

IN THE CLASS.

The following points may profitably engage the attention of the class:

- 1st. The divine model of prayer.
- 2nd. Importunity in prayer illustrated and commended.
- 3rd. The assurance of gracious answers to fervent persevering prayer.

THE DIVINE MODEL OF PRAYER.

As He was praying. Christ's was a life of prayer.

"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of thy prayer."

As John also. "We have no record of John's teachings or methods; but prayer has ever been the great duty impressed by all reformers."

When we pray say. "The things especially characteristic of this model prayer are, *renewance; supreme desire for God's glory; submission and a sense of frailty and danger.*" Like the two tables of the law, it illustrates man's duty towards God, and his duty towards his fellow men. As the law is God's commands to men, so this is the breathing out of the heart's desires for those things that God requires. *Rom. 8:3-4.* Christ's first great work was to produce in His disciples the spirit of prayer. And this is to us an illustration of what the substance of our prayers should be, rather than the things we ought invariably to follow. Even He himself varies in the form of words given in *Matt. 6:9-13*. It is an illustration of the *breath* that should characterize our prayers. *Ecl. 5:2.*

IMPORTUNITY IN PRAYER ILLUSTRATED

AND COMMENDED.

And He said unto them. "The argument is: if selfish man gives in response to opportunity, much more certainly will the bountiful Lord bestow."—*Trench.* Friend, should one who would feel that he could ask his neighbor a favor. At midnight. The best time for travel in tropical Eastern lands is the night; so our missionaries travel now in India. Three loaves. One for the traveller, one for himself as the host to eat with his guest, and one for reserve to avoid the appearance of scarcity, or for his friend if very hungry. One of our loaves would serve several, but an Eastern loaf was no more than enough for one person. "We must come for bread, for that which is needful and we cannot do without. We must come for others as well as ourselves. We may come with more boldness in a strain if it be providential and not the result of our own folly and carelessness."—*Henry.* For a friend of mine. "There is every reason for seeking God's grace on behalf of our unconverted friends. We have no power to save them in their extremity, and we must go to God on their behalf."—*Maycox.*

Trouble me not. He was within and comfortable, what mattered it therefore that his friend was without and in distress. "It is usual for a whole family to sleep in the same room, especially those in lower life, laying their beds (or mats) on the ground. It signifies that they were all in bed in the same apartment." His friendship is not strong enough to overcome his selfish desire not to be disturbed. Yet because of his importunity. The word 'importunity' is 'too mild.' It should be *shamelessness*, not shame by refusal, he kept on knocking. "The applicant is supposed to have gone on knocking until the householder arose. The perseverance is indicated, because it shows his earnestness."—*Farquhar.* "The scriptural examples of prayer have more of them an unutterable intensity. They are pictures of struggles. *The Still Hour.*

THE ASSURANCE OF ANSWERS TO FERVENT PERSEVERING PRAYER.

I say unto you. If importunity overcomes the real reluctance of selfish men, it will certainly overcome the apparent denials of a loving Father. "Though there is an aspect under which God may present himself to us similar to that of the unjust judge and this churlish neighbor, yet there is ever this difference—that His is a *seeming* neglect and unwillingness to grant, theirs a *real* *Matt. 15:21-28; Gen. 32:24.* If *thou* man can be won by importunate prayer to give, and unjust man to do right, much more certainly shall the bountiful Lord, bestow, and the righteous Lord do justice."—*Trench.*

Ask, *99* knock. —The three repetitions of the command are more than mere repetitions; since to seek is more than to ask; and to knock is more than to seek; and thus in this ascending scale of urgency, an exhortation is given not merely to pray but to increasing earnestness.—*Trench.*

"Good prayers," says an old English divine, "never come weeping home. I am sure I shall receive either what I ask, or what I *should* ask."—*Phelps.*

Every one that asketh, a law of the kingdom. *Jer. 29:12-13; Ezek. 36:37.*

Stone, useless. Serpent, something injurious. Scorpion, fatally hurtful.

If ye then being evil, imperfect, partial, blind, sometimes passionate. Bad as our fallen nature is the father in us is not yet extinguished. What a heart, then, must the Father of all others have toward His pleading children. Your heavenly Father. Father from heaven, He comes down to us. When we address God, our prayers go to Him. When He answers, He comes to us. The Holy Spirit, the best of all gifts and the earnest of every real good.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

"The Aediles among the Romans had their doors standing always open, that all that had petitions might have free access to them. The door of heaven is always open for the prayers of God's people."—*T. Watson.*

"It is not the gilded paper and the good writing of the petition that prevails with the king, but the moving sense of it. And to that God who discerns the heart, heart sense is the sense of all."—*Lightfoot.*

"Ask, seek, knock." That is pray in every form—with hands and feet and lips, pray by using every means as well as words.

"Frederick Douglas used to say that he often prayed for freedom, but his prayer was never answered till he prayed with his feet. 'I never was deeply interested in any object, I never prayed sincerely and earnestly for anything, but if I came at some time, no matter at how distant a day, in some shape, probably the last I should have devised, it came.'"—*Madison.*

"I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of 10,000 men."—*Mary Queen of Scotland.*

Sept. 22. Warning against covetousness. Luke 12:13-23. A. D. 29.

GOLDEN TEXT.

Take heed and beware of covetousness. V. 15.

IN THE STUDY.

"There are a number of discourses given about this time, between the feast of Tabernacles (Oct. 11), and the feast of Dedication in December. Jesus was part of the time near Jerusalem, (John 11) and part at Ephraim, and in the wilderness around the lower waters of Jordan (John 11:53-54). He is now discoursing to a large multitude

of people, and warning them against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees opening to the disciples their dangers and their sources of help. In the midst of one of our Lord's most interesting discourses, an interruption occurs. One of his hearers has so slight an interest in the spiritual truths which he is communicating, but had so much at heart the redressing of a wrong which he believed himself to have sustained in his worldly interests, that, as would seem, he could not wait for a more convenient season, but broke in upon our Lord's teaching with that request which gave occasion for this parable."—*Trench.*

"It has been sometimes taken for granted that this man who desired a division of the inheritance, had no right to what he was here claiming, and was only seeking to make an unfair use of the Saviour's influence. But how much does this weaken the moral! All men without any special teaching would condemn such unrighteousness as this. But that love of the world, which, keeping itself within the limits of decency and legality, yet takes all the affections of the heart from God, and robs divine things of their interest—against that, men have need to be continually warned; and such a warning is here,—a warning not against unrighteousness, but against covetousness; for this may display itself in the form of law, in which we hold and reclaim our own as truly as in undue snatching that of others."—*Trench.*

"It was no part of His to take from the oppressor, and give to the oppressed. It was His part to forbid oppression. It was not His office to determine the boundaries of civil rights, nor to lay down the rules of the descent of property. He asserted principles of love, unselfishness, and order which would decide all questions; but the questions themselves He would not decide. He would lay down the great political principle, 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's,' and unto God the things which are God's,' and He would not determine whether this particular tax was due to Caesar or not. So too He would say that justice, like mercy and truth, is one of the weightier matters of the law; but He would not decide whether in this definite case this or that brother had justice on his side. It was for themselves to determine that. That the lawsuit should have been determined by the brothers themselves in love, with mutual fairness, would have been much; that it should be determined by authoritative arbitration was, spiritually speaking, nothing. The right disposition of their hearts, and the right disposition of their property these resulting, was Christ's kingdom. The apportionment of their property by another's division had nothing to do with His kingdom."—*Robertson.*

IN THE CLASS.

Lesson outline. 1st. Worldly covetousness rebuked. 2nd. Warned against. 3rd. Illustrated.

WORLDLY COVETOUSNESS REBUKED.

And one of the company. Not one of His disciples, but one of the multitude listening to Jesus; v. 1. who it appears was oppressed by his brother in the matter of his patrimony. Wherefore he applies to Christ to interpose His authority, which he imagined would have great weight with his brother. "Such was the fame of Jesus, and such credit He obtained for His ministry and miracles, that he concluded a word from Him would go a great way."—*Dr. Gill.*

The man was full of his earthly wrongs while the Lord was talking of heavenly things.

That he divide the inheritance. "An inheritance is the property which is left by a father to his children. Among the Jews the elder brother had two shares or twice as much as either of the other children."—*Deut. 21:17;—Barnes.* "As interpreters of the law, the scribes were appealed to as advocates and arbitrators in questions of property or marriage." And the man being ignorant of the true character and kingdom of our