

mised them to us he is bound to give them, if we pray for them. "By promising," says St. Augustin, "God has made himself a debtor." De verb Dom. ser. 2.

It is necessary, then, to know that God has promised to hear our prayers, and that we are commanded, under pain of mortal sin, to pray. "Ask, and it shall be given you." Mat. vii. 7. "We ought always to pray." Luc. xviii. 1. These words, "ask," "we ought to pray," as St. Thomas teaches, imply a grievous precept, which obliges us, during our whole lives, but particularly when we are in danger of death, or of falling into mortal sin; for, unless we have recourse to God on these occasions, we shall be certainly conquered. And they who find that they have fallen into mortal sin are guilty of a new sin, if they neglect to ask of God help to rise from their miserable condition. But you will ask, how can God hear those whom he knows to be his enemies; God hears sinners who pray for pardon with an humble heart; for it is written in the gospel, that "every one that asketh receiveth." Luc. xi. 10. The words "every one" include all, whether just or unjust: by these words, God has promised to hear all who pray to him, whether they are saints or sinners. In another place God says: "Call upon me.....and I will deliver thee." Ps. xlix. 15. Call upon me and I will deliver you from hell, to which you have been condemned.

On the day of judgment there shall be no excuse for those who die in sin. It will be useless for them to say that they had not strength to resist the temptation by which they were molested; for Jesus Christ shall answer: if you had not strength, why did you not ask it? if you had prayed for it, I should cer-

tainly had given it to you. And if you had already fallen into sin, why did you not come to me, and I would have freed you from it?

If, dear reader, you wish to be saved, and to preserve your soul in the grace of God, you must frequently beg of him to keep his hand over you. The Council of Trent has declared (sess. 6. c. 18, can. 23) that, to persevere in the grace of God, the common help which he gives to all, is not sufficient, but that a special grace, which is obtained only by prayer, is necessary. Hence, all theologians teach that every one is bound, under pain of mortal sin, to recommend himself often to God by asking of him holy-perseverance, at least once in the month. And they who are exposed to many dangerous occasions are bound to pray more frequently for the grace of perseverance.

To obtain this grace, it is very useful to cherish a particular devotion to the mother of God, who is called the mother of perseverance. They who have not this special devotion shall scarcely obtain the gift of perseverance. For St. Bernard says that all graces, and particularly the gift of perseverance, which is the greatest of all, come to us through the hands of Mary.

O would to God that preachers were more careful to inculcate to their hearers, the necessity of this great means of prayer. Although it is the duty of preachers to preach frequently on prayer, and in almost all their instructions to exhort the faithful to the practice of it, there are some who, in the whole course of their Lenten sermons, scarcely ever speak of prayer, except, perhaps, once or twice in a passing way. They who are guilty of such neglect of duty, shall have to render a great account to God. There are so many