

The Our Father Lesson Plan

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW Volume I, Revised Edition, William Barclay

Lesson

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Lesson Questions

1. What is/was your favorite part of Barclay's commentary on the Lord's Prayer?
2. The phrase "kingdom of God" appears repeatedly in the New Testament. Our readings this week suggest that in the Our Father, Jesus offered a definition of this critically important concept. What impact has this had on your thinking?
3. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" seems simple enough. We beseech God's forgiveness and oblige ourselves to forgive others. The readings suggest that the "as we forgive" has a deeper meaning. A meaning that we are asking forgiveness to the same extent and in the same proportion that we forgive. How has knowledge of this deeper meaning affected you?
4. There are four possible meanings offered for the "daily bread" other than simply sustenance. Which of these five (including the food) meanings appeals most to you? Why?
5. The text lists five kinds of attacks of temptation and four defenses. Which of these nine discussions can you relate most closely to from your own life experiences?

THE DISCIPLE'S PRAYER

Matt. 6:9-15

So, then, pray in this way: Our Father in heaven, let your name be held holy: Let your Kingdom come: Let your will be done, as in heaven, so upon earth: Give us to-day bread for the coming day: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One. For, if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you too; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Before we begin to think about the Lord's Prayer in detail there are certain general facts which we will do well to remember about it.

We must note, first of all, that this is a prayer which taught his disciples to pray. Both Matthew and Luke are clear about that. Matthew sets the whole Sermon on the Mount in the context of the disciples (Matt. 5:1); and Luke tells us that Jesus taught this prayer in response to the request of one of his disciples (Lk.11:1). The Lord's Prayer is a prayer which only a disciple can pray; it is a prayer which only one who is committed to Jesus Christ can take upon his lips with any meaning.

The Lord's Prayer is not a child's prayer, as it is so often regarded; it is, in fact, not meaningful for a child. The Lord's Prayer is not the Family Prayer as it is sometimes called, unless by the word family we mean the family of the Church. The Lord's Prayer is specifically and definitely stated to be the disciple's prayer; and only on the lips of a disciple has the prayer its full meaning. To put it in another way, the Lord's Prayer can only really be prayed when the man who prays it knows what he is saying, and he cannot know that until he has entered into discipleship.

We must note the order of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer. The first three petitions have to do with God and with the glory of God; the second three petitions have to do with our needs and our necessities. That is to say, God is first given his supreme place, and then, and only then, we turn to ourselves and our needs and desires. It is only when God is given his proper place that all other things fall into their proper places. Prayer must never be an attempt to bend the will of God to our desires; prayer ought always to be an attempt to submit our wills to the will of God.

The second part of the prayer, the part which deals with our needs and our necessities, is a marvellously wrought unity. It deals with the three essential needs of man, and the three spheres of time within which man moves. First, it asks for bread, for that which is necessary for the maintenance of life, and thereby brings the needs of the present to the throne of God. Second, it asks for forgiveness and thereby brings the past into the presence of God. Third, it asks for help in temptation and thereby commits all the future into the hands of God. In these three brief petitions, we are taught to lay the present, the past, and the future before the footstool of the grace of God.

But not only is this a prayer which brings the whole of life to the presence of God; it is also a prayer which brings the whole of God to our lives. When we ask for bread to sustain our earthly lives, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Father, the Creator and the Sustainer of all life. When we ask for forgiveness, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour and Redeemer. When we ask for help for future temptation, that request immediately directs our thoughts to God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Strengthener, the Illuminator, the Guide and the Guardian of our way.

In the most amazing way this brief second part of the Lord's Prayer takes the present, the past, and the future, the whole of man's life, and presents them to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, to God in all his fulness. In the Lord's Prayer Jesus teaches us to bring the whole of life to the whole of God, and to bring the whole of God to the whole of life.

THE FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matt. 6:9

Our Father in Heaven.

It might well be said that the word Father used of God is a compact summary of the Christian faith. The great value of this word Father is that it settles all the relationships of this life.

(i) It settles our relationship to the unseen world. Missionaries tell us that one of the greatest reliefs which Christianity brings to the heathen mind and heart is the certainty that there is only one God. It is the heathen belief that there are hordes of gods, that every stream and river, and tree and valley, and hill and wood, and every natural force has its own god. The heathen lives in a world crowded with gods. Still further, all these gods are jealous, and grudging, and hostile. They must all be placated, and a man can never be sure that he has not omitted the honour due to some of these gods. The consequence is that the heathen lives in terror of the gods; he is "haunted and not helped by his religion."

The most significant Greek legend of the gods is the legend of Prometheus. Prometheus was a god. It was in the days before men possessed fire; and life without fire was a cheerless and a comfortless thing. In pity Prometheus took fire from heaven and gave it as a gift to men. Zeus, the king of the gods, was mightily angry that men should receive this gift. So he took Prometheus and he chained him to a rock in the middle of the Adriatic Sea, where he was tortured with the heat and the thirst of the day, and the cold of the night. Even more, Zeus prepared a vulture to tear out Prometheus' liver, which always grew again, only to be torn out again.

That is what happened to the god who tried to help men. The whole conception is that the gods are jealous, and vengeful, and grudging; and the last thing the gods wish to do is to help men. That is the heathen idea of the attitude of the unseen world to men. The

heathen is haunted by the fear of a horde of jealous and grudging gods. So, then, when we discover that the God to whom we pray has the name and the heart of a father it makes literally all the difference in the world. We need no longer shiver before a horde of jealous gods; we can rest in a father's love.

(ii) It settles our relationship to the seen world, to this world of space and time in which we live. It is easy to think of this world as a hostile world. There are the chances and the changes of life; there are the iron laws of the universe which we break at our peril; there is suffering and death; but if we can be sure that behind this world there is, not a capricious, jealous, mocking god, but a God whose name is Father, then although much may still remain dark, all is now bearable because behind all is love. It will always help us if we regard this world as organized not for our comfort but for our training.

Take, for instance, pain. Pain might seem a bad thing, but pain has its place in the order of God. It sometimes happens that a person is so abnormally constituted that he is incapable of feeling pain. Such a person is a danger to himself and a problem to everyone else. If there were no such thing as pain, we would never know that we were ill, and often we would die before steps could be taken to deal with any disease or illness. That is not to say that pain cannot become a bad thing, but it is to say that times without number pain is God's red light to tell us that there is danger ahead.

Lessing used to say that if he had one question to ask the Sphinx, it would be: "Is this a friendly universe?" If we can be certain that the name of the God who created this world is Father, then we can also be certain that fundamentally this is a friendly universe. To call God Father is to settle our relationship to the world in which we live.

THE FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matt. 6:9 (continued)

(iii) If we believe that God is Father, it settles our relationship to our fellow-men. If God is Father, he is Father of all men. The Lord's Prayer does not teach us to pray My Father; it teaches us to pray Our Father. It is very significant that in the Lord's Prayer the words I, me, and mine never occur; it is true to say that Jesus came to take these words out of life and to put in their place we, us, and ours. God is not any man's exclusive possession. The very phrase Our Father involves the elimination of self. The fatherhood of God is the only possible basis of the brotherhood of man.

(iv) If we believe that God is Father, it settles our relationship to ourselves. There are times when every man despises and hates himself. He knows himself to be lower than the lowest thing that crawls upon the earth. The heart knows its own bitterness, and no one knows a man's unworthiness better than that man himself.

Mark Rutherford wished to add a new beatitude: "Blessed are those who heal us of our self-despisings." Blessed are those who give us back our self-respect. That is precisely what God does. In these grim, bleak, terrible moments we can still remind ourselves that,

even if we matter to no one else, we matter to God; that in the infinite mercy of God we are of royal lineage, children of the King of kings.

(v) If we believe that God is Father, it settles our relationship to God. It is not that it removes the might, majesty and power of God. It is not that it makes God any the less God; but it makes that might, and majesty, and power, approachable for us.

There is an old Roman story which tells how a Roman Emperor was enjoying a triumph. He had the privilege, which Rome gave to her great victors, of marching his troops through the streets of Rome, with all his captured trophies and his prisoners in his train. So the Emperor was on the march with his troops. The streets were lined with cheering people. The tall legionaries lined the streets' edges to keep the people in their places. At one point on the triumphal route there was a little platform where the Empress and her family were sitting to watch the Emperor go by in all the pride of his triumph. On the platform with his mother there was the Emperor's youngest son, a little boy. As the Emperor came near the little boy jumped off the platform, burrowed through the crowd, tried to dodge between the legs of a legionary, and to run out on to the road to meet his father's chariot. The legionary stooped down and stopped him. He swung him up in his arms: "You can't do that, boy," he said. "Don't you know who that is in the chariot? That's the Emperor. You can't run out to his chariot." And the little lad laughed down. "He may be your Emperor," he said, "but he's my father." That is exactly the way the Christian feels towards God. The might, and the majesty, and the power are the might, and the majesty, and the power of one whom Jesus taught us to call Our Father.

THE FATHER IN HEAVEN

Matt. 6:9 (continued)

So far we have been thinking of the first two words of this address to God--Our Father, but God is not only Our Father, He is Our Father who is in heaven. The last words are of primary importance. They conserve two great truths.

(i) They remind us of the holiness of God. It is very easy to cheapen and to sentimentalize the whole idea of the fatherhood of God, and to make it an excuse for an easy-going, comfortable religion. "He's a good fellow and all will be well." As Heine said of God: "God will forgive. It is his trade." If we were to say Our Father, and stop there, there might be some excuse for that; but it is Our Father in heaven to whom we pray. The love is there, but the holiness is there, too.

It is extraordinary how seldom Jesus used the word Father in regard to God. Mark's gospel is the earliest gospel, and is therefore the nearest thing we will ever have to an actual report of all that Jesus said and did; and in Mark's gospel Jesus calls God Father only six times, and never outside the circle of the disciples. To Jesus the word Father was so sacred that he could hardly bear to use it; and he could never use it except amongst those who had grasped something of what it meant.

We must never use the word Father in regard to God cheaply, easily, and sentimentally. God is not an easy-going parent who tolerantly shuts his eyes to all sins and faults and mistakes. This God, whom we can call Father, is the God whom we must still approach with reverence and adoration, and awe and wonder. God is our Father in heaven, and in God there is love and holiness combined.

(ii) They remind us of the power of God. In human love there is so often the tragedy of frustration. We may love a person and yet be unable to help him achieve something, or to stop him doing something. Human love can be intense--and quite helpless. Any parent with an erring child, or any lover with a wandering loved one knows that. But when we say, 'Our Father in heaven,' we place two things side by side. We place side by side the love of God and the power of God. We tell ourselves that the power of God is always motivated by the love of God, and can never be exercised for anything but our good; we tell ourselves that the love of God is backed by the power of God, and that therefore its purposes can never be ultimately frustrated or defeated. It is love of which we think, but it is the love of God. When we pray Our Father in heaven we must ever remember the holiness of God, and we must ever remember the power which moves in love, and the love which has behind it the undefeatable power of God.

THE HALLOWING OF THE NAME

Matt. 6:9 (continued)

Let your name be held holy.

"Hallowed be Thy name"--it is probably true that of all the petitions of the Lord's Prayer this is the one whose meaning we would find it most difficult to express. First, then, let us concentrate on the actual meaning of the words.

The word which is translated hallowed is a part of the Greek verb *hagiazesthai* (GSN0037). The Greek verb *hagiazesthai* is connected with the adjective *hagios* (GSN0040), and means to treat a person or a thing as *hagios*. *Hagios* is the word which is usually translated holy; but the basic meaning of *hagios* is different or separate. A thing which is *hagios* (GSN0040) is different from other things. A person who is *hagios* is separate from other people. So a temple is *hagion* (GSN0039) because it is different from other buildings. An altar is *hagios* (GSN0040) because it exists for a purpose different from the purpose of ordinary things. God's day is *hagios* (GSN0040) because it is different from other days. A priest is *hagios* (GSN0040) because he is separate from other men. So, then, this petition means, "Let God's name be treated differently from all other names; let God's name be given a position which is absolutely unique."

But there is something to add to this. In Hebrew the name does not mean simply the name by which a person is called-- John or James, or whatever the name may be. In Hebrew the name means the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known or revealed to us. That becomes clear when we see how the Bible writers use the expression.

The Psalmist says, "Those who know thy name put their trust in thee" (Ps.9:10). Quite clearly that does not mean that those who know that God is called Jehovah will trust in him. It means that those who know what God is like, those who know the nature and the character of God will put their trust in him. The Psalmist says, "Some boast of chariots and some of horses, but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" (Ps.20:7). Quite clearly that does not mean that in a time of difficulty the Psalmist will remember that God is called Jehovah. It means that at such a time some will put their trust in human and material aids and defences, but the Psalmist will remember the nature and the character of God; he will remember what God is like, and that memory will give him confidence.

So, then, let us take these two things and put them together. Hagiazesthai (GSN0037), which is translated to hallow, means to regard as different, to give a unique and special place to. The name is the nature, the character, the personality of the person in so far as it is known and revealed to us. Therefore, when we pray "Hallowed be Thy name," it means, "Enable us to give to thee the unique place which thy nature and character deserve and demand."

THE PRAYER FOR REVERENCE

Matt. 6:9 (continued)

Is there, then, one word in English for giving to God the unique place which his nature and character demand? There is such a word, and the word is reverence. This petition is a prayer that we should be enabled to reverence God as God deserves to be revered. In all true reverence of God there are four essentials.

(i) In order to reverence God we must believe that God exists. We cannot reverence someone who does not exist; we must begin by being sure of the existence of God.

To the modern mind it is strange that the Bible nowhere attempts to prove the existence of God. For the Bible God is an axiom. An axiom is a self-evident fact which is not itself proved, but which is the basis of all other proofs. For instance, 'A straight line is the shortest distance between two points,' and, 'Parallel lines, however far produced, will never meet,' are axioms.

The Bible writers would have said that it was superfluous to prove the existence of God, because they experienced the presence of God every moment of their lives. They would have said that a man no more needed to prove that God exists than he needs to prove that his wife exists. He meets his wife every day, and he meets God every day.

But suppose we did need to try to prove that God exists, using our own minds to do so, how would we begin? We might begin from the world in which we live. Paley's old argument is not yet completely outdated. Suppose there is a man walking along the road. He strikes his foot against a watch lying in the dust. He has never in his life seen a watch before; he does not know what it is. He picks it up; he sees that it consists of a metal case,

and inside the case a complicated arrangement of wheels, levers, springs and jewels. He sees that the whole thing is moving and working in the most orderly way. He sees further that the hands are moving round the dial in an obviously predetermined routine. What then does he say? Does he say: "All these metals and jewels came together from the ends of the earth by chance, by chance made themselves into wheels and levers and springs, by chance assembled themselves into this mechanism, by chance wound themselves up and set themselves going, by chance acquired their obvious orderly working"? No. He says, "I have found a watch; somewhere there must be a watch-maker."

Order presupposes mind. We look at the world; we see a vast machine which is working in order. Suns rise and set in an unvarying succession. Tides ebb and flow to a timetable. Seasons follow each other in an order. We look at the world, and we are bound to say, "Somewhere there must be a world-maker." The fact of the world drives us to God. As Sir James Jeans has said, "No astronomer can be an atheist." The order of the world demands the mind of God behind it.

We might begin from ourselves. The one thing man has never created is life. Man can alter and rearrange and change things, but he cannot create a living thing. Where then did we get our life? From our parents. Yes, but where did they get theirs? From their parents. But where did all this begin? At some time life must have come into the world; and it must have come from outside the world for man cannot create life; and once again we are driven back to God.

When we look in upon ourselves and out upon the world we are driven to God. As Kant said long ago, "the moral law within us, and the starry heavens above us," drive us to God.

(ii) Before we can reverence God, we must not only believe that God is, we must also know the kind of God he is. No one could reverence the Greek gods with their loves and wars, their hates and their adulteries, their trickeries and their knaveries. No one can reverence capricious, immoral, impure gods. But in God as we know him there are three great qualities. There is holiness; there is justice; and there is love. We must reverence God, not only because he exists, but because he is the God whom we know him to be.

(iii) But a man might believe that God is; he might be intellectually convinced that God is holy, just and loving; and still he might not have reverence. For reverence there is necessary a constant awareness of God. To reverence God means to live in a God-filled world, to live a life in which we never forget God. This awareness is not confined to the Church or to so-called holy places; it must be an awareness which exists everywhere and at all times.

Wordsworth spoke of it in Lines composed near Tintern Abbey:

"And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

One of the finest of modern devotional poets is Henry Ernest Hardy who wrote under the name of Father Andrew. In *The Mystic Beauty* he writes:

"O London town has many moods,
And mingled 'mongst its many broods
A leavening of saints,

And ever up and down its streets,
If one has eyes to see one meets
Stuff that an artist paints.

I've seen a back street bathed in blue,
Such as the soul of Whistler knew:
A smudge of amber light,

Where some fried fish-shop plied its trade,
A perfect note of colour made—
Oh, it was exquisite!

I once came through St. James' Park
Betwixt the sunset and the dark,
And oh the mystery

Of grey and green and violet!
I would I never might forget
That evening harmony.

I hold it true that God is there
If beauty breaks through anywhere;
And his most blessed feet,

Who once life's roughest roadway trod.,
Who came as man to show us
God, Still pass along the street."

God in the back street, God in St. James' Park, God in the fried fish-shop--that is reverence. The trouble with most people is that their awareness of God is spasmodic, acute at certain times and places, totally absent at others. Reverence means the constant awareness of God.

(iv) There remains one further ingredient in reverence. We must believe that God exists; we must know what kind of a God he is; we must be constantly aware of God. But a man might have all these things and still not have reverence. To all these things must be added obedience and submission to God. Reverence is knowledge plus submission. In his catechism Luther asks, "How is God's name hallowed amongst us?" and his answer is, "When both our life and doctrine are truly Christian," that is to say, when our intellectual convictions, and our practical actions, are in full submission to the will of God.

To know that God is, to know what kind of a God he is, to be constantly aware of God, and to be constantly obedient to him--that is reverence and that is what we pray for when we pray: "Hallowed be thy name." Let God be given the reverence which his nature and character deserve.

GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S WILL

Matt. 6:10

Let your Kingdom come: Let your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

The phrase The Kingdom of God is characteristic of the whole New Testament. No phrase is used oftener in prayer and in preaching and in Christian literature. It is, therefore, of primary importance that we should be clear as to what it means.

It is evident that the Kingdom of God was central to the message of Jesus. The first emergence of Jesus on the scene of history was when he came into Galilee preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God (Mk.1:14). Jesus himself described the preaching of the kingdom as an obligation laid upon him: "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Lk.4:43; Mk.1:38). Luke's description of Jesus' activity is that he went through every city and village preaching and showing the good news of the Kingdom of God (Lk.8:1). Clearly the meaning of the Kingdom of God is something which we are bound to try to understand.

When we do try to understand the meaning of this phrase we meet with certain puzzling facts. We find that Jesus spoke of the Kingdom in three different ways. He spoke of the Kingdom as existing in the past. He said that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets were in the Kingdom (Lk.13:28; Matt. 8:11). Clearly therefore the Kingdom goes far back into history. He spoke of the Kingdom as present. "The Kingdom of God," he said, "is in the midst of you" (Lk.17:21). The Kingdom of God is therefore a present reality here and now. He spoke of the Kingdom of God as future, for he taught men to pray for the coming of the Kingdom in this his own prayer. How then can the Kingdom be past, present and future all at the one time? How can the Kingdom be at one and the same time something which existed, which exists, and for whose coming it is our duty to pray?

We find the key in this double petition of the Lord's Prayer. One of the commonest characteristics of Hebrew style is what is technically known as parallelism. The Hebrew tended to say everything twice. He said it in one way, and then he said it in another way which repeated or amplified or explained the first way. Almost any verse of the Psalms will show this parallelism in action. Almost every verse of the Psalms divides in two in the middle; and the second half repeats or amplifies or explains the first half.

Let us take some examples and the thing will become clear:

"God is our refuge and strength—
a very present help in trouble
(Ps.46:1).

"The Lord of Hosts is with us—
the God of Jacob is our refuge
(Ps.46:7).

"The Lord is my shepherd—
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures—
He leads me beside still waters"
(Ps.23:1-2).

Let us apply this principle to these two petitions of the Lord's Prayer. Let us set them down side by side:

"Thy Kingdom come--Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."

Let us assume that the second petition explains, and amplifies, and defines the first. We then have the perfect definition of the Kingdom of God--The Kingdom of God is a society, upon earth where Gods will is as perfectly done as it is in heaven. Here we have the explanation of how the Kingdom can be past, present and future all at the one time. Any man who at any time in history perfectly did God's will was within the Kingdom; any man who perfectly does God's will is within the Kingdom; but since the world is very far from being a place where God's will is perfectly and universally done, the consummation of the Kingdom is still in the future and is still something for which we must pray.

To be in the Kingdom is to obey the will of God. Immediately we see that the Kingdom is not something which primarily has to do with nations and peoples and countries. It is something which has to do with each one of us. The Kingdom is in fact the most personal thing in the world. The Kingdom demands the submission of my will, my heart, my life. It is only when each one of us makes his personal decision and submission that the Kingdom comes.

The Chinese Christian prayed the well-known prayer, "Lord, revive thy Church, beginning with me," and we might well paraphrase that and say, "Lord, bring in thy Kingdom, beginning with me." To pray for the Kingdom of Heaven is to pray that we may submit our wills entirely to the will of God.

GOD'S KINGDOM AND GOD'S WILL

Matt. 6:10 (continued)

From what we have already seen it becomes clear that the most important thing in the world is to obey the will of God; the most important words in the world are "Thy will be done." But it is equally clear that the frame of mind and the tone of voice in which these words are spoken will make a world of difference.

(i) A man may say, "Thy will be done," in a tone of defeated resignation. He may say it, not because he wishes to say it, but because he has accepted the fact that he cannot possibly say anything else; he may say it because he has accepted the fact that God is too strong for him, and that it is useless to batter his head against the walls of the universe. He may say it thinking only of the ineluctable power of God which has him in its grip. As Omar Khayyam had it:

"But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checkerboard of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that Toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all--He knows--HE knows!"

A man may accept the will of God for no other reason than that he has realized that he cannot do anything else.

(ii) A man may say, "Thy will be done," in a tone of bitter resentment. Swinburne spoke of men feeling the trampling of the iron feet of God. He speaks of the supreme evil, God. Beethoven died all alone; and it is said that when they found his body his lips were drawn back in a snarl and his fists were clenched as if he were shaking his fists in the very face of God and of high heaven. A man may feel that God is his enemy, and yet an enemy so strong that he cannot resist. He may therefore accept God's will, but he may accept it with bitter resentment and smouldering anger.

(iii) A man may say, "Thy will be done," in perfect love and trust. He may say it gladly and willingly, no matter what that will may be. It should be easy for the Christian to say, "Thy will be done," like that; for the Christian can be very sure of two things about God.

(a) He can be sure of the wisdom of God. Sometimes when we want something built or constructed, or altered or repaired, we take it to the craftsman and consult him about it. He makes some suggestion, and we often end up by saying, "Well, do what you think best. You are the expert." God is the expert in life, and his guidance can never lead anyone astray.

When Richard Cameron, the Scottish Covenanter, was killed his head and his hands were cut off by one Murray and taken to Edinburgh. "His father being in prison for the same cause, the enemy carried them to him, to add grief unto his former sorrow, and inquired at him if he knew them. Taking his son's head and hands, which were very fair (being a man of fair complexion like himself), he kissed them and said, 'I know them--I know them. They are my son's--my own dear son's. It is the Lord. Good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me or mine, but hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days.'" When a man can speak like that, when he is quite sure that his times are in the hands of the infinite wisdom of God, it is easy to say, "Thy will be done."

(b) He can be sure of the love of God. We do not believe in a mocking and a capricious God, or in a blind and iron determinism. Thomas Hardy finishes his novel *Tess* with the grim words: "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess." We believe in a God whose name is love. As Whittier had it:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their froned palms in air.
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

As Browning triumphantly declared his faith:

"God, Thou art love! I build my faith on that ...
I know thee who has kept my path and made
Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow
So that it reached me like a solemn joy.
It were too strange that I should doubt thy love."

And as Paul had it: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom.8:32). No man can look at the Cross and doubt the love of God, and when we are sure of the love of God, it is easy to say, "Thy will be done."

OUR DAILY BREAD

Matt. 6:11

Give us to-day bread for the coming day.

One would have thought that this is the one petition of the Lord's Prayer about the meaning of which there could have been no possible doubt. It seems on the face of it to be the simplest and the most direct of them all. But it is the fact that many interpreters have offered many interpretations of it. Before we think of its simple and obvious meaning, let us look at some of the other explanations which have been offered.

(i) The bread has been identified with the bread of the Lord's Supper. From the very beginning the Lord's Prayer has been closely connected with the Lord's Table. In the very first orders of service which we possess it is always laid down that the Lord's Prayer should be prayed at the Lord's Table, and some have taken this petition as a prayer to be granted the daily privilege of sitting at the Table of our Lord, and of eating the spiritual food which a man receives there.

(ii) The bread has been identified with the spiritual food of the word of God. We sometimes sing the hymn:

"Break thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea.
Beyond the sacred page
I seek thee, Lord,
My spirit pants for thee,
O living word."

So this petition has been taken to be a prayer for the true teaching, the true doctrine, the essential truth, which are in the scriptures and the word of God, and which are indeed food for a man's mind and heart and soul.

(iii) The bread has been taken to stand for Jesus himself. Jesus called himself the bread of life (Jn.6:33-35), and this has been taken to be a prayer that daily we may be fed on him who is the living bread. It was in that way that Matthew Arnold used the phrase, when he wrote his poem about the saint of God he met in the east end of London one suffocating day:

"Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen,
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew and said:
`Ill and o'er worked, how fare you in this scene?'
`Bravely!' said he, `for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, the living bread.'"

So then this petition has been taken as a prayer that we too might be cheered and strengthened with Christ the living bread.

(iv) This petition has been taken in a purely Jewish sense. The bread has been taken to be the bread of the heavenly kingdom. Luke tells how one of the bystanders said to Jesus: "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (Lk.14:15). The Jews had a strange yet vivid idea. They held that when the Messiah came, and when the golden age dawned, there would be what they called the Messianic banquet, at which the chosen ones of God would sit down. The slain bodies of the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan would provide the meat and the fish courses of the banquet. It would be a kind of reception feast given by God to his own people. So, then, this has been taken to be a petition for a place at the final Messianic banquet of the people of God.

Although we need not agree that any one of these explanations is the main meaning of this petition, we need not reject any of them as false. They all have their own truth and their own relevance.

The difficulty of interpreting this petition was increased by the fact that there was very considerable doubt as to the meaning of the word *epiousios* (GSN1967), which is the word which the Revised Standard Version translates "daily." The extraordinary fact was that, until a short time ago, there was no other known occurrence of this word in the whole of Greek literature. Origen knew this, and indeed held that Matthew had invented the word. It was therefore not possible to be sure what it precisely meant. But not very long ago a papyrus fragment turned up with this word on it; and the papyrus fragment was actually a woman's shopping list! And against an item on it was the word *epiousios* (GSN1967). It was a note to remind her to buy supplies of a certain food for the coming day. So, very simply, what this petition means is: "Give me the things we need to eat for this coming day. Help me to get the things I've got on my shopping list when I go out this morning. Give me the things we need to eat when the children come in from school, and the men folk come in from work. Grant that the table be not bare when we sit down together to-day." This is a simple prayer that God will supply us with the things we need for the coming day.

OUR DAILY BREAD

Matt. 6:11 (continued)

When we see that this is a simple petition for the needs of the everyday, certain tremendous truths emerge from it.

(i) It tells us that God cares for our bodies. Jesus showed us that; he spent so much time healing men's diseases and satisfying their physical hunger. He was anxious when he thought that the crowd who had followed him out into the lonely places had a long road home, and no food to eat before they set out upon it. We do well to remember that God is interested in our bodies. Any teaching which belittles, and despises, and slanders the body is wrong. We can see what God thinks of our human bodies, when we remember that he himself in Jesus Christ took a human body upon him. It is not simply soul salvation, it is whole salvation, the salvation of body, mind and spirit, at which Christianity aims.

(ii) This petition teaches us to pray for our daily bread, for bread for the coming day. It teaches us to live one day at a time, and not to worry and be anxious about the distant and the unknown future. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray this petition, there is little doubt that his mind was going back to the story of the manna in the wilderness (Exo.16:1-21). The children of Israel were starving in the wilderness. and God sent them the manna. the food from heaven; but there was one condition--they must gather only enough for their immediate needs. If they tried to gather too much, and to store it up, it went bad. They had to be satisfied with enough for the day. As one Rabbi put it: "The portion of a day in its day, because he who created the day created sustenance for the day." And as another Rabbi had it: "He who possesses what he can eat to-day, and says, 'What shall I eat to-morrow?' is a man of little faith." This petition tells us to live one day at a time. It forbids the anxious worry which is so characteristic of the life which has not learned to trust God.

(iii) By implication this petition gives God his proper place. It admits that it is from God we receive the food which is necessary to support life. No man has ever created a seed which will grow. The scientist can analyse a seed into its constituent elements, but no synthetic seed would ever grow. All living things come from God. Our food, therefore, is the direct gift of God.

(iv) This petition very wisely reminds us of how prayer works. If a man prayed this prayer, and then sat back and waited for bread to fall into his hands, he would certainly starve. It reminds us that prayer and work go hand in hand and that when we pray we must go on to work to make our prayers come true. It is true that the living seed comes from God, but it is equally true that it is man's task to grow and to cultivate that seed. Dick Sheppard used to love a certain story. There was a man who had an allotment; he had with great toil reclaimed a piece of ground, clearing away the stones, eradicating the rank growth of weeds, enriching and feeding the ground, until it produced the loveliest flowers and vegetables. One evening he was showing a pious friend around his allotment.

The pious friend said, "It's wonderful what God can do with a bit of ground like this, isn't it?" "Yes." said the man who had put in such toil, "but you should have seen this bit of ground when God had it to himself!" God's bounty and man's toil must combine. Prayer, like faith, without works is dead. When we pray this petition we are recognizing two basic truths--that without God we can do nothing, and that without our effort and cooperation God can do nothing for us.

(v) We must note that Jesus did not teach us to pray: "Give me my daily bread." He taught us to pray: "Give us our daily bread." The problem of the world is not that there is not enough to go round; there is enough and to spare. The problem is not the supply of life's essentials; it is the distribution of them. This prayer teaches us never to be selfish in our prayers. It is a prayer which we can help God to answer by giving to others who are less fortunate than we are. This prayer is not only a prayer that we may receive our daily bread; it is also a prayer that we may share our daily bread with others.

FORGIVENESS HUMAN AND DIVINE

Matt. 6:12,14,15

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors ... For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you too; but, if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Before a man can honestly pray this petition of the Lord's Prayer he must realize that he needs to pray it. That is to say, before a man can pray this petition he must have a sense of sin. Sin is not nowadays a popular word. Men and women rather resent being called, or treated as, hell-deserving sinners.

The trouble is that most people have a wrong conception of sin. They would readily agree that the burglar, the drunkard, the murderer, the adulterer, the foul-mouthed person is a sinner. But they are guilty of none of these sins; they live decent, ordinary, respectable lives, and have never even been in danger of appearing in court, or going to prison, or getting some notoriety in the newspapers. They therefore feel that sin has nothing to do with them.

The New Testament uses five different words for sin.

(i) The commonest word is hamartia (GSN0266). This was originally a shooting word and means a missing of the target. To fail to hit the target was hamartia. Therefore sin is the failure to be what we might have been and could have been.

Charles Lamb has a picture of a man named Samuel le Grice. Le Grice was a brilliant youth who never fulfilled his promise. Lamb says that there were three stages in his career. There was a time when people said, "He will do something." There was a time when people said, "He could do something if he would." There was a time when people said, "He might have done something, if he had liked." Edwin Muir writes in his

Autobiography: "After a certain age all of us, good and bad, are grief stricken because of powers within us which have never been realized: because, in other words, we are not what we should be."

That precisely is hamartia (GSN0266); and that is precisely the situation in which we are all involved. Are we as good husbands or wives as we could be? Are we as good sons or daughters as we could be? Are we as good workmen or employers as we could be? Is there anyone who will dare to claim that he is all he might have been, and has done all he could have done? When we realise that sin means the failure to hit the target, the failure to be all that we might have been and could have been, then it is clear that every one of us is a sinner.

(ii) The second word for sin is parabasis (GSN3847), which literally means a stepping across. Sin is the stepping across the line which is drawn between right and wrong.

Do we always stay on the right side of the line which divides honesty and dishonesty? Is there never any such thing as a petty dishonesty in our lives?

Do we always stay on the right side of the line which divides truth and falsehood? Do we never, by word or by silence, twist or evade or distort the truth?

Do we always stay on the right side of the line which divides kindness and courtesy from selfishness and harshness? Is there never an unkind action or a discourteous word in our lives?

When we think of it in this way, there can be none who can claim always to have remained on the right side of the dividing line.

(iii) The third word for sin is paraptoma (GSN3900), which means a slipping across. It is the kind of slip which a man might make on a slippery or an icy road. It is not so deliberate as parabasis (GSN3847). Again and again we speak of words slipping out; again and again we are swept away by some impulse or passion, which has momentarily gained control of us, and which has made us lose our self-control. The best of us can slip into sin when for the moment we are off our guard.

(iv) The fourth word for sin is anomia (GSN0458), which means lawlessness. Anomia is the sin of the man who knows the right, and who yet does the wrong; the sin of the man who knows the law, and who yet breaks the law. The first of all the human instincts is the instinct to do what we like; and therefore there come into any man's life times when he wishes to kick over the traces, and to defy the law, and to do or to take the forbidden thing. In Mandalay, Kipling makes the old soldier say:

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the best is
like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an' a man
can raise a thirst'

Even if there are some who can say that they have never broken any of the Ten Commandments, there are none who can say that they have never wished to break any of them.

(v) The fifth word for sin is the word *opheilema* (GSN3783) which is the word used in the body of the Lord's Prayer; and *opheilema* means a debt. It means a failure to pay that which is due, a failure in duty. There can be no man who will ever dare to claim that he has perfectly fulfilled his duty to man and to God: Such perfection does not exist among men.

So, then, when we come to see what sin really is, we come to see that it is a universal disease in which every man is involved. Outward respectability in the sight of man, and inward sinfulness in the sight of God may well go hand in hand. This, in fact, is a petition of the Lord's Prayer which every man needs to pray.

FORGIVENESS HUMAN AND DIVINE

Matt. 6:12,14,15 (continued)

Not only does a man need to realize that he needs to pray this petition of the Lord's Prayer; he also needs to realize what he is doing when he prays it. Of all petitions of the Lord's Prayer this is the most frightening.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The literal meaning is : "Forgive us our sins in proportion as we forgive those who have sinned against us." In Matt. 6:14-15 Jesus says in the plainest possible language that if we forgive others, God will forgive us; but if we refuse to forgive others, God will refuse to forgive us. It is, therefore, quite clear that, if we pray this petition with an unhealed breach, an unsettled quarrel in our lives, we are asking God not to forgive us.

If we say, "I will never forgive so-and-so for what he or she has done to me," if we say, "I will never forget what so-and-so did to me," and then go and take this petition on our lips, we are quite deliberately asking God not to forgive us. As someone has put it: "Forgiveness, like peace, is one and indivisible." Human forgiveness and divine forgiveness are inextricably intercombined. Our forgiveness of our fellow-men and God's forgiveness of us cannot be separated; they are interlinked and interdependent. If we remembered what we are doing when we take this petition on our lips, there would be times when we would not dare to pray it.

When Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the South Sea Islands he used always to conduct family worship in the mornings for his household. It always concluded with the Lord's Prayer. One morning in the middle of the Lord's Prayer he rose from his knees and left the room. His health was always precarious, and his wife followed him thinking that he was ill. "Is there anything wrong?" she said. "Only this," said Stevenson, "I am not fit to pray the Lord's Prayer today." No one is fit to pray the Lord's Prayer so long as the

unforgiving spirit holds sway within his heart. If a man has not put things right with his fellow-men, he cannot put things right with God.

If we are to have this Christian forgiveness in our lives, three things are necessary.

(i) We must learn to understand. There is always a reason why a person does something. If he is boorish and impolite and cross-tempered, maybe he is worried or in pain. If he treats us with suspicion and dislike, maybe he has misunderstood, or has been misinformed about something we have said or done. Maybe the man is the victim of his own environment or his own heredity. Maybe his temperament is such that life is difficult and human relations a problem for him. Forgiveness would be very much easier for us, if we tried to understand before we allowed ourselves to condemn.

(ii) We must learn to forget. So long as we brood upon a slight or an injury, there is no hope that we will forgive. We so often say, "I can't forget what so-and-so did to me," or "I will never forget how I was treated by such-and-such a person or in such-and-such a place." These are dangerous sayings, because we can in the end make it humanly impossible for us to forget. We can print the memory indelibly upon our minds.

Once the famous Scottish man of letters, Andrew Lang, wrote and published a very kind review of a book by a young man. The young man repaid him with a bitter and insulting attack. About three years later Andrew Lang was staying with Robert Bridges, the Poet Laureate. Bridges saw Lang reading a certain book. "Why," he said, "that's another book by that ungrateful young cub who behaved so shamefully to you." To his astonishment he found that Andrew Lang's mind was a blank on the whole affair. He had completely forgotten the bitter and insulting attack. To forgive, said Bridges, was the sign of a great man, but to forget was sublime. Nothing but the cleansing spirit of Christ can take from these memories of ours the old bitterness that we must forget.

(iii) We must learn to love. We have already seen that Christian love, agape (GSN0026), is that unconquerable benevolence, that undefeatable good-will, which will never seek anything but the highest good of others, no matter what they do to us, and no matter how they treat us. That love can come to us only when Christ, who is that love, comes to dwell within our hearts--and he cannot come unless we invite him.

To be forgiven we must forgive, and that is a condition of forgiveness which only the power of Christ can enable us to fulfil.

THE ORDEAL OF TEMPTATION

Matt. 6:13

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.

There are two matters of meaning at which we must look before we begin to study this petition in detail.

(i) To modern ears the word tempt is always a bad word; it always means to seek to seduce into evil. But in the Bible the verb *peirazein* (GSN3985) is often better translated by the word test than by the word tempt. In its New Testament usage to tempt a person is not so much to seek to seduce him into sin, as it is to test his strength and his loyalty and his ability for service.

In the Old Testament we read the story of how God tested the loyalty of Abraham by seeming to demand the sacrifice of his only son Isaac. In the King James Version the story begins: "And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham" (Gen.22:1). Obviously the word tempt cannot there mean to seek to seduce into sin, for that is something that God would never do. It means rather to submit to a test of loyalty and obedience. When we read the story of the temptations of Jesus, it begins: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil" (Matt. 4:1). If we take the word tempt there in the sense of to seduce into sin, it makes the Holy Spirit a partner in an attempt to compel Jesus to sin. Time and again in the Bible we will find that the word tempt has the idea of testing in it, at least as much as the idea of seeking to lead into sin.

Here, then, is one of the great and precious truths about temptation. Temptation is not designed to make us fall. Temptation is designed to make us stronger and better men and women. Temptation is not designed to make us sinners. It is designed to make us good. We may fail in the test, but we are not meant to. We are meant to emerge stronger and finer. In one sense temptation is not so much the penalty of being a man; it is the glory of being a man. If metal is to be used in a great engineering project, it is tested at stresses and strains far beyond those which it is ever likely to have to bear. So a man has to be tested before God can use him greatly in his service.

All that is true; but it is also true that the Bible is never in any doubt that there is a power of evil in this world. The Bible is not a speculative book, and it does not discuss the origin of that power of evil, but it knows that it is there. Quite certainly this petition of the Lord's Prayer should be translated not, "Deliver us from evil," but, "Deliver us from the Evil One." The Bible does not think of evil as an abstract principle or force, but as an active, personal power in opposition to God.

The development of the idea of Satan in the Bible is of the greatest interest. In Hebrew the word Satan simply means an adversary. It can often be used of men. A man's adversary is his Satan. In the King James Version the Philistines are afraid that David may turn out to be their Satan (1Sam.29:4): Solomon declares that God has given him

such peace and prosperity that there is no Satan left to oppose him (1Kgs.5:4); David regards Abishai as his Satan (2Sam.19:22). In all these cases Satan means an adversary or opponent. From that the word Satan goes on to mean one who pleads a case against someone. Then the word leaves earth and, as it were, enters heaven. The Jews had the idea that in heaven there was an angel whose charge it was to state the case against a man, a kind of prosecuting angel; and that became the function of Satan. At that stage Satan is not an evil power; he is part of the judgment apparatus of heaven. In Jb.1:6, Satan is numbered among the sons of God: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them." At this stage Satan is the divine prosecutor of man.

But it is not so very far a step from stating a case against a man to making up a case against a man. And that is the next step. The other name of Satan is the Devil; and Devil comes from the Greek word Diabolos (GSN1228), which is the regular word for a slanderer. So Satan becomes the Devil, the slanderer par excellence, the adversary of man, the power who is out to frustrate the purposes of God and to ruin mankind. Satan comes to stand for everything which is anti-man and anti-God. It is from that ruining power that Jesus teaches us to pray to be delivered. The origin of that power is not discussed; there are no speculations. As someone has put it: "If a man wakes up and finds his house on fire, he does not sit down in a chair and write or read a treatise on the origin of fires in private houses; he attempts to try to extinguish the fire and to save his house." So the Bible wastes no time in speculations about the origin of evil. It equips man to fight the battle against the evil which is unquestionably there.

THE ATTACK OF TEMPTATION

Matt. 6:13 (continued)

Life is always under attack from temptation, but no enemy can launch an invasion until he finds a bridgehead. Where then does temptation find its bridgehead? Where do our temptations come from? To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and, if we know whence the attack is likely to come, we will have a better chance to overcome it.

(i) Sometimes the attack of temptation comes from outside us. There are people whose influence is bad. There are people in whose company it would be very difficult even to suggest doing a dishonourable thing, and there are people in whose company it is easy to do the wrong things. When Robert Burns was a young man he went to Irvine to learn flax-dressing. There he fell in with a certain Robert Brown, who was a man who had seen much of the world, and who had a fascinating and a dominating personality. Burns tells us that he admired him and strove to imitate him. Burns goes on: "He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when Woman was the guiding star.... He spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror.... Here his friendship did me a mischief." There are friendships and associations which can do us a mischief. In a tempting world a man should be very careful in his choice of friends and of the society in which he will move. He should give the temptations which come from outside as little chance as possible.

(ii) It is one of the tragic facts of life that temptations can come to us from those who love us; and of all kinds of temptation this is the hardest to fight. It comes from people who love us and who have not the slightest intention of harming us.

The kind of thing that happens is this. A man may know that he ought to take a certain course of action; he may feel divinely drawn to a certain career; but to follow that course of action may involve unpopularity and risk; to accept that career may be to give up all that the world calls success. It may well be that in such circumstances those who love him will seek to dissuade him from acting as he knows he ought, and they will do so because they love him. They counsel caution, prudence, worldly wisdom; they want to see the one they love do well in a worldly sense; they do not wish to see him throw his chances away; and so they seek to stop him doing what he knows to be right for him.

In Gareth and Lynette Tennyson tells the story of Gareth, the youngest son of Lot and Bellicent. Gareth wishes to join his brothers in the service of King Arthur. Bellicent his mother does not wish him to go. "Hast thou no pity on my loneliness?" she asks. His father Lot is old and lies "like a log all but smouldered out." Both his brothers have gone to Arthur's court. Must he go too? If he will stay at home, she will arrange the hunt, and find him a princess for his bride, and make him happy. It was because she loved him that she wished to keep him; the tempter was speaking with the very voice of love. But Gareth answers:

"O mother,
How can you keep me tethered to you--shame.
Man am I grown, and man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? Follow the Christ the King.
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?"

The lad went out, but the voice of love tempted him to stay.

That was what happened to Jesus. "A man's foes," said Jesus, "will be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:36). They came and they tried to take him home, because they said that he was mad (Mk.3:21). To them he seemed to be throwing his life and his career away; to them he seemed to be making a fool of himself; and they tried to stop him. Sometimes the bitterest of all temptations come to us from the voice of love.

(iii) There is one very odd way in which temptation can come, especially to younger people. There is in most of us a queer streak, which, at least in certain company, makes us wish to appear worse than we are. We do not wish to appear soft and pious, namby-pamby and holy. We would rather be thought daredevil, swashbuckling adventurers, men of the world and not innocents. Augustine has a famous passage in his confessions: "Among my equals I was ashamed of being less shameless than others, when I heard them boast of their wickedness.... And I took pleasure not only in the pleasure of the deed but in the praise.... I made myself worse than I was, that I might not be reproached, and

when in anything I had not sinned as the most abandoned ones, I would say that I had done what I had not done, that I might not seem contemptible." Many a man has begun on some indulgence, or introduced himself to some habit, because he did not wish to appear less experienced in worldliness than the company in which he happened to be. One of the great defences against temptation is simply the courage to be good.

THE ATTACK OF TEMPTATION

Matt. 6:13 (continued)

(iv) But temptation comes not only from outside us; it comes from inside us too. If there was nothing in us to which temptation could appeal then it would be helpless to defeat us. In every one of us there is some weak spot; and at that weak spot temptation launches its attack.

The point of vulnerability differs in all of us. What is a violent temptation to one man, leaves another man quite unmoved; and what leaves one man quite unmoved may be an irresistible temptation to another. Sir James Barrie has a play called *The Will*. Mr. Davizes, the lawyer, noticed that an old clerk, who had been in his service for many years, was looking very ill. He asked him if anything was the matter. The old man told him that his doctor had informed him that he was suffering from a fatal and incurable disease.

Mr Devizes [uncomfortably]: I'm sure it's not what you fear. Any specialist would tell you so.

Surtees [without looking up]: I've been to one, sir--yesterday.

Mr Devizes: Well?

Surtees: It's--that, sir.

Mr Devizes: He couldn't be sure.

Surtees: Yes, sir.

Mr Devizes: An operation—

Surtees: Too late for that, he said. If I had been operated on long ago, I might have had a chance.

Mr Devizes: But you didn't have it long ago.

Surtees: Not to my knowledge, sir; but he says it was there all the same, always in me, a black spot, not as big as a pin's head, but waiting to spread and destroy me in the fulness of time.

Mr Devizes [helplessly]: It seems damnably unfair.

Surtees [humbly]: I don't know, sir. He says there is a spot of that kind in pretty nigh all of us, and, if we don't look out, it does for us in the end.

Mr Devizes: No. No. No.

Surtees: He called it the accursed thing. I think he meant we should know of it, and be on the watch.

In every man there is the weak spot, which, if he is not on the watch, can ruin him. Somewhere in every man there is the flaw, some fault of temperament which can ruin

life, some instinct or passion so strong that it may at any time snap the leash, some quirk in our make-up that makes what is a pleasure to someone else a menace to us. We should realize it, and be on the watch.

(v) But, strangely enough, temptation comes sometimes not from our weakest point, but from our strongest point. If there is one thing of which we are in the habit of saying, "That is one thing anyway which I would never do," it is just there that we should be upon the watch. History is full of the stories of castles which were taken just at the point where the defenders thought them so strong that no guard was necessary. Nothing gives temptation its chance like over-confidence. At our weakest and at our strongest points we must be upon the watch.

THE DEFENCE AGAINST TEMPTATION

Matt. 6:13 (continued)

We have thought of the attack of temptation; let us now assemble our defences against temptation.

(i) There is the simple defence of self-respect. When Nehemiah's life was in danger, it was suggested that he should quit his work and shut himself in the Temple until the danger was past. His answer was: "Should such a man as I flee? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live? I will not go in" (Neh.6:11). A man may escape many things, but he cannot escape himself. He must live with his memories, and if he has lost his self-respect life becomes intolerable. Once President Garfield was urged to take a profitable, but dishonourable, course of action. It was said, "No one will ever know." His answer was, "President Garfield will know--and I've got to sleep with him." When a man is tempted, he may well defend himself by saying, "Is a man like me going to do a thing like that?"

(ii) There is the defence of tradition. No man can lightly fail the traditions and the heritage into which he has entered, and which have taken generations to build up. When Pericles, the greatest of the statesmen of Athens, was going to address the Athenian Assembly, he always whispered to himself: "Pericles, remember that you are an Athenian and that you go to speak to Athenians."

One of the epics of the Second World War was the defence of Tobruk. The Coldstream Guards cut their way out of Tobruk, but only a handful of them survived, and even these were just shadows of men. Two hundred survivors out of two battalions were being cared for by the R.A.F. A Coldstream Guards officer was in the mess. Another officer said to him, "After all, as Foot Guards, you had no option but to have a go." And an R.A.F. man standing there said, "It must be pretty tough to be in the Brigade of Guards, because tradition compels you to carry on irrespective of circumstances."

The power of a tradition is one of the greatest things in life. We belong to a country, a school, a family, a Church. What we do affects that to which we belong. We cannot lightly betray the traditions into which we have entered.

(iii) There is the defence of those whom we love and those who love us. Many a man would sin, if the only penalty he had to bear was the penalty he would have to bear himself; but he is saved from sin because he could not meet the pain that would appear in someone's eyes, if he made shipwreck of his life.

Laura Richards has a parable like this:

"A man sat by the door of his house smoking his pipe, and his neighbour sat beside him and tempted him. 'You are poor,' said the neighbour, 'and you are out of work and here is a way of bettering yourself. It will be an easy job and it will bring in money, and it is no more dishonest than things that are done every day by respectable people. You will be a fool to throw away such a chance as this. Come with me and we will settle the matter at once.' And the man listened. Just then his young wife came to the door of the cottage and she had her baby in her arms. 'Will you hold the baby for a minute,' she said. 'He is fretful and I must hang out the clothes to dry.' The man took the baby and held him on his knees. And as he held him, the child looked up, and the eyes of the child spoke: 'I am flesh of your flesh,' said the child's eyes. 'I am soul of your soul. Where you lead I shall follow. Lead the way, father. My feet come after yours.' Then said the man to his neighbour: 'Go, and come here no more.'"

A man might be perfectly willing to pay the price of sin, if that price affected only himself. But if he remembers that his sin will break someone else's heart, he will have a strong defence against temptation.

(iv) There is the defence of the presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus is not a figure in a book; he is a living presence. Sometimes we ask, "What would you do, if you suddenly found Christ standing beside you? How would you live, if Jesus Christ was a guest in your house?" But the whole point of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ is beside us, and he is a guest in every home. His is the unescapable presence, and, therefore, we must make all life fit for him to see. We have a strong defence against temptation in the memory of the continual presence of Jesus Christ.