

## FOR THE SABBATH SCHOOL

## International S. S. Lesson.

LESSON V.—HOW TO PRAY.—JAN. 30.

(Matt. vi : 5-15)

GOLDEN TEXT.—“Pray to the Father which is in secret.”—Matt. vi. 6.

TIME AND PLACE.—Summer A. D. 28. Mount of Beatitudes.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Praying Humbly, 5-7. II. Praying to a Father, 8-13. III. Praying with Forgiveness, 14, 15.

INTRODUCTION.—The Beatitudes with which our Lord introduced His Sermon on the Mount constituted our last lesson. Continuing His discourse, our Lord declared that He had not come to destroy or set aside the law, but to fulfill, and then proceeded to interpret certain of the commandments, showing that the obedience required was not merely such a literal obedience as the Pharisee interpretation demanded, but a spiritual obedience. In the first four verses of the sixth chapter we have some instructions concerning almsgiving, with a warning against all ostentation; and this is followed by our lesson.

VERSE BY VERSE.—5. “Hypocrites.”—Those who wear a mask; who pretend to be good while they are bad. “Synagogues.”—The Jewish churches. “Have their reward.”—By men praising them for their goodness and piety.

6. “Thy closet.”—Some private place, where prayer can be offered alone with God. “Shut the door.”—So as not to be seen of men. “Reward thee openly.”—By giving manifest tokens of His grace, leading to a life that shall be seen and known as a life of prayer.

7. “Vain repetitions.”—The prayers of the heathen were made up largely of many repetitions of the name of their god. “Heathen.”—Those who worshipped idols.

8. “After this manner.”—Not always in these very words, but the elements of prayer are found here—the simplicity of form, the subjects, the manner. We may use this form whenever it may seem suitable. We are not required to use this alone. “Hallowed.”—Made holy; regarded as holy.

9. “Our daily bread.”—Not only that which sustains the body, but that which sustains our spiritual life.

12. “Debts.” Moral obligations unfulfilled—that is, sins.

13. “Temptation.”—To tempt means to try, to make trial of to test, to prove; whatever tries our moral character. “Deliver us from evil.”—From the evil one. (Rev. Ver.)

14. “Trespasses.”—Meaning here the same as debts in verse 12—that is, sins.

THOUGHTS.—“Christ our example.” He first set the example of prayer before He instructed His disciples in prayer. He lived a holy life before them. He acknowledged God as His Father. He expressed His highest desire to fulfill all the Father's will. He evidenced His desire for the salvation of all men. He gave His entire strength to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. He prayed in secret, in public, before meals, long prayers, short prayers, for friends, for enemies, for Himself. None can teach to pray but those who have first learned to pray.

“The Prayer.” The first in this prayer are the petitions for others, for God's honor, and the coming of His Kingdom among men. After that, both in place and importance, come the personal petitions. Such prayer entered into heartily enlarges and broadens the soul, and is an antidote for vain display and selfishness. When God's order is observed the soul develops, reaches out and progresses. When private prayer is attended unto it follows on to the next natural step, that of family prayer, and on to social prayer, and still on to public prayer. These are steps in the spiritual ladder. Unless a man is made strong himself, by secret devotion, wherein he adores God as his Father and yearns for His Kingdom to come, he is not rightly fitted for public exercise. This pattern of prayer which Jesus gave unto His disciples was the ground-plan for all their petitions. It is meant for the use of all the children of God. It suits the child, the parent, the old or the middle aged. It is a model prayer.

“Our Father.” An endearing term, suggesting at once easy access, familiar converse and perfect welcome. Through Christ every soul may have the spirit of adoption whereby they cry Abba Father. How graciously the Saviour led His disciples to understand what His work for them would be. He was to bring reconciliation between them and God. They were to be joint heirs with Him. God's greatness and power could not be a gulf between Himself and His children, if they realize that His love is as infinite as His power and His tender mercies as great as His being. His very greatness, His heavenly abode, are but a guarantee of His ability to help in every need. The very term “Our Father” would put a check on pretentious worship such as the Pharisees engaged in. Kindred

feeling would tower above self-greatness and see in God an all-wise, all-loving Father, whose will cannot be other than right because of Him who exercises it.

“Thy Kingdom Come.” He is the Creator of all things. All life is dependent upon His power to sustain it. His throne is in the heavens. His kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness. To have Him establish a spiritual kingdom in the earth provides for the overthrow of sin and the reign of peace. To pray this prayer from the heart implies a change from self-will to God's will, first in ourselves and in others, with the covenant understood that we will work with God by obedience, trust, and faithfulness to bring His Kingdom into other hearts, until His name shall be exalted in the earth. By bringing His disciples into the spirit of this prayer Jesus raised them to a high standard of piety, and taught them the value of real communion with God. His kingdom was to be in them a kingdom of love—supreme love to Him, and brotherly love toward all mankind. This would fit them for their life work amidst opposition of every sort.

“The Hope.” Hope is desire mingled with expectation. When the disciples should offer their petitions they would express their desire for divine help. When they said “for Thine is the kingdom, the power, the glory,” they expected to receive the grant of their desire, because of the greatness of their Father and the depth of His parental love. The ground for confidence rested upon the fact that all petitions had been made subject to God's will and for His glory, while the heart held no obstruction by entertaining an unforgiving spirit towards others. There is nothing sought in this prayer that is in any way contrary to God's will, and nothing will hinder its answer but a failure on the part of him who offers it to meet the conditions on his part. In this Prayer Jesus taught His disciples that heart religion was the only kind that secured unto them the Kingdom of Heaven, of which His preaching had been.

## CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

## DAILY READINGS.

First Day—How to pray—Matt. vi. 1-15

Second Day—“Ask, and it shall be given you.”—Luke ii. 1-1

Third Day—“Men ought always to pray.”—Luke xviii. 1-14.

Fourth Day—The Power of Fervent Prayer—Jas. v. 13-20.

Fifth Day—“Seek ye first the Kingdom of God”—Matt. vi. 17-34.

Sixth Day—“Let your requests be made known unto God”—Phil. iv. 1-13.

PRAYER MEETING TOPIC, JAN. 30th.—“FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.”—WHAT SHALL WE DO?—Ex. xxv. 20-39; Luke xiv. 33.

## TOPIC THOUGHTS.

The place that the Bible has in a believer's life goes far toward determining his power in the church and over men.

True consecration will find every day a holy day and every duty a post of ministry.

To live sweetly, patiently, and helpfully in a commonplace sphere is a real and great service for Christ and the church.

The Bible lesson presents an interesting analogy for Christian Endeavorers. It tells the story of the Israelites' free gifts for the tabernacle—their consecration offering, as it were. Not all of them gave the same thing, and not all of them gave articles of great value. Some gave onyx stones and rich spices. Some offered jewelry and gold. Others brought goats' hair or badger-skins. The wise-hearted women, who, perhaps, had no jewels or gold to offer, and who could not go out and kill a badger or a ram as they pleased, set to work with their hands and spun goats' hair. Every one did according to his ability. But every one did something. What shall Christian Endeavorers do “for Christ and the Church”? The best they can. If they cannot offer jewels and gold, they can give goat or badger skins, they can spin with their hands, and all the gifts will be equally pleasing unto God. If you cannot preach the Gospel from a pulpit, you can humbly do a layman's work for Christ, and if, perchance, you have no special abilities at all in so-called Christian work, you can help in humbler ways the cause of Christ. There is crying need of a multitude of workers who are willing to run errands for the Master.

We may serve Christ by serving the church. It is possible for us to run too far afield in search of special work to do for the Master, when right at hand in our own churches there are pressing and important duties awaiting us. There is something radically wrong with the Christian Endeavor principles of the young person who is active and prominent in outside work but non-effective in the affairs of his own church.