

1

The Excellence of the Lord's Prayer

Those two things that are of greatest weight to commend unto our diligent consideration the reading or hearing of anything after a special manner commend the Lord's Prayer.

The Author and the Work Itself

Two things in an author make his work to be esteemed: eminence of place and excellence of parts. The work of a king is honored because it is the work of a king, even for his place's sake. The work of a great scholar is admired for his learning's sake, though in his estate he is never so mean.

Two things also in the matter or work itself commend it: The perfection of it and the profit that may be gotten by it. If an art is accurately handled, and so perfectly set out as nothing can be found defective, and yet no superfluous redundancy therein, every good student will be sure to have it and will diligently study it. Or if a work that may bring much profit to such as carefully use it is published, he will be thought careless of his own good who does not use it.

When all these meet together, an excellent author and a worthy work—an author to be respected for eminence of person and excellence of parts, a work to be regarded for the absolute perfection of it in itself, and for the necessity and utility of it to us—they are as a fourfold twisted cord to draw our minds thereto and to bind them thereon.

Such an Author is the indicter of this prayer, and such a work is the prayer itself. This title, "The Lord's Prayer," implies as much. The Lord is the Author; prayer is the work.

By the Lord is meant that one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things, and we by Him. The eminence of His person is such as He has a name given Him above every name. No monarch on earth, no angel in heaven is to be compared unto Him.

In regard of the excellence of His gifts, God gave Him the Spirit without measure, “for it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell.” For He is the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father and knows what is the will of the Father, what is most pleasing and acceptable to Him and what suits He is willing to grant unto His children. God would have many things to be spoken and heard by the prophets, His servants, but how much greater are the things that His Son utters?

As for the work, none is so heavenly, none so profitable as prayer. And among prayers none is to be compared unto this whether we consider the matter contained in it or the manner of setting it down.

The matter is in every way sound, complete, and perfect. Every word in it has its weight. There is not one superfluous word in it that could be spared. Nor is it any way defective. Whatsoever is lawful, needful, and fitting to be asked in prayer is therein contained; yea, whatever is to be believed or practiced by a Christian is therein implied. There is no particle of any good prayer commended in the Scripture, or at any time by any person well-conceived, but may be found couched in this. In this form are comprised all the distinct kinds of prayer, as requests for good things, deprecation against evil, intercession for others, and thanksgiving.

The manner of setting down the things contained in this prayer is answerable to the matter. By it we are taught how to begin prayer, in what order to set every petition that we make, and how to conclude our prayer.

The order therein is as admirable as any other point. Though the things comprised in it are innumerable, yet are