

**Advanced Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson 45B**

Q. 118. WHAT HATH GOD COMMANDED US TO ASK OF HIM?

A. ALL THINGS NECESSARY FOR SOUL AND BODY (A); WHICH CHRIST OUR LORD HAS COMPRISED IN THAT PRAYER HE HIMSELF HAS TAUGHT US.

(A) JAMES 1:17, MATTHEW 6:33

The contents of prayer

Now the Catechism asks about the contents of prayer. We may pray for all things necessary for soul and body (that is: the necessities which we lack). By this we understand everything which we do not have and yet cannot do without. Spiritual and bodily means the needs for our spiritual life and for our temporal life.

Spiritual necessities

Christ has said: *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33).

Even when we are God's children, we must continually pray for God's grace, for the continual forgiveness of sins, and for the increase in the knowledge and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bodily necessities

We must also pray for our bodily needs. We may pray for everything that we need for the supporting, and the strengthening, and the advancement of our life. This means no abundance and no lack. Agur said: *"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me"* (= appointed by Thee or considered appropriate by Thee) (Proverbs 30:8).

Of course, we must work for our substance, but we must also pray for it. 'Ora et labora': pray and work. We must not only pray for good things, but also preservation from evil. When there is need, illness or danger, we may pray for help.

Help can also mean that we receive strength to bear or endure. Sanctified evil does not grieve.

David prayed for preservation: *"Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust"* (Psalm 16:1). Hannah prayed for a son: *"And prayed unto the LORD and wept sore"* (1Samuel 1:10). Hezekiah prayed for recovery: *"Then Hezekiah turned*

his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD' (Isaiah 38:2). It is also necessary to pray for others. When Peter was in prison, the congregation prayed for his deliverance.

Thy will be done

God, however, does not give everything we ask for. He hears in His own way. He only gives that what is good for us. Therefore we pray, "Thy will be done," that is: that also in our prayers we submit ourselves to Thy will, because what thou wilt is always good.

That is how Christ prayed in Gethsemane, when he was sorrowful and very heavy under suffering: *"O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt"* (Matthew 26:39).

What a privilege it is to be allowed to go to the Lord in prayer for all the things necessary for this life! He is willing to teach us to pray. He gave His disciples and all His children the perfect "Lord's Prayer" as a prayer to pray.

Q. 110. WHAT ARE THE WORDS OF THAT PRAYER?

ANSWER: (A) "OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN;

- 1. HALLOWED BE THEY NAME.**
- 2. THY KINGDOM COME.**
- 3. THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.**
- 4. GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD.**
- 5. AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS, AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.**
- 6. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL**
- 7. FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER. AMEN."**

(A) MATTHEW 6: 9-13, LUKE 11 2-4.

THE REQUEST FOR A PRAYER

One of the disciples asked the Lord Jesus how they ought to pray. We read: *"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples"* (Luke 11:1). The disciple asked a very good question. He actually asked the Lord to give a direction for prayer. The disciple showed that he himself did not know how to pray. And who can? No person knows how to pray; only the Lord Jesus does. He teaches His followers the perfect prayer. He also gives additional instructions.

Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount: *"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret (...) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions"* (Matthew 6:6-7). Look for a solitary place to pray, and do not make your prayer unnecessarily long.

The Lord looks for truth in the inward parts. We read in Psalm 145:18: *"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth"*

The Lord's Prayer

This prayer, then follows, which, in a few words, contains all the things necessary for soul and body. This prayer is called "The Lord's Prayer". We read this in two places in the Bible, namely Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11 2-4.

It is an amazingly beautiful and childlike simple prayer, in which all our needs are expressed. This is not a prayer to be rattled off, but to be learned word for word, as matters for the heart.

All people are urged to pray, so also those who are unconverted. *"And call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me"* (Psalm 50:15).

A clear example in the Bible is the conversion of Manasseh. We read of him *"And he (Manasseh) prayed to Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God"* (2 Chronicles 33:13). The Lord does not leave a believing praying person to himself.

The Lord's Prayer is not a standard prayer which should be repeated endlessly, but a prayer that sometimes can be literally recited, providing that during prayer we at least realize for what we are asking. The Lord's Prayer is especially meant to be an example for our personal prayers. The mark of the ungodly is that they do not pray in truth. The apostle James said of them: *"Ye lust, and have not; (...) ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts"* (James 4:2-3)

Questions:

1. For what things may we and must we pray?

2. Why are not all prayers granted?

3. What is the best place to pray?

4. In what two places in the Bible do we read "The Lord's Prayer"?

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: "Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

Happiness, that inestimable jewel, springs only from contentment. Christian contentment is founded in humility. The humble Christian lives upon the fullness of God: thence he seeks all his supplies. Our Lord not only teaches his disciples the word of prayer, which any one may use, but he also gives the spirit of prayer peculiar to themselves only. This consists in knowing our wants; in seeking a supply of them from the Lord, and in daily looking to him for all the blessings of providence and grace needful for us as men and Christians.

Do we know our wants? A proper sense of them will make and keep us low and humble in our own eyes, for we shall go out of ourselves and live out of ourselves. Do we want daily bread to support our bodies? Have we no spring of life in ourselves but what must be fed and nourished from the food we receive for day to day? Just so it is with our souls. Christ saith, "I am the bread of life" John 6:48. We have no inherent stock of spiritual food in ourselves; the man who thinks otherwise is as foolish as he would be who should say he has with himself a supply of natural food, he needs not pray for it.

Do we seek a supply from our Lord? He says, "Blessed are they which do hunger." Matthew 5:6. Their blessedness consists in coming empty to him to be filled: *Give us*. Lord, I am just the same hopeless, helpless, miserable sinner in myself, as I was when I first heard of thee and came unto thee. Give me this day my daily bread: thy flesh to eat and thy blood to drink. Thy flesh is meat indeed: thy blood is drink in deed. John 6:55. Lord, thou has said, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57. O that in feeding on thee by faith, I may know that I have eternal life, and that thou will raise me up at the last day.

This feeding is vastly preferable to disputing. True, we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith; but then it would be with a desire that our own souls and the souls of others may be edified, fed, and nourished by the faith of Jesus; else it is but vain jangling. Who would not contend for his natural food? How jealous, how watchful should we be against every enemy who would prevent our feeding upon Christ, the bread of life! The more we feed upon this bread, the less appetite we have for the pleasures of this world and the vanities of sense. Our spiritual food transforms us into the image of our Lord, and causes us to aspire after him and long to be with him. Precious promise! "Jesus shall feed his flock like a shepherd." Isaiah 40:11.

Taken from: "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God" by W. Mason