

## A Prayer for the Evening

Taken from "The Practice of Piety" by Lewis Bayly

O most gracious God and loving Father, who art about my bed and knowest my down-lying and my uprising, and art near unto all that call upon thee in truth and sincerity, I, wretched sinner, do beseech thee to look upon me with the eyes of thy mercy, and not to behold me as I am in myself; for then thou shalt see but an unclean and defiled creature, conceived in sin, and living in iniquity, so that I am ashamed to lift up mine eyes to heaven, knowing how grievously I have sinned against heaven and before thee; for, O Lord, I have transgressed all thy commandments and righteous laws, not only through negligence and infirmity, but oftentimes through wilful presumption, contrary to my knowledge; yea, contrary to the motions of thy Holy Spirit reclaiming me from them: so that I have wounded my conscience, and grieved thy Holy Spirit, by whom thou hast sealed me to the day of redemption. Thou hast consecrated my soul and body to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; I, wretched sinner, have defiled both with all manner of pollution and uncleanness: my eyes, in taking pleasure to behold vanity; mine ears, in hearing impure and unchaste speeches; my tongue, in leasing and evil speaking; my hands are so full of impurity, that I am ashamed to lift them up unto thee; and my feet have carried me after mine own ways; my understanding and reasoning, which are so quick in all earthly matters, are only blind and stupid when I come to meditate or discourse of spiritual and heavenly things; my memory, which should be the treasury of all goodness, is not so apt to remember anything, as those things which are vile and vain; yea, Lord, by woful experience I find, that naturally all the imaginations of the thoughts of my heart are only evil continually; and my sins are more in number than the hairs which grow upon mine head, and they have grown over me like a loathsome leprosy, that from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, there remains no part which they have not infected; they make me seem vile in mine own eyes—how much more abominable must I then appear in thy sight! And the custom of sinning hath almost taken away the conscience of sin, and brought upon me such dulness of sense and hardness of heart, that thy judgments denounced against my sins by the faithful preachers

of thy word, do not terrify me to return unto thee by unfeigned repentance for them; and if thou, Lord, shouldst but deal with me according to thy justice and my desert, I should utterly be confounded and condemned; but seeing that of thine infinite mercy thou hast spared me so long, and still waitest for my repentance, I humbly beseech thee, for the sake of the bitter death and bloody passion which Jesus Christ hath suffered for me, that thou wouldst pardon and forgive me all my sins and offences, and open unto me that ever-streaming fountain of the blood of Christ, which thou hast promised to open under the New Testament to the penitent of the house of David; that all my sins and uncleanness may be so bathed in his blood, buried in his death, and hid in his wounds, that they may never more be seen, to shame me in this life, or to condemn me before thy judgment-seat in the world which is to come. And forasmuch, O Lord, as thou knowest that it is not in man to turn his own heart, unless thou dost first give him grace to convert; and seeing that it is as easy with thee to make me righteous and holy, as to bid me to be such, O my God, give me grace to do what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt, 47

and thou shalt find me willing to do thy blessed will: and to this end give me thy Holy Spirit, which thou hast promised to give, to the world's end, to all thy elect people; and let the same Holy Spirit purge my heart, heal my corruption, sanctify my nature, and consecrate my soul and body, that they may become the temples of the Holy Ghost, to serve thee in righteousness and holiness all the days of my life; that when, by the direction and assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I shall finish my course in this short and transitory life, I may cheerfully leave this world, and resign my soul into thy fatherly hands, in the assured confidence of enjoying everlasting life with thee in thine heavenly kingdom, which thou hast prepared for thy elect saints, who love the Lord Jesus and expect his appearing. In the meanwhile, O Father, I beseech thee let thy Holy Spirit work in me such a serious repentance, as that I may with tears lament my sins past, with grief of heart be humbled for my sins present, and with all my endeavour resist the like sins in time to come. And let the same Holy Spirit likewise keep me in the unity of thy

church, lead me in the truth of thy word, and preserve me, that I never swerve from the same, to Popery nor any error or false worship. And let thy Spirit open my eyes more and more, to see the wondrous things of thy law: and open my lips, that my mouth may daily defend thy truth, and set forth thy praise. Increase in me those good gifts, which of thy mercy thou hast already bestowed upon me, and give me a patient spirit, a chaste heart, a contented mind, pure affections, wise behaviour, and all other graces which thou seest to be necessary for me to govern my heart in thy fear, and to guide all my life in thy favour; that whether I live or die, I may live and die unto thee, who art my God and my Redeemer. And here, O Lord, according as I am bound, I render unto thee from the altar of my humblest heart, all possible thanks for all those blessings and benefits which so graciously and plenteously thou hast bestowed upon my soul and body, for this life, and for that which is to come; namely, for my election, creation, redemption, vocation, justification, sanctification, and preservation from my childhood until this present day and hour; and for the firm hope which thou hast given me of my glorification: likewise for my health, wealth, food, raiment, and prosperity; and more especially, for that thou hast defended me this day now past, from all perils and dangers both of body and soul, furnishing me with all necessary good things that I stand in need of; and as thou hast ordained the day for man to travel in, and the night for him to take his rest, so, I beseech thee, sanctify unto me this night's rest and sleep, that I may enjoy the same as thy sweet blessing and benefit; that so this dull and wearied body of mine, being refreshed with moderate sleep and rest, I may be the better enabled to walk before thee, doing all such good works as thou hast appointed, when it shall please thee by thy divine power to waken me the next morning. And whilst I sleep, do thou, O Lord, who art the keeper of Israel, that neither slumberest nor sleepest, watch over me in thy holy providence, to protect me from all dangers, so that neither the evil angels of Satan, nor any wicked enemy, may have any power to do me any harm or evil; and to this end, give a charge unto thy holy angels, that they, at thine appointment, may pitch their tents roundabout me, for my defence and safety; as thou hast promised that they should do about them that fear thy name. And knowing that thy

name is a strong tower of defence unto all those that trust therein, I here recommend myself, and all that belong to me, unto thy holy protection and custody. If it be thy blessed will to call for me in my sleep, O Lord, for Christ's sake, have mercy upon me, and receive my soul into thy heavenly kingdom; and if it be thy blessed pleasure to add more days to my life, O Lord, add more amendment to my days, and wean my mind from the love of the world and worldly vanities, and cause me more and more to settle my conversation on heaven and heavenly things. And perfect daily in me, that good work which thou hast begun, to the glory of thy name, and the salvation of my sinful soul. O Lord, I beseech thee likewise, save and defend from all evil and danger, thy holy church, the Queen (*President*), and all the royal family (*leaders of our nation*); keep them all in the sincerity of thy truth, and prosper them in all grace and happiness. Bless *the ministers and leaders of your church and the leaders of this nation*, each of them with those graces which are expedient for their place and calling. And be thou, O Lord, a comfort and consolation to all thy people whom thou hast thought meet to visit with any kind of sickness, cross, or calamity. Hasten, O Father, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Make me ever mindful of my last end, and of the reckoning that I am then to make unto thee; and in the meanwhile, careful so to follow Christ in the regeneration during this life, as that with Christ I may have a portion in the resurrection of the just, when this mortal life is ended. These graces, and all other blessings, which thou, O Father, knowest to be requisite and necessary for me, I humbly beg and crave at thy hands, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son, and in that form of prayer which he himself hath taught me to say unto thee:— “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,” &c.