

The Proper Pattern of Prayer, Pt. 2
Matthew 6:10-14

I Got up early one morning, And rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish, I didn't have time to pray
Troubles just tumbled about me, And heavier came each task.
I wondered, God, why don't you help me? And He said, "You didn't ask."
I tried to come into God's presence, I used all my keys at the Lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, "Why child, you didn't knock."
I wanted to see joy and beauty, But the day toiled on grey and bleak,
I called on the Lord for the reason - He answered, "You didn't seek."
I woke up early this morning, And paused before the day.
I had so much to accomplish, I had to take time to pray.

Author Unknown

Time with the Lord is the life blood of the Christian life, but much too often life is more like the first part of this poem. It is so easy to get caught up in the busyness of life that the purpose of life gets out of focus or is lost. In the rush to get everything done, we try to prevail in our own power and fail to communicate with the one that empowers us to live. But it is not just spending time in prayer that is important. The prayer itself must have the proper purpose, use proper practice and follow the proper pattern.

Review

In our introduction to this passage a few weeks ago I pointed out that our Lord makes the proper purpose and practice of prayer clear. In Matthew 6:5-6, Jesus corrects the practice of the scribes and Pharisees who prayed publically for the purpose of being seen by men to gain their acclaim and honor. The proper purpose of prayer is to talk with God, for only what He thinks is truly important. What other people think is irrelevant.

In Matthew 6:7-8, Jesus explains the proper practice of prayer which is founded on the fact that God knows our needs even before we pray. The pagans had no confidence that their god was aware of what was going on, so they developed all sorts of practices to get his attention and then try to convince him to act. An example of the extreme measures this could take is in 1 Kings 18 when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and Asherah. In praying to the true God, you do not need to do anything like the pagans. There is no need to be repetitious or to offer long prayers to get God's attention and convince Him to act. Neither length, repetition nor eloquence impress God. You can be confident that our God, who is real and personal, will hear and answer the humble prayer that seeks His will. For that reason, the proper practice of prayer is to simply tell Him what is on your heart and trust Him to do what is best.

In Matthew 6:9-13 Jesus presents the proper pattern of prayer. This is not a prayer that He prayed, but rather a model of the elements that should be in our prayers. This example prayer is short, yet it covers all of what prayer is about. It tells us about our relationship with God including His position and nature as well as what is important in life, what our true needs are, and the source of those needs being met. It covers past, present and future.

We looked at the first few elements of the prayer last week. The proper way for the true Christian to address God is as *Our Father*. That defines the relationship of the saved to Him. Everyone can call God, “*Creator*,” but only those who have been born again and adopted as His children can call out to Him in the intimacy of the term, “*Father*.” And because He is Our Father “*which art in heaven*,” we also understand that He is not like any earthly dad. He is not a man and thereby limited in ability, righteousness, wisdom, fairness, goodness, kindness or love. God will never fail us or forsake us. He will always provide what we really need since He knows what is best for us. Even His discipline will always be in and from perfect love. He never misunderstands, has uncontrolled anger, or is unjust. We can trust Him completely.

The passion of our prayer is seen in the next phrase, “*Hallowed be Thy name*.” We come to God with the highest reverence and honor and we accomplish that by believing what He has revealed about Himself. To do less than this implies that God is a liar. We speak of Him in a reverent manner and encourage others to do the same. Taking the Lord's name in vain by using it in a flippant and disrespectful manner is a sin and breaks the third commandment. We also hallow His name by seeking to live in a virtuous manner which will also bring honor to Him.

The next element is our earnest hope and desire: “*Thy Kingdom come*.” We long for that day when Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth in its fullness. We yearn for His return, but this aspect of the prayer also means that we desire for Jesus to reign within our own hearts here and now. The kingdom of God is currently present on earth in part. Scripture tells us that our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), therefore we are aliens and strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11), and ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). We pray “*Thy Kingdom Come*” and thereby pledge our allegiance to our King and set ourselves to follow Him now.

Thy Will Be Done, on Earth as it Is in Heaven

This next element is the occupation of our prayers. It is the central aspect of prayer for the true Christian, yet this very point is probably the most attacked part of true prayer. People seldom want God's will. People generally want their own will done, and professing Christians are not immune to this as demonstrated in prayers in which they make valiant effort to convince God to do their will.

This may be most flagrant in the prosperity preachers of the health, wealth, prosperity movement. These are the “name it, claim it” folks. They attack this element of prayer by ignoring it, perverting it, or both. They twist verses such as Matthew 21:22, which says, “*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive*,” to teach that you can get whatever you want. How shallow. They never put that together with verses such as James 4:3, “*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend in on your lusts*,” or 1 John 5:14-15 which says, “. . . *if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him*.” They want their will done, not God's will. That is the basic problem in their doctrine as a whole and in their teaching on prayer in particular. They do not understand that prayer is about seeking after God's will and not their own. Prayer is an application of trusting God, not manipulating Him.

Others may not attack the idea of praying for God's will to be done directly, but they will do so indirectly. There are many people who struggle with this element of prayer because they do not yet grasp the nature of true love or the goodness of God. They do understand that prayer really is about seeking God's will. They can mouth the words, but they do not like the fact of it. They resent not getting what they want out of life. They want certain things and they do not have them. They are jealous of what other people have and question God because they do not have the same or better. They want their relationships to work out in certain ways, and when they do not, they are both hurt and angry. They want to have good health and they are annoyed that they have health problems or that their body just does not work the way they would like. They are irritated because they want pleasant situations, but find instead that their

circumstances are hard. The reason for it, whether it be their own sin, the sin of some else or the curse of sin on this world is immaterial. They are suffering and so they are annoyed or worse. It may or may not be verbally expressed, but this individual blames God for the things they want but do not have.

These attitudes most often surface when a tragedy strikes. Though we are to have compassion for the emotional turmoil a person may be going through, a person's reaction manifests what is really in their heart. Too often it is that of pride instead of humility. They think themselves as worthy and deserving. They are not "poor in spirit," and so they do not cry out for God's grace and mercy. If they will even pray, "*Thy will be done,*" it is done with resentment or defiant surrender. It is said between clenched teeth in the same manner as someone defeated in a fight would say "uncle." That is not true prayer and it reveals a sad delusion of who God is and what He has done.

There are others that disgrace the prayer, "*Thy will be done,*" even though they are no longer defiant. Instead, they are defeated and have given up the battle. They are left with passive resignation. They quietly go through the motions of prayer trying to use all the correct terminology, but there is no heart in it. They also have a sad misconception about who God is, what He has done, and what He desires.

Others malign this aspect of prayer with an over emphasis on the sovereignty of God that results in fatalism. They will pray because they are supposed to, but since God is just going to do whatever He wants anyway, they do not put any heart into either. They pray, but there is no real belief or expectation. They are like those at a prayer meeting held in a farm community during a prolonged drought. They came to plead before the Lord that He would in His mercy and grace bring the much needed rain. The pastor came, the Elders came, the deacons came, the deaconesses came, all the faithful in the community came, but only one little girl brought an umbrella!

But before we get too self righteous about these farmers, we should examine ourselves and our own approach to prayer. The Bible records others who were not much different. Acts 12 records Peter being thrown in jail. The church gathered to fervently pray for his release (Acts 12:5), and in light of the fact that James, the brother of John, had been killed by Herod only a few days before (12:2), they had extra motivation to be fervent. An Angel came and let Peter out of jail (12:7-10). Peter went to where they were praying and the servant girl, Rhoda, answered the door. When she heard Peter, she became so excited that she forgot to open the door. Instead, she ran to tell everyone that Peter was at the door. They told her that she was crazy or that it must be Peter's angel. They have been fervently praying, but yet they did not believe that God was responding to their prayers. When they saw Peter, they were amazed. We are very often no different than they were. We pray, but have little expectation that God will respond to our prayers. That mindset will eventually cause your prayer life to either cease or become a dead, ritual, religious exercise

Prayer and God's Moral & Sovereign Will

Yes, the Bible teaches in no uncertain terms that God is sovereign. "*God is not a man that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should change His mind*" (Numbers 23:19). But the Bible also teaches that in some way God pays attention to our prayers and as a result, things happen. James 5:13-18 makes this point clear when he talks about praying for the sick and then says in verse 16, "*Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*" When we pray we need to believe that God will hear and respond. Praying for God's will to be done is not fatalism.

I hope you all know that everything that is done is NOT God's moral will. It may be within the realm of His sovereignty in that He has let things happen, but that does not mean it is the full expression of His will. How can I say that?

God's moral will is stated in His commandments. Man has been given volition (the ability to make choices) and must choose to either obey or disobey those commandments. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 states that God *"is patient toward you, not wishing (willing - KJV) for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."* Acts 17:30-31 is also clear on this point. Paul warns the Athenians on Mars hill, *"God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the wicked in righteousness through a Man who He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."* God's stated moral will is that all people repent from their sins and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul warns that a failure to submit to God's stated moral will that *"all should repent"* will result in judgment. In Revelation 20 we find this being carried out. Though God has been patient with the wicked and wants them to repent, most people have not and will not repent so they are doomed to perish in eternal hell. That is God's sovereign will which no one can escape. People may violate God's moral will, but they cannot escape His sovereign will.

Some people will claim that praying for God's will to be done is mystical and therefore they are somewhat fatalistic since they do not know what God's will is. However, neither prayer nor God's will is shrouded in mystery. The Bible explains clearly how prayer works and what God's will is both in principle and specific statements.

For example, when you or someone else sins, 1 Corinthians 10:13 is very clear that it is not moral God's will. *"No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."* When you or someone else sins it is because you are in defiance of God's stated will. James 1:13-15 states, *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust, then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.*

God has revealed His moral will, so no one can claim ignorance of it as an excuse for not obeying it. He expects us to learn His will and do it. Consider the following verses.

Romans 12:2, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."* The Lord expects you to resist the pressure of the world to mold you into its image. You are to instead heed His word and prove out His will by how you live your life. If God's will was not revealed in the Bible, this would be impossible.

Colossians 4:12, *"Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God."* The expectation here is that the Colossians, and us as well, would know and stand in the will of God.

1 Peter 4:1-2, *"Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God."* In this passage we find that living according to the will of God is contrasted with living in the flesh according to the lusts, (the strong desires), of the flesh. Again, this would be impossible if God had not already revealed His will.

1 Peter 4:19, *"Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."* Our comfort in the midst of suffering is knowing the will of God in the matter. If that could not be known, then it would be extremely difficult at best to entrust your soul to God because you would be uncertain as to what is right and whether He was faithful.

1 John 2:17, *"And the world is passing away, and [also] its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever."* Here we find a very sobering ramification if the will of God could not be known. You would pass away with the world for only those that know the will of God will abide with Him forever.

A person who claims they are ignorant of the will of God only demonstrates their own refusal to repent and seek God. They reveal that they do not know the Scriptures or have much of an interest in knowing them or the God who wrote them.

When it comes to praying, *"Thy will be done,"* many people actually attack this element of prayer by mouthing the words, but having hearts that are insincere of that desire. The tragedy with this is that many people are self-deceived at this point. They think they really do want to have God's will done in the matter they are praying about, but the sad reality is that they either want their own will to be done, or want to be able to blame God for whatever happens. We have already seen that all that happens is not God's moral will. Each of us is individually responsible for our own sins.

Obedience and Praying for God's Will

Let me add this. If you are praying for God's will to be done as a true expression of your desire, then it only follows that you will already be seeking to be obedient to those things you already know are God's will. It is ludicrous to be praying for God to do His will in your life when you refuse to follow what He has already revealed as His will. This fact exposes the hypocritical prayer lives of many people. Let me give you some examples.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 states, *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; [that is,] that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, 5 not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 [and] that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is [the] avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned [you.] 7 For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. 8 Consequently, he who rejects [this] is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you."* Could God be any clearer? Yet, it is not unusual to find people who are living in fornication who still think they are in God's will. I have met quite a few couples in this position. They do not like it when I point out this passage of Scripture, but instead of heeding it, they go do what they want anyway. The results are often very tragic, especially when there are children born as a result of their fornication, for they will suffer for the sins of their biological parents. Can a person really sincerely pray for God's will concerning their relationship with another person when they are violating what God has already said is His will about what is already occurring in the relationship?

How about this passage? Colossians 3:22-24, ²² *"Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who merely please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."* Regardless of how bad you think your job may be, at least you are not a slave. What is God's will concerning how you do your work? The verse is plain enough. You are to work sincerely and heartily in a way as to please the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the one you really work for anyway. If you are not obedient to the Lord's will in how you work at your current job, can you honestly pray for God's will concerning your current job or even a future one? Only if it is a prayer of repentance.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 states, *"Rejoice always; 17 pray without ceasing; 18 in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."* Those are clear statements of God's will for you, and refusal to do them means you are out of God's will. Can you then sincerely pray for God's will in other matters while being disobedient to His commands which are clearly stated as His will? Of course not. At that point you can only repent and pray for His help in being obedient to His will before praying for His will about other matters.

Sincerity of Heart and Praying for God's Will

How then can you sincerely pray for *"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven"*? The same way Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion. It would be good to study this whole

passage in depth, but for our purposes this morning, a brief examination will still make the point. Matthew 26 records that Jesus petitioned the Father three times with great emotion about His human desire to avoid the cross. Jesus says in verse 38, *“My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death . . .”* Three times Jesus expresses His own desire praying, *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”* Yet, at the same time Jesus also yields Himself to the Father's will praying, *“My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done.”* It must be the same way for us.

When you pray, *“Thy will be done,”* there should be passion in your prayer. You should express our heart's cry in your petitions to God. Your prayers should have a sense of rebellion against sin - your own, the sin of others and the general curse of sin in the world. But there also must be a total seeking of and yielding to the will of the Father in all things just as there was in Jesus in Gethsemane. The heart of a true Christian wants God's will to be done. In humility you recognize that your understanding is very limited and so you desire to be submissive to what God wants even when things don't go the way you would like. This results in being able to give thanks to God in all things, both the pleasurable and the unpleasant, because you know you can trust God to do what is right and best for you.

When you pray for God's will to be done concerning someone's salvation, you are praying that God will continue to be merciful and longsuffering with them and that the Holy Spirit will convict that person of their sin and need for Christ, that the Lord will graciously enlighten them so that they will understand all of what it means to trust Jesus for salvation, and that they will yield their lives to Him and walk in obedience to Him.

When you pray for God's will to be done when facing tough decisions, you are praying for a clear understanding of Biblical principles and precepts that would apply to the decision, and that the decision would be made based on those truths and how it would affect the person's ability to serve God. You pray the decisions will be based upon the spiritual consequences and not upon the enticements this world offers.

When you pray for God's will in tragedies, you pray that unbelievers would see the frailty of human life and how quickly they could stand in judgment before God and that they would turn to Him. You pray that believers would increase in their trust of the Savior and take advantage of every opportunity to praise God. You pray that earthly leaders would make decisions that uphold righteousness and that those who do not would be removed from power. You pray, *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

The true believer wants God's will to be done *“on the earth as it is in heaven.”* Heaven is where God sits enthroned and His will is done there perfectly and without hesitation. The result is that heaven is a place of peace, order and righteousness. That is our desire for the earth and why we look forward to the day when Jesus Christ will sit on David's throne as king. In the meantime, we pray for that to be true in our own lives and in connection with circumstances of life that we encounter.

Conclusions

True Christians understand who God is and their own relationship to Him through Jesus and so we pray *“Our Father who art in heaven.”* God is holy and our passion is to see the Lord exalted, so we pray, *“Hallowed be Thy name.”* Our God is the creator and we are His creatures. It is His kingdom that is important so our hope and desire is to see Him bring about the fullness of His rule both in our own lives and in the world, so we pray, *“Thy kingdom come.”* Our occupation is to see that it is God's desires that are accomplished, so we pray, *“Thy will be done, in earth and it is in heaven.”*

My prayer for you is that these elements of prayer will become real in your own prayer life, and that when you pray for God's will to be done, you sincerely mean it, and that your very life will demonstrate that desire.

Sermon Notes: The Proper Pattern of Prayer, Part 2
August 10, 2014 - Matthew 6:10

Introduction

Time with the Lord is the lifeblood of the Christian life - a priority often lost to the _____ of daily life

Review

The proper _____ of prayer is to talk with God, not impress other people

The proper _____ of prayer is to seek God's will confident that He hears and answers

Matthew 6:9-13 is the proper _____ of prayer taught by Jesus to His disciples

Christians call God "*Our Father*" for they are born again by faith in Jesus & _____ into His family

God, "*Our Father which art in heaven*" is without limitation in wisdom, love or _____ to answer prayer

God's name is hallowed by treating Him with _____ and living in a manner what will bring Him honor

Christians are to live as _____ of heaven now while longing to God's kingdom to come in its fullness

Thy Will Be Done, on Earth as it Is in Heaven

This is the central aspect of prayer for a Christian - and also the element that is _____ the most

Prosperity preachers twist the Scriptures until prayer becomes seeking their _____ will instead of God's

Some people can say the words, "*Thy will be done,*" but it is with _____ or defiant surrender

Others pray, "*Thy will be done,*" with passive _____ - using the right words but without heart

Others pray, "*Thy will be done,*" with _____ that removes belief and expectation from prayer

Acts 12 - even the _____ had problems believing God would pay attention to their prayers

Prayer and God's Moral & Sovereign Will

God is sovereign and _____ (Numbers 23:19), yet God responds to prayer (James 5:13-18)

What happens in life is within the realm of God's sovereign will, but not always His _____ will

God's moral will is that _____ repent (2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30-31), but most do not and are judged (Rev. 20)

Sin occurs in _____ of God's moral will (1 Corinthians 10:13) due to man's own lusts (James 1:13-15)

God expects us to _____ His stated will and follow it - Rom. 12:2; Col. 4:12; 1 Peter 4:1-2, 19; 1 John 2:17

Praying, "*Thy will be done,*" yet remaining ignorant of God's stated moral will proves _____

Obedience and Praying for God's Will

Those who pray for God's will strive to be obedient to God's stated will - to do otherwise is _____

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 - God wants you to be _____, not sexually immoral

Colossians 3:22-24 - God wants you to do all your _____ as unto Him regardless of who signs your paycheck

1 Thess. 5:16-18 - Christians are to _____ always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in everything

Sincerity of Heart and Praying for God's Will

Pray for God's will to be done the same way _____ did in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26)

There should be _____ in praying, "*Thy will be done,*" - there is a defiance against sin

