

The Lord's Prayer

(Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:9-13)

"Give us day by day our daily bread"

Nothing less than divine wisdom could have framed this petition, so simple and so reasonable is it. Human greed would ask for enough today to supply all possible wants for the future; but if that were granted, the person could use no more of it today than he would use if he had only enough for today's needs. Not only so, but human greed would overreach itself. Thus, if the man should today receive enough for all time, he would have no occasion to ask for anything tomorrow. He would trust in his possession instead of God, and would soon forget God. Thus cutting himself off from the only power that can bestow and preserve, he would soon lose what he has, and then have nothing either for today or tomorrow. Riches make to themselves wings and fly away. But the man who every day asks for provision sufficient for that day, with the assurance that he will receive it, is far better off. He has enough for today, and that is all he could use anyway. And then he does not wear himself out in the vain effort to take care of property that he has stored up for the future. His future supply is in the hands of God, who thus becomes his banker. Surely the man who has all he needs, just when he needs it, while someone else takes care of that which he does not actually need, is far better off than the man who has only what he needs today, but who is burdened with the care of a lot of stuff that he may never need.

Solomon understood the principle spoken of here when he asks only to have what is needed for today: "Give me neither poverty nor riches— feed me with the food allotted to 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" (Prov. 30:7–9).

This petition teaches contentment. The conclusions in the preceding two paragraphs are in harmony with the teaching of the apostle Paul. Said he: "Now 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 clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:6–10).

Here the apostle brings out an additional danger from not trusting God for our daily bread. It is that the man having more than he needs for today, is tempted to use more than he needs. Thus his thoughts become centered entirely on self and the gratification of his own desires and lusts, which increase and multiply with the gratification, until he is finally drowned in perdition.

The apostle continues: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17) This is in harmony with the petition which the Lord has

taught us. We are not taught that to have riches is sin, for the Lord gives some men power to get wealth, but that the sin comes in setting one's heart upon them. The possession of riches is a great danger for Christ says: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" This is because it is next to impossible for one who has riches to keep from setting his heart upon them, and so neglecting to trust in the living God, and forgetting that it is God who gives us all things richly to enjoy.

This is taught by the parable in Luke 12:16-21. "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully." Here we see that it was not the man's superior skill that brought him his wealth, but the providence of God in giving "rain and fruitful seasons." And the man thought: "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops? And he said, 'will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there I will all my crops, and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." If he had listened to the Lord, he might have known what to do with his goods. Says the inspired word: "Command those who are rich . . . Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Instead of this, the man trusted in his riches, and had nothing.

"But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" Why is the man called a fool? Because the fool, according to the Bible, is one who says in his heart, "There is no God." This man acted as though there were no God, because he assumed that he must take care of himself, and left God out of the account altogether. He may have been a professor of religion, but he was practically an atheist. There are thousands of such men in the world today. But no matter how much they exalt themselves (for the man who by his actions assumes that his prosperity depends upon himself alone, virtually puts himself in the place of God), they will in the end be put in fear, and be made to know that they are but men.

"So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). We have already read from Paul the injunction to rich men to lay up store for themselves "a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." In the Sermon on the Mount Christ said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). Neither of these texts implies that the kingdom of God can be bought with money. But they both teach that no man can reach heaven unless he has his treasure there. It is not that his wealth buys him a place in the kingdom of God, but that his thoughts are of God and heaven, and thus he prepares for heaven. In all his ways he acknowledges God, and thus God directs his paths.

At the present time the principle contained in the petition, "Give us day by day our daily bread," needs to be taught; because the tendency of the last days is all against it. We

read: "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days" (James 5:1–3). This does not apply to the millionaires alone, but to all who are heaping treasure. That is, to all who allow their treasures to "heap" up or accumulate. Some time ago we saw a gold piece that was discolored by rust. We asked what caused it, and learned that it had been paid out by a woman who, having a little more money than she needed, had buried the surplus in the ground. She was not a rich woman, but we could not help thinking of the words of James. But the principle of heaping up treasure was there, which showed distrust of God. And what made it worse was that the woman professed to believe in the soon coming of the Lord. Whether we are poor or rich, let us "beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possess" (Luke 12:15); and let us not fear to trust the Lord, knowing that if God clothes the grass and the lilies of the field in beauty, and provides for the sustenance of the birds of the air, He will much more care for those He has bought with the blood of His own dear Son. The sacrifice of Christ is the pledge of God's care for us. "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

The Signs of the Times, (March 31, 1887).

"AFTER THIS MANNER PRAY" - "WHEN YOU PRAY, SAY"