

THE CHURCH CATECHISM EXPLAINED FOR THE LITTLE ONES.

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(Continued.)

CHAPTER VII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

WE have all been taught to use the Lord's Prayer, but how many of us think what it means when we are saying it? We know it so well, I am afraid, too often we repeat the words on our knees without drawing near to God with our hearts at all. Now let us go over it and think what it means. You know it is called the Lord's Prayer because the Lord Jesus gave it to His Apostles when they asked Him to teach them how to pray. And now it is used by Christians all over the world. We call God "Our Father," and that makes us remember that we were His children in our baptism, and also that we must pray for others as well as ourselves.

"Hallowed be Thy Name." Hallowed means made holy; but we do not pray that God's name may be made holy, for it is holy already, but that He would make us, and all people, honor his name and keep it holy. When we say "Thy kingdom come," we pray for three things: that we may love the Lord Jesus and grow in holiness; that all people on earth may become Christians; and that the time will not be long before Jesus will come to take His servants home to the kingdom of Heaven. And we are not only to pray for these things, but we are to do all we can to bring them about. We must try to live good lives; do all we can to send the Gospel to those poor people who do not know anything of the true God; and while we pray for Christ's coming, we must also get ready for it.

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." We pray that God's will, that is, what He wishes us to do, may be done in the same way here as it is done in heaven. Who does God's will in heaven? The holy angels who always do exactly what God wishes them to do. Are we like the angels? Do we always do as God wishes us to do? Do not we often complain of what God sends to us? For we must remember that everything that happens to us comes from Him. If His will is not the same as our wills, we are more inclined to do as we would like ourselves, than as God wishes; and that is why we should pray with our whole hearts so that we may love to do His will even as the holy angels do it in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread." When we ask for our daily bread, we do not, of course, mean bread alone. We pray for all things that are needful for our souls and bodies. You know that our bodies need food, clothes, warmth and such things.

If we do not give them the care they ought to have they cannot grow strong and healthy, but will get weak and sickly. And so it is with our souls; they must be fed with the Bread of Life. How can we feed our souls? By reading God's word, by prayer, and by going to the Lord's Supper. We are to ask for bread every day. Do our souls want attending to every day as well as our bodies? Yes, indeed; if we do not give them what they need, how can they grow in holiness? Just as a child who does not get enough to eat is sickly and delicate, so it is with our souls if we do not feed them with the Bread of Life.

We cannot expect to keep from sin and grow like Jesus. What would you think if in the morning you were told that there was not time to give you any breakfast? That would seem very hard, but perhaps you do not think it any great harm to leave your prayers unsaid when you are in a hurry, or to forget to read your Bible. Ah! that is starving the soul, and it is far worse for us than letting our bodies want. So we pray for our daily bread, that is, nourishment both for our souls and bodies.

"And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." The word trespasses means sins. You know how often we sin and how often we need forgiveness, but in this prayer we are taught to ask that we may be forgiven our sins in the same way that we forgive others; which shows us that we need not come to God for pardon, unless we are at peace with every one else. If we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us. Sometimes we feel when a person does something to wrong us as though we could never forgive him, but are not our sins against God much greater than those we have to forgive? When our Lord Jesus Christ was dying on the cross He prayed that His Father would forgive those wicked people who treated Him so cruelly. Surely when we think of this we will be ready to forgive our enemies.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When we pray to be forgiven our sins, it is our duty to keep from those places and things which we feel will draw us into sin. As I have told you this is a very wicked world, and as long as we are in it we will find plenty to tempt us, and are only too ready to run into danger.

Sometimes God tries us to see whether we really love Him; as He did Abraham, when He told him to offer up his dear son Isaac for a sacrifice. Yet He lets us pray that He will save and defend us in these dangers so that we may not give way to them. And He has given us a promise in the Bible that He will not let us be tempted more than we can bear, but will make a way for us to escape, if we really wish to do right.

We pray that He would deliver us from evil, or, as the catechism very nicely explains it, "that He will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death." Our ghostly enemy means the devil.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen." This part of