

X. OUR LORD'S MODEL PRAYER

What satisfaction must it be to learn from God Himself with what words and in what manner, He would have us pray to Him so as not to pray in vain! We do not sufficiently consider the value of this prayer; the respect and attention which it requires; the preference to be given to it; its fulness and perfection; the frequent use we should make of it; and the spirit which we should bring with it. "Lord, teach us how to pray."--Adam Clark

Jesus gives us the pattern prayer in what is commonly known as "The Lord's Prayer." In this model, perfect prayer He gives us a law form to be followed, and yet one to be filled in and enlarged as we may decide when we pray. The outlines and form are complete, yet it is but an outline, with many a blank, which our needs and convictions are to fill in.

Christ puts words on our lips, words which are to be uttered by holy lives. Words belong to the life of prayer. Wordless prayers are like human spirits; pure and high they may be, but too ethereal and impalpable for earthly conflicts and earthly needs and uses. We must have spirits clothed in flesh and blood, and our prayers must be likewise clothed in words to give them point and power, a local habitation, and a name.

This lesson of "The Lord's Prayer," drawn forth by the request of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray," has something in form and verbiage like the prayer sections of the Sermon on the Mount. It is the same great lesson of praying to "Our Father which art in Heaven," and is one of insistent importunity. No prayer lesson would be complete without it. It belongs to the first and last lessons in prayer. God's Fatherhood gives shape, value and confidence to all our praying.

He teaches us that to hallow God's name is the first and the greatest of prayers. A desire for the glorious coming and the glorious establishment of God's glorious kingdom follows in value and in sequence the hallowing of God's name. He who really hallows God's name will hail the coming of the Kingdom of God, and will labour and pray to bring that kingdom to pass and to establish it. Christ's pupils in the school of prayer are to be taught diligently to hallow God's name, to work for God's kingdom, and to do God's will perfectly, completely and gladly, as it is done in Heaven.

Prayer engages the highest interest and secures the highest glory of God. God's name, God's kingdom and God's will are all in it. Without prayer His name is profaned, His kingdom fails, and His will is decried and opposed. God's will can be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. God's will done on earth makes earth like Heaven. Importunate praying is the mighty energy which establishes God's will on earth as it is established in Heaven.

He is still teaching us that prayer sanctifies and makes hopeful and sweet our daily toil for daily bread. Forgiveness of sins is to be sought by prayer, and the great prayer plea we are to make for forgiveness is that we have forgiven all those who have sinned against us. It involves love for our enemies so far as to pray for them, to bless them and not curse them, and to pardon their offences against us whatever those offences may be.

We are to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," that is, that while we thus pray, the tempter and the temptation are to be watched against, resisted and prayed against.

All these things He had laid down in this law of prayer, but many a simple lesson of comment, expansion, and expression He adds to His statute law.

In this prayer He teaches His disciples, so familiar to thousands in this day who learned it at their mother's knees in childhood, the words are so childlike that children find their instruction, edification and comfort in them as they kneel and pray. The most glowing mystic and the most careful thinker finds each his own language in these simple words of prayer. Beautiful and revered as these words are, they are our words for solace, help and learning.

He led the way in prayer that we might follow His footsteps. Matchless leader in matchless praying! Lord, teach us to pray as Thou didst Thyself pray!

How marked the contrast between the Sacerdotal Prayer and this "Lord's Prayer," this copy for praying He gave to His disciples as the first elements of prayer. How simple and childlike! No one has ever approached in composition a prayer so simple in its petitions and yet so comprehensive in all of its requests.

How these simple elements of prayer as given by our Lord commend themselves to us! This prayer is for us as well as for those to whom it was first given. It is for the child in the A B C of prayer, and it is for the graduate of the highest institutions of learning. It is a personal prayer, reaching to all our needs and covering all our sins. It is the highest form of prayer for others. As the scholar can never in all his after studies or learning dispense with his A B C, and as the alphabet gives form, colour and expression to all after learning, impregnating all and grounding all, so the learner in Christ can never dispense with the Lord's Prayer. But he may make it form the basis of his higher praying, this intercession for others in the Sacerdotal Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is ours by our mother's knee and fits us in all the stages of a joyous Christian Life. The Sacerdotal Prayer is ours also in the stages and office of our royal priesthood as intercessors before God. Here we have oneness with God, deep spiritual unity, and unswerving loyalty to God, living and praying to glorify God.