

ods many and lords many, to philosophers, physicians, to politicians, to statesmen,—that priests, in their ignorant superstition, expressed amid blazing sacrifices, amid thousands of altars, and to the unknown God, He taught us amid new light, in a new day, and with new hearts to breathe forth and embody in those words, which a babe lisps first, and a saint cries forever, "Our Father which art in heaven." What the trembling criminal of old prayed to the avenger,—what the shrinking slave of old prayed to a master,—what the poor victim of old prayed to a conqueror, Christ has taught us, feeling that we are God's children, to pray to Him, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven. Deliver us from evil."

This leads me back to notice Him to whom this prayer is addressed, who is here described as "Our Father." Now, my dear friends, this preface—call it preface, or call it what you will—is the secret spring out of which every petition comes, and the tone, and colouring, and impulses of which every petition in this prayer must have. We must not say, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," and then let go "Our Father;" but must apply "Our Father" to every petition:—Our Father, give us daily bread; Our Father, lead us not into temptation; Our Father, deliver us from evil. If we let go this beautiful relationship, this precious preface, we become like the heathen, asking deliverance from evil from an unknown God; or like the moon to the sun, ever following, ever separated, ever sad. Our first effort, therefore, and our first care must not be to pray, "Deliver us from evil," but our first care must be to be reinstated in the filial relationship, and to say, "Our Father." Our first cry must not be, "Deliver us from evil;" but our first feeling must be, "Our Father which art in heaven." Here, then, is the precious truth which I hinted at on Friday evening—that we are to see all that we need, all that we suffer, in the light of this relationship, "Our Father." Do not look at God in the light of the suffering, but look at the suffering in the light of God. Nature's way is to say, "I suffer this; therefore God is to me just what this is;" but grace's way is to say, "God is my Father; and therefore, this that I suffer is of this description." In other words, we are not to argue from what we suffer to what God is, but from what God is—our Father—to what we suffer. We are not to let light from our sufferings fall upon God, and disclose him a wrathful Being; but to let light from the countenance of our Father fall upon our afflictions, and then see that these afflictions are not penal but paternal, disguising blessings and mercies that are sent to us. The heathen nations formed their idea of God from what they suffered; the Christian nation is to form an idea of what they suffer from what God is to them. Then start with this thought, praying that the Spirit of God may

impress it upon your hearts,—first of all, that you are, if Christians at all, God's children; that he is, if you know him at all, your Father; and then, having got this preface imprinted on your hearts, made part and parcel of your better being, its roots struck into the recesses of your soul,—look upon the grave, look upon bereavement, look upon poverty, look upon sickness, look upon all you weep, all you suffer, and all you lose, in the light that streams from this first and beautiful relationship,—God is our Father. What a glorious faith is the Gospel of Christ! What a grand revelation is that,—that the God that made us, the God that visits us, the God that sends plague, and pestilence, and famine, is not to be construed to be what the famine, and pestilence, and plague seem; but the pestilence, and famine, and plague, and the sword, are to be seen in the light of His countenance,—ministers of beneficence to the people of God in the earth! Then looking not only at your judgments, your trials, and your afflictions, and with all else with which you are associated as Christians, keep this great key-note, "Our Father." That baptismal font is our Father's; that communion-table is our Father's; that Bible is our Father's; that hearing and speaking is our Father's; that bereavement is from our Father; that loss is from our Father; that mercy, that blessing, is from our Father. This world is not the devil's world,—for he is only an intruder for a season, to be cast out with more terrible judgement; but it is our Father's world, and all eternity will show that it is so.

Let me notice, in the next place, (and this is a very important point,) that this prayer is addressed, not to an abstraction, a law, but to a personal being. You know there is a great tendency in human nature to look upon God as some dreamy intellectual abstraction, and to view Him in some such way as our heathen philosophers in the nineteenth century view Him, when they say, "It is the law of Nature that does so; it is the constitution of things:" stupidly and foolishly imagining that God made the world, gave it a blow, and then left it to swim or sink as the "laws of Nature might arrange," or would please to permit it. My dear friends, what we call the laws of Nature, are simply the touches of God; and because God acts consistently,—because He does not constantly change as poor man does;—but is unchangeable in His providence as He is unchangeable in His grace,—we, in our folly, put the law in the room of the law-giver,—the creature in the room of the Creator,—and try to work the world without a God to govern it. Here we are taught to pray, not to an abstraction, but to a personal being,—not to destiny, not to fate, not to fatalism, but to "Our Father." And, my dear brethren, that single word breathed into a man's heart, will give him a new life. I believe that what we want to feel