
Dr. BUTLER'S
Fast-Sermon
BEFORE THE
LORD-MAYOR:

April 4. 1701.

Abney Mayor.

*Jovis Decimo Die Aprilis, 1701.
Annoq; Regni Regis Willielmi
tertij Angliæ, &c. decimo tertio.*

U*Pon the Motion of Sir Thomas Raw-
linson, Knt. and Alderman, This
Court doth desire Dr. Butler to
Print his Sermon preached at the Ca-
thedral Church of St. Paul, London;
before the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and
Citizens of this City, on Friday the
Fourth Instant.*

Ashurst.

A
SERMON

Preached before the

607. 2/6
48

Lord Mayor

AND

COURT of ALDERMEN.

AT THE

Cathedral Church of St. Paul:

On Friday the Fourth of April, 1701.

Being the FAST-DAY appointed by *Proclamation*,
to be Observed in a most Solemn and Devout
Manner for the Imploring a Blessing from Almighty
God, upon the *Consultations* of this Present Par-
liament, and for the *Preservation* of the Protestant
Religion and the *Publick Peace*.

By LILLY BUTLER, D. D.
Minister of St. Mary Aldermanbury.

L O N D O N,

Printed for Brab. Aylmer, at the Three Pidgeons over
against the Royal-Exchange in Cornhill. 1701.

A

SERMON.

HOSEA X. 12.

*It is time to seek the Lord, 'till he
come and rain Righteousness upon
you.*

THE Prophet having described the Sinful and Dangerous State of the People of *Israel*, the Kinds and Aggravations of their Sins, and the Variety and Terribleness of those Judgments he had Commission from God to threaten them with, directs them to the Speedy Performance of a most Seasonable Duty, whereby they might yet prevail with God to *Return and Repent*, and to send down *Showers of Blessing* upon them, in the Words of the *Text*, *It is time to seek the Lord, 'till he come and rain Righteousness upon you.*

For:

For the better Understanding of these Words I shall shew,

First, What it is to Seek the Lord.

Secondly, What is meant by his Coming, and raining Righteousness upon them.

First, To seek the Lord, doth often signifie in General, to apply our selves to the Worship of the True God, but more particularly, to Address our selves to him by Prayer and Supplication, for his Favour, Protection and Blessing: To seek to his Mercy for Pardon, to his Wisdom for Counsel and Direction, and to his Power for Preservation and Deliverance. *The Inhabitants of one City (saith the Lord) shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts, Zeck. 8. 21.* And we read, that *Jehosaphat set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah, and Judah gathered themselves to ask help of the Lord; even out of all the Cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord, 2 Chron. 20. 3, 4.* The Duty of the Text then is the same with that, which we are this Day assembled together for.

Secondly, God is said to come and return to his People, when he is reconciled to them, and takes them under the Special Care of his Providence. And his *raining Righteousness* may signifie, his pouring such Measures of his Grace upon them, as may make true Righteousness to flourish and abound amongst them; or by *Righteousness* we may understand all
the

the happy Effects of Righteousness, or those Blessings which God hath promised to, and being righteous and faithful, ~~and~~ will therefore bestow in a plenteous Measure upon those that seek him. Having thus Explained the Words of the *Text*, I purpose to proceed in this Method, to shew

First, That this *Seeking the Lord* is the most proper and likely Means for the Obtaining the Favour of God, and those Publick Blessings we are solicitous for.

Secondly, That *It is time* for us thus *To seek the Lord*. And,

Thirdly, How we should *Seek the Lord*, and pray to him, that we may effectually obtain his Favour and Blessing, that he may *Come and rain Righteousness upon us*.

First, I shall shew, that this *Seeking the Lord* is a most likely Means for the obtaining the Favour of God, and those Publick Blessings we are solicitous for. And this will appear if we Consider,

First, That this is a Means which God himself hath prescribed for this purpose, and promised Success to. He hath promised all manner of Blessings to the Prayers of his People, Pardon and Peace, Wisdom and Counsel, Assistance and Protection, Deliverance and Prosperity. Our *Prophet Chap. 14. v. 2.* exhorts the People who had *Fallen by their Iniquities*, to take with them Words, and to say unto the Lord, *Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciously.* And afterwards we read these Words of the Lord
him.

4 *A Fast-Sermon Preached before the*

himself, v. 4. *I will heal their Backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine Anger is turned away from him.* And thus saith he to the Captives of Judah, *Jer. 29. 12, 13, 14. Ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you, and ye shall seek me and find me. And I will turn away your Captivity.* And when *A Day of Darkness and Gloominess, a Day of Clouds and thick Darkness,* as the Prophet describeth it, was coming upon them. *Joel 2. 2.* He gives them this Advice, *Sanctifie a Fast and call a solemn Assembly of all the People. Let the Priests, the Ministers of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them say, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thine Heritage to reproach. V. 15, 16, 17.* Then, saith the Prophet, v. 18. *will the Lord be jealous for his Land and pity his People.* And v. 21. *Fear not, O Land, be glad and rejoyce; for the Lord will do great things.* And for the encouraging our Hope in such Ancient Promises of God to the Prayers of his People, let us consider what the Psalmist tells us, *Psal. 102. 17, 18. He will regard the Prayer of the destitute, and not despise their Prayer. This shall be written for the Generation to come; and the People which shall be created, shall praise the Lord; that is, because he will also hear their Cry and help them.*

Secondly, Let us consider also, that we have many Instances of all sorts of Blessings obtained by this means. By this *Solomon* obtained the greatest Wisdom, for the Well-governing of his People, and *David* prevailed with God to Turn the Counsel of *Achitophel* into Foolishness. By this *Asa* discomfited the greatest Army of the *Ethiopians*. And when *Jehosaphat* and
his

Lord Mayor, April 4. 1701. 5

his People were so beset with Enemies, that they knew not what to do, by Fasting and Prayer they obtained this Gracious Answer from God, 2 Chron. 20. 17. *Ye shall not need to fight in this Battel, set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the Salvation of God with you, O Judah and Jerusalem.* And we have it often repeated in the 107th. Psalm, that when the People of Israel cried unto the Lord in their trouble, he delivered them out of their distress. And we know that he is *The Lord who changeth not; He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; his Hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his Ear heavy that it cannot hear.* We have also a more prevailing Name to offer our Prayers in than the Jews then had, the Name of *Jesus Christ.* For *Hitherto they had asked nothing in his Name.* We have now *Such an High Priest who is set on the Right Hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the Heavens, whom he Doth always hear; who hath a tender Care of his Church, it being the Purchase of his own Blood; who presents the Prayers of his People, and in Virtue of that Meritorious Oblation of himself, is Making continual Intercession for them.* And therefore we may reasonably hope for as favourable a Reception at the Throne of Grace as ever the Jews had, and by our Prayers to obtain Mercy, and to find help in the time of Need. I proceed now,

Secondly, To shew, that *It is time for us to seek the Lord,* and to exercise our selves in offering up our Prayers and Supplications to him. This may signify,

First,

First, That this is a most seasonable Duty.

Secondly, That there is yet Time and Opportunity for it. And,

Thirdly, That there is great Danger in Delaying and Putting it off to another time. In all these Senses I shall shew, that *It is high-time for us to seek the Lord.*

First, This is a most seasonable Duty, such as there is great Occasion for at this time. It is indeed a seasonable Duty at all times; but there are some Circumstances, which increase the Necessity of it, and our Obligations to it, and make our Neglect of it more inexcusable. As,

First, When the Sins of a Nation are grown to a great height; when their Transgressions are multiplied, and their Back slidings are increased; when they have Hardened their Necks, and do worse than their Fathers: Then surely it is high-time for them To turn unto the Lord, and say unto him, take away all our Iniquities. And how manifestly is this our Case at this time? How justly may we apply to our selves the Character given of the Jews? Isa. 1. 4, 21. *A sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a seed of Evil Doers, Children that are Corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they are gone away backward. Every Man loveth Gifts, and followeth after Rewards.* We have been acknowledging our sinful State, and therefore I hope we are truly sensible of it. How needful and seasonable then is it, that we endeavour by our Prayers to out-cry our Sins, to implore the Pardon and

Lord Mayor, April 4. 1701. 7

and Mercy of our offended God, to beseech him *Not to deal with us according to our Sins, or reward us after our Iniquities*; that we may not suffer under the like Sentence with that, which was executed upon the *Jews*, whom we resemble so much in the Kind and Greatness of their Provocations, *Isa. i. 7. Your Country is desolate, your Cities are burnt with fire, your Land Strangers devour it in your presence. How needful is it, that we should pray heartily to God, To give us true Repentance, to forgive us all our sins, and to endue us with the Grace of his Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives according to his Holy Word? That he would make our Magistrates a Terrour to Evil Doers, and a Praise to them that do well; That he would bless all Pious Endeavours for a Publick Reformation, that we may remember from whence we are fallen, and do our first Works, that so Iniquity may not be our Ruin.*

Secondly, When God's Hand visibly appears to be stretched out against us, when he is shaking his Rod over us, and seems to be weary of forbearing, then certainly it is high time to meet our God, to fall down and kneel before him, and to beg his Pardon and Mercy. God doth now seem to repent of that little Calm he hath lately given us. The Clouds look dark about us, the Winds begin to rise again, and the Seas to rage and swell against us, it is time therefore for every one of us to arise, and call upon our God, and say unto him, *Lord save or we perish.* For the Hand of the Lord is in all this; and our Enemies, who rage and are mighty, are his Instruments with which he threatens to execute his Wrath upon us. And it is he only can prevent the Storm, which

8 *A Fast-Sermon Preached before the*
hangs over our Heads, and *Bring us to the Haven*
where we would be, to a happy Settlement in Peace
and Safety. How highly seasonable then is it for
us at this time, by fervent Prayers and Supplications,
to *Seek the Lord and his Strength,* the turning away
of his Wrath which is going out against us, and is
the only thing we have to fear, and the Guard of
his Power and Providence, which can save and de-
liver when there is *no other Helper?*

Thirdly, When Matters of the highest Importance
to the Safety and Prosperity of a People are in De-
bate, when their Affairs are perplexed and intricate,
and the greatest Wisdom is required to know what
is best to advise and resolve upon; then it must be
highly seasonable, to *Lift up their Voice for Under-*
standing, and to ask Wisdom of God. This also is
plainly our Case at this Day, and therefore it is a
most proper *Time to seek the Lord.* We seem to be
at a Loss and a Stand, to be divided in our Coun-
sels, and wavering and uncertain in our Resolutions,
like Men who *Know not what to do,* therefore *Our*
Eyes should be upon God, who is *Wonderful in Coun-*
sel and Excellent in Working. For if we *Lean not to*
our own Understanding, but in all our Ways acknow-
ledge God, *Solomon* tells us, *He will direct our Paths,*
Prov. 3. 5, 6. But if we are so *Wise in our own*
Eyes, and so *Prudent in our own Sight,* as to shut
God out of our Councils, and not to seek to him
for Advice, we may reasonably expect, that God
should leave us to *Grope in the dark without light,* and
in the Greatness of our Folly to go astray. It is left as a
Blot upon Israel, that they made Peace and a League
with

with the Gibeonites, without Asking Counsel at the Mouth of the Lord, Josh. 4. 14, 15. And we read of some, who Fell down and there was none to help, because they contemned the Counsel of the Most High, Psal. 107. 11, 12. And if we in our present Difficulties will not look up to God, and earnestly beg of him to assist and direct us in our Consultations, it will be a righteous thing with God, for our Pride and Prophane Contempt of him, to give us up to be Snared in the Work of our own Hands, and to Fall by our own Counsels for Peace and Safety. How seasonable then is it at this time, that we put up our most Earnest Prayers to God, *In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*, by whose Providence all things are ordered, and upon whose Blessing all good Success depends, that he would *Inform our Princes after his Will, and teach our Senators Wisdom*; that he would direct them to the wisest Resolutions, in those Weighty and Difficult Affairs which lye before them?

Secondly, It is time to seek the Lord. There is yet Time and Opportunity for it, and we may hope that it is not yet too late to seek him. *For he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the Evil.* Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a Blessing behind him? Joel 2. 13, 14. A little Hope should encourage us to that, which is so necessary and available to the securing such inestimable Blessings, as Pardon and Peace, and the Safety of all that is dear to us. The Woman of Canaan continues her Suit to our Blessed Lord, after a seeming Denial of her Request, and

and at length received a Gracious Answer to it, *Mat. 15. 24, 27. Judg. 10.* And the People of *Israel* would not cease to ask Deliverance, even then when God had told them he would *Deliver them no more*, and at length they also prevailed, and God raised up a Saviour for them. *There is no Wisdom, or Strength, or Counsel against the Lord.* There can be no Enemy so Crafty, but he can *disappoint their Devices*, or so Mighty, but he can *Break their Arm, and Weaken their Strength.* No Designs against us can be so secretly laid, so cunningly contrived, so ready for Execution; but he is privy to them, and can blast them in a Moment, and bring the wicked Projectors *into the same Pit which they made for others.* It is not therefore yet too late *To seek the Lord*, upon the Account of the Difficulty or Desperateness of our Case. If God *will work* for us, none can *let it.* And we have some Reason to hope, that God hath not cast off all *Thoughts of Peace* towards us, that *His Ears* will yet be open to our Prayers. For *What Nation is there, who hath had God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God hath been hitherto, in all things that we have called upon him for?* How Immensely Great, how Innumerably Many, how Unconceivably Valuable and Precious are the Benefits he hath done unto us? How many Attempts against our Laws and Liberties, our Safety and Religion hath he rendered vain and of no Effect? How often hath he disappointed our Fears, prevented our Hopes, exceeded our Prayers, and out-done our Imaginations, in the wonderful Deliverances he hath wrought for us? That *He who hath thus delivered us, and doth deliver,* we may yet hope, *will still deliver us, if we seek him*
with

Lord Mayor, *April 4.* 1701. 11

with all our Heart. Though he hath corrected us for our Sins, yet he hath not given us over to Destruction. He hath *not stirred up all his Wrath* we have deserved, He hath given us some respite after our great Expence of Blood and Treasure. And what can be the Reason of all this *Goodness, and Long-suffering, and Forbearance* towards us, but his great *Unwillingness* that we should perish, if at least in this our day, we would know the things which belong unto our peace, and unite in Earnest Prayers to him, who hath the Absolute Disposal of them?

Thirdly, It is time to seek the Lord. There is a great Danger in delaying and putting it off to another time. For we cannot tell how soon our Day of Grace may be spent, and an irreversible Decree past against us. Our Sins cry aloud for Vengeance, and if it be speedily executed upon us, we must confess that *God is righteous.* It may be near, even at the Door, and if we do not presently set our selves *To seek the Lord,* but rather say in our Hearts, *What is the Almighty that we should pray unto him?* It may suddenly break in upon us, and there may be no remedy or escaping. If we delay such reasonable Service, such necessary Applications to the Divine Mercy, it may in a little while come to this, that though *We call, God will not answer,* but laugh at our *Calamity* and mock when our *Fear cometh,* when *Distress and Anguish cometh upon us.* O then let us *Seek the Lord while he may be found,* and call upon him *while he is near,* before the *Acceptable Time* is past, before the *Day of Salvation* expires, before our Condition comes to be utterly desperate, and God
resolve.

resolve to Be no more entreated, but to Shut up his Loving Kindness in Displeasure, and to Cover himself with a Cloud, that our Prayers should not pass through. And that our Prayers may be prevailing, I shall proceed,

Thirdly, To shew, How we should Seek the Lord, and pray to him, that we may effectually obtain his Favour and Blessing, that he may Come and rain Righteousness upon us.

First, Our Prayers should be put up with great Humility.

1. With an Humble Sense and Confession of our Sins. Every Man should Know the Plague of his own Heart, and even Groan in his Spirit and be troubled, when he Spreads forth his Hands before the Lord, and sues for Mercy from his so highly offended Goodness. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you, Jam. 4. 8. but then the Apostle adds, Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, v. 9. Humble your selves in the Sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up, v. 10. We should every one take Shame and Reproach to our selves, and bitterly bewail our own personal and particular Offences, whereby we have helped to Fill up the Measure of the Nation's Sins, and increased the loudness of their Cry for Judgments and Vengeance upon it. We should also confess, and bitterly bewail the many and crying Sins of all Sorts and Degrees of Men, when we pray to God to Spare his People, and to Turn his Anger away from us. Thus we read in those Prayers, in the Ninth Chapters of

Ezra,

Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, for Pardon and Mercy, for the Protection and Assistance of God, for the preventing or removing the Judgments they feared or suffered, very large and sorrowful Confessions of Private and Publick Guilt. They were *Ashamed and blushed to look up to Heaven*, whither their Sins had sent so loud a Cry before them; they freely acknowledge and proclaim the aggravating Circumstances of the many Transgressions of their *Kings, and Princes, and Priests*, and of all the People of the Land. They accuse and condemn themselves before God, and acknowledge his Justice, though he should deal most severely with them. Thus humbled, thus confounded, thus oppressed with Anguish and Bitterness of Soul, they cry out to God. *O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, defer not for thine own sake.* It is the Cry of the *humble*, and the Prayers of such *Broken and Contrite Hearts*, these are the *Sacrifices* which God will not despise. And therefore *David, Psal. 51.* having prayed earnestly to God for Pardon, adds this as the Ground of his Hope to obtain Mercy, *v. 3. For I acknowledge my Transgressions, and my Sin is ever before me.* Then God will be most ready to hear our Prayers, for the *Lifting up the Light of his Countenance upon us*, when *Shame hath covered our own Faces*. He will then be most inclined to shew us his Favour, when we are most sensible of our Unworthiness of it, and therefore best disposed to give him the Honour and Acknowledgments which are due to it.

C 2. Our

2. Our Prayers to God should be put up with great Humility, with an Humble Sense of our own Inability, that *We have no Might of our selves to help our selves*, that all our Counsels, that all Endeavours for Peace and Safety can avail us nothing without his Concourse and Blessing; and that *All our Sufficiency is of him*. *Thou art my King O God*, saith the Psalmist, *command Deliverance for Jacob*. *Through thee will we push down our Enemies, through thy Name will we tread them under that rise up against us*. *For I will not trust in my Bow, neither shall my Sword save me*, Psal. 44. 4, 5, 6. Then we shall pray with the greatest Fervency to God, when we have the greatest Distrust in our selves; and then will he be most ready to hear and succour us, when we lean only upon his Help, and disclaim all Share in the Glory of that Salvation we ask of him.

Secondly, Our Prayers must proceed from Meek, and Loving, and Charitable Minds. We must *Lift up pure Hands without Wrath*. We must *Put off all these, Anger, Wrath and Malice, and put on Bowels of Mercy, Kindness, Meekness, Long-suffering, Forbearing one another and Forgiving one another*: If we would have God to hear us, when we pray to him to forgive, and to turn his Wrath away from us. *When ye stand praying forgive*, saith our Blessed Saviour. We cannot expect, that any Prayers we offer should prevail to the appeasing of God, whom we have so justly provoked, whilst we our selves are unmerciful and implacable to one another. If therefore
we

we continue as much divided in our Affections, as warm in our Contentions, as resolute in seeking the Ruin of those, who are not in the same Party and Interest with us, as it is too Notorious we have been, *Though we make never so many Prayers to God for Mercy, we have great Cause to fear He will not hear us.* How can we expect that God should hear us, when we pray, that he would forgive us all our Sins, the Sins of all Sorts and Conditions of Men, when some of these we will not forgive our selves? That God would inflict no Publick Judgments upon us, whilst we our selves are willing to be the Executioners of his Wrath upon one another? That God would give us Peace abroad, when we are prepared to abuse it to the renewing and increasing our Quarrels at home? Do we pray to God to spare us all, when we are ready to *Bite and Devour one another?* Do we pray to him to continue the Gospel of Peace to us, whilst we make it an Occasion of Strife and Contention? What is this, but to pray to God to put his Rod into our Hands, to leave his Avenging Work to us, and to suffer us still to abuse his Holy Religion to the most Unchristian Purposes? And how unlikely are such Prayers as these to prevail with God, at least any farther, than to leave us at Liberty to *Bite and Devour one another, till we are consumed one of another?* Till therefore we come to be more *Of one Heart and of one Mind,* and lay aside that Mutual Wrath and Hatred, which our

breaking into so many Parties hath raised in the Minds of Men; 'till we can *Live in Love and Peace* together, we can have little reason to hope that *The God of Love and Peace* will come to us, and abide with us, and be intreated of us, how loudly soever we implore his Mercy.

Thirdly, When we pray to God, we should take care to *Lift up pure Hands*, and to present him with the Desires of a *Clean Heart*. *Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your Hands ye Sinners, and purifie your Hearts? Jam. 4. 8.* To the same purpose is that Advice of Zophar, *Job 11. 13, 14.* *If thou prepare thine Heart, and stretch out thine Hands towards him; if Iniquity be in thine Hands put it far away. For, saith David, if I regard Iniquity in my Heart the Lord will not hear me, Psal. 66. 18.* Nay, *Solomon* tells us, that *He who turns away his Ear from hearing the Law, even his Prayer shall be an Abomination, Prov. 28. 29.* If we will not hear God, when he calls upon us, to *Put away those Abominable Things which he hates*; How can we expect that he should hear us, when we call upon him to *Turn from us those Evils we fear, and have most righteously deserved?* To what purpose do we pray, that God would preserve our Religion to us, whilst we make no better Use of it, than to dishonour *That* and its most Holy Author, and to aggravate the Guilt of our Disobedience by our Profession of it? Do we think

Lord Mayor, April 4. 1701. 17

think by assembling our selves together with Fasting and Prayer, to change the Holy Nature of God, and his Method of *Governing the Nations of the Earth*? Do we think to prevail any thing by *Lying Words* and Flattering Speeches, by praying to him *To take away those Iniquities*, we are resolved not to part with? To pray for the Pardon of our Sins, whilst we continue our Love and Practice of them, is to pray for that we know is not *Agreeable to his Will*; that God would *Acquit the Guilty* and Impenitent, which he hath told us *He will by no means do*. It is all one as to pray, that Sin may not be provoking to him, that God would not be himself, that he would cease to be Just and Holy, which is, that he would be no longer God. To pray for a firm Establishment of our Peace and Safety, whilst we continue our *Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts*, is to pray against the Nature of Things, and that God would interpose and work such Miracles for us, as would tend to the Dishonour of his most Holy Name. We have assembled this Day for Fasting and Prayer, but if we do not *Truly repent of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a New Life*: To what purpose is all this waste? To what purpose, saith the Lord, to the sinful People of the Jews, *is the multitude of your Sacrifices unto me*? In this Case, Our Prayers are but *Vain Oblations, Incense* that is *An Abomination* to him; and we shall rather provoke, than appease the Wrath of God, by such Absurd and Hypocritical Addresses. But

If

If my People which is called by my Name, saith God himself, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my Face, and turn from their Wicked Ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin and will heal their Land, 2 Chron. 7. 14.

Fourthly, We should add to our Prayers, our sincere and hearty Endeavours, for the procuring those Publick Blessings we pray to God for. Is it not absurd to pray to God for Help and Assistance, if we will not help our selves, as far as we can, and work together with him? Do we pray for the Reformation of a sinful Nation, that we may be qualified for the Favour of God? Let us shew that we are in earnest, by doing all that is proper for us to promote it. How can we, who are his *Ministers*, expect that God should hear our Prayers of this kind, if we are not diligent in observing all those Methods, he hath prescribed to us, for the *Turning Men from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*? How can you, who are *Magistrates*, expect that God should hear the like Prayers from you, if you *Bear his Sword in vain*, and do not industriously improve the Power and Authority he hath invested you with, for *The Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and the Maintenance of True Religion and Virtue*? Do we pray, that God would preserve us from the Attempts of Foreign Enemies, whilst we refuse to lend a Hand to the stopping those Breaches, which

which incourage and lay us open to their Assaults? Do we pray, that God would direct us in our Consultations for the Publick Peace and Safety, when we are resolved before hand, to follow no Counsel any farther, than it may promote our own Private or our Parties Interest? Do we pray, for the Preservation and Prosperity of our Church, when we will not our selves endeavour to preserve the Order and Unity of it, without which it cannot be safe and flourishing? How can we hope, that God will have any regard to such idle, senseless and presumptuous Prayers, that he will hear us, when we call upon him to do that for us, which we are not willing to do for our selves, as far as it is our own Power? Such Prayers do plainly signifie, that we have no Mind God should save us from Destruction, unless it may be done by a Miracle; or that he should make us a Happy People, unless we may be so without any Pains or Labour of our own; or that he would work Deliverance for us any other way but so, that we may *Stand still and see the Salvation of God.* And how absurd and unsuccessful must all such Prayers be? Let our Prayers to God then be always attended with a Resolution, to do the utmost we can our selves, for the Obtaining those Blessings, which we pray to him for.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, We should continue our Prayers, and take all Opportunities of renewing our Addresses, resolving not to give over *To seek the Lord* our God, 'till he come and rain Righteousness upon us; 'till we are pardoned by his Mercy, reformed by his Grace, and obtain the Blessings we call upon him for. If God do not presently relieve and succour us, we must not cease our importunity; we must not be impatient or discouraged, if God delay the Mercies we petition for, or say in our Hearts, *What should we wait on the Lord any longer? Who shall appoint me the time,* saith God? *Jer. 49. 19.* The best Times and Seasons of Mercy and Deliverance, are certainly best known to him, and therefore we should patiently wait till his Time is come. We should follow him with repeated Supplications, and seek him day after day, and strive with him by the most constant Importunity, as if with *Jacob* we were resolved, *not to let him go without a Blessing.* This was *David's* Practice, and at length he found the Happy Success of it, *Psalms 40. 1. I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my Cry.* The Blessings we have now been praying for, are too great and valuable, to be sought only by this one Days Prayer and Fasting. Let us then *Continue in Prayer, and Watch thereunto with all Perseverance.*

I. Let us come before God as often as we can, to put up our Joint and Publick Prayers

Prayers to him, *To give us true Repentance, and to forgive us all our Sins; to save his People and to bless his Inheritance; so to Direct and Prosper all the Consultations of our Great Council now Assembled, that by their Endeavours, All things may be so Ordered and Setled upon the Best and Surest Foundations, that Peace and Happiness, Truth and Justice, Religion and Piety may be established amongst us.* Men may pretend what they will, but where they have such frequent Opportunities, they cannot want Leisure for a more frequent Performance of this Duty, than generally they are willing to imploy themselves in. Are we always imployed, in Business of greater Moment, at every Hour of Prayer? Such as is too weighty to be interrupted, by making Publick Confession of our Sins, and of our Dependance upon God, and the Need we have of his Counsel and Assistance, of his Favour and Blessing; and by Imploring in the most proper and prevailing, that is, in the most Publick Manner, the Publick Blessings of God upon his Church and People? Or do we indeed think it *in vain* thus to *Serve the Lord*? Or, that it is better spending an Hour in Talking together of News, and Politicks, and *Business* not *our own*, to name no worse Conversation, than in making part of a Religious Assembly? Is not this a great Contempt of our God and our Religion, and those Opportunities we enjoy of Assembling together to perform the Offices of it, which I hope we have, I am sure we

D

ought

ought to have, a particular respect to, when we Fast and Pray for the Continuance of our Publick Blessings. How can we expect, that God should visibly appear for our Protection, when we are so backward to appear to do our Homage to him? That he will openly avow us for *his People*, when we will not as apparently own him for *Our God*? That he will unite his Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness for our Defence, when we care not to unite our Prayers in asking his Help? O then that we would all effectually lay to Heart, how much we are concerned, *Not to forsake the Assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is, and so much the more as we see the Day approaching*; as we have reason to fear, *A Day of Wrath and of the Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God* coming upon us.

2. Let us also increase the Frequency and Fervency of our more Private Addresses to *Him, who seeth in secret, and hath promised to Reward us openly*. Let us be often casting our selves down upon our Knees before him, Confessing and Bewailing our own and our Nation's Sins; and earnestly Imploring his Forgiveness of them, the Diverting of his Wrath, the Direction of his Counsel, and the gracious Interposing of his Providence on our Behalf. Let us in this our great Necessity, do something, which may be worthy to be called, *Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication*. Let us go seeking the
Lord

Lord from the Church into our Closets, giving him no rest from our Importunity, 'till he arise and help us. *For Zion's sake let us not hold our Peace, and for Jerusalem's sake let us not rest, until the Righteousness thereof go forth as Brightness, and the Salvation thereof as a Lamp that burneth.* Let us not cease to *Lift up our Heart with our Hands to God in the Heavens;* to cry and call upon him from Day to Day, that he would *Heal our Backslidings and love us freely;* that he would *Cause his Face to shine upon his Sanctuary, for the Lord's sake;* that for his great Mercy, and for his own Name's sake, he would *Stir up his Strength, and come and help us, and rain Righteousness upon us.*

And tho' after all, we should see the greater Part of Men *still going on in their Wickedness,* and as backward in Calling upon God as ever, yet let every good Man, (and surely every good Man will do it) let every one who loves God and his Country, who is heartily concerned for the Peace and Prosperity of this Church and Nation, the rather increase in the Zeal and Constancy of his Devotion, and go and *Pray more earnestly.* And for their Encouragement to do so, let them consider these two Things.

First, That there is some Reason to hope, that the Prayers of good Men, of those few *Who sigh and cry for the Abominations that are*

24 *A Fast-Sermon Preached before the*
done in the midst of us, may at least prevail
for a Lengthning of our Tranquility, for some
Delay or Mitigation of those Punishments we
have deserved, for some Mercy in the midst of
Judgment. The Apostle tells us, Jam. 5. 18. that
Elias prayed, and the Heaven gave Rain, and
the Earth brought forth her Fruit. This Good
Man, by his Prayer alone, obtained a Publick
Blessing upon the Children of Israel, in a
very Wicked Age, When they had forsaken the
Covenant of God, thrown down his Altars, and slain
his Prophets with the Sword, 1 Kings 19. 10.
And from this Instance of Elias, St. James makes
this General Observation, v. 17. that The effec-
tual fervent Prayer of a Righteous Man avail-
eth much. And the same People having For-
gotten God their Saviour, therefore he said that
he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen
stood before him in the Breach; to turn away his
Wrath, lest he should destroy them, Psal. 106. 23.
This he did by Praying for them. Exod. 32.
11, 12. And Moses besought the Lord his God
and said, Turn from thy Fierce Wrath, and Re-
pent of this Evil against thy People. And when
he had ended his Prayer, we read v. 14, that
The Lord repented of the Evil which he thought
to do unto his People. And the like Happy
Effect of his Prayers for them we read in
divers other Places. How should this encou-
rage all good Men To Pray and not to Faint,
to solicit earnestly at the Throne of Grace on
the behalf of this sinful Land, to try how far
they

Lord Mayor, April 4. 1701. 25

they can prevail with God, whose Ears are always open to the Prayers of the Righteous, to Spare and Bless it by their most hearty Intercession for it?

Secondly, Such Frayers of good Men will not fail of being highly beneficial to themselves. Though they cannot prevail for others, yet they will not be lost. They will certainly *Return into their own Bosoms*; and bring down the Blessing of God upon them. God may provide them a *Shadow from the Heat, a Refuge from the Storm*, even then when he comes to take Vengeance on a sinful People, when *There shall go a Consuming Fire before him, and a Mighty Tempest shall be stirred up round about him*. Seek ye the Lord all ye meek of the Earth, which have wrought his Judgment; it may be, ye shall be hid in the Day of the Lord's Anger, Zeph. 2. 3. If any Enemies should prevail against us, and *They which hate us come to be Lord's over us*, God may Hide them under the *Shadow of his Wings*, until their Tyranny be overpast. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, saith the Psalmist, *They shall prosper that love thee*. By such Labours of Love to the Church of God, they may at least obtain some Prosperity to themselves. Nehemiah having mentioned some of the Good Deeds he had done, for his Country, for the House of his God and the Offices thereof, was encouraged thereby to make his Address to God in this Manner, *Remember me, O my God, concerning*

cerning this, and spare me according to the Greatness of thy Mercy, Neh. 13. 22. But however God may think fit to deal with them, as to their Outward Circumstances; such Compassionate Prayers, such Charitable Intercessions of good Men would not fail of being attended with a joyful Testimony of their Conscience, that they have not been wanting in the most proper Endeavours, to prevent the Judgments of God, and to promote the Publick Good. And they may rest assured that all their Light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, will work for them a far more Exceeding and Eternal Weight of Glory: And that they shall fall under no Trials of their Faith, but what will be found unto Praise, and Honour, and Glory at the Appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let us then resolve every one of us, before we go hence, to be more Constant and Fervent in the Performance of a Duty, so Necessary and Seasonable, and so highly Beneficial to us all. And let us continue to *Humble our selves in the Sight of the Lord.* Let us be heartily reconciled to one another, and *Live in Unity and Godly Love.* Let us *Put away the Evil of our Doings,* and *Turn unto the Lord our God.* Let no Private Considerations or Resentments restrain us, from more Unanimous and Vigorous Endeavours for our Common Safety and Prosperity, that so our Prayers may indeed be *Such Sacrifices with which God is well pleased;* and we the
Happy

Lord Mayor, *April 4.* 1701. 27

Happy Instruments of bringing down from Heaven a Shower of Blessings upon this Land and Nation. For *That* we may hope; but of *This* we may be sure, that this our *Labour will not be in vain in the Lord*; that the Prayers of such Humble, Meek and Clean Hearts, will not fail of deriving a Blessing upon our selves; so much Safety and Prosperity, as God shall see to be most expedient for us; so much Strength, as may support us under all our Sufferings; so much Grace, as may preserve us from falling under our Temptations, and carry us on *Through Faith unto Salvation, which is in Christ Jesus: To Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, both Now and for Ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

A Sermon Preached at Bow-Church before the Lord Mayor, &c. upon a General Fast. *June 26.* 1696. On *Nehem. 9.* part of the *26th.* and *27th.* Verses.

A Sermon Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, at the Election of the Lord Mayor, 1696. On *Prov. 29. 2.*

A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Mr. *James Lordell,* March 27. 1694. On *Rev. 14. 13.*

A Sermon Preached at St. Mary-le-Bow, to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, *April 5.* 1697.

All four by *Lilly Butler, D. D.* Minister of St. Mary Aldermanbury. Sold by *B. Aylmer.*