

to the vain-glory of the self-righteous Pharisees; and, in the second place, to the false prophets, of whom it is recorded, 1 Kings, xviii, 26, 29, that they cried from morning until evening, saying, "O Bael, hear us," &c. And he taught them that when they prayed, they should retire from the gaze of their fellow creatures, and pray to God in secret, assuring them that, if they did so, their heavenly Father would reward them openly; meaning, no doubt, (as he afterwards more particularly represented) at the general judgment, when in the presence of the whole world, he will say, "come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv, 34). And as a more particular reason for simplicity and brevity in prayer, he told them that their Heavenly Father knew their necessities before they asked his assistance; thereby teaching them that it would be very inconsistent for them to expect to be heard either for long prayers, or repetition of words, as such suppositions would be a reflection upon his omniscience and benevolence; and therefore (Matt. vi, 9—13) he said, "After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

How admirably simple and comprehensive are the words of this prayer! and it would be more consistent with our characters as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, and who has commended us to learn of him, if we were guided more than we generally are, by that excellent pattern, as it respects matter, manner, and style, in all our prayers; and it is also worthy of our particular observation, that all the prayers recorded in the Holy Scriptures, (except the prayer at the dedication of the Temple) are very short, but earnest and comprehensive.

But it does not appear that our Lord intended that his disciples should confine themselves to the words of that prayer, for in the prayers recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we do not find that they used them, neither is there any reference to them in any of the Epistles.

Immediately following this form of prayer, as recorded by Matthew, our Blessed Lord taught his disciples, *very particularly*, the importance of possessing a forgiving spirit, and which is also plainly implied in a part of the form which he had just before delivered to them (v. 12); and to which he had, no doubt, a direct reference, saying (v. 14), "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive you."

At the other time, when our Lord taught his disciples to pray, as recorded by Luke, (ch. xi), we are informed that he enforced the necessity of *importunity* in prayer by a parable, as he did also at another time (Luke xviii, 1—7), and Matthew informs us, that in connexion with the subject of prayer (Matt. vii, 7, 8,) he (Christ) said, "Ask and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened," &c.; and that he concluded that subject on that occasion, by saying, (verse 13) "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him." By all of which it plainly appears that Christ did not intend, in the least, to prohibit such repetitions in prayer, as proceed from a deep sense of our necessities, and of our entire dependence upon God, and which express an ardent desire for the sustaining and enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit; for such prohibition would have condemned his own conduct, a particular instance of which is recorded by Matthew (ch. 26) when in his agony he prayed three times, saying the same words (verse 44). But the "repetitions" which are "vain," are such as were used by the ostentatious and self-righteous Pharisees, or which are inconsistent with our state, as helpless and unworthy creatures, or which are any way contrary to the character or will of the great and holy God.

It should never be forgotten that it was his *disciples* whom Christ taught to say "Our Father who art in heaven," &c.; for although, as the Creator and Preserver of all things, God may be said to be the "Father of all;" yet in a spiritual or religious sense, being conceived in iniquity, and naturally alienated from God by that "carnal mind which is enmity against him," it is not until we become reconciled to him by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently submit ourselves unreservedly to his authority, that that we can truly call him "Our Father," for Christ himself has positively declared that "no man can come unto the Father but by me;" and the apostle Paul has also said that "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh unto him must believe that he is, and that he is also the rewarder of all those who *diligently seek him*." But, however, those who still remain unreconciled to God may profess to pray to him, and although, like the deluded Pharisees, they may make long prayers, and call him their Father, yet, as they have not right views of his character, nor of their sinful, lost and condemned state, and consequently have not proper feelings towards him, nor faith in Christ Jesus; all these words are "*vain repetitions*," and God may say to them as he said to the Jews, by the prophet Malachi, (i. 1) "If I am a Father, where is my honor?" and as he also declared of the

same people by the Prophet Isaiah, which Christ applied to their descendants, "This people draweth nigh to me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips, but *their hearts are far from me*." And many such characters at the present time act so inconsistently with their pretensions to piety, that by their general conduct they plainly show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes, and to whom the answer which Christ gave to those, who, although seeking to kill him, yet presumptuously and boastingly said to him "God is our Father," may very properly apply, viz., "If God were your father, ye would love me;" "ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." (John viii, 41 and 44.)

But the true believer in Christ, possessing the spirit of adoption, as is so beautifully expressed by the Apostle Paul (Gal. iv, 4, 7), whilst humbled under a sense of the depravity of his nature, and feeling unworthy of the least of God's mercies, draws nigh unto him with filial confidence and humble boldness, in full assurance of faith, rejoicing in the enjoyment of that liberty with which Christ makes his people *free from the condemnation and dominion of sin*; so that, through him, he can address the great and holy God by the endearing name of "*Father!*" and, in looking around upon the works of nature, he can, with the most pleasing emotions, truly say, "*My Father made them all*." And not only in respect to the wisdom, power, and benevolence of God, as is so conspicuously displayed in his works of creation and providence, but especially in the contemplation on the great and glorious plan of redemption, the Christian can say, with David, "My meditation of him shall be *sweet: I will delight in the Lord*."

By the expression, "*Who art in heaven*," we are reminded of the infinite contrast between our earthly and our heavenly Father, in order that we may be suitably humbled at all times, and especially when appearing before him in the attitude of prayer; by the consideration of his great condescension and distinguishing mercy in permitting us to look up to him with such confidence and familiarity; and, consequently, that we may increasingly manifest our gratitude to him by living to his glory, by cultivating those holy principles which, as the children of God, "born of his Spirit," we necessarily possess; and by thus growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we become partakers of his holiness; and so far also we become comparatively "*perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect*." JOAO.

(To be continued.)

#### WALK WITH GOD IN YOUR CALLINGS.

Be upright in your way; admit nothing into your particular callings that is inconsistent with the principle of your general