

BOOK V.

Prayers for Special Occasions.

The Believing Christian Praises God on the Return of His Birthday.

EXHORTATION.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? *Ps. 116, 12.*

The return of the day when we first beheld the light of this world, our birthday, ought to be a day of praise and thanksgiving which we ought to spend singing and praying, and with devotional exercises in thought and act. We should, in particular, reflect upon the many and great favors which we have received from the hand of our faithful God throughout our lives to the present moment; for He has carried us in His arms in childhood, in youth, to the present hour. Unbelievers do not consider these things. True, they remember the day, and celebrate it, but in what manner? Only with banqueting, dancing, and frolicking. A day thus spent does not deserve to be called a day of praise and thanksgiving, and a day pleasing to God.

When the children of God live to see their birthday year after year, they praise the faithfulness and goodness of God, (1) because He had them be born of Christian parents, who brought them to the knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ; (2) because He has given them a healthy body and sound mind, which is a great blessing of God, though hardly ever acknowledged so by men; (3) because He has guarded them against misfortune, rescued them from dangers, and hitherto preserved them.

At the same time, (4) they humbly ask for forgiveness of their sins, and promise God that they will spend the remaining days of their life in childlike obedience and godliness. (5) They

also comfort themselves with the thought that if they continue thus in faith and love, God will continue to spread the wings of His mercy over them. (6) Finally, they reflect that the celebration of their birthday in which they have engaged may have been their last celebration on earth.

PRAYER.

Eternal, gracious, and merciful God, by Thy favor I have again lived to see my birthday, the day on which Thou didst usher me into the light of day, to receive me later by Holy Baptism as Thy child. By the former favor I was made a human being and Thy creature, by the latter I became Thy child and heir. Therefore this day shall be a day of praise, prayer, and thanksgiving to me.

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Should I not praise and magnify Thee, my God, because Thou hast let me be born not only with sound limbs and a well-formed body, which is a great favor, but also from Christian parents, who from my youth have trained me in Thy knowledge, O Triune God? If Thou hadst let me be born of Jews, Turks, or heathen parents, I should probably be as blind and hardened as they. But now I know and love Thee, and have life and the salvation of my soul in Thee.

Having been nurtured in Thy arms, I have been guided and accompanied by Thee in the years which followed. Thou hast given me food and clothing, and hast graciously preserved me until this day. O my God, I am not worthy of the least of all the

mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast shown me. Come and hear; I will declare what the Lord has done for my body and my soul. But, alas! I cannot recount all: one might sooner number the stars in the firmament than the gracious gifts which I have received from Thee, O Lord. From how many dangers hast Thou delivered me! How many calamities hast Thou warded off from me! Thy Spirit has taught, governed, guided me, and when I was inclined to sin, has inwardly warned and restrained me.

O my God, while my years increase and Thy favors also become numerous, I am reminded to-day of the sins which I have committed throughout my life. Forgive them unto me for Jesus' sake; blot them out with His holy blood, and let me obtain mercy for His sake. Grant me grace to spend the remaining days of my life, which are written in Thy book, in the true fear of Thee and in sincere piety, that all my doings and my whole life may be pleasing to Thee. And since I do not know what shall be the number of my days on earth, while I am certain that Thou hast fixed bounds for me which I cannot pass, keep me from shortening my own life by anger, intemperance, sins, wrecklessness, and crimes. Let me reach the limit of life appointed for me in health, with Thy blessing and protection, until for this earthly and transitory life Thou wilt give me eternal and heavenly life for the sake of Jesus Christ. Till then I shall celebrate this day, as often as it recurs, with praise and thanksgiving, and shall now sing:

My soul, now bless thy Maker! Let all within me bless His name,
Who maketh thee partaker Of mercies more than thou dar'st

claim! Forget Him not, whose meekness Forgiveth all thy sin;
 Who healeth all thy weakness, Renews thy life within; Whose grace
 and care are endless, And saved thee through the past; Who leaves
 no sufferer friendless, But rights the wronged at last. Amen.

HYMN.

O that I had a thousand voices!
 A mouth to speak with thousand tongues!
 My heart, which in the Lord rejoices,
 Then would proclaim in grateful songs
 To all, wherever I might be,
 What great things God hath done for me.

O that my voice might high be sounding,
 Far as the widely distant poles,
 My blood run quick with rapture bounding,
 Long as its vital current rolls,
 And every pulse thanksgiving raise,
 And every breath a hymn of praise!

O all ye powers that God implanted,
 Arise, keep silence thus no more,
 Put forth the strength that He hath granted,
 Your noblest work is to adore;
 My soul and body, make ye meet
 With heartfelt praise your Lord to greet!

Ye forest leaves so green and tender,
 That dance for joy in summer air;
 Ye meadow grasses bright and slender,
 Ye flowers so wondrous sweet and fair:
 Ye live to show His praise alone,
 Help me to make His glory known!

O all things that have breath and motion
 That throng with life, earth, sea, and sky,
 Now join me in my heart's devotion,
 Help me to raise His praises high;
 My utmost powers can ne'er aright
 Declare the wonders of His might.

Dear Father, endless praise I render
 For soul and body strangely joined;
 I praise Thee, Guardian kind and tender,
 For all the noble joys I find
 So richly spread on every side,
 And freely for my use supplied.

What equal praises can I offer,
 Dear Jesus, for Thy mercy shown?
 What pangs, my Savior, didst Thou suffer,
 And thus for all my sins atone!
 Thy death alone my soul could free
 From Satan, to be blest with Thee.

Honor and praise, still onward reaching,
 Be Thine, too, Spirit of all grace,
 Whose holy power and faithful teaching
 Give me among Thy saints a place:
 Whate'er of good in me may shine
 Comes only from Thy light divine.

Who grants abundant gifts to bless me?
 Who but Thyself, O God of love?
 Who guards my ways lest fears oppress me?
 'Tis Thou, Lord God of hosts, above!
 And when my sins Thy wrath provoke,
 Thy patience, Lord, forbears the stroke.

I kiss the rod, too, unrepining,
 When God His chastening makes me feel,
 My graces call for His refining,
 The trial works no lasting ill;
 It purifies and makes it known
 That He regards me as a son.

In life I often have discovered,
 With gratitude and glad surprise,
 When clouds of sorrow o'er me hovered,
 God sent from them my best supplies;
 In troubles He is ever near,
 And shows me all a Father's care.

Why not, then, with a faith unbounded
 Forever in His love confide?
 Why not, with earthly griefs surrounded,
 Rejoicing still in hope abide,
 Until I reach that blissful home
 Where doubt and sorrow never come?

No more low vanities regarding,
 To Thee, in whom I find my rest,
 I cry, my inmost soul according,
 "My God, Thou art the highest, best;
 Strength, honor, praise, and thanks, and power
 Be Thine both now and evermore!"

Lord, I will tell, while I am living
 Thy goodness forth with every breath,
 And greet each morning with thanksgiving
 Until my heart is still in death;
 Yea, when at last my lips grow cold,
 Thy praise shall in my sighs be told.

O Father, deign Thou, I beseech Thee,
 To listen to my earthly lays;
 A nobler strain in heav'n shall reach Thee,
 When I with angels hymn Thy praise,
 And learn amid their choirs to sing
 Loud hallelujahs to my King.

The Devout Christian Thanks God for the Harvest That has been Gathered.

EXHORTATION.

For she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof, and will recover My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. *Hos. 2, 8. 9.*

If we were to look for a glorious and great blessing apparent to all men, we should undoubtedly find it in our annual harvests. For it is God who has protected our sowings in the earth during the winter, caused them to sprout, grow, and bear fruit during the

summer, averted hail, tempests, and storms, and filled our barns and cellars with His blessings. On the other hand, if there is a favor that seems trifling and contemptible to the world, and for which God is thanked least, it is the annual harvest. For ungrateful mankind imagines that these things simply had to come to pass, that according to the laws of nature everything had to grow, and that God has had nothing to do with it. Accordingly, God's anger is aroused, and by His just judgment He often causes the crops to fail, in order that everybody may see that the ground cannot produce anything without the Lord's will, and that without His blessing nothing can grow.

A believing Christian views this matter differently. When at harvest-time he beholds the full ears of grain and the vines loaded with clusters of grapes, he (1) lifts his eyes to heaven, and for the blessings which he has received he praises the almighty Creator, Giver, and Preserver, who has produced so many grains from one seed and such luscious fruit from a mean-looking wood. (2) He praises God's preserving providence, which provided throughout the year the early and the latter rain in due season, graciously averted thunderstorms, drought, hail, and floods, and guarded the crops. And when the time has arrived that he sees the grain fall at the stroke of the sharp sickle, when he sees it hauled into the barns, when he sees the grapes crushed in the wine-press, (3) his heart is stirred, and he receives all these gifts with grateful hands. (4) He also makes use of them and enjoys them with thanksgiving. He knows that it is God who feeds him, provides for him, and keeps him.

Yea, (5) he lets God's goodness lead him to repentance. If we thank a benefactor who gives us a garment or something for our support, and are careful not to offend him, why should we not praise the greatest Benefactor who gives us all things?

PRAYER.

O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; for His mercy endureth forever. Thus I say, O my God, now that I live to see again the blessed time of harvest. O gracious God, how great is the goodness Thou hast manifested toward us! Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth that it should be estab-

lished forever. But into this earth Thou hast placed Thy glorious treasures; it is made to produce fruits for us in abundance, which serve for sustaining our life, for our food and health.

O living Father, Thou hast especially crowned this year with Thy blessing, and Thy paths drop fatness. Thou hast watered the hills from Thy chambers; Thou hast filled the earth with fruits which Thou hast created. Thou hast caused the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, that Thou mightest bring forth food from the earth. O faithful Father, this year again Thou hast given food and drink to Thy children, although they have been ungrateful; Thou hast protected our harvest. Heaven has heard the cry of the earth, and the earth has yielded corn and wine. Thou hast given us the early and the latter rain in due season, causing our fields to bloom and giving us the bounties which sprang from them by Thy power. By Thy grace our trees have yielded many kinds of beautiful and pleasant fruits, and the wine has made us glad. O loving God and Father, Thou hast spread the wings of Thy mercy over all our lands: Thou hast caused the sun to shine in season, thus maturing all our crops; Thou hast protected them from hail, blight, drought, and floods. While we slept, Thou didst wake; Thou wast the Watchman and Keeper of our fields.

O Lord, how great and manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all, and the earth is full of Thy riches. All creatures, man and beasts, wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather; Thou openest Thine hand, and they are

filled with good. Yes, Thou hast abundantly blessed us this year, O God, with a wealth of Thy bounties.

For this we thank Thee with our inmost heart. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. Let us enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Let us say with grateful hearts: The Lord hath done great things for us; yea, the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

O Lord, Lord, let us not misuse the gifts and favors which Thou hast bestowed upon us, but let us learn from them Thy love towards us and Thy fatherly faithfulness. O God, if some who are ungrateful should show contempt for Thy gifts by using them for gluttony or refusing to thank Thee for them, do not on that account withdraw Thy blessing from us, but preserve them for us according to Thy mercy.

O Father, who hast loved us with an everlasting love, and who art drawing us to Thee also by these earthly blessings, that we may know the Giver by the gifts and the Benefactor by His glorious presents, grant that Thy goodness may lead us to repentance. Whenever we see Thy gifts before us on the table, or receive them into our hands or mouth, let us always lift our eyes to Thee, O Thou Fountain of every blessing! And as Thou sustainest our bodies by these bounties, let us through the means of grace which Thou hast appointed increase also in the inner man, in faith, love, and godliness, that we may grow in all goodness, and be changed from glory to glory, until we shall be ushered into the enjoyment of the heavenly blessings in everlasting life through Jesus Christ.

O Lord, whose bounteous hand again Hath poured Thy gifts
 in plenty down, Who all creation dost sustain And all the earth
 with goodness crown: Lord of the harvest, here we own Our joy
 Thy gift, and Thine alone. Oh, may we ne'er with thankless heart
 Forget from whom our blessings flow! Still, Lord, Thy heavenly
 grace impart, Still teach us what to Thee we owe. Lord, may our
 lives with fruit divine Return Thy care, and prove us Thine. Lord,
 grant that each may sow to Thee; Grant us in endless life to reap.
 Of every heart the Guardian be: By day and night Thy servants
 keep, That all to Thee may joy afford On Thy great harvest-day,
 O Lord. Amen.

A HYMN OF HARVEST.

Now to Thee, gracious Lord of the seasons,
 Be honor and glory and praise
 That again in the joy of the harvest
 Our jubilant anthem we raise.

Though many the fears that beset us,
 Though faith waxes feeble and cold,
 Thy bow, with its promise unbroken,
 Glitters still as it glittered of old.

Though weary we grow in our watching
 The weeks of the drought as they pass,
 When the earth is as iron beneath us,
 And the heavens above us as brass.

Yet the showers come back in their season;
 Once more in the land there is seen
 The brook brimming over with crystal,
 The grass as the emerald green.

Though troubled the spirit within us,
 When the mist upon valley and plain
 Lies thick, and the clouds in their armies,
 Return again after the rain.

Yet the sun cometh forth as a giant,
 And after the tempest, the morn
 Is cloudless and fair, and the color
 Grows golden and rich on the corn.

For seed-time and harvest we thank Thee,
 Our fears as the shadows have fled;
 Thou hast given his seed to the sower,
 Thou hast given the eater his bread.

OUR FATHER'S CARE.

The fields are reaped, the fruits are stored,
 The air is crisp and keen,
 And plenty heaps the humblest board,
 Our rolling seas between.
 There's joy for old and young to-day,
 And comfort everywhere,
 For all along the pilgrim way
 We're in our Father's care.

Our Father sent the sun and rain,
 And made the strong winds blow
 On lifted hill and level plain
 And in the valley low.
 Our Father heard His children call,
 And listened to their prayer,
 And safe from ill were one and all
 In that dear Father's care.

Perhaps we miss some silver notes
 From out our household song;
 But sweet and full the echo floats
 From where the ransomed throng.
 Perhaps an angel crossed the sill
 And left a shadow there,
 But that was by our Father's will
 And of our Father's care.

For if the fields of earth are green,
 So are the fields above,
 Where evermore the tranquil scene
 Is bathed in heavenly love.
 Not closer is that blessed life
 Than ours, for here or there,
 In that full peace, in this our strife,
 We're in our Father's care.

So fear not, fear not, little flock,
 To whom is always given,
 Sure-founded on the age-long Rock,
 The matchless peace of heaven.
 Lift up your eyes, be glad, be strong,
 The whole wide sky is fair,
 And evermore be this your song,
 "We're in our Father's care."

The Believing Christian Prays during a Thunderstorm.

EXHORTATION.

He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones, and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice, hailstones and coals of fire. *Ps. 18, 11—13.*

Among the external things by which ungodly children of this world, as a rule, are terrified and incited to pray, are thunderstorms. When God causes a severe tempest to arise with thunder and lightning, the lips of blasphemers at once begin to pray, not from love of God, — for why did they not pray before? — but from fear of God's punishment.

Believing Christians know, indeed, (1) that thunder and lightning are produced by natural causes; but they also know (2) that they carry out the commands of God. Just as God can arm any other creature against man, He can easily frighten men and beasts also by thunder, and set houses, villages, and towns on fire with His lightning. Accordingly, (3) godly Christians should refrain from those hideous curse-words in which thunder and lightning are invoked. They should (4) not grow timid at the approach of a thunderstorm, become terrified, and ready to despair from fright; for that is a sign that they have little confidence in God. But (5) they should remember that God keeps thunder and lightning in His hands, and is well able to protect them, even if they should be out in the field and under the open sky.

(6) However, in that case they should turn to God in prayer the more fervently, and recognize in the storm that they are noth-

ing, and God is all, that God is a mighty God, while we human beings are but poor worms, dust, and ashes, which God could destroy with one nod or stroke. (7) Accordingly, they should stand awed and reverent before the majesty of God, not only when it thunders, but also when the sun is shining, and should be careful not to offend Him by words or deeds. Especially, however, should they live in such a manner as to be assured at all times of God's favor, even if He should take us out of this world in a thunderstorm.

PRAYER.

O Thou strong and almighty God, I hear Thy voice in the clouds; I see Thy lightnings flash, and listen to the roar and noise of Thy thunder. Strong is Thine arm and great Thy might; if Thou chooseth, Thou canst in the twinkling of an eye dash me and all men, together with all creatures, to the ground. But, O Lord, Lord, remember Thy tender mercies and Thy loving-kindness; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions; according to Thy mercy remember Thou me for Thy goodness' sake. Rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure.

With sincere humility of heart I acknowledge that I have abundantly deserved to be destroyed and dashed to pieces by Thee in Thy just wrath. But, O Thou long-suffering God, spare me in this thunderstorm. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. I repent, and am heartily sorry that I have hitherto offended Thee so often, and with my thoughts, words, and deeds have provoked Thee to anger. But I pray for mercy and the forgiveness of all my sins and transgressions.

Consider, O heavenly Father, that I am Thy creature and also Thy child. Whither shall children go in their troubles and anxieties but to their father? Therefore I come to Thee, O my Father, and pray Thee: Be merciful to me, Thy child! O Father, protect me, shelter me, guard me. My refuge is under the shadow of Thy wings; hide me in Thy pavilion, place an angel-guard around me, that no calamity may touch me, no lightning harm me, no bolt strike me. O Lord Jesus, Thou Son of God, my only Mediator, Advocate, and Savior, be not far from me; for trouble is near. Make haste to deliver me; be my strong Defense. Leave me not, and do not withdraw Thy hand from me, O God of my salvation. Behold, I am forsaken by all creatures and men, but, oh, do not Thou forsake me; have compassion on me and save me. I cling to Thee, O Jesus; I hide myself in Thy holy wounds, and cry with the disciples: Lord, save us, we perish! O precious Holy Spirit, stir up my heart to prayer and devotion, that I may be roused by this thunderstorm and become godly. Henceforth when Thy holy Word is knocking at my door, help me to heed the call, so that I may repent, become converted, and cease from all sins, in order that I may thereafter become a willing listener, and not conform to the world in its sinful speech, manners, and habits.

O Holy Trinity, have mercy upon me and all godly Christians; shelter with Thy almighty hand my body and my life, my house and home; preserve the fruits of the field; do not let the lightning set my house on fire, nor Thy thunderbolts strike me. Be my Helper in trouble; for vain is the help of

man. O mighty Defender of Thy children, look upon me, and let me dwell safely beneath Thy sheltering protection. At the noise of Thy thundering the mountains shake, and the earth trembles; must not a poor worm like me, then, quake before Thee? Let me now recognize that the world is perishable, that all that we see will be consumed by fire, in order that I may not become enticed with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and thus incite Thee to anger. O Lord, preserve me from sudden and evil death; let this thunderstorm pass by without harm. O Lord, who is like unto Thee, so majestic, almighty, and awe-inspiring, and yet so merciful and gracious, startling us and at the same time sheltering us? O spare me, and let me also this time find mercy and deliverance. Lord God, Father in heaven, have mercy upon us! Lord God Son, the Savior of the world, have mercy upon us! Be gracious unto us, and spare us, good Lord! Be gracious unto us and help us, good Lord! From all calamity by fire and water, good Lord, deliver us! From sudden and evil death, good Lord, deliver us!

God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform; He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm. Deep in unfathomable mines Of never-failing skill He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will. Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; The clouds ye so much dread Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head. Amen.

HYMN.

When in the hour of utmost need
 We know not where to look for aid;
 When days and nights of anxious thought
 Nor help nor counsel yet have brought, —

Then this our comfort is alone,
 That we may meet before Thy throne,
 And cry, O faithful God, to Thee
 For rescue from our misery;

To Thee may raise our hearts and eyes,
 Repenting sore with bitter sighs,
 And seek Thy pardon for our sin
 And respite from our griefs within.

For Thou hast promised graciously
 To hear all those who cry to Thee,
 Through Him whose name alone is great,
 Our Savior and our Advocate.

And thus we come, O God, to-day,
 And all our woes before Thee lay;
 For tried, afflicted, lo! we stand,
 Perils and foes on every hand.

Ah! hide not for our sins Thy face,
 Absolve us through Thy boundless grace,
 Be with us in our anguish still,
 Free us at last from every ill,—

That so with all our hearts we may
 Once more our glad thanksgiving pay,
 And walk obedient to Thy Word,
 And now and ever praise Thee, Lord.

The Believing Christian Thanks God after the Thunderstorm Is Past.

EXHORTATION.

God thundereth marvelously with His voice; great things
 doeth He, which we cannot comprehend. *Job 37, 5.*

All the works which the Lord does in the sight of men are exceedingly great, and every one who observes them finds delight, joy, and pleasure in them. This applies especially to the thunderstorm when we consider it properly. Although it is produced by natural causes, it is nevertheless in God's hand. It is God who

thunders. He governs the clouds that are filled with vapor and fire. He guides them according to His pleasure. He employs them for His purpose, and sends them to accomplish His design. Accordingly, His thunder is always terrible. It is terrible and fearful to behold, and listen to, a thunderstorm. Men are startled. Dumb brutes tremble and roar. All that has breath is thrown into anxiety and fear. What else does God manifest by such an event than His great power and majesty, by which He can set all things in commotion, the moment He causes His voice to be heard on earth by the rumbling in the clouds?

But God accomplishes still more by a thunderstorm. He performs great things, which result, now in damage, now in profit to men: in damage, when the lightning shatters sturdy trees, sets houses on fire, strikes and kills men and beasts; in profit, because by the concussions of the thunder the atmosphere is purified and the fruitfulness of the soil is increased. Is not this another proof that the God who can accomplish such great things in such an incomprehensible manner must be a great and glorious God?

It is but proper that all men who view these acts of the Lord frequently should be roused to a living knowledge and humble adoration of Him. However, in numerous instances this lesson is disregarded. God does great things by means of His thunder, and yet is not known. Most men are scared and depressed as long as they hear the discharges of thunder; but as soon as the storm is past, all impressions which they received are also past. Everything is forgotten, just as if they had not heard the voice of the Lord, as if they had not heard what great things He had done for them. If the tempest has caused damage, they show a fleeting sympathy and pity to those who have been damaged. But if it fortunately passed by without doing harm, no account of it is taken, and thus God continues to be an unknown God to them. O what hard hearts which will not permit themselves to be softened! O what criminal insensibility! O what shameful ingratitude!

True Christians guard against these things with all care. They behold and contemplate attentively the works of nature, and suffer themselves to be guided to their Creator by them. They do this especially when the God of glory thunders in the heavens. When they behold a storm coming up, they marvel at the majesty, grandeur, and glory of Him who causes it to arise. When they

hear the thunder roll overhead, and see the lightnings flash about them, they commit themselves calmly and confidently into the hands of the Lord, where they always are, and in childlike trust expect from Him all good things. When the tempest has passed by harmlessly, they return thanks to God; they praise and glorify His goodness and faithfulness with heart, lips, and hands. And that leads them to God and brings them nothing but salvation and blessing. Of this the mouth of Truth Himself assures them when He says: "Whoso offereth praise glorifies Me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

PRAYER.

O God of my salvation, I, too, long for Thy salvation. Therefore I now approach Thy throne of grace to offer Thee the sacrifice of praise and thanks due Thee, because Thou hast graciously delivered me out of trouble, terror, and danger. I was full of anxiety when I heard Thy mighty voice in the air, because I did not know what Thou wouldst perform by its means. I took refuge in Thee by prayer, and committed myself and all that is mine to Thy fatherly care, and Thou didst not cast me away, but didst show cordial concern for me, and didst prove by deed that Thou art glad to help.

How easily might Thy lightnings have set our houses and forests on fire! How easily might the tempest have crushed the fruits in our fields! How easily could the uproar have consumed and utterly destroyed our possessions and belongings! How easily Thou mightest have made us as Adamah, and dealt with us as with Zeboim! And all this Thou mightest have done justly if Thou hadst intended to deal with us according to our sins and reward us as we had merited according to our iniquities. But

Thou hast not done this. Thou hast remembered us in love. Thou hast yielded Thy right and given Thy mercy sway. Thou hast spared us punishment, and, instead, hast showered Thy blessings upon us. It is because of Thy goodness, O God, that we can put our trust under the shadow of Thy wings, and that we may again dwell in safety. It is because of Thy goodness that we are not consumed, and Thy mercy is without end. This my soul knoweth right well.

Moved, humbled, and yet filled with gratitude, I come before Thee and say: Thou, Lord, hast done great things for me, whereof I am glad. Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Fear before Him, all the earth. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Bless the Lord, Thou my soul, also, and forget not what great things He has now done for thee.

I have now seen, O strong and almighty God, how Thou hast so soon, so graciously turned aside the severe and terrible tempest, and hast let it pass by without causing damage. Rouse me by this event that in all troubles which may yet befall me I may firmly trust in Thee and hope in Thy goodness. I behold again a serene sky; let me henceforth taste and see at all times that Thou art good. I have again seen Thy greatness and glory; let this cheer me to face Thee always with childlike fear, cordial love, and humble reverence, and to walk before Thee so as to please Thee. I have again felt Thy beneficent

hand; let me and mine and all men be committed to the same for the future.

If the tempest that passed us by has caused damage and harm elsewhere, be gracious and have compassion on the injured. Guide them so as to make them see that it is Thy hand that has chastised them, in order that they may humble themselves under it. Comfort and refresh them. Restore to them what they have lost by other blessings. Let them soon hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.

But let me also administer, employ, and use right faithfully and well the gifts and possessions which Thou hast preserved and, as it were, given to me anew. Let me receive my daily bread with thanksgiving. Let me manage my possessions as a faithful steward. Grant that I may not misuse them and employ them for dissipation and prodigality, but always use them for Thy glory, for my benefit, and for the welfare of my fellow-men, in order that I may render a cheerful account to Thee at the end.

Afford Thy gracious protection to all that I have also in the future, and guard it against destruction. If many more tempests are to arise, threatening ruin to me, let me be undismayed and trust in Thy mercy and right confidently hope in Thy goodness. On such occasions let me experience that surely no one will be put to confusion who hopes in Thee. Yea, if it should be Thy will to visit me in the future with a tempest and to make me poor, in that case make me truly rich before in spirit, in order that, while losing all, I may keep Thee, and Thy

communion and heaven. If I but obtain heaven, I have all that I need.

O my Father, O my Savior, O my Comforter, Thou that dwellest in the heavens, and hast granted me protection, aid, and help during the tempest that is now passed by, bring me also into heaven to Thee, that I may behold Thee face to face and give Thee praise and thanks forever. Teach me by Thy Word to walk in the true way, and to do what is well-pleasing to Thee. Lead me in the land of uprightness. Unite my heart to fear Thy name. Let me remain loyal to Thee in my faith, in love, and in hope, and never cease from my godliness until my end shall come, in order that when the Lord Jesus on that Day of Judgment shall be revealed with flames of fire and with thunder and lightning to execute vengeance upon those who do not know God and are not obedient to His Gospel, I may not be terrified, but lift up my head with joy, and enter with Him into the life eternal.

With my lamp well trimmed and burning, Swift to hear and loath to roam, Watching for Thy glad returning To restore me to my home, Come, my Savior; Thou hast promised: quickly come. Amen.

HYMN.

I know not why the flowers lift
 Their faces to the sun,
 I know not why they softly droop
 When the long day is done;
 I know not how the bright stars swing,
 Majestic, ceaseless, true,
 I know not how the soft, gray clouds
 Steal o'er the bonny blue,—
 But this I know, let come what may,
 The great God rules by night and day.

I know not how the sparrow lives,
 No winter's store at hand;
 And how the spider weaves her web
 I do not understand;
 I know not how the prying bee
 Doth find the honey-flowers,
 Nor how the tiny nest is lined
 Where timid field-mouse cowers, ---
 But this I know, that, great or small,
 God's gracious care embraces all.

How God protects in danger's hour
 Is mystery to me,
 How Love forgives my faithlessness,
 It is not mine to see;
 I know not how He knows my need
 And sends me rich supply;
 Faith only grasps His mightiness
 And strong in faith I cry, —
 Let come what will, let go what may,
 God's child is safe by night and day.

The Believing Christian Prays to God when He Leaves Home to Start on a Journey.

EXHORTATION.

The Lord is thy Keeper; the Lord is thy Shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even forevermore. *Ps. 121, 5—8.*

Manifold reasons may urge a believing Christian to leave home and travel, partly his professional business, partly love of his fellow-man, partly his state of health; for journeys for luxury and dissipation are not becoming to a true child of God. But if there is a compelling reason why a believing Christian must leave his home and estate for a season, he should (1) start his journey with prayer, and reflect when he leaves his home that God is with him in every place in the foreign country to which he is going, and that He sees and hears everything.

Accordingly, he must conduct himself as being in God's presence, in an honorable, well-behaved, godly, Christian manner. (2) At the beginning of his journey a believing Christian should commend himself to God's gracious protection, praying that God would bring him home again in good health and with sound limbs. For many have lost life and health and met with misfortune while traveling. (3) He should also commend those whom he leaves behind, as well as his home and possessions, to God, that He may through His holy angels take everything into His safe-keeping, and guard it against conflagrations, floods, and calamities. (4) He should pray God to let him find his possessions unharmed and his dear ones in good health on his return.

PRAYER.

Gracious and merciful God, in Thy name I have resolved to be absent from my dear ones and my home for some time; therefore I come to Thee and pray Thee: Bless my going out and my coming in. In Thy name I shall begin my journey; let me accomplish it with Thee as my Companion, and let me return to my home under Thy protection. Let the host of angels surround and guard me like Jacob; let Thy angel stand by me in every danger as by St. Paul; let the company of Thy angels travel with me going and coming, as with Joseph and Mary when they fled to Egypt with the young Child Jesus, that I may remain safe from all misfortune, from thieves, murderers, and any other injury. O Thou Keeper of Israel, who dost not sleep nor slumber, be a wall of fire around me by day and by night, as around Elisha, that no misfortune or disaster may come nigh me. Accompany me early and late, in forests and fields, with Thy holy angels' watch, as Thou didst guide the children of Israel through the desert with a cloudy pillar. Be my Companion when I am traveling; stay with me when I rest;

watch for me while I am sleeping. Yes, Lord, Lord, take care of me wherever I go, and let me be commended to Thy holy protection.

Grant that every hour there may be ringing in my ears the words which Thou didst send Abraham on his journey from home: "Walk before Me and be thou perfect." Let me have before my eyes in foreign lands Thy most holy presence. Keep me from lusting after evil things while I am absent from home and traveling. Guard me against gluttony, dissipation, impudence, wickedness, conformity with worldly men, and committing sinful and shameful acts. Help me to return to my home with an untarnished conscience. Turn my eyes away when they behold something wicked; turn my mind away from evil lusts when they arise in my heart. Keep me from contaminating either my body or my soul on this journey. Grant that I may bear in mind that Thou hearest everything I speak, that Thou seest everything I do, and that Thou art wherever I am going, standing, or am busy, and listenest to me and observest me, lest I sin against Thee and draw down upon myself Thy anger and disfavor.

I commit to Thee all that belongs to me and that I leave at home; guard it against thieves, conflagration, and floods, and let me find everything undestroyed and undamaged on my return. I commit to Thee also my dear ones whom I leave behind. O my God, I am going away from them, but do Thou stay with them. Graciously avert from them every danger, every injury, every misfortune and sickness. Let me see them again in good health; be their Protector; preserve them, guide them, guard them, and let no sad message reach me. Let them

live before Thee, and enjoy Thy protection and favor. In due time let me return safely to my home, and find my loved ones safe and sound in Thy protection.

O Lord Jesus, who didst journey with two disciples in the guise of a traveler, be with me also while I am on my journey and fill my heart with good thoughts. Give me godly companions, that we may not by shameful words and wicked conversations sin against Thee on this journey, but may think of Thee and converse in Thy most holy presence about Thy goodness, Thy wonderful works, Thy faithfulness and truth. O my God, in Thy name I have begun this journey; let me safely finish it in Thy name, and I will with my loved ones heartily praise and glorify Thee for Thy protection as long as I live.

Let my life and conversation Be directed by Thy Word; Lord,
Thy constant preservation To Thine erring child afford;
Nowhere but alone in Thee From all harm can I be free.
Wholly to Thy blest protection I commit my heart and mind,
Mighty God, to Thy direction Wholly may I be resigned.
Lord, my Shield, my Light divine, O accept and own me Thine!
Lord, to me Thine angel sending, Keep me from the subtle Foe;
From his craft and might defending, Never let Thy wand'rer go,
Till my final rest shall come, And Thine angel bear me home. Amen.

HYMN.

Jesus, my Truth, my Way,
My sure, unerring Light,
On Thee my feeble soul I stay,
Which Thou wilt lead aright.

My Wisdom and my Guide,
My Counselor Thou art:
O let me never leave Thy side,
Nor from Thy paths depart.

Thou seest my feebleness;
 Jesus, be Thou my Power,
 My Help and Refuge in distress,
 My Fortress, and my Tower.

Give me to trust in Thee;
 Be Thou my sure Abode;
 My Horn, and Rock, and Buckler be,
 My Savior and my God.

Myself I cannot save,
 Myself I cannot keep;
 But strength in Thee I surely have,
 Whose eyelids never sleep.

My soul to Thee alone
 Now, therefore, I commend:
 Thou, Jesus, having loved Thine own,
 Wilt love me to the end.

PRAYER OF A PERSON LIVING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Far from my friends and acquaintances I find myself in foreign parts, where I know very few people. But I know Thee, O Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High, as my Immanuel, as my Brother, as my best Friend. Therefore I turn to Thee and humbly pray Thee to take care of me, and not to forsake me until I have returned to my home, yea, until I have come to Thee in Thy heavenly kingdom.

Thou hast given the comforting promise to Thine own: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Fulfil this promise to me, and let me feel Thy gracious presence at all times and in all places. Thou hast hallowed all our travels when in Thy youth Thou didst visit Jerusalem and other places, and when during Thy min-

istry Thou didst journey to and fro in the land of the Jews, doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Let me always remember this, and, following Thy example, let me do nothing while I am abroad, except what is good, what is praiseworthy, and what is of good report. After Thy resurrection Thou didst join Thy disciples on the way to Emmaus, and at their request didst abide with them. Abide with me also, and do not leave me. Remain my Companion, my Protection, my Succor, my Counselor, my Guide, and my Deliverer.

O Lord Jesus, let me feel in every situation that Thou art near me. Guard me against evil company, and if I should fall in with such, make me strong, so that I may not sin and allow myself to be led astray. Give me strength to resist all allurements and temptations to sin, and to preserve a good conscience. Raise up for me faithful and good friends with whom I can be intimate, and let me enjoy their company with profit and blessing to myself. Take me into Thy protection, body and soul, and give me not only health of body, but also this grace, that my body may shelter an uncontaminated soul and an unsullied conscience. Give me by Thy Spirit the contentment of Moses, the chastity of Joseph, the godliness of Samuel, the temperance of Daniel. Fill my mind with wisdom that in all my doings I may act uprightly. Incline my will unto virtue that I may exercise myself therein, so as to gain for myself, and to keep, a good reputation while I am abroad, and to bring home a good report and be able to enjoy Thy favor. Bridle my passions, lest I become involved in strife and worry. Let me

faithfully keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

My Savior, strengthen me especially to the end that I may confess and glorify Thee before the world with lips and heart, with words and works. And if I should ever be assailed on account of my faith, grant me the grace to be ready at all times to give a reason of the hope that is in me, and that I may in no wise permit myself to be led astray into falling away from, or denying, Thy doctrine or into unfaithfulness toward Thee. Let Thy Word ever be a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Then I shall be able to walk blamelessly and to stand before Thee at all times.

O my merciful God, keep me also in health and preserve my life. Let me hear none but good tidings from my loved ones. Bless my business, on account of which I am detained here, and let all my enterprises prosper. And when I have achieved my object, bring me safely and happily back to my dear ones, and I shall pay Thee all my vows, and praise and magnify Thee without ceasing for the faithfulness and love which Thou hast shown me. Upon my return home let me ever bear in mind that I am both Thy stranger and Thy sojourner, and that at all times I may walk so as to be able to pursue my pilgrimage on earth with Thee, to complete it happily, and then enter my true fatherland in heaven and there live in communion with Thee forever.

And though through desert wilds I fare, Yet Jesus Christ is with me there; The Lord Himself is near. In all my dangers He will come, And He who kept me safe at home Can keep me safely there. Amen.

HYMN.

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
 And hope in Him through all thy ways,
 He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
 And bear thee through the evil days;
 Who trusts in God's unchanging love
 Builds on the Rock that naught can move.

What can these anxious cares avail thee,
 These never-ceasing moans and sighs?
 What can it help if thou bewail thee
 O'er each dark moment as it flies?
 Our cross and trials do but press
 The heavier for our bitterness.

Only be still and wait His leisure
 In cheerful hope with heart content,
 To take whate'er thy Father's pleasure
 And His discerning love hath sent;
 Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
 To Him who chose us for His own.

He knows the time for joy, and, truly,
 Will send it when He sees it meet;
 When He has tried and purged thee duly
 And finds thee free from all deceit,
 He comes to thee all unaware,
 And makes thee own His loving care.

Nor think amid the heat of trial
 That God hath cast thee off unheard;
 That he whose hopes meet no denial
 Must surely be of God preferred;
 Time passes and much change doth bring,
 And sets a bound to everything.

All are alike before the Highest;
 'Tis easy to our God, we know,
 To raise thee up, though low thou liest,
 To make the rich man poor and low;
 True wonders still by Him are wrought
 Who setteth up and brings to naught.

Sing, pray, and keep His ways unswerving;
 So do thine own part faithfully,
 And trust His Word, though undeserving,
 Thou yet shalt find it true for thee;
 God never will forsake in need
 The soul that trusts in Him indeed.

**PRAYER OF A PERSON WHO IS LYING SICK IN A FOREIGN
 COUNTRY.**

O Thou infinitely great God, how very strange are the ways which Thou leadest men, how utterly incomprehensible are the dispensations and guidings which they experience from Thee,—thus I must say now that I approach Thee, though lying on this sick-bed. When I started from home on my journey, I was hale and hearty; now I am sick and miserable. While I was traveling, and until I arrived at this place, I was strong and robust; now I am faint and weak. Thus the world that smiled when morn was come may change for me ere close of eve.

O my God, let this redound to my benefit. Let me learn from it how vain and transitory is the life, happiness, and prosperity of men here on earth, in order that I may never place my trust in these things, never set my affection upon them, but strive and press forward after those things which are eternal and imperishable. Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. Teach me to see that, verily, man at his best estate is altogether vanity.

I must confess and acknowledge, indeed, that I am particularly grieved because I am far from my loved ones, because I cannot enjoy their society and comforting conversation, and because I do not

know whether I shall ever see their faces again. But I will not lose heart on that account, but hope in Thee, my Father, who art with me also in these foreign parts, who carest for me even here, and wilt surely not fail to watch over me.

Accordingly, I calmly place myself into Thine arms and say: Do with me as seemeth good in Thy sight. Above all things, take loving care of my soul lest it perish. Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned. Heal me, and I shall be healed. Graciously forgive me all sins with which I have ever offended and grieved Thee. Forgive them for the sake of Thy Son, my Reconciler, for Jesus Christ's sake. Strengthen my faith in His name, and let me always pray to Thee in His name, and seek the help that I need. Work mightily in my heart by Thy Spirit, and fashion me here in time as Thou wouldst have me be in eternity. Let Him bear witness to my spirit that I am a child of grace and an heir of everlasting life. Give me the needful patience, that I may not murmur against Thee, or that I may not rebel against Thee, but resignedly accept and endure whatever Thou layest upon me.

Thou, O Lord, art He that giveth power to the faint and increasest strength to them that have no might. Do this also to me according to Thy great mercy. If I am to suffer much pain, let me consider that it is still much less than my sins have merited. If I am to suffer a long time, let me nevertheless quietly submit to Thee and wait for the hour of my help and deliverance from morning to morning. And when it comes, let me be gladdened beholding Thy mercy. Do with me as it seems good to Thee. Thy will is best. Convince my heart that this is so.

Teach me to pray with my Savior: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." If it be possible, if it please Thee, restore me to health. To that end bless the medicine which I take, and let me gain strength from day to day. Reward the faithfulness and care of those who are taking care of me, a stranger, and be Thou their Shield and exceeding great Reward. But if it do not please Thee to let me rise again from this sick-bed; if it is Thy will that I shall find my grave in a foreign land, be it so; only give me strength that I may surrender my will entirely to Thy good and gracious will. In that event let me bear in mind that the whole earth is Thine, and that Thou art able to find and quicken my decayed bones here too. Take my absent friends and relatives into Thy protection. Bless them with spiritual and temporal blessings. Let Thy Spirit guide them in an even path, in order that we may meet again yonder in the joy of heaven, and jointly praise and glorify Thee. Lord, I hope in Thee, and firmly believe that Thou wilt do all things well. My trust is in Thee alone, therefore I say in full confidence:

Where should else my hopes be centered? Grace o'erwhelms me with its flood; Thou, my Savior, once hast entered Holiest heaven through Thy blood. Eternal redemption for sinners there finding, From hell's dark dominion my spirit unbinding, To me perfect freedom Thy entrance has brought, And childlike to cry "Abba, Father," I'm taught. — Christ Himself, my Shepherd, feeds me, Peace and joy my spirit fill; In a pasture green He leads me Forth beside the waters still. Oh! naught to my soul is so sweet and reviving As thus unto Jesus alone to be living; True happiness this, and this only, supplies, Through faith on my Savior to fasten mine eyes. Amen.

HYMN.

O Thou, from whom all goodness flows,
 I lift my heart to Thee;
 In all my sorrows, conflicts, woes,
 Dear Lord, remember me!

When on my aching, burdened heart
 My sins lie heavily,
 My pardon speak, new peace impart;
 In love remember me.

Temptations sore obstruct my way,
 And ills I cannot flee;
 O give me strength, Lord, as my day;
 For good remember me.

Distressed with pain, disease, and grief,
 This feeble body see;
 Grant patience, rest, and kind relief;
 Hear, and remember me.

When in the solemn hour of death
 I wait Thy just decree,
 Be this the prayer of my last breath,
 Good Lord, remember me!

And when before Thy throne I stand
 And lift my soul to Thee,
 Then with the saints at Thy right hand,
 Good Lord, remember me!

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING WHEN A PERSON HAS COMPLETED A JOURNEY AND RETURNED SAFELY TO HIS HOME.

Lord, Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, who art able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think, who art rich in mercy and favor towards those who fear Thee and walk in Thy ways: behold, I come before Thy most holy countenance for the

first time in my own home, after safely completing with Thy aid the journey which I undertook in Thy name. I have vowed that I would give Thee thanks, and I now wish to pay my vow. Lift up my heart to Thee in fervent devotion and zeal, and incline Thine ear to my cry, my King and my God!

I cannot hide it from Thee that my heart was full of anxiety when I left my home. Many were my misgivings when I thought of the numerous dangers to which travelers are frequently exposed. And how easily I might have met with disaster! How easily I might have fallen into the hands of murderers and robbers, who would have robbed and slain me! How easily I might have met with an accident in which I would have been crippled! How easily sickness, pain, and death might have snatched me away, or hindered me in my business! How easily my house and home, my estate and property, might have suffered damage during my absence! But all this has not come to pass, and this I owe solely and alone to Thy mighty protection, Thy fatherly care, Thy powerful aid, and Thy faithful guidance. To Thee, to Thee alone, then, be blessing, praise, honor, and glory!

However, not only hast Thou so graciously guarded me against all accidents and misfortunes during the journey which I have now completed, but Thou hast also shown me many a kindness during the same. Thou hast kept me in good health; Thou hast given me faithful companions on my journey; in all places Thou didst raise up good friends for me; Thou hast blessed my business. Thou hast taken all my possessions under Thy protection so that I have found them undamaged upon

my return; Thou hast kept my loved ones in good health as I prayed for, and hast granted me a glad and joyful return to them. How great is Thy mercy! How manifold are Thy benefits! How immeasurable are the riches of Thy grace and love!

What shall I, what can I render Thee for all the goodness that Thou hast manifested toward me? I am unable to do so; I am too weak and powerless for this task. I thank Thee with heart and voice and hands. With a heart filled with gratitude I say: Thousand, thousand thanks to Thee, O great King, for all these favors! Let this feeble thank-offering be acceptable to Thee because of Thy mercy and the perfect atonement of Jesus. O Father, deign Thou, I beseech Thee, to listen to my earthly lays; a nobler strain in heaven shall reach Thee, when I with angels hymn Thy praise, and learn amid their choirs to sing loud hallelujahs to my King.

However, my God, now that I am again with my loved ones, let me continue to enjoy Thy favor and grace with them. Stir me up to relate to them frequently what great things Thou hast done for me on my journey, in order that they may be incited to praise and admiration of Thy faithfulness and love and to childlike trust in Thee. Let me live with them in quiet, peace, and true contentment as long as I shall still be with them, and let me be ever careful of this one thing, that I may serve Thee in holiness and righteousness before Thee. Let me also well apply the blessing which Thou hast bestowed upon me through this journey, and always regard and use it with thanksgiving. In general, let me view the entire remainder of my life as a journey to eternity. Accordingly, let me spend it in the

power of Thy good Spirit, in the fear of God, in piety, and in Thy service. Let me pursue without wearying my pilgrimage to the heavenly fatherland, and successfully overcome everything that obstructs my path. And when I have finished my course, receive me into Thy eternal, heavenly kingdom, and bring me to the rest which Thou hast appointed and prepared for Thy people in yonder world. There I shall laud and praise Thee as is meet. There I shall glorify Thee. There I shall extol Thee forever because of the faithfulness of Thy love.

Praise the God of all creation For His boundless love; Praise the Lamb, our Expiation, Priest enthroned above, Praise the Spirit of salvation, Him by whom we live; Undivided adoration To the Godhead give! Amen.

HYMN.

The Lord hath helped me hitherto
By His surpassing favor;
His mercies ev'ry morn were new,
His kindness did not waver.
God hitherto hath been my Guide,
Hath pleasures hitherto supplied,
And hitherto hath helped me.

I praise and thank Thee, Lord, my God,
For Thine abundant blessing
Which heretofore Thou hast bestowed
And I am still possessing.
Inscribe this on my memory:
The Lord hath done great things for me,
And graciously hath helped me.

Help me in future, God of grace,
Help me on each occasion,
Help me in each and ev'ry place,
Help me through Jesus' Passion;
Help me in life and death, O God,
Help me through Jesus' dying blood,
Help me as Thou hast helped me!

The Believing Christian Prays in Time of War.

EXHORTATION.

Behold, O Lord; for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled; abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death. The Lord hath bent His bow like an enemy. He hath swallowed up all palaces. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets; my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword.

Lam. 1, 20; 2, 4. 5. 21.

The three plagues with which God in His anger makes whole countries and cities waste and desolate are war, famine, and pestilence. Jer. 19, 12. War is a severe punishment; for when God withdraws His protection from a country, its enemies soon make ready to attack it.

The reasons why God punishes a country with war and devastation are various: 1) Disobedience, Is. 1, 19, 20; (2) living after the lusts of one's heart, and setting aside the fear of God, Judg. 4, 1; 6, 1; (3) contempt of God's Word, either by not hearing it at all, or by failing to live in accordance with it, Lev. 26, 17; (4) idolatry, Judg. 2, 12—14, whether it be of the gross or the subtle kind. Under this head belong dissipation, fornication, murder, the shedding of innocent blood, the oppression of strangers, and widows, the despoiling of the poor. But when God calls to the sword and takes away peace, Jer. 25, 29, He also takes away the valor of the sword, Ps. 89, 43, so that a multitude of people and a great army obtain no victories, thus compelling them to flee before their enemies, Ps. 44, 10, and bringing on destruction, sacking, and oppression of their country, and, finally, misery and wretchedness.

PRAYER.

O God, whom we have provoked to anger! We come before Thee in the anguish of our heart, we bend our knees before Thy most holy countenance, and bewail the great misery into which our great sins and Thy just anger have brought us. Lord, Lord, we dwelt securely under Thy protection; no sword durst frighten us, because Thou wast the foe

of our foes and the adversary of our adversaries. We went out and in at our gates in peace, and enjoyed the fruits of the land undisturbed. But now, O great God, Thou hast withdrawn from us Thy protection and our peace; therefore the foe has started against us and unsheathed the sword; he threatens to burn, sack, and destroy our cities, and to overrun our country.

What shall we say in our fright? We must confess that we have long ago deserved punishment and the rod of chastisement. Alas! we have misused the times of peace and prosperity. When we ought to have been built up in Thee and walked in Thy fear, serving and obeying Thee, alas! contempt of Thy Word, misuse of Thy holy name, injustice, security, wickedness, and most abominable vices were rampant among us. We are ashamed to speak of all our abominations before Thee, O God, whom we have provoked; they are crying to heaven anyway.

O merciful God, remember not our iniquities, which are as many as the sands upon the shore, but according to Thy mercy remember us for Thy goodness' sake. We prostrate ourselves before Thee in supplication, relying not upon our righteousness, but on Thy grace and mercy. We have sinned and done evil; we have been wicked, we have apostatized, and departed from Thy commandments. O Lord, rebuke us not in Thine anger, neither chasten us in Thy hot displeasure. We flee to the mercy-seat, to Jesus Christ, our only Helper and Advocate. Behold His blood and His wounds! O merciful God, have compassion on us! If Thou wilt deal with us according to our sins and Thy

justice, the enemy will exterminate us, swallow us up, consume us with fire, and overwhelm us, and there will be none to deliver us.

O mighty Protector of the distressed, arise, lest men overpower us. Thou canst arm us with strength for the battle; Thou canst cast down before us those who stand arrayed against us. In Thee is all our trust and all our hope in this great distress. Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name forever, as though none could deliver us out of his hand? Deliver us, O God of our salvation, and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake. Take away from the enemies their courage; scatter them, and watch over our entire land, over our houses and homes. Let peace spring up speedily, and avert the danger in which we are involved. Lord, to Thee belongs the honor of shattering swords, cutting spears in sunder, and burning chariots in the fire. O God of love, hear the cries of those who are now surrounded by dangers, and are in the hands of the enemy, and must endure many an ignominy and merciless treatment. Have compassion on the poor, the widows, the aged and stricken in years, the children and infants which cannot flee. Make a speedy end of this wasteful war, and hear our prayer for the sake of Thy goodness and mercy.

God bless our native land! Firm may she ever stand Through storm and night; When the wild tempests rave, Ruler of wind and wave, Do Thou our country save By Thy great might. For her our prayer shall rise To God above the skies; On Him we wait: Thou who art ever nigh, Guarding with watchful eye, To Thee aloud we cry, God, save the State. Amen.

HYMN.

Zion mourns in fear and anguish,
Zion, city of our God.

“Ah!” she saith, “how sore I languish,
Bowed beneath so hard a load;
God hath sure forsook me quite,
And forgot my evil plight,” —
Nay, the Lord, who chose thee spares thee,
For within His heart He bears thee.

“Once,” she mourns, “He promised plainly
That His help should aye be near,
Yet I now must seek Him vainly
In my days of woe and fear.
Will He, then, forevermore
Keep His anger, and no more
Help His chosen generation
In their present tribulation?”

“Zion, surely I have loved thee!”
Thus to her the Highest saith,
“Although many woes have proved thee,
And thy soul is sad to death,
Yet now cast thy griefs behind;
Where wilt thou a mother find
For her own child not providing,
Or in hatred with it chiding?”

“And if thou couldst find a mother
Who forgot her infant’s claim,
Or whose wrath her love could smother,
Yet would I be still the same;
For My truth is pledged to thee,
Zion, thou art dear to Me,
I within My heart have set thee,
And I never can forget thee.

“Let not Satan make thee craven,
He can fight, but cannot harm;
On My hands thy name is graven,
And thy shield is still My arm.

How, then, could it ever be
That I failed to think of thee,
Build the wall of My own city,
And look down on thee with pity?

“Thou before My eyes art ever,
In My bosom thou art laid
As a nursing child, and never
Shalt thou lack My timely aid.
Me and thee no time, nor stress,
War, nor danger, nor distress,
No, nor Satan’s self shall sever,—
Only be thou faithful ever.”

The Believing Christian Praises and Thanks God for the Restoration of Peace.

EXHORTATION.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge. *Ps. 46, 8—11.*

No gladder tidings can ring out after a bloody and grievous war than this: There is peace! Then fugitives return to their homes; the banished have hope of regaining their own; the land recuperates and teems with joy because it is no longer trampled by the feet of the enemy.

A believing Christian regards peace as a gift that comes down from above; accordingly, with his heart and voice in unison, he praises God (1) because He has made an end of the destruction, the robbery, the pillaging, the slaughter, the incendiarism, the conflagrations, and because the inhabitants of the land have been delivered from the terror and violence of the enemy. He returns thanks (2) because amidst the dangers of the war God has protected him and his possessions, and has not given them as spoils into the hands of the enemy.

He perceives (3) that blessed peace is like the sun and the dew, which raises up and refreshes what was drooping. He prays God (4) to let the peace become permanent and to restrain all disturbers of peace. (5) He employs the times of peace not for dissipation and voluptuousness, but for his growth in the Christian religion and for serving His God without let and hindrance.

PRAYER.

Lord, Lord, gracious, merciful, and abundant in goodness, by a just judgment Thou hast hitherto deprived our country of peace, because we had misused our days of prosperity and peace, and on that account a bloody war arose. Thou didst summon our enemies for our chastisement: they had to draw their swords, slaughter us, lay the country waste, and fill us with terror and dread. Although we had deserved to be utterly destroyed by this war, still in the midst of Thine anger Thou didst remember Thy mercy; Thou didst inspire the warring hosts with thoughts of peace, for which we return Thee glad and heartfelt thanks. At Thy command the sword went back into its scabbard; the fugitives are returning, and we may again pass in and out at our gates quietly and without danger. Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee; He maketh peace in thy borders.

What a blessed treasure is peace, in which the whole country rejoices! To-day Thou renewest to us the promise: "Ye shall dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid; neither shall the sword go through your land." O Lord,

make this peace to last during the time of our life; lift up Thy countenance upon us, and give us peace, as a glorious portion of that divine blessing which Thou hast laid upon Thy people. Let our peace be like a stream of water that never diminishes, but wells up from its source and flows constantly; for Thou alone maintainest our peace according to Thy sure promise. Let righteousness and peace kiss each other, and righteousness look down from heaven.

Give us Thy Holy Spirit that we may not misuse this blessed peace for dissipation, gluttony, and security, but for building ourselves up and walking in the fear of the Lord. Refresh the devastated land with Thy blessing, and always regard us with thoughts of peace. At the end of our lives let us depart in peace and enter the home of peace.

O holy Father, who hast led Thy children, In all the ages, with the fire and cloud, Through seas dry-shod; through weary wastes bewildering; To Thee, in reverent love, our hearts are bowed. O holy Jesus, Prince of Peace and Savior, To Thee, we owe the peace that now prevails, Stilling the rude wills of men's wild behavior, And calming passion's fierce and stormy gales. O Holy Ghost, the Lord and the Life-giver, Thine is the quickening power that gives increase From Thee hath flowed, as from a pleasant river, Our plenty, wealth, prosperity, and peace. O Triune God, with heart and voice adoring, Praise we the goodness that has crowned the day; Pray we that Thou wilt hear us, still exploring Thy love and favor, kept to us alway. Amen.

HYMN.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
 O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy Health and Salvation.
 Join the full throng;
 Wake, harp and psalter and song;
 Sound forth in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
Who, as on wings of an eagle, uplifteth, sustaineth.

Hast thou not seen

How thy desires all have been

Granted in what He ordaineth?

Praise to the Lord, who hath fearfully, wondrously made thee;
Health hath vouchsafed, and when heedlessly falling hath stayed
thee.

What need or grief

Ever hath failed of relief?

Wings of His mercy did shade thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth visibly bless and defend thee;
Who, from the heavens, the streams of His mercy doth send thee;

Ponder anew

What the Almighty can do,

If with His love He befriend thee!

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!

He is thy Light;

Soul, keep it always in sight,

Gladly forever adore Him.

The Believing Christian Prays to God when His Country has been Visited with Hard Times and Famines.

EXHORTATION.

Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight and with care; and they shall drink water by measure and with astonishment.

Ezek. 4, 16.

As tame and wild animals are trained by means of hunger to learn something and to forget their wildness, so God, as a rule, puts a bit and bridle into the mouths of men when they will not submit to Him. God seeks to attract them for a long time with blessings, but if they will not let His goodness lead them to repentance, He sends famine into their land, either by a failure of

crops or by war, or by hard times and scarcity, or by withholding His blessing from the food, so that people eat and are not satisfied.

This punishment is usually visited upon men, (1) when they esteem the Word of God lightly, and only think of high living, Is. 5, 13; (2) when they persecute godly people and the servants of God, Jer. 11, 22; (3) when they gladly hear the voice of false prophets, Jer. 14, 15. 16; (4) when they are stiff-necked, Jer. 24, 10; (5) when they remain disobedient, Ezek. 4, 16; or (6) when they practise violence towards their inferiors, 2 Sam. 21, 1. 2. In the wake of a famine come poverty, distress, starvation, so that parents, driven by fierce hunger, have eaten their children, and sought other horrid means to relieve their distress. (7) When to such a physical famine there is added a spiritual hunger, Amos 8, 11, the distress is unspeakable.

PRAYER.

O righteous God, who renderest to every man according to his works, and lettest wrath, tribulation, and anguish come upon those who do evil, we come before Thy most holy countenance, ashamed because we have sinned so grievously that Thou must force us to prayer and obedience by means of hunger. Oh, how abundantly didst Thou feed in former years! We had bread a-plenty; the earth brought forth the loveliest and best fruits. Like bands of love these gifts should have drawn us to Thee, the generous Giver, and led us to repentance. But how shamefully were they misused for gluttony, high living, and surfeiting, so that these very creatures had to groan because they were received with ungrateful hands by ungrateful men. Is it a wonder, then, that our fertile land bears nothing because of the sins of those dwelling in it? Thou chastisest us with hard times, scarcity, and drought, so that the earth yields its fruits sparingly, and our country is oppressed with want.

O Lord, hear the cry of the poor who are begging bread and cannot appease their hunger. Let Thy heart be moved with the cries of the children, the wails of their parents, the distress that fills all homes in town and country. It seems that Thou hast withdrawn Thy blessing from our food: we eat, and are not satisfied; we take much food, and almost faint with hunger. And the cattle, the dumb creatures, are crying to their Creator for food.

O Lord, Lord, gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness, have mercy upon us. Return to us with Thy blessing which Thou hast withdrawn from us. The rivers are full of water; therefore visit the earth and water it. Let heaven hear the cry of the earth, and do Thou Thyself hear us from Thy sanctuary. Let the famine cease; return to us with Thy grace; feed the hungry; gladden the poor; bless our scant supply of bread, which we are sorrowfully having doled out to us daily by weight. We perceive now that we cannot live by bread alone, but chiefly by the Word of blessing which proceeds out of Thy mouth and by which strength is put into our food. Let the fields soon be teeming again with fruits; increase our little store of meal like that of the widow of Zarephath, and let our small supply suffice for the support of many. Meanwhile let Thy Word ever be our food, that we may derive nourishment from it; for Thy Word is the rejoicing of our hearts, our honey and honeycomb; and we shall glorify and praise Thee for this mercy as long as we live.

To Thee, our God, we fly For mercy and for grace; Oh, hear our lonely cry, And hide not Thou Thy face! O Lord, stretch forth Thy mighty hand, And guard and bless our fatherland. Amen.

HYMN.

What our Father does is well:
Blessed truth His children tell!
Though He send, for plenty, want,
Though the harvest-store be scant,
Yet we rest upon His love,
Seeking better things above.

What our Father does is well:
Shall the wilful heart rebel
If a blessing He withhold
In the field or in the fold?
Is He not Himself to be
All our store eternally?

What our Father does is well:
Though He sadden hill and dell,
Upward yet our praises rise
For the strength His Word supplies,
He has called us sons of God —
Can we murmur at His rod?

What our Father does is well:
May the thought within us dwell;
Though nor milk nor honey flow
In our barren Canaan now,
God can save us in our need,
God can bless us, God can feed.

Therefore, unto Him we raise
Hymns of glory, songs of praise;
To the Father and the Son
And the Spirit, Three in One,
Honor, might, and glory be
Now and through eternity.

The Believing Christian Prays in Time of Pestilence.

EXHORTATION.

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord, thy God, . . . that all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. . . . The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until He have consumed thee from off the land. . . . The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. *Deut. 28, 15. 21. 22.*

When wrath, tribulation, and anguish is come upon those that do evil, Rom. 2, 8, 9, contagious diseases and pestilence must certainly be included in that anguish. To a large extent this plague comes, (1) when men put no faith in the word of warning and admonition, Num. 14, 12; (2) when men serve God only outwardly and not with the heart, Jer. 14, 12; (3) when they even put God out of their minds entirely by their disobedience, Jer. 24, 10; 27, 9; (4) when they despise the servants of God, Jer. 29, 17; (5) when the people become bold and unruly, Ezek. 14, 19; (6) when fornication and murder are rampant, Ezek. 33, 26, 27; (7) when no admonition to repentance is any longer heeded, Amos 4, 10; (8) on account of adultery, Num. 25, 9; (9) on account of blasphemy, 2 Kings 19, 35; (10) on account of pride, 2 Sam. 24, 15; and also on account of other sins. Now, when this chastisement is inflicted by God, it is necessary that men repent, because the Lord suffers Himself to be entreated according to His mercy; hence David from among three plagues chose this one rather than the others.

PRAYER.

O Thou strong and mighty God, great is Thy wrath against wilful sinners, who will not let Thy benefactions lead them to repentance. For a time Thou dealest with men like a loving father, who seeks with much patience to draw his disobedient children to himself, but afterwards, when men wantonly abuse Thy grace, Thou manifestest Thyself as a stern Judge. We, too, are experiencing this now, O just God; we hear that in many places a con-

tagious disease has appeared, which devours many thousands of people, so that there are corpses in nearly every house, and there are not enough hands to bury them. We are consumed by Thine anger, and by Thy wrath are we troubled. Have we not strong reasons to fear that Thou wilt send this spreading contagion also into our borders and our city? O jealous God, we need not think that those on whom Thy heavy rod is now descending are sinners above the rest; rather we must confess that we all deserve to perish like them. There is found among us security, contempt of Thy Holy Word, stiff-neckedness, dissipation, fornication, unrighteousness, voluptuousness, and pride. Yea, there is scarcely any fear of God in our land; the godly man ceases, and the faithful fail from among the children of men. If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?

O Lord, Lord, when Thou saidst, Seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Thou hast no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but that the sinner turn from his way and live. Therefore, we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. Do not look upon our manifold sins; graciously pronounce us not guilty; succor us in our distress, and remove all punishments from us. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Command the destroying angel who is wielding the sword of vengeance to cease, and say to him, It is enough. Let us live, and we will glorify Thy name. Though we do not deserve any mercy, yet we are in need of it. Though we are all children of death, yet Thou hast

promised the penitent that Thou wouldst exercise mercy instead of justice towards them.

Oh, grant us Thy grace and life, for Jesus' sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Have mercy, have mercy upon us, O God of mercy! Be gracious unto us; spare us, good Lord; be gracious unto us; help us, good Lord, our God. Have mercy on the poor and afflicted who have been seized with this violent pestilence, who must suffer hunger and grief, who are destitute of all nursing care, and forsaken by all men. Lead them to the knowledge of Thy grace in Christ, Thy dear Son; aid them with Thy comfort, and let Thy Spirit witness unto their spirit that they are God's children, though they may have to die of this plague. O Lord, hear our prayer; protect our fatherland, and we shall say: The Lord hath done great things for us. Yea, Thou canst deliver all who come to Thee.

What God wills, that I am willing. Can I ever say Him nay? Fire and flood His deed fulfilling Making for His feet a way. Ah! God's yea and nay shall be Ever yea and nay to me. What God wills as to correcting, That shall always be my rule. Why should pupil make objection, Sitting in the Master's school? Flesh and blood the stroke would shun, Still I say, God's will be done. What God wills when I am praying, As to measure, time, and term, I can trust e'en His delaying, That may be His glory's germ. Give He many, give He few, What have I with that to do? Amen.

HYMN.

We know not how, O God, that Thou wilt move
Thy great, eternal majesty to prove.
Not only in the sunshine of this life,
But in its darker hours, and times of strife,
E'en then we see Thy will, and humbly bend
To that which seemeth best for Thee to send.

And yet in our own weakness oft we strive
 To rise above the ills which round us thrive;
 We battle single-handed with the wrong
 That seeks to weigh us down the whole day long.
 But now at eventide we pray to Thee
 For strength to help us gain the victory.

O Father, teach us that the darker hours
 Are needed to bring forth more perfect flowers,
 Cleanse Thou our minds, and make us know aright
 That vales of darkness lead to clearer light—
 For this we humbly ask, most gracious God,
 E'en though we pass beneath Thy chastening rod.

To us, so weak, the load seems oftentimes hard,
 And, sorely pressed, we see not the reward;
 We do not try to pierce the cloud of grief,
 Or seek the hand which brings to us relief.
 But open, Lord, we pray, our sin-blind eyes
 And make us see from whence our help will rise.

Give us clean hands, a broken, contrite heart,
 That we may choose naught but the better part,
 Help us to offer unto Thee our lives
 One pure, entire, unbroken sacrifice—
 Then we may hope for glory at the last,
 When earthly trials and struggles all are past.

The Believing Christian Prays during a Conflagration.

EXHORTATION.

Behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God. *Amos 7, 4—6.*

From this passage we learn chiefly three things. In the first place, this, that God always accomplishes something when He permits calamities to befall men, and especially when He permits a

conflagration to start. Therefore the Prophet says: "The Lord God called to contend by fire." God summons fire, and hurls it upon men directly when He flings His lightnings and sets forests and houses on fire. Indirectly, however, He calls to the fire when He permits either wicked men to start it, or the impudence and carelessness of men to cause it.

Accordingly, when a Christian hears that a conflagration has broken out in the place where he lives, he says to himself: That is not happening by blind chances, but the Lord has done it; for shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? He remembers that he, too, is under the mighty hand of God, who can visit him also on this occasion. He bows before God, and beseeches God to succor and protect him. Like a child he commits himself to God's mercy, in firm assurance that all things must work together for good to them that love God.

Furthermore, we learn from the passage cited that God frequently employs fire to chastise and punish men. For the Prophet says: He called to the fire for a punishment; it was to devour a great deep, and was already eating up a part. God punishes the sins of men, and He must punish them, not only because of His holiness, by which He resents and hates sin, but also because of His righteousness, by which He must fulfil the threats of punishment and chastening which He has pronounced against the disobedient and wicked in His Word. Moreover, God really punishes men on account of their sins, sometimes with individual, sometimes with general plagues. He visits them with individual plagues when He lays crosses and sicknesses on them, withdraws His blessing from them, and lets them suffer various kinds of distress. In such instances they have to realize and learn by experience what it means to forsake the Lord and not to be afraid of our God. But if this has no effect, He sometimes sends general plagues by which He reveals His wrath against sinners. To this end He sometimes employs fire also, and permits it to spread terror everywhere and to cause great devastation.

In this way God punishes men chiefly (1) for their contempt of preaching and His Word; (2) for their ingratitude towards Him for the great and innumerable blessings which they have received from Him, as is plainly shown by the instance recorded in Num. 11, 1; (3) for their persistent impenitence, as can be seen from what happened to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah

according to Genesis 19. Accordingly, a Christian must beware of these sins with exceptional care, lest he call down upon himself and his brethren the fiery vengeance of God. And when he hears of a conflagration that has broken out anywhere, he must regard it as a well-deserved, divine chastisement. He must remember his sins and seek to stay the chastening rod of God, lest it come down upon him also. He must let the conflagration rouse him to repentance, to amendment of his life, and to vowing and rendering new obedience to God.

Finally, we see from the passage cited before that God can be moved by earnest and eager prayer to dismiss His wrath and change it into mercy. For the Prophet says: "Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee. By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. The Lord repented for this. This also shall not be, saith the Lord God." Thus by the humble intercession of the Prophet in behalf of his people God became graciously inclined towards them, and changed His thoughts of wrath to thoughts of peace, having compassion on them and ceasing from punishing them with fire. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man still avails much. Therefore a believing Christian must resort to prayer when a conflagration has broken out. He must commit himself and his possessions to the guardian care and protection of God. He must faithfully pray both for those who are already involved in the calamity, and for those who are threatened by it. Believingly, fervently, and persistently he must sigh: O Lord, cease from Thine avenging anger, for from whom are we to expect help but from Thee? And he will surely obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

PRAYER.

Lord, Lord, Thou art an infinitely good and kind, but also a terrible God, when Thy anger has been roused, and Thou dost reveal to men Thy disfavor by Thy judgments. I do not now behold Thy gracious countenance, which I have so often and in such manifold ways beheld on other occasions. I see now that Thou art angry, and who can stand before Thine anger, and shield himself against Thy hot displeasure? From all sides I now hear tumult, cries,

wailing, and lamentation. My heart quails; my strength has forsaken me; my soul is very much frightened. A conflagration has broken out, which could not have happened without Thy will and permission.

I do not as yet know the real cause that started this sudden conflagration, but this I know for a certainty, that mine iniquities and sins and those of my brethren are the chief cause of it. These have come before Thee; these have put an end to Thy long-suffering by which Thou hast borne with us such a long time. At last Thou hast been compelled to punish us, and to show that Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee.

O yes, Lord, Lord, we are sinners, great sinners, who have merited Thy wrath. We do not conceal our iniquities. We confess that we have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called Thy children. We behold now before us Thy fiery indignation, and see that in a few moments Thou couldst demolish and destroy us all. But, O Lord, do not do so. Cease from Thine anger. In the midst of Thy wrath remember Thy great mercy, which Thou hast promised to them that seek Thy face. However, do not remember our sins only, but also, yea, much more, the precious and all-sufficient atoning sacrifice of Thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Spare us for His sake, and do not reward us according to our works. Quench the fire of Thy hot displeasure in the blood of the Lamb. O God Father, remember the death of Christ; behold His crimson wounds, which are the payment and ransom for the sins of the whole

world. That is our comfort at all times, and we hope in Thy mercy. I, too, hope in it especially in the present distress and danger, and therefore turn to Thee, my only Succor and Deliverer.

I commend to Thy gracious charge and protection, above all, my loved ones, my house, my goods, and all the gifts from Thy hands which I possess. Check the flames that they do not spread too far; let them be extinguished before they can reach my dwelling. Strengthen my faith, my trust and hope in Thy goodness, lest I lose heart, if the danger should come closer. Give me wisdom and understanding that I may conduct myself in such a manner as will redound to Thy glory and my benefit. Let the whole calamity pass by happily in the end, and I shall increasingly laud and praise Thy name, and tell what great things Thou hast done for me.

O gracious God, have mercy on those who must now behold their homes and possessions wasted and consumed by the flames. Fill their hearts with courage and comfort to hope in Thee. Be Thou their strong Shield and mighty Succor in the great affliction which has come upon them, and graciously deliver them. Care equally for those who are near the seat of danger. Command the fury of the flames to cease and not attack their dwellings. Speak the word only, and it will be done. Remember the precious promise which Thou hast made us when Thou saidst: "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." Remember this promise, and according to Thy great mercy, do accordingly.

Bless the good efforts which are being made to

quench the fire, and let them have the desired effect. Fill all who come to the aid of the suffering with true love, tender pity, and Thy fear, that they may render their assistance and help honestly. And if evil persons should mingle with them, who intend to rob and steal, touch their heart powerfully and cause them to desist from their wicked purpose and not to grieve and injure the afflicted still more. Make a speedy end of our distress. Let order and quiet be restored within our walls. Quench the smoldering flames, and let them not break out again.

However, grant also that we may be humbled and improved by this chastisement which Thou didst decree for us, and that we may be brought to fear Thy wrath and no longer purposely act contrary to Thy commandments, but walk before Thee as long as we live in holiness and righteousness. Graciously hear this my prayer and the prayers of all other godly Christians, and send forth Thy help, and we shall praise and glorify Thee for this and all other benefits, here in time and hereafter in eternity.

When man's help and affection Shall unavailing prove, God grants me His protection, And proves His power and love; He helps me in my need, Delivers me from evil, From sin, and death, and devil, He is my Friend indeed. Amen.

HYMN.

Alas, my God! my sins are great,
My conscience doth upbraid me;
And now I find that in my strait
No man hath power to aid me.

And fled I hence, in my despair,
In some lone spot to hide me,
My griefs would still be with me there,
And peace still be denied me.

Lord, Thee I seek. I merit naught,
 Yet pity and restore me;
 Be not Thy wrath, just God, my lot,
 Thy Son hath suffered for me.

If pain and woe must follow sin,
 Then be my path still rougher.
 Here spare me not; if heav'n I win,
 On earth I gladly suffer.

But curb my heart, forgive my guilt,
 Make Thou my patience firmer,
 For they must miss the good Thou wilt
 Who at Thy chastenings murmur.

Then deal with me as seems Thee best,
 Thy grace will help me bear it,
 If but at last I see Thy rest,
 And with my Savior share it.

The Believing Christian Prays when He has Suffered by Fire.

EXHORTATION.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. *Job 1, 21.*

Excellent words these, which pious Job uttered when several evil tidings reached him concerning calamities that had befallen his children and his earthly possessions. One of the messages which he received ran thus: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them." Even this dreadful message did not terrify him, nor unsettle him. Here is an excellent example to Christians who are reduced to similar straits by a conflagration that has damaged their goods and estate. For that Christians should compare their conduct with the model conduct of godly and pious persons and should follow their example, is taught not only by Sirach, who exclaims, chap. 2, 10: "Look at the generations of old and see," but also by Paul, who writes, Romans 15, 4: "Whatsoever things

were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

Accordingly, when Christians, by the inscrutable and righteous counsel of God, are visited by misfortune, so that they must forfeit and lose much of their property, they must compose themselves and strive to order their conduct according to the example of Job. This godly man not only accepted with composure whatsoever the hand of God sent him, but he also resigned himself trustingly to the will and guidance of God.

True Christians must do likewise, and therefore observe the following duties: Their first duty is not to believe themselves forsaken by God, but to approach Him with childlike humility and call upon Him for other and renewed blessings. Their second duty is not to lose heart when they see before them a scantier supply than formerly, but to pray and labor more diligently, and at the same time believe firmly that God is able to restore to them abundantly what they have lost. Their third duty is to trust firmly in God, and to be assured that He has thousands of ways of repairing the damage which they have suffered, and that He will certainly do this in accordance with His great faithfulness after He has attained His loving objects regarding them.

If Christians act in this way, they will infallibly notice and experience that it is an easy thing for God to bless them and make them rich again, that He will remove their want, and so deal with them that in the end they will be forced to exclaim from a heart stirred to His praise: Blessed be the name of the Lord!

PRAYER.

Lord, almighty God, what a fearful thing it is to fall into Thy hands! How insufferable is Thy wrath when poured out upon men! We have now experienced this, since thou hast not only visited us with a conflagration, but hast also taken away from us a great portion of Thy former blessings. We confess frankly that we have justly merited such punishment with our sins. We confess our sins unto Thee, and our iniquity do we not hide; for we

have not made the faithful use of Thy gifts that we should. We have at times been unjust stewards; perhaps we owe Thee more than ten thousand talents. No wonder, then, that Thou hast thus chastised and punished us in Thy righteous wrath. Alas, that we have sinned so grievously! Alas, that we have so grossly insulted Thy divine majesty! We prostrate ourselves before Thee and humbly sue for mercy. We plead guilty and repent in dust and ashes. We seek Thy face; oh, let us find grace before Thee for Jesus' sake! Incline Thine ear and hear us in our pitiful weeping and wailing. Rebuke us no longer in Thine anger, neither chasten us in Thy hot displeasure, but rather be gracious unto us; for we are weak. Heal us, O Lord; for our bones are vexed. Be merciful unto us according to Thy goodness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Enter no further into judgment with Thy servants; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.

Remember that we are dust and ashes. Show us a token for good. Comfort us again after Thou hast smitten us so sorely; heal us after wounding us so severely. Restore to us by Thy blessing what the flames have devoured and reduced to ashes. Raise up compassionate and kind hearts for us that will lovingly assist and help us. Bless our calling, our labor, and the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands, prosper Thou it for Thy name's sake. Let goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life, and let us never feel Thy eternal wrath which we have fully merited with our sins. Make us truly cautious, lest we be careless in handling

fire and light, and cause terror and injury to our fellow-men.

However, above all, make us truly pious. Grant that the cross and suffering which we have endured may lead us to Thee and keep us with Thee until our end. Give us strength to avoid sin and to walk before Thee in newness of life. Let us rightly employ the new blessings which Thou art bestowing on us, and use them in such a way that we may be able to render a good account to Thee. Lead us at all times by Thy Spirit into the land of uprightness, and graciously bring us at last into Thy heavenly kingdom, which from the beginning Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee.

Thy Word hath said, Thou art my Rock, The Fortress that can fear no shock, My Help, my Life, my Treasure; Howe'er distress And dangers press, All must perform Thy pleasure. Amen.

HYMN.

O God, Thou righteous, faithful Lord,
I have not kept Thy holy Word,
But sinned and oft offended Thee;
Now I repent, it grieveth me.

Thou, Father, merciful and kind,
No pleasure in my death dost find,
But strong desire doth in Thee burn
That I should unto Thee return.

Since Thou, dear Father, callest me,
I, poor lost sinner, come to Thee,
Relying on Christ's precious blood
Which from His holy five wounds flowed.

I pray through Christ, Thine only Son,
Who for my good here flesh put on:
Thy love to me let never fail,
O'er justice let Thy grace prevail.

In mercy, Father, let Thy grace
 Through Jesus' blood my sins efface;
 Then I, the poor lost child, will be
 From all my sins forever free.

Grant that, according to Thy Word,
 I lead a godly life, O Lord;
 And let me, after time is o'er,
 Inherit life forevermore.

The Believing Christian Thanks God after Safely Passing through a Conflagration.

EXHORTATION.

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. *Rom. 12, 15.*

This is an admonition which most earnestly enjoins upon Christians a sympathetic interest in all that happens to their fellow-men; an admonition of which they should be mindful at all times, and which they should heed especially when they see their brethren visited with conflagrations and other calamities, and behold them eating their bread with tears and mingling their drink with weeping. When they observe this, they must weep with them and share their sorrow as a sorrow which they feel with them, because they are members with them in one body. But when they see that their fellow-men are recovering, and, after passing through their anxiety, are becoming joyful again, they must join them and raise their voices in songs of joy to the honor of Him who has so gloriously helped them and done all things well.

When a fire has started, but has soon been put out, Christians must, first of all, show their sympathy to their neighbor by refusing to rejoice over the misfortune which has befallen him. They must not wish him such a misfortune, saying: Aha, that is what I like to see! For that is a proof of their malice, meanness, and want of love, which are not becoming a Christian. They must rather reflect that the fire might just as well have started with them as with their neighbors; that it might have damaged them as well as others, and they must, accordingly, show the same interest in it as if it had happened to them, and must mourn and weep with a sorrowful heart.

Furthermore, they must refrain from all uncharitable judgments; they must not forthwith pronounce the persons injured by the conflagration the greatest sinners, and regard themselves as holier and better than others; they must not boldly declare the misfortune that has befallen their neighbors to be a just punishment of their wickedness, but rather put their hand upon their mouth and say to themselves: It is the Lord's doing; and who has ever been His counselor?

Christians who have suffered no damage by the conflagration must show and prove to the fire-stricken their genuine sympathy in still other ways. They must return to the unfortunate persons anything which the latter during the conflagration had entrusted to them for safe-keeping, and not withhold the least thing; for that would be stealing, and would still more grieve those who are already aggrieved, which would be inexcusable.

Finally, they must show their sympathy also in this way, that they contribute gladly, willingly, and liberally, according to their means, towards the relief of the sufferers, if the latter request it, just as they would wish their fellow-men to do to them in a similar case. Thus they weep with them that weep, and share their distress and affliction. In like manner Christians must rejoice with them that do rejoice. When they see that their injured brethren take heart again, that they lift up their hearts unto God and thank Him because in their distress He was the health of their countenance and their God, they must join with them in spirit, praising and glorifying God, and must from the heart offer Him thanks for having relieved their brethren, as much as they thank Him for their own protection, and the safety and averting of injury which God vouchsafed them. If Christians do this, they discharge a duty, and that brings them nothing but favor and blessing. God is well pleased with them. He takes them under His protection. He will remember them in future troubles and deliver them. He will always let them taste and see that He is good.

PRAYER.

O holy and righteous God, Thou hast executed Thy judgment upon us for our punishment, chastisement, and improvement; Thou hast indeed manifested Thy sincerity. But Thou hast at the same

time done great things for us, so that we are forced to confess: Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments. I am still trembling when I think of the cries, groans, wailing, and weeping which but a short while ago filled my ears wherever I turned. I am still unable to compose myself when I recall how many parents, how many children, how many babes and sucklings, how many women with child and nursing mothers, how many sick and dying persons were in imminent danger of being devoured by the flames, how they cried to Thee in their distress, and how many thousands might have been rendered unhappy.

Thou hast indeed permitted many people to lose all they had and become poor, but amidst Thy anger Thou hast also remembered Thy mercy. Thou hast commanded the conflagration to halt and not to spread any farther. Thou hast heard the sighs of the distressed and turned Thy gracious countenance to us again, so that the violent flames have not consumed everything. What mercy and goodness! For this we give Thee praise and glory. However, we wish to praise and thank Thee especially for the great mercy which Thou hast shown to the poor on this occasion.

I am not better than my brethren; I have deserved a like punishment, but Thou hast mercifully spared me. Thou hast given me courage and comfort in the midst of trouble. Thou hast kept the fire from my dwelling; Thou hast left me and my loved ones, my goods and possessions, unscathed. Oh, how shall I sufficiently praise Thee for this? Thousand, thousand thanks be to Thee, my King, for Thy mercy! O that I had a thousand voices, A mouth

to speak with thousand tongues! My heart, which in the Lord rejoices, Then would proclaim in grateful songs To all, wherever I might be, What great things God hath done for me. But since my ability is too feeble and poor to thank Thee, O God, as the goodness and favor which Thou hast shown me require, accept my will for the deed and be pleased to accept my poor stammering.

Grant me at the same time ability and strength to consecrate my entire future life to Thee, and to make a thank-offering to Thee, that I may diligently shun sin, zealously strive after holiness, unwaveringly cling to Thee, and faithfully serve Thee until my blessed end. Thus show me Thy mercy for Jesus Christ's sake, and keep me in Thy grace, that I may enjoy it here in time and hereafter in eternity.

However, I commend to Thy special care those who have suffered by the conflagration which has now been extinguished. Raise them up with Thy divine consolations, and make them see Thy holy will. Give them patience in their affliction, and let them with true resignation cling to Thee and Thy grace. Restore to them by Thy blessing the losses which they have suffered, and give them the grace to perceive Thy fatherly love, goodness, and faithfulness towards them, and to praise and glorify Thee yonder without end.

Lord, our God, be gracious and merciful to us in the days to come. Take us into Thy sheltering protection day by day. Guard us against future danger by conflagration. Mercifully remember us at all times. Do good unto us in Thy good pleasure for Thy mercies' sake. Do good unto us till the end of

our days, and we shall offer Thee the fruit of our lips, as we are now doing, bending before Thee and saying :

Jehovah, let me now adore Thee, For where is there a God such, Lord, as Thou? With songs I fain would come before Thee; O let Thy Holy Spirit teach me now To praise Thee in His name, through whom alone Our songs can please Thee, through Thy blessed Son. O Father, draw me to my Savior, That Thy dear Son may draw me unto Thee; Thy Spirit guide my whole behavior And rule both sense and reason thus in me That, Lord, Thy peace I taste may ne'er depart, But wake sweet melodies within my heart. Amen.

HYMN.

Give to our God immortal praise!
 Mercy and truth are all His ways.
 Wonders of grace to God belong:
 Repeat His mercies in your song.

Give to the Lord of lords renown,
 The King of kings with glory crown,
 His mercies ever shall endure
 When lords and kings are known no more.

He built the earth, He spread the sky,
 And fixed the starry lights on high.
 Wonders of grace to God belong:
 Repeat His mercies in your song.

He fills the sun with morning light,
 He bids the moon direct the night;
 His mercies ever shall endure
 When suns and moons shall shine no more.

He sent His Son with power to save
 From guilt and darkness and the grave;
 Wonders of grace to God belong:
 Repeat His mercies in your song.

Through this vain world He guides our feet,
 And leads us 'to His heavenly seat.
 His mercies ever shall endure
 When this vain world shall be no more.

The Believing Christian Prays to God during a Long Period of Wet Weather.

EXHORTATION.

Behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die. *Gen. 6, 17.*

Thus God in olden times declared His mind to pious Noah, and revealed to him a severe judgment which He purposed to send upon the sinful world. In this way God taught him, in the first place, that the flood which was to come was caused by God alone and depended on His wisdom and power; for He said: "I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth."

He reveals to Noah, furthermore, that He intends to do this in anger on account of men's sins. Finally, God remarks that He intends to employ this flood for the punishment and destruction of sinners; for He says: "to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life, and everything that is in the earth shall die." All this happened as foretold. The Deluge came; the waters rose; all flesh perished; all that breathed and had not entered into the ark with Noah died.

This is to us a convincing proof both of God's truthfulness, according to which He fulfils most accurately all His predictions, His threats as well as His promises, and of His justice, according to which He bears indeed with the transgressions of men for a long time and overlooks them, but punishes them when they do not quit their sins and repent. And although God has promised that He will not again chastise the world with a universal flood and destroy men, although this fact is settled to all eternity, still, for the purpose of humbling and rousing sinful men to repentance, God at times sends floods, violent torrents of rain, and continuous wet weather, when the rain seems never to stop.

Now, when Christians observe these occurrences, they remember, first, that they come from God and are happening as part of His wise government. Accordingly, they commit themselves trustingly into His hand, in the firm confidence that God will do all things well.

In such visitations Christians reflect, furthermore, that God is angry with them because of their sins and disobedience. Accord-

ingly, they examine themselves and seek to know their evil ways and living, to feel sorry for it, and in genuine repentance, to seek grace and forgiveness for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Christians reflect on such occasions that they could easily tend to their ruin. They are not indifferent, but they revolve in their minds what God might do to them. This leads them to perceive readily that, if the wet season would be drawn out too long, the ground would become too soft, the fruits in the field would rot, vegetation would be destroyed, food would be lacking for men and beasts, want, famine, hunger, sickness, and ultimately, universal distress would arise. This drives them to God: they commit themselves into His hand; they cry to Him and call upon Him in their trouble; they beseech Him to avert the punishment with which they are threatened; they seek with childlike confidence the help and deliverance which they need in such days. If they do this, God will incline His heart to them again, and will become as gracious to them as He was angry before. He will have compassion on them and grant them fruitful seasons and fill their hearts with food and gladness.

PRAYER.

O God, glorious in power and majesty, Thou hast laid the foundations of the earth, and hast created all that lives and moves and has being. We see with our eyes that Thou rulest and orderest all things according to Thy pleasure. How soon Thou canst change the face of the earth! How soon Thou canst deprive it of its beauty and glory! How soon Thou canst withdraw from us the goods and blessings which Thou hadst but recently bestowed on us!

We experience this especially at this time, when Thou hast opened the windows of heaven and dost cause the rain to fall without ceasing. Everything is sad and gloomy; everything presents a disheartening appearance. The sun withhold its cheering light and warm rays. Our eyes and hearts feel oppressed because everywhere we behold dark and

heavy clouds. The earth is covered with water, grass and the fruits of the field are about to rot; the rivers are rising, and we are threatened with floods; the roads are becoming impassable, and make trade and commerce difficult; and who can tell what other damage and losses may still be caused by the calamity which has been visited upon us.

O Lord, Lord, look upon our distress, and in Thy mercy have compassion on us. Thou art now showing plainly that Thou art angry with us. And we know full well that we have roused Thy anger by our sins, our disobedience, our unfaithfulness, and our obstinacy. Indeed, we are sinners, great sinners, and utterly come short of Thy glory. We have sinned against Thee, and are not worthy to be called Thy children. We have deserved, fully deserved, that Thou shouldst withdraw Thy blessings from us and make us feel Thy displeasure instead. Accordingly, we confess our sins to Thee, and hide not our iniquity. We humble ourselves before Thee in true repentance, and pray Thee for mercy and grace.

Return to us with Thy mercy after Thou hast so keenly smitten and afflicted us. Remember us and bless us. Remember us for good. Remember that we are dust and ashes. Remember the perfect atonement of Jesus, and for His sake let mercy have sway over us instead of justice. Thou hast promised that while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, cold and heat, day and night shall not cease. Thou hast promised to satisfy the desire of every living thing on earth. Thou hast made the precious promise, no more to destroy the

earth and exterminate those that dwell on it by a flood. Remember this promise now, and fulfil it upon us, O God, plenteous in grace and truth. Shut the windows of heaven and command the rain to cease falling. Clear the murky sky, and cause the glorious sun to shine again, and dry and warm the moist earth. Give new life to the grass and all vegetation. Let everything grow again, and ripen fully, in order that in due season we may gather again with joy our needful supply of corn, wine, oil, and all that we need for our support. Grant us in future weather seasonable for our crops. Guard us against hailstorms and tempests. Give us the early and the latter rain in season, and let the cheering sun again refresh the earth now that Thou hast watered it, that grass may grow for the cattle and grain for the use of man.

However, let us also receive with gratitude the gifts which Thou hast so wonderfully preserved and so graciously bestowed on us, and let us nevermore forget what great things Thou hast done for us. Soften our hard hearts by the goodness and truth which Thou hast shown us, that we may sincerely mend our lives, shun all intentional sins, follow after godliness and righteousness, and until our end walk before Thee to Thy pleasing. At last receive us by Thy grace into Thy eternal, heavenly kingdom, after we have proved faithful. Then we shall render Thee more perfect thanks than we can show Thee in our present weakness for all the benefits which Thou hast conferred on us. Where sweetest hymns Thy saints forever raise Thee, we, too, shall praise Thee.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee, Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see, Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee, Perfect in power, in love, and purity. Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea; Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty! God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity! Amen.

HYMN.

Almighty Lord, before Thy throne
Thy mourning people bend;
'Tis on Thy grace in Christ alone
Our failing hopes depend.

Dark judgments, from Thy heavy hand,
Thy dreadful power display;
Yet mercy spares our guilty land,
And still we live to pray.

How changed, alas! are truths divine
For error, guilt, and shame!
What impious numbers, bold in sin,
Disgrace the Christian name!

O turn us, turn us, mighty Lord!
Convert us by Thy grace;
Then shall our hearts obey Thy Word,
And see again Thy face.

Then, should oppressing foes invade,
We will not yield to fear,
Secure of all-sufficient aid,
When God in Christ is near.

The Believing Christian Prays to God during Continuous Hot Weather and Drought.

EXHORTATION.

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. *Jas. 5, 17. 18.*

The real aim of the holy Apostle James in placing this example of the Prophet Elijah before us was not at all to teach us that it had been at the option and the power of this prophet to procure rain for the land or to withdraw it, but rather to show us that believing, sincere, and God-pleasing prayer has very great power and can accomplish very many things. By citing this instance, the Apostle wishes to confirm and render indubitable his previous statement: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

We gather three truths from the incident which he has cited. First, that God alone is the Dispenser of rain, that He alone has power to send us rain or to withhold it. It is reserved to His will alone to open the heavens or to keep them closed. Not only does this power belong to God, as the Lord of creation, the Creator, Preserver, and Sustainer of the world, who can do whatsoever He hath pleased, and has everything under His control, but it is also emphatically ascribed to Him alone in His holy Word. For thus the Prophet Jeremiah writes, chap. 14, 22: "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art not Thou He, O Lord, our God? Therefore we will wait upon Thee; for Thou hast made all these things." It is God, then, who causes the moistening and drying up of the earth, wet seasons and droughts. Therefore Elijah turns to Him in prayer. Accordingly, when we see what is happening on earth, we must at all times acknowledge and humbly reverence His hand and counsel in these things. A Christian, then, must not ascribe the coming of rain or its absence to nature or fate, but to the Lord of creation. He must recognize the operation and government of God in this matter, and entirely submit to it.

The other truth is this: It is a great mercy of God when He sends rain in due season; but when He withholds it, that is a severe punishment. Elijah's prayer to God relates to both these acts. At first he prayed for the cessation of rain, in order that the people might be punished for their sins. Afterwards He prayed God to remove the punishment, to change His wrath into mercy, and to refresh the parched land again with rain. And, indeed, it is a great mercy of God when He sends rain. The soil is made soft by it, and fit to produce fruit. The seeds lying in the earth are prepared for germination and made to sprout. Fields and forests are invigorated. Men and beasts are refreshed. All nature

becomes animated, and is preserved in its glory. Hence, who would not acknowledge that rain is a true blessing which God by His grace bestows upon men? For this reason God even promises this blessing especially to men when they walk in His ways and observe His commandments to do them. For He says expressly, Deut. 11, 13—15: "It shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord, your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle that thou mayest eat and be full." However, as it is a great mercy of God when He sends the needed rain for a land, so it is, on the other hand, a grievous and severe punishment when He withholds rain, and smites a land with drought and a season of hot weather. God permits this punishment to overtake men when they sin against Him, and do not walk in His commandments. This punishment is as just as it is severe and sharp. For how wretched and pitiable everything looks when the rain fails, and heat and drought become oppressive! The earth cracks, and has no power to produce its plants. The meadows become like deserts; the trees decay; the fruits drop; the cattle thirst; men languish. Famine, want, sicknesses, and pests easily arise; in the midst of summer the entire land looks as if it had been robed in a shroud. What a melancholy sight! What a keenly felt punishment! When we behold and feel it, we must not remain indifferent, but rather commune with our own heart, acknowledge our transgressions, with a humble and penitent heart seek reconciliation with God through Christ Jesus, and in a contrite spirit call upon Him for lightening to us His just punishment and for turning it away altogether.

The third truth is this: Sincere and God-pleasing prayer is the surest means of obtaining from God every blessing, also this favor, that He removes our punishment and refreshes and saturates the parched land with a blessed rain. The example of Elijah shows this. He was indeed a prophet of the Lord, but in other respects a man, a sinful mortal, a powerless and feeble man, as we are. He prayed, and God granted his request. He prayed in accordance with God's will and good pleasure, and was heard. We can obtain the like good fortune. We can have the same blessing; for with

God there is no respect of persons. Whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted with Him. Whoever asks anything according to His will is heard. Accordingly, when Christians see that God has extended His hand to punish them, when they see that He withholds rain from them and visits them with a hot season and drought, they must have recourse to prayer, and offer their prayer in such a manner that it must come before God and be a sweet savor to Him. They must pray, sincerely acknowledging their sins, seeking forgiveness of them by faith in Christ Jesus, banishing even the least doubt from their hearts while they pray, and never becoming slack, but persevere in prayer, until the desired help has been vouchsafed them. Then they may rest assured that God will hear them and give them the desire of their heart. Then they will soon behold the fulfilment of their request; for the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He will also hear their cry and save them.

PRAYER.

O Lord, our God, Thou art gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth. Help us now in the great distress in which we come before Thee to implore Thy mercy. Help us in this great affliction which has befallen us. Help us and graciously deliver us from it. Thou hast threatened Thy people aforetime that, if they would not obey Thy voice and not live according to Thy commandments and statutes, Thou wouldst make the heavens above them brass and the earth beneath their feet iron, give them dust and ashes instead of rain for their land, and punish them even to the point of destroying them from the earth. Thou art now beginning to fulfil this just and terrible threat also upon us. For some time Thou hast visited us with continuous hot weather and a drought that withers everything. For quite a while Thou hast really shut up the heavens

against us and commanded the clouds either to fly past us or to give us no rain. It seems indeed as if the heaven above us had become brass and the earth beneath us iron. How sad and pitiable everything looks in fields and meadow, on the mountains and in the valleys, in the fruit-gardens and vineyards, yea, everywhere! The earth gapes and groans to be refreshed. Men and beasts pant from the great heat; the trees are drying up; the grass is withering; nowhere the fruits are able to thrive and mature. The cattle lack fodder, and our rivers, brooks, and wells must finally become dry, and we shall have to suffer a water-famine. What sad consequences may not rise from this condition!

O Lord, Lord, behold our distress and make an end of it. We must indeed acknowledge before Thy holy countenance that we have fully merited such grievous punishments with our persistent disobedience toward Thy commandments, with our base ingratitude for Thy many blessings, and with our appalling misuse of the bounties which Thou hast bestowed upon us. Yea, we are forced to confess that Thou wouldst do us no wrong at all if Thou wouldst afflict us with much more grievous punishments for our manifold transgressions. But, O Father of mercy, behold, we prostrate ourselves before Thee crushed and humbled, and pray Thee to forgive our grievous sins and to turn Thy gracious countenance to us again. Have compassion on us, and at last turn this severe affliction from us. It is Thou that doest so much good unto men, that givest us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and fillest our hearts with food and gladness. Thou waterest the hills from Thy chambers; the earth is satisfied

with the fruit of Thy works. Thou causest grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, that Thou mayest bring forth food out of the earth. Therefore the eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Remember us now for Thy name's sake, and refresh us with a fructifying and penetrating rain. O Thou almighty Creator and Preserver of all things, open the windows of heaven, visit the earth again that is panting for Thy bounty; water it that the fruits in our farms, orchards, and vineyards may ripen; that the plants in the fields may grow, and grass come up in our meadows, so that men and beasts everywhere may again find their food and sustenance.

O God, though we have hitherto been disobedient children, nevertheless we are Thy children, reconciled to Thee by Christ. Therefore we humbly call upon Thee for His sake, graciously to hear our sighings and supplications in this our urgent and persistent need. Gladden every living thing with water from above. Protect our country and our homes also in the future from contagious diseases, famine, and other merited chastisements. Let the punishments which we have now experienced serve for our improvement and our sincere conversion to Thee. To that end let Thy Spirit enter our hearts and make us entirely different people — people who faithfully walk in Thy ways, and observe Thy commandments to do them. Sanctify us wholly through Him, that our whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, our God, we hope in Thy goodness; let us live before Thee and spread abroad Thy praise. Hear our prayer, and we shall be

heartily thankful for Thy mercy, and shall highly exalt Thy name as long as we live, here in time and hereafter in eternity. Hear us, dear Father in heaven; for Thou only art our God. Hear us according to Thy faithfulness which has no end, and according to which Thou hast promised us succor and help in every trouble. Hear us for Thine own sake.

Abide with Thy protection Among us, Lord, our Strength,
Lest world and Satan fell us, And overcome at length. Abide,
O faithful Savior, Among us with Thy love, Grant steadfastness,
and help us To reach our home above. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

If any be distressed, and fain would gather
Some comfort, let him haste unto
Our Father;
For we of hope and help are quite bereaven,
Except Thou succor us
Who art in heaven.
Thou showest mercy, therefore for the same
We praise Thee, singing.
Hallowed be Thy name.
Of all our miseries cast up the sum;
Show us Thy joys, and let
Thy kingdom come.
We mortal are, and alter from our birth;
Thou constant art,
Thy will be done on earth.
Thou madest the earth, as well as planets seven;
Thy name is blessed here
As 'tis in heaven.
Nothing we have to use our debts to pay,
Except Thou give it us:
Give us this day
Wherewith to clothe us, wherewith to be fed
For without Thee we want
Our daily bread.

We want, but want no faults, for no day passes
But we do sin —

 Forgive us our trespasses.

No man from sinning ever free did live;

Forgive us, Lord, our sins,

 As we forgive.

If we repent our faults, Thou ne'er disdain'st us;

We pardon them

 That trespass against us;

Forgive us that is past, a new path tread us.

Direct us always in Thy faith,

 And lead us —

Us, Thine own people and Thy chosen nation —

Into all truth, but

 Not into temptation.

Thou that of all good graces art the Giver,

Suffer us not to wander,

 But deliver

Us from the fierce assaults of world and devil,

And flesh, so shalt Thou free us

 From all evil.

To these petitions let both church and laymen,

With one consent of heart and voice, say Amen.

