

Prayers

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Anglican · Post-Reformation · Exegesis

STROMATA 90

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INTRODUCTION

Composed by one of the great Caroline divines and a chaplain to Charles I, these prayers belong to the same devotional impulse that produced *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*, works that shaped Anglican piety for two centuries after their author's death in 1667. The morning and evening offices gathered here carry the cadences of the Book of Common Prayer but turn inward, toward the examined conscience and the ordinary hazards of a day. Taylor writes in the long, balanced periods of seventeenth-century English prose, and the petitions move by accumulation rather than argument. Read slowly: these are prayers meant to be prayed, not surveyed.

A Short Prayer to be Said every Morning.

O Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of mercy and comfort, with reverence and fear, with humble confidence and strong desires, I approach to the Throne of Grace, begging of thee mercy and protection, pardon and salvation. O my God, I am a sinner, but sorrowful and repenting: Thou art justly offended at me, but yet thou art my Lord and my Father, merciful and gracious: Be pleased to blot all my sins out of thy remembrance, and heal my soul, that I may never any more sin against thee. Lord open my eyes, that I may see my own infirmities, and watch against them; and my own follies, that I may amend them: and be pleased to give me perfect understanding in the way of godliness, that I may walk in it all the dayes of my pilgrimage. Give me a spirit diligent in the works of my Calling, chearful and zealous in Religion, fervent and frequent in my Prayers, charitable and useful in my conversation: Give me a healthful and a chaste body, a pure and a holy soul, a sanctified and an humble spirit; and let my body and soul and spirit be preserved unblameable to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

II. Blessed be thy Name, O God, and blessed be thy Mercies, who hast preserved me this night from sin and sorrow, from bad chances, and a violent death, from the malice of the Devil, and the evil effects of my own corrupted nature and infirmity. The out-goings of the Morning and Evening shall praise thee, and thy servants shall rejoyce in giving thee praise for the operation of thy hands. Let thy providence and care watch over me this day, and all my whole life, that I may never sin against thee by idleness or folly, by evil company or private sins, by word or deed, by thought or desire; and let the employment

of my day leave no sorrow, or the remembrance of an evil conscience at night: but let it be holy and profitable, blessed, and alwayes innocent; that when the dayes of my short abode are done, and the shadow is departed, I may die in thy fear and favour, and rest in a holy hope, and at last return to the joyes of a blessed Resurrection, through Jesus Christ: In whose Name, and in whose words, in behalf of my self and all my friends, and all thy servants, I humbly and heartily pray, Our Father. &c.

A Prayer for the Evening.

Eternall God, Almighty Father of Men and Angels, by whose care and providence I am preserved and blessed, comforted and assisted, I humbly beg of thee to pardon the sins and follies of this day, the weaknesses of my services, and the strength of my passions, the rashness of my words, and the vanity and evil of my actions. O just and dear God, how long shall I confess my sins, and pray against them, and yet fall under them! O let it be so no more, let me never return to the follies of which I am ashamed, which bring sorrow, and death, and thy displeasure, worse then death. Give me a command over my evil inclinations, and a perfect hatred of sin, and a love to thee above all the desires of this world. Be pleased to bless and preserve me this night from all sin, and all violence of Chance, and the malice of the Spirits of darkness: watch over me in my sleep, and whether sleep or wake, let me be thy servant. Be thou first and last in all my thoughts, and the guide and continual assistance of all my actions: Preserve my body, pardon the sin of my soul, and sanctifie my soul; let me alwayes live holily, and justly, and soberly; and when I die, receive my soul into thy hands, O holy and ever Blessed Jesus, that I may lie in thy bosome, and long for thy coming, and hear thy blessed Sentence at Doomsday, and behold thy face, and live in thy Kingdome, singing praises to God for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Father, &c.

For SUNDAY. A Prayer against Pride.

I. O Eternal God, merciful and glorious, thou art exalted far above all heavens, thy Throne, O God, is glory, and thy Scepter is righteousness, thy Will is holiness, and thy Wisdome the great foundation of Empire and Government: I adore thy Majesty, and rejoyce in thy Mercy, and revere thy Power, and confess all glory, and dignity and honour to be thine alone, and theirs to whom thou shalt impart any ray of thy Majesty, or reflexion of thy honour; but as for me, I am a worm and no man, vile dust and ashes, the son of corruption, and the heir of rottenness, seized upon by folly, a lump of ignorance and sin, and shame and death. What art thou O Lord? the great God of Heaven and Earth, the fountain of Holiness, and Perfection infinite. But what am I? so ignorant, that I know not what; so poor, that I have nothing of my own; so miserable, that I am the heir of sorrow and death; and so sinful, that I am encompassed with shame and grief.

II. And yet, O my God, I am proud: proud of my shame, glorying in my sin, boasting my infirmities; for this is all that I have of my own, save onely that I have multiplied my miseries by vile actions, every day dishonouring the work of my hands: my understanding is too content, my affections rebellious, my will refractory and disobedient; and yet I know thou resistest the proud, and didst cast the Morning

Stars, the Angels, from heaven into chains of darkness, when they grew giddy and proud, walking upon the battlements of heaven, beholding the glorious Regions that were above them.

III. Thou, O God, who givest grace to the humble, do something also for the proud man; make me humble and obedient. Take from me the spirit of pride and haughtiness, ambition and self-flattery, confidence and gayety: teach me to think well, and to expound all things fairly of my brother, to love his worthiness to delight in his praises, to excuse his errors, to give thee thanks for his grace to rejoyce in all the good that he receives and ever to believe and speak better things of him than of my self.

IV. O Teach me to love to be concealed and little esteemed; let me be truly humbled, and heartily ashamed of my sin and folly: teach me to bear reproaches evenly, for I have deserved them; to refuse all honours done unto me, because have not deserved them; to return all to thee, for it is thine alone; to suffer reproof thankfully, to amend all my faults speedily; and do thou invest my soul with the humble robe of my meek Master and Saviour Jesus; and when I have humbly, patiently, charitably and diligently served thee, change this robe into the shining garment of immortality, my confusion into glory, my folly to perfect knowledge, my weaknesses and dishonours to the strength and beauties of the Sons of God.

V. IN the mean time use what means thou pleasest to conform me to the image of thy holy Son; that I may be gentle to others, and severe to my self: that I may sit down in the lowest place; striving to go before my brother in nothing, but in doing him and thee honour; staying for my glory till thou shalt please in the day of recompences to reflect light from thy face, and admit me to behold thy glories. Grant this for Jesus Christs sake, who humbled himself to the death and shame of the Cross, and is now exalted unto glory: Unto him, with thee O Father, be glory and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

For MUNDAY. A Prayer against Covetousness.

I. O Almighty God, eternal Treasure of all good things, thou fillest all things with plenteousness; Thou clothest the lillies of the field, and feedest the young ravens that call upon thee: Thou art all-sufficient in thy self, and all-sufficient to us, let thy Providence be my store-house, thy dispensation of temporal things the limit of my labour, my own necessity the measures of my desire: but never let my desires of this world be greedy, nor my labour immoderate, nor my care vexatious, and distracting, but prudent, moderate, holy, subordinate to thy Will, the measure thou hast appointed for me.

II. Teach me, O God, to despise the world, to labour for the true riches, to seek the Kingdome of heaven and its righteousness, to be content with what thou providest, to be in this world like a stranger, with affections set upon heaven, labouring for, and longing after the possessions of thy Kingdome; but never suffer my affection to dwell below, but give me a heart compassionate to the poor, liberal to the needy, open and free in all my communications, without base ends, or greedy designs, or unworthy sorts of gain; but let my strife be to gain thy favour, to obtain the blessedness of doing good to others, and giving to them that want, and the blessedness of receiving from thee pardon and support, grace and holiness perseverance and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For TUESDAY. A Prayer against Lust.

I. O Eternal Purity, thou art brighter then the Sun, purer then the Angels, and the Heavens are not clean in thy sight, with mercy behold thy servant apt to be tempted with every object, and to be overcome by every enemy. I cannot, O God, stand in the day of battel and danger, unless thou coverest me with thy shield, and hidest me under thy wings. The fiery darts of the Devil are ready to consume me, unless the dew of thy grace for ever descend upon me. Thou didst make me after thy image: be pleased to preserve me so, pure and spotless, chaste and clean; that my body may be a holy Temple, and my soul a sanctuary to entertain thy divinest Spirit, the Spirit of love and holiness, the Prince of Purities.

II. Reprove in me the spirit of Fornication and Uncleaness, and fill my soul with holy fires, that no strange fire may come into the Temple of my body, where thou hast chosen to dwell. O cast out all those unclean spirits which have unhallowed the place where thy holy feet have trod: Pardon all my hurtfull thoughts, all my impurities, that I who am a member of Christ, may not become the member of a harlot, nor the slave of the Devil, nor a servant of lust and unworthy desires: But do thou purifie my love, and let me seek the things that are above, hating the garments spotted with the flesh; never any more grieving thy holy spirit by filthy inclinations, with impure and phantastick thoughts; but let my thoughts be holy, my soul pure, my body chaste and healthful my spirit severe, devout and religious, every day more and more; that at the day of our appearing, I may be presented to God washed and cleansed, pure and spotless by the blood of the holy Lamb, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For WEDNESDAY. A Prayer against Gluttony and Drunkenness.

I. O Almighty Father of Men and Angels, who hast of thy great bounty provided plentifully for all mankinde to support his state, to relieve his necessities, to refresh his sorrows, to recreate his labours; that he may praise thee, and rejoyce in thy mercies and bounty: Be thou gracious unto thy servant yet more, and suffer me not by my folly to change thy bounty into sin, thy grace into wantonness. Give me the spirit of temperance and sobriety, that I may use thy creatures in the same measures, and to the same purposes which thou hast designed, so as may best enable me to serve thee, but not to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof: Let me not, as Esau, prefer meat before a blessing; but subdue my appetite, subjecting it to reason and the grace of God, being content with what is moderate, and useful, and easie to be obtained; taking it in due time, receiving it thankfully, making it to minister to my body, that my body may be a good instrument of the soul, and the soul a servant of thy Divine Majesty for ever and ever.

II. Pardon, O God, in whatsoever I have offended thee by meat and drink and pleasures; and never let my body any more be oppressed with loads of sloth and delicacies, or my soul drowned in seas of wine or strong drink; but let my appetites be changed into spiritual desires, that I may hunger after the food of Angels, and thirst for the wine of elect souls, and may account it meat and drink and pleasure to do thy will, O God. Lord let me eat and drink so, that my food may not become a temptation, or a sin, or a disease; but grant that with so much caution and prudence I may watch over my appetite, that I may in the strength of thy mercies, and refreshments, in the light of thy countenance, and in the paths of thy Commandments, walk before thee all the dayes of my life acceptable to thee in Jesus Christ, ever advancing his honour, and being filled with his Spirit, that I may at last partake of his glory, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For THURSDAY. A Prayer against Envy.

I. O Most gracious Father, thou Spring of an Eternal Charity, who hast so loved mankinde, that thou didst open thy bosome, and send thy holy Son to convey thy mercies to us; and thou didst create Angels and Men, that thou mightest have objects to whom thou mightest communicate thy goodness: Give me grace to follow so glorious a precedent that I may never envy the prosperity of any one, but rejoyce to honour him whom thou honourest, to love him whom thou lovest, to commend the vertuous, to discern the precious from the vile, giving honour to whom honour belongs, that I may go to heaven in the noblest way of rejoycing in the good of others.

II. O Dear God, never suffer the Devil to rub his vilest Leprosie of Envy upon me; never let me have the affections of the desperate and damned; let it not be ill with me, when it is well with others, but let thy holy Spirit so over-rule me for ever, that I may pity the afflicted, and be compassionate, and have a fellow-feeling of my brothers sorrows, and that I may as much as I can promote his good, and give thee thanks for it, and rejoyce with them that do rejoyce; never censuring his actions curstly, nor detracting from his praises spitefully, nor upbraiding his infelicities maliciously, but pleased in all things which thou doest or givest, that I may then triumph in spirit, when thy Kingdome is advanced, when thy Spirit rules, when thy Church is profited, when thy Saints rejoyce, when the devils interest is destroyed, truly lovieg thee, and truly loving my brother; that we may all together joyn in the holy Communion of Saints, both here and hereafter, in the measures of grace and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For FRIDAY. A Prayer against Wrath and inordinate Anger.

I. O Almighty Judge of Men and Angels, whose anger is alwayes the minister of Justice, slow, but severe, not lightly arising, but falling heavily when it comes: Give to thy servant a meek and a gentle spirit, that I also may be slow to anger, and easie to mercy and forgiveness. Give me a wise and a constant heart, that I may not be moved with every trifling mistake, and inconsiderable accident in the conversation and entercourse of others; never be moved to an intemperate anger for any injury that is done or offered; let my anger ever be upon a just cause, measured with moderation and reason, expressed with charity and prudence, lasting but till it hath done some good, either upon my self or others.

II. Lord let me be ever courteous, and easie to be intreated; never let me fall into a peevish or contentious spirit, but follow peace with all men, offering forgiveness, inviting them by courtesies, ready to confess my own errors, apt to make amends, and desirous to be reconciled. Let no sickness, or cross accident, no imployment or weariness, make me angry or ungentle, and discontent, or unthankful, or uneasie to them that minister to me; but in all things make me like unto the holy Jesus. Give me the spirit of a Christian, charitable, humble, merciful and meek, useful and liberal, complying with every chance; angry at nothing but my own sins, and grieving for the sins of others; that while my passion obeys my reason, and my reason is religious, and my religion is pure and undefiled, managed with humility, and adorned with charity, I may escape thy anger which I have deserved, and may dwell in thy love, and be thy Son and Servant for ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For SATURDAY. A Prayer against weakness in well-doing.

I. O My God, merciful and gracious, my soul groans under the loads of its own infirmity, when my spirit is willing, my flesh is weak; my understanding foolish and imperfect, my will peevish and listless, my affections wandring after strange objects, my fancy wilde and unfixed, all my senses minister to folly and vanity; and though they were all made for Religion, yet they least of all delight in that. O my God pity me, and hear me when I pray, and make that I may pray acceptably. Give me a love to Religion, an unwearied spirit in the things of God. Let me not relish or delight in the things of the world, in sensual objects, and transitory possessions; but make my eyes look up to thee, my soul be filled with thee, my

spirit ravished with thy love, my understanding employed in the meditation of thy Law, all my powers and faculties of soul and body wholly serving thee, and delighting in such holy ministeries.

II. O Most gracious God, what greater favour is there then that I may, and what easier employment can there be then to pray thee, to be admitted into thy presence, and to represent our needs, and that we have our needs supplied onely for asking and desiring passionately and humbly. But we rather quit our hopes of heaven, then buy it at the cheapest rate of humble prayer. This, O God, is the greatest infirmity and infelicity of man, and hath an intolerable cause, and is an unsufferable evil.

III. O Relieve my spirit with thy graciousness, take from me all tediousness of spirit, and give me a laboriousness that will not be tired, a hope that shall never fail a desire of holiness not to be satisfied till it possesses, a charity that will alwayes increase; that I making Religion the business of my whole life, may turn all things into Religion, doing all to thy glory, and by the measures of thy Word and of thy Spirit, that when thou shalt call me from this deliciousness of employment, and the holy ministeries of grace, I may pass into the employment of Saints and Angels, whose work it is with eternal joy and thanksgiving to sing praises to the mercies of the great Redeemer of Men, and Saviour of Men and Angels, Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and worship, all service and thanks, all Glory and Dominon for ever and ever. Amen.

#A Prayer to be said by a Maiden, before she enters into the state of Marriage.

I. O Most glorious God, and my most indulgent Lord and gracious Father, who doest bless us by thy bounty, pardon us by thy mercy, support and guide us by thy grace, and govern us sweetly by thy providence; I give thee most humble and hearty thanks, that thou hast hitherto preserved me in my Virgin state with innocence and chastity in a good name, and a modest report. It is thy goodness alone, and the blessed emanation of thy holy Spirit, by which I have been preserved, and to thee I return all praise and thanks, and adore and love thy goodness infinite.

II. And now, O Lord, since by thy dispensation and over-ruling providence I am to change my condition, and enter into the holy state of Marriage, which thou hast sanctified by thy Institution, and blessed by thy Word and Promises, and raised up to an excellent mystery, that it might represent the Union of Christ and his Church: Be pleased to go along with thy servant in my entring into, and passing through this state, that it may not be a state of temptation or sorrow, by occasion of my sins or infirmities, but of holiness and comfort, as thou hast intended it to all that love and fear thy holy Name.

III. Lord bless and preserve that dear person whom thou hast chosen to be my Husband; Let his life be long and blessed, comfortable and holy, and let me also become a great blessing and comfort unto him; a sharer in all his joyes, a refreshment in all his sorrows, a meet helper for him in all accidents and chances of the world. Make me amiable for ever in his eyes, and very dear to him. Unite his heart to me in the dearest union of love and holiness; and mine to him in all sweetness, and charity, and compliance. Keep from me all morosity and ungentleness, all fullness and harshness of disposition, all pride and vanity, all discontentedness and unreasonableness of passion and humour: and make me humble and obedient, charitable and loving, patient and contented, useful and observant, that we may

delight in each other according to thy blessed Word and Ordinance, and both of us may rejoyce in thee, having our portion in the love and service of God for ever and ever.

IV. O Blessed Father, never suffer any mistakes or discontent, any distrustfulness or sorrow, any trifling arrests of fancy, or unhandsome accident to cause any unkindness between us: but let us so dearly love, so affectionately observe, so religiously attend to each others good and content, that we may always please thee, and by this learn and practise our duty and greatest love to thee, and become mutual helps to each other in the way of godliness; that when we have received the blessings of a married life, the comforts of society, the endearments of a holy and great affection, and the dowry of blessed children, we may for ever dwell together in the embraces of thy love and glories, feasting in the Marriage-supper of the Lamb to eternal ages, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen.

A Prayer for a holy and happy Death.

O eternal and holy Jesus, who by death hast overcome death, and by thy Passion hast taken out its sting, and made it to become one of the gates of heaven, and an entrance to felicity; have mercy upon me now and at the hour of my death; let thy grace accompany me all the dayes of my life, that I may by a holy conversation, and an habitual performance of my duty, wait for the coming of our Lord, and be ready to enter with thee at whatsoever hour thou shalt come. Lord let not my death be in any sense unprovided, nor untimely, nor hasty, but after the manner of men, having in it nothing extraordinary, but an extraordinary piety, and the manifestation of a great and miraculous mercy. Let my senses and my understanding be preserved intire till the last of my dayes, and grant that I may die the death of the righteous, free from debt and deadly sin, having first discharged all my obligations of Justice, leaving none miserable and unprovided in my departure; but be thou the portion of all my friends and relatives, and let thy blessing descend upon their heads, and abide there till they shall meet me in the bosome of our Lord. Preserve me ever in the communion and peace of the Church; and bless my Death-bed with the opportunity of a holy and a spiritual Guide, with the assistance and guard of Angels, with the reception of the holy Sacrament, with patience and dereliction of my own desires, with a strong faith, and a firm and humbled hope, with just measures of repentance, and great treasures of charity to thee my God, and to all the world, that my soul in the arms of the holy Jesus, may be deposited with safety and joy, there to expect the revelation of thy day, and then to partake the glories of thy Kingdome, O eternal and holy Jesus. Amen.

Source: The Golden Grove, Jeremy Taylor. London: Printed by J.F. for R. Royston at the Angel in Ivie-lane, 1655. Text sourced from Project Canterbury (anglicanhistory.org).

Transcribed from the 1655 first edition by Project Canterbury (Anglican History Project, anglicanhistory.org). Taylor composed The Golden Grove during his years of enforced exile in Wales under the Interregnum, when Anglican worship had been suppressed and he was living under the protection of Richard Vaughan, Earl of Carbery, at the estate from which the book takes its name. The text is in the public domain; Taylor died in 1667. No translator is involved; this is Taylor's own English.

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