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BIBLE LESSONS.

Second Quarter.

STUDIES IN LUKES GOSPEL.

Lesson X. June 8. Luke 11: 1-13.

TEACHING TO PRAY.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."—Luke 11: 9.

I. JESUS TEACHING TO PRAY, BY EXAMPLE AND BY PRECEPT. Ver. 1. As He was walking in a certain place, the certain attitude in prayer was either standing or bowing on the knees, with the head toward the ground.

JESUS' EXAMPLE AS TO PRAYER. (1) Jesus gives us an example of the habit of prayer. The fact of His praying is frequently mentioned. When He ceased. One of His disciples said unto Him, Lord teach us to pray. Not "give us a form of prayer," but teach us how to pray, with what spirit, asking for what things, with what form, or shall it be without form, in what way, so that we may obtain the blessings of prayer and an answer from God. As John also taught His disciples. It is not known whether John taught his disciples some form of prayer more perfect and spiritual than those customarily used by the Jews, who were very punctilious in the use of forms of prayer, or whether he only taught them the true spirit and aim of prayer, and how to pray so as to receive an answer.

Practical Suggestions. Prayer brings the impotence of man into connection with the Omnipotence of God. Christ teaches us to pray, (1) By His Word. (2) By His Spirit. (3) By His example. (4) By His Providential dealings and deeds.

II. THE MODEL PRAYER. 2. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Not necessarily the words that follow, and only those, but, as in Matthew, "after this manner" pray ye. (1) The fact that Christ gave His prayer in two different forms shows that no exact form of words was required; and the fact that Luke, writing at least 25 years after the formation of the Church, gives one form, and Matthew another, shows that no obligatory form was in use in the churches.

"It embodies all essential desires of a praying heart, yet in the simplest form, resembling in this respect a pearl of which the light of heaven plays. It expresses and combines in the best order, every divine promise, every human sorrow and want, and every Christian aspiration for the good of others."

THE ADDRESS. Our. Implying that all men are brethren, because children of the same Father; implying, too, our fellowship with Christ. Our Father. The most endearing name under which God can be addressed, reminding us of His infinite love and exciting our filial love. Which, art in heaven. Showing that no earthly father is meant, but God Himself, perfect in holiness, limitless in power.

FIRST PETITION. Hallowed. Held in reverence, treated as holy, loved and worshipped by ourselves and by all. Be Thy name. God's name means "Himself as revealed and manifested."

SECOND PETITION. Thy kingdom come. The reign of God through Christ in the hearts of all men. The aim of prayer is this prayer implies that we are doing and giving all in our power to hasten on the coming of this kingdom in our own hearts and in the world.

THIRD PETITION. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. The standard of obedience is that of the inhabitants of heaven, both in inward spirit and outward form. The petition implies: That all the world may obey God as perfectly as the angels obey Him. What a prayer this is! What changes, what overrulings it implies.

FOURTH PETITION. Now begins the second class of petitions,—those for ourselves. 3. Give us day by day our daily (or needful) bread. That which satisfies our daily wants; both bodily and spiritual.

FIFTH PETITION. And forgive us our sins. One of the first and deepest needs of the human soul is forgiveness from our heavenly Father,—to be received back into His fellowship, His family, and His home. For we also forgive. We cannot sincerely ask God to forgive us, if we do not forgive those who have sinned against us.

SIXTH PETITION. And lead us not into temptation. That who art the guide of our life, lead us away from temptation. For whosoever wishes to be led into temptation, and is not afraid lest he fall, is already more than half fallen.

SEVENTH PETITION. But deliver us from evil. Not merely from the evil one, but from evil, every evil, temporal and spiritual. The mark of a saint is the strength of his longing to be delivered from all sin.

CONCLUSION. In Matthew is given the reason for perfect faith in God that He can and will answer the prayer,—"For this is the kingdom and the power."

III. AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE WAY TO PRAY. 5. Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight. A most inconvenient time, when it would require a good deal of patience to grant the request. Lead me three loaves. Thin cakes, of which it would be easy to take three to satisfy a hungry man.

6. For a friend of mine. Giving the reason for his inopportune but urgent request.

7. My children are with me, but I cannot rise and give thee. I will not, I cannot without too much trouble. It would disturb the family. (2) It was no little bother to get up from a comfortable bed, light a lamp, and get what was needed.

8. Not... because he is his friend. Though the higher motives will not avail, for the friendship is so weak. Yet because of his impotency. The word rendered by "impotency" is too mild. It should be, as in the margin, shamelessness; it is, no shame can check or stop. "Forbearing impotency." He will rise and give him. It was no less trouble to grant his wishes than it was to endure the unwearied impotency. The argument of this parable is: "If selfish man can be won by prayer and impotency so give," much more certainly shall the merciful Lord bestow."

WHY DOES GOD REQUIRE IMPOTENCY IN PRAYER? The reason why God requires this impotency is not from His

unwillingness to bestow, but by the opportunity to make us fit to receive. The great difficulty with all God's gifts is on our part, to make us willing and able to receive. The gifts would be wasted on us, unless we had the appreciation and desire which made us importunate. We lose many prayers for want of two things which support each other,—specificity of object and intensity of desire. A gift of food is of no use unless there is a want. Books are of little value unless there is a desire for knowledge. The wrestling in prayer increases the desire. Only they who hunger and thirst after righteousness can be filled. "If the delay of a divine answer to prayer could be attributed to the disapproval of our request, impotency would be impertinent; but when the delay is caused by our unreadiness to receive, impotency becomes a necessary condition of the grant."

IV. THE ANSWER TO PRAYER ASSURED. 9. And I say unto you. Applying the parable just spoken. Ask... seek... knock. The three words imply distinct degrees of intensity.

10. For every one that asketh, etc. The promise is repeated to make certain more certain.

THE ABSOLUTE PROMISE. The promise here given is absolute and unqualified to those who fulfil the conditions. These conditions imply (1) that we ask what we want. (2) That we ask in Christ's name (John 14: 14), and hence things which He approves. (3) That we ask in faith, which is proved by perseverance, and by the faithful use of all proper means. (4) That we ask in submission to God's better knowledge and will.

NOTE IN REGARD TO THE ANSWER. (1) That the best things cannot be given directly, as money or houses can be given, but they must be wrought in us; and the extent to which they can be given depends on our co-operation. Such gifts are characterized by the Holy Spirit, wisdom, usefulness, love. (2) The best answers to prayer, therefore, often taken a long time to ripen so that we can receive them, but the answer begins to come with the first prayer of faith.

V. THE ANSWER AND PROOF FROM HUMAN EXPERIENCE.—Vers 11-13. 11. If a son shall ask bread (a loaf). There is here implied, not merely a promise to give some answer to the prayer, but to give the thing asked for, or something better. If he ask a fish, he shall receive a serpent; if he ask an egg, he shall receive a scorpion. Perhaps, the contrast refers only to the different properties of the egg and the scorpion, which is sufficiently emblematic.

OMNIVIA. Human fathers do not give such gifts, and yet how often we deem the bread God gives a stone, the fish a serpent, and the egg a scorpion, totally misunderstanding the character of His best gift.

13. If ye then, being evil, imperfect, sinful, selfish. Know how to give good gifts unto your children. Very few, if any, are so much better than the brutes as to do this. But how much more will your heavenly Father. Infinite in His love and goodness, and in His desire to help and bless. Give the Holy Spirit. The best of all good gifts, the sum and source of all. It is like giving life to the dead, making possible to him all enjoyments and all powers. It is like giving light to those in the dark, or sight to the blind, revealing all the glories of earth and sky. The good father who gives this best of all gifts, will not withhold any of the lesser good things.

"I can't," said Rob, with a little choke; and, boy that he was, his eyes filled with tears as he turned toward the gate. "O Rob Preston, I'm ashamed of you," said the faithful old woman. "How shall you feel when mamma takes your face between her hands to give you your good-night kiss and calls you her little laddie? Will you want to look up in her face? Won't you feel ashamed to think what a coward you have been? Shall you want to tell her about it? Robbie, be mamma's brave little laddie."

There was just a minute's hesitation, then Robbie turned and went quickly up to the steps where Annie stood, quivering with excitement.

"Come with me Annie. I'm going your way," he said; and Annie caught hold of his hand instantly.

"I'm not afraid," she almost sobbed.

"I am never coming again. I didn't want to say, but mother cried and wanted me to."

"I'll tell you," said Robbie, reassuringly: "we will go right to my home, and tell my mamma. She always knows just what to do."

So they went bravely down the walk; and, though the boys tried to laugh, they could not make much of a success of it. Somehow, Robbie's sweet, successful face touched them.

"He was a plucky little fellow," said one, after the two had gone.

"Yes, and more of a gentleman than any of us, if we are older," said another.

Mother scolded and comforted little Annie, and sent her home happy, with one of her own Annie's outgrown dresses that just fitted her, and a promise to come and see her mother.

When she had gone, mamma stooped and kissed Robbie.

"My own precious laddie, my little man," she said fondly.

"But I wasn't brave at first. I wanted to run away like a coward, only I thought of you, and how ashamed I should be to have you know about it," said Rob.

"That was right, dear; but remember God sees and knows always. Mamma might not, perhaps; but we cannot hide anything from Him. Think of that when you are tempted. We must try very hard not to do anything we are ashamed or sorry to have God know, mustn't we?"

"I'll try; but, O mamma, sometimes it is so hard even to do right in little bits of things."

"I know, laddie dear; but remember, we can always have help if we ask for it."—National Baptist.

Fear Not.

Would our King tell us again and again, "Fear not" if there were any reason at all to fear? Would He say this kind word again and again, ringing changes as of the bells of heaven upon only to tell us that we have nothing to fear? Only give half an hour to seeking out the reasons He gives why we are not to fear, and the all-inclusive circumstances in which He says we are not to fear; see how we are to fear nothing and no one, and never; see how He Himself is in every case the foundation and the grand reason of His command; His presence and His power always behind it; and then shall we hesitate to say, "I will fear, as I fear Thee, O God, with me?" Shall we even fancy there is any answer to those grand and forever unanswered questions, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"—F. R. Havergal.

Robbie's Victory.

Rob Preston put on his coat and hat and came out of school very slowly, with a perplexed, troubled look on his bright, sunny face. Some of the boys were already outside, and were whispering and laughing about something. Rob evidently knew what it was, but he was too much in it, still, instead of hurrying away as he might have done, he lingered irresolutely.

The truth was Robbie was fighting a real battle within himself. There was new scholasticism in school, little as it was. Hoffman. Her father was a miserable drunkard, and they were poor as poor could be. Her mother had done her best; but poor little Annie was a pitiful sight in her faded, ragged garments.

Rob had discovered in some way that a few of the rougher, more thoughtless boys were proposing to make some fun for themselves when she came out of school to go home, and all the afternoon his conscience had been pleading earnestly with him.

"On ought to try to stop them," he said.

"But they would not hear a word from a little boy like me," he answered.

"Then you must help Annie. The poor little thing will be frightened if they laugh at her." "Then they will laugh at me," said Robbie; and he fairly shivered with dismay at the mere thought of the about they would give if he showed himself Annie's champion.

"Well, suppose they do laugh, answered the little group, and "What if your mamma's little man, oughtn't you to be brave enough to bear that? You were wishing the other day that you could do something brave and good; here is a chance for you. If you cannot do this little thing, you would not be very apt to do anything great."

So this afternoon had passed, and now Rob must decide one way or the other; but it seemed to him that he was no nearer a decision than at first.

"Well, have some private fun," he heard Tom say. "She is the greatest-looking object I've seen for her age."

"Hullo there!" he called out as Annie appeared in the doorway. "Is that a rag bag I see walking around?"

"The little group around Tom shouted as he spoke, and Rob's face grew crimson with pain for Annie and for himself.

"Don't, please, boys," he said pleadingly; "she isn't to blame, and it will make her feel so bad to be laughed at."

"Oh, run home, little Molly Coddle," said Tom, contemptuously; "it will take more than you to stop me."

Rob walked on a few steps. What should he do? Oh, dear, why couldn't he go right home? He could not stop them, they would probably only laugh the more if he did anything.

"But Annie will feel as if she had a friend."

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