

PENITENTIAL PRAYERS



A Confession

Omnipotent and everlasting God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who by Thy eternal providence disposes kingdoms as best seemeth to Thy wisdom: we acknowledge and confess Thy judgments to be righteous, in that Thou hast taken from us, for our ingratitude and for abusing of Thy most holy Word, our native king and earthly comforter.

Justly may Thou pour forth on us the uttermost of Thy plagues, for that we have not known the days and times of our merciful visitation. We have held Thy Word in contempt and despised Thy mercies. We have transgressed Thy laws, for deceitfully have we wrought every man with our neighbors; oppression and violence we have not abhorred; charity hath not appeared among us, as our profession requireth. We have little regarded the voices of Thy prophets; Thy threatenings we have esteemed vanity and wind. So that in us, as of ourselves, rests nothing worthy of Thy mercies, for all are found fruitless, even the princes with the prophets, as withered trees apt and meet to be burnt in the fire of Thy eternal displeasure.

But, O Lord, behold Thy own mercy and goodness, that Thou may purge and remove the most filthy burden of our most horrible offenses. Let Thy love overcome the severity of Thy judgments, even as it did in giving to the world Thy only Son, Jesus, when all mankind was

lost and no obedience was left in Adam nor in his seed. Regenerate our hearts, O Lord, by the strength of Thy Holy Ghost. Convert Thou us, and we shall be converted. Work Thou in us unfeigned repentance and move Thou our hearts to obey Thy holy laws.

Behold our troubles and apparent destruction and stay the sword of Thy vengeance before it devour us. Place above us, O Lord, for Thy great mercy's sake, such a head, with such rulers and magistrates as fear Thy name and will the glory of Christ Jesus to spread. Take not from us the light of Thy gospel, and suffer Thou no papal religion to prevail in this realm. Illuminate the heart of our Sovereign Lady Queen Mary with pregnant gifts of Thy Holy Ghost. And inflame the hearts of her counsel with Thy true fear and love. Repress Thou the pride of those that would rebel, and remove from all hearts the contempt of the Word. Let not our enemies rejoice at our destruction, but look Thou to the honor of Thy own name, O Lord, and let Thy gospel be preached with boldness in this realm. If Thy justice must punish, then punish our bodies with the rod of Thy mercy. But, O Lord, let us never revolt, nor turn back to idolatry again. Appease the hearts of those that persecute us; and let us not faint under the cross of our Savior, but assist us with the Holy Ghost, even to the end. Amen.

—Taken from Laing, *Works of John Knox*, 3:106–7

A Confession of Our Sins, Framed to Our Time, Out of the Ninth Chapter of Daniel

O Lord God, which art mighty and dreadful,¹ Thou that keepest covenant and showest mercy to them that love Thee and do Thy commandments;² we have sinned; we have offended;³ we have wickedly and stubbornly gone back from Thy laws and precepts. We would never obey Thy servants the prophets that spake in Thy name⁴ to our kings and princes, to our forefathers, and to all the people of our land. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee;⁵ unto us pertaineth nothing but open shame, as it is come to pass this day unto our miserable country of England—yea, unto all our nations whether they be far or near, through all lands, wherein they are scattered for the offenses that they and we have committed against Thee⁶—so that the curses and punishments which are written in Thy law⁷ are now poured on us. Thou hast performed those words wherewith Thou didst menace us and our rulers that governed us in bringing the same

1. Neh. 1; Job 9, 38, 39, 40; Pss. 7, 24, 76, 139.

2. Ex. 20; Luke 7.

3. Gen. 3; Pss. 32, 106; Rom. 5; 1 John 1.

4. Lev. 26; Deut. 28; Neh. 1; Jer. 26, 29.

5. Job 4, 9, 25; Ps. 11; James 4.

6. Ps. 89; Jer. 26, 27.

7. Lev. 26; Deut. 27, 28, 30.

plagues on us that before were threatened. And yet notwithstanding, both they and we proceed in our iniquity and cease not to heap sin upon sin. For they that once were well instructed in the doctrine of Thy gospel are now gone back from the obedience of Thy truth⁸ and are turned again to that most abominable idolatry,⁹ from the which they were once called by the lively preaching of Thy Word. And we, alas, to this day, do not earnestly repent us of our former wickedness; neither do we rightly consider the heaviness of Thy displeasure.¹⁰

Such is Thy just judgment, O Lord, that Thou punishest sin by sin, and man by his own inventions,¹¹ so that there can be no end of iniquity except Thou prevent us¹² with Thy undeserved grace.¹³ Therefore convert us, O Lord, and we shall be converted;¹⁴ for we do not offer up our prayers trusting in our own righteousness¹⁵ but in Thy manifold mercies. And although Thou hast once of Thy special grace delivered us from the miserable servitude of error and blindness and called us many times to the sweet liberty of Thy gospel,¹⁶ which we notwithstanding have most shamefully abused in obeying rather our own lusts

8. How miserable it is to return to the old vomit [marg. note].

9. Prov. 26; 2 Peter 2; Heb. 6, 10.

10. Ps. 19; Deut. 29, 31; Ezek. 5.

11. Rom. 1.

12. Rom. 10; Isa. 65.

13. Eph. 2.

14. Ps. 85; Jer. 31.

15. 2 Tim. 1; Titus 3.

16. Gal. 4, 5.

and affections¹⁷ than the admonitions of Thy prophets,¹⁸ yet we beseech Thee once again, for Thy name's sake,¹⁹ to pour some comfortable drop of Thy accustomed mercies on us. Incline Thy ears and open Thy eyes²⁰ to behold the grievous plagues of our country, the continual sorrows of our afflicted brethren, and our woeful banishment.²¹ And let our afflictions and just punishment be an admonition and warning to other nations among whom we are scattered, that with all reverence they may obey Thy holy gospel, lest for like contempt, in the end, like or worse plagues fall on them.²² Wherefore, O Lord, hear us! O Lord, forgive us! O Lord, consider and tarry not over long! But for Thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake, be merciful unto us and deliver us.²³ So shall it be known to all the world that Thou only art the selfsame God that ever showeth mercy to all such as call on Thy holy name.²⁴ Amen.

—Taken from Laing, *Works of John Knox*, 4:179–81

17. Gal. 5.

18. Zech. 7.

19. Pss. 23, 25.

20. Ps. 71.

21. Let all people take heed by our example [marg. note].

22. Matt. 11, 12; Luke 10.

23. John 16.

24. Pss. 103, 108, 136.

Another Confession for All States and Times

O eternal God and most merciful Father: we confess and acknowledge here, before Thy divine majesty, that we are miserable sinners¹ conceived and born in sin and iniquity,² so that in us there is no goodness.³ For the flesh evermore rebelleth against the Spirit,⁴ whereby we continually transgress Thy holy precepts and commandments, and so purchase to ourselves, through Thy just judgment, death and damnation.⁵

Notwithstanding, O heavenly Father, forasmuch as we are displeased with ourselves for the sins that we have committed against Thee and do unfeignedly repent us of the same, we most humbly beseech Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake, to show Thy mercy on us, to forgive us all our sins, and to increase Thy Holy Spirit in us so that we, acknowledging from the bottom of our hearts our own unrighteousness,⁶ may from henceforth not only mortify our sinful lusts and affections but also bring forth such fruits as may be agreeable to Thy most blessed will—not

1. Ps. 14; Rom. 3.

2. Ps. 51.

3. Rom. 7.

4. Gal. 5.

5. Isa. 40; Jer. 3; Rom. 2.

6. Rom. 6; Eph. 4, 5; Col. 3; 1 Peter 2.

for the worthiness thereof but for the merits of Thy dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ,⁷ our only Savior, whom Thou hast already given as an oblation and offering for our sins and for whose sake we are certainly persuaded that Thou wilt deny us nothing that we shall ask in His name according to Thy will.⁸ For Thy Spirit doth assure our consciences that Thou art our merciful Father⁹ and so lovest us Thy children through Him that nothing is able to remove Thy heavenly grace and favor from us. To Thee, therefore, O Father, with the Son and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. So be it.

—Taken from Laing, *Works of John Knox*, 4:181–82

7. Rom. 6; Eph. 2; Heb. 9.

8. Matt. 7; John 14, 16; James 1.

9. John 3; Rom. 8.

Another Confession and Prayer Commonly Used in the Church of Edinburgh on the Day of Common Prayer

O dreadful and most mighty God, Thou that from the beginning hast declared Thyself a consuming fire against despisers of Thy most holy precepts and yet to the penitent sinners hast always shown Thyself a favorable Father and a God full of mercy: we, Thy creatures and workmanship of Thy own hands, confess ourselves most unworthy to open our eyes unto the heavens, but far less to appear in Thy presence. For our consciences accuse us, and our manifest iniquities have borne witness against us that we have declined from Thee. We have been polluted with idolatry; we have given Thy glory to creatures; we have sought support where it was not to be found and have taken lightly Thy most wholesome admonitions. The manifest corruption of our lives in all estates evidently proveth that we have not rightly regarded Thy statutes, laws, and holy ordinances; and this was done, O Lord, not only in the time of our blindness, but even now, when of Thy mercy Thou hast opened unto us an entrance to Thy heavenly kingdom by the preaching of Thy holy gospel, the whole body of this miserable realm still continueth in their former impiety. For the most part—alas!—following the footsteps of the blind and obstinate princes, utterly despise the light of

Thy gospel and delight in ignorance and idolatry; others live as a people without God and without all fear of Thy terrible judgments. And some, O Lord, that in mouth profess Thy blessed gospel, by their slanderous life blaspheme the same. We are not ignorant, O Lord, that Thou art a righteous Judge that cannot suffer iniquity long to be unpunished in the obstinate transgressors, especially, O Lord, when that after such long blindness and horrible defection from Thee, so lovingly Thou callest us again to Thy favor and fellowship, and yet we do obstinately rebel. We have, O Lord, in our extreme misery, called unto Thee; yea, even when we appeared utterly to have been consumed in the fury of our enemies, then didst Thou mercifully incline Thy ears unto us. Thou foughtest for us even by Thy own power, when in us there was neither wisdom nor force. Thou alone breakest the yoke from our necks and settest us at liberty, when we by our foolishness had made ourselves slaves unto strangers; mercifully unto this day hast Thou continued with us the light of Thy gospel and so ceasest not to heap on us benefits both spiritual and temporal.

But yet—alas!—O Lord, we clearly see that our great ingratitude craveth further punishment at Thy hands, the signs whereof are evident before our eyes. For the whispering of sedition, the contempt of Thy graces offered, and the maintenance of idolatry are assured signs of Thy further plagues to fall on us in particular for our grievous offenses. And this immeasurable intemperance of the air doth also threaten Thy accustomed plague of famine that commonly

followeth riotous excess and contempt of the poor, where-with, alas, the whole earth is replenished. We have nothing, O Lord, that we may lay between us and Thy judgment but Thy only mercy freely offered to us in Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, purchased to us by His death and passion. For if Thou wilt enter into judgment with Thy creatures and keep in mind our grievous sins and offenses, then can there no flesh escape condemnation. Therefore, we most humbly beseech Thee, O Father of mercies, for Christ Jesus Thy Son's sake, to take from us these stony hearts, who so long have heard as well Thy mercies as severe judgments and yet have not been effectually moved with the same, and give unto us hearts mollified by Thy Spirit that may both conceive and keep in mind the reverence that is due unto Thy majesty. Look, O Lord, unto Thy chosen children laboring under the imperfections of the flesh and grant unto us that victory which Thou hast promised unto us by Jesus Christ Thy Son, our only Savior, Mediator, and Lawgiver, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and praise, now and ever. Amen.

—Taken from Laing, *Works of John Knox*, 6:294–96