

## “OUR FATHER,” THE LORD’S PRAYER

(Discourse by E. F. Crist, 1916 Convention Report, starting on page 72.)

Many Scriptures show that God desires those who become His children to think of Him as a tender, solicitous, loving Father. Agreeable with this are the words of our text, Matt. 7:11: “If ye, then, being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?”

By nature we are all evil, yet we take real pleasure in subjecting ourselves to inconvenience, self-denial, and even suffering, that we may bring advantage to our children. Isa. 55:8, 9 tells us that God’s thoughts and ways are as far above ours as the heavens are higher than the earth. If then, notwithstanding the unfavorable influence of continued association with selfishness, we are so willing to do for our children, how much more will our Father, who is in Heaven, where all is unselfishness and love, be willing to give good things to those who beseech Him in accordance with His gracious arrangements.

In the prayer which the dear Master taught his disciples, as recorded in Matt. 6:9, 13, the fatherliness of our God is taught beautifully. We pray—

**“Our Father which art in Heaven.”** It is of great importance to those hoping for a place in God’s divine family to understand and rightly appreciate God’s deep interest in those whom He has begotten to His own nature. This was illustrated to us in a very forceful manner some years since when we heard a robin making a great fuss from her nest. Curiosity then prompted us to quickly diagnose the case. We concluded that some intruder was threatening the bird’s nest, and investigation soon proved the correctness of our surmise. A cat was seen stealthily climbing toward the precious nest. We quickly assumed to ourselves the prerogatives of a policeman and chased the would-be assassin away. Curiosity then prompted us to take a peep into the nest which at first revealed only several wide-open mouths. Deeper searching disclosed four or five blue, skinny, and decidedly unattractive little creatures. If you have ever seen young robins, recently hatched, you will understand better than I can tell you. These homely creatures seemed not to constitute sufficient cause for such a demonstration as the mother robin was making. Ah! she would not have cared had they been little crows or little elephants. But she knew that these little ones were partakers of her own nature; she knew that notwithstanding their present lack of beauty, if she could feed and care for them for a time, they would grow the feathers needed, and otherwise develop so as to be beautiful like herself.

Similarly, when we had received the spirit begetting, at first there was not much to be seen but mouth—that is, all we could do was to tell the Lord what we hoped to do. Perhaps it was some time before we bore any closer resemblance to Him than the young

robins bore to their mother. But if we have been begotten by His spirit, God knows that by feeding us with His Word and caring for us with His providences, we will in due time acquire the marks of beauty that will make us like Himself and His dear Son. Let us not lose sight of this comforting thought.

### **HALLOWED BE THY NAME**

In this also, as in every part of the prayer, we are able to see the fatherliness of our God. We cannot believe that God is so desirous of honor that He would violate the principles of humility which He has so earnestly enjoined us to operate in becoming copies of Himself. If so then the more like God we become the more will we seek honor for ourselves. We are instructed to hallow His name because greater good will thus come to us as His children. In our mind there is no doubt that when we finally view retrospectively the transpirings that have contributed to our preparation for divine conditions, it will be found that reverencing and praising God have had much to do with our protection against evil, as well as with our development.

Prov. 16:6 declares that “by the reverence of the Lord men depart from evil.” The logic of this is that when our hearts are going out in reverence and adoration toward God, as we meditate upon His holiness, His purity, His patience, His love, we can scarcely be doing evil during that time. Further the influence of such meditation would help to ward off evil influence for some time. In Psalm 34:9 and 10 we are told that while the young lions, notwithstanding their strength and agility, do lack and suffer hunger at times they that reverence the Lord shall not lack *any good thing*. If our hearts be kept in that reverential attitude, God stands obligated to provide everything that would be for our good as new creatures.

If this reverence take its legitimate course and assume the form of praise, what a potent antidote would be afforded for “blues” discouragement, discontent, murmurings, and kindred evils. In Deut. 28:47, 48 the Lord tells Israel, “Because thou servest not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies.” The lesson to us is readily seen. We read a little incident not long since that will illustrate this principle. A veteran who had served on the side of the North in the war of the rebellion was crossing the Atlantic. Fellow-travelers gathered about him at times to listen to his stories of the war. One day he was relating how he had been on a long march and at night had just settled himself to take some much needed rest when he was directed to go out on picket duty. He was rebellious inwardly as he went to his post, and thought dire things of the officer who was responsible. But as he began to reflect, and remembered how many of his boyhood chums had fallen a prey to enemy shot or shells at his side since enlistment, while he had not even been wounded, his bitter spirit gradually melted away and thankfulness began to

take its place. As gratitude welled up in his heart he could not restrain the impulse to give expression, and softly he sang,

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

As he paused in his story and looked about him, a white-haired man at his right was seen with tears streaming down his cheeks. This man broke into the story and said, “Yes, and I was on that field on the night you mention. I was in charge of a detail of men in the Southern army who were doing a little scouting. We saw this man on his lonely beat, and I had given command for my men to take careful aim and get ready to fire, when the words, ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow’ floated out just loudly enough for us to hear. I could not say FIRE! I said, boys, put down your guns; we will go back to camp.”

Perhaps praising God may not always bring such tangible results, not so speedily, but we may be sure that it was the Father quality in God that taught us to hallow His name.

### **THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN**

This implies upon our part a longing that others than ourselves may come to enjoy the blessedness of His favor, and be brought to glorify Him. It also implies a willingness upon our part to have His will done in us as it is done in Heaven, even if this should involve experiences similar to those of the Saviour in Gethsemane and Calvary. The best proof that we pray this part of the prayer in sincerity would be our prompt submission when little things arise that are not according to our natural choosing. A father sent his son to a miller with a sample of some wheat which he wished to sell. After careful examination the miller asked: “How much wheat like this does your father have?” The boy replied quickly: “Oh he has no more at all like that; he spent all of the morning picking that out.” We hope, dear brethren, that it is not needful for us to search a long time to find enough submission to our Father’s will to make us fully resigned to what His providences permits.

### **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD**

The fatherly element in God is again manifest in this part of the prayer. In the natural it implies a willingness on our part to receive our sufficient portion daily, rather than anxiously desiring to have enough for months or years in advance. That we may see God’s kindly intention in this, let us see the principle worked out in the case of Elijah. When he had declared to King Ahab that no rain would fall for three and one-half years, he fled for safety to the brook Cherith, of whose waters he drank, while ravens sent by God brought to him the daily portion of food. It would have been assuring to Elijah had they brought enough for two days. Suppose they would fail to come the next day? But as the days added into weeks, and the weeks merged into months, how his faith was

strengthened by God's manner of dealing with him. When the brook dried up he was sent to a widow of Sarepta, whom he found at the gate of the city gathering sticks. He asked of her bread and water, but was told that she had but a handful of flour in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; that she had been hunting some sticks to bake a little cake for herself and son, and then they expected to die. Think of the faith that could ask her to take him in as a boarder. It had been built up by the daily experiences at Cherith.

What an encouragement it would have been to Elijah had there been found at least a quarter barrel of flour the next morning, and a quart or more of oil. But, no, each day they had to scrape the barrel, and practically drain the cruse of oil, yet there was sufficient for their needs on the following day. Can we not see how this daily exercise of trust was a most appropriate preparation for that grand climax in the life of Elijah when he dared to go boldly to the king and direct him to assemble the people, including the priests of Baal, on Mount Carmel? Is it not apparent that it was that severe training along the lines of faith that emboldened Elijah to defy the 400 priests of Baal; that gave him courage to heap scorn upon them when their most frantic efforts failed to bring down the asked-for fire; that at the crucial moment gave him confidence that dared to command that twelve barrels of water be poured upon the offering and altar which he had prepared; that enabled him then to look up to God for assistance in the form of fire, with such unwavering assurance that the flames descended forthwith and licked up not only the offering, but also the stone, and even the very water? Who can doubt that having to trust God for daily bread was the very best way to prepare Elijah for this thrilling climax of faith? Then can we not see why God, as a kind Father, has taught us to pray for daily bread?

We may appropriately offer a word of caution against placing a too literal construction upon this. Sometimes great disadvantages may result from adhering to the letter rather than to the spirit of scriptural passages. The following incident will make the point plain: An old couple had lived for a term of years on the second floor of a building directly over the room occupied by the landlord and his wife. They had proven model tenants. But one night a noise was heard on the second floor that sounded as if the old man and his wife were playing horse. The same thing occurred the next night at about bed-time, and again the third night. The fourth night there was a thump, then a shuffle, a thump, a shuffle, and then a thud as though a body had fallen to the floor. The landlord hurried upstairs, and the poor old lady, with tears said: "You see pa had the rheumatism and the doctor gave him some medicine to take at bed-time three nights running, and skip the fourth. He took it running pretty well the three nights, but when he tried to skip he fell and hurt himself quite badly."

We are not to take this thought in the prayer so literally that we will not make reasonable provision for the morrow. But if the Lord should permit such unfavorable conditions to

hem us about that we would at best, only have needed bread for the day, let us feel sure He is exercising His Fatherly prerogative in looking out for our highest interests.

The comments upon this scripture in our Watch Tower Bible tell us that “daily bread” means “our needs, temporal and spiritual,” and this suggests a further lesson. The apostle Paul tells us plainly in 2 Cor. 11 that he did not always have daily bread in the natural sense, for he was often in hungering and fastings. Answering the Canaanitish woman who besought the Lord to heal her daughter the Master said, as recorded in Matt. 15:26: “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” By “bread” here he evidently meant blessings. Jesus said to his disciples, John 4:32: “I have meat to eat that ye know not of.” Our spiritual meat would be our good, our nourishment, our blessing. There was a time when it became Paul’s daily bread to be beaten with many stripes and with blood streaming wounds to be cast into the dungeon with his feet in the cruel stock. No meal of natural food had ever given him such joy that he could not refrain from singing, as did this painful experience. One day it was the daily meat of the Master to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem amid the acclaim of the multitude, and very shortly thereafter it became his daily meat to sink sweetly into God’s will in the bitterness of Gethsemane, and the excruciating experiences of Calvary.

God wishes us to pray this prayer because to do so in sincerity will develop in us the disposition of true sons. And let us remember as declared in Psalm 84:11: “The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Whether He shield us, or whether our experiences be like the hot shining of the sun upon our unprotected head, we may be assured that He will not keep any really good thing from us if we are walking uprightly.

#### FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS

We prefer this form to the one often used, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,” because it seems to us to be more comprehensive. The latter expression seems rather to limit itself to sections or words against God’s will, while the former also covers the things we should have done, but failed to do. These would constitute a part of our debt to our Father.

God’s fatherliness constrains Him to forgive us only upon conditions that would make forgiveness a blessing to us. David’s prayer for forgiveness when he had committed the grievous sin in connection with the wife of Uriah, the Hittite, affords a fitting example of the conditions. His plea is found in Psalm 51, and after asking mercy he says in verse 3: “For I acknowledge my transgression.” Ah! that is a very important matter. Sometimes I fear we are not as ready to acknowledge our transgressions as would be favorable to our highest spiritual good. I wish to present to each of you a souvenir which will be of assistance if you find a tendency in yourself to shun acknowledgment of wrong. Unlike

many souvenirs this one will neither rust nor break, and you may safely give it to your children to play with, for they cannot break it. Furthermore, it has the advantage of being adopted for use at any time when you are occupied with work that engages both hands, such as washing dishes, or running the auto. It can be carried along when taking a bath without inconvenience. I know you will be surprised when I tell you that it is a looking glass. However, it is a special kind for use if disinclined to accept blame, and not of any value to determine whether your hat is on straight.

Can we not see ourselves in that looking glass, when we are trying so hard to put the blame on our wife, or our husband, or one of the children, or upon the cat if nothing better offers? It is to our advantage that God requires free, full acknowledgment of sin, not only to Him, but also to those whom we may have injured, before the sunshine of His favor may be once more enjoyed.

We cannot take up all of the helpful thoughts that might be gleaned from this Psalm, but one more thought from verse 12 is specially pertinent. David prays: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and UPHOLD me with thy free spirit." He not only wished to be reinstated in God's favor, but he earnestly desire to be so upheld that he might not fail similarly again. Another crude illustration will emphasize the point. An Irishman was confessing to his priest, and finally said, hesitatingly: "And father, I, I, ah also stole a little hay." "How much?" "Not so very much." "But you must tell me quickly for others are waiting to make confession." "Well then, I may as well confess to stealing the whole stack, for me an' Biddy is goin' to git the rist of it the fir-r-st dark night." You readily see the application. Suppose we go to our Father somewhat after this fashion, "Now Father, I am so sorry that I allowed that bad temper to get the better of me again today. But the-en, you know I inherited it from my grandfather, and, a-h, well, I suppose I will do the same thing over again tomorrow, and every day as long as I live. Of course you will continue to forgive me each time and finally cover it all up with the robe of Christ's righteousness and take me into the kingdom." While this picture is extreme to make the point conspicuous, do you not think that too often a little of this spirit creeps into prayers for forgiveness? To forgive under such circumstances would be injurious to the one asking. But if there be sincere sorrow, full acknowledgment, and a strong determination that by the grace of God there shall not be a failure again upon that point, we are assured that the Father's forgiveness would be granted for our good.

He also forgives in the same degree that we forgive the debts of others. Do we not feel that we often fail to render what we really owe to the Lord as a debt, and do we not then, desire Him to forgive the shortcoming? Proportionate to our willingness to forgive the debts of others toward us will be His forgiveness of our debts toward Him. It is in the exercise of the love of a kind Father that He refrains from forgiving upon other conditions.

## AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

(One of the old Watch Towers favors this form, rather than “abandon us not in temptation.”)

Coming so closely in connection with the request for forgiveness would not inaptly suggest that we might be led into temptation, or brought into temptation, if God would forgive otherwise than according to the proper condition which we have just noticed. We can see how it would be quite proper to ask that God not “bring” (the word in the Greek) us into temptation. Lot made a choice of the well-watered, fertile valley of the Jordan, notwithstanding the disadvantage of evil associations which this would involve him in, and thus was he brought into temptation. Balak came to the prophet Balaam and asked him to curse Israel, promising a rich reward. God forbade the prophet, but with visions of the attractive reward dancing before his mental view, Balaam sought to find some way of getting around God’s restriction. Seeing this attitude upon the part of the prophet, when he next inquired God said to him, “GO.” Had God changed his mind? No, but since the prophet was yearning for the little advantage offered by the king, God bade him go. He was led into temptation because he entertained a desire for what God disapproved. Similarly, Israel longed for flesh, and God provided it for them in plenty so that they were sickened by eating of it so freely. Psalm 106:14 and 15 tells us that “they lusted exceedingly... and He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul.” Do we not see, then, how God in His infinite fatherliness, teaches us to pray these words? Thereby we are telling Him that if some strong desire should rise up in us, the realization of which would be to our spiritual disadvantage, we beseech Him not to lead us into that which would be a temptation beyond our power to resist. We pray, “Give us not eldership if it would be a temptation too strong.” “Give us not more salary, a better position, better health, or any other earthly thing that we might have a natural desire for, but which would lead us into overwhelming temptation.”

## BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL, OR THE EVIL ONE

We may not look for deliverance to come always in the form of escape from distressing experiences. Abraham was delivered out of the temptation on the mount (for such the Scriptures denominate it), but not until he had been put to the crucial test. Jesus was delivered from the evil one, but only by going into death as a man and being raised in the divine nature. Israel was in sore temptation in the land of Canaan, confronted by armed hosts securely entrenched in walled cities. God delivered them from evil by making their weapons effective. He did not cast down the walls long before they approached these cities, nor did He strike down to death all of their inhabitants so that Israel would find no obstacle in the way of taking possession. Doubtless God could have done this equally as well as to give success to their swords. He chose the latter method because it would be more to their advantage, and because it would afford a better lesson to spiritual Israel. We too, have strongly entrenched foes in our flesh, and perhaps we have almost

persuaded ourselves at times that they cannot be dislodged. But our Father will deliver us from the evil one, and from these evils, by blessing in our hands the weapons of His own providing, of which the apostle speaks in 2 Cor. 10:4 and 5, saying: “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Surely, then, our proper course is to learn what these weapons are, and to practice until we become skillful in wielding them valiantly, having our weakness supplemented by our Father’s all-sufficient strength. He is truly able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

When the spirit of our Father, as it is represented in this prayer, has been made our own, then will we be able to approach Him with our requests with approximately the assurance that 1 John 5:14, 15 pictures: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” It does not mean that we may dictate the course that God must take. Not like little Johnie whose mother questioned him carefully, being fearful that he was neglecting his prayers. He said: “Mama, I have been praying the Lord every day for about two weeks, that He would help you and papa to see things more like I do.” We may not desire that God see things as we do, but having come to the point where we have learned to ask for those things which He is so glad to give, we may then ask with assurance.

May the dear Father teach us the spirit of the Lord’s Prayer, which so beautifully shows us OUR FATHER.

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CAUTIOUS REASONING OF A WISE AND HUMBLE PASTOR

Another question I will anticipate: Suppose that the Gentiles Times should end in October, 1914, what would be the logical thing to expect? Well, I am not sure what to expect. We could not be sure, we would not know, whether it would take the Lord fifteen minutes or fifteen days or fifteen years to put out the kingdoms of this world. It is merely a guess, but one guess that we might give with a little bit of scriptural bases is this: We have seen parallelisms between the Jewish Age and the Gospel Age. We have seen that the forty years of the harvest in the end of the Jewish Age corresponds with the forty years harvest in the end of the Christian Age. We have seen that at the end of the forty years of Israel's harvest, the nation of Israel was destroyed within approximately six or seven months after the end of their harvest—a little more than six months. And so, following the same parallel, if it is a parallel (I am not sure that it is), if it is a parallel, it would seem to imply that the great trouble should be expected to come upon the world in the six months following October, 1914. Well, now, if you will wait until this time next

year and see how it is, and we have another convention, then we will perhaps be wiser; but I hope we will not be any the less loyal to the Lord and His Word, whatever may be the circumstances or conditions. We did not consecrate until the end of Gentile times, nor did we consecrate until the end of 1914 nor until the end of 1915, but we consecrated, if we consecrated properly, until death.

(1914 Convention report, page 123, par. 1.)

Question 28. Could it be said that a class was studying Tabernacle shadows too deeply when every point is covered by the Watch Tower, Tabernacle Shadows, or questions in the Convention Reports?

Answer: I would rather have my views understood by what is in the Watch Towers and the Dawns. I do not always know what is in the Convention Reports. And I have found occasionally things in the Convention Reports and in some of the convention discourses I would not entirely approve. You will understand that what I have to say and what I will say is in the Watch Tower. That does not mean that we would necessarily be “tight fitting” and make a quarrel with everybody who expresses a different thought at a Convention, on the platform or anywhere else. We would like to have a great deal of liberty ourselves, and we would like to have all the brethren have a great deal of liberty. Whenever I express my own opinion you will understand it to be that expressed in the Watch Tower.

(1913 Convention Report, page 137.)