

Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Preached on: Sunday, June 2, 2013

We continue our study this morning of Prayer. So, if you will, take your Bibles, turn to Matthew 6. We are going to be looking at a section from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount that is included in chapters 5-7 of Matthew. As we continue to understand, not only our Savior's prayer life, but the pattern of prayer that he has given to each of us.

Before we look at this text closely, may I remind you that we are really in a series where we're continuing to understand great biblical truths that are essential to spiritual growth and development. Spiritual immaturity is rampant in evangelicalism today. And one of the surest marks of spiritual immaturity is our inability to see it in ourselves. In fact, the spiritual babe will be quite proud of his or her spiritual prowess and that is the very essence of hypocrisy. Biblically, maturity is measured by our love for God, by our willingness to keep his commandments, especially our commitment to the great commandment, as well as the great commission. But, my friends, spiritual maturity can be most effectively measured by our secret devotion to God in prayer. My friends, who you are alone with God reveals who you really are. You might be able to fool a lot of people, but you don't fool God and there is no pretending in the presence of our own conscience. If you are a stranger to private worship, if you have no habit of private prayer, if you have no real longing to commune with God in prayer, the lover of your soul, then you are a spiritual babe and you have no business, frankly, serving in any teaching capacity within the church because you're operating in the flesh, not in the Spirit.

We have learned, thus far, four great lessons from our Savior's secret devotion to God in prayer. Last week, we looked at Mark 1:35-39 and there we learned that prayer reveals an intense longing to commune with God. We learned that prayer should be the first priority to prepare our day. We also learned that solitude is really the sanctuary of prayer and that prayer is as important in times of blessing as it is in times of distress.

But now, we come to this issue of how we are to pray. You might want to ask yourself, What is the typical content of my prayer, of my prayer life? For most people, it begins with a general thank you and then it very quickly moves to soliciting God's help for physical needs. Most of the time, sickness dominates prayer requests, especially on Wednesday nights. By nature, we tend to look to God for our physical needs far more than our spiritual needs. Seldom do we pray for personal holiness or for useful service or for boldness in evangelism or for richer fellowship with Christ because, again, by nature, our flesh tends to look at our needs much more than the needs of others and the glory of God.

And, unfortunately, very often our prayers can be ritualistic, they can be repetitious, they can be rather mechanical and throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus denounces hypocrisy because God hates ritualistic ceremonial religion. He hates that because it's phony. It provides merely an illusion of spirituality. It might be impressive to naïve

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people that are observing it, but it's not to God. And, unfortunately, many times this is manifested in our prayers.

I remember when I was a young man, actually a little boy, during the Wednesday night prayer meetings I would sit with some of the other little boys and we would do something that I'm not recommending for you children to do, but we would count all of the "Dear Lords" in one man's prayer, and for others it was "Father God," for others it was "O Lord," for others it was "Sweet Jesus." For example, the man would pray, "Dear Lord, we thank you for this day, dear Lord and dear Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to come together, dear Lord, with all of these people, dear Lord. And dear Lord, we pray for our missionaries, dear Lord, that you would protect them, dear Lord." And we would just start counting them.

Well, unfortunately, such flippant repetitions really betray a phony sentimentalism designed to portray fervent love and it's sickening to those who are listening. And, my friends, it is offensive to God. I might also add that it betrays a heart that is a stranger to God in prayer. We never talk to each other that way, why would we talk to God that way?

In Matthew 6:7, Jesus said, "When you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition," meaning thoughtless chatter, the mindless repetition of spiritual-sounding words and phrases, it's offensive to God. By the way, we see this especially in the ecstatic gibberish in the Pentecostal movement, the Charismatic movement as well as other pagan religions where Satan loves to deceive and impress other people.

But in Jesus' day, Rabbinic tradition had turned prayer into a religious theatrical performance. It was merely a meaningless ritual and maybe it is for you, at times, as well. The people, for the most part, just memorized the prayers that they would pray or they would read them. Most folks, during this time, prayed three times a day: at 9, at 12 and at 3 pm. Regardless of where they were, they would pray. They would mindlessly repeat the Shema, which is praise, "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One." And the really devout Jews would repeat the Shemoneh Esrei which is the 18, which is a composite of 18 prayers that they would pray for various occasions. But none of this was an expression of the heart. In fact, it was just a ritual and they would even rattle it off as fast as they could and then feel proud that they had prayed.

But, O dear friends, the Scribes and the Pharisees, now they competed for the Academy Awards. They were not men of God but actors looking for a stage, looking for an audience. They would loudly enunciate every syllable when they prayed and they would always do it for an audience. And the longer they prayed, the better. In fact, Jesus exposed them in Mark 12:40, describing them as those who "for appearance's sake offer long prayers."

So, what we have here in Matthew 6, especially verse 5-8, is Jesus addressing this issue of hypocritical praying. Verse 8, he says, therefore, "do not be like them." In other words,

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like the hypocrites who are being like the Gentile, like the idolaters that would use meaningless repetition believing that somehow this would impress God and get an answer from him. He goes on to say, "for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." Isn't that amazing, our Father knows better than us what we need to pray for.

I might add, that prayer is not merely informing God of that which he does not already know, nor is it cajoling an indifferent heavenly Father to get him to somehow help us when he's reluctantly not willing to do so, but rather prayer is an opportunity to glorify God, seeking to align our wills with his. It reveals our trust in his absolute sovereignty. It reveals our faith in his perfect will. It reveals our dependence upon his mercy and grace. For this reason, Jesus said in John 14:13, "Whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son." If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.

Now, this doesn't mean that you just mindlessly tack on the end of your prayer "In Jesus' name" as if it's some ritualistic formula. When he says, "my name," he's basically saying, "I want you to ask knowing that because of my name, because of who I am, you have absolute confidence in the totality of my attributes that is included in my name. My name encompasses the sum of all of my glorious attributes. The self-revelation of all of my works." So, when we pray in his name, we're basically saying, "I ask these things based on the confidence that I have in the totality of who you are that is encapsulated within your name."

So, we want to be careful not to pray with hypocrisy, we want to pray with full confidence that our Father knows what we need before we ask him and then, in our feebleness, we can cry out to him. And isn't it interesting that many times we don't really know what to pray, how to pray, yet we're comforted knowing, according to Romans 8 beginning in verse 26, that the Spirit, also, helps our weaknesses. Isn't that precious to know? The Spirit also helps our weaknesses. He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

So, we have this marvelous concept here, this marvelous blessing, this marvelous opportunity to come before the Lord in prayer. We have access into the presence of God, we can come boldly before his throne because we have been hidden in Christ and then the Spirit who dwells within us, helps align our wills with the will of the Father.

Now, prayer was a huge priority in the life of Jesus and the disciples saw this. In fact, we learn in Luke 11:1, that the disciples come to Jesus and they ask him to teach them how to pray and he then proceeds to repeat the same basic pattern for prayer that we have here in Matthew. Now, before we look at this, let me remind you that he did not teach them a prayer. He taught them a model or a pattern for prayer. Many times this is called the Lord's Prayer but it's really the disciples' prayer, a model of prayer for all of us. And I find it staggering to think that in 70 words, our God is able to comprehensively articulate every conceivable element of genuine prayer that is honoring to him.

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Now, let's read what Jesus told them and what he tells us. Matthew 6:9, "Pray, then, in this way : 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."

Here we have an outline that is very easy for us to remember and I want to break it down for you. It's divided into two very easy sections, each having three petitions. Section one addresses God's glory, in verses 9-10. These are areas of praise and petitions regarding his name, his kingdom and his will. And then section two addresses our needs, in verses 11-13. Petitions regarding daily bread, in other words, our dependence on God for today. The issue of forgiveness, our debts to God and also issues of protection from temptation where we plead for our defense by God. And I want you to notice the perfect balance that the Lord gives us here, a balance of God's glory and our needs. Usually in our prayers, we are out of balance. It's much more about ourselves, about our needs, than the glory of God. Very often, our lives are very self-centered, not God-centered and we focus more on ourselves than we do on him.

Now, I want to caution you here, this is not to suggest that every time you pray, you cover each point of this outline. Again, notice he doesn't say, "Pray these words," but he says, "Pray this way." But this is an outline that provides for us the essential elements that need to be dominant in our thinking when we come before God. Again, not that we always pray every category, but we understand this overall theme that should really be a part of our thinking, a part of our heart.

I would also add, that the Lord knew that this would help us organize our thoughts. If you think about it, many times when you go before the Lord in prayer, there is no organization, you just kind of wing it. Sometimes you have to, but there should be such a rich and vibrant private prayer life that even when you have to pray publicly, all you're doing is just saying aloud what you're used to doing privately. Can you imagine going before some great king, having that opportunity. If you did, you would certainly have some sense of what you wanted to say, what you wanted to talk about. And yet, many times we come into the presence of the Almighty unprepared. We blurt out a few familiar clichés, we ask for forgiveness of sin in general, not in specific, we submit out little wish list and then we quickly close before our mind wanders onto something that is more important. But here, we have a stark contrast to ritualistic mechanical repetitious prayers, the prayers of a hypocrite. We have six massive caverns of theological truth, each one containing a magnificent cache of spiritual riches.

And today we want to look at section one addressing God's glory: praise and petitions regarding his name, his kingdom and his will. So, first, let's look at his name, the issue of his name, Matthew 6:9. Jesus says, "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in

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heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.” Beloved, here is where the Lord wants us to begin. This is so precious. We are to begin with an acknowledgment of God as our Father, affirming the fatherhood of God. What a humbling yet glorious reality. And this should shape our attitude, it should shape, therefore, our prayers.

The idea of him being our Father denotes not only origin but also intimacy of relationship. This was a concept that was utterly foreign in 1st century Judaism. But, also notice, it is our Father in heaven reminding us of our future home. If you've ever gone away, especially in other parts of the world, one of the things that you will find is this longing to go home. You can't wait to get back home to be with your family and this is all part of this.

But, it also denotes the fact that God is majestic, that he is sovereign, that he is utterly transcendent and glorious. Heaven is his dwelling place. He exceeds anything that we can imagine and yet, we can actually come into his presence. But, it also reminds us that we should keep our proper place. He is God and we are not. Solomon exhorts worshippers to discipline their minds and hearts and guard against hasty and empty words because of the issue of God being in heaven. He says in Ecclesiastes 5:2, “Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God for God is in heaven and you are on earth, therefore, let your words be few.” It's staggering to think that God is accessible to us like a godly Father. That his children can come into his presence to experience his love and his protection and his provision, all of the things that a godly Father should do.

And sometimes we even experience his discipline, if we are truly his sons. Through faith in Christ, we've been adopted as sons. Paul tells us this in Romans 8 beginning in verse 14, “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” He goes on to say, “You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” So, beloved, it is crucial for us to begin our time of prayer with all of this in mind, with the profound awareness that we are sons and daughters of the Most High God.

And do you realize that even as a son or a daughter would bear the resemblance of the parent, so too, we bear the resemblance of our Father. You might say that we have his DNA. In 2 Peter 1:4 we are told that we have been made “partakers of the divine nature.” In fact, some day we are going to be conformed into the very image of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus.

So, when you come to the Lord in prayer, do you have these things in mind? Do you come before him as a child who loves his or her Father? And is aware of his great love for you? In 1 John 3 beginning in verse 1, we read, “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are

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children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

Now, sometimes, you hear people say, “Well, we’re all God’s children.” No, we’re not. No, we’re not. Not so for the unsaved. No matter how religious they may appear, if a person has not placed their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, they are not a child of God. We read in John 1:12, “But as many as received Him,” referring to Christ, “to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” For this reason, the unsaved will have no desire to honor the Father. They will have no passion to give him glory. In fact, they are utterly incapable of reflecting his attributes in their lives because God is not their father, Satan is. Jesus made this very clear. He spoke of the unbelieving Jews in John 8:44 saying, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.” It goes on to say that, “he is a liar and the father of lies.” And even the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:2 that the unregenerate are children of disobedience.

Now, I want you to think about this: our Father in heaven has spared absolutely nothing, not even his own Son, to provide for his children eternally. In fact, right now, according to 1 Peter 1:4, we have “an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Think about this, this is what our Father has given us. This was so exciting to the Apostle Paul that he exhorts the saints in Colossians 1:12 “to give thanks to the Father.” And then he says this, “who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.” The term “qualified” means to empower, it means to authorize. Not based upon our merit but rather on the merit of Christ, because of his imputed righteousness the Father has qualified us. And because it is in the present tense, it is something that we have full possession of right now. Do you realize that? You have an inheritance that is waiting for you. It’s an amazing thing. We are fellow heirs with Christ. You see, all of these things should fill our hearts when we come before the throne and pray to our Father.

Paul goes on to say in the next verse that he delivered us from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son, verse 13. So, think about this: our Father has qualified us to share in the inheritance. Literally, in the original language, it reads “for the portion of the lot.” For the portion of the lot. And here Paul is alluding to the individual allotments of the Israelites that were given to them as an inheritance when they came into Canaan. So, what he’s saying here, is that each of the children of the Father have reserved for them an inheritance. You each have a portion, your own individual allotment of the total inheritance. That’s just amazing, isn’t it? Now, you might ask, “Well, what’s that going to be?” I have no idea but I know it will be better than anything that we have on earth. For me, the greatest thing you could give me on earth is a beautiful ranch somewhere in the most remote wilderness of British Columbia and a good string of horses and a vast wilderness to hunt in and to fish in. Now, he may give me that, I don’t know, but, you know, whatever he gives me, whatever he gives you, will be so much

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greater than any of that. Do you think about this when you come to prayer? This is what the Father has done for you.

But I want you to notice that this intimacy is also balanced with reverence. Because of all that the Father is, because of all that he has given to us, he deserves our undiminished and eternal praise. And for this reason, Jesus calls upon us to hallow his name. Notice, verse 9, "Hallowed be Thy name." Now, this is an old archaic English term used to translate the Greek word, *hagiazo*, which means "to make holy." So, what he's saying here is, "God is to be acknowledged as holy. Our heart is to be filled with extreme veneration when we come before him." You see, to hallow his name is to confess his supreme holiness. His name is to be kept holy so we must come into his presence with utmost reverence and praise, bowing before his consummate perfection and his infinite glory. Just think of all the names and the titles and the metaphors used in Scripture to define our Triune God and all of them really underscore different aspects of his character. And these great concepts should resonate in our hearts whenever we begin to pray to our Father in heaven and hallow his name. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 138:2, "I will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word."

So, I would ask you, Does this characterize your heart when you come before the Lord in prayer? This is so foundational to God honoring prayer. This is why we begin here. We approach the throne of grace recognizing that we are true sons of a heavenly Father that loves us with a perfect and an infinite love, an eternal love. We are consciously aware that he is the source of our life, that every moment of our life we live in his presence. We approach him without any fear but with utmost respect and reverence. We are confident of his love, of his protection, of his provision. And we are humbled by all that he is, therefore, we have a desire to obey him. We are unwilling to do anything that would bring reproach upon his name but rather, we will hallow his name by living a life that honors and glorifies all that he is. Does this characterize the attitude of your heart?

Second, Jesus says that we petition him for his kingdom. Notice, verse 10, "Thy kingdom come." Now, kingdom refers to a domain, a realm, that is ruled by a king. Now, as we think about it, certainly all the universe is the dominion of God. He is the Almighty Sovereign that rules over all that he has created, but my friends, this is not the kingdom for which we are to pray. Moreover, his kingdom includes a present spiritual kingdom whereby he rules in the hearts of all that he has redeemed by his grace but this is not the kingdom for which we pray.

You see, the kingdom that he has asked to pray for must be understood in light of the next clause. He says, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So, this speaks of a kingdom that must exist upon the realm of the earth. An earthly dominion that will hallow the name of the Father and do his will on earth as it is being done in heaven. My friends, this can only refer to the long promised Messianic Kingdom, the Millennial Kingdom where the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of David will rule and

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reign, whose subjects will include the restored and the reconciled remnant of ethnic national Israel and the nations of the earth. This is the long awaited consolation of Israel. This is what the disciples would've understood. Essentially, when we pray, "Thy kingdom come," we are praying the same thing that John prayed at the very end of Revelation. In Revelation 22:20 he says, "Come, Lord Jesus." That's what it means. "Lord, come and establish your glorious kingdom upon the earth."

I also find it interesting that in all three petitions regarding God's name, regarding his kingdom and his will, the Greek verbs are all in the emphatic position and, therefore, that underscores the profound importance of each one. But it is also interesting to note that in each case, the verbs are in an aorist active imperative. In other words, the grammatical form of the verbs denote a single or instantaneous action. In other words, we are praying for something that will suddenly explode upon the earth. A kingdom to come, not something that already exists upon the earth as in the universal kingdom or even the spiritual kingdom that currently exists. Nor does it speak of the kingdom that is going to somehow gradually appear upon the earth. Nor can it refer to some kind of a spiritualized millennial kingdom that currently exists in the present church age and will continue until Christ's return. If we're currently living in the kingdom on earth right now, then this text would beg for relevance as would many others. By the way, those concepts would've been totally foreign to the disciples. They were longing for the kingdom. So, my friends, we are to pray for the glory of God to suddenly, instantaneously burst forth upon this earth.

The late Adolph Saphir, a godly and learned Christian Jew, rightly observed that the kingdom of God must come "on earth where God has been denied and forgotten, where his honor has been disregarded and his commandments have been transgressed. Where nations and kingdoms, instead of seeking his glory and showing forth his praise, have not bowed to his authority and revered his law. It is on earth," he says, "that the Lord shall reign. Injustice, cruelty, and war shall be banished and instead of idolatry, selfishness and sin the fear and love and beauty of God will be manifested."

Dear Christian, to pray "Thy kingdom come" is to join with John in Revelation 1. At the end of verse 6, he says, "To him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." In other words, "Let it be."

Little child of God, I pray that this is the longing of your heart. Longing to see our Lord, our Messiah, our King glorified. To see him come to this wicked, sin-cursed earth and to see him renovate this earth, to turn it back to Edenic splendor and then reign in all of his glory. A time when the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters covered the sea. I hope you live in light of this. If you don't this won't be a part of your prayer life.

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Now, technically, the kingdom of God encompasses the past, the present and the future. For example, the kingdom past is described in places like Luke 13. There Jesus reminded us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets were in the kingdom of God. Also, remember Jesus said to Pilate in John 18, "My kingdom is not of this world." So, there is a kingdom past, there is also a kingdom present. Jesus said in Luke 17 that the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Indeed, the Messiah was right there. Remember that the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven as it's sometimes called, is at the very heart of the gospel. When we come to Christ in repentant faith, we enter into that kingdom. John the Baptist cried out, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And this was the very core of Jesus' message, he came to preach "the kingdom of God" in Luke 4.

But he came unto his own and his own received him not, they rejected and crucified the Messiah, the King, so he postponed the earthly kingdom, he ascended back into heaven but he promised to come back again as King of kings and Lord of lords and establish his earthly kingdom.

This was a preoccupation that the Lord had at the final supper, the last supper. In fact, he mentioned the future kingdom five times: twice during the prelude to the supper and three times during the supper. For example, in Mark 14:25, he says, "Truly I say to you I shall never again drink of the fruit of the wine," in other words, participate in this Passover meal, "until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Luke 22:18, he says, "I say to you I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." So, what is he referring to there? He's referring to the kingdom future.

This will be the consummation of redemptive history. The Millennial Kingdom, the Messianic Age when Jesus will be exalted on earth as he is in heaven. When that remnant of Israel will be saved and grafted back into the root of blessing from which they have been temporarily removed. This will be the time when Christ will reign in Jerusalem for 1,000 years upon a renovated earth at the end of which he will uncreate the heavens and the earth and then recreate them giving us a new heaven and a new earth and then we will enter into that eternal state of heaven. Beloved, it will be at that time that the Father's name will be hallowed and his will, will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The prophets spoke much about this thousand year reign. It's described six times in Revelation 20 alone. The disciples and the early Jewish saints were very familiar with these promises. They're sprinkled all through the Old Testament. You can read about it in 2 Samuel 7; we can see it in Jeremiah 30-33; you can read about it in Daniel 2 and 7; you see it in Psalm 2; we see it in Isaiah 11 and 24; we can read about it in Hosea 3; and Joel 3. It's all through the Old Testament: Amos 9, Micah 4, Zephaniah 3, Zechariah 14. Even the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24 and 25. In Daniel 7 we have given to us a revelation of the coronation of the Messiah King as God the Father places the crown upon his head. Verse 13, Daniel says this, "'I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that

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all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

Beloved, again, when the Lord returns in all of his glory, he will renovate this earth, he will establish his kingdom, he will reign for 1,000 years and that Millennial Kingdom will be the consummating bridge between human history and the eternal state. Do you pray for this? Is this the passion of your heart? Or do you just live for your little kingdom? If you do not long for the kingdom, you know little of the King who has asked you to pray for his kingdom to come. Worse yet, you may love this world far more than you should. The kingdom for which we are to pray will be a time when the Messiah will take back his rightful authority from the current ruler of this age who is Satan. Who Jesus called in John 12:31, “the ruler of this world.” In fact, in 1 John 5:19, we read that “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”

Beloved, I ask you, Are you like Simeon in Luke 2 who was “looking for the consolation of Israel,” the menachem, the Messiah Comforter. Like the disciples learning to pray, Simeon and all of the Jews longed for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, an everlasting covenant that contained four elements that will be fulfilled in the kingdom. Elements referring to the seed, the Messiah that would come from Abraham ultimately. Promises regarding the land, regarding the nation, regarding divine blessing and protection for his posterity. They were longing for the Davidic Covenant that promised a king that would come from David that will rule over the world. They longed for the New Covenant, whereby forgiveness was promised, a cleansing, a new heart, the implanting of the Holy Spirit. And you see, now, we can look back in history and we can see that the King has arrived. He's given us a portion of the kingdom right now but he has also ascended back into heaven and now we await his return. Therefore, the King teaches us to pray “Thy kingdom come.” Do you understand? It's an amazing thought.

So, the Lord teaches us to address God's glory by first focusing on his name and then his kingdom and finally his will. Notice, verse 10, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Now, the disciples knew all too well that very few submitted to the will of God. His will, even to this day, is ignored, it is mocked, it is disobeyed. Even among the King's chosen subjects. Very often, those within the royal family have no regard for the will of the King. He has given us a great commandment: “to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.” He has given us a great commission: to go into the world and to make disciples and to teach them to observe all that Jesus has commanded. But, very few Christians commit themselves to this.

It's important for you to understand, there are three distinct components to the will of God. First of all, there is the will of sovereign purpose. In other words, it's sometimes called his decreed will. He has decreed a sovereign plan that controls all of history. It encompasses everything that occurs in the universe, including heaven and earth and even hell. Ephesians 1:11, “He works all things after the counsel of his will.” The prophet

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Our Savior's Pattern for Prayer Part 1

By David Harrell

Bible Text: Matthew 6:9-13

Preached on: Sunday, June 2, 2013

Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 14:24, "The Lord of Hosts has sworn saying, Surely just as I have intended, so it has happened and just as I have planned, so it will stand." My friends, without this we would have no hope in the Word of God, no confidence in it. Only because of God's decreed will can we have confidence that the purposes and promises of prophecy will ever be fulfilled.

And so, his decreed will, his will of sovereign purpose includes things like the stability of the universe, the seasons and boundaries of nations, the rise and the fall of rulers, the duration of a man's life, even the manner of our death has been decreed. It includes the good and evil acts of men. Remember in Genesis 50, Joseph told his brothers, "You meant it for evil but God meant it for good." In Peter and John's prayer recorded in Acts 4 they speak in verse 27 of how God predetermined history according to his purpose. It says that he even anointed Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, to persecute Jesus. Verse 28, "To do whatever thy hand and thy purpose predestined to occur." So, there is the will of sovereign purpose. That's not what we are to pray for here.

Secondly, there is the will of his desire and this falls within the circle of God's sovereign or decreed will. It never violates it, it's always consistent with it. This is much more specific and it's often unfulfilled, at least for now. Just think about it, he came to seek and to save lost sinners and yet, despite the astounding miracles, the fact that he had banished virtually all of the disease in Palestine over three years of ministry, still only about 1,000 converts believed in him by the end of his ministry.

See, in his will of desire, his attitude is involved. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:4, we read, "He desires all men to be saved." The "all" there refers to all in terms of social and ethnic classes. He desires that but we know that he has not decreed it. "Many are called, but few are chosen," Matthew 22:14. It's important for you to understand that God has not decreed all that he has desired and vice versa. He has decreed some things he doesn't desire. For example, it was not his desire for his Son to be tortured and to suffer and to die but he decreed that it be so. Jesus longed to see men repent, but very few did. In fact, in Acts 1 we see that there's only 120 in the Upper Room after our Lord had risen. Jesus desired Jerusalem to be saved but they crucified him. And in Luke 13:34, we read, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I wanted to gather your children together just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not have it."

But, my friends, there is finally the will of command, what our Father expects of his children. And we are the only ones that have the capacity to obey it. And this is what Jesus has in mind when he says, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, think about it, how is his will done in heaven? It is done without hesitation, without any question, without any argument. It is done willingly and joyfully and fervently, wholeheartedly, completely, perfectly, constantly. Psalm 103:20, David sings about the angels performing the will of God, we read, "Bless the Lord you his angels, mighty in strength who perform his word obeying the voice of his word."

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There is a stunning picture in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1, a description of the magnificent cherubim that hover around the throne. They are so glorious that the inspired prophets have to describe them in language in order for us to understand, but yet you can tell there's no language to really describe what they see. But, what's fascinating is he tells us that the eyes of the cherubim are riveted upon the Almighty, ever vigilant to do his bidding. That's what we're to pray for to happen here on earth. And some day, at the end of the kingdom when there is a new heaven and a new earth, that's how all of God's creation will do his will. Ezekiel describes how that when the cherubim are dispatched to do the will of God, that the power of their holy service may "the noise of many waters like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army." And when their wings were stopped and their service was complete, he says that they stood still in utter silence before their Creator.

Dear Christian, is this the passion of your heart? To do the will of God like that? I hope so. John McArthur has rightfully said, "To be dedicated to God's will is by definition to be opposed to Satan's. To rebel against the worldly idea that sin is normal and inevitable and should, therefore, be acquiesced to or at least tolerated. It is to rebel against the world system of ungodliness, the dishonoring and rejecting of Christ and also the disobedience of believers."

My friends, I hope that you long to do the will of God in this way, that you desire for the Father's will to be your will. Don't pray this if you don't mean it, otherwise you play the hypocrite. To often, I fear, that we approach the Almighty expecting him to conform his will to ours, seeking to build our kingdom. In essence, saying, "My will be done."

Spurgeon said, "That will may cost us dear yet let it never cross our wills. Let our minds be wholly subjugated to the mind of God. That will may bring us bereavement, sickness and loss but let us learn to say, 'It is the Lord, let him do what he seemeth good.' We should not only yield to the divine will but acquiesce in it so as to rejoice in the tribulation which it ordains. This is a high attainment but we set ourselves to reach it. He that taught us this prayer used it himself in the most unrestricted sense when the blood sweat stood on his face and all the fear and trembling of a man in anguish were upon him, he did not dispute the decree of the Father but bowed his head and cried, 'Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt.' Can thy will, O God, be done in earth as it is in heaven? It can be and it must be for a prayer wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit is ever the shadow of a coming blessing. And he that taught us to pray after this manner, did not mock us with vain words."

My friends, may I challenge you the next time you enter into a time of prayer, focus on the glory of the one in whose presence now you enter, remembering his name, remember his kingdom and his will. I leave you with these thoughts:

The universe is yours, O Lord,
You alone can reign.

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By the power of your Word,
Creation is sustained.
Humble subjects of your grace,
Yet children we became.
Adopted sons your chosen race,
Hallowed be your name.
O Lord, triumphant, we persist,
May thy kingdom come.
Cast the dragon from our midst,
Reclaim your earthly throne.
Stir our souls for heaven sweet,
We long to be at home.
And may our prayers on earth repeat,
O God, Thy will be done.

Let's pray together.

Father, we praise you for these eternal truths. May they become such a part of who we are that you will be glorified, we will be blessed and others will be convicted that they, too, might embrace the glorious gospel of Christ and be transformed into those that will hallow your name. That will long for your kingdom and that will crave to do your will. I ask in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

We pray you've be edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org

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