

# The Lord's Prayer

Explained by Emmet Fox (1886-1951)

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The Lord's Prayer is the most important of all the Christian documents. It was carefully constructed by Jesus with certain very clear ends in view. That is why, of all his teachings, it is by far the best known, and the most often quoted. It is, indeed, the one common denominator of all the Christian churches. Every one of them, without exception, uses the Lord's Prayer; it is perhaps the only ground upon which they all meet. Every Christian child is taught the Lord's Prayer, and any Christian who prays at all says it almost every day. Its actual use probably exceeds that of all other prayers put together. Undoubtedly everyone who is seeking to follow along the Way that Jesus led, should make a point of using the Lord's Prayer, and using it intelligently, every day.

In order to do this, we should understand that the Prayer is a carefully constructed organic whole. Many people rattle through it like parrots, forgetful of the warning that Jesus gave us against vain, repetitions, and, of course, no one derives any profit from that sort of thing.

The Great Prayer is a compact formula for the development of the soul. It is designed with the utmost care for the specific purpose; so that those who use it regularly, with understanding, will experience a real change of soul. The only progress is this change, which is what the Bible calls being born again. It is the change of soul that matters. The mere acquisition of fresh knowledge received intellectually makes no change in the soul. The Lord's Prayer is especially designed to bring this change about, and when it is regularly used it invariably does so.

The more one analyzes the Lord's Prayer, the more wonderful is its construction seen to be. It meets everyone's need just at his own level. It not only provides a rapid spiritual development for those who are sufficient advanced to be ready, but in its superficial meaning it supplies the more simpleminded and even the more materially-minded people with just what they need at the moment, if they use the Prayer sincerely.

The greatest of all prayers was designed with still another purpose in view, quite as important as either of the others. Jesus foresaw that, as centuries went by, his simple, primitive teaching would gradually become overlain by all sorts of external things which really have nothing whatever to do with it. He foresaw that men who had never known him, relying, quite sincerely, no doubt, upon their own limited intellects, would build up theologies and doctrinal systems, obscuring the direct simplicity of the spiritual message, and actually erecting a wall between God and man. He designed his Prayer in such a way that it would pass safely through those ages without being tampered with. He arranged it with consummate skill, so that it could not be twisted or distorted, or adapted to any man-made system; so that, in fact, it would carry the whole Christ Message within it and yet not have any thing on the surface to attract the attention of the restless, managing type of person. So it has turned out that, through all the changes and chances of Christian history, this Prayer has come through to us uncorrupted and unspoiled.

The first thing that we notice is that the Prayer naturally falls into seven clauses. This is very characteristic of the Oriental tradition. Seven symbolizes individual soul, just as the number twelve in the same convention stands for corporate completeness. In practical use, we often find an eighth clause added - "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory" - but this, though in itself an excellent affirmation, is not really a part of the Prayer. The seven clauses are put together with the utmost care, in perfect order and sequence, and they contain everything that is necessary for the nourishment of the soul. Let us consider the first clause:

# Our Father

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This simple statement in itself constitutes a definite and complete system of theology. It fixes clearly and distinctly the nature and character of God. It sums up the Truth of Being. It tells all that man needs to know about God, and about himself, and about his neighbor. Anything that is added to this can only be by way of commentary, and is more likely than not to complicate and obscure the true meaning of the text. Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "My religion is summed up in the first two words of the Lord's Prayer," and most of us will find ourselves in full agreement with him.

Notice the simple, clear-cut, definite statement - "Our Father." In this clause Jesus lays down once and for all that the relationship between God and man is that of father and child. This cuts out any possibility that the Deity could be the relentless and cruel tyrant that is often pictured by theology. Jesus says definitely that the relationship is that of parent and child; not an Oriental despot dealing with groveling slaves, but parent and child. Now we all know perfectly well that men and women, however short they may fall in other respects, nearly always do the best they can for their children. Unfortunately, cruel and wicked parents are to be found, but they are so exceptional as to make a paragraph for the newspapers. The vast majority of men and women are at their best in dealing with their children. Speaking of the same truth elsewhere, Jesus said: "If you, who are so full of evil, nevertheless do your best for your children, how much more so will God, who is altogether good, do for you"; and so he begins his Prayer by establishing the character of God as that of the perfect Father dealing with His children.

Note that this clause which fixes the nature of God at the same time fixes the nature of man, because if man is the offspring of God, he must partake of the nature of God, since the nature of the offspring is invariably similar to that of the parent. It is a cosmic law that like begets like. It is not possible that a rosebush should produce lilies, or that a cow should give birth to a colt. The offspring is and must be of the same nature as the parent; and so, since God is Divine Spirit, man must essentially be Divine Spirit too, whatever appearances may say to the contrary.

Let us pause here for a moment and try to realize what a tremendous step forward we have taken in appreciating the teaching of Jesus on this point. Do you not see that at a single blow it swept away ninety-nine percent of all the old theology, with its avenging God, its chosen and favorite individuals, its eternal hell fire, and all the other horrible paraphernalia of man's diseased and terrified imagination. God exists - and the Eternal, All-Powerful, All-Present God is the loving Father of mankind.

If you would meditate upon this acct, until you had some degree of understanding of what it really means, most of your difficulties and physical ailments would disappear, for they are rooted and grounded in fear. The underlying cause of *all* trouble is fear. If only you could realize to some extent that Omnipotent Wisdom is your living, loving Father, most of your fears would go. If you could realize it completely, every negative thing in your life would vanish away, and you would demonstrate perfection in every phase. Now you see the object that Jesus had in mind when he placed this clause first.

Next we see that the Prayer says, not "My Father," but "Our Father," and this indicates, beyond the possibility of mistake, the truth of the brotherhood of man. It forces upon our attention at the very beginning the fact that all men are indeed brethren, the children of one Father; and that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither chosen nor unchosen," because all men are brethren. Here Jesus in making his second point, ends all the tiresome nonsense about a "chosen race,;" about the spiritual superiority of an one group of human beings over any other group. He cuts away the illusion that the members of any nation, or race, or territory, or group, or class, or color, are, in the sight of God, superior to any other group. A belief in the superiority of one's own particular group, or "herd," as the psychologists call it, is an illusion to which mankind

is very prone, but in the teaching of Jesus it has no place. He teaches that the thing that places a man is the spiritual condition of his own individual soul, and that as long as he is upon the spiritual path it makes no difference whatever to what group he belongs or does not belong.

The final point is the implied command that we are to pray not only for ourselves but for all mankind. Every student of Truth should hold the thought of the Truth of Being for the whole human race for a least a moment each day, since none of us lives to himself nor dies to himself; for indeed we are all truly - an in a much more literal sense than people are aware - limbs of on Body.

Now we begin to see how very much more than appears on the surface is contained in those simple words "Our Father." Simple - one might almost say innocent - as they look, Jesus has concealed within them a spiritual explosive that will ultimately destroy every man-made system that holds the human race in bondage.

## Which Art In Heaven

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Having clearly established the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, Jesus next goes on to enlarge upon the nature of God, and to describe the fundamental facts of existence. Having shown that God and man are parent and child, he goes on to delineate the function of each in the grand scheme of things. He explains that it is the nature of God to be in heaven, and of man to be on earth, because God is Cause, and man is manifestation. Cause cannot be expression, and expression cannot be cause, and we must be careful not to confuse the two things. Here heaven stands for God or Cause, because in religious phraseology heaven is the term for the Presence of God. In metaphysics it is called the Absolute, because it is the realm of Pure Unconditioned Being, of archetypal ideas. The word "earth" means manifestation, and man's function is to manifest or express God, or Cause. In other words, God is the Infinite and Perfect Cause of all things; but Cause has to be expressed, and God expresses Himself by means of man. Man's destiny is to express God in all sorts of glorious and wonderful ways. Some of this expression we see as his surroundings; first his physical body, which is really only the most intimate part of his embodiment; then his home; his work; his recreation; in short, his whole expression. To express means to press outwards, or bring into sight that which already exists implicitly. Every feature of your life is really a manifestation or expression of something in your soul.

Some of these points may seem at first to be a little abstract; but since it is misunderstandings about the relationship of God and man that lead to all our difficulties, it is worth any amount of trouble to correctly understand that relationship. Trying to have manifestation without Cause is atheism and materialism, and we know where they lead. Trying to have Cause without manifestation leads man to suppose himself to be a personal God, and this commonly ends in megalomania and a kind of paralysis of expression.

The important thing to realize is that God is in heaven and man on earth, and that each has his own role in the scheme of things. Although they are One, they are not one-and-the-same. Jesus establishes this point carefully when he says, "Our Father which art in heaven.

## Hallowed Be Thy Name

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In the Bible, as elsewhere, the "name" of anything means the essential nature or character of that thing, and so, when we are told what the name of God is, we are told what His nature is, and His name or nature, Jesus says, is "hallowed." Now what does the word "hallowed" mean? Well, if you trace the derivation back into Old English, you will discover a most extraordinarily interesting and significant fact. The word "hallowed" has the same meaning as "holy", "whole", "wholesome", and "heal", or "healed"; so we see that the nature of God is not

merely worthy of our veneration, but is complete and perfect - altogether good. Some very remarkable consequences follow from this. We have agreed that an effect must be similar in its nature to its cause, and so, because the nature of God is hallowed, everything that follows from that Cause must be hallowed or perfect too. Just as a rosebush cannot produce lilies, so God cannot cause or send anything but perfect good. As the Bible says, "The same fountain cannot send forth both sweet and bitter water." From this it follows that God cannot, as people sometimes think, send sickness or trouble, or accidents - much less death - for these things are unlike His nature. "Hallowed be thy name" means "Thy nature is altogether good and Thou art the author only of perfect good." *Of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*

If you think that God has sent any of your difficulties to you, for no matter how good a reason, you are giving power to your troubles, and this makes it very difficult to get rid of them.

## **Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done In Earth As It Is In Heaven**

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Man being *manifestation* or expression of God has a limitless destiny before him. His work is to express, in concrete definite form, the abstract ideas with which God furnishes him, and in order to do this, he must have creative power. If he did not have creative power, he would be merely a machine through which God worked - an automaton. But man is not an automaton; he is an individualized consciousness. God individualizes Himself in an infinite number of distinct focal points of consciousness, each one quite different; and therefore each one is a distinct way of knowing the universe, each a distinct experience. Notice carefully that the word "individual" means *undivided*. The consciousness of each one is distinct from God and from all others, and yet none are separated. How can this be? How can two things be one, and yet not one and the same? The answer is that in matter, which is finite, they cannot; but in Spirit, which is infinite, they can. With our present limited, three-dimensional consciousness, we cannot see this; but intuitively we can understand it through prayer. If God did not individualize Himself, there would be only one experience; as it is, there are as many universes as there are individuals to form them through thinking.

"Thy kingdom come" means that it is our duty to be ever occupied in helping to establish; the Kingdom of God on earth. That is to say, our work is to bring more upon this plane. That is what we are here for. The old saying, "God has a plan for every man, and he has on for you," is quite correct. God has glorious and wonderful plans for every one of us; He has planned a splendid career, full of interest, life, and joy, for each, and if our lives are dull, or restricted, or squalid, that is not his fault, but ours.

If only you will find out the thing God intends you to do, and will do it, you will find that all doors will open to you; all obstacles in your path will melt away; you will be acclaimed a brilliant success; you will be most liberally rewarded from the monetary point of view; and you will be gloriously happy.

There is a true place in life for each one of us, upon the attainment of which we shall be completely happy, and perfectly secure. On the other hand, until we do find our true place we never shall be either happy or secure, no matter what other things we may have. Our true place is the one place where we can bring the Kingdom of God into manifestation, and truly say, "Thy kingdom cometh."

We have seen that man too often chooses to use his free will in a negative way. He allows himself to think wrongly, selfishly, and this wrong thinking brings upon him all his troubles. Instead of understanding that it is his essential nature to express God, to be ever about his Father's business, he tries to set up upon his own account. All our troubles arise from just this folly. We abuse our free will, trying to work apart from God; and the very natural result is all the sickness, poverty, sin, trouble, and death that we find on the physical plane. We must never for a moment try to live for ourselves, or make plans or arrangements without reference to God, or

suppose that we can be either happy or successful if we are seeking any other end than to do His Will. Whatever our desire may be, whether it be something concerning our daily work, or our duty at home, our relations with our fellowman, or private plans for the employment of our own time, if we seek to serve self instead of God, we are ordering trouble, disappointment, and unhappiness, notwithstanding what the evidence to the contrary may seem to be. Whereas, if we choose what, through prayer, we know to be His Will, then we are insuring for ourselves ultimate success, freedom, and joy, however much self-sacrifice and self-discipline it may involve at the moment.

Our business is to bring our whole nature as fast as we can into conformity with the Will of God, by constant prayer and unceasing, though unanxious, watching. "Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

"In His Will is our peace," said Dante, and the *Divine Comedy* is really a study in fundamental states of consciousness, the *Inferno* representing the state of the soul that is endeavoring to live without God, the *Paradise* representing the state of the soul that has achieved its conscious unity with the Divine Will, and the *Purgatorio* the condition of the soul that is struggling to pass from the one state to the other. It was this sublime conflict of the soul which wrung from the heart of the great Augustine the cry "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they repose in Thee."

## Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

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Because we are the children of a loving Father, we are entitled to expect that God will provide us fully with everything we need. Children naturally and spontaneously look to their human parents to supply all their wants, and in the same way we should look to God to supply ours. If we do so, in faith and understanding, we shall never look in vain.

It is the Will of God that we should all lead healthy, happy lives, full of joyous experience; that we should develop freely and steadily, day by day and week by week, as our pathways unfold more and more unto the perfect day. To this end we require such things as food, clothing, shelter, means of travel, books, and so on; above all, we require *freedom*; and in the Prayer all these things are included under the heading of bread. Bread, that is to say, means not merely food in general, but all things that man requires for a healthy, happy, free, and harmonious life. But in order to obtain these things, we have to claim them, not necessarily in detail, but *we have to claim them*, and, we have to recognize God and God alone as the Source and fountainhead of all our good. Lack of any kind is always traceable to the fact that we have been seeking our supply from some secondary source, instead of from God Himself, the Author and Giver of life.

People think of their supply as coming from certain investments, or from a business, or from an employer, perhaps; whereas these are merely the channels through which it comes, God being the Source. The number of possible channels is infinite, the Source is One. The particular channel through which you are getting your supply is quite likely to change, because change is the Cosmic Law for manifestation. Stagnation is really death; but as long as you realize that the *Source* of your supply is the one unchangeable Spirit, all is well. The fading out of one channel will be but the signal for the opening of another. If, on the other hand, like most people, you regard the particular channel as being the source, then when that channel fails, as it is very likely to do, you are left stranded, because you *believe* that the source has dried up - and for practical purposes, on the physical plane, things are as we believe them to be.

A man, for instance, thinks of his employment as the source of his income, and for some reason he loses it. His employer goes out of business, or cuts down the staff, or they have a falling out. Now, because he believes that his position is the source of his income, the loss of the position naturally means the loss of the income, and so he has to start looking about for another job, and perhaps has to look a long time, meanwhile finding himself without apparent supply. If such a man had realized, through regular daily Treatment, that God was his supply,

and his job only the particular channel through which it came, then upon the closing of that channel, he would have found another, and probably a better one, opening immediately. If his belief had been in God as his supply, then since God cannot change or fail, or fade out, his supply would have come from *somewhere*, and would have formed its own channel in whatever was the easiest way.

In precisely the same way the proprietor of a business may find himself obliged to close down for some cause outside of his control; or one whose income is dependent upon stocks or bond may suddenly find that source dried up, owing to unexpected happenings on the stock market, or to some catastrophe to a factory or mine. If he regards the business or the investment as his *source* of supply, he will believe his source to have collapsed, and will in consequence be left stranded; whereas, if his reliance is upon God, he will be comparatively indifferent to the channel and so that channel will be easily supplanted by a new one. In short, we have to train ourselves to look to God, Cause, for all that we need, and then the channel, which is entirely a secondary matter, will take care of itself.

In its inner and most important meaning, our daily bread signifies the realization of the Presence of God - an actual sense that God exists not merely in a nominal way, but as *the* great reality; the sense that He is present with us; and the feeling that because He is God, all-good, all-powerful, all-wise, and all-loving, we have nothing to fear; that we can rely upon Him to take every care of us; that He will supply all that we need to have; teach us all that we need to know; and guide our steps so that we shall not make mistakes. This is Emanuel, or God with us; and remember that it absolutely means some degree of actual *realization*, that is to say, some experience in consciousness, and not just a theoretical recognition of the fact; not simply talking about God, however beautifully one may talk, or *thinking about* Him; but some degree of actual experience. We must begin by thinking about God, but this should lead to the realization which is the *daily bread* or manna. That is the gist of the whole matter. Realization, which is experience, is the thing that counts. It is realization which marks the progress of the soul. It is realization which guarantees the demonstration. It is realization, as distinct from mere theorizing and fine words, which is the *substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. This is the Bread of Life, the hidden manna, and when one has that, he has all things in deed and in truth. Jesus several times refers to this experience as bread because it is the nourishment of the soul, just as physical food is the nourishment of the physical body. Supplied with this food, the soul grows and waxes strong, gradually developing to adult stature. Without it, she, being deprived of her essential nourishment, is naturally stunted and crippled.

The common mistake, of course, is to suppose that a formal recognition of God is sufficient, or that talking about Divine things, perhaps talking very poetically, is the same as possessing them; but this is exactly on a par with supposing that looking at a tray of food, or discussing the chemical composition of sundry foodstuffs, is the same thing as actually eating a meal. It is this mistake which is responsible for the fact that people sometimes pray for a thing for years without any tangible result. If prayer is a force at all, it cannot be possible to pray without something happening.

A realization cannot be obtained to order; it must come spontaneously as the result of regular daily prayer. To seek realization by will power is the surest way to miss it. Pray regularly and quietly - remember that in all mental work, *effort* or strain defeats itself - then presently, perhaps when you least expect it, like a thief in the night, the realization will come. Meanwhile it is well to know that all sorts of practical difficulties can be overcome by sincere prayer, without any realization at all. Good workers have said that they have had some of their best demonstrations without any realization worth speaking about; but while it is, of course, a wonderful boon to surmount such particular difficulties, we do not achieve the sense of security and well-being to which we are entitled until we have experienced realization.

Another reason why the food or bread symbol for the experience of the Presence of God is such a telling one is that the act of eating food is essentially a thing that must be done for oneself. No one can assimilate food for another. One may hire servants to do all sorts of other things for him; but there is one thing that one must positively do for himself, and that is to eat his own food. In the same way, the realization of the Presence of

God is a thing that no one else can have for us. We can and should help one another in the overcoming of specific difficulties - "Bear ye one another's burdens" - but the realization (or making real) of the Presence of God, the "substance" and "evidence," can, in the nature of things, be had only at firsthand.

In speaking of the "bread of life, Emanuel," Jesus call it our *daily* bread. The reason for this is very fundamental - our contact with God must be a living one. It is our *momentary* attitude to God which governs our being. "Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation." The most futile thing in the world is to seek to live upon a past realization. The thing that means spiritual life to you is your realization of God *here and now*.

Today's realization, no matter how feeble and poor it may seem, has a million times more power to help you than the most vivid realization of yesterday. Be thankful for yesterday's experience, knowing that it is with your forever in the change of consciousness which it has brought about, but do not lean upon it for a single moment for the need of today. Divine Spirit *is*, and changes not with the ebb and flow of human apprehension. The manna, in the desert is the Old Testament prototype of this. The people wandering in the wilderness were told that they would be supplied with manna from heaven every day, each one always receiving abundant for his needs, but they were on no account to try to save it up for the morrow. They were on no account to endeavor to live upon yesterday's food, and when, notwithstanding the rule, some of them did try to do so, the result was pestilence or death.

So it is with us. When we seek to live upon yesterday's realization, we are actually seeking to live in the past, and to live in the past is death. The art of life is to live in the present moment, and to make that moment as perfect as we can by the realization that we are the instruments and expression of God Himself. the best way to prepare for tomorrow is to make today all that it should be.

## **Forgive Us Our Trespases As We Forgive Them That Trespass Against Us**

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This clause is the turning point of the Prayer. It is the strategic key to the whole Treatment. Let us notice here that Jesus has so arranged this marvelous Prayer that it covers the entire ground of the unfoldment of our souls completely, and in the most concise and telling way. It omits nothing that is essential for our salvation, and yet, so compact is it that there is not a thought or a word too much. Every idea fits into its place with perfect harmony and in perfect sequence. Anything more would be redundancy, anything less would be incompleteness, and at this point it takes up the critical factor of forgiveness.

Having told us what God is, what man is, how the universe works, how we are to do our own work - the salvation of humanity and of our own souls - he then explains what our true nourishment or supply is, and the way in which we can obtain it; and now he comes to the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness of sins is the central problem of life. Sin is a sense of separateness from God, and is the major tragedy of human experience. It is, of course, rooted in selfishness. It is essentially an attempt to gain some supposed good to which we are not entitled in justice. It is a sense of isolated, self-regarding, personal existence, whereas the Truth of Being is that all is One. Our true selves are at one with God, undivided from Him, expressing His ideas, witnessing to His nature - the dynamic Thinking of that Mind. Because we are all one with the great Whole of which we are spiritually a part, it follows that we are one with all men. Just because in Him we live and move and have our being, we are, in the absolute sense, all essentially one.

Evil, sin, the fall of man, in fact, is essentially the attempt to negative this Truth in our thoughts. We try to live apart from God. We try to do without Him. We act as though we had life of our own; as separate minds; as

though we could have plans and purposes and interests separate from His. All this, if it were true, would mean that existence is not one and harmonious, but a chaos of competition and strife. It would mean that we are quite separate from our fellow man and could injure him, rob him, or hurt him, or even destroy him, without any damage to ourselves, and, in fact, that the more we took from other people the more we would have for ourselves. It would mean that the more we considered our own interests, and the more indifferent we were to the welfare of others, the better off we would be. Of course it would then follow naturally that it would pay other to treat us in the same way, and that accordingly we might expect many of them to do so. Now if this were true, it would mean that the whole universe is only a jungle, and that sooner or later it must destroy itself by its own inherent weakness and anarchy. But, of course, it is not true, and therein lies the joy of life.

Undoubtedly, many people do act as though they believed it to be true, and a great many more, who would be dreadfully shocked if brought face-to-face with that proposition in cold blood, have, nevertheless, a vague feeling that such must be very much the way things are, even though they, themselves, are personally above consciously acting in accordance with such a notion. Now this is the real basis of sin, of resentment, of condemnation, of jealousy, of remorse, and all the evil brood that walk that path.

This belief in independent and separate existence is the arch sin, and now, before we can progress any further, we have to take the knife to this evil thing and cut it out once and for all. Jesus knew this, and with this definite end in view he inserted at this critical point a carefully prepared statement that would compass our end and his, without the shadow of a possibility of miscarrying. He inserted what is nothing less than a trip clause. He drafted a declaration which would force us, without any conceivable possibility of escape, evasion, mental reservation, or subterfuge of any kind, to execute the great sacrament of forgiveness in all its fullness and far-reaching power.

As we repeat the Great Prayer intelligently, considering and meaning what we say, we are suddenly, so to speak, caught up off our feet and grasped as though in a vise, so that we must face this problem - and there is no escape. We must positively and definitely extend forgiveness to everyone to whom it is possible that we can owe forgiveness, namely, to anyone who we think can have injured us in any way. Jesus leaves no room for any possible glossing of this fundamental thing. He has constructed his Prayer with more skill than any lawyer displayed in the casting of a deed. He has so contrived it that once our attention has been drawn to this matter, we are inevitably obligated either to forgive our enemies in sincerity and truth, or never again to repeat that prayer. It is safe to say that no one who reads this with understanding will ever again be able to use the Lord's Prayer unless and until he has forgiven. Should you now attempt to repeat it without forgiving, it can safely be predicted that you will not be able to finish it. This great central clause will stick in your throat.

Notice that Jesus does not say, "Forgive me my trespasses and I will try to forgive others," or "I will see if it can be done," or "I will forgive generally, with certain exceptions." He obliges us to declare that we have actually forgiven and forgiven all, *and he makes our claim to our own forgiveness to depend upon that*. Who is there who has grace enough to say his prayers at all, who does not long for the forgiveness or cancellation of his own mistakes and faults? Who would be so insane as to endeavor to seek the Kingdom of God without desiring to be relieved of his own sense of guilt? No one, we may believe. And so we see that we are trapped in the inescapable position that we cannot demand our own release before we have released our brother.

The forgiveness of others is the vestibule of Heaven, and Jesus knew it, and has led us to the door. You must forgive everyone who has ever hurt you if you want to be forgiven yourself; that is the long and the short of it. You have to get rid of all resentment and condemnation of others, and, not least, of self-condemnation and remorse. You have to forgive others, and having discontinued your own mistakes, you have to accept the forgiveness of God for them too, or you cannot make any progress. You have to forgive yourself, but you cannot forgive yourself sincerely until you have forgiven others first. Having forgiven others, you must be prepared to forgive yourself too, for to refuse to forgive oneself is only spiritual pride. "And by that sin fell the angels." We cannot make this point too clear to ourselves; we have got to forgive. There are few people in the world who have not at some time or other been hurt, really hurt, by someone else; or been disappointed, or



injured, or deceived, or misled. Such things sink into the memory where they usually cause inflamed and festering wounds, and there is only one remedy - they are to be plucked out and thrown away. And the one and only way to do that is by forgiveness.

Of course, nothing in all the world is easier than to forgive people who have not hurt us very much. Nothing is easier than to rise above the thought of a trifling loss. Anybody will be willing to do this, but what the Law of Being requires of us is that we forgive not only these trifles, but the very things that are so hard to forgive that at first it seems impossible to do it at all. The despairing heart cries, "It is too much to ask. That thing meant too much to me. It is impossible. I cannot forgive." But the Lord's Prayer makes our own forgiveness from God, which means our escape from guilt and limitation, dependent upon just this very thing. There is no escape from this, and so forgiveness there must be, no matter how deeply we may have been injured, or how terribly we have suffered. It must be done.

If your prayers are not being answered, search your consciousness and see if there is not someone whom you have yet to forgive. Find out if there is not some old thing about which you are very resentful. Search and see if you are not really holding a grudge (it may be camouflaged in some self-righteous way) against some individual, or somebody of people, a nation, a race, a social class, some religious movement or which you disapprove perhaps, a political party, or whatnot. If you are doing so, then you have an act of forgiveness to perform, and when this is done, you will probably make your demonstration. If you cannot forgive at present, you will have to wait for your demonstration until you can, and you will have to postpone finishing your recital of the Lord's Prayer too, or involve yourself in the position that you do not desire the forgiveness of God.

Setting others free means setting yourself free, because resentment is really a form of attachment. It is a Cosmic Truth that it takes two to make a prisoner; the prisoner - and a jailer. There is no such thing as being a prisoner on one's own account. Every prisoner must have a jailer, and the jailer is as much a prisoner as his charge. When you hold resentment against anyone, you are bound to that person by a cosmic link, a real, though mental chain. You are tied by a cosmic tie to the thing that you hate. The one person perhaps in the whole world whom you most dislike is the very one to whom you are attaching yourself by a hook that is stronger than steel. Is this what you wish? Is this the condition in which you desire to go on living? Remember, you belong to the thing with which you are linked in thought, and at some time or other, if that tie endures, the object of your resentment will be drawn again into your life, perhaps to work further havoc. Do you think that you can afford this? Of course, no one can afford such a thing; and so the way is clear. You must cut all such ties, by a clear and spiritual act of forgiveness. You must loose him and let him go. By forgiveness you set yourself free; you save your soul. And because the law of love works alike for one and all, you help to save his soul too, making it just so much easier for him to become what he ought to be.

But how, in the name of all that is wise and good, is the magic act of forgiveness to be accomplished, when we have been so deeply injured that, though we have long wished with all our hearts that we could forgive, we have nevertheless found it impossible; when we have tried and tried to forgive, but have found the task beyond us.

The technique of forgiveness is simple enough, and not very difficult to manage when you understand how. The only thing that is essential is *willingness* to forgive. Provided you desire to forgive the offender, the greater part of the work is already done. People have always made such a bogey of forgiveness because they have been under the erroneous impression that to forgive a person means that you have to compel yourself to like him. Happily this is by no means the case - we are not called upon to like anyone whom we do not find ourselves liking spontaneously, and, indeed, it is quite impossible to like people to order. You can no more *like* to order than you can hold the winds in your fist, and if you endeavor to coerce yourself into doing so, you will finish by disliking or hating the offender more than ever. People use to think that when someone had hurt them very much, it was their duty, as good Christians, to pump up, as it were, a feeling of liking for him; and since such a thing is utterly impossible, they suffered a great deal of distress, and ended, necessarily, with failure, and a resulting sense of sinfulness. We are not obliged to like anyone; but we are under a binding obligation to love everyone, love or charity as the Bible calls it, meaning a vivid sense of impersonal good will. This has nothing

directly to do with the feelings though it is always *followed*, sooner or later, by a wonderful feeling of peace and happiness.

The method of forgiving is this: Get by yourself and become quiet. Repeat any prayer or treatment that appeals to you, or read a chapter of the Bible. Then quietly say, "I fully and freely forgive X (mentioning the name of the offender); I loose him and let him go. I completely forgive the whole business in question. As far as I'm concerned, it is finished forever. I cast the burden or resentment upon the Christ within me. He is free now, and I am free too. I wish him well in every phase of his life. The incident is finished. The Christ Truth has set us both free. I thank God." Then get up and go about your business. On no account repeat this act of forgiveness, because you have done it once and for all, and to do it a second time would be tacitly to repudiate your own work. Afterward, whenever the memory of the offender of the offense happens to come into your mind, bless the delinquent briefly and dismiss the thought. Do this, however many times the thought may come back. After a few days it will return less and less often, until you forget it altogether. Then perhaps after an interval, shorter or longer, the old trouble may come back to memory once more, but you will find that now all bitterness and resentment have disappeared, and you are both free with the perfect freedom of the children of God. Your forgiveness is complete. You will experience a wonderful joy in the realization of the demonstration.

Everybody should practice general forgiveness every day as a matter of course. When you say your daily prayers, issue a general amnesty, forgiving everyone who may have injured you in any way, and on no account particularize. Simply say, "I freely forgive everyone." Then in the course of the day, should the thought or grievance or resentment come up, bless the offender briefly and dismiss the thought.

The result of this policy will be that very soon you will find yourself cleared of all resentment and condemnation, and the effect upon your happiness, your bodily health, and your general life will be nothing less than revolutionary.

## **Lead Us Not Into Temptation but Deliver Us from Evil**

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This clause has probably caused more difficulty than any other part of the Prayer. For many earnest people it has been a veritable stumbling block. They feel, and rightly, that God could not lead anyone into temptation or into evil in any circumstances, and so these words do not ring true.

For this reason, a number of attempts have been made to recast the wording. People have felt that Jesus could not have said what he is represented to have said, and so they look about for some phrasing which they think would be more in accordance with the general tone of his teaching. Heroic efforts have been made to wrest the Greek original into something different. All this, however, is unnecessary. The Prayer in the form in which we have it in English gives us a perfectly correct sense of the true inner meaning. Remember that the Lord's Prayer covers the whole of the spiritual life. Condensed though the form is, it is nevertheless a complete manual for the development of the soul, and Jesus knew only too well the subtle perils and difficulties that can and do beset the soul when once the preliminary stages of spiritual unfoldment have been passed. Because those who are yet at a comparatively early stage of development do not experience such difficulties, they are apt to jump to the conclusion that this clause is unnecessary; but such is not the case.

The facts are these - the more you pray, the more time you spend in meditation and spiritual treatment, the more sensitive you become. And if you spend a great deal of time working on your soul in the right way, you will become very sensitive. This is excellent; but like everything in the universe, it works both ways. The more sensitive and spiritual you become, the more powerful and effective are your prayers, you do better healing, and you advance rapidly. But, for the same reason, you also become susceptible to forms of temptation that simply

do not beset those at an earlier stage. You will also find that for ordinary faults, even things that many men and women in the world would consider to be trifling, you will be sharply punished, and this is well, because it keeps you up to the mark. The seemingly minor transgressions, the "little foxes that spoil the vines," would fritter away our spiritual power if not promptly dealt with.

No one at this level will be tempted to pick a pocket, or burgle a house; this does not by any means imply that one will not have difficulties, and because of their subtlety, even greater difficulties to meet.

As we advance, new and powerful temptations await us on the path, ever ready to hurl us down if we are not watchful - temptations to work for self-glory, and self-aggrandizement instead of for God; for personal honors and distinctions, even for material gain; temptations to allow personal preferences to hold sway in our counsels when it is a sacred duty to deal with all men in perfect impartiality. Above and beyond all other sins the deadly sins of spiritual pride, truly, "the last infirmity of noble mind," lurks on this road. Many fine souls who have triumphantly surmounted all other testing have lapsed into a condition of superiority and self-righteousness that has fallen like a curtain of steel between them and God. Great knowledge brings great responsibility. Great responsibility betrayed brings terrible punishment in its train. *Noblesse oblige* is preeminently true in spiritual things. One's knowledge of the Truth, however little it may be, is a sacred trust for humanity that must not be violated. While we should never make the mistake of casting our pearls before swine, nor urge the Truth in quarters where it is not welcome, yet we must do all that we wisely can to spread the true knowledge of God among mankind, that not one of "these little ones" may go hungry through our selfishness or our neglect. "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

The old occult writers were so vividly sensible of these dangers that, with their instinct for dramatization, they spoke of the soul as being challenged by various tests as it traversed the upward road. It was as though the traveler were halted at various gates or turnpike bars, and tested by some ordeal to determine whether he were ready to advance any further. If he succeeded in passing the test, they said, he was allowed to continue upon his way with the blessing of the challenger. If, however, he failed to survive the ordeal, he was forbidden to proceed.

Now, some less experienced souls, eager for rapid advancement, have rashly desired to be subjected immediately to all kinds of test, and have even looked about, seeking for difficulties to overcome; as though one's own personality did not already present quite enough material for any one man or woman to deal with. Forgetting the lessons of our Lord's own ordeal in the wilderness, forgetting the injunction "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," they have virtually done this very thing, with sad results. And so Jesus has inserted this clause, in which we pray that we may not have to meet anything that is too much for us at present level of our understanding. And, if we are wise, and work daily, as we should, for wisdom, understanding, purity, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we never shall find ourselves in any difficulty for which we have not the understanding necessary to clear ourselves. *Nothing shall by any means hurt you. Behold I am with you always.*

## **Thine Is The Kingdom And The Power And The Glory For Ever And Ever**

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This is a wonderful gnomic saying summing up the essential truth of the Omnipresence and the Allness of God. It means that God is indeed All in All, the doer, the doing, and the deed, and one can say also the spectator. The Kingdom in this sense means all creation on every plane, for that is the Presence of God - God as manifestation or expression.

The Power, of course, is the Power of God. We know that God is the only power, and so, when we work, as when we pray, it is really God doing it by means of us. Just as the pianist produces his music by mean of, or

through his fingers, so may mankind be thought of as the fingers of God. His is the Power. If, when you are praying, you hold the thought that it is really God who is working through you, your prayers will gain immeasurably in efficiency. Say, "God is inspiring me." If, when you have any ordinary thing to do, you hold the thought, "Divine Intelligence is working through me now," you will perform the most difficult tasks with astonishing success.

The wondrous change that comes over us as we gradually realize what the Omnipresence of God really means, transfigures every phase of our lives, turning sorrow into joy, age into youth, and dullness into light and life. This is the glory - and the glory which comes to us is, of course, God's too. And the bliss we know in that experience is still God Himself, who is knowing that bliss through us.