

## THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

### THE COLLECT

**A**LMIGHTY God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### COMMENTARY

If there is one time in the Church year when we ought to feel the need to exercise faith and to pray fervently in faith—as the Gospel illustrates—it is Lent. If there is one period of the Church year when we should hear clearly the word of the Epistle—God’s will is your sanctification—it is also Lent.

The usual tendency in our prayers is to ask God to help us, to aid us, to assist us and to strengthen us. All well and good, but sometimes hidden in such verbal requests is the general idea that we can do so much for ourselves and we only need God to come along and give us the extra push, to top up our strength. But in this prayer, we begin by recognising as we meditate before Almighty God our Father, who is the Omnipotent One,

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that in fact we need more than a push and a topping-up: we need his help, power, grace and strength completely and wholly. For we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves in the real battles of life against adversaries much stronger than we are.

Therefore, from the position of total dependency upon God's gracious power, we ask the Father in the name of his well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, that in body and soul we may be daily preserved and protected from all forms of evil and sin. We cannot predict as each day begins what bad things can and will happen to our body, from accident, disease, carelessness, or the evil will of others. Further, and significantly, we cannot predict what can and will happen to our soul—our mind, emotions and will—as it is open to testing and temptation. Evil thoughts, desires and imaginations can be generated within our souls by all kinds of stimuli, by the world and the devil.

This prayer of wholehearted submission to the Almighty Father is entirely suitable for Lent as we engage in self-examination, fast inwardly and outwardly in union with our blessed Lord (who himself fasted forty days and forty nights) and look forward to the victory of

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Christ at Easter over the world, the flesh and the devil, in which, by union with him, we share. In fact, like the Canaanite woman in the Gospel, we need to be so intent of being united to Jesus that he can say to us what he said to her: 'O woman, great is thy faith!'

THE EPISTLE. 1 Thess. 4. 1-8

**W**E beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God; that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you, and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore that despiseth despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.

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THE GOSPEL. S. Matth. 15. 21–28

JESUS went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent, but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

*Commentary by the Revd. Dr. Peter Toon.*

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