petitions that relate directly to God's legitimate interests first should sufficiently indicate to us that we must labor in prayer to promote the manifestative glory of God, to advance His Kingdom, and to do His will before we are permitted to supplicate for our own needs. These petitions that more immediately concern ourselves are four in number, and in them we may clearly discern an implied reference to each of the Persons of 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 that is observed in these last four petitions: one of them concerns our bodily needs; three relate to the concerns of the soul. This teaches us that in prayer, as in all other activities of life, temporal concerns are to be subordinated to spiritual concerns.

"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 that concern the needs of the soul? 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 labors? Fifth, what is our Lord inculcating by restricting the request 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 to material bread rather than to spiritual.

Matthew Henry has astutely pointed out that the reason this request for the supply of our physical needs heads the last four petitions is that "our natural [well being] is necessary [for] our spiritual well-being in this world." In other words, God grants to us the physical things of this life as helps to the discharge of our spiritual duties. And since they are given by Him, they are to be employed in His service. What gracious consideration God shows toward 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. We may also rightly infer that this petition comes first in order to promote the steady growth and strengthening of our faith. Perceiving the goodness and faithfulness of God in supplying our daily physical needs, we are encouraged and stimulated to ask for higher blessings (cf. Act 17:25-28).

"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; Gen 28:20), such as food, raiment, and housing. Inherent in the use of the specific term bread rather than the more general term food is an emphasis 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 does us no good. It also takes into account our nourishment: for this comes 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. "For 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" (1Ti 4:4-5).

In begging God to give us our daily bread, we ask that He might graciously provide us with a portion of outward things such 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, and take the name of my God in vain" (Pro 30:8-9). If God grants us the superfluities of life, we are to be thankful, and must endeavor to use them to His glory; but we must not ask for them. "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1Ti 6:8). We are to ask for "our daily bread." It is to be obtained not by theft, nor by taking by force or fraud what belongs to another, but by our personal labor and industry. "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread" (Pro 20:13). "She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness" (Pro 31:27).

How can I sincerely ask God for this day's bread when I already have a good supply on hand? First, I may ask this because my present temporal portion may speedily be taken from me, and that without any warning. A striking and solemn illustration of this is found in Gen 19:15-25. Fire may burn down one's 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, we should plead this petition every day, because what we have will profit us nothing unless God deigns also to bless the same to us. Third, love requires that I pray this way, because this petition comprehends far more than my own personal needs. By teaching us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," the Lord Jesus is inculcating love and compassion toward others. God requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to be as solicitous about the needs of our fellow Christians as we are of our own needs (Gal 6:10).

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, God must give it to us because our right to it was forfeited when we fell in Adam. Second, God must bestow it because everything belongs to Him. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness 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" (Hos 2:9). Therefore we hold in fee from our Lord (that is, on condition of homage and service) the portion He bestows. We are but stewards. God grants us both possession and use of His creation, but retains to Himself the title. Third, we ought to pray this way because all that 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; cf. Act 14:17). Although by labor and purchase things may be said to be ours (relatively speaking), yet it is God who gives us strength to labor.

What is Christ inculcating by restricting the request to "our daily bread"? First, we are reminded of our frailty. We are unable to continue in health for twenty-four hours, and are unfit for the duties of a single day, unless constantly fed from on high. Second, we are reminded of 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 tomorrow (Pro 27:1). Third, we are taught to suppress all anxious concern for the future and 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" (Mat 6:34). Fourth, Christ 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 our Lord's words, "Give us this day our daily bread," are appropriate for use each morning, whereas the expression He teaches in Luk 11:3, "Give us day by day our daily bread," ought to be our request every night.

In summary, then, this petition teaches us the following indispensable lessons:

- (1) that it is permissible and lawful to supplicate God for temporal mercies;
- (2) that we are completely dependent upon God's bounty for everything;
- (3) that our confidence is to be in Him alone, and not in secondary causes;
- (4) that we should be grateful, and return thanks for material blessings as well as for spiritual ones;
- (5) that we should practice frugality and discourage covetousness;
- (6) that we should have family worship every morning and evening; and
- (7) that we should be equally solicitous on behalf of others as for ourselves.

Chapter VI The Fifth Petition

Mat 6:12 "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"

At the outset of our consideration of this fifth petition, it is vital that we give due attention to the fact that it begins differently than the first four. For the first time in our Lord's Prayer we encounter the word and. The fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is followed by the words, "And forgive us our debts," indicating that there is a very close connection between the two petitions. It is true that the first three petitions are intimately related, yet they are quite distinct. But the fourth and fifth petitions are to be especially linked in our minds for several practical reasons. First, we are taught that without pardon all the good things of this life will benefit us nothing. A man in a cell on death row is fed and clothed, but what is the daintiest diet and the costliest apparel worth to him as long as he remains under sentence of imminent death? "Our daily bread doth but fatten us as lambs for the slaughter if our sins be not pardoned" (Matthew Henry). Second, our Lord would 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 offenses that forfeit even the common blessings of life, so that he should ever say with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies. . . which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant (Gen 32:10). Third, Christ would remind us that our sins are the great obstacle to the favors we might receive from God (Isa 59:2; Jer 5:25). Our sins constrict the channel of blessing, and therefore as often as we pray, "Give us," we must add, "And forgive us." Fourth, Christ would encourage us to go on in faith 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 from the power and dominion of sin and from sin's dreadful wages?

"Forgive us our debts." Our sins are here viewed, as in Luk 11:4, under the notion of debts, that is, undischarged obligations or failures to render to God His lawful due. We owe to God sincere and perfect worship together with earnest and perpetual obedience. The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (Rom 8:12), thus stating the negative side. But 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" (Luk 17:10). Failure to discharge our debt of worship and obedience has entailed guilt, bringing us into debt to Divine justice. Now when we pray, "Forgive us our debts," we do not ask to be discharged from the duties we owe to God, but to be acquitted from our guilt, that is, to have the punishment due us remitted.

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors" (Luk 7:41). Here, in our text, God is set forth under the figure of a creditor, partly in view of His being our Creator, and partly as being our Lawgiver and Judge. God not only has endowed us with talents, obligating us to serve and glorify our Benefactor, but also has placed us under His 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 our respective stewardships (Rom 14:12). There is to be a great Day of Reckoning (Luk 19:15), and those who have failed to repent of and bewail their debts and to take refuge in Christ will be eternally punished for their defaults. Alas, that so very few conduct themselves 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 applies equally to the remedy for our 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 we are powerless to pay Him that compensation, 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 Himself 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 prophetically through His father David: "Then I restored that which I took not away" (Psa 69:4). God declares concerning His elect, "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 continue to beg God for forgiveness? This difficulty is self-created, through a 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 their guilt was canceled. True, all our old sins are purged at our conversion (2Pe 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. Therefore, it is both necessary and proper that we should seek pardon for them. (1Jo 1:6-10). Even after Nathan administered assurance to David, saying, "The Lord also hath put away thy sins" (2Sa 12:13), David begged God's forgiveness (Psa 51:1).

What do we ask for in this petition? First, we ask that God will not lay to our charge the sins we daily commit (Psa 143:2). Second, we plead that God will accept the satisfaction of Christ for our sins and look upon us as righteous in Him. Some may object, "But if we be real Christians, He has already done so." True, yet He requires us to sue for 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, we beseech God for the continuance of pardon. Though we be justified, yet we must continue to ask; as with our daily bread, though we have a goodly store on hand, yet we beg for the continuance of it. Fourth, we plead for the sense of forgiveness or assurance of it, that sins may be blotted out of our conscience and from God's book of remembrance. The effects of forgiveness are inner peace and access to God (Rom 5:1-2).

Forgiveness is not to be demanded as something due us, 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 suppliant of a favour" (John Brown). Nor is this anywise inconsistent with, or a reflection upon, our complete justification (Act 13:39). It is certain that the believer "shall not come into condemnation" (Joh 5:24); yet instead of this truth leading him to the conclusion that he need not pray for the remission of his sins, it supplies him with the strongest possible encouragement to present such a petition. Likewise, 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, and the realization that He can righteously pardon us. Its presentation should ever be preceded by self-examination and humiliation.

Our Lord teaches us to confirm this petition with an argument: as we forgive our debtors." First, Christ teaches us to argue from a like disposition in ourselves: whatever good there be in us must first be in God, for He is the sum of all excellency; if, then, a kindly disposition has been planted in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, the same must be found in Him. Second, we are to reason with God from the lesser to the greater: if we, who have but a drop of mercy, can forgive

the offenses done to us, surely God, who is a veritable Ocean of mercy, will forgive us. Third, we are to argue from the condition of those who may expect pardon: we are sinners who, out of a sense of God's mercy to us, are disposed to show mercy to others; hence, we are morally qualified for more mercy, seeing that we have not abused the mercy we have already received. They who would rightly pray to God for pardon must pardon those who wrong them. Joseph (Gen 50:14-21) and Stephen (Act 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, having them prosecuted. 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 (Rom 13:1-8). If a fellow citizen is guilty of a crime and I do not report it, then I become an accessory to that crime. I thus betray a lack of love for him and for society (Lev 19:17-18).

Chapter VII The Sixth

Mat 6:13 "And lead us not into temptation"

This sixth petition also begins with the word and, requiring us to mark closely its relationship with the preceding petition. 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 that 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 in the future. We should therefore make it our practice to beg 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 in us to ask Him to mortify the flesh and to vivify the spirit.

Before proceeding further, it may be best to clear the way by disposing of something that 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" (Jam 1:13). There is no more conflict between the words "And lead us not into temptation" and the expression "neither tempteth He any man" than there is the slightest opposition between the teaching that "God cannot be tempted with evil" and the recorded fact that Israel "turned back and tempted God" (Psa 78:41). That God tempts no man means that He neither infuses evil into anyone nor is in any wise a partner with us in our guilt. The criminality of our sins is to be wholly attributed to ourselves, as Jam 1:14-15, makes clear. But men deny that it is from their own corrupt natures that 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: "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen 3:12).

It is important to understand that the word tempt has a twofold significance in Scripture, though it is not always easy to determine which of the two applies in a particular passage:

(1) to try (the strength of), to put to the test; and

(2) to entice to do evil.

When it is said that "God did tempt Abraham" (Gen 22:1), it means that He tried him, putting to the test his faith and fidelity. But when we read that Satan tempted Christ, it signifies that Satan sought to bring about His downfall, morally impossible though it was. To tempt is to make trial of a person, in order to find out what he is and what he will do. We may tempt God in a legitimate and good way by putting Him to the test in a way of duty, as when we await the fulfillment of His promise in Mal 3:10. But, as is recorded for our admonition in Psa 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 the truths that are 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 the ordering of all temptations is in the hands of our all-wise, omnipotent God. Second, God's offended justice and the evil we deserve are avowed. Our wickedness is such that God would be perfectly just if He should now allow us to be completely swallowed up by sin

and destroyed by Satan. Third, His mercy is recognized. Though we have so grievously provoked Him, yet for Christ's sake He has remitted our debts. Therefore, we plead that He will henceforth preserve us. Fourth, our weakness is acknowledged. Because we realize that we are unable to stand against temptations in our own strength, we pray, "And lead us not into temptation."

How does God lead us into temptation? First, He does so objectively when His providences, though good in themselves, offer occasions (because of our depravity) for sin. When we manifest self-righteousness, He may lead us into circumstances something like Job experienced. When we are self-confident, He may be pleased to suffer us to be tempted as Peter was. When we are self-complacent, He may bring us into a situation similar to the one Hezekiah encountered (2Ch 32:27-31; cf. 2Ki 20:12-19). 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, prosperity enlarges one's capacity for usefulness. Second, God tempts permissively when He does not restrain Satan (which He is under no obligation to do). Sometimes God suffers him to sift us as wheat, just as a strong wind snaps off dead boughs from living trees. Third, God tempts some men judicially, punishing their sins by allowing the Devil to lead them into further sin, to the ultimate destruction of their souls.

But why does God tempt His people, either objectively by His providences, or subjectively and permissively by Satan? He does so for various reasons. First, He tries us in order to reveal to us our weakness and our deep need of His grace. God withdrew His sustaining arm from Hezekiah in order "that he might know all that was in his heart" (2Ch 32:31). When God leaves us to ourselves, it is a most painful and humiliating discovery that we make. Yet it is needful if we are to pray from the heart, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe" (Psa 119:117). Second, He tests us in order 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 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, our Father subjects us to trials in order to cure our slothfulness. God calls out, "Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph 5:14), but we heed Him not; and therefore He often employs rough servants to rudely arouse us. Fourth, God puts us to the test in order to reveal to us the importance and value of the armor He has appointed (Eph 6:11-18). If we heedlessly go forth to battle without our spiritual panoply, then we must not be surprised at the wounds we receive; but they shall have the salutary effect of making 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 (Mat 4:1; Mar 1:12). Not all temptations are evil, regardless of the aspect in which we view them: their nature, their design, or their outcome. It is from the evil of temptations that we pray to be spared (as the next petition in the prayer indicates), yet even in that we pray 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 by the sin. 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" (Jam 1:2-3).

In conclusion, a few remarks upon our responsibility in connection with temptation are appropriate. First, it is our bounden duty to avoid those persons and places that would allure us into sin, just as it is always our duty to be on the alert for the first signs of Satan's approach (Psa 19:13; Pro 4:14; 1Th 5:22). 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. "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines" (Son 2:15). We must not yield a single inch to our enemy. Third, we are to go to God for grace submissively, for the measure He grants us is according to His own good pleasure (Phi 2:13).

You are to endeavour, indeed, to pray, and use all good means to come out of temptation; but submit, if the Lord be pleased to continue His exercise upon you. Nay, though God should continue the temptation, and for the present not give out those measures of grace necessary for you, yet you must not murmur, but lie at His feet; for God is Lord of His own grace (Thomas Manton).

Thus we learn that this petition is to be presented in subservience to God's sovereign will.

Chapter VIII The Seventh Petition

Mat 6:13 "But deliver us from evil"

This seventh petition brings us to the end of the petitionary part of our Lord's Prayer. The four requests that 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 and our, not me and my. For we are to supplicate not for ourselves only, but for all the members of the household of faith (Gal 6:10). How beautifully this demonstrates the family character of truly Christian prayer. For our Lord teaches us to address "our Father" and to embrace all His children in our requests. On the high priest's breastplate were inscribed the names of all the tribes of Israel — a symbol of Christ's intercession on high. So, too, the Apostle Paul 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 our hearts makes us solicitous on behalf of our brethren.

"But deliver us from evil." We cannot agree with those who restrict the application of the word evil here to the Devil alone, though doubtless he is principally intended. The Greek may, with equal propriety, be rendered either the evil one or the evil thing; 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, and subtlety of the powers of darkness; from this evil world and all its allurements, snares, tempers, and deceits; from the evil of our own hearts, that it may be restrained, subdued, and finally extirpated; and from the evil of suffering. . . (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 to God, who is the Holy One, Satan is designated "the wicked [or evil] one" (Eph 6:16; 1Jo 2:13-14; 1Jo 3:12; 1Jo 5:18-19). Yet it is also true that sin is evil (Rom 12:9), the world is evil (Gal 1:4), and our own corrupt nature is evil (Mat 12:35). Moreover, the advantages that the Devil gains over us are by means of the flesh and the world, for 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 that, as a consequence, Satan no longer has any lawful authority over us. Nevertheless, our adversary wields an awesome and oppressive power: though he cannot rule us, he is permitted to molest and harass us. He stirs up enemies to persecute us (Rev. 12, Rev. 13), he inflames our lusts (1Ch 21:1; 1Co 7:5), and he disturbs our peace (1Pe 5:8). It is therefore our constant need and duty to pray for deliverance from him.

Satan's favorite device is to incite or to deceive us into a prolonged self-indulgence in some one sin to which we are particularly inclined. Therefore, we need to be in constant prayer that our natural corruptions may be mortified. When he cannot cause some gross lust to tyrannize a child of God, he labors to get him to commit some evil deed whereby the name of God will be dishonored and His people offended, as he did in the case of David (2 Samuel 11). 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 our Father's chastening or else to drive us to despair. When he fails in these methods of attack, then he stirs

up our friends and relatives to oppose us, as in the case of Job. But whatever be his line of assault, prayer for deliverance must be our daily recourse.

Christ Himself has left us an example that should encourage us to offer 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" (Joh 17:15). Observe how this explains to us the connection between the clause we are now considering and the one that 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. Therefore, He asked not that we should be taken out of this world, but that we be delivered from the evil. 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, He keeps us from evil so far as it would be hurtful to our highest interests. It was for Peter's ultimate good, and the good of God's people, that he was suffered to fall temporarily (Luk 22:31-34). Second, God prevents evil from gaining full dominion over us, so that we shall not totally and finally apostatize. Third, He rescues us from evil by an ultimate deliverance, when He removes us to heaven.

"But deliver us from evil." This is a prayer, first, for Divine illumination, so that we may be able to detect Satan's devices (2Co 2:11). He who can transform himself into an angel of light (2Co 11:14) is far too subtle for human wisdom to cope with. Only as the Spirit graciously enlightens can we discern his snares. Second, this is a prayer for strength to resist Satan's 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 willfully yielding to temptation or from taking pleasure in the sins we commit. Third, it is a prayer for grace to mortify our lusts, for only to the degree that we put to death our own internal corruptions shall we be enabled to refuse 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 always 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 to harden our hearts (Heb 3:13). Naught but Divine grace can free us from unabashed indifference and work in us a godly sorrow for our transgressions. The very words "deliver us" imply that we are as deeply plunged into sin as a beast that is stuck in the mire and 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; 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 from evil that our souls are restored again to communion with God. Seventh, it is a prayer that He will overrule our falls for His glory and for our lasting good. To have a sincere desire for all these things is a signal favor from God.

What we pray for we must endeavor 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 from each other. We must make it our special care to mortify our lusts (Col 3:5; 2Ti 2:22), to make no provision for the flesh (Rom 13:14), to avoid every appearance (or form) of evil (1Th 5:22), to resist the Devil steadfastly in the faith (1Pe 5:8-9), to love not the world, neither the things that are in it (1Jo 2:15). The more our character is formed and our conduct regulated by the holy Word of God the more we shall be enabled to overcome evil with good. Let us labor diligently to maintain a good conscience (Act 24:16). Let us seek to live each day as though we knew it was our last one on earth (Pro 27:1). Let us set our affection on things above (Col 3:2). Then may we sincerely pray, "But deliver us from evil."

Chapter IX The Doxolo

Mat 6:13 "For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen"

This model for Divine worshipers 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 that which is properly His. Thanksgiving and praise are an essential part of prayer. 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 with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ!" exclaims Paul (Eph 1:3). To pronounce blessing upon God is but 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 become apparent only by a reverent pondering. This doxology may be considered in at least a threefold way:

- (1) as an expression of holy and joyful praise;
- (2) as a plea and argument to enforce the petitions; and
- (3) as a confirmation and declaration of confidence that the prayer will be heard.

In this prayer our Lord gives us the quintessence of true prayer. In the Spirit-indited prayers of the Old Testament Psalter, prayer and praise are continually joined together. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul gives the following authoritative instruction: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phi 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 (Psa 22:3).

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 by 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 supplications. The more the soul is engaged in contemplation of God Himself, the more spontaneous and sincere will be its praise. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col 4:2). Is it not our failure at this point that is so often the cause of blessing being withheld 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, how can we expect Him to bless us with His mercies?

"For Thine is the Kingdom." These words set forth God's universal right and authority over all things, by which He disposes of them according to His 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. The words "and the power" allude to God's infinite sufficiency to execute His sovereign right and to 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 (Psa 121:3-4); nothing is too hard for Him (Mat 19:26); none can withstand Him (Dan 4:35). All forces opposed to Him and to the Church's salvation He can and will overthrow. The phrase "and the

glory" sets forth His ineffable excellency: since He has absolute sovereignty over all and commensurate power to dispose of all, He is therefore all-glorious. God's glory is the grand goal of all His works and ways, and of His glory He is ever jealous (Isa 48:11-12). To Him belongs the exclusive glory of being the Answerer of prayer.

Let us next notice that the doxology is introduced by the conjunction for, which here has the force of because or on account of the fact that Thine is the Kingdom, etc. This doxology is not only an acknowledgement of God's perfections, but a most powerful plea as to why our petitions should be heard. Christ is here teaching us to employ the for of argumentation. Thou art able to grant these requests, for Thine is the Kingdom, etc. While the doxology undoubtedly belongs to the prayer as a whole and is brought in to enforce all seven petitions, yet it seems to us to have a special and more immediate reference to the last one: "but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the Kingdom. . . ." O Father, the number and power of our enemies are indeed great, and they are rendered the more formidable because of the treachery of our own wicked hearts. Yet we are encouraged to implore Thy assistance against them, because all the attempts made by sin and Satan against us are really assaults upon Thy sovereignty and dominion over us and the promotion of Thy glory by us.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory." 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 are here intimated. That God bids us, through Christ His Son, to address Him as our Father is an indication of His love and an assurance of His care for us. But God is also the King of kings, possessing infinite power. This truth assures us 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 own honor and glory that He manifests His power and shows 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 petitions with arguments drawn from the Divine perfections. God's universal kingship, His power, and His glory are to be turned into prevailing pleas for obtaining the things we need. We are to practice what Job sought to do: "I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments" (Job 23:4). Second, we are clearly directed to join petition and praise together. Third, we are taught to pray with the utmost reverence. Since God is so great and powerful a King, He is to be feared (Isa 8:13). Hence it follows that we are to prostrate ourselves before Him in complete submission to His sovereign will. Fourth, we are instructed to make a full surrender and subjection of ourselves to Him; otherwise we do but mock God when we acknowledge verbally His dominion over us (Isa 29:13). Fifth, by praying thus, we are trained to make His glory our chief concern, endeavoring so to walk that our lives show forth His praise.

"For ever." How marked is the contrast between our Father's Kingdom, power, and glory and the fleeting dominion and evanescent glory of earthly monarchs. The glorious Being whom we address in prayer is "from everlasting to everlasting. . . God" (Psa 90:2). Christ Jesus, in whom He is revealed and through whom prayer is offered, is "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever (Heb 13:8). When we pray aright, we look beyond time into eternity and measure present things by their connection with the future. How solemn and expressive are these words for ever! Earthly kingdoms decay and disappear. Creaturely 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 they shall

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 through all eternity.

"Amen." This word intimates the two things required in prayer, namely, a fervent desire and the exercise of faith. For the Hebrew word Amen (often translated "verily" or "truly" in the New Testament) means "so be it" or "it shall be so." This twofold meaning of supplication and expectation is plainly hinted at in the double use of Amen in Psa 72:10 : "And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen." 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 forth. Uttering the Amen, both in public and private prayers, we express our longings and affirm our confidence in God's power and faithfulness. 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.

The End