

## The Larger Catechism

### Question 193

#### 193. Q. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

**A.** In the fourth petition, (which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, [1253]) acknowledging, that in Adam, and by our own sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them; [1254] and that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, [1255] nor we to merit, [1256] or by our own industry to procure them; [1257] but prone to desire, [1258] get, [1259] and use them unlawfully: [1260] we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them; [1261] and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, [1262] and contentment in them; [1263] and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort. [1264]

#### Scriptural Defense and Commentary

[1253] **Matthew 6:11.** Give us this day our daily bread. [1254] **Genesis 2:17.** But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. **Genesis 3:17.** And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. **Romans 8:20-22.** For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. **Jeremiah 5:25.** Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. **Deuteronomy 28:15-17.** But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store, etc. [1255] **Deuteronomy 8:3.** And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. [1256] **Genesis 32:10.** I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. [1257] **Deuteronomy 8:17-18.** And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. [1258] **Jeremiah 6:13.** For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. **Mark 7:21-22.** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. [1259] **Hosea 12:7.** He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. [1260] **James 4:3.** Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. [1261] **Genesis 43:12-14.** And take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight: Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man: And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved. **Genesis 28:20.** And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on. **Ephesians 4:28.** Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. **2 Thessalonians 3:11-12.** For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. **Philippians 4:6.** Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. [1262] **1 Timothy 4:3-5.** Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. [1263] **1 Timothy 6:6-8.** But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. [1264] **Proverbs 30:8-9.** Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me

with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

### Introduction

In our western world, it may seem difficult to pray for the fourth item in the Lord's Prayer. How can we pray the fourth petition which is ***Give us this day our daily bread...***? We have food in the pantry, money in the bank, stores galore, and a "safety-net" of a sort to take care of us. Is this merely a pious petition having little to do with our lives?

Our inability to feel the true need exhibited in this petition betrays what is so wrong with us. In our hubris, we assume that *what is* is the same as *what it ought to be* and *what it will be*. That is, we presume that our good estate is what is owed.

In this petition, we come to terms with our finitude and dependence upon God. No matter what our political persuasion, we tend to think we have certain rights, certain inalienable rights. Though our *Declaration of Independence* makes this point clear, we must not confuse it with what the Bible teaches.

Vos clears up this confusion and we would do well to listen to him on this point. He asks, "Is it true that all men have an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" Then he offers this answer:

This is only true within the limited sphere of civil society. Human beings have a civil right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without unjust interference on the part of their fellow men. Even within the sphere of human society the right of life or liberty may be taken away as a judicial penalty for the commission of crime. A man who has committed murder no longer has a right to life and liberty.

When we speak of man's relation to God, it is definitely *not* true that all men have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Whatever rights human beings might have had, have been forfeited by sin; first by Adam's sin, which is imputed to all mankind; and then by each person's own sin, so that no human being has any rights which he can claim over against God. Man has no rights which God is bound to respect. (Vos, 562)

Vos is correct. Once we understand this, we look at life differently and the fourth petition will have more force and urgency in our prayers. If we do not see this correctly, we will be bitter, despondent, and defiant against God. He will be viewed as our enemy and the omnipotent foe who wields His power malevolently against us. We will feel trapped, powerless, and an unspeakable sense of despair will grip our hearts. We will never rightly pray *Give us this day our daily bread*.

### We Have Forfeited

In asking for daily bread, we are admitting that we have forfeited everything. That is, we have to ask for daily bread because we cannot assume that we are entitled to it. As the LC states, we are ***"acknowledging, that in Adam, and by our own sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them..."***

Many elements of this point have been developed in our study of the LC #28 ("*What are the punishments of sin in this world?*"). We come into the world with sin (Adam's and our own); therefore, God owes us nothing. Justice demands punishment; the blessings in this life are *always*

free displays of God’s patience, benevolence, longsuffering, love, etc. We “**deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God**” — that is what we deserve (see LC #28). Our bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments can all be cursed, deservedly! Ridgley says, “If he should deprive us of all the conveniencies of life, and so embitter it to us that we should be almost inclined to make the unhappy choice which Job did of ‘strangling and death, rather than life;’ there would be no reason to say that there is unrighteousness with God.”<sup>1</sup>

When we pray *Give us this day our daily bread*, we are acknowledging we don’t deserve it because we have forfeited every right to all the blessings in this life. Not only do we deserve to be deprived of them but we also deserve to have them become a curse to us: “**to have them [i.e. “the outward blessings in this life”] cursed to us in the use of them**.” Meaning, every good thing we enjoy and use can rightly be employed to curse us. Israel sinned so God kept the blessings from them (it did not rain): “Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have kept good from you.” (Jer. 5:25)<sup>2</sup> God can withhold what is commonly good to us (in this case “rain”); He can also use them to our hurt (cf. the covenant curses in Deut. 28:15-17). God said that “all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you” (Deut. 28:15). These curses parallel the blessings enumerated in vv. 3-6; they are the counterparts. “The reason for this direct contrast is clear: obedience and disobedience to the covenant have exactly the opposite consequences.”<sup>3</sup>

If the Old Covenant was so strict, how much more for humanity who are outside of the covenant of grace? It is reasonable to conclude that disobedience negates all blessings. Therefore, God can curse any thing we use because we all are in the state of sin (apart from Christ). When we pray for our daily bread, we remember we have forfeited it and God can curse it to our harm. Should we not ponder the significance of this? That means every good thing can turn on us. Our cars, relationships, medicine, money, skills, circumstances, etc. may all seem promising but if the Lord does not bless them, they may in fact be used as curses against us. Israel was cursed with the meat in their mouth — they wanted those good things so God gave it to them (Num. 11:19-20, “You shall not eat just one day, or two days, or five days, or ten days, or twenty days, but a whole month, until it comes out at your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you have rejected the LORD who is among you and have wept before him, saying, “Why did we come out of Egypt?””). Those good things were not given to them for their benefit. They were used against His people. We must not assume and presume that all the blessings we have will work for our good; if the Lord blesses them to our benefit, then we rejoice. We cannot assume because of our monetary wealth, perfect bill of health, untiring industry, etc. that all will be well. We deserve to have all of them turn against us!

### They Cannot Sustain Us

Though this could easily fit into the previous section, it is worth pondering on its own. The LC states that the outward blessings of life cannot sustain us: “**and that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us...**” In our health conscious age, we tend to think that medicine, right diet, regular exercise, healthy habits, etc. will all work for our good and will

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity, Volume 2* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 629.

<sup>2</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah* (EBC 6; ed. Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), n.p.: “As Creator, God has control over the rain as he does over the sea (cf. Deut 11:10-17). The withholding of seasonal rains was attributable to their sinfulness (v.25).”

<sup>3</sup> John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy*, EP Study Commentary (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2006), 437-8.

sustain and maintain our health. We assume that these outward blessings of life are calculated and created to sustain us in and of themselves. Good stewardship requires that we make good use of all the good things of life for our benefit — God may very well bless those efforts (and He often does). Yet, there is no inherent energy or efficacy in them to work in us for our good. This is a stupendous theological truth!

The divines used an interesting verse to support this most important point: “And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut. 8:3) Forty years in the wilderness compelled them to trust in the Lord. “In the desert, he [God] was the only source of life, and the most important factor in Israel’s existence. The entire episode is an indictment against self-sufficiency: without Yahweh the Hebrews would not have survived the wilderness.”<sup>4</sup> Currid is correct. But more can be said about this verse.

When the people were hungry, God fed them manna; the provision of manna was not simply a miracle, but it was designed to teach the Israelites a fundamental principle of their existence as the covenant people of God. The basic source of life was God and the words of God to his people; *every utterance of the mouth of the Lord* (v. 3) was more basic to Israelite existence than was food. This principle did not mean that the Israelites were to expect at all times the miraculous provision of food, as in the instance when God provided manna. Normal circumstances would involve the normal acquisition of food supplies. But if the command of God directed the people to do something or go somewhere, the command should be obeyed; shortage of food or water, lack of strength, or any other excuse would be insufficient, for the command of God contained within it the provision of God.<sup>5</sup>

Still, there is more to this than what the commentator just stated. The older commentators understood the point better: “*Possessing no nutritious properties inherent in it, this contributed to their sustenance, as indeed all food does (Matthew 4:4) solely through the ordinance and blessing of God. This remark is applicable to the means of spiritual as well as natural life.*”<sup>6</sup> Think about it, the nation was sustained by manna for forty years. What nutritional value was there in manna? We do not know but it was blessed by God for the nourishment of the entire nation. They had to trust God to meet their needs — not in what they assumed they needed. “The general import is, of course, that the Lord wanted to teach Israel to trust, not in anything created, but only in the Creator.”<sup>7</sup> We too often trust in the blessings of life to sustain us as if they possessed inherent effectual power. Without God’s blessings, they will not benefit us. Therefore in this petition, we recognize that without God’s blessing, food, clothing, relationships, finances, work, etc. will do us no good if He does not effectually use them for our benefit! “He must add his blessing to all the mercies he bestows, else they will not conduce to our happiness, or answer

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<sup>4</sup> Currid, *Deuteronomy*, 198.

<sup>5</sup> Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Accordance electronic ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 185.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (1871, Accordance electronic ed. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 1996), n.p.

<sup>7</sup> J. Ridderbos, *Deuteronomy*, trans. Ed M. van der Maas, Bible Student’s Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 127.

the general end designed by them. Without the divine blessing, the bread we eat would no more nourish us than husks or chaff; our garments could no more contribute to our being warm, than if they were put upon a statue; and the air we breathe would rather stifle than refresh us.”<sup>8</sup>

### Cannot Merit or Work Hard for Them

Our “can do” American society teaches us that if we simply give ourselves to hard work, we will prosper. This, after all, is the great land of opportunity. In fact, the book of Proverbs teaches a similar point. The difference, however, between the “American dream” and Proverbs is God. In Proverbs, God is the moral governor sustaining and blessing and those in covenant fellowship with Him believe His teaching and promises. We are taught, “Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.” (Prov. 12:11) As we have seen before (in the section above), this is true because God sustains, maintains, and blesses the means. In this case, he blesses those who work hard (numerous Proverbs could be cited to support the same teaching). The “can-do” philosophy tends to equate industry with the blessings of life. To put it bluntly, we procured the blessings of life through the merit of human industry. That is, we earned the blessings because we worked hard for them!

In asking God for our daily bread, we are in fact arguing just the opposite. The LC teaches: “**nor we to merit, or by our own industry to procure them [all the outward blessings of this life]..**” We come to this world with a deficit (our sins) and to a world that is cursed (Gen. 3:17-19). In this situation, we cannot merit the blessings of this life. All the blessings that happen to come to us are bestowed either by divine benevolence (on the just and unjust) or in terms of the covenant (relationship) for the sake of Christ.

Jacob said to his brother (against whom he sinned): “I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.” (Gen. 32:10) If Jacob’s sin against a mere man makes him unworthy, how much more for sinners before a Holy God?

We also do not procure the blessings of this life by our industry (“**or by our own industry to procure them**”). A person may quickly agree that he cannot merit these blessings. Yet the same person instinctively believes that his hard work, diligence, and industrious efforts will procure those blessings. They will get what they want; they will not rest until those blessings are secured. Has he forgotten what Ps. 127 teaches? “Unless the Lord builds the house those who build it labor in vain...It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil...” Deut. 8:17, 18 teach us one of the most important lessons regarding our “industry.” “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.” God gives you power to get wealth! Though spoken in terms of the Old Covenant, the theological truth still pertains to us because it teaches us something about God. We tend to think raw hard work will earn all things. Without the Lord’s blessing, it will not produce what we want and whatever we do end up acquiring, it is because the Lord has given us the power to acquire it.

Let me now flip this around. Do we not assume that if we live godly lives, if we are honest and full of integrity, if we live in the fear of the Lord, no harm would befall us? We would never positively argue that we can actually *merit* God’s external blessings but we tend to believe that by doing good we will in turn receive good things. In general, this principle is true

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity, Volume 2* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 631.

and God indeed blesses obedience. Yet we must not sneak in the opposite: Bad things cannot come into my house because I am doing good. After all, I am going to church, I am reading the Bible, I am trying to live with integrity, etc. Surely this means that all will go well. Job's story teaches us that is not the case.

We are called to obey and be industrious. "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat." (2Thess. 3:10) This is a New Testament truth. Diligence is required. God often blesses diligence and promises to meet all our needs. We make mistakes in our assumptions and our understanding of cause and effect. Our assumption is that obedience itself will produce earthly blessings (when in fact it is God who blesses). We think our industry and diligence actually procured the outward blessings of this life but we know unless the Lord blessed the means, our efforts would be fruitless. Let this be our plea, "O Lord... give success to your servant today" (Neh. 1:11).

### Unlawful Use

This clause "**but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully...**" reminds us of another problem. Not only do we not merit any of these earthly blessings, but when God does bless us (though we are unworthy of them), we often use them unlawfully. The three verbs (desire, get, and use) are modified by the adverb "unlawfully" — we tend to desire, get, and use "all the outward blessings of this life" unlawfully. We want them for the wrong reason; we can at times acquire them unlawfully; and we utilize them to pander to our flesh. James 4:2-3 says, "You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."<sup>9</sup> However we might punctuate these verses, one thing is clear. Desiring and asking are with wrong motives. We want certain things so that we can use them unlawfully ("to spend it on your passions"). "In such prayers God is regarded as a mere dispensary of instruments of vice. The language of monetary exchange is brought in by James. God does not answer their prayers not only because they are evil but also because they would just spend his generosity on themselves. They would, as it were, simply "cash in" whatever they could exchange his gifts with for their idea of "gain."<sup>10</sup>

Before moving on to the positive aspect of this petition, let us simply remember that we often pray selfishly. Why should God bless us? What have we done with all his blessings before? What are we intending to do with them now? We are indeed prone to desire them unlawfully.

### Waiting on God's Providence

Recognizing all that we have said above, the divines teach us what we are actually praying for: "**we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them...**" Vos calls this portion of the LC answer "a beautiful gem of scriptural teaching." It certainly is. *The Shorter Catechism* gives a very brief answer and does not include this gem. As we pray, we wait upon God to provide for us. We wait "day to day" — that is, it is our *daily* portion we are asking and

<sup>9</sup> How we punctuate this verse is a subject of much debate. ESV translates it as murdering because we do not have. The NIV has "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want." Murdering and coveting as not specifically related to the not the result of not getting.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt A. Richardson, *James* (NAC 36; ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Accordance electronic ed. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 177.

must not assume today's portion entitles us to tomorrow's without "waiting upon the providence of God." We wait "... realizing that God will give us blessings according to his holy will in his own appointed time; therefore we are to avoid both unbelief and impatience. We will not demand blessings immediately when God in his wisdom sees fit to postpone them." (Vos, 563)

As we wait upon our God, we utilize the "lawful means." That is, we are to be active in using the means God has provided. It is waiting and working. "If we are sick, we will trust in God to make us well if it is his will to do so, but we will also avail ourselves of the best possible medical treatment. If we are waiting on God for a harvest, we will also take pains to cultivate the soil and plant the seed. We will not expect God's providence to eliminate our own toil and efforts." (Vos, 564) Trusting God for our daily needs does not mean we do nothing. The "lawful means" include everything God calls us to do, work, save, pray, deny ourselves, plan, regulate our use of time, etc. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians the following corrective: "For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living." (2Thess. 3:11, 12) That is always the rule — "work quietly and to earn their own living"; idleness is forbidden. Furthermore, Ridgley adds that the fourth petition does not mean we don't make provisions for the future.

But not to make provision for the future is contrary to what we are exhorted to do, when we are called to consider the provision which the smallest insects make for their subsistence: 'The ant provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' [Prov. 6:8] And the apostle says, 'If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.' [1Tim. 5:8] We hence ought to make provision for our future wants. Accordingly, we are to pray that God would give success to our lawful endeavours, in order to the attainment of this end.<sup>11</sup>

The lawful means we are to use, of course, forbids the use of unlawful means. Just because we believe we have not been treated justly by our boss does not mean we can steal from him to make ends meet. We cannot lie and cheat others to get what we need just because our clients may not have paid us for our services. "We will try to promote our business interests by intelligence and honest work, but not by use of dishonesty, untruth, or theft, or by injustice to anyone." (Vos, 564) Paul says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." (Eph. 4:28)

As we wait while busying ourselves in the use of lawful means, we must firmly believe and be convinced that God's fatherly wisdom will dispense what He deems best. Asking and trusting go together; trusting means we leave the matter to our heavenly Father and not dictate how He must provide. Vos answers this question, "Is it right to pray for earthly blessings such as financial prosperity for ourselves and others?" He says, "Certainly this is right, and we ought to do it, but always in subordination to the will of God 'as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best.' We may pray for financial prosperity and similar earthly blessings, provided we pray that *if* it is God's will he will give them to us. We have no way of knowing in advance whether or not such will be his will." (Vos, 564)

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<sup>11</sup> T. Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity*, 2:631-2.

### Competent Portion

Lastly, in this petition we are asking for a “a competent portion.” The LC says, “**enjoy a competent portion of them; and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them; and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.**” “Daily bread” does not mean a billionaire’s portion. A “competent portion” means a moderate portion of what we need. God determines what that is. An immoderate and inordinate yearning for a large portion of the world’s goods is greed. Again, the apostle Paul wrote to young Timothy the following exhortations: “But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.” (1Tim. 6:8-10) We’re to be content with what we receive. We must pray also that these things would be “blessed unto us in our holy and comfortable use of them.” We do not want the good things of God to be a snare. One commentator summarized Paul’s point in 1Tim. 6 in this way: “The point is clear enough. Godliness is not something to make material gain in or from (v. 5); rather, it is itself the greatest gain (v. 6). True godliness, however, is accompanied by contentment (v. 6). Since we can take nothing with us at death (v. 7), if we have life’s essentials, we can be content with these (v. 8); and such an attitude obviously excludes greed.”<sup>12</sup> Contentment is a rare jewel and may the Lord preserve us from an inordinate lust for wealth. Once again, the same commentator says the following:

Paul’s point is that the very desire for wealth has inherent spiritual dangers, partly because (vv. 6–8) wealth itself is unrelated to godliness in any way and partly because (v. 9) the desire is like a trap set by Satan himself to plunge one into spiritual ruin. To put that in a different way: Why would anyone want to get rich? Wealth has nothing to do with one’s eschatological existence in Christ; on the contrary, the desire leads to other desires that end up in ruin, of which truth the false teachers themselves are Exhibit A (v. 10).<sup>13</sup>

The last element of the petition is also necessary. We don’t want to be ensnared by riches or by poverty: “**and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.**” This truth comes from Proverbs 30:8-9 — “*Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, “Who is the LORD?” or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*” In our weakness, deprivations can often expose us to temptations. It is true, God often allows those deprivations to test us but it is not inappropriate to ask to have enough to sustain us for His glory. The point of this is not so that we can be carnally comfortable but rather the temporal support would be enough to keep us going so that we can do all things for His glory (unless God would have us glorify Him in that moment of deprivation — all according to His fatherly wisdom).

<sup>12</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (NIBC 13; Accordance electronic ed. 18 vols.; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 144.

<sup>13</sup> Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 145.