

"OUR DAILY BREAD"

"Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11.

This petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," opens the second part of the Model Prayer. Up to this point our petitions have all been concerned with God's glory and praise. This prayer has moved from worship--"Our Father which art in heaven," through adoration--"Hallowed be Thy name," through missionary zeal, which is always the outcome of the worship and adoration of God,--"Thy kingdom come," to a place where we have abandoned all interest in ourselves in a supreme desire for the will of God to "be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

Having thus observed the rule, "first things first," and having sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we are now at liberty to pass on to secondary things and to offer up to God petitions for personal blessings. Although this is the fourth petition in the prayer, it is the first in which the suppliant asks anything for himself. We are taught to start the list of personal petitions with a prayer for "daily bread."

It is very noticeable how the first part of this prayer has gone from the inner shrine of worship to the outward sphere of service. It began in heaven, and then it sought to bring heaven down to earth, that heaven and earth might move in harmony and in unison: "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." But, this second part of the prayer reverses the direction. It begins with want, and then it moves in through sin, through conflict, through temptation, and finally it ends with praise. It speaks about a past failure, "Forgive us our debts." It anticipates future perils on the journey, "Lead us not into temptation." Somehow this prayer takes within its scope every experience of human life. It began with a contemplation of the greatness of our Father in heaven, but the second part starts with a simple cry to God for bread, and it climbs up through our need and through our unforgiving spirit, through our weakness in temptation, and finally it passes through all our troubles and sorrows and takes us right home to God. The doxology at the end comes circling around to meet the invocation of "Our Father" at the beginning.

Think what a gracious light this petition throws upon the condescension of God. He is the high and holy One, Who inhabits eternity, and, yet, He stoops to lowly folk and lowly things. "The Lord thinketh upon me." Whatsoever concerns me is of concern to Him. This petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is not an unworthy one. It is not too trivial a request to bring to God; for He is not a God simply for great crises, dire emergencies and tremendous catastrophes. He is a God for every day and for the commonplace events of every day. He is a Master of details. He cares not only for the policies of the nations and the movements of world-wide significance, but He also notes the fall of a sparrow and counts the very hairs of our heads. Nothing is too small for God to notice. The detailed affairs of the commonest life are matters of concern to Him.

I. The Giver Of Blessings.

God is the giver of the blessings which we enjoy. It is God's nature to give. He has showered His golden mercies upon us. He always delights in giving. He gives constantly. As some of our older brethren were accustomed to say, "God is on the giving hand." The springs of His mercy are ever running. The faculty of thought, the power of will and the strength of arm all come from Him. Therefore, He is the actual

giver of all that is produced through us. Instead of saying, "My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth," the Word of God calls upon us to "remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:17-18).

II. The Acknowledgment Of Dependence.

The simple fact that we do not have any life in and of ourselves, which is equally true of all of us, should keep us ever mindful of our absolute, entire and constant dependence on God. In God we live and move and have our being. All of us are dependent upon God for everything---for the breath of life, for vigor of mind and for strength of body. Nowhere is this utter dependence of man upon God more clearly seen than in the matter of daily bread. We do not have anything except that which we have received. Every good and perfect gift cometh from above, from Him with Whom there is no variableness nor shadow cast by turning.

This prayer is the cry of children to a Father. It reminds us of our weakness rather than of our strength; not of our dignity as created in the image of God, but of our humility as in constant dependence upon Him.

This request, "Give us this day our daily bread," is an acknowledgment of dependence. It really amounts to this, "Father, give us our daily bread, or we shall never have it." Our personal and unceasing dependence on God for the necessities of a mere existence is a fact that few would formally question, but which, perhaps, few adequately feel. It is noticeable and regrettable that the people who are blessed with an increase of possessions are in danger of thinking that they don't need anything. They are blind to the fact of their dependence on God.

It is strange that we recognize our dependence upon God for the Bread of Life far more than we do for bread for our bodies. But the Bread of Life is no more a gift from God than is the material bread upon which we nourish our bodies day by day. Apart from God, the wisest of us could no more create a loaf of ordinary bread than we could make a universe. He must send the sunshine and the rain in order for the earth to "give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." Any man is a fool who thinks that he is independent of God, whether he lives in a palace or sleeps on a bench in a park. Therefore, all of us should pray this prayer with a sense of our complete dependence on God.

III. The Duty Of Prayer.

This petition emphasizes the privilege and duty of the children of God to pray for temporal blessings. There are those who believe in the efficacy of prayer in the realm of the spiritual, but refuse to utilize it in the realm of the physical. That God answers prayer for temporal blessings is clearly taught in His Word. To this, also, some of the greatest of the saints bear witness. There was George Mueller, for example, who maintained his great orphanages for long years without an appeal to anybody except God.

Since God is our Father, He is deeply interested in everything that concerns His children. That is why He delights to have us bring our spiritual and material needs to Him. There is nothing in life too small to bring to God. Once we begin to think that our need is too small to mention to God, the time soon arrives when we fail to take the big things to Him. He is able to meet our every need.

IV. The Supply Of Need.

It is our daily bread that we are to ask for, bread for subsistence, bread to sustain us, enough bread for our actual needs. We are not to tell God how much shall be enough for our needs. Rather we are to ask for bread for our daily needs, and leave the decision as to how much is enough to Him. We simply ask for what is needful and no more. We should ask for enough for the present need without any thought of storing up for the future.

This expression, "this day," reminds us of the uncertainty of life. We cannot pray in faith for supplies to last us even for tomorrow, because by then we may be beyond the need of earthly food. Most of our troubles are concerned with tomorrow. We need to be reminded again that God says, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25). The best way to prepare for the hazards of tomorrow is by the faithful discharge of the obligations of today. Tomorrow is not ours. In fact, tomorrow may never dawn. Today is all we have, so let us use it well. God is not going to give you grace to do something tremendous tomorrow. He will give you grace to be extraordinary in the circumstances of today. He will never lead us into any place that He will not go with us. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

God knows exactly what is needed to make us more Christlike. He knows what is needed to make us vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use. He knows what is needed to give us strength in temptation, victory over Satan and sin, strength to go through life's experiences and be usable anywhere He may send us.

It is not for the needs of a lifetime, but for the necessities of today that we are to pray. "Give us this day our daily bread." We are to pray for enough bread to meet our present needs, sufficient for our sustenance today. It is our duty, also, to pray that the needs of others may be supplied. "Give us this day our daily bread."