

**Scriptures and Doctrine :: 'DELIVER US FROM EVIL'****'DELIVER US FROM EVIL' - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/6/23 18:42**

'DELIVER US FROM EVIL'

Alexander Maclaren

'But deliver us from evil.'—MATT. vi. 13.

The two halves of this prayer are like a calm sky with stars shining silently in its steadfast blue, and a troubled earth beneath, where storms sweep, and changes come, and tears are ever being shed. The one is so tranquil, the other so full of woe and want. What a dark picture of human conditions lies beneath the petitions of this second half! Hunger and sin and temptation, and wider still, that tragic word which includes them all—evil. Forgiveness and defence and deliverance—what sorrows these presuppose! Each step of these latter supplications seems to carry us deeper into the shadow and the darkness, each to present a darker aspect of what human life really is; and now that we have reached the last, we have an all-comprehensive cry which holds within its meaning every ill that flesh is heir to.

But seeing that we have to do with a prayer, we have also to do with a prophecy. We know that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us, and therefore the sadder the want which is expressed, the fuller of hope is the prayer. This petition gives a dark picture of human wants, but whatsoever thing we pray about or against, we thereby profess to believe to be contrary to God's will, and to be certain of removal by Him; and when our Lord commanded us to say 'Our Father, . . . deliver us from evil,' He gave us the lively hope that all which is included in that terribly wide word should be swept away, and that He would break every yoke and let His oppressed go free. The whole sum of human sorrow is gathered into one petition, that we may all feel that every item of it is capable of attenuation and extinction; and so our prayer, in the very clause which seems to sound the lowest depth, really rises to the loftiest height, and the words which sound likeliest a wail over all the misery that is done under the sun, have in them the notes of triumph. 'The sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought.' The most jubilant and confident prayer is that which feels most keenly the burden of evil, and 'falling with its weight of sins upon the great world's altar-stairs,' cries to God for deliverance.

Consider, then:—

I. The width of this petition.

What is evil?

Well, we leave God to decide what it is, but also we have no reason that I can see for limiting the impressive width of the word. It is a profound insight into the nature of evil which, in our own language and in other tongues, uses one word to express both what we call sin, and what we call sorrow. And I know not why we should suppose that our Lord does not include both of these here. There is what we call physical evil, pain, sorrow, meaning thereby whatever wars against our well-being and happiness. There is what we call moral evil, sin, meaning thereby whatever wars against our purity. Both are evil. Men's consciences tell them so of the one. Men's sensibilities tell them so of the other.

You cannot sophisticate a man into believing that he is not suffering when his flesh is racked or his heart wounded. It is evil to be in pain. It is evil to carry a heavy heart. It is evil to be stripped of what we have long been accustomed to lean upon. It is evil to be crushed down by loss and want. It is evil to stand by the black hole that swallows the coffin that holds the light of our eyes. It is evil to have the arrows of calumny or hate sticking in our quivering spirits. It is evil to be battered with the shocks of change and doom in the world, to have to toil at ungrateful tasks beyond our strength. The life which turns the child's rounded features into the thin face lined and wrinkled, and the child's elastic run into the slow, heavy tread, is after all a life which in its outward aspects is a life of evil.

And many a man who has had little sympathy with what seem to him the hazy platitudes of the rest of the prayer, learns to pray this clause, and is always ready to pray it. For we may be sure of this, that they who make the world their all are they who feel its evils most keenly. From how many lips unused to prayer are cries every hour going up in this sorrowful world which really mean, 'deliver us from evil!'

Scriptures and Doctrine :: 'DELIVER US FROM EVIL'

But it is not only these external evils which the prayer includes. It means every kind of sin, all dominion of what is contrary to God's will.

And the petition is 'deliver,' pull us out, drag us from. It is a cry for the entire emancipation or utter extinction of evil in its effect upon us.

So this petition in its clear recognition of evil sets forth man's condition distinctly, and is opposed to that false stoicism which tries to argue men out of their senses, and convince them that the fire which burns them is only a painted fire. Christianity has nothing in common with that insensibility to suffering which it is sometimes supposed to teach. Christ wept, and bade the daughters of Jerusalem weep also.

Christianity has deep words to say about evil and pain as being salutary and for our good, and about submission to God's will as being better than wild wishes to be delivered now and at once from all pain and sorrow. But it begins with full admission that evil is evil, and all its teachings presuppose that. Job was tormented by the well-meaning platitudes of his friends, who lifted up their hands in holy horror that he did not lie on his dunghill, as if it had been a bed of roses; and Job, who felt all the sorrow of his losses and ground out many a wrong saying between his teeth, was justified because he had held by the truth that his senses taught him, that pain was bitter and bad, and by the other which his faith taught him, that God must be good. He could not reconcile them. We can in part; but our Lord has taught us in this prayer that it is not to be done by denying or sophisticating facts. Then let us use this prayer in all its breadth, and feel that it covers all which makes our hearts heavy, and all which makes our consciences sore.

'From all evil and mischief—plague, pestilence, and famine, as well as envy, hatred, and hypocrisy—from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil,—Good Lord, deliver us.' 'In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment,—Good Lord, deliver us.'

Continued:

Re: 'DELIVER US FROM EVIL' - posted by JoanM, on: 2008/6/23 22:04

Rich, and timely, thoughts for revival prayer here. Hopefully those praying for the conferences will see this.

Have you joined the 100? How did you come to post this?

Re: - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/6/24 20:30

Hi JoanM,

Quote:

-----Have you joined the 100? How did you come to post this?

I trust to have joined an untold number many times beyond 100, who hopefully are praying daily for the Lord to send forth labourers into His harvest.

This is part of a series of commentary and sermons by Alexander Maclaren covering the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7.

Thank you for your interest and comments.

In His Love
pastorfrin

Re: 'DELIVER US FROM EVIL' - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/6/24 20:32

'DELIVER US FROM EVIL'

Alexander Maclaren

'But deliver us from evil.'—MATT. vi. 13.

II. The unity and source of the evil.

The singular number suggests that all evil, multiform as it seems, is at bottom one. It is a great weltering coil, but wilderness and tangle as it appears, there is a tap root from which it all comes, like a close-clinging mass of ivy which is choking the life out of an elm-tree. If that root were grubbed up, all would fall. It is like some huge sea monster 'floating many a rood,' but there is only one life in it. The hydra has a hundred heads, but one heart. And the place in the prayer in which this clause comes suggests what that is—sin.

That place implies that all human sorrows and sufferings are consequences of human evil. And that is true inasmuch as many of them are distinctly and naturally its results. Disease is often the result of dissipation, poverty of indolence, friendlessness of selfishness. How many of the miseries of our great cities, how many of the miseries of nations, result from criminal neglect and injustice! 'Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.' Ah! if all men were saying from the heart, 'Thy will be done,' how many of their griefs would be at an end! And it is true that sorrows are the consequences of sin inasmuch as suffering has been introduced by God into the world because of sin. He has been forced by our rebellion to use judgments, and that to bring us back.

And it is true that sorrows are the consequences of sin inasmuch as the sting is taken out of them when our sins are forgiven and we love God. Then they so change their characters as scarcely to deserve to be called by their old name, and the paradox, 'sorrowful yet always rejoicing,' becomes a sober fact of experience.

III. The divine opposition to evil.

This prayer implies that all evil is contrary to His will. The one kind is so, absolutely and always. The other is a method to which He has had recourse, but not that which, if things had gone right, He would have adopted.

So this prayer breathes confidence that God will overcome both kinds.

How much there is to make us believe that evil is eternal.

How apt we are to fall into despair, to lose heart for ourselves and our fellows; to say that it has always been so, and it always will be so.

For all social reformers here is encouragement.

For ourselves, when we seem to do so little in setting ourselves right, here is confidence.

But it must be God who conquers the world's evil.

Our most potent weapon in the struggle with our own and the world's evil is the earnest offering of this petition.

Think of the failure of godless schemes; how often we have been on the verge of political and other millenniums.

Only the God, who cures sin, can cure the world's ills.

We are not to substitute praying for working. God may answer our prayer by setting us to work.

Remember that you pledge yourselves to work for your fellows by that Us, and to try to reduce, were it by ever so little, the sum of human misery.

IV. The manner of God's deliverance from evil. God delivers us by Christ, that is the sum of all.

He delivers us from sin by His answers to the previous petitions.

He delivers us from suffering by teaching us how to bear it, and by showing us the meaning of it. The evil in evil is taken away. There shines a brightness round about the devouring fire (Ezek. i. 4). 'All things work together for good.'

Finally, He delivers by taking us to Himself.

This prayer goes beyond present experience. It is the yearning for full redemption. It is the last which is answered. But there lies in it a not indistinct prophecy of that great and blessed time when we shall be like Him, and delivered from all evil

For ourselves and for the world it carries the assurance that neither sorrow nor sin shall be permitted to deform for ever the face of this fair creation; but that the day comes when God's name being everywhere hallowed, and His will done on earth, and His kingdom set up, and all our wants supplied, and all our sins forgiven, and all temptations taken out of the way, evil of every kind shall be scourged out of God's universe, and 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return with joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'

Then shall this mighty prayer be answered, the prayer of God's children in all ages, the prayer which He offers before the Throne who on earth prayed, 'Not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil'; the prayer which the white-robed souls offer when they cry, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' the prayer which, all unconsciously, the sobs, and cries, and sorrows of six thousand years have been offering; the prayer which is every hour being answered in hourly mercies, and multitudes of forgivenesses and gracious guiding; the prayer which has been steadily tending towards its fulfilment, through all the ages during which God's name has been growing in men's love, and His will more and more obeyed, and His kingdom more and more fully come; the prayer which will be at last completely realised when all His children shall stand before His Throne happy and good, and the noise of earth's evil shall sound only in the ear of memory, like the murmur of some far-off sea heard from the sacred mountain, or the remembrance of the tempest when all the winds are still.

If our prayer is, 'Deliver us from evil,' our life's experience will be that 'He delivered us from so great a death and will deliver,' our dying word will be thanksgiving to 'the angel who delivered us from all evil,' and our death will bring the full deliverance for which while here we pray, and admit us into that region of unmingled good and blessing and purity, whose distant brightness we, tossing on the unquiet sea, behold from afar and long to possess. 'After this manner pray ye,' and to you the promise will be blessedly fulfilled, 'Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known My name' (Ps. xci. 14).

Alexander Maclaren