

"The Lord's Prayer"

The Present Truth – November 1, 1900

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How many times you repeat the words of the prayer taught by our Saviour to His disciples. Most likely you say them every day, and perhaps twice a day, at morning and evening. But do you always think of their beautiful meaning, and really pray them in your heart, or are they only to you a "vain repetition"? Do you know that there is a great difference between "saying your prayers," and praying? Perhaps you know the little child's hymn beginning,

"I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray,"

and this is a good thing for you, dear children, to think about.

A short time ago, I saw some long strips of paper fastened together, covered with prayers which the Hindu people make to their false gods. These had been taken from a tree in India, where they had been placed by a native who believed that every time the wind stirred these paper leaves, it was the same as though he had repeated all the prayers written on them. There are also "prayer wheels" used by some heathen nations, who believe that every time the wheel is turned, it is counted as though they said a prayer.

You will think this very foolish, for of what use would such prayers be, even if the people who use them could repeat them the hundreds of times they fancy they were counted as doing? You think, perhaps, that you be in no danger of doing anything so foolish.

But when Jesus tells us about these poor heathen who "think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." He adds the warning, "Be not ye like unto them." He says that when we "say prayers," without really praying in our hearts to our Heavenly Father, our words are of no more value than these "vain repetitions" that the heathen make to their gods of wood and stone that can neither see nor hear.

"Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him." Why then does He want us to come to Him in prayer and make our requests known to Him?

It is because He loves us; He wants to talk to us, and to have us talk to Him. He wants His children to learn to know Him. You know that the best, the quickest and easiest, and indeed the only way to get really acquainted with anyone, is to talk with him yourself. In other ways you may learn much about anyone, but to know the person himself you must talk with him.

As you come to talk with God in prayer, it will help you much, and keep you from saying over your prayers as a mere form, without even thinking of the meaning of

the words, if you remember that God is really present with you, and listening for every word that you say.

His Word tells us that "the Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." And again, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."

"If earthly parents hear
Their children when they cry;
If they with love sincere
Their children's wants supply;
Much more wilt Thou Thy love display,
And answer when Thy children pray."

So as you come and talk with God, as you thank Him and praise Him for all that He has done and is doing for you, and ask Him for all that you need, He will also talk to you. His Holy Spirit will speak to your heart, and bring His Word to your mind, giving you new thoughts of God, and filling you with love for Him.

When Jesus was on earth He spent much time in prayer. He loved to talk with His Father in Heaven. His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray as He did. So as a model prayer He gave them what we call "the Lord's prayer." He did not mean they were to say only these words that He gave them, but He said: "After this manner therefore pray ye." So we need to study this prayer that He has given us, that we may learn of Him how to pray, not with His words only, but in His Spirit.

For a few weeks we will study together the prayer that Jesus has taught us, and as we do this, let us pray the prayer of the disciples of Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray."