

LORD'S DAY 50

125. Q. What is the fourth petition?

A. *Give us this day our daily bread.*

That is:

Provide us with all our bodily needs¹
so that we may acknowledge
that Thou art the only fountain of all good,²
and that our care and labour,
and also Thy gifts,
cannot do us any good
without Thy blessing.³

Grant, therefore, that we may
withdraw our trust
from all creatures
and place it only in Thee.⁴

1. **Psalm 104:27-30** These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. ²⁸ What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. ²⁹ You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. ³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth.

Psalm 145:15-16 The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. ¹⁶ You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Matthew 6:25-34 Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

2. **Acts 14:17** Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Acts 17:25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift

is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

3. **Deuteronomy 8:3** So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.

Psalm 37:16 A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.

Psalm 127:1-2 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain. ² It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep.

1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

4. **Psalm 55:22** Cast your burden on the LORD, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.

Psalm 62

Psalm 146

Jeremiah 17:5-8 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. ⁶ For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land which is not inhabited. ⁷ Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. ⁸ For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit."

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

The Lord's Prayer could be divided into two parts just as the commandments are (cf. LD 34). The first three petitions we focus directly upon God, which is reflected in the word "*Thy*" (Hallowed by *Thy* Name, *Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done...) In the last three petitions we focus upon ourselves, which is reflected in the word "*us*" (Give *us* this day our daily bread, Forgive *us* our debts ..., Lead *us* not into temptation ...).

Regarding these last three petitions, the prayer for our physical needs comes first. It is doubtful whether much significance can be placed upon this order. In the early Christian church it appears that some of the church fathers were embarrassed that the request for a physical gift (bread) should precede the request for spiritual gifts (forgiveness, deliverance from temptation). Thus they interpreted this petition spiritually, as though it referred to the "*bread from heaven*" which is Jesus Christ (cf. John 6:35: *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*). This continued to be the accepted interpretation for centuries, so that the Latin Vulgate translated this petition as a reference to *supersubstantial bread*, to the bread that is more than just bread, that is, to Jesus Christ.

This idea was not accepted by the Reformers, however. They understood the reference to bread as literal bread which is needed to sustain earthly life. It is good that they did, for we should never be embarrassed to ask God for the needs of our body, as though our physical needs are of lesser importance than our spiritual needs. God created us with body and soul, and wants us to glorify him in body and soul as we perform the duties which He assigned to us in this world. But we cannot perform the duties that God assigned us unless our bodies receive what is needful for life. If our bodily needs are not provided, then we die, and as the psalmist says, the dead cannot praise God. We need to live if we are to serve and glorify God. Therefore

we should not be embarrassed to ask God to provide us with the bread for our body, as though our physical needs are of lesser importance than our spiritual needs.

We may trust that God will not muzzle the ox while it is treading grain. That is, God will not deny His servants the things they need to do their work.⁸

In this petition we are taught to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread.*" The reference to bread teaches us that we are to ask for **the things we need**. We should not ask for riches or luxury. Neither should we crave these things. With Paul we say, "*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.* (1 Timothy 6:8). The prayer of Agur is a good example in this respect. Agur prayed, "*Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God*" (Proverbs 30:8,9).

The reference to *bread* is a reference not just to food, but to **all the necessities** for daily life. And not just for life itself. We pray for the things we need for maintaining and promoting the kingdom of God, such as sufficient funds to support the church and school, to do the work of mission, etc. If the needs in the kingdom are very great then we may pray for prosperity. Only we cannot expect God to provide us with abundance if our aim is selfish. As the apostle James said, "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (James 4:3).

Before anyone will pray this petition, he must believe in God as the God of providence from whom all physical blessings flow. Basic to this petition is the confession "*that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, **food and drink**, health and sickness, riches and poverty come ... from [God's] fatherly hand*" (LD 10).

In this petition there is also a confession of trust. We do not ask for the things we need ten years ahead. We ask for the things that we need today. We ask for our *daily*

8. I would refer you to LD 42 where we spoke about the relationship between food and work quite extensively.)

bread, that is, for bread which is needful for today, not for tomorrow, nor for the year or the decade ahead. People often wish to accumulate money in a savings account or make investments as a form of security for the future. If God provides us with abundance we may put some aside for the future. That is good stewardship. But in prayer we ask only for the things which we need for today. This requires trust that God will continue to provide in the future.

We are taught to pray "*Give us ... our ... bread*" This hardly seems like a humble petition. Rather, it sounds as though we are demanding our rights. But nothing could be further from the truth. We acknowledge that we have no rights before God. We have sinned and we deserve death, not life. We deserve to die of hunger and thirst. We do not deserve so much as a crumb.

Why then do we pray "*Give us ... our ... bread*? That sounds rather bold! We pray this not because we deserve it, but because God has promised this to us. Our heavenly Father has promised to provide us with all that we need for body and soul. In this

petition we believe, and lay claim to, what God has promised us in His Word.

In doing so we acknowledge the work of Christ which makes it possible for us to receive God's blessings. For God's blessings can only be given to us because Christ has paid for our sins. He suffered in order that we might be blessed. This can be clearly seen at the beginning of Christ's ministry. After His baptism Christ was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There He would suffer, and in His sufferings He would be tempted. He would go forty days and forty nights without food. And being hungry He would be tempted by the devil to take what God had not given, even as Adam was tempted in Paradise. Christ suffered extreme hunger, yes, even death in order that we might receive life and all the things we need for it.



Questions:

1. What do the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer deal with? How is that evident? What do we focus upon in the last three petitions? How is that evident?
2. How did some of the early church fathers interpret the reference to "*bread*"? Did the Reformers accept this interpretation? Should we be embarrassed to ask God for this? Why (not)?
3. Why do we ask God for food?
4. What are we asking God for in this petition? What should we not crave or ask for? What does Paul say in 1 Timothy 6:8?
5. What other things do we pray for besides the necessities of life, such as food, clothing and shelter?
6. When may we pray for prosperity? What must our aim be for this prosperity?
7. What must a person believe in before He will offer this petition?
8. How does our trust become evident in this petition "*Give us this day our daily bread*"?
9. It hardly sounds humble to pray, "*Give us....*" Why do we pray in this manner?
10. Do we deserve God's blessings? What makes it possible for us to receive God's blessings? Where do we see this?