

The Lord's Prayer

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

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name"

When Christ was on earth He prayed often, sometimes spending whole nights in prayer. Of course none of these prayers are recorded. We have, however, the record of several prayers which He offered in public, prominent among which are the prayer at the grave of Lazarus, and the one for His disciples, just before His betrayal and crucifixion. But neither of these is referred to by the term, "the Lord's prayer." That prayer is the brief petition which our Savior gave as a model for all prayers. And a model it is indeed. It comprehends everything that it is possible for man to desire from God. There are no circumstances or conditions in life that are not covered by this petition. Yet this must be understood as applying to followers of Christ, and not to unconverted persons, even though they be convicted of sin. This will appear in the course of our comments upon the prayer.

There is no other form of words ever devised which can be used as a prayer over and over again for years, and still retain its freshness. This is simply because this one was given by One who knew man's needs. But our Savior did not design that His disciples should simply repeat the words which He gave them. This is evident from the introduction: "After this manner pray / When you pray say." It was designed as we have said, as a comprehensive model. Let us consider it well, that we may henceforth pray with more of the Spirit and the understanding.

"Our Father"

What tenderness is expressed in those words! What infinite condescension it reveals on the part of God to allow poor, frail mortals to address Him thus. His greatness is unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Before Him, "the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless" (Isa. 40:15-17). He walks "on the wings of the wind" (Ps. 104:3); he "has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet" (Nahum 1:3). And yet this awful God has the tenderness of a parent, and His ear is open to the supplications of those who whisper, even in faintest accents, "Our Father;" for we are told that "as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him" (Psalms 103:13). Although God is the "High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy," He has assured us that He dwells with him "who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). Thus the first words of the Lord's prayer bring us into the most intimate relation with the great Creator.

Even in the first word alone there is a great truth conveyed. It shows the relation of those who can call God Father. They are brethren, having common hopes and needs. Even in his secret devotions, the Christian is not to make his petitions wholly personal. He is not to be shut up to his own needs, but is to remember that he is only one of a great family, whose welfare ought to be with him scarcely second to his own. Paul wrote to the Romans: "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers" (Rom. 1:9). It is possible for a person to be selfish even in his petitions for overcoming grace; but it will be found in that case, as in all others, that selfishness defeats itself. Every Christian will bear witness to the fact that the richest blessings have come to him when, even though almost overwhelmed with a sense of his own need, he has coupled his petition for pardon and strength, with a request for a blessing upon others besides himself. And so, even in the closet, we are to say, "Our Father."

It is not everybody, however, who can say, "Our Father." We hear much of the "Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man," but the Bible says nothing about such a thing. All men are not sons of God. Paul reminds the Ephesians of the time before they were converted, saying, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). In the first verses he shows still more plainly that men are not by nature the children of God. He says: "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Eph. 2:1–3). Again the apostle warns the Ephesian brethren against the sins to which they had formerly been addicted, saying, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 5:6; see also Col. 3:6). S

But the plainest statement of all, that men are not by nature the children of God, was given by our Savior himself. To the wicked Jews who said, "we have one Father—God," He said: "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. . . . You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:41–44). Putting these texts together, we learn that all who know not God are the children of wrath; they are the children, or recipients, of wrath, because they are children of disobedience because they are the children of the devil. Now a person cannot at the same time be a child of God and a child of Satan. Nor is it necessary that one should be as hardened as were the Jews to whom Christ spoke, in order that they may be called children of Satan. "Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34). If a person is a child of disobedience and of darkness, he is not a child of God. "All have sinned;" and therefore none are by nature children of God.

How do people become children of God? If they are not natural children, it must be by adoption. So Paul says: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of

God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:14–17). In like manner he writes to the Galatians: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal. 4:4–7).

In the above text it will be noticed that the Spirit is the pledge of our adoption. It is called the Spirit of adoption, because only those who have the Spirit are sons of God. Indeed, its reception constitutes us sons of God. If we are children, then we are heirs of God; and so Paul says that the Spirit "is the guarantee of our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14).

If we are heirs of God, we are joint heirs with Christ. All that Christ has or is to have, we shall have also. He is the Son of God by birth; the only begotten Son of God. Angels are the sons of God (Job 38:7) by creation. Adam was a son of God in the same way, only a little lower than the angels. If he had not sinned against God, his descendants would like him have been sons of God. But he transferred his allegiance to Satan, and so no man from Adam down can be a son of God except by adoption. "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

From this brief study of the Scripture it is clearly evident that since the Lord's prayer begins, "Our Father," it cannot be used by one who is not a child of God. For those who are in a state of nature, and thus children of wrath, there is another prayer. It is, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." They cannot address the Creator as Father, but only as God, the Judge who, however, is able to save as well as to destroy. If they have once been adopted into the family of God, and have lost their heirship through sin, the same prayer is applicable. With David, under like circumstances, they may cry: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions" (Psalms 51:1). "Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (v. 9). "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit" (v. 12). But only those with whose spirits the Spirit of God bears witness that they are children of God, can with confidence repeat the tender words, "Our Father."

Yet not a long time must the sinner lie a suppliant at the throne of God, unable to utter those words. God is longing for the world to become reconciled to him. When the prodigal son, who had forfeited his right to a place in his father's house, said, "I will arise, and go to my father" (Luke 15:18), not as a son but as a servant seeking mercy, his father met him while he was yet a long way off. He met him not as a master, but as a father. The humble prodigal did not have time to call himself a servant before he was embraced as a son. And so, although no one in a state of nature can properly repeat the Lord's prayer, at the first sincere petition for mercy, which the repentant sinner puts up

to God, the Spirit of God is sent forth into his heart, and he becomes a son, and can confidently and joyfully say, Father, Father.

"In Heaven"

The fact that God is in Heaven is often used to indicate His power and majesty. The expression occurring in the model prayer indicates that whoever prays should recognize the greatness of the Being whom he addresses. "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6). We quote a few texts to show the comprehensiveness of the expression, "in Heaven."

"The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). "But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases" (Ps. 115:3). The same thing is found in 2 Chronicles 20:6: "O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?" Whenever it is designed to indicate the power and majesty of God, His dwelling-place in heaven is mentioned.

"The Lord is in His holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men" (Ps. 11:4). Here God's dwelling-place in heaven is mentioned to show His omniscience.

"Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the Lord; "Do I not fill heaven and earth?" says the Lord" (Jer. 23:24). Here the omnipresence of God is indicated, as also in 1 Kings 8:27: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!" And also, "Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?" (Isa. 66:1).

"Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Eccl. 5:2). Here the fact that God is in heaven is given as a reason for sobriety and carefulness of speech.

Thus we find that the expression in the Lord's Prayer, "in heaven," stands for a recognition of the power, the majesty, the omnipotence, and the omniscience of God. All these things should be borne in mind when we approach the throne of grace. This thought will tend to produce reverence and awe. Multiplication of words and "vain repetitions," for which Christ condemned the heathen, arise from the fact that the petitioner thinks more of himself than he does of the One whom he is addressing. The heathen gods were so contemptible that the heathen worshiper could not help thinking more of himself than of his god; for heathen worship, in its inception, was self-worship. (See Rom. 1:21-23). But the God whom we worship sits upon the circle of the heavens,

and he who has a just sense of His greatness will come with reverence into His presence, and will confine his words to just the things which he needs.

"Hallowed Be Your Name"

This follows as a natural consequence of that which precedes. The one who remembers the words, "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun (Jerusalem), who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds" (Deut. 33:26), will of necessity "fear this glorious and awesome name, THE LORD YOUR GOD" (Deut. 28:58).

The Signs of the Times, (February 24, 1887) and (March 3, 1887).

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

The Lord's Prayer

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

"Your kingdom come"

In this brief petition is contained one of the most comprehensive requests ever made by mortal man. Thousands have repeated the simple phrase thoughtlessly, and thousands who have pronounced the words with all the reverence possible for them, have had very limited ideas of what they were asking for. Someone has well written:—

"Your kingdom come; and day by day
We lift our hands to God, and pray;
But who has ever duly weighed
The meaning of those words he said?"

Let us try to weigh the meaning of the words, that we may utter them more intelligently. It is certain that if we know the full meaning of the petition, we shall not lightly make use of it.

First, we will notice that the Lord's prayer shows the kingdom to be still future. That prayer is for all Christians; it is a model for us, just as much as it was for the personal followers of Christ. We are to pray for the kingdom of God to come; but that would be out of place if the kingdom were already set up. That it was not set up in the days of Christ's first advent, is shown by the question which His disciples asked as they stood upon the Mount of Olives, just before He was taken out of their sight. Said they, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Christ did not say, "It has already been restored," but "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (v. 7). That is, It is not for the disciples to know when the kingdom will come; but they are to pray for it; if they knew that the time for the kingdom were fixed, it would be useless to pray for it. That God has not made known the time of the coming kingdom, is shown by the statement that he has put it "in His own authority." He is not under obligations to set up the kingdom at any specified time, for he has not appointed any; it is all within His own power.

Many people have the idea that "the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5), is a spiritual kingdom, that it is simply the reign of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. It is true that the gospel plan is termed a kingdom, as in Col. 1:13 and Rev. 1:9; but that kingdom,—the kingdom of grace,—began as soon as man fell, as soon as he had need of "the grace of God that brings salvation" (Titus 2:11); but the kingdom referred to in the Lord's prayer is, as we have seen, still future; consequently that kingdom cannot be the gospel. Moreover, the apostle James says: "Listen, my beloved brethren: has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" (James 2:5). Here he speaks of a kingdom that is promised to those who love the Lord,—a kingdom of which they are heirs through faith. It is this kingdom for whose coming we are to pray.

What Is the Kingdom?

When Adam was created, he was made king of the earth, as is shown by these words: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:27–28). This dominion was forfeited by the fall, and the world passed into the hands of the one who had conquered Adam,—Satan,—who is now "god of this world." Not that God has no control over the earth; for even when He gave the dominion to Adam, He did not relinquish any part of His own universal dominion; but Satan took as much of the dominion as was given to Adam. He is not able, however, to go beyond the bounds which God sets for him. (See Job 1:12, 2:6).

When David was king over Israel, God promised him that his throne should be "established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). This promise was often repeated, and God said, "My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, And his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky" (Ps. 89:34–37). Yet notwithstanding this promise, it was not long before the whole kingdom of Israel was overthrown, and the people were taken into captivity; and although many of the people were afterward allowed to return to their own land, the kingdom was never restored. The kings who afterward reigned in Jerusalem were simply the creatures of the Roman power, which controlled Judea and all the rest of the civilized world.

But David himself, it seems, never expected that his throne should be established forever with earthly monarchs upon it. He understood that Christ was the one referred to, who should rule over the kingdom. So Peter, after quoting David's words in Ps. 16:8-11, said: "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:29–31).

Christ, then, is the one who is to "restore again the kingdom to Israel." It is to be a literal kingdom for He is to sit upon the throne of David. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she should be the mother of Jesus, he said: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32–33). The coming kingdom must, therefore be as literal a kingdom as was that of David.

The kingdom is, however, to be different, in that it will be perfect and sinless. Said the prophet, addressing Christ by inspiration; "And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the

kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem" (Micah 4:8). And the Lord himself, in His promise to David, said: "Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously" (2 Samuel 7:10).

These two texts teach us that the dominion of Christ is to be the same as that given to Adam,—“the first dominion,”—that it will be the earth in its Eden beauty and free from the oppression of sin. And so we read the words of Peter, who, after speaking of the fire which shall melt the earth, and shall destroy sin and sinners out of it, says, “Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). (This promise is recorded in Isa. 65:17-25. Read those verses, and then read the parallel passage in Amos 9:13-15. Then read Amos 9:11, 12, and you will see that this new heavens and new earth is in the time when the Lord has restored the kingdom to Israel). So we learn that when we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we are simply praying for God to set up His own reign of righteousness in the earth made new.

Setting Up the Kingdom

But let not the subject be dismissed with this simple statement of the truth. Around the fulfillment of this promise cluster the grandest and most tremendously important events. That kingdom is ushered in by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul indicates in his charge to Timothy: “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). This kingdom Christ receives before He returns to earth; for He Himself compared Himself and kingdom to a certain nobleman that “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return” (Luke 19:11, 12). See the account of His receiving this kingdom, in Dan. 7:13, 14. So it is, that when Christ comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, He will be sitting upon the throne of His glory, and to the righteous He will say: “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:31–34). This again shows that the kingdom which the saints are to inherit is the dominion of the new earth.

In this kingdom righteousness, and that alone shall dwell. (2 Pet. 3:13). The prophet says of that time: “Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa. 60:21). Read the verses preceding this one, and then read the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, the last verse of which says: “But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:27).

This state of righteousness will not be brought about by the conversion of all men, for we read that as the end approaches “lawlessness will abound” (Matt. 24:12) and that “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse” (2 Tim. 3:13); and that in the days when the Son of Man shall be revealed, it shall be as it was in the days of Noah and of

Lot. (Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30). So when God gives to Christ the heathen for this inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, for a possession, the first thing He does is to rule them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. (See Ps. 2:8, 9). Says the prophet: "Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it" (Isa. 13:9). And we also read that "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed" (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Thus we learn that to pray, "Your kingdom come," is to pray for the coming of the Lord to destroy the wicked, and to cleanse the earth of everything that defiles, and to give immortality to His people. God is no respecter of persons. Whosoever shall not be found written in the book of life shall be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:15). It will avail nothing that men have said, "Lord, Lord,"—that they have prayed earnestly, even praying for the kingdom of God to come, if in that day any defilement is found in them, they will be cast into the lake of fire. Who is there, then, that realizing what the kingdom of God is, who alone can inherit it, and what will be the fate of those who are unfit,—can pray, "Your kingdom come," and still cherish sin in his heart? How carefully and blameless we must live if we are able to unite, in saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20).

The Signs of the Times, (March 10, 1887).

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

The Lord's Prayer

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

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"

It is probable that this part of the Lord's prayer is the least understood of any. The sentence, "Your will be done," is thought by most people to be applicable only in cases of sickness or other trial, to indicate that the sufferer is willing to endure patiently. But this is but a very limited view of the expression. As a matter of fact there is no more comprehensive sentence in the Bible, or that can be uttered by man, than the simple words, "Your will be done." It all depends on what the will of the Lord is, which point we must investigate.

The second chapter of Romans has reference especially to the Jews, to show that they, as well as the Gentiles, are sinners, and the apostle speaks to them directly, in these words: "Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law" (Rom. 2:17, 18). How does Paul say the Jew knew the will of God? Because he was instructed out of the law. The obvious conclusion, then, is that the will of God may be known only by a study of the law, which makes necessary the further conclusion that the law of God is His will.

This conclusion is verified most plainly by the words which the psalmist utters prophetically in behalf of Christ. In Psalms 40:7, 8, we read: "Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart." It is first stated that Christ delighted to do the will of the Father; and then to make this statement emphatic, it is added, "Your law is within my heart." Out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23); as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7); that is, a man's actions correspond to that which is in his heart; he does just what is in his heart. Therefore if the law of God being in a man's heart leads him to delight to do the will of God, it follows that the law of God is the will of God.

In Rev. 22:14 we read that they who keep the commandments shall have right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city; and in Matt. 7:21 we read that only those who do the will of God, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Here again we see the identity of the will of God and the commandments. If there is any doubt in anyone's mind as to what law it is that is the will of God, it may be settled by reading Rom. 2:21, 22 in connection with verses 17-20, the first two of which have been quoted. The Ten Commandments are the will of God.

Therefore when we pray, "Your will be done," we in reality pray that the commandments of God may be kept by us and by all others who dwell on the earth. We pray that they may be kept even as they are kept in heaven, where the angels "do His word, heeding the voice of His word" (Ps. 103:20). It follows, therefore, that whoever utters the Lord's prayer or a prayer modeled after it, and does not in his heart "consent unto the law that it is good," and honestly desires to conform to all its requirements, is guilty of mockery

before God. Such an one cannot hope to have his petition regarded; and so we may understand the words of the psalmist: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18); and of Solomon: "One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

When will this petition be granted? When shall the will of God be done in earth as it is now done in heaven? The preceding clause, upon which we commented in our last article, answers this question. It is when the kingdom of God is established upon the earth; for in the new heavens and the new earth, righteousness alone shall dwell. (2 Peter 3:13). "Also your people shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land forever" (Isa. 60:21). The law of God, His holy will, is righteousness (Ps. 119:172), and the keeping of it constitutes the righteousness of God's people. (Deut. 6:25). The Lord's prayer, therefore teaches us to long for the coming and kingdom of our Lord, when the law of God shall be in the hearts of all men, even as it was in the heart of the Son of God when He was on earth.

But the coming of the Lord, and the establishment of His kingdom, will not bring about this state of things. When Christ comes, the only change which is wrought in men is the change from mortality to immortality. He does not change men's characters from sinfulness to righteousness, for just before He comes the decree goes forth: "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11). Men will be ushered into eternity with just the same characters that they have when probation closes. Those who inhabit the new earth will all be righteous, simply because the transgressors will have been rooted out of it (Prov. 2:22), and the perfect will be permitted to remain in it, just because they are perfect in the midst of unrighteousness, even as Noah was.

This being the case, it follows that to utter the Lord's prayer with honesty of heart, is to pray that God will work in us that which is good; it indicates a willingness to submit ourselves in all things to the will of God, that we may become like Him. Certainly no one who knows what the will of God is, and who knows how it will come to pass that the will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, could utter that prayer and not really desire to have that law written in his heart.

Although God's ways are as much higher than our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth, we have the assurance that every petition offered in humility and sincerity will be answered, and we may attain to this high standard. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Signs of the Times, (March 24, 1887).

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

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"

The Lord's Prayer

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

"And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us"

This may be called the crowning petition in this wonderful prayer. In the beginning of these comments we said that this prayer is only for those who have given themselves to Christ,—who can truly say "Our Father." This proves that still more plainly. We do not mean that it is for none but those who are perfect, but that it is for those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord that He may work in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. To be able always to pray understandingly and from the heart, "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us," is something that can be done by but comparatively few who profess to be Christians. The one who can do it is in possession of the greatest of all Christian graces—love; for "love suffers long, and is kind," "is not provoked, thinks no evil," and this is the way we would be to have the Lord deal with us.

A great many people think that they are of a forgiving disposition when they are not. When they have done wrong, and someone takes revenge on them, they think that they are deserving of considerable credit if they can take it patiently; but they think that they are perfectly justifiable in harboring harsh thoughts, at least, if they are injured without cause. This is indicated by the common saying, "If I had done anything to deserve this treatment, I would not say anything; but I have not done anything, and I won't stand it." That is as far from the forgiveness that our Savior taught, as the east is from the west. "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God" (1 Peter 2:20).

It has been truly said that to forgive is divine. Certainly it is not human. Human nature knows nothing of forgiveness. Human nature stands upon its dignity, and says, "I'll have my rights; nobody shall trample on me with impunity." But the divine Son of God, who did no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). You who say, "All I ask is simple justice; I demand only my rights," how would you fare if you should go immediately after such an assertion and repeat the Lord's prayer, and the Lord should take you at your word? Who could stand if the Lord should mark iniquity? Suppose the Lord should give you simple justice,—just what you deserve, and nothing more,—what would be the result? Not only would you be deprived of eternal life, but your present life would not be continued for another moment; for there is not one of us who deserves a single blessing from the hand of God; "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. 3:22). There is in us no good thing; we have all gone out of the way, and are unprofitable (Rom. 3:10-12); now when our rights have been invaded,

and we cherish resentment, we cannot utter the Lord's prayer without asking the Lord not to forgive us. What a terrible thing it is not to have a forgiving spirit.

Nor can we avoid the consequence above indicated, by refusing to use our Savior's prayer. Whether we ask or not, we shall be forgiven just as we forgive. Says the Savior: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:14, 15).

We have said that forgiveness is not natural to the human heart. Only to the extent that one is partaker of the divine nature, can he exercise true forgiveness. God's forgiveness is the standard for us. Says Paul: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). No one can know how to forgive, unless he knows how God forgives; and nobody can fully understand how God forgives, until he has felt in his own soul the fullness of divine pardon. It will be worth our while to note a few texts which show how God forgives, so that we may know what spirit we should have. Let us read a few texts:—

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:9, 10, 19).

We have heard it claimed that we are not required to forgive an offender unless he asks for forgiveness; that until he repents and begs for pardon, we are warranted in holding him off. But the above texts convey a different idea. We are to forgive as God forgives. Now suppose that God had made no movement towards the salvation of rebellious men until they humbled themselves before Him; there never would have been any salvation for men. It is only because of His love for us while we were rebels, that we are enabled to come to Him. He was under no obligation to mankind; the obligation was all on the other side; yet He took the initiative. God loved the world. He harbored no malice or enmity in His heart, because He had been insulted, and His laws trampled upon, but was filled with love and pity for poor, erring mortals. It grieved Him to think that man would pursue a course that would inevitably end in his ruin, and He made the way easy for him to return to his allegiance, and begged him to come and be forgiven. The same spirit should actuate us. No matter how much we may have been misused, we are not warranted in entertaining the slightest feeling of enmity toward the offender. On the contrary, we should have such love for him that our only feeling would be that of sorrow that he should pursue a course so detrimental to himself. The thought of the personal injury we have sustained should be lost sight of in the thought of the greater injury which

the offender's course will bring upon himself. It is not natural for us to do this; we can do it only when we are partakers of the divine nature.

It may be said that God does not actually forgive men until they repent. This is true; but He desires that they shall receive His pardon, and therefore, so far as He is concerned, He has pardoned them. All that is lacking is for them to accept the pardon which He gives them; if they will not, He is clear, and the responsibility of their ruin rests upon themselves. God could not actually pardon an unrepentant sinner, for the reason that when He pardons it means far more than when we forgive. If a man has maliciously injured us, and we forgive him, it makes no difference with his guilt; but when God forgives the sinner, his guilt is by that pardon taken away; and it is evident that God cannot take away the guilt of a man who has no desire or intention to abstain from his sins and is determined to retain his guilty practices.

This brings us to another feature of forgiveness. It is very common for people to say that they can forgive but they cannot forget. That is not true forgiveness. The man who does not forget the injury, will brood over it until the bitter feelings will come up again with more than their original force; the harsh feelings are not put away, but only smothered for a time. The man who does not forget an injury done to him, has never really forgiven the offender; he has not allowed love for the erring one to eclipse all thought of the injury done to himself, and without this there can be no forgiveness such as God exercises toward us. Divine pardon is justification; God pardons the believer in Christ, by imputing His righteousness "for the remission of sins that are past." The pardoned one is as though he had never sinned; where there was nothing but guilt before, God beholds nothing but righteousness,—righteousness put there through His own wonderful love. Then if we forgive as God forgives, we must regard the repentant offender as though he had done nothing against us. We must forget that he ever injured us. We must treat him and regard him as though he had done us nothing but good instead of nothing but evil.

The man who forgives in this manner is a true disciple of Christ, because no one can do this unless he has and is experiencing the blessing of divine forgiveness. It is not enough that we have once been forgiven; we must have a vivid sense of the love of God toward us now, if we would forgive as we ought. Under these circumstances the most difficult thing in the world to do, becomes the easiest. Because when we realize how sinful we are, and how much God has forgiven us, it seems a small matter in comparison to forgive the petty wrong done us by a fellow-man. When we contemplate the magnitude of our sin against God, all the wrongs that men may have done to us, sink into insignificance. We think that the servant who had received a free gift of ten thousand talents from his lord was mean and ungrateful because he would not give his fellow-servant one hundred pence. If he had any sense of what had been done for him, he would have told his fellow-servant to keep the paltry sum, and would have thought no more about it. So if we have any just sense of God's love to us, we cannot fail to exhibit corresponding love to our fellows.

The Signs of the Times, (May 5, 1887).

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

The Lord's Prayer

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

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one"

This petition cannot well be considered apart from that which immediately follows it: "but deliver us from the evil one." Both together form a fitting climax to this wonderful prayer, for they indicate, if used understandingly, the soul's desire for purity of heart.

There are two senses in which the word tempted is used in the Bible. The apostle says: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). Again he says: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed" (v. 14). Now it is evident that the apostle would not exhort men to count it a joyful thing to be drawn away of their own lust, and enticed into sin; therefore the temptations spoken of in verse 2 are different from those in verse 14.

The temptations of verse 2 are those which are successfully met, and which leaves the individual stronger than ever. It is the trying of faith. In Ephesians 6:16 we learn that "taking the shield of faith" we "will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." The office of a shield is to protect the person. If a "fiery dart" is received upon the shield, the person at whom it was aimed receives no injury; he does not feel it. The trials (temptations), then, which work patience, and which strengthen, are those which are instantly repelled and meet with no response in our heart.

The other temptations, of verse 14, are those which come from within our heart. The sin presents itself, mind goes out towards it, and longs for it. It may be that the actual act is never committed, but since "the devising of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9), the one who only in imagination does the sinful act is in the sight of God accounted guilty. Such temptations as those are natural to every human being, "for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders" (Mark 7:21).

The petition "do not lead us into temptation," must be understood as meaning, "suffer us not to fall into temptation;" and it must also be understood as referring to the second class of temptations (those described in James 1:14),—those which proceed from within our heart. The reason is (1) that we are not to ask freedom from trials, but rather to count them a blessing, and (2) that God cannot and does not lead people into sin. The prayer, then, is "suffer us not to fall [or to be overcome by] into foolish and hurtful lust, but deliver us (keep us back) from evil."

This cannot mean that God will not allow a man to act out the evil that is in him, for that would be impossible; if evil is in the heart, it must show itself, and we are expressly told that at one time God left a man to do what his heart prompted him to do. The man was Hezekiah. After he had been healed, the Babylonian ambassadors came to

congratulate, and he showed them all the treasures of his kingdom. (2 Kings 20:12, 13). This action was prompted by pride. (2 Chron. 32:24, 25). The historian, speaking of this, says: "However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron. 32:31). We must therefore conclude that the petition "do not lead us into temptation" does not mean that God is to interpose his mighty power to miraculously preserve us from the wickedness that is in our own hearts.

There can be but one conclusion, and that is that this prayer implies a renunciation and hatred of sin, and a desire to have the heart cleansed from it, and to be strengthened again not allowing it [the sin] to pass the shield of faith, and gain access to the heart. This is the only way that temptations can be instantly repelled, since, as we have read, evil thoughts are natural to the human heart.

It was to effect this that Christ came into the earth. It is not enough that we be freed from the guilt of sin,—from past transgressions,—but we must be freed from the love of sin. Paul says that Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father" (Gal. 1:4). This "present evil age" does not mean the physical creation, "for all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). Again we read that he "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

This is what God wants to do for us; it is what we are to ask Him to do for us, for He will not do it against our will. What is there to hinder His doing it? Nothing, if we offer the prayer in all sincerity, "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." We cannot cleanse ourselves from the defilement of sin, however much we may desire to be freed from it (Prov. 20:9); but if we do earnestly desire to be kept from sin, God will work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Phil 2:13), and that will be to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in us that which is good. (Heb. 13:21).

But while this is in one sense a passive state, in that it is an entire yielding of self to God, it is by no means a state of inactivity. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). "Strive to enter through the narrow gate" (Luke 13:24). There is to be a constant watchfulness against the insidious assaults of the enemy. A reaching out after God implies a drawing away from sin.

This part of the Lord's prayer cannot be uttered from the heart, except by one who with the psalmist can say, "I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law" (Ps. 119:113). And this cannot be done until the individual realizes that fellowship with God is the only thing to be desired,—that the loving-kindness of God is better than life. Every man in the world will have just what he wants. If he loves the pleasures of sin, he will be left to its lusting enjoyment; but if his heart and his soul cry out after God, the promise is that he shall be filled.

The Signs of the Times, (May 19, 1887).

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