

Sermon on the Mount, 6

by John Wesley

The sermon emphasizes the importance of doing good works with a pure and holy intention, and not seeking the praise of men.

Scripture: Matthew 6:1

Topics: "The Lord's Prayer", "Sincerity in Worship"

Description

John Wesley emphasizes the importance of sincerity in giving, praying, and fasting, urging believers to perform these acts not for the praise of men but for the glory of God. He explains that true acts of mercy and piety must stem from a pure intention, as God rewards those who serve Him in secret. Wesley highlights the Lord's Prayer as a model for prayer, encompassing all that we need and reflecting our dependence on God. He stresses the necessity of forgiveness, both in receiving it from God and extending it to others, as a condition for our own forgiveness. Ultimately, Wesley calls for a heart aligned with God's will, seeking His kingdom and righteousness above all.

Transcript

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: That thine alms may be in secret: And thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly.

"But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do: For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before you ask him.

"After this manner therefore pray ye:

"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.

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matt. 6:1-15.

1. In the preceding chapter our Lord has described inward religion in its various branches. He has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the inward tempers contained in that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. He proceeds to show, in this chapter, how all our actions likewise, even those that are indifferent in their own nature, may be made holy, and good and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in his sight, of great price.

2. The necessity of this purity of intention, he shows, First, with regard to those which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed works of piety; the rest, works of charity or mercy. Of the latter sort, he particularly names almsgiving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy.

I. 1. And, First, with regard to works of mercy. "Take heed," saith he, "that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." "That ye do not your alms:" -- Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, every thing which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproofing the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.

2. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them." -- The thing which is here forbidden, is not barely the doing good in the sight of men; this circumstance alone, that others see what we do, makes the action neither worse nor better; but the doing it before men, "to be seen of them," with this view from this intention only. I say, from this intention only; for this may, in some cases, be a part of our intention; we may design that some of our actions should be seen, and yet they may be acceptable to God. We may intend that our light should shine before men, when our conscience bears us witness in the Holy Ghost, that our ultimate end in designing they should see our good works, is, "that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven." But take heed that ye do not the least thing with a view to your own glory: Take heed that a regard to the praise of men have no place at all in your works of mercy. If ye seek your own glory, if you have any design to gain the honour that cometh of men whatever is done with this view is nothing worth; it is not done unto the Lord; he accepteth it not; "ye have no reward" for this "of our Father which is in heaven."

3. "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have praise of men." -- The word synagogue does not here

mean a place of worship, but any place of public resort, such as the market-place, or exchange. It was a common thing among the Jews, who were men of large fortunes, particularly among the Pharisees, to cause a trumpet to be sounded before them in the most public parts of the city, when they were about to give any considerable alms. The pretended reason for this was, to call the poor together to receive it; but the real design, that they might have praise of men. But be not thou like unto them. Do not thou cause a trumpet to be sounded before thee. Use no ostentation in doing good. Aim at the honour which cometh of God only. They who seek the praise of men have their reward: They shall have no praise of God.

4. "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." -- This is a proverbial expression, the meaning of which is, -- Do it in as secret a manner as is possible; as secret as is consistent with the doing it at all, (for it must not be left undone; omit no opportunity of doing good, whether secretly or openly,) and with the doing it in the most effectual manner. For here is also an exception to be made: When you are fully persuaded in your own mind, that by your not concealing the good which is done, either you will yourself be enabled, or others excited, to do the more good, then you may not conceal it: Then let your light appear, and "shine to all that are in the house." But, unless where the glory of God and the good of mankind oblige you to the contrary, act in as private and unobserved a manner as the nature of the thing will admit; -- "that thy alms may be in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, he shall reward thee openly;" perhaps in the present world, -- many instances of this stand recorded in all ages; but infallibly in the world to come, before the general assembly of men and angels.

II. 1. From works of charity or mercy our Lord proceeds to those which are termed works of piety. "And when thou prayest," saith he, "thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." -- "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." Hypocrisy, then, or insincerity, is the first thing we are to guard against in prayer. Beware not to speak what thou dost not mean. Prayer is the lifting up of the heart to God: All words of prayer, without this, are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out thy soul before him; not as the hypocrites, who love, or are wont, "to pray standing in the synagogues," the exchange, or market-places, "and in the corners of the streets," wherever the most people are, "that they may be seen of men:" This was the sole design, the motive, and end, of the prayers which they there repeated. "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." -- They are to expect none from your Father which is in heaven.

2. But it is not only the having an eye to the praise of men, which cuts us off from any reward in heaven; which leaves us no room to expect the blessing of God upon our works, whether of piety or mercy. Purity of intention is equally destroyed by a view to any temporal reward whatever. If we repeat our prayers, if we attend the public worship of God, if we relieve the poor, with a view to gain or interest, it is not a whit more acceptable to God, than if it were done with a view to praise. Any temporal view, any motive whatever on this side eternity, any design but that of promoting the glory of God, and the happiness of men for God's sake, makes every action, however fair it may appear to men, an abomination unto the Lord.

3. "But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." -- There is a time when thou art openly to glorify God, to pray, and praise him, in the great congregation. But when thou desirest more largely and more particularly to make thy requests known unto God, whether it be in the evening, or in the morning or at noon-day, "enter into thy closet, and shut the door." Use all the privacy thou canst. (Only leave it not undone, whether thou hast any closet, any privacy, or no. Pray to God, if it be possible, when none seeth but He; but, if otherwise, pray to God.) Thus "pray to thy Father which is in secret;" pour out thy heart before him; "and thy Father which seeth in secret,

he shall reward thee openly."

4. "But when ye pray," even in secret, "use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do;" _mE battalogEsEte_. Do not use abundance of words without any meaning. Say not the same thing over and over again; think not the fruit of your prayers depends on the length of them, like the Heathens; for "they think they shall be heard for their much speaking."

The thing here reproved is not simply the length, any more than the shortness, of our prayers; -- but, First, length without meaning; speaking much, and meaning little or nothing; the using (not all repetitions; for our Lord himself prayed thrice, repeating the same words; but) vain repetitions, as the Heathens did, reciting the names of their gods, over and over; as they do among Christians, (vulgarly so called,) and not among the Papists only, who say over and over the same string of prayers, without ever feeling what they speak: -- Secondly, the thinking to be heard for our much speaking, the fancying God measures prayers by their length, and is best pleased with those which contain the most words, which sound the longest in his ears. These are such instances of superstition and folly as all who are named by the name of Christ should leave to the Heathens, to them on whom the glorious light of the gospel hath never shined.

5. "Be not ye therefore like unto them." -- Ye who have tasted of the grace of God in Christ Jesus are throughly convinced, "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." So that the end of your praying is not to inform God, as though he knew not your wants already; but rather to inform yourselves; to fix the sense of those wants more deeply in your hearts, and the sense of your continual dependence on Him who only is able to supply all your wants. It is not so much to move God, who is always more ready to give than you to ask, as to move yourselves, that you may be willing and ready to receive the good things he has prepared for you.

III. 1. After having taught the true nature and ends of prayer, our Lord subjoins an example of it; even that divine form of prayer which seems in this place to be proposed by way of pattern chiefly, as the model and standard of all our prayers: "After this manner therefore pray ye." Whereas, elsewhere he enjoins the use of these very words: "He said unto them, When ye pray, say -- ." (Luke 11:2.)

2. We may observe, in general, concerning this divine prayer, First, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. There is nothing which we have need to ask of God, nothing which we can ask without offending him, which is not included, either directly or indirectly, in this comprehensive form. Secondly, that it contains all we can reasonably or innocently desire; whatever is for the glory of God, whatever is needful or profitable, not only for ourselves, but for every creature in heaven and earth. And, indeed, our prayers are the proper test of our desires; nothing being fit to have a place in our desires which is not fit to have a place in our prayers: What we may not pray for, neither should we desire. Thirdly, that it contains all our duty to God and man; whatsoever things are pure and holy, whatsoever God requires of the children of men, whatsoever is acceptable in his sight, whatsoever it is whereby we may profit our neighbour, being expressed or implied therein.

3. It consists of three parts, -- the preface, the petitions, and the doxology, or conclusion. The preface, "Our Father which art in heaven," lays a general foundation for prayer; comprising what we must first know of God, before we can pray in confidence of being heard. It likewise points out to us all those tempers with which we are to approach to God, which are most essentially requisite, if we desire either our prayers or our lives should find acceptance with him.

4. "Our Father:" -- If he is a Father, then he is good, then he is loving, to his children. And here is the first and great reason for prayer. God is willing to bless; let us ask for a blessing. "Our Father;" -- our Creator; the Author of our being; He who raised us from the dust of the earth; who breathed into us the breath of life, and we became living souls. But if he made us, let us ask, and he will not withhold any good thing from the work of his own hands. "Our Father;" -- our Preserver; who, day by day, sustains the life he has given; of whose continuing love we now and every moment receive life and breath and all things. So much the more boldly let us come to him, and we shall "obtain mercy, and grace to help in time of need." Above all, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all that believe in him; who justifies us "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus;" who hath "blotted out all our sins, and healed all our infirmities;" who hath received us for his own children, by adoption and grace; and, "because" we "are sons, hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into" our "hearts, crying, Abba, Father;" who "hath begotten us again of incorruptible seed", and "created us anew in Christ Jesus." Therefore we know that he heareth us always; therefore we pray to him without ceasing. We pray, because we love; and "we love him because he first loved us."

5. "Our Father:" -- Not mine only who now cry unto him, but ours in the most extensive sense. The God and "Father of the spirits of all flesh;" the Father of angels and men: So the very Heathens acknowledged him to be, *PatEr te theOn te*. The Father of the universe, of all the families both in heaven and earth. Therefore with him there is no respect of persons. He loveth all that he hath made. "He is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." And the Lord's delight is in them that fear him, and put their trust in his mercy; in them that trust in him through the Son of his love, knowing they are "accepted in the Beloved." But "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" yea, all mankind; seeing "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son", even to die the death, that they "might not perish, but have everlasting life"

6. "Which art in heaven:" -- High and lifted up; God over all, blessed for ever: Who, sitting on the circle of the heavens, beholdeth all things both in heaven and earth; whose eye pervades the whole sphere of created being; yea, and of uncreated night; unto whom "are known all his works", and all the works of every creature, not only "from the beginning of the world," (a poor, low, weak translation,) but *ap' aiOnos*, from all eternity, from everlasting to everlasting; who constrains the host of heaven, as well as the children of men, to cry out with wonder and amazement, O the depth! "the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" "Which art in heaven:" -- The Lord and Ruler of all, superintending and disposing all things; who art the King of kings, and Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate; who art strong and girded about with power, doing whatsoever pleaseth thee; the Almighty; for whensoever thou willest, to do is present with thee. "In heaven:" -- Eminently there. Heaven is thy throne, "the place where thine honour" particularly "dwelleth." But not there alone; for thou fillest heaven and earth, the whole expanse of space. "Heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord, most high!"

Therefore should we "serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with reverence." Therefore should we think, speak, and act, as continually under the eye, in the immediate presence, of the Lord, the King.

7. "Hallowed be thy name." -- This is the first of the six petitions, whereof the prayer itself is composed. The name of God is God himself; the nature of God, so far as it can be discovered to man. It means, therefore, together with his existence, all his attributes or perfections; His Eternity, particularly signified by his great and incommunicable name, JEHOVAH, as the Apostle John translates it: *To A kai to O, archE kai telos, oOn kai ho On kai ho En kai ho erchomenos*, -- "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the

end; He which is, and which was, and which is to come;" -- His Fullness of Being, denoted by his other great name, I AM THAT I AM! -- His omnipresence; -- His omnipotence; who is indeed the only Agent in the material world; all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God; and he is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible, which could neither act nor exist, without the continual influx and agency of his almighty power; -- His wisdom, clearly deduced from the things that are seen, from the goodly order of the universe; -- His Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, discovered to us in the very first line of his written word; _bara' 'elohim_ -- literally, the Gods created, a plural noun joined with a verb of the singular number; as well as in every part of his subsequent revelations, given by the mouth of all his holy Prophets and Apostles; -- His essential purity and holiness; -- and, above all, his love, which is the very brightness of his glory.

In praying that God, or his name, may "be hallowed" or glorified, we pray that he may be known, such as he is, by all that are capable thereof, by all intelligent beings, and with affections suitable to that knowledge; that he may be duly honoured, and feared, and loved, by all in heaven above and in the earth beneath; by all angels and men, whom for that end he has made capable of knowing and loving him to eternity.

8. "Thy kingdom come." -- This has a close connexion with the preceding petition. In order that the name of God might be hallowed, we pray that his kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, may come. This kingdom then comes to a particular person, when he "repents and believes the gospel;" when he is taught of God, not only to know himself, but to know Jesus Christ and him crucified. As "this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" so it is the kingdom of God begun below, set up in the believer's heart; "the Lord God Omnipotent" then "reigneth," when he is known through Christ Jesus. He taketh unto himself his mighty power, that he may subdue all things unto himself. He goeth on in the soul conquering and to conquer, till he hath put all things under his feet, till "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

When therefore God shall "give his Son the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;" when "all kingdoms shall bow before him, and all nations shall do him service;" when "the mountain of the Lord's house," the Church of Christ, "shall be established in the top of the mountains;" when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved;" then shall it be seen, that "the Lord is King, and hath put on glorious apparel," appearing to every soul of man as King of kings, and Lord of lords. And it is meet for all those who love his appearing, to pray that he would hasten the time; that this his kingdom, the kingdom of grace, may come quickly, and swallow up all the kingdoms of the earth; that all mankind, receiving him for their King, truly believing in his name, may be filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy, with holiness and happiness, -- till they are removed hence into his heavenly kingdom, there to reign with him for ever and ever.

For this also we pray in those words, "Thy kingdom come:" We pray for the coming of his everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven, which is the continuation and perfection of the kingdom of grace on earth. Consequently this, as well as the preceding petition, is offered up for the whole intelligent creation, who are all interested in this grand event, the final renovation of all things, by God's putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death, taking all things into his own hands, and setting up the kingdom which endureth throughout all ages.

Exactly answerable to this are those awful words in the prayer at the burial of the dead: "Beseeching thee, that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to

hasten thy kingdom: That we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy everlasting glory."

9. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." -- This is the necessary and immediate consequence wherever the kingdom of God is come; wherever God dwells in the soul by faith, and Christ reigns in the heart by love.

It is probable, many, perhaps the generality of men, at the first view of these words, are apt to imagine they are only an expression of, or petition for, resignation; for a readiness to suffer the will of God, whatsoever it be concerning us. And this is unquestionably a divine and excellent temper, a most precious gift of God. But this is not what we pray for in this petition; at least, not in the chief and primary sense of it. We pray, not so much for a passive, as for an active, conformity to the will of God, in saying, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

How is it done by the angels of God in heaven, -- those who now circle his throne rejoicing? They do it willingly; they love his commandments, and gladly hearken to his words. It is their meat and drink to do his will; it is their highest glory and joy. They do it continually; there is no interruption in their willing service. They rest not day nor night, but employ every hour (speaking after the manner of men; otherwise our measures of duration, days, and nights, and hours, have no place in eternity) in fulfilling his commands, in executing his designs, in performing the counsel of his will. And they do it perfectly. No sin, no defect belongs to angelic minds. It is true, "the stars are not pure in his sight," even the morning-stars that sing together before him. "In his sight," that is, in comparison of Him, the very angels are not pure. But this does not imply, that they are not pure in themselves. Doubtless they are; they are without spot and blameless. They are altogether devoted to his will, and perfectly obedient in all things.

If we view this in another light, we may observe, the angels of God in heaven do all the will of God. And they do nothing else, nothing but what they are absolutely assured is his will. Again they do all the will of God as he willeth; in the manner which pleases him, and no other. Yea, and they do this, only because it is his will; for this end, and no other reason.

10. When therefore we pray, that the will of God may "be done in earth as it is in heaven," the meaning is, that all the inhabitants of the earth, even the whole race of mankind, may do the will of their Father which is in heaven, as willingly as the holy angels; that these may do it continually, even as they, without any interruption of their willing service; yea, and that they may do it perfectly, -- that "the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make them perfect in every good work to do his will, and work in them all "which is well-pleasing in his sight."

In other words, we pray that we and all mankind may do the whole will of God in all things; and nothing else, not the least thing but what is the holy and acceptable will of God. We pray that we may do the whole will of God as he willeth, in the manner that pleases him: And, lastly, that we may do it because it is his will; that this may be the sole reason and ground, the whole and only motive, of whatsoever we think, or whatsoever we speak or do.

11. "Give us this day our daily bread." -- In the three former petitions we have been praying for all mankind. We come now more particularly to desire a supply for our own wants. Not that we are directed, even here, to confine our prayer altogether to ourselves; but this, and each of the following petitions, may be used for the whole Church of Christ upon earth.

By "bread" we may understand all things needful, whether for our souls or bodies; *ta pros zOEn kai eusebeian*, -- the things pertaining to life and godliness: We understand not barely the outward bread, what our Lord terms "the meat which perisheth;" but much more the spiritual bread, the grace of God, the food "which endureth unto everlasting life." It was the judgment of many of the ancient Fathers, that we are here to understand the sacramental bread also; daily received in the beginning by the whole Church of Christ, and highly esteemed, till the love of many waxed cold, as the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God.

"Our daily bread." -- The word we render daily has been differently explained by different commentators. But the most plain and natural sense of it seems to be this, which is retained in almost all translations, as well ancient as modern; -- what is sufficient for this day; and so for each day as it succeeds.

12. "Give us:" -- For we claim nothing of right, but only of free mercy. We deserve not the air we breathe, the earth that bears, or the sun that shines upon, us. All our desert, we own, is hell: But God loves us freely; therefore, we ask him to give, what we can no more procure for ourselves, than we can merit it at his hands.

Not that either the goodness or the power of God is a reason for us to stand idle. It is his will that we should use all diligence in all things, that we should employ our utmost endeavours, as much as if our success were the natural effect of our own wisdom and strength: And then, as though we had done nothing, we are to depend on Him, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

"This day:" -- For we are to take no thought for the morrow. For this very end has our wise Creator divided life into these little portions of time, so clearly separated from each other, that we might look on every day as a fresh gift of God, another life, which we may devote to his glory; and that every evening may be as the close of life, beyond which we are to see nothing but eternity.

13. "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." -- As nothing but sin can hinder the bounty of God from flowing forth upon every creature, so this petition naturally follows the former; that, all hinderances being removed, we may the more clearly trust in the God of love for every manner of thing which is good.

"Our trespasses:" -- The word properly signifies our debts. Thus our sins are frequently represented in Scripture; every sin laying us under a fresh debt to God, to whom we already owe, as it were, ten thousand talents. What then can we answer when he shall say, "Pay me that thou owest?" We are utterly insolvent; we have nothing to pay; we have wasted all our substance. Therefore, if he deal with us according to the rigour of his law, if he exact what he justly may, he must command us to be "bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the tormentors."

Indeed we are already bound hand and foot by the chains of our own sins. These, considered with regard to ourselves, are chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that I bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But considered, as they are here, with regard to God, they are debts, immense and numberless. Well, therefore, seeing we have nothing to pay, may we cry unto him that he would "frankly forgive' us all!

The word translated forgive implies either to forgive a debt, or to unloose a chain. And if we attain the former, the latter follows of course: if our debts are forgiven, the chains fall off our hands. As soon as ever,

through the free grace of God in Christ, we "receive forgiveness of sins," we receive likewise "a lot among those which are sanctified, by faith which is in him." Sin has lost its power; it has no dominion over those who "are under grace," that is, in favour with God. As "there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus,"~ so they are freed from sin as well as from guilt. "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in" them, and they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

14. "As we forgive them that trespass against us." -- In these words our Lord clearly declares both on what condition, and in what degree or manner, we may look to be forgiven of God. All our trespasses and sins are forgiven us, if we forgive, and as we forgive, others. [First, God forgives us if we forgive others.] This is a point of the utmost importance. And our blessed Lord is so jealous lest at any time we should let it slip out of our thoughts, that he not only inserts it in the body of his prayer, but presently after repeats it twice over. "If," saith he, "ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:14, 15.) Secondly, God forgives us as we forgive others. So that if any malice or bitterness, if any taint of unkindness or anger remains, if we do not clearly, fully, and from the heart, forgive all men their trespasses, we far cut short the forgiveness of our own: God cannot clearly and fully forgive us: He may show us some degree of mercy; but we will not suffer him to blot out all our sins, and forgive all our iniquities.

In the mean time, while we do not from our hearts forgive our neighbour his trespasses, what manner of prayer are we offering to God whenever we utter these words? We are indeed setting God at open defiance: we are daring him to do his worst. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!" That is, in plain terms, "Do not thou forgive us at all; we desire no favour at thy hands. We pray that thou wilt keep our sins in remembrance, and that thy wrath may abide upon us." But can you seriously offer such a prayer to God? And hath he not yet cast you quick into hell?' O tempt him no longer! Now, even now, by his grace, forgive as you would be forgiven! Now have compassion on thy fellow-servant, as God hath had and will have pity on thee!

15. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." --"[And] lead us not into temptation." The word translated temptation means trial of any kind. And so the English word temptation was formerly taken in an indifferent sense, although now it is usually understood of solicitation to sin. St. James uses the word in both these senses; first, in its general, then in its restrained, acceptation. He takes it in the former sense when he saith, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; For when he is tried," or approved of God, "he shall receive the crown of life." (James 1:12, 13.) He immediately adds, taking the word in the latter sense, "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. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust," or desire, ~_exelkomenos~, drawn out of God, in whom alone he is safe, -- "and enticed;" caught as a fish with a bait. Then it is, when he is thus drawn away and enticed, that he properly "enters into temptation." Then temptation covers him as a cloud; it overspreads his whole soul. Then how hardly shall he escape out of the snare! Therefore, we beseech God "not to lead us into temptation," that is, (seeing God tempteth no man,) not to suffer us to be led into it. "But deliver us from evil:" Rather "from the evil one,;" ~_apo tou ponErou_.~ _Ho PonEros_ is unquestionably the wicked one, emphatically so called, the prince and god of this world, who works with mighty power in the children of disobedience. But all those who are the children of God by faith are delivered out of his hands. He may fight against them; and so he will. But he cannot conquer, unless they betray their own souls. He may torment for a time, but he cannot destroy; for God is on their side, who will not fail, in the end, to "avenge his own elect, that cry unto him day and

night." Lord, when we are tempted, suffer us not to enter into temptation! Do thou make a way for us to escape, that the wicked one touch us not!

16. The conclusion of this divine prayer, commonly called the Doxology, is a solemn thanksgiving, a compendious acknowledgement of the attributes and works of God. "For thine is the kingdom" -- the sovereign right of all things that are or ever were created; yea, thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all ages. "The power" -- the executive power whereby thou governest all things in thy everlasting kingdom, whereby thou dost whatsoever pleaseth thee, in all places of thy dominion. "And the glory" -- the praise due from every creature, for thy power, and the mightiness of thy kingdom, and for all thy wondrous works which thou workest from everlasting, and shalt do, world without end, "for ever and ever! Amen!" So be it! I believe it will not be unacceptable to the serious reader, to subjoin A PARAPHRASE ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

1 Father of all, whose powerful voice

Call'd forth this universal frame;

Whose mercies over all rejoice,

Through endless ages still the same.

Thou, by thy word, upholdest all;

Thy bounteous love to all is show'd,

Thou hear'st thy every creature's call,

And fillest every mouth with good.

2 In heaven thou reign'st, enthroned in light,

Nature's expanse beneath thee spread;

Earth, air, and sea before thy sight,

And hell's deep gloom are open laid. ~

Wisdom, and might, and love are thine:

Prostrate before thy face we fall,

Confess thine attributes divine,

An hail the Sovereign Lord of All.

3 Thee, sovereign Lord, let all confess

That moves in earth, or air, or sky

Revere thy power, thy goodness bless,

Tremble before thy piercing eye.

All ye who owe to Him your birth,
In praise your every hour employ:
Jehovah reigns! Be glad, O earth!
And shout, ye morning stars, for joy!

4 Son of thy Sire's eternal love,
Take to thyself thy mighty power;
Let all earth's sons thy mercy prove,
Let all thy bleeding grace adore.
The triumphs of thy love display;
In every heart reign thou alone;
Till all thy foes confess thy sway,
And glory ends what grace begun.

5 Spirit of grace, and health, and power,
Fountain of light and love below,
Abroad thine healing influence shower,
O'er all the nations let it flow.
Inflame our hearts with perfect love;
In us the work of faith fulfil;
So not heaven's hosts shall swifter move
Than w~e on earth to do thy will.

6 Father, 'tis thine each day to yield
Thy children's wants a fresh supply:
Thou cloth'st the lilies of the field,
And hearest the young ravens cry.
On thee we cast our care; we live
Through thee, who know'st our every need;
O feed us with thy grace, and give

~Our souls this day the living bread!

7 Eternal, spotless Lamb of God,
Before the world's foundation slain,
Sprinkle us ever with thy blood;
O cleanse and keep us ever clean.

To every soul (all praise to Thee!)

Our bowels of compassion more:

And all mankind by this may see

God is in us; for God is love.

8 Giver and Lord of life, whose power

And guardian care for all are free;

To thee, in fierce temptation's hour, From sin and Satan let us flee.

Thine, Lord, we are, and ours thou art; In us be all thy goodness show'd;

Renew, enlarge, and fill our heart

With peace, and joy, and heaven, and God.

9 Blessing and honour, praise and love, Co-equal, co-eternal Three,

In earth below, in heaven above,

By all thy works be paid to thee. Thrice Holy! thine the kingdom is,

The power omnipotent is thine;

And when created nature dies,

Thy never-ceasing glories shine.

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