



The Supreme Theme of Prayer

Matthew 6:9-10

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The Bible says that we speak from that which fills our heart. Whatever is going on in our thoughts and in our affections, sooner or later, is what comes out of our mouth. As I was thinking about teaching on the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6 – you can turn there if you like – I couldn't help but think that and realize that in that simple truth is a penetrating tool to assess where your heart is at.

The way that you pray is the reflection of the way that you think about God. The way that you think is the reflection of your love for Him. Either for good or for ill, there couldn't be any other way to say that or to think about that.

Think with me for a little bit here. Think about the glory of being a Christian. If you are a true Christian, you are saying that God the Father, before the foundation of the world, chose you to be a part of His family – chose you to receive the eternal inheritance which belongs to His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a true Christian, you are saying that God the Father sent Christ into the world to save you from your sins. You are saying that Christ bore your sins in His body and was raised again so that you could be forgiven and receive His very righteousness and have eternal life.

If you are a true Christian, you are saying that you believe that God cares for you in a unique way – you are the special object of His affection, He provides for you, He protects you, and He sets you on a path that ultimately ends in the glory of heaven, where you will see Jesus Christ face to face and be transformed into His likeness because you will see Him just as He is. Those are glorious truths, aren't they?

You are saying that you have been delivered from eternal hell unto the favor of God. You are saying that once you were lost, but now you have been found. You were blind, but now you see.

If I could just ask you to put out of your mind any concerns that you brought into this room this morning and just focus on those glories of what it means to be a Christian – say that “the worse problems in my life don't matter for this hour as we focus on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and you think rightly about those things that we just described, you should

see that that drives you and compels you – it sets your heart on the path of loving God with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

How else could you respond to such a glorious good and gracious God? How else could you respond except to bow before the throne of unspeakable majesty that condescended to take your sins into the body of the Lord Jesus Christ and to design such a plan that you would be with Him forever – you who sinned against Him and rebelled against Him, forfeited any claim on Him!

The sheer magnitude and glory of that should stagger you afresh again and again and again every time you think of it. If that doesn't just stagger you, you are too comfortable; you are too familiar with it in the wrong way, in the wrong sense because those truths should never get old to you – never.

What is more, quite apart from the glory of your own salvation and even more transcendentally if you are a true Christian, you are saying, "I understand something from the scriptures about the surpassing greatness of this God, His surpassing power that He has possessed from all of eternity." The character of God, the glory of salvation, should be a locomotive in your heart that moves you to affections that are uniquely reserved for God alone – it should move your heart profoundly.

And as a result of that, it should affect the way that you pray. There is no way that those two things could be disconnected. When Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer in Matthew chapter 6 beginning at verse 9 – this is where I am going to read from – Jesus sets out for us a model through prayer. He sets out a pattern; He lays forth principles that should guide your prayer life throughout all of your existence here on earth.

But what I want you to see and what I want you to think about – this is really, really important – is that Jesus wasn't just setting forth words to be said. Jesus was showing you what should be the affections of your heart, what should be the urgent priorities of your heart. It has to be that way, because Jesus wasn't teaching us to pray like hypocrites, was He? To pray things that we didn't mean?

Jesus teaches us to pray this way in response to the kind of truth that we have just been discussing, and that response is a heart response that is deeply moved by the truths that are expressed in the prayer – no question about it. Let's look at this right prayer, this divinely inspired prayer, beginning in Matthew 6, verse 9, where Jesus said:

*Pray then in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come. Your 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 Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen.]*

What we said last time is that in this model prayer and the overall context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching us how to pray righteously. This is part of the overall righteous life that should mark every true Christian. This is the pattern to build your prayer life on, but it flows from everything that Jesus has been saying earlier even in the beatitudes about being poor in spirit, mourning over sin, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, being pure in heart so that you can see God. This just goes to the very core – it grabs the center of your heart and shakes it and should produce a real and true and genuine passion.

We focused last time on the simple words “our Father who is in heaven” and we said that those simple words could be the subject of ongoing exposition for weeks and weeks. We tried to simplify it enough to say that there are three requirements for righteous praying expressed in those simple words that fall too easily and too thoughtlessly off of our Christian lips.

We said first of all, *you must be a Christian to truly pray this prayer*. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. No one knows God as Father except those that put their faith in Christ, so you have to be a Christian.

We said secondly, to genuinely pray in a righteous way that is acceptable to God, *you must believe the goodness of God*. The word “Father” expresses a trusting relationship with a loving God, an intimate relationship with that God. We say, “When I come to You, my Father, I trust You to deal with me in Your goodness as a loving father would.”

Thirdly – this is just review from last time, very briefly – we said that *you must believe the greatness of God*. Jesus tells us to pray “Our Father who is in heaven,” and immediately, your mind is transported to the greatness of the throne of God where God reigns over the universe as Lord, where God reigns in authority over you. This isn’t a chummy kind of prayer where you’re kind of giving elbows into the ribs – no, no, no! – perish that kind of thinking! Perish that kind of flippant approach to prayer! Every time you bend your knee or bow your head to go to prayer, you are going into the presence of unspeakable majesty.

So when you pray, you should think like this; you should refresh your mind on these things again and again and again. Every time that you would speak the word “Father” off of your lips and direct it toward God, you should be thinking, “My Father is good, so I trust Him. My Father is great, so I bow down before Him.” When you engage in that quiet solitude with God, where you are praying to Him and focusing and directing your thoughts and your heart intentions towards Him, that has to frame everything that you pray – that is the starting point.

It doesn’t matter at all – I say this in love – it doesn’t matter at all what kind of problems you are bringing to the table at any time that you pray. This is always the fundamental starting point – the goodness and the greatness of God. That sets the frame; that sets the direction for everything that you say and everything that you feel. And everything that you want in prayer flows from that transcendent relationship with the loving God.

Now as we move on in the prayer, Jesus is going further. He recognizes the weakness of our flesh. He recognizes how difficult it is for us to transcend our earthly circumstances and pray as we should. He understands that our minds are easily dragged down, that we are slow in thought, that we are sluggish spiritually. And so He sets before us these principles to help us pray the way that we should.

The words are simple, but beloved, *don't make the mistake of thinking that the simplicity of these words somehow shows a simplicity of truth.* The depth of what Jesus teaches here is profound – it is impossible to plunge into full depths of it. Christians for two thousand years have been expositing this prayer and they haven't touched bottom yet.

What Jesus teaches us breaks down into two main sections, and these sections should reflect the sequence of priorities in your heart. The first section – the first three requests – focuses on the glory of God, and that's what we are going to discuss today. The second section – the second three requests – focuses on the needs of man. That is a logical, necessary consequence of calling God your Father who is in heaven.

Think about it: if God truly is who we have been talking about, if He truly is a good Father, reigning in transcendent glory in heaven, and you are simply one of His creatures – a sinful creature at that, one whose breath is in his nostrils, one whose life is short and quickly passing away, one without power, one dependent upon this God for everything – then listen: it follows so obviously – if we could just put aside our selfishness for just a minute to think rightly – it follows obviously that the interest in the program and the desires of God are far more important in prayer than anything that we happen to want to be concerned about.

By the very nature of His transcendent person, what God say and what the interest of God is – the things that affect the glory and the majesty of God – are far more important than the collective stuff that we could bring together about our earthly needs. That's just part of the package – God is great, God is transcendent, He is working out His eternal purposes, and that's what matters in prayer as the top priority – is to align yourself with that.

And beloved, if you believe, if you truly embrace, the things that we talked about at the start about the glory of God and your salvation – about how good He has been to you and how sweepingly magnificent His salvation in your life is – then you as a matter of heart priority are going to embrace that, because you are going to be so captivated by it that you are going to say, “Of course that's the main priority for me in prayer! That's the main priority in my life. I owe my physical and spiritual existence to this God; without Him I would be roasting in hell. Now how could I put myself in a greater position of priority when I pray than the God who has done so much for me?” That's necessary; it has to be that way!

Your first priority in prayer is the glory of God. You should value Him preeminently at all moments of your life. And when you pursue those times of prayer, you carry that

preeminence of the glory of God right into your prayer closet and you speak from that which has been filling your heart all along. It has to be that way, beloved. His preeminence should be reflected in the content and in the passion of your prayer life.

Let me step back for a moment, because I'm about to get worked up here. When you think about it along these lines, beloved, you can see more clearly why I've been saying for weeks that the goal for you in prayer is not to pray longer prayers – it's to pray *better* prayers; it's to pray prayers that are driven by this passion for the glory of the God of your salvation. When these things grip your heart like they should, beloved, you should find yourself having difficulty controlling the expression of your exuberance to this God.

And let me say gently what I'm about to say, because I know that I'm about to shoot arrows that are going to pierce a few hearts here: If your prayers and your prayer life is cold and lifeless, if you look back on the way you have prayed over these past several days and weeks and see only selfish requests related to your earthly wants and your earthly irritations, then beloved, whatever else you can say about articulating the doctrine of God, you aren't getting it at all.

Your prayer life betrays you because you are speaking from that which fills your heart and if you go to God continually – I understand we go through dry times; I'm not talking about that – but if you look at your prayer life and you say, “You know, I've got to be honest with you: it's just a continual dry desert in my prayer life” – beloved, I want to tell you, if your prayer life is giving you away, you are not seeing God and you are not loving God for the majesty of who He is, because if you were truly seeing that, the locomotive in your heart would be pulling you to pray the way that you should.

Yes, you might articulate the doctrine, but the real thermometer of your love for God is shown in the way that you pray, not how long you pray – the way that you pray, and what you pray about. So, if that's you and your prayers are cold and lifeless, I've got good news for you: It doesn't have to be that way. Jesus teaches us this prayer so that we can see the standard, conform our heart to it, and then act upon it.

You can pray better, you can pray well, and you must – that's why Jesus gave us this prayer, so that you could pray in a way that would glorify God and you could pray in a way that approximates something of the worth of His glory – it's got to be that way.

Today we are just going to look at this first section, and what we are going to see is that Jesus in an overarching way tells you to seek the glory of God as you pray. As your first priority of prayer, you seek the glory of God. And He lays it out in three broad themes that we will touch on individually: God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will. Those are the marks that we should aim after as we pray.

1. God's Name

Let's look first of all at what Jesus says about God's name and praying for the glory of His name – look at the end of verse 9 with me. Jesus said:

Pray in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

“Hallowed be Your name.” That word “to hallow” means to sanctify, to make holy, or to consider something as holy – to be set apart. We pray for God’s name to be hallowed – get this – because we strongly desire that He receive surpassing praise in our own lives, in the church, and in the world around us.

You go to God in prayer informed by the recognition of the greatness of His person, overwhelmed by the majesty of being in the presence of the Father who you can trust, who is also transcendent above the universe. And you say, “God, You are so great that I just wish everyone everywhere would recognize Your greatness because that is what You deserve. Start it in my life, Lord – spread it to my circle of influence; spread it to Your church; spread it to the world, to those who don’t know You. Father, display Yourself so that men would recognize You and give praise to Your name.”

You see, the name of God is more than just the word by which we call Him. You call me Don – that’s the name; that’s just an appellation that you use. But here, Jesus is using the term “name” for something much more than just the mere word “God,” because the name, especially in the Hebrew mindset, stands for someone’s character. When Jesus says, “Hallowed be Your name,” He is talking about God as He is, God as He is revealed Himself to be.

And so what does it mean to pray “Hallowed be Your name?” Listen, God is already perfectly holy. His name cannot be made more intrinsically holy than it already is. So what you are saying in this prayer is, “God, please act in a way so that I and others and Your whole creation will give You the reverence that You deserve. Father, Christians need to grow in the knowledge of Your holiness and then worship more deeply. Father, there are billions of unbelieving people who either ignore You or mock You or sin against You – they all sin against You. But there is just this whole realm of creation, Father, where Your name is not loved and adored like it should be by Your own intrinsic worth, and Father, I can’t bear it like that. I can’t bear to see You not receiving the honor that You intrinsically deserve.”

Little point of grammar for you: The form of the command in this Greek text is an aorist imperative. I don’t expect most of you to know why that’s important, but let me just say this: The aorist imperative is used to convey a sense of urgency in the command. This is where your heart desires are really displayed. This command has the sense of urgency – this is not a routine prayer.

Let me say that again to make sure that you get it: This is not a routine prayer! This is not just babbling day after day, “Ah, I’ve got to say this because Jesus said to say it, and so let’s get this out of the way...” No – your heart is captivated by this. This is urgent. You’re stomping your foot as it were, saying, “God, this has to happen!”

The man or the woman who prays this prayer with urgency – “Hallowed be Your name” – is someone who is looking at his own spiritual dullness, the sin and indifference of men against God throughout the world, and with a burning passion – fully informed by the greatness of the character of God, the supremacy and the worship that He rightfully deserves – he looks at that dullness and indifference and he says, “Lord, this is not right – it is not right for you as the Creator of the universe to be ignored and sinned against so routinely without any pang of conscience by those who do it.”

“But it is not right for me as a Christian, O God, to come before You with a dull heart, half asleep, indifferent myself, and babble out a few words about what I want and think that that’s acceptable prayer – Lord, that is not right! So please, God, hallow Your name – display Your glory in such a way that people would respond to You properly and give You the worship and adoration You deserve – I can’t take it any other way, God.”

A. W. Pink said about this prayer – he said:

This petition must take the precedence, for the glory of God’s name is the ultimate end of all things. Every other request must not only be subordinated to this one, but be in harmony with and in pursuance of it. We cannot pray rightly unless the honor of God is dominant in our hearts.

So let me ask you: This past week, was the glory of God’s name uppermost in your mind when you prayed? Did it even cross your mind? Did it occur to you?

Another trusted writer said this:

It is when we look at our prayer lives in this way that we see how utterly valueless much of our praying must be.

The glory of God is what should drive and animate your prayers. Now for those of you who love Christ in here and you feel convicted by that, take this as the opportunity and say, “I’ve got to set the bar higher.” This is an opportunity for you to get better, for you to be more sanctified in your spiritual life – that’s why God calls this to your attention.

But beloved, you have got to receive the conviction that these words rightly bring upon your heart. If you are rightly convicted about it, you need to deal with that – you need to repent and say, “I don’t want my life to be like this anymore, because it is not worthy of the glory of God.” And then, you devote your heart and energy to pursuing the kind of prayer that Jesus teaches here. He convicts us in order to change us and all the change that Jesus lays before you in this prayer is glorious.

Second point – not just God’s name as we seek His glory in prayer, but also:

2. God’s Kingdom

As you pray for God's name to be magnified, as you pray for God to be glorified in prayer, as you're thinking rightly, as you are thinking through it, a question something like this should occur to you: Why is it that every man doesn't just humble himself and worship this great God? Why is it, given the obviously great intrinsic glory of God – why doesn't everyone just fall down and worship Him immediately?

There is an answer to that question – the answer is: because of sin. It is because of kingdom of darkness; it is because man has fallen. And what you as a Christian passionately desire – seeing the name of God glorified – is opposed by the supernatural forces of sin and Satan himself. The thing that you most want as a heart desire is beyond your power to be able to bring about.

And so, in that position of dependence, that position of urgency – because this is also the same kind of command in the Greek; all three of them are; all of them convey some sense of urgency – you go to your good and great Father in heaven, and you pray, “O God, Your kingdom come. God, use Your power to introduce Your kingdom so that Your interest would be advanced.” There is overlap in all of these prayers, but there are two aspects to the kingdom of God that I want to just bring out for the purpose of teaching on this prayer.

A. The earthly kingdom of Christ

First of all is to recognize that Jesus is telling us to look forward to His earthly kingdom – that time that is still future when Christ returns and establishes His reign over the kingdom of the world, whatever that's going to look like, whatever eschatological page you want to hang that on. The Bible teaches that Christ is coming back and that He is going to reign. Revelation 11:15 says:

Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign for ever and ever.”

When you pray for the coming of the kingdom, in essence what you are doing is this: you are declaring war on the existing evil world system. You are saying to God, “God, the way things are now – this whole system is unacceptable to me. God, I can't bear to see a system in place where You are mocked and Your law is so blatantly violated, seemingly without consequence. So God, would You please send Christ back and establish Your kingdom so that righteousness will be supreme? That's what I want, Father. I am not comfortable in this world; I am a stranger and a sojourner in this world, Father. And I don't like it because of the way it reflects on You because You are not receiving the glory You deserve.”

And so you assault the existing world order by asking for the return and reign of Jesus Christ, and one day God will answer that prayer – we just don't know when. This has ever been the prayer of Christians. 1 Corinthians 16:22 says:

If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha – which is to say, “O Lord, come.”

The last prayer in the Bible – almost the very last words of the Bible – in Revelation 22:20: “Come, Lord Jesus.” There is almost a sigh and a heaviness in this because as a Christian, you’re just worn out by the world system around you. And you say, “Lord, I’m not going to be really, completely fulfilled until I see You reigning like You said You are going to do. Until that happens, there’s going to be a deferral of the completeness of everything that I want, because I want to see You visibly reigning as supreme, as number one on the earth, and every nation bowing before You, God – that’s what I want. Your kingdom come; bring Your kingdom.”

So we ask this question, and I hope that you see the significance of what Jesus is teaching here, that this shows you what should be the aspirations of your heart which fuel what you say in prayer. But also, it is just absolutely penetrating as you examine yourself in light of what Jesus says should be the urgent priority of your heart.

The future kingdom of God, a pressing priority on your heart – listen, most of us, in this room anyway, live pretty comfortable lives; there is not a whole lot of earthly reason for us to want it to change really traumatically unless we are captivated by the glory of God and what His interests are.

So would you prefer the kingdom of Christ to your present pursuits? You have to deal with that question, and you have to examine yourself so that you would pray rightly and say, “Lord, even as good as it ever gets here, it is nothing compared to what I really want. What I really want is Christ to be here bodily present, glorified, honored, reigning – that’s what I want, God.”

You see, what Jesus teaches us here just so untangles the desires of your heart and shows what your priority should be. If you are a true Christian – whatever is the level of conviction you feel about this – if you are a true Christian, your heart responds to this kind of truth and says, “Yeah, that is what I want. I’ve forgotten all about it. I wonder what’s wrong with me. Oh well, you know what? That *is* what I want; that *is* the deepest desire of my heart – the glory of God as seen in the exaltation of His name and the coming of His kingdom.”

I think there is another aspect of this prayer “Thy kingdom come” that we need to mention also. Just be mindful of the fact that there is also a spiritual dimension to God’s kingdom.

B. The spiritual kingdom of Christ

I believe this prayer “Thy kingdom come” should stimulate us to pray that men would come to Christ in true salvation. In Colossians 1, the apostle Paul said this:

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

And so when you pray for the salvation of your loved ones, of your friends, of your neighbors, of your family – understand that the deepest motivation for that prayer, to set your affection as high as they should go, your deepest motivation for that prayer is not that they would avoid the flames of hell – that’s a consequence; that’s a by-product. The real reason you want someone to come to Christ – or at least you should – is so that God would be glorified by having another trophy of grace in His display case, that there would be another voice added to the hallelujah chorus, that God would be glorified by His grace and His mercy in an increasing number of lives, because as Jesus Christ reigns over the hearts of more and more men, He expands His kingdom.

And so this prayer says, “Lord, there are souls outside Your kingdom who still belong to the domain of the devil. I want You to be glorified by bringing them into Your kingdom, the kingdom of Christ, so Father, would You do that?”

So you seek the glory of God and the exaltation of His name and the coming of the kingdom. The final point, point number three for today, is that you seek the glory of God in God’s will.

3. God’s Will

Look at the end of verse 10 with me:

Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

“Your will be done.” The following phrase in the original language is kind of interesting in that in the Greek the order is, “Your will be done, as in heaven also upon earth.” And so this prayer recognizes the perfect pattern of the obedience and gladness and joy found in the perfect fulfillment of the will of God. It says, “God, heaven is like this, where Your will is done perfectly and everyone there rejoices in it – that’s what I’d like to see come down on earth.”

Entire books have been written about the will of God and so there is no way I am going to exhaust the topic in the next five or ten minutes. The guiding principle for you to think about here is that Jesus is teaching you to submit to the will of God – this God who controls everything in your life – you come to God and you say, “God, just like Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, ‘Your will, not mine, be done.’ I have my own desires, my own thoughts about what would be good here, but Lord, Your will be done.”

What I want to do is just limit this discussion to two sub-points. There is more that we could say in other aspects of the will of God, but I just want to deal with two points and talk first of all about God’s will in the sense of His secret will.

A. God's secret will

God's secret will – sometimes called His will of decree – that secret will refers to His hidden decrees, those things that are unknown to us by which He determines everything that will happen in the universe. God is in absolute sovereignty; He has determined everything that is going to happen.

The apostle Paul refers to this will, this aspect of God's will, when he says: "God works all things after the counsel of His own will" – Ephesians 1:11. He is a sovereign God, working out great transcendent purposes that are beyond our understanding, beyond our ability to know, certainly beyond our ability to evaluate.

Now there have been – and this is the reason I wanted to address this matter; I almost left it out – there have been some men, far more gifted than I, who say that God's secret will is not a proper subject for prayer. They say that God, since He has determined it from all of eternity, God is going to accomplish irreversibly what He has decreed and therefore we do not need to pray about it. One writer said it this way – he said:

To ask God to bring about what He has already decreed to happen would simply be to pray, "May what is going to happen, happen." That would not be asking for anything at all.

You know, those guys are a lot better than I am, but I don't agree with that. Jesus stated very simply and without qualification: You pray, "God, Your will be done." God uses means to accomplish His will. He has commanded us to pray, we don't know His secret will, and so when you are praying about things that you cannot know what the mind of God is – as He unfolds history or whatever – to say you are not doing anything there is not what I agree with, because what you are doing when you pray that way is you are once again recognizing the transcendence of God. You are recognizing the supremacy of His purposes, the greatness of His ways, and you are saying, "God, I want to be aligned in my heart with whatever You are doing."

And besides, there are specific aspects of God's will that we pray about that we know are already determined. God has determined before the foundation of the world everyone who will be saved – you don't stop praying for people to be saved as a result of that, do you?

And so when it comes to that aspect of God's will, you look at the flow of history, you look at everything that God is doing, and you say, "Father, You do Your will even when I don't know what it is." That expresses submission to God's will and aligns you with His purposes – that's what you want. Say, "God, I'm on Your side. Whatever You do – and I know most of it is hidden from me and I'm too dumb to understand the rest of it – God, I still want Your will to be done."

Second aspect of His will that we will talk about here this morning is:

B. God's moral will

God's moral will refers to those commands revealed in scripture for how men are to conduct themselves that they would act rightly before Him. This is God's declared will – we find it in the scripture: this is where God has said, “This is what you shall be; this is what you shall do; this is what you shall not do.” Part of God's moral will, part of His revealed will, is right here in what we are studying in the Lord's Prayer. This is God's moral will for you to pray this way. You really don't have an option to pray differently.

So when we pray, “Father, Your will be done,” what we are asking – in this sense of God's will, in His moral will – we are asking, “Father, would You so work that men would obey what You have commanded. Father, in my life, Father, in the lives of my family and the life of your church, in the lives of unbelievers throughout the world – I pray that Your will would be done.”

And this is where the integrity of your prayer is really tested – okay? This is where the integrity of your prayer life is really, perhaps supremely, tested, when you say, “Because that is what I want, my God – I want your will to be done – I'm telling You that obedience to that revealed will starts with me. If there is sin in my life, Lord, I declare war against it because I want Your will to be done.”

So this prayer has immense implications – this goes everywhere in your life, to pray, “Thy will be done.” Just starting with you personally, it commits you to obedience. It commits you to know God's word and to study it so that you could practice what it commands in your worship, in your speech, in your thoughts, in your family, in your work, in your study, in your leadership, in your finances, in your purity – that's just to name a few off the top of my head. “Thy will be done” – catch your breath before you pray that.

“God, in Your moral will and the outworking of Your providence, which may not go the direction I want it to go – okay, Thy will be done. That's what I want. I want Your will worked out in the providence of my life. I want my life to reflect obedience to Your command. Father, I want your will to be done.” When you pray that way, it is like you've got a bird in your hand and you are just letting it go, and that bird flies where God wants it to go and it is an expression of total surrender.

These people who want to bark about no lordship salvation – I know I'm getting off track here but listen – this prayer is meaningless to them. This prayer by itself exposes the futility of that system of theology and condemns it in no uncertain terms – that was for free.

So how can we pull all of this together? Jesus clearly teaches you to make the glory of God preeminent in your prayer life, and obviously you can only pray that way when it reflects the true desires of your heart. And that's what makes it so searching, because when you are alone with God in prayer, the only thing that you have to make you pray this way is the desires of your heart, the fact that this is what God commands. And so it is extremely searching.

The righteous man loves the glory of God more than he wants his own needs met, so much so that even when you come with pressing needs, you say “God, that’s just secondary; can we talk about You? Can we talk about Your glory? Can we talk about Your kingdom and Your will being done? That’s what really motivates me Lord.” And you consciously and deliberately put the name of God ahead of your own needs when you bow in prayer.

You consciously – get this – you consciously and deliberately, with intention, pray with focus, with passion, and with desire for the glory of His great name. As you come to prayer, as your mind starts to move toward prayer, you gear yourself up and you say, “I’m going to pray to my good and great Father, and I’m going to pray a certain way – the way that He told me to pray – and will orient my desires to line up with what is right. It is not right for me to be the self-centered focus of a dialogue with the Almighty – He should be first.”

And that kind of heart commitment, beloved, will put to death the lifelessness and selfishness that so many of us have known for far too long in our prayer lives. It all starts with you being impressed with the glory of God. When you know God and when you are impressed with His glory, this other stuff follows.

Now, final thought. I realize that many of you are wriggling with conviction – you are glad it’s ten o’clock, because you are tired of doing this thing – wiggling the collar looking for some air. That’s as it should be, beloved – that conviction is exactly what should happen if your prayer life has been lifeless and selfish, because it is not right for you to pray – if you have been saved by grace – it is not right for you to bypass the glory of God when you pray.

So what do you do with that conviction? What do you walk out with? Start with simple confession. And in the midst of that conviction, come back to the fact and come back to the simple statement “Our Father who is in heaven” – “My Father who loves me, my Father who is forgiving. You said that if we confess our sins that You are faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I bring to You, Father, the dirty rags of my selfish prayer life and lay it out before You and pray that You would cleanse me from it and take it away, because I am confident that the blood of Jesus Your Son cleanses me from all unrighteousness.”

And then, having repented of your selfish prayer life, then you turn your thoughts to the character of God until your heart simply forces your mouth to speak this way. You meditate on the goodness and the greatness of God until your heart is so full of Him that your mouth spontaneously prays out this way because it’s what’s dominating your heart. And when your heart is new that way, exert yourself in prayer; consciously go through the priorities that Jesus has given us here – “God, Your name, Your kingdom, Your will.”

It is not about praying longer, beloved. It is about your heart’s desires. It is about praying better. So pray that way, then live that way. Let’s pray:

Our Father, we do exalt Your name and see its greater exaltation in the days to come. We love the prospect of Your coming kingdom and of Your reign over the hearts of men, and we pray that that would come. Father, we love Your will; it is that which is good and perfect and acceptable. And we ask, Father, that it would be done as You work out Your providence in all things, as You work out Your providence in our lives. Father, as we contemplate our own responsibility before what You have revealed in the scriptures, Father, may Your will be done as fully and as gladly on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, take these things and change us. May Your Spirit diagnose the illnesses of our hearts, the sins of our hearts, so that we might repent – that we might be transformed into transcendent Christians who love things that transcend this world in our lives in this world and are so captivated by Your glory that if You would simply fulfill these prayers, Father – “Hallowed be Your name; Your kingdom come; Your will be done” – You would look on us and find us fully satisfied, because Your glory is the preeminent desire of our hearts.

Make us into those kinds of people, Father, individually and collectively, until Jesus comes. In His name we pray, amen.

This transcript was prepared by Shari Main.