

## **NUMBER SEVEN.**

**(CONTINUED.)**

There are seven petitions in what is commonly called the "Lord's prayer" – more properly the prayer He taught His disciples. Matt. 6:9-13. This prayer, so brief and so expressive of human wants, is based on the sacred number which we have found underlying so many things in God's plan. Does not this fact show that the mind which invented this prayer, so to speak, knew that principle? It is to us an additional evidence of the inspiration of the Bible. Our Lord Jesus spoke from His own Divine fullness, "I am the Truth" – and hence in harmony with human wants.

The central petition in this remarkable prayer is, "Give us this day our daily bread." This doubtless includes both natural and spiritual bread. It is as certain that we need spiritual bread – the truth – constantly, in order that our spiritual life be sustained, as that we need natural bread daily to sustain our physical life. In this as in almost everything else in the Bible the natural represents the spiritual. Hence Jesus could say both, "I am the Truth" and "I am the true Bread which came down from heaven." Truth is to the spiritual life as bread is to the natural life, hence: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt. 4:4. (If, as some would have us believe, Jesus while here in the flesh, was nothing but a man, having left His Divine nature and life, will some one tell us how He could truly say I came down from heaven?) (If His flesh came down from heaven, then we all came down from heaven.)

In a preceding chapter we saw that Joseph was a type of Christ as the bread-giver, and also that there were seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, or what would have been famine

had it not been for the abundance in the storehouse. Since that was written it occurs to us that those two periods of seven express typically the relation between the Jewish and Gospel dispensations. This new thought – new to us – looks very clear and beautiful and tends to confirm our faith in the equality and parallelism of the Two Dispensations.

Where do we get our spiritual food during the Gospel dispensation, but from the full storehouse of the Old Testament? The Jewish age was emphatically a period of direct communication from God. All the Old Testament was written during that age. The gospel in all its glorious fullness, is contained in the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. The New Testament is but the development and fulfillment of the Old. Christ and the Apostles quoted from and applied the teachings of the Old Testament. The New was in the Old as the kernel in the shell, or as the light is in the oil before it is burned. The burning is the process of bringing out the light. The work of the Holy Spirit as Christ's representative has been to bring out from the rich storehouse the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Not all at once, nor all to one person, has the truth been unfolded, but to the church in its varied capacities, and as meat in due season.

The want of these direct communications, and of visible angelic ministrations has made the Gospel age emphatically one of faith, and it would have been, like the second seven, a period of famine, had it not been for the full stores laid up for us by our Joseph – Christ the Bread Giver. How very wise His provisions, and how precious the constant, daily, supply!

As human wants are expressed in seven petitions, so Christian character is comprehended in seven graces added to faith. 2 Pet. 1:5-7. This language is addressed to Christians, as shown by the exhortation to add to faith. Faith is fundamental, and these graces

are as the house of Wisdom built upon it. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." Prov. 9:1. Pillars are not only for beauty but for strength. "If ye do these things ye shall never fall." "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11:6. Peter says to those who have faith, "Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." By comparing Paul's and Peter's statements above, it will be seen that diligently to seek **[R137 : page 4]** and come to God is to build this house of Wisdom, and so form a character like God, or grow up into Christ our Head in all things; and it will be seen also, by reading the context that the reward, of the abundant entrance is to him who thus builds.

We have been surprised at times by a statement of a Christian brother, something like the following: "If you expect to gain the high calling on account of character you will be greatly disappointed." This statement, we believe, has a worse meaning and influence than he who wrote it supposed. Had it been said, "If you expect to form such a character out of Christ you will be greatly deceived," we would have said a hearty AMEN. But from Peter's statement and the general teaching of the New Testament, it is evident that the object of union with Christ is that we bring forth fruit unto holiness; and we may safely say that whoever expects to have a part in the high calling of God without character will be greatly disappointed. And we firmly believe that the writer above referred to would agree to this.

Men are sometimes led to make statements in the heat of an argument, the legitimate effects of which they would reject. Their

hearts in such cases are better than their statements. But when the doctrine of holiness is obscured by such statements, then the Lord gives a fullness of expression to this subject by His Spirit, enabling us to defend the truth and ourselves against the wiles of the Devil. And we are justified, for the sake of the flock of God who are in danger, in contending earnestly for the truth.

See how emphatic Peter is upon this point. "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Verse 8. As much as to say though we have the knowledge, yet lacking these we will be both barren and unfruitful. "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Verse 9.

The doctrine of the forgiveness of sin is made very prominent in the Bible, and is a strong motive to a holy life. He that is conscious of being forgiven much loveth much; hence the danger of forgetting it, and of falling into the idea that every one must suffer the full penalty for his own sins. The Psalmist says "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities" &c. Psa. 103:2-3. The very first great benefit is **[R137 : page 5]** forgiveness of all our sins. According to Peter the effect of forgetting this is the neglect of the Christian graces. Hence he would put them in remembrance and says: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence [by adding these graces] to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do [add] these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." Peter did not consider it enough that his brethren should be established in the present truth, but in addition to that he would continually remind

them of these things – the seven graces. We have here a good reason for our importunity on this theme, though unfortunately it may be distasteful to some. May the Spirit of truth help us to appreciate and to add these seven cardinal graces.

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