



Linore Rose Burkard

Inspirational Romance
for the Jane Austen Soul



The Prayers of Jane Austen



Before we get to Jane's prayers, a few words about the society of her day might be helpful. England during her lifetime (1775-1817), was considered a "Christian nation." That is, unlike today, it was understood that most people had a working knowledge of the Anglican faith. It was the government-sanctioned religion, and mainstream.

This does not mean that all people were religious, of course, or even approving of the general moral codes of the nation. For example, the French painter and friend of Marie Antoinette, Elisabeth-

Louise Vigée LeBrun said of London that,

Sunday in London is as dismal as the climate. Not a shop is open; there are no plays, nor balls, nor concerts. Universal silence reigns, and as on that day no one is allowed to work nor even to play music without incurring the risk of having his windows broken by the populace, there is no resource for killing time but the public walks. These, indeed, are very well frequented"

The resentment in her tone is unmistakable. She goes on to describe these walks:

The women walk together on one side, all dressed in white; they are so taciturn, and so perfectly placid, that they might be taken for perambulating ghosts. The men hold aloof from them, and behave just as solemnly. I have sometimes come upon a couple, and have amused myself, if I happened to follow them awhile, by watching whether they would speak to each other. I never saw any who did.



Mme. LeBrun is evidently referring to a distinct style of walking, called promenading, which sounds so proper it is likely to conjure visions of stern Victorian dames. But this is shortly before the regency! In other words, this is the same society that is famous for its upper class scandals

and unquenchable thirst for enjoyment. But that was the upperclass. Jane herself would have greatly enjoyed promenading, as she mentions walking out on many occasions. Even the silence would have suited her, though not if it were prolonged. She loved good conversation as much as strolling. On one occasion she said in a letter that her cousin George had,

Talked sense to me every now & then in the intervals of his more animated fooleries with Miss Bendish... There was a monstrous deal of stupid quizzing, & commonplace nonsense talked, but scarcely any wit:--all that border'd on it, or on sense came from my Cousin George, whom altogether I like very well.

Jane was not given, it seems, to “stupid quizzing and commonplace nonsense.” She was far more interested in broadening her mind with real and exciting talk that might lead to new opinions and ideas. The prayers that follow are reminders of the earnest and sober sides of her nature. She is honest and real when she addresses her God, and yet of course more “pious” sounding than most of our prayers today. This was due to the nature of the religious upbringing she had been given in the Anglican church. Indeed, her sentences evoke the cadences of the BCP (Book of Common Prayer, 1662) which shows a great familiarity with it.

Jane did not only write the three prayers following, but most likely read them aloud in the evening, as the family sat together near the fire. At the end of each prayer comes "The Lord's Prayer," which would have been recited communally in unison, or repeated by the listeners after the reader.

Besides her father, the Rev. George Austen, Jane had two brothers who were clergymen (the Rev. James Austen, her eldest brother; and the Rev. Henry Austen, her fourth brother). She was also cousin to four clergymen, and the profession is represented in each of her novels. There can be no doubt whatsoever that she was intimately familiar with the ways of the church, and with private devotions, both alone and with her family.

Prayer the First: Give Us Grace

Give us grace, Almighty Father, so to pray,
as to deserve to be heard,
to address thee with our Hearts, as with our lips.
Thou art every where present, from Thee no secret can
be hid.
May the knowledge of this, teach us to fix our Thoughts
on Thee,
with Reverence and Devotion that we pray not in vain.

Look with Mercy on the Sins we have this day committed,
and in Mercy make us feel them deeply, that our



Interior view of the church in Steventon, where Jane's father was rector .

Repentance may be sincere, and our resolution steadfast of endeavouring against the commission of such in future.

Teach us to understand the sinfulness of our own Hearts, and bring to our knowledge every fault of Temper and every evil Habit in which we have indulged to the discomfort of our fellow-creatures, and the danger of our own Souls.

May we now, and on each return of night, consider how the past day has been spent by us, what have been our prevailing Thoughts, Words, and Actions during it, and how far we can acquit ourselves of Evil.

Have we thought irreverently of Thee, have we disobeyed thy commandments, have we neglected any known duty, or willingly given pain to any human being?

Incline us to ask our Hearts these questions Oh! God, and save us from deceiving ourselves by Pride or Vanity.

Give us a thankful sense of the Blessings in which we live, of the many comforts of our lot; that we may not deserve to lose them by Discontent or Indifference.

Be gracious to our Necessities, and guard us, and all we love, from Evil this night. May the sick and afflicted, be now, and ever [in] thy care; and heartily do we pray for the safety of all that travel by Land or by Sea, for the comfort and protection of the Orphan and Widow and that thy pity may be shewn upon all Captives and Prisoners.

Above all other blessings Oh! God, for ourselves, and our fellow-creatures, we implore Thee to quicken our sense of thy Mercy in the redemption of the World, of the Value of that Holy Religion in which we have been brought up, that we may not, by our own neglect, throw away the salvation thou has given us, nor be Christians only in name. Hear us Almighty God, for His sake who has redeemed us, and taught us thus to pray.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.



“It will, I believe, be everywhere found, that as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation.”

Jane Austen



[Linore Rose Burkard.com](http://LinoreRoseBurkard.com)

Inspirational Romance for the Jane Austen Soul

Prayer the Second: Almighty God!

Almighty God!

Look down with mercy on thy servants here assembled
and accept the petitions now offered up unto thee.

Pardon oh! God the offences of the past day.

We are conscious of many frailties;
we remember with shame and contrition, many evil thoughts and neglected duties;
and we have perhaps sinned against thee and against
our fellow-creatures in many instances of which
we have no remembrance. Pardon oh God!
whatever thou has seen amiss in us,
and give us a stronger desire of resisting every evil inclination
and weakening every habit of sin.

Thou knowest the infirmity of our nature,
and the temptations which surround us.

Be thou merciful, oh heavenly Father!
to creatures so formed and situated.

We bless thee for every comfort of our past and present existence,
for our health of body and of mind
and for every other source of happiness
which thou hast bountifully bestowed on us
and with which we close this day,
imploping their continuance from thy fatherly goodness,
with a more grateful sense of them, than they have hitherto excited.
May the comforts of every day, be thankfully felt by us,
may they prompt a willing obedience of thy commandments
and a benevolent spirit toward every fellow-creature.

Have mercy oh gracious Father!

upon all that are now suffering from whatsoever cause,
that are in any circumstance of danger or distress.

Give them patience under every affliction,
strengthen, comfort and relieve them.

To thy goodness we commend ourselves this night
beseeching thy protection of us through its darkness and dangers.

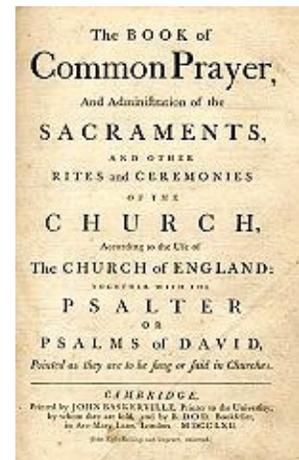
We are helpless and dependent; graciously preserve us.

For all whom we love and value, for every friend and connection,
we equally pray; however divided and far asunder,
we know that we are alike before thee, and under thine eye.

May we be equally united in thy faith and fear,
in fervent devotion towards thee,
and in thy merciful protection this night.

Pardon oh Lord!

the imperfections of these our prayers,
and accept them through the mediation of our blessed saviour,



The Book of Common Prayer. The 1662 version that Jane read is still in use today.

in whose holy words, we further address thee.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.

Prayer the Third: Father of Heaven!

Father of Heaven!
whose goodness has brought us in safety
to the close of this day,
dispose our hearts in fervent prayer.
Another day is now gone, and added to those,
for which we were before accountable.
Teach us almighty father,
to consider this solemn truth, as we should do,
that we may feel the importance of every day,
and every hour as it passes,
and earnestly strive to make a better use
of what thy goodness may yet bestow on us,
than we have done of the time past.

Give us grace to endeavour after a truly Christian spirit
to seek to attain that temper of forbearance and patience
of which our blessed saviour has set us the highest example;
and which, while it prepares us for the spiritual happiness
of the life to come, will secure to us the best enjoyment
of what this world can give.
Incline us oh God!
to think humbly of ourselves,
to be severe only in the examination of our own conduct,
to consider our fellow-creatures with kindness,
and to judge of all they say and do
with that charity which we would desire from them ourselves.

We thank thee with all our hearts for every gracious
dispensation, for all the blessings that have attended our lives,
for every hour of safety, health and peace,



of domestic comfort and innocent enjoyment.
We feel that we have been blessed far beyond
any thing that we have deserved;
and though we cannot but pray for a continuance
of all these mercies, we acknowledge our unworthiness
of them and implore thee to pardon the presumption of our
desires.

Keep us oh!
Heavenly Father from evil this night.
Bring us in safety to the beginning
of another day and grant that we may rise again
with every serious and religious feeling which now directs
us.

May thy mercy be extended over all mankind,
bringing the ignorant to the knowledge of thy truth,
awakening the impenitent, touching the hardened.
Look with compassion upon the afflicted
of every condition, assuage the pangs of disease,
comfort the broken in spirit.

More particularly do we pray
for the safety and welfare of our own family and friends
wheresoever dispersed, beseeching thee to avert from them
all material and lasting evil of body or mind;
and may we by the assistance of thy holy spirit
so conduct ourselves on earth as to secure
an eternity of happiness with each other in thy heavenly kingdom.
Grant this most merciful Father, for the sake of our blessed saviour
in whose holy name and words we further address thee.

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.



Linore Rose Burkard writes *Inspirational Romance for the Jane Austen Soul*. Her characters take you back in time to experience life and love during the Regency England era (circa 1800 – 1830). Ms. Burkard's novels include *Before the Season Ends* and *The House in Grosvenor Square* (coming April, 2009). Her stories blend Christian faith and romance with well-researched details from the Regency period. [Experience a romantic age](#), where timeless lessons still apply to modern life, and happy endings are possible for everyone!

Resources: [The Book of Common Prayer](#) with links
Jane Austen and the Clergy: Collins, Irene. The Hambledon Press, 1994
The Memoirs of Elisabeth-Louise Vigée LeBrun

