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EXPLANATORY NOTES BY REV. R. S. M'ARTHUR, D. D.

Lesson IX of the International Series (Third Quarter) for Sunday, Aug. 28. Text of the Lesson, Matt. vi. 1-16. Golden Text, 1 Samuel xvi. 17.

V. 1. This verse is a statement of the general principle which is illustrated in what follows. The Revised Version has properly introduced the word "righteousness" instead of "aims." The best critics are agreed in this change. Righteousness here is not the righteousness of Christ; it means rectitude, right doing, conformity to the will of God.

Vs. 2-4. Here we have the first illustration of the application of the principle to aims giving. The change from the plural ye to the singular thou individualizes the thought. Not sound a trumpet.—It is supposed that it was the custom of the Pharisees literally to sound a trumpet and so call together the poor; others think the reference is to the trumpet shaped money boxes and the shaking of the coin as it fell into them. But all these suppositions are far fetched. Hypocrites.—The word originally meant those who wore a mask and performed a part. This is the classical usage. As the composition of the word suggests, they were dissemblers. In the synagogues.—Here religious assemblies were held at which offerings were made. In the streets.—Where beggars gathered and where gifts were bestowed. Have their reward.—Of course they have. Men generally get what they seek. Literally, this is their full reward.

V. 3. Left hand.—This doubtless was a proverb. The privacy was to be so great that one member of the body was not to know what another member did. This is as if the right hand slipped out its gift so quietly and quickly that the left hand was ignorant of the act.

V. 4. This verse indicates the true method; it gives the positive direction. In secret—in a secret place. God will see. Thy Father.—The individuality of the deed is still suggested by the statement regarding the reward.

Vs. 5-15. We now have the second illustration of the application of the general principle of doing good without ostentation. This is in regard to private prayer. The remarks made are not to be applied to common prayer or public worship.

V. 5. Hypocrites pray to be seen of men, but when ye pray there is to be another motive. Dr. Broadus calls attention to the fact that throughout this passage the plural is used in general injunctions and the singular in pointed applications. No criticism is here made on the standing posture in prayer. It is ostentation which is condemned. The corners of the streets.—The crowded thoroughfares, the broadways, this is the idea, were admirable places for such ostentatious display.

V. 6. Now comes the positive side of the teaching, the pointing out of the true method. Thou.—The singular form for the sake of a pointed personal application. Closet.—Literally, storeroom or a place of privacy; an innermost apartment. In the Revised Version it is rendered "inner chamber," sometimes the upper chamber (Acts i. 13; ix. 37; xx. 9). By thy closet may be meant a place under one's own control. No Christian can be strong among men except he be often alone with God. Shut thy door.—Not only must the door be closed, but, as is implied, fastened; this suggests the greatest privacy. No rebuke is intended for family, social or more public prayer. Every man's own heart may be his closet. Openly is to be omitted.

Vs. 7-8. Ye.—Our Lord now comes to speak of prayer in its varied relations in life, and so uses the plural. Prayer is liable to other dangers than ostentatious display; another fault in prayer is vain repetition. One practice has been condemned—the pharisaical practice; the other is the heathen practice which is to be condemned. Vain repetitions.—The word so translated occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Some have thought that it is derived from the name Battus, a Cyrenian king mentioned by Herodotus, who was noted for his stammering; others derive it from a poet of that name whose poetical effusions abounded in repetitions.

V. 9. Now we come to the model prayer; this is its true name. The true Lord's Prayer, our Lord's intercessory prayer, is found in John, 17th chapter. The prayer here is rather the disciples' prayer, although the common name is found as early as A. D. 250. For simplicity, comprehensiveness and spirituality, this prayer must ever be a model. There is nothing said of the mediatorial work of Christ, no asking in his name, but these elements could not be present at this stage in his life and teaching. The prayer is adapted to the time when it was uttered. It is not given as a form to be always and necessarily used; it is to serve as a specimen of acceptable prayer. In Luke we have it with important variations, showing that it was not intended as an invariable form. So far as we know Christ did not himself use this form, neither did the apostles. The prayer falls into two divisions of three petitions each. The first class of petitions—like the first table of the law—refers to God and our relations to him. The second—like the second table of the law—to ourselves and our relations to one another. We are to pray for God's glory before we pray for our own bread. Our Father.—The plural is used throughout the prayer, because the prayer is social rather than secret. God is our Father by creation, preservation, and especially so by adoption. Our shows the brotherhood of man, as well as the fatherhood of God. In heaven.—More accurately, in the heavens. This is a Hebrew usage very common in the New Testament. Hallowed.—This is an Anglo-Saxon word often used in translating the Old Testament, but only here and in Luke ii, 2 in the New Testament. It is a prayer that God's name may be regarded and treated as sacred, sanctified and revered alike by our works, words and thoughts.

V. 10. Thy kingdom come.—God's kingdom is his reign; the administration of Jesus Christ. To offer this petition aright is to labor and to give for the spread of the Gospel, for the conversion of the world. Thy will.—This includes all which God purposes and commands. Strictly, "be done" means to come to pass. The order in the Revised Version is worthy of notice. "As in heaven, so on earth." That is, as fully, joyously and universally as it is done by angels. Bengel notes that in the first three petitions we have thy, thy, and in the others us, us.

V. 11. Daily bread.—With this verse the second division of the prayer begins, and petitions for us are now offered. Bread stands for food in general. To the Israelites God gave daily manna. This is a prayer primarily for the body. The man who is too lazy to work ought not to use this prayer.

V. 12. Debts.—Our chief need is forgiveness of our sins. Our hearts ought to give their supreme love to God. They have failed to do this; God, therefore, has claims upon us. This obligation must be discharged by us or atonement be made by another. Our failure is our sin, and it is here represented as a debt.

V. 13. This is the sixth and last petition. Lead us not.—We need not strictly

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