

fits he puts into your hands. Many to whom the Lord has given plenty of worldly good things, look on themselves as entitled to a greater liberty than others: but know that the more ye have, ye are the more in God's debt; and as your receipts are more than others, your reckoning will be deeper.

6. Let us serve God joyfully with what he gives us. Let not men take God's gifts, and bestow them on their lusts, as those who use their worldly good things to the dishonour of the name of God, and the feeding of their pride, sensuality, and other brutal passions. Sobriety becomes us; and as our Lord has stinted us to ask no more than a day's provision, let us use what he gives for every day soberly, with thankfulness; and improve it to his honour, in doing his will.

7. Let us not be anxious about provision for this life, nor go out of the road of duty or righteousness to get it. For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; and they that keep his way, he will see to their provision. Let us be diligent in our several callings to maintain ourselves in an honest way, without anxious solicitude and carking cares about the event; but leave the success to God, taking thankfully whatever he sends, and craving his blessing upon it.

8. *Lastly*, Let us, from the same God, through Jesus Christ, look for eternal life, and the means leading thereto. Be concerned for your souls, and for the bread of life to them. Little bread will serve us till we will need no more. Many of us have eaten most of our bread already, and less may serve us than we are aware of. Our souls must have food too, and live for ever; therefore be especially concerned for them.

THE FIFTH PETITION.

MATTII. vi. 12.—*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

THIS petition concerns our souls, as the former did our bodies, and relates to the pardon of sin, which we are here taught to pray for.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall consider,

I. The order of this petition, and the connection of it.

II. The petition itself.

III. Deduce some inferences.

I. I shall consider the order of this petition, and the connection of it. Concerning the order of it, two things may be observed.

1. That it follows the petition for daily bread. Not that bread

is comparable, far less preferable to pardon; but that the time of this life is the season of pardon, Heb. ix. 27. Now or never we must be pardoned. When we have no more ado with bread, death taking away the necessity of it, we have no more ado with pardon.

2. That is the first of the petitions for spiritual blessings. Because pardon of sin is a leading benefit, and while sin remains unpardoned, the communication betwixt God and the sinner is stopped, Amos iii. 2. 'Can two walk together, except they be agreed?' While God has a controversy with the sinner, he pursues it in greater or lesser measure, Psal. lxvi. 18. And the removal of guilt is the opening of the spring of spiritual blessings, to run abundantly; it is the taking the stone off the mouth of the well.

As to the connection, this petition is knit to the former by the participle '*and, Give us this day,*' &c. '*And forgive us,*' &c. which speaks this, that, in giving bread without forgiving sin, there is death in the pot, Psal. iv. 6, and xvii. 14. There can be little sap or sweet in the bread of the condemned, though, alas! many eat it cheerfully. Like the rich man, Luke xii. they eat, they drink joyfully, while the sword of Justice hangs over their head by a hair. It is because they see it not. The looks of an angry Judge, the frowns of a Father, in giving the bread to us, will make it very sapless, to those who discern them. A pardon is the best seasoning to any meal, Eccl. ix. 7. Compare Acts ii. 37, 46.

II. Let us consider the petition itself, wherein we pray, 'That God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.' In which we may speak of two things.

1. The thing petitioned.
2. The argument backing it.

FIRST, Let us consider the petition itself, *Forgive us our debts.* This is the petition, strictly speaking. Upon which I am to enquire,

1. What is meant by *debts*.
2. What is meant by *our debts*.
3. Who are meant by *us*.
4. What is meant by *forgiveness*.
5. What is the import of this petition.

First, What is meant by *debts*? Sins are the debts here prayed to be forgiven, Luke xi. 4. the worst debts in the world.

1. Why is sin called a debt? Not because it is a non-payment of God's dues, a non-performance of duty, as some say; these things answer not the notion of debt: far less because we owe it to God.

But sin is called debt, because it is a taking away from God something for which we owe him an equivalent, Psal. lxxix. 4. 'Then I restored that which I took not away.' This notion is the common notion of debts. By sin we rob God of his honour, and owe him reparation.

So in sin as a debt four things are to be considered. (1.) The debtor which is the sinner. Every sinner is a debtor, owing more than he is able to pay. (2.) The creditor is God, at whose mercy the sinner lies. (3.) The valuable thing which the sinner has got away from God for his own use, or rather abuse, is God's honour. (4.) The equivalent which the sinner owes on that account to God, is the reparation of God's honour.

2. What sort of a debt is sin?

(1.) It is a drowning debt, a debt so great as no mortal is able to pay, Matth. xviii. 24, 25. And all mankind had died in it, if a cautioner able to pay it had not been found, Psal. lxxxix. 19.

(2.) It is a disheartening debt for the presence of God. As an insolvent debtor has no will to come in his creditor's sight; so the sinner has no will to come into God's sight till he be brought, Matth. xviii. 24. This is the reason why many otherwise jovial and merry, when they come into God's presence in duties, are quite heartless.

(3.) It is a debt that the sinner is very ready to diminish, Luke xvi. 6. As he is unable to pay, so naturally he is unwilling to confess it, and make fair count.

(4.) It is a debt that in the end will be fairly and exactly stated, and not the least article forgotten or miscounted. The creditor has given his oath upon it, Amos viii. 7. 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely, I will never forget any of their works.' And the debtor, whether he will or not, shall be convinced of the justness of the accounts.

(5.) It is a debt that must be paid one way or other. The debtor has but three choices, Pay, Find a cautioner, or Go to prison, Matth. v. 25. None can pay, few will employ the cautioner, therefore must go to prison.

(6.) It is a growing debt. While its growth is not arrested, the interest runs on, and the great sum to-day becomes greater to-morrow, Rom. ii. 5.

Lastly, When it is pursued, on the debtor's expence. The pursuit is at the sinner's cost, and he is made to bear the weight of it.

Secondly, What is meant by *our* debts, or sins? All sins which we are any manner of way chargeable with, and accountable for, before the Lord. Now sin becomes ours four ways.

1. By imputation. So Adam's sin is our sin, Rom. v. 19. and

therefore must be pardoned to us otherwise we will be ruined by it, as the heir is ruined by the father's debt.

2. By inhesion in us. So the sin of our nature conveyed to us from Adam, consisting in a bent to evil, and backwardness to good, is our sin as subjected in us, Psal. li. 5. This will ruin us also, if it be not forgiven as to the guilt of it: for 'the wages of sin is death,' Rom. vi. 23.

3. By personal omission or commission, Jer. xvi. 10. Thus all our omission of duties, and commission of sins, are our sins which we absolutely need to be forgiven, as treason personally done by us against the King of heaven.

4. By accession any manner of way, to the sins of others, 1 Tim. v. 22. Thus other men's sins, which we become accessory to by commanding, counselling, approving, and the like, become our sins, and involve us in guilt, which we need to be forgiven.

Thirdly, Who are meant by *us*, for whom forgiveness is asked?

1. Ourselves: for every man is, in the first place, to be concerned for his own pardon. Yet not ourselves only,

2. But others also; not only those who are already of God's family, but all sorts of men living, 1 Tim. ii. 1; those only excepted who have sinned the sin unto death, 1 John v. 16. The saints are daily orators at the throne of grace, for the rest of the world, and are concerned for pardon to those who are not concerned for it to themselves. Thus our Lord set the copy, Luke xxiii. 34. 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And Stephen the first martyr followed it, Acts vii. 60. 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.'

Fourthly, What is meant by forgiveness or pardon? It is the removal of guilt, which is an obligation to punishment. Guilt is twofold; the guilt of eternal wrath, and the guilt of temporary fatherly anger. Guilt is removed two ways, formally, and declaratively. Pardon is threefold.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath. Thus every soul, upon its first closing with Jesus Christ in the gospel, is pardoned, Rom. v. 1. The condemning sentence of the law, binding them over to vindictive justice, to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till they have paid the utmost farthing of their own debt, is removed, Rom. viii. 1. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.'

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporary strokes and fatherly anger, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. The law of grace says, 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments: then will I visit their transgres-

sion with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail,' Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33. So the children of God, who are beyond the reach of eternal wrath, are oft-times liable to temporary fatherly wrath, which they need a pardon for, as the child needs the father's pardon. And upon their fresh application to the Lord Jesus Christ they obtain it.

3. A declarative pardon, which is the pardon manifested to the soul, a sense of pardon, Luke vii. 47, 48. 'Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven.' She was a pardoned sinner before, for that is evident from her love to Christ; but now the pardon is intimated to her. The debt is not only forgiven, but the debtor gets the discharge of it.

This threefold pardon is here meant, and each of them is given for Christ's sake, and we obtain them by faith apprehending his obedience and death, Eph. i. 6, 7. Therefore the sea of glass is represented as betwixt the throne and the elders, Rev. iv. 6. See Zech. xiii. 1.

Fifthly, Let us consider the import of this petition. This we take up in these three things.

1. A confessing of debt. The saints own themselves and all others God's debtors, Dan. ix. 5. 'We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.' They will not deny the debt, nor mince it. They see that God is spoiled of his honour by themselves and others, and that they are bound to a reparation. They confess their folly with shame and sorrow.

2. A pleading poverty, and utter inability to pay the debt, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4. 'If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Who among all the sons of Adam is able to repair God's honour taken away by sin? There is an infinite evil in the least sin, which no creature is able to expiate, far less Adam's broken family, where the party has nothing to pay, whether he be owing ten talents or ten thousand.

3. A desire of free forgiveness, for Christ's sake, Dan. ix. 17. 'Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.' What can the debtor do, who is not able to pay? He must plead to be forgiven, or he is a ruined man. And it is to free forgiveness that the saints do all turn, Psal.

exxx. 3, 4. forecited. And it is a forgiving of the debt to us, though Christ merited it; for we can do nothing to procure it to ourselves. Our pardon indeed stood dear to Christ, but it cost us nothing, Rom. iii. 24. 'We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.'

Now, the pardon which the saints are taught here to desire daily, is to be considered agreeably to the state of the parties for whom it is desired.

1. Pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, is desired for those who are yet out of Christ, and in an unjustified state. Not the saints themselves, who being already justified can never be more actually liable to eternal wrath, Rom. vii. 1. forecited. They are not under the law, but under grace, the threatenings of which extend no farther than rods, &c. Psal. lxxxix. 30. &c. forecited. It is one thing, what a saint may pray for, apprehending himself liable to eternal wrath, and another what Christ bids him pray for.

2. Pardon of the guilt of temporal strokes, is desired for the saints themselves. For under that guilt they may fall: and being duly considered, it is dreadful, as comprehending all miseries consistent with the love of God.

3. Declarative pardon is also desired for themselves, that they may be delivered from doubts, and fears of eternal wrath, Psal. iv. 6. 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.'

SECONDLY, Let us consider the argument enforcing the petition, *as we forgive our debtors*. This is not put in our mouths, to move God to forgive us, but to move ourselves to believe that our prayer shall be heard, and so to encourage us.

Here I shall shew,

1. Who are meant by *our debtors*.
2. What is meant by *forgiving* them.
3. What is meant by *our forgiving as we forgive*.
4. What encouragement one can draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will grant the forgiveness desired.

First, Who are meant by *our debtors*? All such as have sinned against, or wronged us any manner of way, 1 Sam. ii. 25. For sin may reach both God and man at once; and in respect of the injury done to us by the sin of others, they are our debtors, owing us a reparation of the injury, which many times they either cannot or will not do.

Secondly, What is meant by *our forgiving* them? It is our hearty forgiving them the injury done to us, (to forgive the injury against God is not in our power), entertaining no hatred or malice against them, but loving them with a love of good-will, heartily wishing

their good, and being ready to do them good, Matth. v. 44, 45. 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.' But it does not extend to a love of complacency or delight in them, in whom there appears no ground for that, either as men or as Christians, Psal. xxvi. 4. 'I have not sat with vain persons,' says David, 'neither will I go in with dissemblers.'

Thirdly, What is meant by *forgiving as we forgive*?

1. It does not denote the desire of a perfect equality or likeness betwixt God's forgiving and ours, for at best ours is but lame, and is neither so free nor full as we would desire of God. But the reality of our forgiveness that it is real and sincere, though imperfect (Matth. xviii. ult.), for which we can appeal to God.

2. It denotes our forgiving to go before the forgiveness here asked of God for ourselves, Luke xi. 4. 'Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.' And this is a demonstrative proof, that the forgiveness the saints here ask for themselves is only the pardon of the guilt of fatherly anger, and the manifestation of pardon, and not the pardon of the guilt of eternal wrath, which concerns their state. For till this last be obtained, one cannot sincerely forgive others, Matth. xviii. 32, 33. 'Then his Lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?' No man can sincerely forgive his brother, who does not so love him; and none can love his brother, but he who loves God; and none loves God, but he who is forgiven of God, Luke vii. 47. 'Her sins, which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little.'

Fourthly, What encouragement can one draw from his forgiving others, to hope that God will grant the forgiveness desired?

1. What we find that we who are such evil and malignant creatures, so hateful and ready to hate one another, are by the power of God's grace enabled to forgive those who have injured us, we have ground to hope that the most gracious God will forgive the injury against himself, even to those who are under the guilt of eternal wrath, it being easier for him to forgive a talent, than for us to forgive a mite.

2. From our disposition to forgive, we may confirm our confidence

in God as our God, and therefore firmly believe that our feet shall be washed, where our whole body has been washed before.

I shall conclude with some inferences.

Inf. 1. Beware of sin, as ye would be of contracting a debt which ye are unable to pay; and make sure your interest in the great Cautioner in time, lest ye be arrested ere ye are aware.

2. See your debts, and mourn over them, and apply to the blood of Christ for the pardon of them all, your imputed, your inherent, and your actual sins.

3. Pretend not to pay your debt by your good hearts, works, mourning, repentance, &c. but betake yourselves to free grace for forgiveness. If ever ye obtain pardon, it will be in the way of free grace.

4. An unforgiving irreconcilable disposition, and revengeful spirit, unfits men for praying. Forgive, if ye would be forgiven. And so it unfits for other duties, and particularly for the Lord's supper, the seal of forgiveness.

Lastly, Come to God through Christ for pardon. He is a forgiving God. Why does he teach us to pray for pardon to ourselves and others, but that there is a fulness of mercy for pardon with him?



THE SIXTH PETITION.

MATTH. vi. 13.—*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

THIS is the second of those petitions which concern our souls, and it relates to temptation, for warding off that great evil, as the former for the enjoyment of a great good, the pardon of sin. Thus all that are to seek for our personal, spiritual good, is deliverance from sin, from the guilt of it, petition fifth; and from the power of it, petition sixth. For these being obtained, the soul is happy, since nothing can hurt us but sin.

In discoursing from this subject, I shall shew,

I. The connection of this petition with the former, in the particle *and*.

II. The petition itself.

III. Apply.

I. I am to shew the connection of this petition with the former, in the particle *and*. This teaches us, that,

1. No man can with a good conscience sue to God for pardon, nor