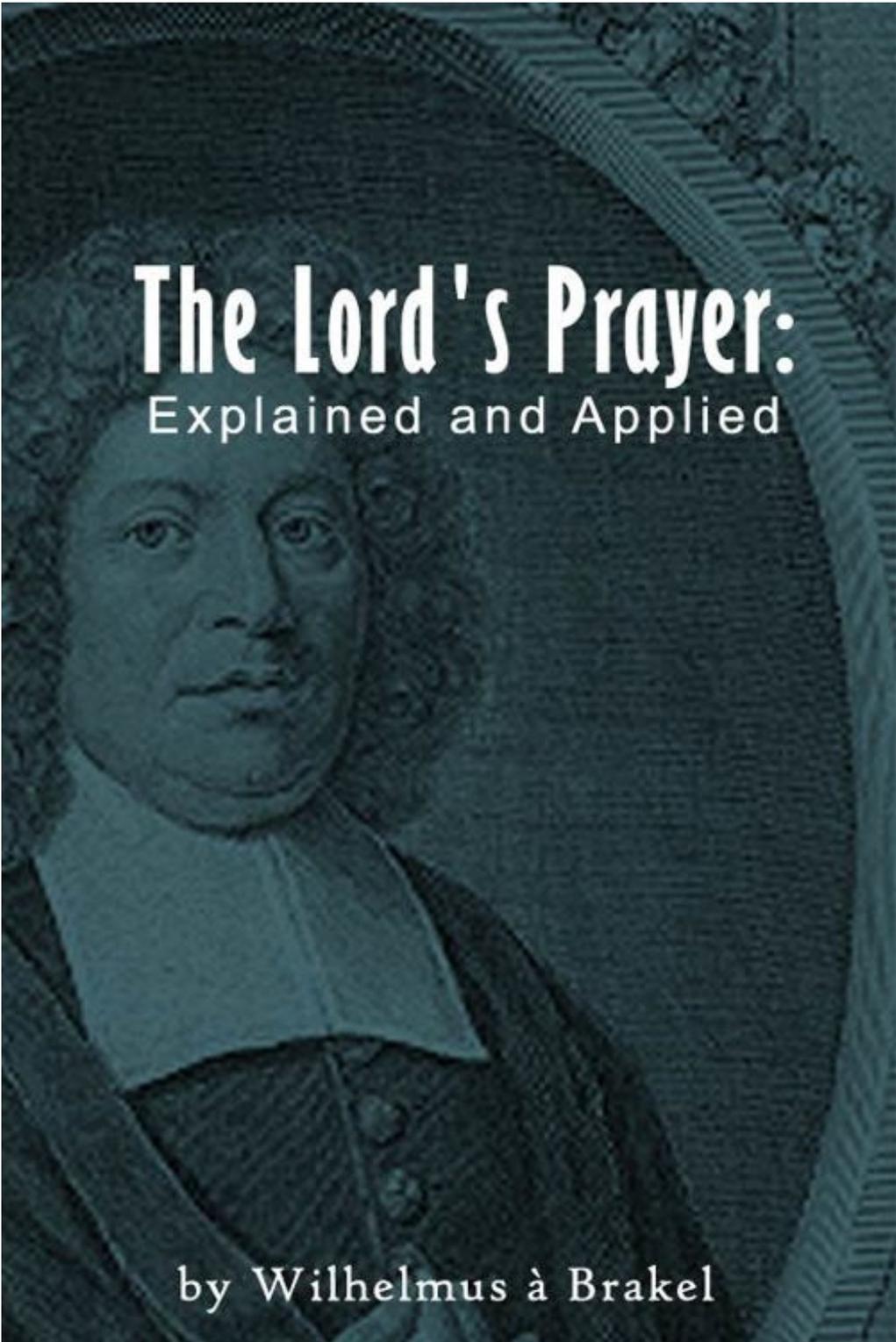


The Lord's Prayer:

Explained and Applied

by Wilhelmus à Brakel



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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Our Father, Which Art in Heaven](#)

[Hallowed By Thy Name](#)

[Thy Kingdom Come](#)

[Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread](#)

[Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors](#)

[And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil](#)

[The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer](#)

Introduction

In the previous chapter we have dealt with prayer in general, considering its nature, required internal qualifications, externals, necessity, and beneficial nature. We must now show the supplicant what the matters are for which he ought to pray and the order in which he must pray for them. This has been defined for us by the Lord Jesus in the prayer He has provided for us upon the request of the disciples. This is generally referred to as The Lord's Prayer, and is recorded in Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. Matthew records it with a conclusion, whereas Luke omits it. This

is not to suggest that the Lord Jesus did not add this, but is an indication that it was only His intent to give an orderly presentation of those matters which are to be prayed for. For the same reason, the evangelists, when relating identical matters, do so either in a more elaborate or abbreviated form. The one evangelist writes about this matter and the other about divergent matters, as they were not all present together at all occasions when Jesus either spoke or performed something. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus has said and performed many more things than could all have been recorded. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25). However, what has been recorded is sufficient "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20:31). The papists quote this prayer from Luke without the conclusion, and we do so from Matthew with the conclusion.

A Rule and Example for Our Prayer

The Lord Jesus has given this prayer as a rule and example to which we must conform our prayers as far as matters and order; that is, in regard to the priority of each matter, such being the manner in which we are to desire them. It is, however, not mandatory that we repeat this prayer verbatim. The apostles, in their recorded prayers, have never repeated this prayer word for word. We may indeed pray this prayer, both in public meetings as well as privately; however, we are not obligated to do so. We must not be of the opinion that, upon having recited this, we have uttered a more holy prayer than if we had used our own words. This prayer is perfect in and of itself; however, he who prays has not prayed perfectly by merely having recited this prayer. If we do not have a correct understanding of each petition—yes, each word—if we do not have a holy and conscious desire for each matter, and nevertheless recite it, then it is a vain use of God's Name. It is a mocking with God, as if He were served with that rattling off of words, the meaning of which is not understood and by which one's desires are not expressed—even if one were to have a general opinion that he were praying to God. God demands the heart. Prayer is the expression of holy desires before God, and thus praying

must be done in spirit and in truth. "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also" (1 Cor 14:15). For a better understanding of this prayer we must distinguish between the various parts. This spiritual prayer is robbed of its meaning, and it is a blatant distortion of the Word of this majestic God to divide this prayer into seven fabricated periods or time-frames. It is then presupposed that some matters are already past and should no longer be prayed for, whereas others would as yet be future and do not transpire in our time. Only one matter would relate to the present; however, which one this would be cannot be determined. Then there would indeed be nothing to be found for the spiritual needs of each individual. However, it can at once be observed that there are three divisions: 1) the address; 2) the petitions; and 3) the conclusion. The petitions can in turn also be divided as follows:

(1) There is the most eminent matter which is to be the objective of all that is to be desired (this being the first petition), and the means which are to be desired to that end (which are the five subsequent petitions); or (2) in three matters we petition relative to God and three which relate to ourselves and our neighbor.

THE ADDRESS

"Our Father, Which Art in Heaven!"

Prayer requires that we turn to the person from whom we wish to petition something. Since we are requesting matters in prayer which none can give but God, the supplicants thus turn themselves to God, the Father of lights, from whom descends every good and perfect gift. We acknowledge Him as the only One worthy of worship, before whom we bow ourselves with the deepest humility, being desirous to do so with our whole heart. Then we shall worship Him with all reverence, giving Him honor and glory, even if we did not need to request anything from Him. Since, however, we are always in need of something, we thus turn to God as the fountain of all that we are, of all that we have received, and of all that we desire to receive. We shall shrink back from requesting anything from anyone else—indeed, we shall not do so. When requesting something from man, we are requesting it both from God and from man as a means

in God's hand, he being under God's command. The supplicant holds God before him as being omniscient, who knows and perceives what our needs and desires are and who hears the prayerful supplicant. He notes Him as being the omnipotent One, who can give what we desire—whether or not the means are at hand—yes, who can do more than we pray for, purely by the exercise of His will. He notes God as being good—not only to all men in doing them good by filling their hearts with food and gladness: "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9), but toward His children in Christ, manifesting a fatherly and unfathomable goodness. He rejoices in doing well to them and He delights in mercy. He says to them, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will answer thee; open thy mouth wide, and I shall fill it; let Me hear thy voice, for it is sweet." He notes God as being faithful—as the One who fulfills all His promises to His children, the heirs of promise, particularly the following: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do" (John 14:13); "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24). Such is the nature of God, and God deals with His children accordingly. Therefore the supplicant must also acknowledge Him to be thus if he is to please the Lord and have freedom in prayer. The act of prayer demonstrates that we acknowledge the Lord to be thus, for otherwise we would not flee to Him. However, a lively acknowledgment begets a lively prayer. Not only does the supplicant turn to God as such a One, but he also addresses the Lord by using a name which either fits the disposition of the soul toward God, the need which we presently have, or the desire for a prayerful disposition, marked by both reverence and faith. The saints have used various addresses, such as: "Lord," "Oh Lord God of my salvation," "Lord my strength," "My God," "Thou Lord the searcher of the heart," "Thou art the God who has made heaven and earth," and "Oh holy and faithful Lord." The Lord Jesus generally used the address Father, and My Father in His prayers, and teaches us also to address God with the name Father. This is not to suggest that we may not use a different address, for the saints in the Old and New Testaments have generally used others. However, the name Father is the most intimate, congenial, soul-moving, and lovely name—which engenders the greatest reverence and confidence. Such is the privilege the Lord Jesus affords believers: They may address the majestic and living God with the name Father.

The Threefold Fatherhood of God

God is denominated as Father in different respects.

(1) He is Father by virtue of eternal generation, and thus in reference to God the Son. "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee" (Ps 2:7). (2) He is Father by virtue of creation and preservation, and thus in reference to the angels and all men. The heathen referred to God as such. Adam thus becomes the Son of God (Luke 3:38), and the angels are called the children of God (Job 38:7). It is from this perspective that we read, "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us" (Mal 2:10); "A Father of the fatherless ... is God in His holy habitation" (Ps 68:5). When it is used as such, however, the name Father cannot give any comfort, but it will instill terror due to man having fallen away from Him and God having become a wrathful avenger in consequence of sin. (3) He is a Father by virtue of adoption. God has eternally purposed to adopt the elect in time as His children. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph 1:5). In consequence of this purpose He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, thereby making them children of God. "Which (God's children) were born ... of God" (John 1:13); "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1:18). These He leads to His Son Jesus Christ, granting them faith whereby they receive Him to be their ransom and righteousness, and enter into a spiritual marriage-covenant with Jesus. They are thus united with Him, the Father of the Bridegroom, and he thereby also becomes their Father. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12); "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). It is with this in mind that the Lord Jesus says, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father" (John 20:17). The God and Father of Christ and believers is one and the same, but in different respects. Since believers are the children of God and have received the Spirit of adoption, they cry out, "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). This name engenders in the believer love, liberty, comfort, and confidence.

The Use of the Father Name: The Practice of Believers in Both Old and New Testaments

The use of the Father name does not stand in contradistinction to the practice of Old Testament believers—as if they could not address God with the Father name. For they also were born of God, possessed faith in Christ, and had the Spirit of Christ (Ps 51:11) by whom they were led (Ps 143:10); God was their Father (Mal 1:6). "Is not He thy Father" (Deut 32:6)? They were the children of God: "I have nourished and brought up children" (Isa 1:2); "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" (Deut 14:1). They also addressed God with the name "Father": "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto Me, My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth" (Jer 3:4); "Doubtless Thou art our Father. ... Thou, O Lord, art our Father" (Isa 63:16); "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father" (Isa 64:8). It is thus a privilege which all believing members of the covenant of grace of all times have, and not a privilege of New Testament believers only. When the Lord Jesus taught his disciples to say "Father," the Old Testament dispensation, as well as the ceremonial service, were still in force. The word "Father" is sometimes used to designate the essence of the Godhead; that is, in reference to a triune God: "... the Father of lights" (James 1:17); "Have we not all one Father" (Mal 2:10). Sometimes it is used in a personal sense, referring to the first Person in the divine essence, or rather, God as existing in the first Person. For we cannot extract a divine Person from the divine essence and view Him independently. However, we can distinguish between the essence and the Person. This is how the "Father" is to be understood in the following passages: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:14); "My Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1).
Question #1: How is the word "Father" in the address to be understood?
Answer: Not in reference to creation and preservation, nor in reference to eternal generation, but in reference to adoption, for the supplicant comes with a childlike disposition.

Question #2: Must the word "Father" be understood in its essential or personal sense?

Answer: The supplicant, being stirred up to pray and directed in prayer by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of prayer, who intercedes with groanings that cannot be uttered) approaches the Father through the Son, and thus approaches God Himself as He exists in the first Person without

exclusion of the Son and the Holy Spirit. We must refrain from attempting to comprehend the incomprehensible and from making too great a separation between the Persons and the divine essence. This causes some confusion in the minds of some beginners in grace, as if it would be a concern to the one Person if one of the three divine Persons were addressed more than another. We must proceed in simplicity here and be led by the Spirit to go to the Father through the Son as Mediator, and thus worship and address the one and eternal God. The Lord Jesus does not only teach us to address God with the name "Father," but He adds the relative and possessive pronoun "our": our Father. Since the word "Father" pertains to gracious adoption, regeneration, betrothal, and union with the Lord Jesus—the Son of God—by faith, then the word "our" must not be understood to refer to all men, but only to the regenerated, believing children of God. An unconverted person is not a child of God, and thus he also cannot address God with the name "Father." Even though he is God's creature, God thus being his Father by virtue of creation, the use of the word "Father" can render him neither comfort nor liberty to approach unto God as such, for sin has fully separated him from God and His favor, and has subjected him to the wrath of God, so that God is a consuming fire and a terror unto him. There is no approach unto God except through Christ. Since the unconverted person is without Christ, he can therefore not come unto God and address Him with the name "Father." The believing supplicant does not include only himself in the word "our," but he includes all true believers—those whom he knows and those whom he does not know. He is a member of the church of God of which God is the Father. "And (I) will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor 6:18). He thus includes the entire church of God when he says, "Our Father," and thereby demonstrates his love to all the members of God's family, expressing his faith that God is his portion, that he is permitted to address Him as Father, is a member of the family of God, and has communion with all the saints.

Question #3: May we not, when praying in solitude, say "my Father" instead of "our Father"?

Answer: The Lord Jesus has not furnished us this prayer so as to use its

words verbatim. A believer, when in secret, frequently prays for himself, and then he may also specifically say "my Father" as Elihu did: "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end" (Job 34:36).

Question #4: How must a weak believer proceed who is not assured that God is His Father? May he skip the words "our Father"?

Must he think of God as his Father by creation? May he say in a wishful sense, "Oh, that thou wouldst be my Father"? Answer: The supplicant, while in his closet, is not limited to the words of this prayer, but may use and present his own words as best as he knows how. No prayer is pleasing to God, nor shall it be heard, except it be offered in faith. The essence of faith does not consist in assurance, however, but in the entrusting of our soul to Jesus, He being our ransom and righteousness. The supplicant knows that there is no other way to approach unto God except through Christ. He approves of this way, desires no other way, chooses this way, and in his approach has Christ in view—be it in a habitual or an active sense. He longs for, prays to, yearns for, receives, and surrenders himself to Him. Being thus exercised, he perceives that he has an aversion for, is grieved by, and is greatly burdened by sin. Moreover, he longs and desires to obey the Lord in all simplicity, love, and filial fear, this being the objective he also pursues. If he were to give a general evaluation of one thus exercised, he would admit that such a person is a true believer and may freely call God "Father." However, due to perceiving his darkness, slothfulness, and continual sinning, he does not dare to call God his Father, even though he perceives the aforementioned matters within himself. Such a person must put his unbelief aside, hold this for truth, and esteem God to be his Father as being the One who has given him this disposition and these fruits. To call God "Father" in prayer does not proceed from assurance, but rather from their judgment and heartfelt desires. Yes, these concerns and wrestlings are a proof of life and faith. Since in such a person there is not only love toward the Lord Jesus, but also to all His members and to His church, he includes them all in his prayer, and therefore not only says "Father," "my Father," but also our Father.

The Significance of the Phrase "Which Art in Heaven"

The Lord Jesus causes us furthermore to say, "which art in heaven." It must be noted here that it says "heavens"²² and not heaven as in the third petition. Hereby the following is conveyed: First, "in the heavens" does not refer to a location, for God is infinite. He fills heaven and earth and infinitely exceeds them. "Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (1 Kings 8:27). Secondly, "the heavens" also does not refer to the third heaven, which is the abode of holy angels and glorified saints, the paradise of God, the house of the Father, the throne of God, and the place where God's glory is seen. The third petition refers to this, but such is not true here. Mention is made here of "the heavens," and this includes all the heavens. The supplicant is thus not limited to a local perception of the third heaven, but rather it lifts the supplicant above the edifice of heaven and earth—all of which vanishes from the heart and eye of the supplicant as something insignificant. It causes us to view God as the infinite One; as most majestic, glorious, omnipotent, and invisible; and as the One who dwells in unapproachable light, who covers Himself with light as with a garment. Both the nature and the disposition of the saints teach them to view God as such in prayer, with a lifting up of the heart and eye on high (without thinking of a locality) unto God as being invisible and all-seeing. There is no contrast here between the supplicants of the Old and New Testaments—between Jerusalem, the temple, the Holy of Holies, and the third heaven. It is not so that in the Old Testament they had to say, "Oh God, who dwellest in Jerusalem and between the cherubim," and that we in the New Testament may straightway go to God and say, "Our Father which art in heaven." For also in the Old Testament supplicants lifted up heart and eye to God in heaven: "Mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord" (Isa 38:14); "Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam 3:41); "Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens" (Ps 123:1). They prayed that God would look down upon them from heaven: "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory" (Isa 63:15), and God heard them from heaven: "He will hear him from His holy heaven" (Ps 20:6). In this they are on equal footing with New Testament believers and it removes the thought that there is a distinction between the Old and New Testaments in this text. The fact that they prayerfully turned their countenances toward

Jerusalem, saying, "O Shepherd of Israel. ... Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps 80:1), indicates that in prayer they approached unto God through the Messiah. They prayed in His name—He being depicted by the mercy seat, which was overshadowed by the wings of the cherubim. Likewise, we in the New Testament, when praying in His Name, do not approach unto God in any other way but through the Mediator. Since they thus in both cases approached unto God by way of the sacrifice of the High Priest Jesus Christ—who then had to come and now has come—they were both pleasing to God and were heard, God being pleased with the sacrifice of His Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt 17:5).

The Address Renders Liberty and Reverence

With divine wisdom the Lord Jesus conjoins these two matters in the address: "Father, our Father, which art in heaven (Dutch: the heavens)." The word "Father" gives liberty to lay before and to unveil to God, as Father, in an intimate manner our needs and desires—and to pray for their fulfillment. And, lest we lose our reverence and awe due to such intimacy, we must add to this the awe-inspiring expression, "which art in heaven." However, lest we be fearful to approach due to our awe for His lofty majesty, we add the word "Father" to it. Filial freedom and reverence must go hand in hand. Finally, we say "our" to express our love for God's children.

The Lord Jesus thus teaches us that we are to use an appropriate address in our prayers. If we address God out of form and custom with a certain name which so happens to come across our lips—without a conscious acknowledgment of God, ourselves, and the condition in which we are—it shows that as supplicants we are void of spirituality, for it is sinful to begin prayer in such a manner. We must also not occupy ourselves for a time considering by which name we shall address God. This generally causes a prayerful disposition to vanish. If, however, the supplicant separates himself from everything and turns to God, such a prayerful disposition will engender a fitting address—be it by considering God's goodness, omnipotence, mercy, truthfulness, holiness, glory, and majesty—or else our need, fear, or anxiety will suggest a fitting address which will bring our soul either into a prayerful frame or further enhance this frame.

However, if no particular name comes to mind, then be at liberty, upon the command of the Lord Jesus, to address God as "our Father which art in heaven."

The Believer's Approach to the Father

Generally, an attentive and prayerful frame will bring forth a sigh and one will begin with "oh!" If you are in the company of people, you must refrain yourself so that your sighing voice will not be heard by others; this will hinder them. Such sighs must also not be feigned, for that is hypocrisy. These sighs must also not be the result of the condition of the body; they are not related to prayer. They must also not be the result of pretense or custom. This belongs to the realm of routine, which ought to have no part in prayer at all. Instead, such a sigh must be the voice of the soul and proceed from the Holy Spirit, who "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom 8:26).

(1) Sometimes the soul is so overcome with either sorrow, physical sorrow, or soul's grief, that she cannot utter one word. She presents herself before the Lord, however, and pours out her heart before the omniscient One with a heartfelt sigh—with the voice of a turtledove. This is pleasing to Him, and the Lord, knowing the mind of the Spirit, insists on hearing it: "O My dove ... let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice" (Song 2:14).

(2) Sometimes the soul is empty. She is tense, desirous to pray, but no matters come to mind, and desires for a given matter are neither lively nor do they stir up the soul. What must she do? Leave her closet? That she cannot do, for she knows that she lacks everything. And if there is nothing in particular, a sigh comes forth out of her emptiness which cries for fulfillment—a sigh which God understands well.

(3) Sometimes the soul is focused so intently upon a desired spiritual matter, having such profound insight in it, and her desires being so intense, that she cannot find words to express those inexpressible matters and desires. Therefore, she cannot do otherwise than make this known by way of a sigh which expresses far more than many words could do.

(4) Sometimes the soul is in a sinful condition. She would desire to approach, but she is ashamed, does not dare to come, and hides herself. She crawls, so to speak, to the throne of grace, having no courage to speak. She then lets herself be heard by quiet sighs, which at times are accompanied with quiet tears—this being a delightful manifestation of a penitent soul. Even though the supplicant may use various addresses in prayer, there is none so sweet, so soul-stirring, and so beneficial as saying "Father," "my Father," and "our Father." When the supplicant, by faith, engages himself in meditation upon the word "Father," and views it from God's perspective, his own perspective, and all that is comprehended in that relationship, this can then bring the soul into ecstasy and cause her to lose herself in adoration.

The supplicant sees himself as a worm and, moreover, as one who is so sinful within and without, so despicable, hateful, and damnable that no one could even cast an eye of pity upon him. It is thus due to the wondrous longsuffering of God that he has not long since been cast into hell already. To think that he has been delivered from the eternal destruction in which the majority of men, who are no worse than he is, sink away! And beyond that, to think that he has been adopted as a child of God—adopted to be an heir of God and a fellow-heir of Christ in eternal glory! That transcends all the comprehension of both angels and men. To think that he may address God by the name "Father," and "my Father"!

When the supplicant focuses upon God, whom he may call Father, and considers God in His majesty, glory, holiness, and fullness of perfection; when he considers furthermore that God, in all that He is, is there for him so that he might be filled, satisfied, and be made joyful in the only blessed God; and when he finally considers that he is a partaker of all felicity—this cannot be comprehended to all eternity. This is able to bring the supplicant into such ecstasy, that body and soul are not capable of enduring the wondrous goodness of God; the soul would be overwhelmed due to astonishment and joy, and the spirit would succumb. When the supplicant reflects upon the relationship in which he is to God, and God to him, he must exclaim, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Ps 118:23). For, if God is his Father, then God has loved him with

an eternal and fatherly love. Then God's omnipotent, faithful, and fatherly eye is upon him to protect him against all evil, to provide for him in all the needs of body and soul, and to cause all things to work for good for him. Likewise, God's fatherly tenderness and mercy are engaged toward him to have pity upon him when he comes into circumstances of misery, need, and death. God thus makes him an heir of all the benefits of the covenant of grace. God will therefore hear him as his Father when he calls upon Him. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him" (Matt 7:11). If the Lord does not immediately give what we desire, He will do it at a time which is best for us and He will give that which is to our benefit. It is fatherly love when He gives and it is fatherly love when He withholds. And you—entrust everything fully to your Father without fear and concern. As a child, honor your Father: fear Him, love Him, and obey and serve Him with a willing soul.

Behold, all this—and more than we are able to express—is included in this address. Therefore, attentively make use of this in faith, and thus proceed to the matters you are to pray for as comprehended in the following six petitions.

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed Be Thy Name

The goal stimulates the worker, defines what means he will use, and renders the use of grievous means easy. The irrational animals, even though they are not acquainted with the goal, are driven by a natural instinct toward the goal set for them by God, and know which means to use unto that end. Rational man, however, prior to undertaking something, has something in mind which he desires to have. This becomes the goal he wishes to attain. In proportion to how necessary, beneficial, and desirable the attainment of that goal is to him, so intense will his use of the means be. As true as this is in the natural realm, so true is it in the spiritual realm. In proportion to someone's acquaintance with and love for spiritual matters, so slothful or zealous he will be. In accordance with this he will either not be able to separate himself from

the world, or it will be easy for him to forsake the world and to make a wholehearted resolution to only seek the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification, as well as that He might be his life and joy.

Our ultimate goal is primary in our considerations and comes last in the execution of our plans. At first a person has a particular matter in view. This he pursues; he focuses upon it; he has nothing in mind beyond that. The means which he uses to obtain such a matter in and of themselves are not related to the various goals which he pursues. However, his use of the means is not the end of the matter; rather he uses that which he has attained to attain something else. In turn, he uses this again to attain something else. He thus proceeds until he can enjoy the matter he originally had in view; at that point his activity terminates. This is also applicable in the spiritual realm. This will enable you to determine how sincere or insincere you are in the pursuit of your objective, as well as how and for what reasons the means are used.

The Objective of This Petition

In this prayer the Lord Jesus teaches what the ultimate goal must be which we are to hold before us, what our primary desire must be, and the end we must desire and present in the other petitions.

Question: It is a certainty that our ultimate goal is the primary objective of our pursuit, and that the Lord Jesus in the first petition establishes the glorification of God's name as the goal as to why we are to desire the other petitions. Is the desire for, and the seeking after, our deliverance and salvation (that is, of conversion, faith, and holiness, without being motivated to that end purely and alone by the love for and having as objective the glorification of God's name) not sinful self-love, and therefore must be neglected until we have first received a love for the glorification of God? Ought not that love and that objective alone motivate us to seek for our deliverance and salvation?

Answer #1: If someone has eternal salvation as his objective—without having any further objective—and in order to attain this seeks the Lord Jesus unto justification and sanctification by a variety of means such as heartfelt prayer and supplications to God, the exercise of faith, an active

opposing of sin, and the exercise of godliness, then his activity is governed by the ground rule mentioned above. Salvation is the primary objective of his pursuit, and he uses means to obtain this—this being his ultimate goal.

Answer #2: This prayer is perfect as far as substance and order are concerned. In order for someone to pray this perfectly, he must be perfect himself. In this life no one is perfect, however, and therefore no one is able to pray perfectly. What then is to be done? Must he then, in order not to sin, refrain from praying because his prayer and actions are deficient and polluted with sin? Absolutely not, for otherwise all religion would cease. However, it is true that his prayer and works cannot be placed on the register of perfect virtues. He can thereby neither approach unto God, exist before Him, nor obligate God to hear his prayer. The uprightness of his objective, and his activity issuing forth from this objective in pursuing this ultimate goal, are pleasing to God, for he pursues this goal and is active with Christ in view; and his activity is spiritual and has spiritual vitality. God will hear this deficient prayer, not because of the virtues to be found in it, but according to His fatherly goodness and promise rooted in the satisfaction of Christ.

Thirdly, if someone is as yet not acquainted with this ultimate purpose, that is, the glorification of God's Name, and is not motivated out of love for this but only has his salvation and eternal security in view, then he has something in view which God commands. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12); "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30). Salvation was the objective and the apostle directed him to the means whereby this is to be obtained: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (vs. 31). A person who is likewise seeking to be saved, and to that end endeavors to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus, is not active in an entirely correct sense, but neither is his activity wrong. It is God's will that he endeavor to be saved and that he enter upon the way of believing in Christ. When he does this, he pleases the Lord and He promises to grant salvation to such persons.

Answer #4: God does not lead His children in such a way that they will first have a love for the glorification of God's Name and that nothing but love and the pursuance of this goal engages them to seek their salvation

unto repentance and faith. I repeat, God does not lead His children in this way. Never have the prophets or the apostles guided their pupils in such a direction. He who teaches such a way and wishes to lead others into that way, reveals that he himself is but in the state of nature and that the way of salvation is hidden for him. As a blind guide he misleads the souls which come under his care, for in that way they will never be saved. Never will anyone attain the highest level of holiness if he does not begin at the lowest level. We do not begin with the highest step and then descend to the lowest step; instead, we begin with the lowest and ascend to the highest.

Answer #5: A spiritual and wise father, who is going to teach his child to read and write, will not endeavor first to cause his child to be acquainted with and delight in the glorification of God's Name in order that he would thereby be motivated to learn how to read. He knows that such is beyond the reach of the intellect of a child. Likewise God leads His children in accordance with their comprehension. First He puts them on the lowest rung in order to lead them higher step by step. A beginner in grace, even though he is not motivated by a desire for the glorification of God's Name, is nevertheless not opposed to this. Rather, he approves of this in accordance with the measure in which this is presented to him and can be comprehended by him. Yes, time and again he ends in this when he thanks God for that which he has enjoyed.

When we pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name," then we must not imagine that we are praying on behalf of the Lord, as if we could contribute anything to him, and as if by hallowing His Name we could increase His glory. To do so would be to dishonor God, for He is perfect and all-sufficient. "Neither is (He) worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing" (Acts 17:25); "My goodness extendeth not to Thee" (Ps 16:2); "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him, that thou makest thy ways perfect" (Job 22:3). It is not God's felicity, but rather man's that he knows, loves, serves, and praises God. It is a grace that he may do so, and it will be the highest purpose and felicity of his life if he is permitted to do so and in actuality does this. The following is to be noted in the words of the first petition: 1) the object: Thy Name and 2) the desired activity: be hallowed.

illuminate, regenerate, restore the image of God in man, to render holy and virtuous, and to render someone radiant and glorious due to holiness. (4) To be holily engaged in the service of God—in a task commanded by God. Occasionally, this is attributed to God and sometimes to man. If it is attributed to God, then it signifies:

(1) The separation of a people or a person in order to penalize them for their sins. "Prepare²³ them for the day of slaughter" (Jer 12:3). (2) The separation, preparation, and qualification of nations to execute His judgments over others: "And I will prepare²⁴ destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons" (Jer 22:7). (3) To set apart a matter or day for His service: "I have hallowed this house" (1 Kings 9:3); "Wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exod 20:11). (4) To separate a nation or a person from others to be His property and for His service: "I hallowed unto Me all the firstborn in Israel" (Num 3:13); "I am the Lord which sanctify you" (Lev 20:8). It also signifies a rendering fit for His service; that is, to change, make holy, and render spiritual. "Sanctify them through Thy truth" (John 17:17); "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly" (1 Thess 5:23). In this manner God has also set apart the Lord Jesus to be a Surety and a Mediator, qualifying Him by the union of the two natures and the extraordinary infusion of the Holy Spirit. "...Him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world ..." (John 10:36); "For it became Him ... to make the captain of their salvation perfect²⁵ through sufferings" (Heb 2:10). When "hallowing" is attributed to men, it signifies: (1) To set apart—upon God's command—a day, matter, or person for the service of God. There is the hallowing of a day: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8). There is the hallowing of a matter: "So they sanctified the house of the Lord in eight days" (2 Chron 29:17). There is a hallowing of persons: "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exod 13:2). (2) To separate ourselves, to consecrate ourselves to God, or to prepare ourselves for the service of God. "Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow" (Josh 7:13); "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1).

All these meanings of the word "to hallow" are not applicable here. However, we have pointed them out since you need to be acquainted with

them in order to be free from any confusion in this respect, and to be all the more capable of understanding the meaning of the word "to hallow." This is a hallowing which has as its object neither man nor anything else. The reference here is to a hallowing which has God as its object. Sometimes this is attributed to God and sometimes to man. God Hallows Himself

God hallows Himself: "And I will sanctify My great name" (Ezek 36:23). God hallows Himself both in the works of nature and of grace, revealing to man what manner of God He is.

He hallows Himself in the works of nature.

(1) He does this when He reveals Himself as being the only God. "I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; ... beside Me there is no God" (Isa 44:24, 6). Man can discern this from creation: "... being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom 1:20).

(2) He does so when He reveals His goodness by means of temporal blessings. "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven" (Acts 14:17); "The earth is full of Thy riches" (Ps 104:24).

(3) He does so when He demonstrates His justice in punishing sinners. Even the heathen perceive this, for one of them states, "I have long been in doubt as to whether God rules over everything or whether everything comes about by chance. However, the punishment of Rufinus at last terminated this train of thought and vindicated God. They (the ungodly) are exalted in order that they will be crushed all the more severely." This is frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Such is true in these two texts: "Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her" (Ezek 28:22); "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten Me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen" (Exod 14:18).

(4) This occurs when the Lord reveals His irresistible omnipotence in His works: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exod 9:16). Consider also Dan 4:34-35, "I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

However, God hallows Himself in a special sense in the work of grace wherein He reveals Himself as: (1) A righteous God, who cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and who cannot be reconciled to the sinner except the committed sins be fully punished. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness" (Rom 3:25). (2) A good God: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared. ... He saved us" (Titus 3:4-5). (3) A wise God: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). (4) A faithful God: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor 1:20). (5) A truthful God: "But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay" (2 Cor 1:18). (6) An immutable God. "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath" (Heb 6:17). Therefore the Lord says, "But My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed" (Isa 54:10).

In these ways God reveals His perfections and hallows His Name.

The Manner in Which Man Hallows

Man is also said to hallow, either himself, other people, or a variety of matters. It then signifies: (1) The separation of ordinary things for religious purposes: "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn" (Exod 13:2); "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2).

(2) To devote to, to consecrate to God, to surrender to the service of the Lord, or to sacrifice: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). The following passages refer to this: "But first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor 8:5); "And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa 44:5).

(3) To prepare for the service of the Lord: "Sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice" (1 Sam 16:5). (4) To be involved in a holy manner in the work of the Lord. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exod 20:8). To this also belongs a being godly and holy in the totality of our life and deeds. "Ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev 11:44).

Man is also said to hallow God. Such hallowing, however, does not signify all that which we enumerated, for God is perfect, and nothing can either be taken away or added to Him.

However, the hallowing of God's Name consists, first of all, in knowing and attentively observing where and in what manner God hallows His Name—in His works as well as in grace, as has been discussed above. He who will hallow God's Name, must take note wherein God reveals Himself, and which perfections of God manifest themselves in this. "Come, behold the works of the Lord" (Ps 46:8); "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord" (Ps 107:43). Secondly, there must be a recognition and a joyful approbation that God is such a God. "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Rev 16:7).

Thirdly, God's Name as such must be glorified, exalted, and praised. "O praise the Lord, all ye nations: praise Him, all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever" (Ps 117). (1) Such occurs with the heart: "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Ps 103:1); "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1 Pet 3:15);

(2) with the mouth: "I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Ps 145:5);

(3) with our life and our deeds: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Fourthly, we must show to others how glorious a God our God is. From the Holy Scriptures and His works, both His common and extraordinary providence, we must point out which perfections of God manifest themselves in a given situation, and thereby we must lead them to the knowledge, acknowledgment, love, and glorification of God. Everywhere in the Psalms David exhorts everyone to do so—also in Ps 148, where he addresses angels, hosts, kings, princes, judges, young men, maidens, and old men. He stirs them all up to praise God and to behold the glory of the Lord in all His works of creation, preservation, government, and redemption of His people. He concludes in verses 13-14 by saying, "Let them praise the name of the Lord: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of His people, the praise of all His saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto Him. Praise ye the Lord." The psalmist also makes mention of animals, birds, fish, the sun, and trees. This does not mean that they are able to do this, but that they render man reasons to glorify God; and he ends the book of Psalms with: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.:"

The Implication of Praying, "Hallowed be Thy Name"

Thus far we have demonstrated how and whereby God's Name is hallowed. It now remains to demonstrate what it means to pray, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

First of all, it consists of an expression of strong love and a desire that God's Name be glorified and praised. "Let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified" (Ps 70:4).

Secondly, it includes an acknowledgment that we and all other men are not worthy that God would manifest Himself to us even in the very least, that we should rejoice in this revelation, and that we should put the praises of God in our mouths. When the holy angels glorified God and thrice exclaimed "Holy," they covered their countenances (Isa 6). Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the

Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Gen 18:27). Thereby we acknowledge that it would be God's incomprehensible grace and goodness if the Lord were to permit and enable us to glorify Him. For this grace we then pray.

Thirdly, it implies an admission of impotence to do this, for he who delights in the hallowing of God's Name finds himself perplexed from all sides. His understanding is too darkened, his will too inert, and his affections too lethargic. He is neither able to begin, nor to proceed, and if he does anything it is more the work of his head than his heart and he is therefore inclined to desist. He thus perceives that it must be given him out of grace, and therefore he says, "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (Ps 51:15).

Fourthly, it is indicative of faith that God is able to do it, is also willing to give it—and indeed does give it. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isa 43:21); "That they might be called ... the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified" (Isa 61:3). The Lord Jesus would not put these words in our mouth if it were not the Lord's intent to grant this to the supplicant.

Fifthly, it consists of a heartfelt entreaty:

(1) That God would reveal Himself as He is, and that He is the One who rules everything from the least to the greatest, He being the One who punishes and blesses, and who gives both victory and defeat in war. "O Shepherd of Israel ... shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up Thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine" (Ps 80:1-3); "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth ... show Thyself" (Ps 94:1).

(2) That both the supplicant and others would see and acknowledge God as He reveals Himself in His Word and in His works by His Spirit—as God is indeed pleased to do. "... the wicked ... will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (Isa 26:10); "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. ... So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps 58:10-11); "Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it"

(Ezek 37:14).

(3) That both the supplicants and others—by reason of knowing the Lord as being such a majestic, holy, glorious, good, and omnipotent Lord—would, in all that He does, love, fear, obey, and praise Him; and by reason of that disposition and desire they initiate everything, are active as such, end in this, and in very deed exclaim, "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom 11:36). All this is included in the prayer, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

Having a strong love that God will be glorified among men, in view of his unworthiness to be permitted to do so, and due to his inability to do so, the supplicant presents himself in faith to the Lord as a child, coming to God as his Father in Christ, and prays, "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children" (Ps 90:16); "Let my mouth be filled with Thy praise and with Thy honour all the day" (Ps 71:8).

The Vain Use of this Petition

How far man is removed from conducting himself as such, however! The heathen neither know, desire, nor glorify God, and are without God. Christians are indeed obligated to glorify God, but in some respects they behave themselves worse than the heathen, for instead of glorifying God, they dishonor Him—yes, they mock with God in an intolerable manner. However, you may say, "How do they mock with God?" They do so by daily taking these words in their mouths: "Hallowed be Thy Name," for they daily recite this prayer and are of the opinion that they would commit a great sin if they had not prayed this—if the Lord's Prayer had not been the conclusion of their prayer. However, in the meantime they have no knowledge of what this means: "Hallowed be Thy Name." They do not desire this, nor are they motivated to pray this by reason of such a desire. It does not even occur to them, and they just rattle it off. Is not this mockery? Would you dare to address a king or a man of distinction in this manner? Do you think that he would give you your request upon such irreverent babbling? Acknowledge therefore what an abomination it is to be prattling in this manner in the presence of God, while yet being of the opinion that you had prayed to God. Such persons have no interest in the means whereby God's Name is hallowed: the coming of God's

kingdom and the petitions which follow. Consequently, this means that they themselves also have no desire for the glorification of God's Name, and yet they insist on daily reciting this petition ignorantly, doing so without a desire for the matter—and irreverently. Is this not to be guilty of mocking with the great God? It would be less sinful not to pray at all than to rattle something off mockingly in God's presence.

The Grave Consequences of Not Hallowing God's Name

Therefore, give ear, you ignorant ones, who neither have knowledge of God nor of the contents of this petition, and who have no desires relative to this petition; hear, you who rattle off your prayers, who pray routinely, who mock with God, who tear God's laws to shreds and trample upon them, who abuse the holy name of God, who with your ungodly walk cause the name of God to be slandered; hear and take the following to heart:

First, God will not permit Himself to be mocked and despised. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked" (Gal 6:7); "Surely He scorneth the scorers" (Prov 3:34). Oh, how dreadful it will be when you will thus be scorned!

Secondly, as long as you live in such a condition, God does not wish to be worshiped by you. "When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts? And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Isa 1:12, 15). What a wretched condition it is not to be permitted to pray—yes, then even their religion is an abomination before God! "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov 15:8). God even forbids them to speak of divine things: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth" (Ps 50:16). Oh, God is so holy that we may not approach unto Him except in the way of holiness.

Thirdly, if we do not hallow God's Name; if we but say with our mouth, "Hallowed be Thy Name," while neither understanding what we are saying nor having a heartfelt desire that such would occur, then God will sanctify Himself by punishing you, in order that everyone would perceive

how very much God ought to be feared and how reverent we ought to be in our approach unto Him. When Nadab and Abihu came before the Lord with strange fire, "there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them" (Lev 10:3). In response to this Moses said, "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me" (Lev 10:3). Even though God does not always do this immediately, the Lord will nevertheless do this at His time and in His manner, and they will be aware of the fulfillment of this threat: "Forasmuch as this people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart far from me ... therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder" (Isa 29:13-14). Therefore, also give heed as to how you pray; be acquainted with and desirous for that which you declare before God: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God" (Eccles 5:2). This is intended for those who pray in an evil manner.

The Godly Rebuked for Their Deficient Use of This Petition

Also the godly are very deficient in praying this petition, and therefore are in need of rebuke. Many dwell too much upon themselves and are too intent upon a feeling sense of the forgiveness of sins, the assurance of their state, and victory over their sins, holiness, and virtuousness. The latter is a good desire, but it is not sufficient. We ought much more to accustom ourselves to have knowledge of, love for, and focus upon the highest goal in all things: the glorification of God's Name. This we must heartily supplicate for in our prayer, rather than desist in discouragement by saying, "I cannot glorify God; I am too ignorant and I do not know how to begin; I am too sinful, and the power of my corruptions troubles my soul; my cross presses me down and I am surrounded by sorrows; I find it difficult to believe that God is my God. How then can I glorify His Name? And even if I undertake this, then I must immediately desist. I am without subject matter for my prayer, I find no sweetness in it, and it is but the work of my intellect."

You are indeed to be rebuked. To refrain from this causes you to remain spiritually immature. You desire to immediately have a view of the glory of God in a high measure, as well as having a feeling and vehement sense

of love. Instead, you must begin in a humble condition of soul and reflect upon the suitableness of God being hallowed by all creatures, the blessedness of those who do so with desire and love, as well as your own desire to that end. You must thus train yourself continually to have this objective in view in order to become accustomed to it. In so doing, your propensity in this regard will improve.

Therefore, stir up your soul to hallow God's Name and to pray for this continually, for: (1) God is worthy of this (Rev 4:11), and it behooves you (Isa 42:21).

(2) God is pleased with it (Ps 22:4), and this is all your delight (Ps 71:8).

(3) It is the delightful activity of the birds, the heavens (Ps 19:1), the angels (Isa 6:3), and the saints upon earth (Ps 92:2; Ps 69:31). Would you then be silent?

(4) this will cause your work to be more genuine (John 3:21), and is a great privilege for you (Ps 99:3, 6). God glorifies all who glorify Him (1 Sam 2:30), and it is the sweetest task (Ps 147:1). Yes, it is felicity itself and it will be the eternal activity of glory (Rev 5:9-12). Therefore, take pleasure in this, undertake it, take conscious notice of the manner in which God reveals His perfections, and praise the Lord. Begin with this objective and end in it. "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord" (Ps 150:6). These matters have been enlarged upon and recommended in chapter 56x Add this chapter to it for it belongs to it. If I had not dealt with it extensively there, I would have been obligated to do so here. Since, however, we did so at that time, I have said less of it here.

The Second Petition: Thy Kingdom Come

God has conjoined both the end and the means to obtain that end with an unbreakable bond. He who does not use the means should not expect to attain the end. This is common knowledge to everyone. Sometimes the means—such as heavy labor and perilous circumstances—are unattractive and we would not avail ourselves of them if it were not for the fact that we would thus attain the desired end. Sometimes the means in and of themselves are attractive. We would make use of them without any

further objective in view—as is true for delectable food and drink. In the spiritual realm all is sweet—the end and the means which we use and avail ourselves of in order to attain the end (I am not referring to suffering here). They are sweet in view of the end to be attained, and they are inherently sweet as well. How amiable and desirable the ultimate of all objectives is—the hallowing of God's Name—we have demonstrated in the preceding petition. The five subsequent petitions are the means to that end—each individual petition being very precious and giving cause for rejoicing to the truly spiritual person. The means which most preeminently promotes the glorification of God's Name is the coming of God's kingdom. Its nature, glory, advantages, and desirability we shall now explain. In the second petition reference is made to a kingdom, relative to which the prayer is uttered that it might come. The Word "Kingdom" Defined and Expounded

Let us consider the word "kingdom." A kingdom consists of a populace united under one leader. There have always been many kingdoms in the world, and it is still divided into many. Among them there have been four empires; that is, eras when the entire world was subjected to one ruling head. These are the empires of Babylon, of the Medes and Persians, of the Greeks, and of the Romans. There is yet a fifth empire of an entirely different nature: the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, of which we are now speaking. This is otherwise referred to as the congregation of God and of Christ, and we denominate it with a word not found in Scripture: the church.²⁶ Let us furthermore consider the word "Thy" In this prayer God the Father is addressed, and thus the reference here is to the kingdom of the Father, for all things are out of Him and through Him. The Father gathers, rules, and preserves this kingdom by His Son Jesus Christ. This is therefore conjoined in the following passage: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" (Rev 12:10). God is King in and of Himself. He is the original cause of all things; He inherently has the preeminence, is exalted, has all majesty and glory, and all power and dominion from all eternity. This was true before there were any creatures, and now that creatures do exist, they are all subject to God in consequence of His nature.

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the

victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chron 29:11). The Lord is great—yes, He alone is King: "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and My name is dreadful among the heathen" (Mal 1:14). The kingdom of God is distinguished between 1) the kingdom of His power, 2) the kingdom of His glory, and 3) the kingdom of His grace. The kingdom of His power has all creatures as its subjects: good and evil angels, good and evil men, all living animals, and all inanimate objects in the heavens and upon earth. Everything is so fully in His hand that they cannot move without Him. Furthermore, they immediately stand ready at His bidding and execute His will. The Lord is therefore generally referred to in Scripture as the Lord of hosts. David speaks as follows: "They continue this day according to Thine ordinances: for all are Thy servants" (Ps 119:91); "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps 103:19). Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged this by saying, "Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Dan 4:34-35).

The kingdom of His glory has as its subjects the holy angels and the glorified elect in the third heaven—that is, paradise or the house of the Father. "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt 25:34). "God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess 2:12), that is, to His glorious kingdom.

The kingdom of His grace is also denominated as "the Church of God." First, the subjects of this kingdom are all true believers and converted persons. "... the Lamb shall overcome them ... and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev 17:14). Secondly, God separates them from the world, all nations, all communities, and all kingdoms, and causes them to dwell alone. "Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num 23:9); "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the

unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor 6:17).

Thirdly, there is a very intimate interrelationship among them—a most intimate and spiritual bond—so that together they form one whole. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). This union exists: (1) As a result of true doctrine: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph 2:20); "One Lord, one faith" (Eph 4:5). The apostle therefore exhorts: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (2 John 1:10).

(2) Due to being united by the same Spirit who dwells in all of them and by whom they all live: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom 8:14); "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Eph 2:18).

(3) By love: "Their hearts ... being knit together in love" (Col 2:2); "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

(4) By that selfsame faith, by which they are united to Christ and in Christ to each other. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21).

Fourthly, this kingdom has the Lord Jesus as its King. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Ps 2:6). Even though only true believers are the actual subjects of this King—they being

God, knowledge the only members who truly constitute the church, being united to the Lord Jesus with a spiritual bond, and in Him to each other—the Lord Jesus is nevertheless King of the entire church as she manifests herself in the world, which includes many unconverted members. Just as an earthly king rules over strangers, residents, hidden enemies, and traitors, likewise Christ also rules over the unconverted in His kingdom. For they acknowledge Him to be their King, subject themselves to Him, have sworn allegiance to Him, and confess Him, even though they do it but in an external sense and with an unchanged heart. Kingdom of God,

church Fifthly, God designates this kingdom as the object of His goodness and all manner of blessings. In that kingdom: (1) God dwells with His gracious presence: "God is in the midst of her" (Ps 46:5); "In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion" (Ps 76:2). Jesus is their King "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev 2:1). (2) There is safety: "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day" (Isa 27:3); "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech 2:5). Therefore all who know the Lord take refuge there: "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isa 14:32). (3) There is light: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ... but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa 60:1-3). (4) There is spirituality, life, and holiness. "But ye are ... an holy nation" (1 Pet 2:9). (5) There is peace and joy: "For the kingdom of God is ... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom 14:17). (6) There is comfort and refreshment for an oppressed soul: "All My springs are in Thee" (Ps 87:7). (7) The elect are converted and are gathered in: "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her" (Ps 87:5); "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). Such glorious things are said of the city of God—of the kingdom of Christ.

The Origin and Nature of the Kingdom This kingdom has its origin in the first gospel declaration to Adam, and will continue without fail until the end of the world. From Adam to Abraham it was gathered from various nations, but the particular focus was upon the holy lineage. From Abraham to Christ it consisted in the seed of Abraham, although many other individuals joined themselves to it. "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation" (Ps 147:19-20). After the coming of Christ, all distinction among nations has been removed, and whoever believes in and fears the Lord is pleasing to Him, regardless of what nation he belongs to. "Thou ... hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev 5:9).

This kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, being denominated as such in contrast to all earthly kingdoms. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). It originates in heaven, is of a heavenly nature, functions in a heavenly manner, and culminates in heaven. It is therefore called the kingdom of heaven. Since this kingdom has always been the same, being identical in nature from Adam to Christ, it thus has been in all ages a heavenly kingdom. However, it is especially the New Testament church which is denominated as such, all the externals of the shadow ministry of the Old Testament having been removed. The church is presently not an external kingdom; that is, it is not governed by kings and princes and furnished with external weapons—as was true in the Old Testament. Instead, she is now fully and entirely removed from all earthly externals, and is only heavenly in nature—also in its external manifestation. Thus, the church of the New Testament is in a special sense the kingdom of heaven. John the Baptist denominates it as such: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2). The Lord Jesus generally denominates it as such in the gospels and requires His apostles to do likewise. "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:7). It is a kingdom by virtue of its being ruled by a king, namely, Jesus Christ, who gathers, protects, and governs this kingdom. We refer to it as the kingdom of heaven since:

(1) It has its origin in heaven and is therefore frequently denominated the kingdom of God. By means of the gospel God reveals the Mediator and the way to salvation. God converts and adds to the church those regarding whom it pleases Him to do so. He sends forth ministers to that end, and the gospel call is therefore referred to as a heavenly calling. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1).

(2) Its subjects have heavenly natures. "Which were born ... of God" (John 1:13), are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4), "... are led by the Spirit of God" (Rom 8:14), and "are spiritual" (Gal 6:1).

(3) The benefits of this kingdom are heavenly: God Himself is their portion (Lam 3:24), and the Lord Jesus is their "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30). All the benefits of the covenant of grace are theirs. They are "the heirs of promise" (Heb 6:17).

(4) The activity of its subjects is of a heavenly nature: they pray, believe, love, and exercise virtue.

(5) They are without carnal weapons and are defenseless, even though the entire world is at enmity with them. Their battle is of a spiritual nature, however, and their weapons are spiritual. The apostle describes this armor from head to toe in Eph 6:13-18. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor 10:4).

(6) It culminates in heaven: "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet 1:9); "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet 5:4). These are all the reasons why this kingdom is denominated the kingdom of heaven.

This Kingdom Redounds to the Glorification of God

The existence of this kingdom redounds to the glorification of God in consequence of what God works in its subjects, what God does relative to them, and by what the church does relative to God.

(1) God's perfections shine forth in the ingathering of the church and the conversion of souls solely by the instrumentality of the Word; in the uniting of believers to Christ, justifying them by His ransom and righteousness; and by sanctifying, leading, and comforting them. In all this God reveals His wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, and faithfulness. He is thus "glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess 1:10).

(2) God is also glorified by what He does relative to His church. When He chastises the church for her sins, then God's holiness is manifested as not being able to endure sin even in His children and thus visits them with the rod. He is glorified when He preserves His church in the midst of wolves, so that she remains standing in all the assaults of the enemy—assaults which, humanly speaking, could easily undo her. He is glorified when He causes the church to be manifest again in a glorious fashion

after having been in very humble circumstances. God thus reveals in all this His omnipotence and faithfulness, showing that they are His people and that He will avenge Himself upon the oppressors of the church (2 Thess 1:6-7).

(3) God is also glorified by the church when she, with her deeds, shows "forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet 2:9). "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise" (Isa 43:21). Thus, this kingdom is the preeminent means whereby God's Name is hallowed. The Lord Jesus therefore teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

It is relative to this kingdom that we pray that it may come.

Question When does this kingdom come? The kingdom of heaven, as far as its New Testament manifestation is concerned, had not yet come at the time when the Lord Jesus prescribed this prayer, for the Lord Jesus had neither paid the ransom nor had yet been glorified. The Holy Spirit had not as yet been poured out in that extraordinary manner and the gospel had not yet been conveyed to the heathen, even though that moment was near. They could thus pray that it would come; it did not exist as yet, but was near. However, how can we now pray that such would come about, since all this has transpired?

Answer: Even though this great change initially took place, its progression occurs daily, and will not cease to occur until the Lord Jesus returns for judgment. When we therefore presently pray, "Thy Kingdom come," then this pertains to individuals in particular and to the condition of the church in general.

This Petition as It Relates to Individuals

This petition pertains to individual persons. As a house is built by adding stone to stone, and as a kingdom exists and is enlarged by uniting more and more subjects, likewise this kingdom prospers by the translation of individuals from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of Christ. This takes place when God, by means of the Word of the kingdom, illuminates their understanding. He will thereby cause them to see, while being

inwardly stirred, their sinful and damnable condition, the way of salvation, and the preciousness of the state of the redeemed. This kingdom comes when God removes their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh; when He gives them a submissive, attentive, and pliable heart; when He grants them faith whereby they accept Christ as their righteousness and ransom; when He regenerates them and grants them spiritual life, adding them as living stones to this spiritual building and incorporating them as faithful subjects into this heavenly kingdom.

And, the more they increase in light and holiness, the more God's kingdom is within them.

This Petition as It Relates to the Church in Its Condition

This kingdom comes relative to the condition of the church in general. (1) This kingdom comes when the light emanated by the church is pure and holy; when she eliminates the foul odor of error and heresy; when she excels in holiness, and she "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (Song 6:10); when she glitters with "beauties of holiness" (Ps 110:3), which "becometh thine house" (Ps 93:5), and when she is thus "a praise in the earth" (Isa 62:7) and "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa 62:3). This kingdom comes when the church radiates such glory that others do not dare to join her and magnify her instead (Acts 5:13).

(2) This kingdom comes when the church is multiplied and when multitudes join her in those localities where the church exists. It furthermore comes when the gospel is brought to other locales, nations, and kingdoms, and when the gospel is readily received there according to the promise: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt 24:14).

(3) This kingdom comes when the Lord delivers the church from overwhelming oppression which had caused her to flee into the wilderness, and when He causes her to reappear more gloriously. Such was the case when the Lord, at the time of Constantine the Great, delivered the church from the persecution of the heathen emperors; and

when He delivered her from the oppression of the antichrist at the time of the Reformation. It will come when God will destroy the throne of the beast, Rome, and annihilate the pope of Rome. For as the antichrist is reduced, the church will proportionally increase.

(4) This kingdom will come when the Jews will come to the Messiah, Jesus Christ; when they will acknowledge Him, believe in Him, repent toward the Lord, unite themselves with believers among the Gentiles, and together will form one church. This will be according to the promise found in Rom 11:25-26: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery ...that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob"; "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead" (Rom 11:15).

(5) This kingdom will come when that which is recorded in Rev 20:2, 4 will come to pass: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The glory of the church during the millennium will consist in the annihilation of the antichrist and the Mohammedans—the two chief enemies of the church; the binding of Satan and his incarceration in hell; the conversion of the Jews; the manifestation of great zeal among the heathen and all manner of nations; the presence of extraordinary light, holiness, and peace; the extraordinary indwelling of God among them; and a wondrous revelation of the Lord Jesus as King—not physically, but in the Spirit. God will then also make the earth extraordinarily fruitful. Oh, what a glorious time that will be! Who does not long for this time? All these things constitute the coming of God's kingdom.

The Lord Jesus mandates that we must pray for the coming of this kingdom. Such was the practice of the Old Testament saints: "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually" (Ps 72:15). This pertains to the kingdom of which Messiah is King—and thus the church—which is the spiritual body of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:23). For the King's honor is in the multitude of people. No matter what

David's perplexities were, the church was always bound upon his heart. He could not conclude his prayer for deliverance unless there was also a sigh for Zion: "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion: build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Ps 51:18); "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles" (Ps 25:22). He exhorts everyone to do likewise: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee" (Ps 122:6).

Our Duty to Pray This Petition

It is thus also our duty to pray, "Thy kingdom come." This includes: Let Thy church radiate light and holiness; extend her to all nations; deliver her from her oppression and anguish; annihilate the antichrist and all the enemies of the church; convert the Jews; and let the promised, glorious state of the church come about.

Furthermore, bless all the means which are subservient to the growth of the church:

(1) Send forth faithful and capable servants, established in the truth, who are zealous and apt to teach: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest" (Matt 9:38); that is, such as the Lord has promised: "I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness" (Isa 60:17).

(2) Let the Word and its preaching be blessed and fruitful: "Pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you" (2 Thess 3:1); "Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ" (Col 4:3).

(3) Let the institutions for learning—for the children as well as for the sons of the prophets—be blessed. Let the nurture of children be blessed so that the families become little churches. "And, ye fathers ... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

(4) Grant us a good government which, according to promise, will seek the welfare of the church: "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers" (Isa 49:23).

The Requisites for Praying This Petition Aright

In order to pray rightly for the coming of this kingdom there must be: (1) knowledge of what constitutes the future and glory of this kingdom; how this petition relates to the first petition; or, how God's Name is hallowed by the coming of this kingdom—both of which have been demonstrated above;

(2) love for the well-being of the church;

(3) an acknowledgment of the impotence of individuals to repent, to add themselves as a living member to the church, to live as members who bring glory to the church, as well as the impotence of the church in general to gather herself, remain intact, maintain purity in doctrine and sanctification, enlarge herself, and persevere during persecutions;

(4) faith that only God can do this, is willing to do it, has done so prior to this moment and still does, and has promised to hear the prayers of His children in this respect—and will also do this in the future according to His promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). All this constitutes the contents of this prayer. **The Vain and Sacrilegious Use of This Petition**

How few are they who pray this petition in truth, and how many are they who rattle it off! They think that to neglect praying the Lord's Prayer every day is ungodly; however, they have no qualms as to whether this petition is prayed aright.

First, this is true for all those who neither know nor cherish this kingdom in its spiritual, glorious, and beneficial nature, and who neither honor nor fear its King. And yet they say, "Thy kingdom come."

Secondly, there are those who do not manifest themselves as true members, but as subjects of the kingdom of Satan, as ungodly, worldly-minded. They are nothing but blots upon the church and a disgrace to her. And yet they pray, "Thy kingdom come." Thirdly, there are those who are of the opinion that the well-being of the church consists in the quantity of members and the presence of peace—even if the church is in

an ignorant and sinful condition. They—ministers, elders, deacons, common members, or authorities—will do nothing for the upbuilding of the church, and do not concern themselves with whether it goes well or ill with the church. They allow everything to proceed as if it did not pertain to them and nevertheless they pray, "Thy kingdom come." Fourthly, there are those who hate, oppress, and persecute the faithful subjects of this kingdom—those who have received light and are godly. If someone comes forward who opposes errors, ungodliness, and the oppression of the saints and desires to seek the good of Jerusalem, he will have to fear that in all things he will be opposed with a bitter hatred. Nevertheless they pray "Thy kingdom come."

First of all, this is mockery with God. By reciting this petition they are declaring that they are praying to God that He do such a thing, expressly requesting Him to do so. In the meantime, however, they do not know what they are saying, and they request what they do not desire; on the contrary, they work against it. Do you think that God will permit Himself to be mocked? Secondly, to hate, contend with, oppose, and oppress the church is to contend with the Lord Jesus, the King of the church Himself. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:4-5).

Thirdly, not only are you no partaker of all the heavenly benefits of the church—and thus you will also not be glorified with her—but all manner of dreadful judgments will come upon you: "But those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before Me" (Luke 19:27); "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" (Zech 2:8). Take note of the judgment which is threatened upon the oppressors of the church: "And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed" (Rev 11:5). When those who rattle off this petition—thus those who mock with God, are blots upon the church, cause the church to be slandered by their walk, and are the oppressors of the church—will come to judgment and observe the church standing in glory at the right hand of Christ; when they will observe that the Lord Jesus Himself, the King of the church, is the Judge and will look upon them in wrath; oh, how will they then be terrified and

tremble! If they were then permitted to render Christ a service, how readily they would do so! They will not be deemed worthy of this, however, but will be cast into the fire.

Obligations in This Petition

However, for you who have some esteem for the Lord Jesus and His kingdom, there are several obligations incumbent upon you. First, unite yourself to this kingdom and place yourself under the banner of King Jesus. Be as a champion among champions in contending for this kingdom and against its enemies. For outside of this kingdom there is nothing but enemy territory. Do you wish to sojourn in the territory of the enemy? There are but two kingdoms—that of the Lord Jesus and that of the devil; there is no third. To be part of the kingdom of the devil, however, so that he has dominion over you as he does over all children of disobedience (Eph 2:2), is indeed the most despicable and abominable thing imaginable. For it is to be at enmity against the Lord Jesus and at war with His kingdom. It is the most extreme form of slavery, for it is to be under the dominion of sin, and it is a most dreadful thing, for it will end in eternal damnation. Therefore, depart from it with utmost urgency and enter into the kingdom of the omnipotent, faithful, good, and blessed King Jesus. There you will find safety, peace, reconciliation with God, light, holiness, and comfort, and it will culminate in the kingdom of eternal glory. Therefore, depart and make a transfer, and join in honoring of Christ and the hallowing of God's Name.

Secondly, cherish this kingdom, and continually stir up your love to that end. Declare with your entire heart: "Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee"; that is, I cannot make any contribution toward Thee, but I can do so "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight" (Ps 16:3). Have a heart for the church as David did: "They shall prosper that love thee. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good" (Ps 122:6, 8-9). Let love prompt you to say with Israel, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy" (Ps 137:5-6). If your heart is capable of love, it must love the church,

for God loves her. "But because the Lord loved you" (Deut 7:8); "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah ... for the Lord delighteth in thee" (Isa 62:7). The Lord Jesus has a heartfelt love for her. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph 5:25). The angels love her and all believers love her. She is most delightful from every perspective, for they are the elect, the children of God, the saints, and the excellent. The church is "a crown of glory" (Isa 62:7), "a praise in the earth" (Isa 62:7), and "the perfection of beauty" (Ps 50:2). Therefore, love the church.

Thirdly, let both the well-being and the degenerate condition of the church be a matter of concern for you. Attentively inquire how the church in general is faring throughout the entire world. If you are informed that she is oppressed in certain places, that errors are surfacing and beginning to overwhelm her, that love is growing cold, that a worldly attitude is beginning to manifest itself, and that religious weeds are beginning to obscure the appearance of the church, then grieve over this and grieve "for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6:6). This is what Nehemiah did in chapter 1 and in chapter 2:3: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city (Jerusalem, the city of God), lieth waste?" From Lamentations it can be observed how deeply Jeremiah—and with him all the lovers of Zion—grieved over the oppression of the church. How do both he and the church lament there! "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger" (Lam 1:12).

Furthermore, if you hear that the Lord here and there causes His church to lift up her head again, and visits His people with blessings, rejoice in this and thank the Lord for it. The church did this formerly: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them" (Ps 126:1-2); "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isa 12:1); "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise to be heard ... we went through fire and through water: but Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Ps 66:12).

Fourthly, pray and work for this kingdom. Even though it is not in man's power to extend, preserve, and sanctify this kingdom, this being God's doing, it is nevertheless His will that man, out of love, be motivated to promote its well-being, and to call upon God to that end: "Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach" (Joel 2:17); "O send out Thy light and Thy truth" (Ps 43:3); "Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion" (Ps 51:18).

The Duty of the Upright

He who prays in his heart, will and must actively promote the well-being of the church and strive to be a means in God's hand—each in his place and according to his abilities.

(1) Ministers (the builders), in the demonstration of the Spirit and power, must preach the gospel from heart to heart, clearly and distinctly applying it individually to the ungodly, the godly, the weak, and the strong. They must convict, threaten, rebuke, comfort, and speak according to everyone's condition, doing so publicly as well as in the homes. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2); "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16).

(2) Elders must not only pray, "Thy kingdom come," but out of love for this cause must actively engage themselves, give heed to how the congregation functions, rebuke those who are disorderly, instruct the ignorant, and visit the sick. Furthermore, all that is a minister's duty in the private realm, is also their duty. Likewise the deacons must labor in their sphere.

(3) All individual members must not only continually persevere in praying for the well-being of the church, but also be active in their individual positions. It must be their objective to render the church glorious, separating themselves from all who are outside of her in order that the distinction be all the more visible. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Cor 6:17). Everyone must endeavor to be an example to others. That which was Timothy's

duty is applicable to every member of the church: "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12). Maintain mutual peace (except if the truth and godliness be at stake), and "seek peace, and pursue it" (Ps 34:14). Manifest a loving heart toward those who are within and without—to the one with the love of delight and toward the other with a compassionate love: "And (add) to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Pet 1:7). Be your brother's keeper by instructing, exhorting, and comforting everyone—each according to his own circumstances—so that no one may backslide, but that all would unitedly go forward from strength to strength.

"... warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thess 5:14). How the church would radiate the beauties of holiness and render Christ honor if everyone were to behave himself in this fashion! Even though the work inherently is sufficiently rewarding, doing something for God and His church being the most glorious and sweetest task, let the following reasons also stir you up:

(1) God is extraordinarily pleased with this. "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam 2:30).

(2) The Lord will preserve such in the day of evil: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble" (Ps 41:1); "Set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" (Ezek 9:4).

(3) Such will experience that they themselves will greatly increase in gifts and graces: "Every branch in Me ... beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2); "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matt 13:12).

(4) Such a congregation will be richly blessed, "for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Ps 133:3).

(5) The Lord will abundantly reward such faithful ones. "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on Mine altar for nought" (Mal 1:10); "Blessed is that servant,

whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Matt 24:46). Oh, how sweet it will be to be able to say, "Behold, here am I and the children which the Lord has given me." To them the Lord shall say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt 25:21). Happy is that people that is in such a case! The Third Petition: Thy Will Be Done on Earth as it Is in Heaven

The eternal and only blessed God, out of sovereign goodness, has created heaven and earth and all their hosts. He preserves them in their essence and motions by His omnipotent, omniscient (as far as each creature is concerned), efficacious, and all-encompassing influence. "Who ... upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3); "By Him all things consist" (Col 1:17). Furthermore, He is also the lawgiver of His rational creatures—men: "For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our lawgiver" (Isa 33:22).

Among all creatures upon earth, only man knows God as Creator, preserver, ruler, and lawgiver. When man was still in the state of rectitude, he joyously acknowledged the majesty, supremacy, and other perfections of the Lord. He beheld these perfections by reason of the immediate revelation of God to the soul, as well as by observing the creatures and God's operations in them. He was conscious of his dependency upon His Maker, submitted himself to Him as lawgiver, and with a joyful willingness did everything the Lord required from him. He knew of no other will but the Lord's will, for His law was imprinted in his nature—not only as a rule, but it was natural to him, he being a law unto himself.

However, after the fall everything in man has been reversed and corrupted. Even though he may be conscious and knowledgeable of his obligations toward God, he nevertheless separates himself from God, rejects the law of his Lord, lives according to his own rule, allows himself to be guided by his lusts, and declares himself to be his own master. By his very conduct he declares: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice ... I know not the Lord" (Exod 5:2); "Who is Lord over us" (Ps 12:4).

When God converts a person, however, his own will is most burdensome

and grievous to himself. He hates it, strives against it, and would extract it by its very root if he were able to. He loves the will of God, and to do this will would be all his desire and delight. Yes, since he loves God, it is his desire that not only he, but that all men would acknowledge, honor, and fear God in His majesty and sovereign rule, and be obedient to Him. Since he knows that both he and all other men are unworthy, impotent, and incapable of this, and that such obedience is a gracious gift of God, he therefore avails himself of prayer and prays in humility, "Thy will be done," doing so in accordance with what the Lord Jesus has prescribed in the third petition.

This petition consists of two parts. First, there is the matter requested: "Thy will be done." Secondly, there is the manner in which this will is to be done: "On earth as it is in heaven."

The Subject of this Petition: The Revealed Will of God

Relative to the matter requested, there is 1) the subject: Thy will; and 2) the activity requested: be done.

The address "Our Father," etc. is applicable to all petitions. The supplicant here maintains his childlike disposition and makes use of a childlike boldness to make his desire known to God as being His Father in Christ, and requesting its fulfillment. He does this, taking the lowest place, in deepest humility, and with the deepest reverence for the eminence and awe-inspiring nature of the divine majesty. While being in such a frame, the supplicant will perceive at once that his request will not attribute anything to the Lord Himself. Rather, he perceives it to be a gracious gift to man that he is permitted to behold and delight in the majesty of his God and His worthiness to be obeyed; that he is privileged to submit to Him and with joyful willingness may do that which is pleasing to Him, thus executing His will and commandments with zeal and steadfastness. He therefore requests this in such a heartfelt manner.

In regard to man, his will is a faculty of the soul which enables him to love or to hate, to be either pleased or displeased, to choose or reject—all this in accordance with the manner in which the intellect views or judges a given matter as being desirable or undesirable. However, this is not true

of the will of God. We puny human beings speak of it in human terms and are to understand it in a divine sense. We are acquainted with the matter as such, but for the "how" of this truth we must close our eyes; it is incomprehensible. We know that the will of God is the willing God Himself, and this is therefore not the matter to which our petition relates here.

When we speak here of the will of God, we perceive this will as it relates to the creature. As such, it signifies that which pleases God—God's good pleasure: "... according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5). It can be that God Himself executes this: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3), or that He requires this to be done by man: "... doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph 6:6).

God wills the execution of those things which He has purposed in His eternal counsel and which He has not made known to man in advance. This is denominated the will of His decree, or His secret will. We read of this will in the following passages: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isa 46:10); "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut 29:29). Even though this is not the actual subject of this petition, man is nevertheless involved with it.

Rather, the actual reference here is to those things which God has revealed to us, and not solely to those matters in which God finds pleasure, such as are recorded in the following passages: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess 4:3); "In these things I delight, saith the Lord" (Jer 9:24). It particularly relates to the activity of men, however, which they engage in, due to it being the will of God: "Lo, I come ... to do Thy will" (Heb 10:7); "... doing the will of God" (Eph 6:6). This will is denominated: the revealed will of God, or the will of His command. "Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut 29:29). This revealed will pertains to matters which God reveals in advance, but as yet have to come to pass. Such is true of the prophecies and the Revelation of John. Or else it refers to God's commands, the moral law, and thus to that which God requires from man. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do

justly" (Mic 6:8); "... but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt 7:21). So much for the subject of this petition.

It is this will concerning which the supplicant prays that it "be done," that is, that it be performed. Here the supplicant does not primarily and foremost focus upon man and his happiness and felicity in respect to holiness—as consisting in the harmony of his intellect, will, words, and deeds with the revealed will of God. Rather, the supplicant is moved by the glorification of God in His majesty. This is realized when man submits himself to God, and when he lives according to God's will. He is moved to pray for this by his desire that God be acknowledged by men as He is, and as He manifests Himself in the works of nature and grace. For man by nature does not perceive this, does not exalt God above all, nor does he glorify Him; he is furthermore not able to do this. He therefore prays that God would convert men, draw them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and translate them into the kingdom of His Son, so that they will be rendered capable of doing His will and be desirous to do it in very deed.

God creates His secret will, the will of His decree, irresistibly. This is thus not the matter we petition to be done. "For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back" (Isa 14:27). This sovereignty of the Lord the supplicant acknowledges, and he exalts and honors Him as such. Nebuchadnezzar did so: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou" (Dan 4:35). Even though we are not praying that this will be done, we nevertheless acknowledge this will, acquiesce in it, and fully submit to it, while confessing: "Be it with me according to the Lord's good pleasure; let Him do with me as pleases Him; I do not wish the Lord's sovereign rule over me to be restricted by whether or not this pleases me. I am but clay, and let Him make, break, or shape me according to His good pleasure. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: ... and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth' (Job 23:14, 13). Let Him do this and let Him be sovereign in doing so!"

The revealed will of God—that is, the will of His command, the manner in

which we are to conduct ourselves in all respects and under all circumstances—is the subject of our prayer. This does not pertain to the will of His command as it relates to God Himself, but as it relates to man. Thus, the petition is that man would do that which God wishes to command, doing so for the very reason that God commands it and is pleased with man for doing so—for we observe daily that man does not do what God commands. Yes, he prays this due to being acquainted with man's wickedness, his own impotence, as well as with the fact that no one will, or is able to, obey God's commandment (and thus acknowledge God's majesty and rule) except God illuminates the understanding, changes the heart, and causes us to walk according to His institutions and to keep and observe His judgments. The Lord promises to do this in Ezek 36:26-27, as well as in Jer 31:33: "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Therefore the supplicant prays that God would manifest His omnipotence and goodness by granting the supplicant and others such a heart to know, love, fear, and obey Him in order that man would thereby show that God is the sole Lord, ruler, and lawgiver, who by His very nature obligates all creatures to obedience. David exemplifies this for us when he prays, "Teach me Thy statutes" (Ps 119:36); "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts" (Ps 119:36); "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies" (Ps 119:36); "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments" (Ps 119:35).

We are to emulate him in this, and thereby demonstrate our desire for the glorification of God's Name by the doing of His will, acknowledging our impotence due to the foolishness and wickedness of our heart. Moreover, we must thereby acknowledge that God is good in being willing to give this, has the ability to give it, and is faithful to fulfil His promises to the supplicant. So much for the first portion—that is, the matter requested.

The Manner in Which God's Will is to Be Done

The second part of the petition relates to the manner in which we are to be willing to do God's will: "On earth as it is in heaven." It is neither contrary to the text, nor to the matter itself to acknowledge here a contrast between heaven and earth, or rather, a oneness of heaven and earth. Thus the petition is: "Thy will not only be done in heaven as the angels and the souls of the just made perfect glorify Thee there by doing

Thy will, but let also Thy will be done by men upon earth. May Thy Name thus be glorified in heaven as well as upon earth, and upon earth as well as in heaven. The devil and the reprobate upon earth are not deemed worthy by Thee of this, as they neither desire this nor will ever do so. However, Thou hast formed a people for Thyself in order that they would show forth Thy praise. Therefore, let Thy elect do so both in heaven—which they do and about which Thy children upon earth rejoice—and upon earth in Thy church, which is so imperfect and in order to do so is in need of a greater measure of grace and of the Spirit. Illuminate and sanctify them more and more in order that they may be equipped to do Thy will, and thus glorify Thy Name and that thus Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." From this perspective all the elect are viewed as one congregation who all join together in glorifying God by doing His good pleasure. Observe the unity of the residents of heaven and the congregation upon earth: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (Heb 12:22-24). They are one people who rejoice in each other's activity; that is, in their mutual glorification of God. However, the comparison between heaven and earth can also be understood as referring to the manner in which the will of God is to be done—namely, that men upon earth do the will of God as heartily, eagerly, earnestly, joyously, and continually as the angels and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven. It is not suggested here that it is done as perfectly. A believer indeed strongly desires this, strives for this, and will not rest until his obedience will be perfect. However, he does not desire to limit the Holy One of Israel. It is a gracious gift to be privileged and be able to do the will of God, and one is therefore grateful for the smallest measure of this, even though he longs for more. He does not dare to put restrictions on the measure, however, knowing that God will not make His children perfect here. Rather, it is His will to lead His children to perfection and felicity by faith in the Mediator who is given unto daily justification and sanctification. Therefore, this is not prayed in the absolute sense of the word and with the designation that perfection be attained in the present time. Rather, one joins the citizens of heaven in

their endeavor and is desirous to emulate them in their zeal, desire, and love—praying therefore that he may have both grace and the Spirit to that end.

(1) The residents of heaven do the will of God with an unfathomable willingness. "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Ps 103:20). This is also the desire of true worshipers, and they endeavor to be thus engaged. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Ps 110:3).

(2) In heaven the most sacred reverence and deepest humility is manifested in the presence of the Lord. The angels cover their faces when they declare the holiness and glory of God (Isa 6:2). The twenty-four elders cast their crowns before the throne and fall down before Him who sat upon the throne (Rev 4:10). Likewise every believer desires to do the will of God in a very meek and humble disposition. God wills that it be so: "What doth the Lord require of thee, but ... to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic 6:8). Such was David's practice: "In Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Ps 5:7).

(3) The residents of heaven do God's will diligently and zealously:

"Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire" (Ps 104:4). The Lord also wills that His children upon earth do His will zealously: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom 12:11).

(4) In heaven there is nothing but joy. All that they do they do with an inexpressible joy. God wills that also upon earth His children likewise do His will with joy. "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps 100:2). This is also their desire: "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Prov 21:15).

(5) In heaven they never become weary, but they are always and steadfastly doing God's will: "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night" (Rev 7:15). Likewise, God wills that His people upon earth also be steadfast in the doing of His will. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58). The petition therefore is that we may do the will of God as willingly, humbly, diligently, zealously, joyously, and

steadfastly as the residents of heaven do, even though we shall not attain their perfection until we shall join them in glory. From the nature of this petition, as declared above, everyone will be able to be convinced whether or not he prays this petition aright.

The Vain Recitation of This Petition

Many recite this petition daily; however, it is nothing more than a recital and thus not a prayer.

(1) This is true for all who are not acquainted with the Lord's majesty and worthiness to be obeyed, whereby all men—and particularly each of you individually—are obligated to submit to His will. They neither acknowledge nor love this will with inner approbation. They neither submit themselves to the Lord, offer their services to Him, nor willingly do His will, so that in all this they might glorify His Name, acknowledge Him as the only God, and exalt, magnify, and praise Him. You who are convinced that such is your disposition, what business do you have to pray and to say to God, "Thy will be done"? For you are neither sincere in this, nor desire this, nor are desirous to do so. It is therefore no more than a rattling off of this petition in the presence of the majestic, omniscient, and holy God. How do you dare! Do you not fear to be cast into hell with one blow?

(2) This is true for you who set God aside, let Him be for what He is, remove yourself far from Him, and live according to your own will, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph 2:3); "... that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom 6:12); "... serving divers lusts and pleasures" (Titus 3:3). You are a person who allows your own will to be the law and motive for your doings, declaring, "I will do this and I will not do that; period! Who has any say over me, and of whom do I need counsel? To whom do I need to give an account of my doings? It pleases me to conduct myself in this manner." No matter what God commands, you will not do it. If God forbids something, you refuse to desist, for your will must be done. Nevertheless you rattle off before God, "Thy will be done."

(3) Some are not even satisfied with doing their own will. Rather, they

insist that all men and beasts—and if they dared to say it, also God—would stand ready to do their will. Any person who does not fulfil their wishes and does not behave according to their will, can expect to be penalized by them in as cruel a manner as possible. And if they were capable, they would cause everyone to do their will. They do whatever they are capable of, however, by showing aversion, hatred, wrath, vengefulness, and by verbal abuse and the infliction of injury. Even though they insist that others do their will, they nevertheless say to God, "Thy will be done." Attentively take note of these convicting remarks.

First, you who are such, and in such a frame pray, "Thy will be done" (which however is no prayer), ought indeed to be inwardly convinced that you are mocking with God. How do you dare to rattle something off before the most eminent and awe-inspiring Majesty, saying something to Him which you do not mean and will not do, whereas you intend, and actually do the very opposite! If you dare to proceed with mocking God, you will experience that "God is not mocked" (Gal 6:7). Surely, God will mock with you when He will cast you away from Himself. "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov 1:26); "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov 28:9).

Secondly, you nevertheless wish to be known as a Christian and would be offended if people called you a heathen or an atheist—which those being referred to above truly are. Be assured that you are neither a partaker of Christ, nor of the benefits of the covenant of grace, for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24). Those who are Christ's have yet remaining lusts which surface daily. However, these lusts are subdued, controlled, and opposed in order that they may be rooted out. Such persons hate their own will and grieve when it manifests itself. On the contrary, it is your pleasure, delight, and your very activity to do your will. You are therefore without Christ, without God, and without hope. Will you then yet proceed in this way with delight?

Thirdly, you who live, as has been said, according to your own will, and then still say, "Thy will be done," are not only mocking with God and are without Christ and without hope, but eternal condemnation hangs above

your head; eternal damnation will be your end. Hear what God says concerning you and to you: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (Rom 8:13)—not only temporal death which all men have in common, but also eternal death, that is, damnation. "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:19). And do you ask what eternal damnation is? Consider 2 Thess 1:8-9, where we read, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." The apostle speaks likewise to you: "But unto them that ... do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Rom 2:8-9). Consider also other texts in which eternal damnation is described. Question your own conscience and give heed if it will not cause you to perceive all this in some measure so that you may be alarmed by it. Therefore, do not go on in this way; either desist from praying, or pray this petition reverently in the presence of God, earnestly desiring and humbly requesting the same.

The Godly Rebuked and Exhorted

The godly do indeed have light, life, and truth within themselves. It is all still so feeble, however, and the residual corruption of nature still has so much strength. They have to strive against the lusts of the flesh which war against the soul. Even though their own will does not have dominion over them, it nevertheless frequently manifests itself, and readily meddles with all things. Frequently they are also not conscious of their own will, do not detect it quickly enough, and do not strive against it sufficiently. Too often they are too irreverent and careless when they pray, "Thy will be done," for the perfect intention to turn from and strive against their own will is not present in an express and lively sense. They must therefore humble themselves about their deficient prayers, seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ, pray for strength to oppose their own will, and henceforth be more earnest in denouncing their own will. With a sincere intent they must strive against their own will and come to God, saying, "Thy will be done."

Therefore renounce your own will; that is, treat it as a stranger whom you do not know. Do not consult it, esteem it as your enemy, hate it, reject it, thrust it away from you, and do not heed it—however delightful and flattering it may be—for everything would be defiled if your will would but find residence in your smallest finger. Therefore, renounce your own will.

For, first of all, what are you—you, who are but a worm and an insignificant, vain, sinful, and hateful monstrosity, that you should have a will which is contrary to the will of God, who is your Lord, lawgiver, and Judge? Who are you that your own will would be to you as a lord, law, and rule—yes, that you insist upon others also conforming to your will? Something more unbecoming, despicable, and contemptible is not imaginable. Abhor yourself, be ashamed, and hide yourself so that neither God, angels, nor men will see you. Do you dare to maintain your own will in opposition to the holy will of the sovereign God? Shame on you! Hasten to thrust out and mortify your will, for this is not becoming to one who is but an ant and a monstrosity; it is intolerable. I cannot find the words to give expression to the hateful and intolerable nature of all this. Hasten to thrust your own will from you as far as possible.

Secondly, what is it that your own will desires? Does it desire something which is beautiful, glorious, honest, and beneficial? No, but it desires that which is impure, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. It desires to be honored by a worm—yes, by one who is bound for hell—and thus you desire to be loved by those who are hateful. Your desires relate to a splendid piece of real estate, that which is vanity, things which perish, things which pollute the soul, and things which at best are of no benefit. They are things which are prohibited by God, and will lead soul and body to hell. Will these things be more glorious and delightful to you than God, His will, and the things in which God delights? Shall your will be in direct opposition to the will of God? If God says, "I hate these things, and you will neither desire, seek, nor focus upon them," will you then say, "I wish to covet, seek, and have them"? Will that which is inferior prevail over that which is superior; that which is defiled over that which is holy; and that which is harmful over that which is beneficial? Therefore, renounce your own will if you wish to pray, "Thy will be done."

Thirdly, believing supplicants, you have certainly not received the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God. Doesn't this Spirit compel you to renounce the world and to desire and seek after that which is divine? You are indeed a partaker of the heavenly calling, and by this you have been drawn out of this present evil world. Would you wish to return to it again and reinstate the earthly will which you have renounced as being lord over you? That precious gospel by which you have been called teaches us that we should renounce ungodliness and the lusts of this world. How then, being subject to the light of the gospel, could you follow your own sinful, and worldly will? Since you have been born of God and have been made a partaker of the divine nature, then as a child you love God as your Father and have received an obedient heart to do the will of your Father and to delight in the law of God after the inward man. What business do you therefore have with your own sinful will, which is hostile to the will of God? Cause it therefore to be silent, trample it under foot when it asserts itself, strive against it, do not yield to it in the least, cast it out, and oppose it by praying, "Not my, but Thy will be done."

Fourthly, the doing of your own will engenders nothing but sorrow for you. It wounds, defiles, and deforms the soul; it causes sorrow as well as a loss of freedom and peace. God, who is all your light and desire, hides Himself and lets you mourn alone. While standing from afar, you are vulnerable to drifting away further and further by the smallest breeze of lust. Should you then allow yourself to be a safe harbor for your enemy? No, you must expel him and chase him away as you would a thief and a murderer from your home. On the contrary, the renouncing of your own will shall yield much blessing for you as it will give you free access to the Father through Christ. It will engender much peace, result in great personal freedom, and give you boldness to discharge your duty toward others. You will find yourself to be delivered from desires for earthly things and there is thus nothing to lose nor fear. Yes, the Lord will abundantly requite the loss of honor, love, possessions and pleasure with spiritual blessings and occasionally also with temporal blessings—be it in abundance or as much as is needful or beneficial for you.

Compliance with God's Will During Seasons of Affliction

When you pray with your heart, "Thy will be done," then you are acknowledging the Lord's majesty, claim, and authority over you. Then you will acknowledge with delight and joy that He alone is sovereign and is Lord, and you are thus fully submitting yourself to Him and His will. You thereby request that He deal with you in full accordance with His will and pleasure, thus acquiescing in the fact that you will have nothing to say in the matter. You are thereby leaving everything in His hands, since you know you are neither able nor willing to act contrary to Him, knowing that He will deal with you in a fatherly manner and, being reconciled with Him in Christ, all things will work together for good for you.

If the Lord then afflicts you—as He will most certainly do with all His children, not one excepted—you are to reflect upon your petition and thus with all quietness subject yourself to the will (this chastising will) of your Father. This is not to imply that you would not be conscious of your cross, for that would be unnatural and an implicit despising of the God who chastises—which provokes Him to wrath. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved" (Jer 5:3). It is also not contrary to submission to the will of God if we desire to be delivered from those oppressing or threatening circumstances. You may indeed pray for deliverance and you may indeed use lawful means to be delivered from it. However, all this must be practiced while embracing the will of God, being much more desirous that God's will be done toward us than that we be delivered from the cross. Rather, you would be opposing the Lord's will if you were fretful. "Neither be weary of his correction" (Prov 3:11). Such occurs when you thereby become discouraged, reject your spiritual state, and view all this as proceeding from the avenging justice and wrath of God; when you harbor hard thoughts toward God and entertain doubts about the providence of God: "Thou art become cruel to me: with Thy strong hand Thou opposeth Thyself against me" (Job 30:21); "Lest I ... take the name of my God in vain" (Prov 30:9); or when you wish for death and, with Judas, entertain thoughts to hang yourself: "So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15). It occurs if you become envious of the prosperity of the wicked: "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Ps 73:3, 14); and if you

begin to doubt as to whether God truly rules all things—whether this evil proceeds from the Lord, whether He sees those who are destitute, and whether He hears their cry or helps them indeed.

To do so is to contend with the Almighty (Job 40:2), and is a hardening of ourselves: "Who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered" (Job 9:4). When such or similar thoughts, dispositions, and inner motions manifest themselves, you oppose the Lord, not being submissive to the will of God. Then you bring a threefold cross upon yourself as well as a chastisement which you will not be able to avoid. You will increasingly be afflicted with grief, and not bearing the cross well will be more grievous than the chastisement itself. The cross will also be made heavier and be of longer duration, for God will prevail: "That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Rom 3:4). You would cause the Lord to withdraw Himself from you: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest My soul depart from thee" (Jer 6:8). Have you then gained the upper hand? Therefore, in all quietness submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord, and say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mic 7:9). Learn from a king to bring your soul into submission unto the Lord. He said in Ps 39:9, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it."

And should it not behoove you to conduct yourself likewise?

First, is not the Lord the sovereign God? May not He do with His own as pleases Him? Do you have a right to demand from Him why His dealings are thus? Would you indeed desire that the Lord be obligated to you and be required to do your will? Certainly not; you rejoice that He is God, is sovereign, and is exalted above all. Why then, as you acknowledge His majesty, would you not willingly submit yourself to Him—even if it were with tears in your eyes due to the grief you must endure?

Secondly, believers, is not He your reconciled Father in Christ? Does not He act in love—even if it is due to paternal displeasure with your deeds? "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev 3:19). Should you then render opposition to love and be fretful over the manifestation of love? This is where the problem lies. You think: "If only I knew that God loves

me, I would quietly and willingly endure the affliction." It is that which begets your fretfulness. Overcome this and humbly submit yourself to the chastising hand of the Lord and you will better perceive the grace which the Lord has bestowed in you. During temptation you are not able to ascertain your spiritual state by way of the marks of grace. Rather, you must deem this to be a fact, and exercise faith instead. This will bring you closer to God and cause you to look unto Jesus; all that leads to the Lord Jesus, and through Him to God, cannot be counterfeit. Therefore, consider that the cross is a consequence of God's displeasure over your sinful behavior, but you must at the same time esteem it as proceeding from a paternal heart in order to thereby sanctify you and draw you away from sin. With this in mind, submit yourself unto the Lord. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits" (Heb 12:9).

Thirdly, the chastisement, when you bear it well and embrace the will of God in it, will be greatly beneficial to you. This is God's very objective: "He (chastises) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb 12:10-11).

Even if you do not perceive the beneficial nature of the chastisement, then do not be surprised by this, for the fruit will come afterwards. Therefore, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps 37:5), and you will experience what David experienced and say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes. I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy word" (Ps 119:71, 75, 67).

The Holy Obligation to Do God's Will

Believing supplicants, it does not suffice to renounce your own will and to be submissive to the Lord's will in affliction. Rather, you who pray, "Thy will be done," must know that it is also your duty to do the will of God by living according to His precepts; for whatever a believer prays, he is also

willing to do. Therefore, acknowledge the obligation which is upon you with your whole heart—not only due to being God's creature, but also in view of His relationship to you as being your Father in Christ. Submit yourself as such to the Lord and say, "I am Thy servant—yes, I am Thy servant." Offer yourself to the Lord by reason of that relationship and say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Neither do anything carelessly, nor because it seems good to you, but ask the Lord for counsel: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Do not ask this with the desire that the Lord would answer you according to your wishes, but as with a sense of holy indifference that it be as it pleases the Lord, seeking for His will in your every deed. God has revealed His will in His Word and we therefore are neither in need of nor should expect, desire, or request immediate revelations each time. Rather, we must come to the Lord by way of His Word which is a lamp for our feet and a light upon our path. Then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all the Lord's commandments.

Do not only pray, but listen with readiness and desire for an answer. Be ready to hear what the Lord will speak to you, desiring that He would not only direct you by His Word as to what His will toward you is, but also that He would enliven your soul and kindle it with love toward His will, and cause you to subscribe to His will with willing obedience and maintain such a disposition in you. Therefore, let compliance with God's revealed will be your only duty, and say with David, "I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes always, even unto the end" (Ps 119:30, 111-112). Do not only resolve to do so with resolute determination, but carry it out and engage yourself with delight. Reverently seek to be pleasing to the Lord in all your deeds. Do not hesitate and neither consult your own will nor consider your own interests, but subscribe to the doing of God's will with a ready mind. Hasten and do not delay to observe the Lord's commandment. Whatever you do in the Lord's service, do it with a zealous spirit and with fervent earnestness, such being your pleasure and delight. God is not pleased when we perceive our service to Him as troublesome and burdensome. Therefore, greatly delight yourself in the Lord's commandments, and let

it be a joy to you if you may do something which will be pleasing to the Lord. Conquer all external and internal hindrances and opposition. Persevere courageously in all circumstances and be as the horse of the Lord's majesty in battle, while being "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58).

Final Exhortation

Therefore, children of God, since you pray, "Thy will be done," and are desirous to do the Lord's will in the place assigned to you, stir up your soul to that end so that you may execute it in a lively manner. For no matter where you turn, you are surrounded by those who cry out to you, "Oh, do the Lord's will."

First, when you focus upon God, you will perceive that He is worthy of this for He is the majestic and exalted One. He is your Maker, and you exist by His powerful influences. If He were to withdraw this but for a moment, you would no longer exist. Apart from His infusion of power you would not be able to see, hear, or move. He who is in such a position and is so dependent upon the exalted, glorious, holy, and omnipotent God—would such a person not be engaged with his entire soul and all its faculties to do His will? Children of God, the Lord loves you. Motivated by love He has given you His Son to be a Surety and Savior. He has redeemed you, granted you spiritual life, adopted you to be His children, and ordained you for eternal glory. When considering that, should you then not receive wings to embrace, love, and do the will of God with a burning heart, solely because He is the Lord and your Father? The church of old boasted in this: "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king" (Isa 33:22).

Secondly, when you focus upon the will of God, you will perceive it to be delightful; all that He requires from us is delightful. "And ... that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom 12:2). All that God commands is pure and holy. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps 19:7-8).

How can someone who knows the Lord refrain from embracing the will of his Lord and from observing His commandments with joy? "It is joy to the just to do judgment" (Prov 21:15).

Thirdly, to do the will of God is to glorify God. It is the delight, pleasure, and joy of a child of God that God be known, feared, and glorified, and that none but He be Lord, the Most High, the Holy One, and the lawgiver. This we do by ourselves and with others when we do His will. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

Fourthly, our Lord is so good that He will reciprocate to the doer of His will all that he does in His service out of love, with filial fear, and willingly. If we do the Lord's pleasure—oh wonder—then He will in turn do our pleasure. "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him" (Ps 145:19). He will reward them richly: "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps 19:11). All restlessness of the soul is the consequence of doing our own will; but in the doing of God's will there is nothing but peace: "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps 119:165). Spiritual life is but feeble in believers and it grieves them that they do not make more progress. Therefore, begin to do the Lord's will sincerely, according to your feeble strength—as a child—and the Lord will give you increase. "Every branch in Me that beareth ... fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

The hiding of God's countenance is most bitter for a child of God; however, His revelation of Himself to him constitutes all his joy. The Lord grants this privilege to all that do His will: "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways" (Isa 64:5). Therefore, enter upon this way which leads to salvation. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Ps 84:5, 7).

The Fourth Petition: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

There is a Christian proverb as expressed by a pagan: "Orandum est, ut sit mens sana in corpore sano," which means: "One ought to pray that there be a healthy soul in a healthy body." This is in agreement with

John's wish expressed to Gaius: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2). How delightful is this testimony addressed to Gaius! In general we must now reverse this and say, "I wish that your soul may prosper as your body prospers." For we observe in this that we also are to care for the body, for if we are to hallow God's Name, edify the congregation, and do the will of God, we are in need of a soul and a body which are both in health. If the one is not healthy, the other will be hindered and the entire man cannot function properly.

The Relationship Between Soul and Body

The soul influences the body. A healthy soul benefits the body, whereas a troubled soul has an ill effect upon the body. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones" (Prov 17:22). The body also influences the soul and is irritated by ill health. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom 6:12). This is also evident in the following passage: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom 7:23). The apocryphal book Wisdom has a splendid proverb in chapter 9:15: "For the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that nurseth upon many things." Therefore, we must take care that both soul and body are brought and kept in good health in order to be fit for the service of the Lord. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor 6:20). If the health of both is to be maintained, they are in need of nourishment. The soul, being an immortal spirit, has no need of anything for the maintenance of its existence except the preserving influence of God. However, for its spiritual well-being it is in need of spiritual food in this life—which is the Word of God applied by faith. The Word of God is the incorruptible seed of her regeneration (1 Pet 1:23). The Word of God is her nourishment, resulting in the growth of her spiritual life. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:2).

The body is also in need of food. It has its origin in the earth and its nourishment proceeds from the earth, whereby both its essence and

motions are maintained. Unconverted men, who have nothing in view but earthly things, are very desirous for that which is earthly, wishing to gratify and entertain themselves therewith. In this respect, they almost resemble the irrational animals, for it is as if they live in order to eat, whereas they ought to eat in order to live. "From men which are Thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure" (Ps 17:14). A believer does not wish to have earthly things as his portion—they are beneath him. He does not desire earthly things for their own sake, but as a means unto something else: to maintain the body in a fit condition in order to serve the Lord. He knows that it is only the Lord who causes bread to come forth out of the earth—that "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" (Ps 147:9); also giving man his food and raiment: "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season" (Ps 145:15). He knows that the Lord must also render the food efficacious to be nourishing, and therefore a believer looks unto the Lord and prays, "Feed me with food convenient for me" (Prov 30:8). It is this which the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the fourth petition.

The Position of This Petition

Many have investigated why the Lord Jesus places the petition concerning the maintenance of the body in the fourth place and wills that there be prayer for the welfare of the soul in the fifth and sixth petition. It cannot be easily ascertained who has most closely approximated the reason for this. All agree that this prayer is perfect—not only in regard to the matters it contains, but also as far as the order is concerned. In applying this to this petition some say that the Lord Jesus adjusts Himself to human weakness, which causes man to be very concerned about food and raiment for the body. He would therefore teach us first to pray for the body, so that we, being freed from anxiety concerning the body, would have that much more freedom to pray for the welfare of the soul. Others insist that the Lord Jesus wishes to guide us step by step from the physical to the spiritual. Others divide the petitions into two divisions, maintaining that the first four petitions are requests for that which is good, whereas the last two petitions are invocations for the

averting of evil. They then divide these benefits into heavenly (which precede in the first three petitions) and temporal benefits which, being least important, follow in the fourth petition, upon which the invocations follow. Again, others divide the petitions as follows: In the first three petitions God is the immediate object of the requests; the most eminent petition has the primary position. In the last three petitions, however, man is the immediate object, and that which is least important is listed first; one has to exist before he can be well. However, who shall be able to advance an infallible argument regarding the order which will be satisfactory so as not to be subject to counter-argumentation? We shall now proceed to consider the petition itself. In this petition we must consider individually 1) the matter which is requested: our daily bread; 2) for whom we pray: us; and 3) the manner in which we request the receipt of bread: not by way of purchase, but as a gift; and not once and for all, but every day. "Give us this day."

The Matter Requested

The matter requested is bread, which is further defined as our and daily bread. The word "bread" here does not refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, who calls Himself the Bread of Life (John 6:35) because He is the spiritual life of God's children and the maintainer of that life. The reference here is not to the bread of the Lord's Supper as it relates to the body of Christ—as is the case in 1 Cor 10:16. Rather, it refers to the common nourishment for the human body. "... that He may bring forth food out of the earth ... and bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Ps 104:14-15). In a general sense it refers to all manner of food and all necessities which are subservient to man's support. Jacob prepared a great meal and invited his brethren "to eat bread: and they did eat bread" (Gen 31:54). Thus, the Hebrew word לֶחֶם (lechem) signifies bread, that is, all manner of food. "Who giveth food to all flesh" (Ps 136:25); "I ate no pleasant bread" (Dan 10:3). Since the maintenance of the body is here requested, the word "bread" is also understood to refer to drink as well as clothing—all of which the body needs. Jacob expressed this: "If God ... will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on" (Gen 28:20), and the apostle says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim 6:8).

All manner of livelihood—particularly food—is expressed here by the

word "bread," this being the preeminent and most nourishing food. "... bread which strengtheneth man's heart" (Ps 104:15). It is the most essential food, for without bread one cannot live well; however, it is possible to live without meat or fish, these being referred to as supplementary foods (John 21:5).²⁷ It is the most pleasant of all foods: bread always tastes pleasant when we are hungry; we never tire of it. It is the most common of all foods, for people of all ranks—high and low—make use of it. It is the food most used in moderation, for we desire no more of it than we need for the satisfaction of our hunger. The Bread Referred to as Our Bread This bread is designated as our bread. Something is referred to as being ours when we either have need of it for our existence, or if we are the owners of it. By nature we do not own anything before God, since by reason of sin we have lost a right to all that Adam had. The earth is cursed due to sin: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Gen 3:17). And the sinner is cursed in all that he lays his hands on: "Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep" (Deut 28:17-18). Everything in the heavens—the sun and moon—and here below serves the sinner unwillingly and reluctantly, and groans contrary to him (Rom 8:20-22). Nevertheless, it is the Lord's goodness that He grants food and raiment to sinners in whom He has no pleasure—sometimes more abundantly than to the godly who are not intended to have more of this so that they may know that God is good. However, the bread—all that the godly enjoy, and all that they pray for—belongs to them; they have a right to it. First, they have a right to it through Christ. The Lord Jesus has purchased it with His blood and, they being His favorites, has given it to them. "For all things are yours; ... things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's" (1 Cor 3:21-23).

Secondly, they have a right to it from man's perspective, since that which they possess has rightfully become theirs either by way of inheritance, business transactions, or their labor. This is in contrast to unrighteousness, laziness, and wasteful spending which causes one to be reduced to poverty and he must then live from the generosity of others. The apostle confirms this: "... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess 3:12). If, however, someone has applied himself and

has been thrifty, and yet is unable to make any progress, requiring the support of others, this is not unrighteous. Rather, it is his bread which the Lord has given him—even though "it is more blessed (more blissful, honest, and delightful) to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The ungodly, as far as man is concerned—even though they have no right to anything in reference to God—nevertheless, have a right to all that they possess lawfully. When we pray for bread, we are also praying against poverty. "Give me neither poverty nor riches" (Prov 30:8).

This Bread Referred to as Daily Bread

We pray here for bread—for our bread, and for daily bread. Since the word "daily," as recorded here in the original text, is nowhere else to be found in the New Testament, there are several sentiments regarding the origin of this word. Yet there is no implicit absurdity in this matter. The exception here is that the papists, by deriving the word from $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi\iota$ (epi) and $\tilde{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\alpha$ (ousia), translate it as supernatural essence. They understand this to refer to the bread of the mass, and since in their opinion the bread vanishes and changes into Christ, they thus understand it to refer to Christ, who is repeatedly referred to as "bread" in John 6. Aside from the fact that transubstantiation is nothing but a fabrication, the word does not imply this—even if it were derived from $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi\iota$ and $\tilde{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\alpha$ (epi ousia), for the word $\tilde{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\alpha$ (ousia) never signifies essence in the New Testament. Rather, in Luke 15:12-13 (there being no other references) it signifies possessions—temporal possessions. "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me ... and there wasted his substance." And even if this had been imported from pagan philosophers and understood to refer to the extra-essential, it would not signify supernatural, spiritual bread—that is not implied by the word at all. Rather, extra-essential would mean that we are in need of bread outside of our essential existence in order to support and maintain our essential existence. Such is the interpretation of this word by many Reformed. Others maintain that it is a derivative of the word $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\iota\mu\iota$ (epeimi), that is, "to follow," "to come in the place of." As a second aorist active participle we have $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$, $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ (epioon, epiousa), from which is derived $\tilde{\epsilon}\pi\iota\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (epiousios), that is, "following," "that which follows." As such it is understood in Acts 7:26:

לֶחֶם יְמִינֵנוּ לְיוֹם וּלְיוֹם אֲחֵרֵנוּ, the following day. In this sense (albeit with a different word) it is used in James 2:15: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food." And in Luke 11:3 the phrase day by day is added to this petition. On the basis of this, the above word can correctly be translated as daily, or bread which follows day by day—for it is the will of God that man would exist by the use of daily nourishment, rather than receiving everything all at once. This concludes the first portion: the matter requested.

For Whom this Request Is Made

The second portion pertains to the persons for whom we request bodily sustenance: "Give us." The pronoun "us" refers to: First, the supplicants themselves, for people are most closely involved with themselves. Love must begin with ourselves, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love must therefore begin in ourselves, but must not end in ourselves; rather it is to extend to our neighbor.

Secondly, we pray for all God's children who, together with us, address God as our Father, and we thus pray for the entire church of God, as if we say: "Thy children—Thy church is defenseless. They are neither able nor willing to govern their own affairs nor to make ends meet with either legitimate or illegitimate means. Such is the practice of the world which has as its objective to harm Thy children and church as much as possible. Therefore, care Thou for them and provide food and raiment for them, so that they may be able to live, and that the world may see that Thou art their God and Father who protects and cares for them." Thirdly, their love, and thus also their compassion, goes yet beyond that. The godly pray for all men who have been created in identical fashion as we were, and share the same existence with us. Since they need food and raiment as we do, they pray that the Lord who has granted them life may also preserve their life through nourishment. For believers are of the same nature as their heavenly Father, who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45); "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps 145:9). Herein they rejoice and praise God for it, and they are thus moved to request that which is good for themselves.

The Manner of Their Request

The third portion relates to the manner in which the godly pray. They neither demand it as if they had a claim to it, nor do they desire to bargain for it. Rather, they request it as a gift: "Out of unmerited goodness, give." They do not even request this for their entire lifetime, but repeatedly ask it for today.

When we pray, "Give," then we acknowledge thereby: (1) that we cannot exist in and of ourselves; (2) that we are neither capable of producing nourishment, nor of rendering to food the efficacy to be nourishing; (3) that we have not merited it, but by our sins have made ourselves unworthy of the same; (4) that it is the Lord who renders the earth fruitful, bringing "forth food out of the earth" (Ps 104:14). It is the Lord who gives to each his portion; He renders food efficacious for nourishment. Neither our care, our labor, nor the food itself will be to our benefit apart from the Lord's blessing. Such is the case when "the Lord...doth take away...the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water," which is what He threatens to do in Isaiah 3:1; that is, when "ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag 1:6). On the contrary, however, when the Lord bestows His blessing then everything prospers: "Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn" (Ps 65:11, 13). Then our food will satisfy us and our raiment will warm us: "...to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing" (Isa 23:18). Thus, as children we are to pray to the Lord as our Father, asking Him that He would give us food to eat and clothing to wear; that He would grant us health to partake of our food; and that He would render our food efficacious unto nourishment, since in all things we are dependent upon the Lord and are to expect all things from Him.

We are to pray that God would give us our bread today. "Today" implies repeated prayer—as much as we need it. We are in need of bread each day, and each day is today. Thus, we do not pray to receive it once and for all, but rather, that we would receive it each day by renewal. This is not to suggest that we should consume it all each day, for God in one day

generally gives a portion for many days. Rather, we acknowledge each day that what we have is from the Lord; that it has been preserved by the Lord and that He has permitted us to keep it; and that also upon this day we are permitted to eat to the satisfaction of our hunger and to the maintenance of our strength. For, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). If we have nothing in supply, we are to petition God that He would give us on this day as He is pleased and able to give us—even if we cannot perceive where it will come from. "The eyes of all wait on Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season" (Ps 145:15). Oh, how sweet it is to live out of the hand of God and to have confidence free from any apprehension!

The Lessons this Petition Teaches

This petition provides us with many essential and beneficial lessons. When we pray for bread we are reminded that we are not to be a gourmand,²⁸ for then we do not pray in a pleasing manner. The apostle speaks of this in James 4:3: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." To be a gourmand does not relate to the ability to taste the distinction between foods, preferring the one over the other; or if, upon being ill, we reflect about what we have an appetite for; or if occasionally we enjoy delicious foods, eat the fat things, drink that which is sweet, and send portions to the poor (Neh 8:11). One is a gourmand: (1) if, being healthy, he reflects upon that which is delectable, and how it will be prepared in the most delectable manner; (2) if he has a continual longing for something delectable, for dining engagements, and thinks of exotic spreads in his imagination; (3) when he is occupied with gourmet foods to such a degree that it appears to be the very essence of enjoyment, and if this is frequently the subject of conversation; (4) if he pursues such delicacies at any cost, even if he would have to borrow from others and never pay them back; (5) if he is in a bad humor when he is deprived of something delectable, and if he complains, grumbles, frets, and is angry if food is not properly prepared, and commonly quarrels with the cook; (6) if he enjoys a delectable meal either at his own or someone else's table, and then overindulges to such an extent that he is not fit for anything else but sleep.

First, you who are a gourmand—how can you pray for bread if you have

had enough bread and your soul abhors it as being lowly and distasteful food, and you only make use of it to render other foods all the more delicious? Bread is the basic food, and all other foods are dainties. You reverse this, however, by making bread a dainty; you do not pray this petition sincerely, but you mock with God by your inattentive and irreverent prattling. And even if in some measure you are conscious of what you are praying for, you are ultimately not interested in bread, but rather in delicacies.

Secondly, you can thus readily convince yourself that you serve your belly more than you serve God. Be ashamed, you who commit idolatry with your abominable idol. The apostle speaks of such: "Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame" (Phil 3:19).

Thirdly, due to your fondness for gourmet foods you are depriving your children, so that they would be poor when they become adults. They could have been well-to-do if you had been frugal, and you yourself may come to great poverty, so that you will have to be supported by the deacons. Solomon forewarns you about this: "Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: for the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (Prov 23:20-21). He who always wishes to drink that which is sweet and eat that which is delectable will accumulate neither possessions for himself nor treasures for his children. "He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Prov 21:17).

Fourthly, if we are accustomed to a gourmet spread upon our tables, and we begin to lack funds, we shall pursue sinful avenues to continue this. We shall either buy on credit, take out a loan, lie and deceive, at last flirt with bankruptcy, and allow widows and orphans, whom one has robbed, to eat the bread of tears.

Fifthly, gourmands are generally merciless toward the poor. They have abundance upon their tables, but there is nothing left for a poor Lazarus. They must thus look forward to a merciless judgment.

Sixthly, if you remain so rich that you can live as a gourmand until your death—what then? Will you go to heaven? No, but you will experience

what the elegant rich man—who was also a gourmand—experienced. After his death he found himself in hell and he was not permitted to have one drop of water for his relief (Luke 16:22 ff). Hear how the Lord threatens you: "Woe to them that are at ease. ... That ... stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive ... therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein" (Amos 6:1,4,7-8). Impress the word of the apostle upon your heart: "Weep and howl. ... Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (James 5:1, 5).

Diligence Taught in This Petition

We do not only pray for bread, but for our bread. This teaches that we are to be diligent, since we desire to receive it in the way in which it pleases God to give it. It is, however, God's will to give by means of our labor, and we must therefore labor in the station and the calling to which God has appointed us. If one has an adequate supply, he must nevertheless neither be idle nor fatten himself as a swine. Rather, he must be occupied in some measure for the sake of being occupied, to benefit himself and to give other people an opportunity to work, as well as be able to give to the poor all the more abundantly.

First, what else—as the proverb goes—is an idle person, but a pillow for the devil? He is the object of the devil's operations who is most successful in leading idle persons to the commission of various sins. An idle and lazy person is a breeding ground for all manner of vain and sinful thoughts, and of the deeds which proceed from them—yes, he is capable of such deeds as one would otherwise never have imagined.

Secondly, if we pray this and are not desirous to work, we are tempting God. Then we insist that God do miracles for our sake and depart from His normal way of providence. This is a sin which provokes God and is expressly forbidden by Him. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut 6:16). We can read in the accounts of the journeys of the children of Israel in the wilderness how Israel fared when they tempted God. This is also recorded in the following passages: "They waited not for His counsel:

but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps 106:13-15); "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague" (Num 11:33). Such are the results of tempting God. This is what those who pray for bread but are not willing to work and do not wish to avail themselves of God's common means must expect.

Thirdly, a sluggard:

(1) is an abomination to God; God wanted no part of a useless ass (Exod 13:13); (2) is a burden to others and despised by everyone; no one has compassion for him (Prov 10:26); (3) furthermore, wastes away, for he does not know how he will spend his time, is a burden to himself, and is reduced to extreme poverty. "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Prov 6:9-11); "Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags" (Prov 23:21).

Therefore, he who prays for our bread must be diligent in an honest calling and must use the means to which God obligates him when He promises bread to him. His labor is not the cause, but only the means whereby he lawfully receives what God grants him. (1) He will then eat his bread in the presence of God and man. "... that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thess 3:12).

(2) When he prays in faith and labors obediently, it will all be blessed—be it that one has much or little, or that it is lean or fat. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (Ps 37:16). He eats it with freedom as being his own; a piece of bread is delicious to him since he receives it from his heavenly Father, it having been purchased by Christ's blood. The curse has been removed, a blessing rests upon it, and the little that he has satisfies and strengthens him. The Lord grants him the blessing for which Moses prayed: "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (Ps 90:17). He receives the promise made to the godly: "For thou shalt eat

the labour of thine hands" (Ps 128:2). Therefore, Ora et Labora, that is, pray and work. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Eccles 9:10).

Concerning Anxiety for the Future

When we pray that God would give us our daily bread from day to day, we are exhorted not to be careful—that is, we are not to be concerned how we shall fare all the days of our life; whether we shall sufficiently be supplied for our entire life; whether we shall be reduced to poverty and shall suffer want with our children of that which our children and grandchildren will live from. For if our desires and concerns relate to the quantity of bread and to our entire life—yes, to our descendants, then we can indeed not pray for bread for this day. Therefore, if we are to pray this prayer with a true heart, we must be satisfied with the present and not be concerned about the day of tomorrow. Rather, we should be as children who, when they are hungry, request food from their parents and are not concerned about the future. God's children have all the more reason to live out of the hand of their heavenly Father and to trust Him that He will care for them.

First, apprehension torments man and we thereby bring much grief upon ourselves. Such anxiety saps the vitality of the soul and the body. We shall tremble about the future, be doubtful about the providence of God, or view God as being wrathful, merciless, and unyielding. We then reject our spiritual state, are vulnerable to many foolish and harmful lusts, and lie open for the assaults of the devil.

Secondly, what have you ever gained with all your anxiety? You will indeed have to answer: nothing. Why then do you engage in that which is of no benefit to you and causes you harm instead? "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" (Matt 6:27); "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows" (Ps 127:2).

Thirdly, to do so is to live in sin continually, for to be anxious is a clear sign that we wish to put our trust in our possessions. If we had as much as we desired, we would not be concerned about the future. Why not? Because you then would have in your pocket what you need to live. Then

you do not trust in God but in your possessions. However, whatever you put your trust in is your god, and thus being anxious is nothing but idolatry. Believers, would you then turn away from your God, esteeming and trusting your money more than God? Therefore, be fearful of that abomination which brings many into hell. "But ... idolaters ... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev 21:8).

Furthermore, fretful anxiety constitutes a continual dishonoring of God. You thereby demonstrate that God is not all-sufficient for you and that something besides God is your portion, delight, and the rock of your heart. This was entirely different with Asaph (Ps 73:25-26). You give an evil impression of God to others, implying that He neglects and does not care for His children. Would it not be to the dishonor of a rich father if his children were to turn to other persons and were to beg for a piece of bread? Would you thus dishonor God, your heavenly Father? Far be it from you! Therefore, neither be anxious, nor let the unsettledness of your countenance convey that you mistrust God.

Fourthly, anxiety prevents many from being converted. Such occasionally are under conviction and make a resolution: "I shall now arise and also seek God." However, the cares of life again draw them into the world. The cares of life are the thorns which choke the seed. "He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt 13:22). As anxiety keeps many from conversion, it likewise impedes growth in the converted. How much progress many would make; how mature they would become had anxiety not prevented them! Therefore, you who are godly, elevate yourself above this world; it is too insignificant, polluted, and harmful than that you should concern yourself with and yearn for it.

Fifthly, time here is short, and there is nothing which is able to satisfy you anyway. Why are you then so anxious about that which is insignificant? Truly, you are still too much involved with the world and not enough with heaven.

Sixthly, is not God your portion? Is He not your Father? Did He not grant you His own Son? "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him

up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Rom 8:32).

Therefore, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on" (Matt 6:25); "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Pet 5:7); "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps 37:5); "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb 13:5). You will thus be able to pray with a childlike heart, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Satisfaction with the Portion the Lord Allots us When we pray, "Give us ...," then we do not only pray for ourselves, but also for others. We may therefore not be envious when another person receives something—yes, more than we do. For:

(1) We have asked for this on his behalf if we have prayed aright. And if we become envious when he receives something or much upon our prayer, then this is indicative that we either regret that we have prayed, or that we did not mean it and thus have mocked with God. (2) Who are you to be envious of someone else's fortune? Do you not know that you are neither worthy of a piece of bread in your mouth nor a thread upon your skin; that it is only due to the longsuffering of God that you are not already in hell; that it is a great mercy of God that you are permitted to be among people and that you might be a servant or a slave of the least of them? And should you then be envious? Or do you think that you are so important that you are worthy of it? Be silent! (3) Is it not the Lord who gives unto others? God is sovereign, is He not, and may He not do with His own as pleases Him? Or must He ask you how much He should give to such and such a person?

Is your eye evil because the Lord is good? Be therefore ashamed before God and man that an envious thought arises within you.

This Petition Exhorts to Generosity

You who pray, "Give us ...," it behooves you and you are obligated by this petition toward generosity. For when many make a request together and

it is given to one, it must be divided among all on whose behalf it was requested. When many poor outcasts are begging at a given door, and if one receives a gift and keeps it for himself, he deprives the others of what also had been given for them. However, you do not pray, "Give me ...," but "Give us ..."; thus, others must share in this. This does not mean that as soon as you receive something, you must immediately begin to hand it out, for you have received it as a steward to disperse it upon command. If therefore there are those in need who request something from you, or if it comes to your knowledge that there is someone in need elsewhere, then this must stir up your compassion and your hand must be ready to give. You must, however, do it in such a manner that you may continue to be able to give and that the welfare of your family and children is preserved. Extraordinary seasons and occasions also demand something extraordinary. Therefore, see to it that in truth and with liberty you may pray, "Give us ..."

First, take as an example the generosity of the man Job, and of a woman named Dorcas. Job's generosity is described as follows: "I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor" (Job 29:15-16); "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering," etc. (Job 31:16-17, 19). Of Dorcas it is written, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. ... All the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made" (Acts 9:36, 39). Happy is he or she who follows such examples!

Secondly, the following passages convey how highly generosity is recommended: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates. ... Thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, " (Deut 15:7-8). To obey in this is pleasing to God. "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16). Indeed, impress upon your heart the great word of the apostle: "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7); "He which soweth

sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor 9:6). Add to these the following: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (Prov 19:17). If you then desire to pray in truth and to be heard, be joyously generous. If you do not do so, then you are an unrighteous possessor of that which you have, and you must see to it that a curse will not rest upon it.

God Acknowledged as the Giver

Since you pray to God for daily bread, it is thus essential for you to believe that all good gifts and the blessing upon that which you have, come from God, and that you acknowledge God as being the origin of all good things. Such He truly is: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). All that exists is God's; whatever anyone possesses he has received from God. "I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, ... my corn ... my wine ... my wool and my flax" (Hos 2:8-9). Man is but a naked entity and all that he has does not proceed from himself. All that he has proceeds from another source—he has received it from God alone. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive" (1 Cor 4:7). The Lord causes food to come forth from the earth; the Lord grants to each his peculiar portion; the Lord renders the food efficacious unto nourishment; the Lord maintains man and beast; He even provides the cattle with their food and the young ravens when they cry to Him. Since all is the Lord's and He communicates to everyone that which is His, one must invoke the Lord for all that we stand in need of and acknowledge Him as the origin and giver. We must not do so, however, with the disposition of a creature, but as a reconciled child in Christ and with a childlike heart. If we receive something, we must receive it as out of the hand of God as being our Father. We must be satisfied with that which the Father gives—be it much or little, it will be enough. Therefore we ought not to waste it, but with a joyful heart make use of it. We must then always lift up our heart on high to the Giver, doing so with a grateful heart and with a mouth filled with the praises of the Lord. "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee

with the finest of the wheat" (Ps 147:12-14). God requires and expects this, and is pleased with it. "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which He hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God" (Deut 8:10-11). The Fifth Petition: Forgive us our Debts as we Forgive our Debtors

Man is in need of bread in order that he may live. Therefore the Lord has taught us to pray for bread. Bread is not the most essential matter, however, for man has a rational, immortal soul which innately knows God and cannot be satisfied except with God Himself. A natural man is indeed satisfied with earthly things—if he is able to acquire them. This is recorded in Ps 17:14, where we read: "Men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly Thou fillest with Thy hid treasure." And God will not permit them to depart from this life without having done them good: "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17). That is the extent of God's dealings with them. However, God has laid away something greater for His own. Furthermore, He has also given them a heart which is not satisfied with earthly things, but they desire the Lord and choose Him as their portion. With their whole heart they make the words of Asaph their own: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. But it is good for me to draw near to God" (Ps 73:25-26, 28). With their entire heart they offer themselves to the service of God; however, at the same time they understand that God does not wish to be served by the ungodly who are His enemies. God says to them: "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth" (Ps 50:16). The godly perceive that sin, which makes a separation between God and man, must be removed in order for God to reveal Himself to them, and for them to approach unto God with boldness and with a peaceful heart. Therefore they are very desirous to be reconciled with God, praying time and again for the forgiveness of sins. This the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray in the fifth petition:

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

This petition consists first of all in a request: "Forgive ..." Secondly, the disposition of the supplicant is added: "As we forgive our debtors." In this petition we are to note the object: "Debts—our debts," and the requested action toward these debts: "Forgive us."

The Object of this Petition: Our Debts

Let us consider the word "debts" (in Luke 11:4 we read "sins"). Sin incurs debt, and in order to know what debt is, we must take note of three matters:

First, man is entirely and in every respect bound to God as Creator. Thus, his being, life, spiritual faculties, and physical strength are from God. This must not be understood as a singular act once performed, man thereafter being his own master as well as self-existent. Rather, he exists and moves by the continual influence and preserving power of God. It is for this reason that man is obligated to exist for God with his entire being—not only as a matter of gratitude, but on account of an obligation which is more binding than we can imagine. He is also obligated to God by virtue of the covenant of works, established with the human race in Adam, whereby salvation was promised upon condition of obedience—a covenant to which man has fully committed himself. Thus, there is an obligation upon man to be submissively obedient. He is also bound to God as being his lawgiver, who has power to command, and to whom man is inherently obligated to render obedience (Luke 17:10). Man approves of this obligation, and irrespective of whether he breaks those bonds, there is nevertheless no one who would dare to say, or who will say, that he is not under obligation to God.

Secondly, this binding relationship, however much it may have been approved of, has been broken by man and he still breaks it daily by withdrawing himself from obedience to God and by continually resisting this obligation. The Holy Scriptures refer to this as: (1) sinning: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Ps 51:4); (2) transgressing against the Lord: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me" (Isa 1:2); (3) the transgression of the law: "Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law" (Dan 9:11); (4) the transgression of the covenant: "But they like men have

transgressed the covenant" (Hos 6:7); (5) the rending asunder of God's laws: "These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds" (Jer 5:5); (6) the forsaking of God, His law, and His covenant: "They have forsaken the Lord" (Isa 1:4); "... because they have forsaken my law" (Jer 9:13); "They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God" (Jer 22:9); (7) being disobedient: "But unto them that ... do not obey the truth" (Rom 2:8). Sin is all the more serious in light of the majesty of God and man's dependence upon Him—as well as its voluntary and deliberate nature, and its continuance and frequency. Furthermore, the greater the measure of light and the livelier the conscience, the greater the sin will be.

Thirdly, due to man's breach of obligation, he incurs debt; that is, he is worthy of punishment. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy" (Heb 10:29); "... receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet" (Rom 1:27). Sin begets debt and places us under bondage of eternal condemnation: "... for the judgment was by one to condemnation" (Rom 5:16). Through sin man has come under the curse which is expressed as follows: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deut 27:26). He is therefore at enmity with God, worthy to be cast away and to endure eternally the unbearable wrath of God. "Neither shall evil dwell with Thee" (Ps 5:4); "... indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom 2:8-9); "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess 1:9).

Such is the nature of the debt, and this debt is acknowledged by all men. It is acknowledged by the heathen: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death" (Rom 1:32). This is acknowledged by all who live under the ministry of the Word: "And all the people shall say, Amen" (Deut 27:20). Believers acquiesce in this: "... that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Ps 51:4); "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him" (Mic 7:9). Sincere prayer for the forgiveness of sins necessitates that a person know his guilt, be grievously sensible of it, acknowledge himself to be worthy of this punishment, and justify God in executing judgment upon him.

The Focus of This Petition: The Forgiveness of Guilt

We pray for the forgiveness of our debts (or guilt).²⁹ No one has imposed this debt upon us. God did not do so for He created man holy and perfect. The devil did not do so—he may suggest sin, but he can neither compel nor cause us to sin. The world has not done so. It may threaten and entice, but it is beyond its reach to incline one's will. Rather, it is man himself who is the cause of his deeds. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:14-15); "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee" (Jer 2:19); "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter" (Jer 4:18); "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins" (Lam 3:39). This supplicant does not only acknowledge that he has sinned, but also that he is a debtor—having an exceedingly great debt. He furthermore acknowledges that he is thereby marred, abominable, hateful, intolerable, and condemnable. Being thus grievously affected by his sins, he humbles himself before the Lord and supplicates His Judge to be gracious unto him—yes, he approaches to his Father with shame, for he can neither leave his Father alone nor can he endure the alienation and displeasure of his heavenly Father. He would rather be chastised and by renewal be reconciled with his Father than to continue unreconciled without chastisement. He therefore approaches with sorrow and perplexity, and prays, "Forgive me my sins and take away my debt from me." The Requested Action: Forgiveness The petition relative to these debts is: "Forgive; forgive us ..." Forgiveness comes about either by way of annulment or satisfaction. A father forgives his child either by not punishing him, or, if he punishes him, the forgiveness is still needful in order that the child may be at peace. Such is the practice among men. However, God cannot forgive debt except that punishment has been meted out for it. This is to be taken to heart, for many people, not knowing this, imagine forgiveness when there is no forgiveness. Since they do not seek forgiveness in the right manner, they continue to be deprived of it and will become subject to everlasting judgment. They imagine that God functions as man does. They deem a man to be good and merciful if he forgives someone who has wronged him, and who, confessing his guilt, humbles himself deeply and prays for forgiveness. If

someone would then not be willing to forgive, such conduct would be esteemed evil in everyone's eyes and he would be despised as a cruel person. They therefore reason as follows: "God is more merciful than man and God is good. He will therefore surely forgive those who ask Him to be gracious." Furthermore, if from henceforth such a person does his best to lead a godly life, he is at peace. It does not matter whether he has spent his life in ungodliness; as long as he prays upon his deathbed, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a poor sinner!" He is forgiving to others who have done him wrong; he regrets his sinful life, and in this frame he dies. Such a person is most certainly deemed to be saved. Poor man! Awake, for this is the way whereby thousands of people go to hell. Do not proceed in this manner; rather, be acquainted with the way whereby God forgives sin. Enter upon this way before it is too late, so that you may yet be saved.

I thus maintain that God neither can nor will permit sin to go unpunished. God punishes sin both temporally and eternally. In order to fully convince you of this, you must note that God is not only Lord and lawgiver, but He is also the Judge of all men. Abraham states, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right" (Gen 18:25). David acknowledged God as such: "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11).

Every man will come before God in judgment. "For God shall bring every work into judgment" (Eccles 12:14); "But know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccles 11:9). Not only does every man, upon death, appear before God as Judge, to be either ushered to hell or taken into glory—for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27)—but all men will appear simultaneously before God in the great judgment, where everything will transpire according to righteousness. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). Enoch—the seventh from Adam—knew, acknowledged, and preached this: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all ... that are ungodly" (Jude 14-15). I the writer, and you who read or hear this read, shall come before that judgment. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done,

whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10).

Let us consider this judgment from every perspective. All men will appear there and will be divided into two groups. The one group will be condemned for no other reason but sin. God is the Judge and a righteous Judge. Does not justice consist in the rendering to everyone his just desert, and is not a righteous judge someone who either punishes or acquits in harmony with the condition in which one is found? It is common knowledge that a judge must do right: A guilty person must be declared guilty and an innocent person must be acquitted. Mercy may not move him to acquit the guilty one. As good-natured and compassionate a person a judge may be, he must not allow a murderer to go free. He must condemn him to death since justice requires this. However, is God not more righteous than man? Thus, His righteousness requires that He condemn the sinner. Here goodness is not the issue, but justice. This is confirmed by the expressions God makes concerning Himself: "... and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Exod 34:7). Tell me: "Why does God condemn those who will be at His left hand? Is He not infinitely merciful? Why then is He not gracious to them?" There must therefore be another reason for bringing about the condemnation of the sinner. What is this? There can be no other reason than the righteousness and veracity of God. Would not the Judge of the whole earth do right? Is God's judgment not according to truth? "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth" (Rom 2:2). Since sinners are not delivered from hell by the mercy of God, and God is a righteous Judge whose judgment is according to truth and who can by no means clear the guilty, God cannot allow sin to go unpunished, and thus the sinner cannot expect forgiveness by way of annulment.

What counsel is there then for the sinner? Must they all perish? There is no solution with man himself, for he cannot exhaustively bear the punishment due to sin. He cannot transcend his punishment for he cannot give God his ransom; he must eternally remain subject to it. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul" (Matt 16:26). Sin is a reality which man cannot deny. All his suffering in this world cannot render satisfaction. All his good works—aside from the fact that they are not pure before God and are but as filthy rags—cannot erase sins which

have previously been committed. He retains a sinful heart, and all manner of sinful thoughts, words, and deeds continue to proceed therefrom. The soul, upon departing from the body, remains sinful; and as long as sin continues, so long will the punishment continue—that is, eternally.

Man's Need of a Surety

In order for man to be delivered from guilt and punishment and be exonerated in the righteous judgment of God, he must have a Surety who, on his behalf, satisfies the justice of God, bears the punishment which the sinner deserves, and perfectly fulfills the law. This payment and obedience must be reckoned to the account of the sinner by divine imputation, God permitting the intervention of a Surety. Man, in turn, must acquiesce in being delivered by a Surety and must receive His ransom and righteousness as his own in order to come unto God thereby. This way is hidden from all the heathen and God also conceals it from all the unconverted who live under the gospel—although some can explain this in an external sense and can speak of this as such. However, God reveals this way to His own and leads them in that way. The Lord Jesus, being very God and man, has been given of God Himself to be a Surety. "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" (Heb 7:22). He has made payment for the elect on their behalf: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). Thereby believers are reconciled with God. "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom 5:10). Hereby peace with God has been merited. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). He who has Jesus as a Surety is complete in Him. "And ye are complete in Him" (Col 2:10); "... that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21). This is the way in which forgiveness of sin is to be obtained; apart from this way there is no forgiveness.

Question: How can there be forgiveness if payment has been made?

Answer: If we were to have endured all punishment in person, and if we in person had perfectly fulfilled the law of God, there would be a more

valid reason for this question. However, since all this occurs by way of a Surety; there is a need for the imputation of the ransom and righteousness of the Surety. It is needful for man to receive this believingly and when the sinner thus comes to God he will receive forgiveness. In this there is a simultaneous manifestation of the justice of God as Judge and of His goodness as a reconciled Father, for the same nature which has sinned must make restitution. The Surety has become surety with the approbation of the Judge, and the Father is satisfied with the Surety. Since He is satisfied with the execution of the suretyship, both its application and forgiveness are therefore righteous. Man has contributed nothing to this; he is guilty in and of himself and thus forgiveness is entirely gracious as far as he is concerned. Thus, payment and forgiveness harmonize very well, whereas forgiveness and application remain distinct acts.

When praying for forgiveness here, we do not do so in a different sense from what believers did in the Old Testament. They also obtained forgiveness as well as we. We find the word ἀφεσις (aphes) here. Its usage here is not unique to the New Testament and does not stand in contradistinction to παράσις (paresis)—as if this were unique to the Old Testament only and that Old Testament believers only knew of an overlooking of sin while we have actual forgiveness. For forgiveness is denominated ἀφεσις (aphesis) in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22). At that particular moment the Old Testament was still in full force; nevertheless the Lord Jesus caused His disciples to pray: ἀφεσις (aphes).

This Petition: The Believer's Prayer for Paternal Forgiveness

In praying for forgiveness here, the supplicant does not view himself as unconverted and unreconciled, and as desirous to be delivered from the state of wrath (believers being children of wrath by nature as all others); rather, he views himself as being a child of God, for he prays, "Our Father, forgive us." God deals with His children in human fashion. As a father shows his displeasure over the misbehavior of his children, God likewise shows His displeasure to His children when they have sinned. He withdraws Himself from intimate fellowship with them, hides His

countenance, lets them feel His fatherly wrath, and punishes them with a remorseful, restless, and anxious conscience. Inner peace has departed, and a lack of freedom overcomes them within and without. Such a condition causes the believer to be very perplexed, and he goes to his Father, confesses his misdeeds, takes refuge to the blood of the Lord Jesus, and prays, "Forgive." To such the Lord will manifest Himself and He will forgive them time and again.

Forgiveness Implied

The following is implied in forgiveness: First, there is the absence of punishment: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure" (Ps 6:1), and there is no imputation of sin; that is, he is not dealt with as a sinner: "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps 32:2).

Secondly, upon forgiveness God neither hides His countenance—which alone is the life of the soul of a child of God—nor withdraws His presence, nor conceals Himself as with a cloud so that no prayer can penetrate, nor does He hold Himself as a stranger. "And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Ps 143:2); "Hear me speedily, O Lord...hide not Thy face from me" (Ps 143:7). Thirdly, there is the assurance of forgiveness; that is, a frame of heart is granted in which there is freedom from the burden of debt and a sense of the forgiveness of sin. "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Ps 32:5); "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa 38:17). David prayed for this: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Ps 35:3). This was stated to Isaiah: "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isa 6:7). Fourthly, peace is bestowed upon the soul. Sin wounds the soul—makes her restless, fearful, and anxious. When God forgives sin, however, there comes sweet quietude and inexpressible peace. Such was David's desire: "Blot out my transgressions...purge me...wash me...make me to hear joy and gladness" (Ps 51:1, 7-8). God promises this: "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned" (Isa 40:1-2). Such has been the experience of the church: "O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me" (Isa 12:1). Fifthly,

it results in free access to God as being a reconciled Father: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb 10:19, 22).

Sixthly, forgiveness implies restoration of fellowship with God—which was discontinued due to sin—in which God embraces the soul intimately. "Thou hast in love to my soul³⁰ delivered it ... Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa 38:17). The soul in turn meets God with filial joy and delight. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa 33:24). She joyfully gives thanks to the Lord: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities" (Ps 103:2-3). All this constitutes forgiveness. It is this which the supplicant requests in this petition, and it is this which God grants to believing supplicants. He indeed forgives whenever and as often as His children confess their sins, receive the Lord Jesus as their ransom and righteousness, and pray for forgiveness. However, the Lord does not always grant them all the matters mentioned. He also does not always grant it in the measure that they desire; at times God permits them to run after Him for a long period of time. They are frequently slack in their seeking, listless in prayer, unbelieving, discouraged, not fully emptied of sinful lusts, and thus not fit to enjoy these sweet experiences. Therefore there comes darkness at times when they anticipate light, and fearfulness instead of healing. However, the Lord will ultimately "regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Ps 102:17). Therefore, persevere in prayer and do not only pray for yourself, but also for the church and all believers, for they are all burdened by sin and many go bent down because of it. There is no peace in their soul due to their sin; they are grieved and they long for forgiveness, so that with more freedom of heart they may praise Him, fear Him filially, and sweetly progress in the ways of the Lord. This is the first portion of this petition: "Forgive us our debts."

The Disposition of the Supplicant

The second portion conveys the disposition of the supplicant: "As we forgive our debtors." There are a great variety of opinions about this addition. One thing is certain, these words are not a meritorious cause of

God's forgiveness, for then it would have to read, "... because we forgive." Instead, the word « (hoos) (= as) is used. If that were true then it would not be a petition, but a demand for that which is ours. Furthermore, forgiveness is granted on the basis of grace. "Being justified freely by His grace" (Rom 3:24). It is equally evident that this does not imply that our forgiveness is on an equal par with God's forgiveness. God forgives as Judge and as Father; we forgive our equals. God forgives perfectly, and we deficiently. It is also not a condition in the literal sense of the word, for then it would come about by way of contract with God. Rather, it is a humble supplication for grace; it is a *conditio sine qua non*, or an indispensable or essential condition; that is, a required disposition for being a suitable object to request and receive forgiveness. For if someone is enraged against his neighbor and lashes out in anger in order to avenge himself, then it can be understood by all that such a person is not in a condition to pray, "Forgive ..." At that moment he will be able to obtain neither forgiveness and its resultant comfort, nor all that is implied in forgiveness (as stated above). This also applies when there is hatred and vengefulness in the heart, for a greater or lesser measure of sin does not change the nature of the sin. If anyone is to pray, then his heart must not condemn him. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:20-21). When a person perceives that he harbors a grudge, hatred, and aversion toward his neighbor who has done him wrong, he (if he has spiritual life) will not dare to pray for forgiveness. He must condemn himself; he neither dares nor can expect any forgiveness. This is also true when he becomes aware that he is guilty of wrongdoing toward someone else with whom he is not yet reconciled (Matt 5:23-24). When he is reconciled with his neighbor, however, and forgives whomever has offended him, he can approach boldly in prayer, and in faith request and expect forgiveness. The Lord Jesus conveys this when He restates this petition: "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 6:14-15). He will then neither grant you the comforting sense of the forgiveness of sins nor will He say to you, "Be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy salvation." He will neither grant you free access to Himself nor permit you to have communion in

peace with Him. This is signified by the phrase "... as we forgive ..."

Debtors are not those persons who are indebted to us as far as money or possessions are concerned. It is not implied here that we are not permitted to demand payment according to the rule of justice—even though such is not to be done with sharpness and cruelty toward an impotent debtor. Rather, debtors are those who have done wrong toward us in word or deed.

Human Forgiveness vs. Divine Forgiveness

To forgive is not to forgive as God forgives, that is, with authority and majesty. It also does not relate to the measure in which one has done wrong toward God and is punishable for at God's bar. This is solely God's doing. Such human forgiveness would have no value before God. No one should comfort himself in the hour of death with the fact that he will now be saved since he has forgiven others and has been forgiven by his adversary—and is thus reconciled with his neighbor. Rather, this forgiveness is only applicable to those wrongdoings which have been committed against each other. This does not mean that by the wrongdoing of our neighbor we have become his judge or have the authority to punish him; most certainly not. Rather, forgiveness occurs between equals who, even though they have been wronged, may not punish. Yes, no one is permitted to be wrathful toward the offender, allow the inclination toward vengeance to arise in the heart, nor have a grudge against, hate, or have an aversion toward him. It is thus not a virtue if you put aside anger, wrath, and hatred toward your neighbor. To be thus disposed is not a voluntary matter as if it were a matter of choice whether or not we would be thus minded. Instead, it is but a desisting from sin. Therefore, we are not to be of the opinion that we have done something significant toward our neighbor if we are no longer angry at him and neither punish nor intend to punish him. Forgiveness is a declaration to the offender proceeding from the heart of a offended party that he entertains neither hatred, aversion, nor wrath in his heart toward him, and that he will not inflict evil upon him due to his offense, but rather is inclined to live in peace and love with him. Such an expression of the disposition of the heart does not always occur; rather it only occurs when the offender confesses his guilt and seeks forgiveness and reconciliation.

This is evident in Luke 17:3-4: "If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." To say, "I forgive you" when such is not warranted is a triumphant boasting of your kindness and will harden the offender in his sin.

All of this is implied when we pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

The Lord Jesus has suffered once and for all for the sins of all who are His. This He did once when He sacrificed Himself, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb 10:14), and thus obtained eternal redemption for them. Even though forgiveness by virtue of the death of Christ is indeed a reality, man himself is nevertheless nothing but sin within and without, dead in sins, and is thus by nature a child of wrath as all other men. He is condemnable and in a condition in which a holy God cannot find delight. Instead, God hates the state of sin and divine justice should execute judgment upon it. In such a condition he is not an object of forgiveness. However, the Lord grants His elect spiritual light and life—each at his own time. He then begins to perceive in what state he is by nature, is fearful, and is perplexed about his sinful and condemnable state. He perceives that his salvation consists in being in a reconciled state with God, in having peace with God, in approaching boldly unto God as being reconciled with Him, and in walking humbly with God as his Father in filial obedience and love. He is very desirous to be delivered from the one and to obtain the other. He looks unto the Surety, receives Him, and supplicates for forgiveness. The Lord, in response to this, grants him this, applies the atonement to him, and causes him to taste the fruits of atonement and forgiveness. For the one this is more clear and for the other more obscure. Since the believer daily offends in many things, his faith in the forgiveness of sins is weakened—it generally being very feeble anyway—and fear and anxiety resurface. The desire for that state which gives peace again returns, and thus he resumes the exercise of faith and his praying for forgiveness. Observe this in the example of the holy man David, the man after God's own heart: "Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults" (Ps 19:12); "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions ... for Thy

name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Ps 25:7, 11); "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps 51:1-2).

A Serious Warning Addressed to the Unconverted

The unconverted cannot pray this petition. When they rattle it off—as they do daily—they are mocking with God, for they are not sincere in their heart and will, except they repent, experience to their terror that God will not allow Himself to be mocked, and that they are also not able to deceive Him.

Therefore, 1) you who are still insensitive about your sinful state—about your sinful thoughts, words, and deeds—who do not fear the wrath of God and carelessly go on your way; 2) you who have no intention to depart from all, I repeat, all sin (What do I say? You are not acquainted with sin except for three or four grievous ones, and how would you thus depart from them); 3) you who do not know what it means to be reconciled with God, to have peace with God, to freely make use of access to God, to have fellowship with God in a filial disposition, and who are neither restless about your defect nor desirous for this delightful experience; and 4) you who live in envy, hatred, and are continually permeated with a desire for vengeance, this desire manifesting itself whenever there is an opportunity; oh, that you would be conscious of this your disposition!

First, be assured that as often as you recite this petition (for it cannot be called prayer) you are provoking God, indeed defying God to punish you. When God's longsuffering toward you will have come to an end, you will know what it means to have recited this petition without the heart and under the pretense of prayer.

Secondly, you are living and continue to live in an unreconciled state, laden with guilt and subject to the unbearable wrath of God. When this will once be poured out upon you, where will you then flee? Then it will be fearful for you to fall into the hands of the living God.

Thirdly, you will not avoid the punishment, for if God has punished His own Son for the sins of His elect, what must you expect? Therefore, repent and seek to be delivered from your guilt and punishment through the blood of Jesus Christ, and with an upright heart pray for forgiveness.

Counsel for Those Who Desire to Be Reconciled and Be at Peace with God

You who desire to live continually in a state of reconciliation and peace and experience that your faith in the forgiveness of sins is faint and feeble—who have but little assurance, who rarely or never have a sense of forgiveness, and whose conscience is repeatedly troubled by committed sins, which inhibit you in your approach unto God, make you discouraged, and therefore obstruct you in your seeking to be in a reconciled state—come, earnestly endeavor to have a grievous sense of your sins, to become a partaker of forgiveness, and to live in a state of peace. The Lord Jesus has afforded us the means by teaching us to pray, "Forgive us our debts." We may indeed be at liberty to pray for that which the Lord puts in our mouth.

First, our need must compel us to do so—for how dreadful it is to be subject to the wrath of God, to be accursed, to be under the power of the devil, to be under the dominion of sin, and to be subject to the punishment of eternal condemnation! How unbearable it is when God gives man but a glimpse of this! Such is the state in which all the unconverted are. Oh, that they would take it to heart and believe it; that the terror of the Lord would persuade them to seek earnestly for the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God by the blood of the Lord Jesus! Therefore in a heartfelt manner pray, "Forgive!" Even though the converted are reconciled with God, if they presently do not know this, it is for them personally as if they had no forgiveness; then it seems to them as if they are still subject to the judgments mentioned. This must therefore stir them (since they are much easier to be persuaded) to seek forgiveness. What a mournful and anxious life it is to live always in fear of death and condemnation, always to live with an anxious conscience, time and again to be troubled when thinking upon God, and always to be a prisoner to the power of corruption, for the one is contingent upon the other! Then each perplexing circumstance is perceived as a sign of God's

wrath, whatever we undertake is considered to be accursed, and no delight can be found in either our food and drink, family and home, the starry sky, the delightful countenance of the earth, or friends. All this is a consequence of sin. Therefore, seek the forgiveness of sins and it shall all be removed.

Secondly, neither allow the magnitude of your sins, nor the fact that you sin repeatedly discourage you from praying for the forgiveness of sins. Do not say with Cain: "My sin is greater than that it should be forgiven. My prayer is but mockery with God, for upon having earnestly prayed for the forgiveness of sins, I immediately sin again; I no longer dare to pray for forgiveness." Where then do you wish to turn? Do you wish to remain in this wretched condition? Do you know of a different way? You must have forgiveness, and therefore you must pray for it. It does not help you to say, "I do not dare." Therefore, turn to the Lord against whom you have sinned. Confess your sins before Him, humble yourself before Him, and pray for forgiveness, for our God is not harsh and unyielding. Rather, He is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod 34:6). The Lord delights in doing well, forgiving sin, and answering prayer. Let the following text afford you boldness: "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee" (Ps 86:5). Add to this Jer 32:41: "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good." Yes, the Lord yearns to see if someone comes to Him who is desirous for grace: "And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you" (Isa 30:18). Are your sins many? There is also much forgiveness with the Lord: "He will abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7). Do you sin each day again? Then consider Lam 3:22-23: "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness." Who would then not have freedom to go to such a good God and to supplicate Him to be gracious? Since the Lord Jesus has satisfied the justice of God, is a merciful and compassionate High Priest to apply His merits to all who come to Him to become partakers of His atonement, and to pray for them, there is all the more reason to do so. Therefore, you who are perplexed, at your wits' end, sorrowful, and overwhelmed—receive this Surety, and through Him and with His merits go to the Father, praying, "Forgive our debts."

Thirdly, it is a most delightful condition to have the forgiveness of sins. Believers, however feeble you may be and however far you may have strayed away, you have not yet forgotten what it was like to be freed from all debt and all punishment—what it was like to have free access to God and to say with a filial heart, "My Father" —what it was like to have a quiet soul, to taste peace with God which passes all understanding, to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, to be a partaker of Christ's ransom and righteousness and to be clothed with it. Do you not remember how your heart was enlarged and that it seemed as if all that is in heaven and upon earth was reconciled with you when the Lord said to you, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; I am thy God and thou art Mine"? You are indeed acquainted with this condition, be it sensibly or by faith. Your soul is troubled when you are not in such a condition, and it is the intense desire of your heart to be in such a state and to be led further and further in the enjoyment of such a frame. Would this not move you to seek forgiveness with God if you are without it, and to flee to the Lord Jesus if you have lost it, and thus be restored in a disposition where you are at peace? And you who are in such a state, preserve it most carefully, for it is so readily disturbed by either a serious falling into sin or a reckless yielding to sin. Furthermore, this will be the case when you fail to make continual use of the Lord Jesus, when you fail to arise and wash yourself by renewal in Christ's blood after you fall, and by renewal to walk humbly before the countenance of God, thus acquainting yourself with the Lord. Then, I say that you will readily lose this sweet frame. Therefore, pray daily, "Forgive!"

Fourthly, if there is but the least principle of faith and life in you, you will be desirous for sanctification. It will be your intention to be on guard against a given sin, to do such and such, and you will make an effort to do so. Yet, there is no progress, for you fall again and your expectation is shattered. You will deny your spiritual state, for such a life cannot coexist with grace. In one word, you will become discouraged and will despair, and you would desist in this endeavor if the Lord would not time and again intervene. Then a renewed effort will be made; however, the outcome will be the same. You will thus live in anxiety, and if any progress is made in this manner, it is at best but natural work and the conscience remains restless.

If, however, you desire to be more holy, you must begin with the forgiveness of sins. If, by faith, you may receive the Surety Jesus Christ, and as such come to God and receive the forgiveness of all your sins, then the separation between God and the soul is removed and you will exercise communion with God. The soul will love God and will find such delight in fellowship with God that she would not readily like to lose this. Since she knows that this fellowship is disrupted by sin, she will be all the more on her guard against it. Since the forgiveness of sins stirs up love in her, this love will cause her to fear and obey God in a filial manner, and do whatever is pleasing to the Lord. Thus, the forgiveness of sins engenders sanctification. This is indicated by the following passages: "... purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9); "... faith which worketh by love" (Gal 5:6); "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Ps 130:4). By way of the forgiveness of sins the wounded soul is healed and this causes the believer to proceed with courage. "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" (Isa 33:24). All these texts give expression to the necessity, sweetness, and efficacy of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore seek it with all your heart, for it can be obtained. Having obtained this, you will be enabled to sanctify the name of the Lord and, with David, to give thanks: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," etc. (Ps 103:2-3).

The Sixth Petition: And Lead us not into Temptation, but Deliver us from Evil

A Christian desires to perform all that he prays for; that is, if it pertains to matters where his activity is appropriate. To pray without a desire to be active is mocking with God. To be active without prayer does not yield good results, since we are not capable of doing anything spiritual in and of ourselves.

In the first three petitions the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for three great matters: that God's Name be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done. As supplicants ourselves, we are involved in the execution of these matters. Therefore we cannot pray for them unless we are willing to effect them in our station in life. In order to be a means in effecting these matters, however, we must be in a condition in which we are fit according

to soul and body to effect them. Since we ourselves are neither fit for this nor are able to acquire these qualifications in and of ourselves—God alone being able and willing to grant them—the Lord Jesus teaches us in the last three petitions, having presented in the first three petitions the matters which are to be effected, to pray for the qualifications which are needed for the execution of these matters. To that end it is requisite that our bodies function and be in good condition—food and raiment being needful for that purpose. This we request in the fourth petition: "Give us this day our daily bread." Furthermore, in order that the first three matters be effected it is also requisite that we be in a reconciled state with God and be at peace with Him, for God does not deem His enemies worthy of effecting such great matters. Moreover, man can neither approach unto God in an unreconciled state, have fellowship with Him, nor do anything for the Lord. His consciousness of sin would cause him to be fearful of God and prompt him to flee from Him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus taught in the fifth petition to pray to be in a state of reconciliation and peace with God: "Forgive us our debts." Since spiritual life is feeble, faith is weak, and the soul has but little strength; since it has pleased the Lord, to a greater or lesser degree, to give his enemies free reign against him; and since those enemies are shrewd, evil, tireless, and powerful, a believer is in fear that the enemies would hinder him in the execution of those matters which he so greatly delights in, and render his heart incapable of doing anything spiritual—yes, lead him into sin. Therefore the supplicant flees to the Lord for help in order that he might be preserved in a state of holiness and thus be fit to effect these three great matters. The Lord Jesus teaches us to pray for this in the sixth petition: "Lead us not into temptation," etc.

The Twofold Nature of This Petition

In these words we do not find two petitions, but only one. There is but one subject with which we are exercised here and about which we utter a twofold petition. First of all, there is a petition for the preservation from evil, and secondly, a petition to be delivered from

The petition to be kept from evil is expressed in these words: "And lead us not into temptation." First of all we have the subject, temptation, and secondly the invocation, lead us not into it.

The last three petitions are all connected with the conjunction "and," for a Christian is in need of all three dispositions in order both to pray the first three petitions as well as to effect them. If one of these dispositions is lacking, he will not be fit to do so. All three must always coalesce.

The Subject of This Petition: Temptation

The subject is temptation. The Greek word $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\zeta\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota$ (peirazein) signifies trial. "And this He said to prove him" (John 6:6); "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles" (Rev 2:2). It also signifies "to examine": "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor 13:5). Most often it signifies "to tempt": "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18). From this word the word $\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\sigma\mu\circ\varsigma$ (peirasmos = temptation) is derived, which is used here. Temptation can originate with 1) God, 2) man, 3) the world, and 4) the devil.

God Tempts God is said to tempt or prove man. God tempted Abraham when He commanded him to sacrifice his son (Gen 22:1); He proved Israel with the manna (Exod 16:4); and He tried David (2 Sam 24:1) and Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:31). It is not as if God would thus become acquainted with certain matters or outcomes, for all things are naked and opened before Him and He knows man's thoughts from afar. Rather, He does so to make matters known to either the person himself or to others—thus conveying what good or evil is to be found in man. It was thus that Job's patience, Abraham's obedience, David's weakness, and Hezekiah's pride became manifest, to their humiliation, the comfort of others, and to prompt others to caution. God proves His own by either temporal prosperity or adversity in order to ascertain whether He is all-sufficient to them and their only confidence; whether they believe the providence of God in each individual matter; whether they love His will; or whether they have the courage to put their trust in His promises. The Lord also tries His own with spiritual temptations by the withdrawal of His Spirit, light, comfort, and opportunities, in order to cause them to live by faith alone—in reliance upon His Word—and continually receive Him as their strength.

Man the Tempter

Man tempts God, other men, and himself.

(1) Man tempts God if we limit Him as far as time, manner, and measure are concerned, dictating to Him how and in what manner matters are to transpire: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps 78:41). We limit Him when we are not satisfied with His common way of providence, but instead require a miracle from God, something extraordinary, above and beyond the course of nature. "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness" (Ps 78:19); "The children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat" (Num 11:4). Thus, the Jews tempted Christ: "Master, we would see a sign from Thee. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt 12:38-39). This also occurs when we set up certain conditions before we shall believe—if we insist on a certain measure of contrition, illumination, sanctification, or assurance. Thomas did this: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). This is a dreadful sin. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God" (Deut 6:16); "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents" (1 Cor 10:9). This does not apply to a meditating upon the wonders which God has done of old in order to strengthen us in great distress by reflecting upon God's omnipotence and faithful care for His own, and thus in a more lively sense to submit to that which pleases the Lord.

(2) Man proves other men by convincing them of their sinful state and thus to lead them to conversion and to Christ. In this respect the elders prove the members: "Do not ye judge them that are within" (1 Cor 5:12). Or, we can tempt other men to commit evil by leading them into situations in order to cause them to fall, and bring them to sin and shame. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink ... and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab 2:15). We furthermore do so when we draw our neighbor out in order to get him to speak so that we may thus catch him in his words. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to

inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25); "Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not" (Matt 22:15, 17). Such will praise a person, show him great friendship, or urge him to be valiant—all of this, however, to cause him to stumble.

(3) Man proves himself positively when he considers whether or not he possesses grace in truth. The apostle commands this: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor 13:5). Such, in order not to deceive themselves, pray that the Lord would uncover them: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps 139:23-24). Man can also tempt himself toward evil when he carelessly brings himself into circumstances which could have been avoided, and of which we know that they have generally caused us to sin; when we yield to minor sins; when we entertain idle thoughts; when we postpone the performance of a specific duty; and when we debate about a sin as to whether or not we are permitted to do this, or whether such and such is indeed a great sin. James speaks of this tempting of self: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:14).

The World as Tempter The world tempts converted and unconverted alike to commit sin. It does so by holding before them all manner of entertainment; by promising advantage and profit, as well as friendship, love, esteem, and honor. If that does not succeed, it will threaten with evil, harm, shame, persecution, etc. Even though one worldly person will tempt another worldly person to sin, the church in general, and each believer individually, are its primary focus. The latter are to view themselves as sheep among the wolves. They are therefore not to trust anyone, but must always be on their guard when they are among worldly people. The Lord Jesus foretold them that they have nothing but evil to expect from the world and worldly people. "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). The Lord Jesus also teaches them that they are to be on their guard: "But beware of men" (Matt 10:17). We read furthermore: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness" (2 Pet 3:17). To that end the

Lord Jesus gave this golden counsel: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt 10:16).

The Devil as Tempter

The devil also tempts man. The unconverted are in his power; he rules over them and they are captive under him at his will. He exerts all his power to cause believers to fall by way of temptations, however, and he consequently also bears the name of tempter (Matt 4:3), the enemy (Matt 13:39), the adversary (1 Pet 5:8), and the devil (James 4:7). His temptations are most subtle, and they are therefore referred to as "the wiles of the devil" (Eph 6:11). He searches out where and when the believer is weak, and he adjusts himself accordingly to present his temptations, then in this and then in that manner. To advance all his temptations at once would not be possible and would not be effective with many. He knows the constitution of the body as well as its vulnerability; he knows the sin most likely to be committed, and he knows in what circumstances we must at all times be to do so. Along with this he interjects thoughts and mental images in our imagination whereby he endeavors to make us think about such thoughts, stimulating our lusts by such reflections. As much as he is permitted, he will create situations in which he knows that we have frequently fallen. Then when the soul is troubled about falling into sin, he tries to seduce her from one sin to the next. He knows how to camouflage sin in such a subtle manner, or presents it as being so desirable that our lusts are stirred up. At the very outset he stirs man up and urges him to make haste—to make haste so that man will not have time to direct one thought toward God. Once the sin has been committed, he tries to bring this person to despair, by suggesting:

"Such a life cannot coexist with grace; you are not born again; you do not have true faith; for you there is no grace; your sin is too great; you have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost." Subsequent to this he will terrify them in a variety of ways. For a more comprehensive treatment of the temptations of the devil we refer you to a later section in this chapter entitled: "The assaults of the devil."

This we must know, however: the devil can neither compel nor cause man to sin. All he can do is to suggest, entice, and create situations. Thus, man himself is the cause of those sins which he commits, and may therefore not blame the devil. Furthermore, the devil is not always the instigator; rather, man himself is generally the initiator.

The Request Relative to Temptation

Thus far we have seen what temptation is. Now we are to consider what activity is being requested relative to this subject, namely, temptation: "Lead us not into temptation." We hereby supplicate that God our Father would not do so. God leads His children, to and in the way of salvation—without which they would never obtain salvation. "And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known" (Isa 42:16); "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go" (Isa 48:17). The Lord Jesus is called their captain (Heb 2:10; 12:2). Believers pray that they may be led by the Lord: "Lead me in Thy truth" (Ps 25:5); "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Ps 143:10). For on the one side they know their weakness, and the deviousness, wickedness, and violence of the enemies; and on the other side they know the Lord's power and goodness. They pray that the Lord would illuminate them, continually show them the way, exhort and stir them up to enter upon that way, support and govern them by His power, and not forsake them until they have reached their goal. They pray that they may be led in such a way. However, the invocation relates to not being led into temptation.

The Lord our God is holy and whatever He does is holy: "His work is honourable and glorious" (Ps 111:3). All that He executes is righteous: "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Rev 16:7). All that is unrighteous is far removed from God. There is no unrighteousness in Him. Let no one accuse God when he is tempted to evil and falls as a result of this. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1:13). God Himself does neither tempt anyone with evil nor to commit evil. When God tempts someone, this always occurs in an incomprehensible and holy manner—with holy purposes or thereby to manifest His righteousness

and goodness, and thus to the glory of His Name, before angels and men, they being witnesses of those deeds.

Trials Sent by God are of a holy Nature

God tries both the ungodly and godly in a holy manner. He tries the ungodly: (1) When He withdraws His gifts which have been abused, such as common illumination, conviction, and His restraining influence. "But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Sam 16:14).

(2) When He, as righteous Judge, gives man—who is nothing but sin, desires to do nothing but sin, and cannot do anything but sin—over to himself, the consequence of being unwilling to hear Him. "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (Ps 81:12).

(3) When He gives a man over to the devil so that he governs this man according to his will: "... who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim 2:26).

(4) When man—while being subject to these judgments and due to continual sinning and a continual going against his conscience—is hardened so that he becomes insensitive to sin and a fear for punishment. This judgment God executed upon Pharaoh: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart" (Exod 7:3). A man who is in such a condition and in whom God permits all manner of inclinations to arise, will fall into every sin until the righteous wrath of God destroys him.

God tries His children with a holy objective and in a holy manner. This occurs:

(1) When the Lord gives free reign to the tempters—be it the devil, the world, or the flesh—to assault His children in various ways. It was thus that God gave the devil free reign with Job (even though there were limitations) (Job 1-2), as well as with David (2 Sam 24:1).

(2) When God withholds His gracious influence and sustaining power—of which the church complained: "O Lord, why hast Thou made us to err

from Thy ways, and hardened our heart from Thy fear" (Isa 63:17). When a child of God is thus deprived of God's help, and is thus assaulted by his enemies—and if both grace and spiritual life are but feeble—he is in danger indeed!

(3) When God permits certain situations to arise in which he should have remained standing, and he is then not on his guard. If his emotions and lusts are stirred up, and he then departs from the fear of God, obedience, and the love of God, he will be tossed about as a top, and be led about by his flesh, being swept along from the one sin to the next (even to sins toward which he had no natural inclination beforehand). What a tragic situation this is! What would be the end if God were not to deal with him again and restore him? A child of God must be fearful of such a condition and pray against it.

What is Implied When the Godly Pray: "Lead Us Not into Temptation"

When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," we are not praying for the averting of all temptations or trials resulting from a spiritual or physical cross, or from all circumstances in which we would be able to fall. This is God's way with all His children whereby He humbles them, exercises them in the battle against the enemies, and sanctifies them. Rather, the petition is as follows: "Neither let the temptation get a hold of nor have power over us; do not withdraw Thy Holy Spirit from us; do not give us over to ourselves when opportunities for sin manifest themselves. When the enemies assault us and seek to toss us to and fro and sift us as wheat, let us then not be overpowered by the temptation. Do not let us be ensnared so that unrighteousness would gain the upper hand; neither give us over to evil inclinations nor to the lusts of our corrupt heart. For where would this not bring us? If, however, it pleases Thee to let situations arise and that snares are laid for us everywhere, and if devils and worldly people in a subtle or evil way scheme to catch us, keep us from falling and lead us by Thy Spirit. Give us strength to remain standing, so that by our fall our own soul be not mortally wounded, the godly be neither grieved nor offended, and Thy Name and true godliness be not blasphemed." Such was David's prayer: "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee. Let

integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on Thee" (Ps 25:20-21); "O forsake me not utterly" (Ps 119:8); "Let not them that wait on Thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek Thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel" (Ps 69:6).

Thus, the petition not to be led into temptation is indicative of:

(1) a knowledge and an acknowledgment of the sinfulness of our heart and our weakness to resist temptations;

(2) a hatred and an aversion for sin and a fear for falling into sin;

(3) a love for communion with God, which is affected and obscured by a falling into sin; as well as a love for the honor of God's Name, the reputation of godliness, and the joy of the godly;

(4) faith in God's care for His own, and in God's omnipotence to give them strength to subdue the enemies in their assaults; as well as faith in the goodness of God as rendering Him willing to do this, and His veracity that He will do it, having promised to hear and answer prayer.

The Second Part of the Petition: But Deliver us from Evil

The first portion of this petition having been dealt with, the preservation from evil, we shall now consider the second part, the deliverance from evil. The first part relates to the future, whereas the second part relates to the present. These two portions of the petitions are conjoined by the adversative "but." From this it is evident that the latter differs from the first, but nevertheless is related to the first. The manner in which there is a distinction and relationship is contingent upon the interpretation of the word "evil"—that is, how this is to be understood. "Evil" (ὄϊϛñ poneros) signifies the devil: "... then cometh the wicked one ... the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt 13:19, 38). The world is referred to as evil: "... this present evil world" (Gal 1:4), which is said to lie in wickedness, that is, to be entirely evil: "... and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). The heart of man is said to be evil: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief" (Heb 3:12). This evil heart is filled with wickedness: "An evil man out of the evil

treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matt 12:35). In the heart of the natural man there is nothing but wickedness: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5). Also, sin is referred to as that which is evil: "Abhor that which is evil" (Rom 12:9). Since these four—the devil, the world, the heart of man, and sin—are called evil, the question is who or what is to be understood by "evil" here.

The Word "Evil" Defined

The supplicant is a child of God who addresses God as Father and greatly desires the glorification of God's Name, the well-being and extension of God's kingdom, and the doing of God's will. To that end he requests temporal support for himself and all the godly, so that, due to poverty, they would not be a reason for slander to the ungodly and they themselves would not be overcome by cares. He prays to continually be in a state of peace and reconciliation in order that they may run their course with joy and liberty before God and man. Furthermore he prays that they would not encounter any snares or stumbling blocks whereby they could be ensnared or over which they would fall. To that end he prays that they may be delivered from all that would hinder them in the way of godliness. It is all this which is here denominated as evil. By the word "evil" must primarily and preeminently be understood, not the devil, for then both portions of this petition would almost be identical, but our sinful nature, the sins which easily beset us, the law of sin which is in our members, and sin with all its manifestations. Thus, both the contradistinction with and the relationship to the first portion of this petition is clear. As long as sin has much power in man, the least temptation causes him to fall; however, when the image of God has been more restored, Christ has been formed in the soul, and the heart has increased in desire, life, and holiness, man will remain standing in temptation that much better. Furthermore, what would it profit man if he would not encounter any temptations at all and would in the meantime continue in his sinful disposition? The supplicant abhors the monster of sin, cannot tolerate it, but requests to be delivered from it. Also, the Greek word (*rusai*) yields further emphasis. The Greeks have several words whereby they express deliverance, and the word which they use here means "to extract," or "to deliver by way of extraction." Sin must be extracted: "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it

out, and cast it from thee" (Matt 18:9); "... in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (Col 2:11). (Extracting is implied here even though the vocabulary differs.) We thus pray: "Deliver us from the sinful disposition of heart and its sinful manifestations." This is not contradicted by the fact that there is an article here: (tou ponerou)—as if this were to refer to a person and thus to the devil. For this article is also used with the word "sin": "The whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). We consider the most correct view to be that is neuter rather than masculine, and that in this instance the word "evil" includes both sin and all that is evil. The meaning of this petition is therefore: Keep us in the future so that we shall not succumb to the power of temptation and be caused to fall thereby. Furthermore, deliver us from this present sinful disposition of soul and the sins which issue forth therefrom.

An Unconverted Person Is not Able to Pray this Petition

As an unconverted person cannot pray any petition since he has no desire for any of these, he likewise also cannot pray this petition. This is all the more true since he can be most clearly convinced that not only is he without desire for the matters comprehended in this petition, but that it is all his desire and delight to live in sin. He does not want sin to be extracted from him. Instead, he draws unrighteousness to himself with the cords of vanity, and sin as with heavy wagon ropes. He has no fear that he will fall into temptation; he even seeks it out and eagerly involves himself in it, for sinning is his delight—as long as it does not result in harm or injury. When such a person therefore says to God. "Lead us not," etc. ..., then he lies in the presence of an omniscient God and mocks Him. For if he would truly express what is in his heart, he would say: "Grant me opportunities to engage in many delightful and expedient sins, for they are my delight." Such a person ought no longer to pray this petition to God, lest he tempt Him. Instead, he ought either to continue without prayer to his destruction, or else repent and then offer the petition, "Lead us not into temptation!"

The Godly are Not Always in a Frame to Pray This Petition

A godly person also is not always in a frame to pray this petition. In order to have liberty, he must always regain his composure and modify his

behavior when he intends to pray. Thus he must specifically turn within before he prays this petition, and examine himself as to whether his heart cleaves to a given sin—whether there is a sin which presently holds him captive, he is not forsaking, and he is not valiantly resisting so that he may desist from and strive against it. If someone is in such a condition, he will have no liberty to approach to God, for his heart condemns him. It is thus essential that we are fully opposed to sin in general as well as to such and such a specific sin which torments us most—even though we have no strength against it and we are able to deduce from our disposition as well as from experience, that we can fall into this again unless we receive further strength from above. For then are we able to ask for help and pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

This Petition Must be Prayed in All Earnestness

This petition therefore ought to be most earnestly prayed by us, for:

(1) If we are no partakers of this disposition and these matters, we are not even capable of praying the other petitions—much less do them. However, upon having received what we petition for here, we shall be fit for everything. As the first petition is the objective of all things, so is this petition the disposition from which and whereby we must strive to attain that objective—as well as render the use of the means profitable.

(2) Furthermore, how dreadful is sin! It is a breach of the binding obligation which the Lord has imposed upon man—an obligation which man himself readily acknowledges. To sin is to be disobedient to the majestic Lord and to despise His awe-inspiring character, doing so in His presence and while He observes it. We commit sins from which we would be kept by the presence of a man—yes, even a child. Indeed, it is an act of utter contempt toward God when we are neither concerned about His wrath nor His judgments. Is anything more dreadful imaginable?

(3) Sin deforms the soul, and makes her despicable, hateful, and abominable—more than we can even think or express.

(4) And what sorrows it engenders! God withdraws Himself and leaves the person over to himself. His precious soul is tossed about day and

night due to loss of freedom, instability, fear, anxiety, and restlessness.

(5) The one sin begets the other, and those in turn beget others—and where would sinning end?

(6) Sinning does not merely consist in the committing of transitory evil thoughts, words, and deeds, but it injures spiritual life itself. It becomes more feeble and weaker, and a person becomes less fit to live godly and to turn from sin. You know all this, believers. Ought you therefore not to be fearful and anxious about sin, and knowing your impotence, ought it not to cause you to cry out to the Lord, "Deliver me from evil! Deliver me; wash me; sanctify me, oh sanctify me, for I must be holy as Thou art"

The Bitterness of Succumbing to the Power of Temptation

To succumb to the power of temptation is the most bitter thing that can befall a godly person. When a godly person, who already has but little strength, succumbs to a sinful frame, yields to sin more than he commonly does, and is thoughtless, careless, and shoddy in his conduct, he is in a frame which renders him vulnerable to temptations. When the tempter is then permitted by God to assault such a person and employ his wickedness, subtleties, devices, and practices; when the opportunities are there for this person to be wrathful, proud, unrighteous, impure, and to deny his confession either due to fear, lust, or whatever else; and if God departs from him, deserts him, and leaves him over to himself, his lusts will become lively and vehement and toss him about as dust in a whirlwind. This cannot be resisted, for both intellect and judgment have no say in this; his burning lusts are in control. Even if spiritual life manifests itself in some measure and counsels and groans against this—even then things nevertheless proceed as if he were without his senses. The running horses cannot be held back. What all can a man not be led into? It can lead him into things for which he had no desire his entire life—yes, which he abhorred.

When man falls due to temptation, it is frequently not limited to one fall. And even if he wishes to refrain and regain previous tenderness, there is no strength. God hides Himself, temptations are renewed, lusts stir by renewal, and he is overcome once more—until the Lord visits him by

renewal and draws him out of this. However, the previous tenderness of heart, the enjoyment of peace, communion with God, and a shining forth with holiness are still far removed. Sorrow, tears, anxiety, prayer, wrestling, a following hard after the Lord, and a renewed stumbling are the order of the day. Who would not be fearful of such a condition? Therefore, pray continually, "Lead us not into temptation!"

The Motivation for This Petition

The praying of this petition issues forth from a hatred and aversion for sin, from the experience of our inability to remain standing, and out of love for a pure and unspotted life. If this motivates us to pray thus, it must also render us active to remain in that condition. Temptations, when they come, will have no effect upon such when they come. Such have a perfect heart which longs for nothing else but continual union and fellowship with God. The world, and all that appears to be attractive and delightful in the world, must be banished from the heart, and the Lord alone must be all-sufficient to us—and must be the object of our joy, delight, love, and fear. Even if we cannot carry this out according to our wishes, we must always seek to preserve the choice, the intention, and the exercises. If we do not proceed in this from the heart, in all our doing no progress will be made; we shall be vulnerable to temptations and the most insignificant occasion will cause us to fall. If, however, the heart is perfect toward the Lord, and we conduct ourselves in the presence of God, then we will be strengthened against temptations. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

Prayer and Work Must Also be Combined

Prayer and work must be combined; a Christian desires to perform what he prays for, and endeavors to do as much as he is able. When he prays, "Lead us not into temptation," then he must refrain from leading himself into temptation. We lead ourselves into temptation, (1) when we do not flee those circumstances in which we have frequently fallen, but rather seek them out, or, upon their occurrence consciously yield to them, there being neither need nor obligation to avail ourselves of them. Such circumstances can vary greatly and may either pertain to someone's

disposition, calling or other situations. To some the company of given individuals is harmful, to others dining engagements, to others the use of ordinary means, and for others at times solitude. We must flee from these things that can be avoided, or else we lead ourselves into temptation. If we cannot avoid those situations in which we have frequently fallen, being under obligation by divine commandment, we must be very much on our guard to keep our hearts diligently by bridling our tongue, yielding in specific cases, standing firm for God's cause, and arming ourselves with sincerity and caution. When we conduct ourselves in this way, the temptation will have less effect upon us.

(2) when we use lawful and ordinary things too frequently and thoughtlessly.

(3) when we cherish vain thoughts and find our delight in them—even if they pertain to natural matters.

(4) when upon having sinned, we do not immediately arise, but either through carelessness, discouragement, unbelief and rejection of our spiritual state—or else due to finding delight in sin—remain where we are, so that sin gains in strength.

(5) when we reflect upon thoughts which suddenly enter our mind—be it concerning a sin in which we find delight, unbecoming thoughts of God and divine things, or dreadful interjections. We shall thereby lose a good spiritual frame, and in an evil spiritual frame we are susceptible to temptation. Against all these a Christian must be watchful and strive, being active in faith: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt 26:41); "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith" (1 Pet 5:8-9).

Guarding Against Temptation

Do you wish to be protected against temptation? First, give heed to your heart and the thoughts proceeding from it: "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov 4:23). Secondly, place a watch before your eyes: "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job 31:1), and pray: "Turn away mine eyes

from beholding vanity" (Ps 119:37).

Thirdly, close your ears to vain talk and backbiting: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor 15:33); "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken" (Eccles 7:21). Fourthly, give heed to your tongue; govern it carefully and circumspectly. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Ps 39:1). Also pray: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Ps 141:3). If you do not give heed to your heart and your external senses, you will continually succumb to temptation. If, however, you are thus on your guard and if you walk carefully, then, while praying and striving, you will walk surely, conquer the enemies, and inherit the crown of life.

The Conclusion of the Lord's Prayer

The third division of this prayer is its conclusion. "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." The papists and some others omit this and contest it. However, the sacred text itself, the practice of the first church and of generations following, as well as similar expressions in other texts of the divine Scriptures ought to convince them and confirm us in our usage of them.

(1) We can view this conclusion as the basis upon which the supplicant has received liberty and upon which he leans; for God, his Father, has command over all creatures, is omnipotent to give the supplicant what he desires, and is glorious and majestic in His Being—it being the supplicant's objective to magnify Him.

(2) We can view this conclusion as a motive toward prayer. It is common with prayers recorded in Scripture that motives are used whereby the supplicant quickens and spiritualizes his desires. He is thus supplicating God to grant him the matters which he desires—since He is ruler over all and can do everything by His power—and that the receipt of the desired matters would be to the glorification of His Name, He being worthy of this. Or: "We have prayed this for the church, the kingdom of grace; this is Thine and therein Thou dost desire to be glorified. Therefore hear our prayer!"

(3) It can also be viewed as an enlargement of and an urgent plea related to the last petition that God would not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for He has all authority and power over both the tempters and the ones being tempted. He is thus able to sustain the latter by His omnipotence, to restrain the tempters, and to grant the tempted one a steadfast and holy heart. However, this is not to be limited to the last petition only, but is applicable to this prayer in its entirety. Thine is the kingdom. This is indicative of God's majesty, $\tilde{\nu} \text{ } \tau\text{-}\text{d} \text{ } \text{-}\text{m} \text{ } \wedge$ (exousia), authority, and dominion over everything, all of which is immediately subject to Him. This is most gloriously expressed by king David: "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. Both riches and honour come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might" (1 Chron 29:11-12). God has sovereign dominion over both the kingdom of power and of grace, and of glory.

"... and the power ($\tilde{\nu} \text{ } \tau\text{-}\text{d} \text{ } \text{-}\text{m} \text{ } \text{d}$ dunamis)." God does not only have a just claim upon everything and authority over everything, but in the Lord there is also strength and power to rule over all that is His, protect His own, grant them their desires, punish the enemies, and execute whatever He wills. "I am the Almighty God" (Gen 17:1). The godly acknowledge this: "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Ps 115:3); "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20).

"... and the glory." God is glory and majesty in Himself—even if there were neither heaven, nor earth, nor any creature. God's glory is revealed in all His works, both in nature as well as in grace. The angels and the souls of the just made perfect praise and glorify Him as they witness His glory. However, in His goodness God has also willed that He be glorified upon earth. The unconverted neither are acquainted with the glory of God, nor do they have any desire to witness, praise, or magnify it. However, God has formed His people in order that they would show forth His praise; He has drawn them out of the power of darkness in order that they would show forth His praises. In all their activity they have God's glory in view; it is their chief delight. "Every day will I bless Thee; and I

will praise Thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works" (Ps 145:2-5).

The supplicant says: "Thine is the kingdom; Thou art worthy that everything would glorify Thee." Since true supplicants have this in view, they pray, expecting that God will hear their prayer.

"... forever!" The kingdom, the power, and the glory are the Lord's from eternity to eternity; by Him there is neither change nor shadow of turning. He is always the same: always glorious, omnipotent, and majestic. The believers upon earth—from Adam until Christ's coming to judgment, from generation to generation—declare: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev 5:13).

The Meaning of the Word "Amen" "...Amen." This is a Hebrew word which means truth. Sometimes it is used singularly, and sometimes it is repeated: Amen and Amen. At times it is used singularly and at times with an addition: Amen, Hallelujah; Amen, Oh Lord; Amen, the Lord do thus. (1) Sometimes it is an approbation and a subscribing to what has been said. "And all the people shall answer and say, Amen" (Deut 27:15); "And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands" (Neh 8:6). This approbation indicates that we comprehend the matter, as well as that we wish and desire it. "Else ... how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest" (1 Cor 14:16).

(2) Sometimes it is expressive of a strong desire for a matter, and a desire that it be thus and come about as such: "That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers. ... Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord" (Jer 11:5). (3) Sometimes it signifies veracity, certainty, and steadfastness—upon which one can rely and trust in. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor 1:20).

The believing supplicant who has prayed everything with both his

understanding and his heart, acknowledges the veracity and certainty of God's promises, that He will hear prayer—and particularly this prayer: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24); "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14-15). The supplicant has prayed with his heart, knows that the matters he has prayed for are according to God's will, believes the goodness, omnipotence, and veracity of God, expects the fulfillment of his desire (subjecting himself to its time, manner, and measure), and longingly adds to this: "Amen, so be it; it shall most certainly be true." "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen" (Rev 22:20).