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THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

MATT. 6:9-13

The 17 chapter of John is more properly the *Lord's* prayer, the earnest expression of his own heart. This, usually so called, is rather the disciple's prayer, learned from the Lord in answer to the request, "Lord teach us to pray."

Coming from His lips it can not be unimportant. We are impressed with its simplicity, brevity, and comprehensiveness. It contains no "vain repetitions." Christians should follow Christ rather than the heathen, who "think they shall" be heard for much speaking." Ver. 7. Prayer is not designed as a lecture of suggestion or instruction to the Lord, for he knoweth what things we need before we ask. Ver. 8. And yet he teaches us to pray. It seems important that we should feel our need, and dependence on the Lord as the Giver.

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To *express* our wants makes a deeper *impression* on our own hearts. Even *vocal* prayer has thus an important use, though we are glad our Father recognizes even our thoughts, and "is able to do exceeding abundantly *above* all that we *ask* or *think*." Eph. 3:20.

We do not regard this as designed for a stereotyped *form* of prayer. There may be as much danger of mere formalism in repeating this as any other form of prayer.

It is the *manner* of the prayer on which Christ lays the stress. "After *this manner*, therefore, pray ye." It is clear, childlike and pointed; and it is in harmony with God's plan. We should know what we want, and ask expecting to receive. Prayer must be intelligent in order to be of faith, for faith is not feeling, but a depending on God's promises; it is taking him at his word.

It is interesting to observe the divisions of this prayer. It has three parts. The first relates to God, the second to others, or the general cause, and the third to ourselves. This is important. True prayer is

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humble worshipful and unselfish—"Our Father" first, ourselves last. He should be recognized first because of what he is and what he deserves. Let his sacred Name be spoken with reverence. A

careless use of God's name is profanity. Morality relates to human relations Christianity includes both human and Divine. A proper recognition of our relations to God will best secure the performance of our duty to humanity. As God in man is man's hope, so to *realize* God, is the mainspring of life. For this reason doubtless God is placed first in the arrangement of the prayer.

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The prayer recognizes the plan of the ages, and the dispensational steps of advancement; and to lose sight of God's order of development is as unreasonable as to expect harvest without seedtime, or fruit before the tree is grown. "Our *Father*" savors of the Gospel dispensation, which was *dawning* when Christ taught his disciples. Former dispensations revealed God as Creator, Lawgiver and Judge, and the terrors of Sinai were characteristic of the effect produced on the minds of the people. The gospel reveals him as a Father, and we as brethren. That was bondage; but God hath not given *us* the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of *adoption* whereby we cry Abba—Father. Rom. 8:15.

The former church were mere servants and to them Christ came, but to as many as received him he gave power to become *sons*. Jno. 1:12. This new name brings new and exalted privileges, even *fellowship* or *unity* with God and his Son Jesus Christ. This gives a new basis for action, *love* instead of fear and leads to certain success. The complete realization of this unity, is the prime element of our Blessed Hope. For this the Saviour prayed—the marriage—"That they all may be one," "even as we are one," "made perfect in one" "that the world may believe." Jno. 17:20-23. This unity is thus shown to be not only the Christian's life and hope, but also the basis of the world's hope. Certain it is that the world cannot be saved until after the church is glorified.

Do we, when we say "Our Father" realize how much it means. He that does not receive Christ as his Saviour and elder Brother cannot consistently or truthfully say "Our Father." This is the prayer of the disciples of Christ, or the son of God, not by Adam but by the Divine Nature.

The prayer is *prophetic*. The second part shows this. In this it resembles the 17th of John. The fact that they were taught to pray "Thy Kingdom come" is an indication of God's plan, and the assurance of its success. Prayer moved by the spirit will be answered. "Thy will be done in *Earth*" finds its assurance in the promise. "The Earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord," and its many kindred statements. The coming of the kingdom must precede the state of holiness referred to. In "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," the relation of cause and effect between the two parts of the sentence is too often lost sight of. The prayer, "Thy will be done," is certainly appropriate to cases where, as individuals, we are subjected, in God's arrangements, to trying circumstances, as when Jesus said, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." But is it not too often applied where the circumstances are not of God, but of our own arrangement? That this second phase of

the prayer is for *others*, more than for ourselves, will be most appreciated by those who know the glorious truth that the *object* for which Christ and the saints will reign is to bless the nations. With this in view, the Christian's hope is unselfish. As the joy set before Christ was the *well-being of others*, for which he endured the cross, and despised the shame, so for the same joy we can endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and as now in part, by and by to the full extent, we shall "enter into the joy of our Lord." Whoever can appreciate this fact concerning the coming kingdom, must of necessity appreciate the gospel dispensation and its privileges. As we are being nourished for Christ and His work, all personal benefits are given by Our Father, and received by us as a means to a great end, and we can, for this reason, pray, "Father, give us"—to use for Thee. J. H. P.

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— April, 1880 —



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