

Thy Will Be Done
Matthew 6:10
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There's a movement of thought in this prayer from the person of God, *Hallowed be thy name*, to the kingdom of God, *Thy kingdom come*, to the realization to the will of God in that kingdom which is now where we come. God's will on earth is accomplished through his people, and it is not accomplished apart from this particular prayer request. Kingdom praying is praying that God would accomplish his will through us while we yet live here on the earth. We are integrally involved and active in God's will being done here on earth. And when we pray this prayer request it requires something of us. We are not only engaged in the praying, but we are also moved and active in its fulfilment. There's three things I'd like to cover here this morning as we work through this third petition. First of all, what does it mean? And the second thing is why do we need to pray this prayer request? But the third one that I would like to make sure that we have is some encouragement. Some encouragement for you to pray this prayer in the right way.

So first of all, let's look at what it means. Here we have a prayer request, a third petition, that God's will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. And there's a comparison between the earth and the heaven. When we pray this prayer request we are praying that God's will will be done here on earth through us, his people, just like it's done perfectly by his angels in heaven. And that's really, in essence, what it's talking about.

Now angels are created creatures. And like man, they too, have wills. They are free moral beings. There are fallen angels that have carried out their activities, and they carry out their activity here on the earth. There was a time when there were a number of angels that chose to disobey God. And so, like man, they fell from their first estate. God cast them out of heaven to this present external world, and that is where here in this sphere, where they carry out their work. The earth is the sphere of their activity. Now the earth is a focus of a great spiritual battle displayed throughout all of heaven. You might recall Job chapter one, when God himself speaks to Satan and he says, *And the Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it."* In other words that was the place in which he was dwelling. That's the place he was carrying out his activity. So the earth is a battle ground in a cosmic battle for good and evil. And here is a great spiritual warfare that is battling with great force right here in the sphere of this realm of the earth. And although that spiritual battle is not a battle of flesh and blood against which we war, the spiritual battle does involve flesh as it's carried out here on the earth through the lives of people. See, it's not primarily a physical battle. It's a spiritual battle. But there's implements of that battle and those happen through people.

From the very beginning it's been the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent. And after the fall, we first see this played out in Cain and Abel. Now, there was something behind that contention, something behind that battle. And that was really where the war was. But it's being played out here in earthly wars and earthly battles. But it's something far beyond what our eyes see. And ever since Cain and Abel, there have been two opposing sides here on the earth. And while the battle is indeed spiritual, there are invisible forces and spiritual forces at work that

we cannot see. And this earth is the battle ground for a great cosmic battle which is being displayed throughout all of heaven. And people are involved. Every person is involved.

That's an important truth to understand, if we grasp the meaning of this prayer request. Notice the comparison of the text here between heaven and earth. The realm where the elect angels do their work is spoken of as in heaven. Thy will be done on earth as it's done in heaven. And in heaven the good angels, the elect angels that did not fall, have performed flawlessly the will of God. And that's really what we're praying. Lord, may your will be done here in our lives, in your church, in your kingdom, as it's done perfectly and flawlessly by your angels who do that in heaven.

Now, about angels, we don't know a lot. But we do know a little. Some have fallen, some have not. And we feel, from the way that the scripture reveals it, that there is not a redemptive plan for angels. Those who have fallen have forever been fixed in that fallenness. And those who have not, God has forever fixed in his state of election and grace. But we do know that those who are elect angels, they are doing the will of God. In Isaiah chapter 6 we see Seraphim, which was a class of angels that are attendants to the throne of God. And they attend the throne of God day and night. We see, in Genesis chapter 3 the Cherubim, the first mention of an angel there where we see that they are protectors of the holiness of God. When Adam and Eve were driven out from the garden, Cherubim were put there with flaming swords to protect the holiness of God. We see those Cherubim also adorned in part of the mercy seat that was pounded out of gold. And we have these Cherubim there attending to the throne of God and protecting that holiness. We have angels that appeared to Daniel, with a message as he prayed, and came to him to minister to him with understanding. We have in Hebrews 1:14 angels are spoken of as ministering spirits who help the saints here upon the earth. And yet we have an astounding passage in Ephesians 3:10 that informs us that the angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God as they behold and observe the church here on the earth. So angels are learning creatures as well. Intelligent, and yet ever learning. That's why in 1 Corinthians 11:10 it says one of the reasons why women ought to have a covering on their heads in the realm of worship is because of the angels who are looking down upon us even now and observing and learning of the manifold wisdom of God.

So following the progression of this prayer, we first pray that God's glory and all of his perfections would be manifest throughout all of his eternal realm. Then we pray that God would bring his reign and his dominion from heaven right down to earth when we pray *Thy kingdom come*. And then we pray now, that his will will be realized here on earth in the perfection that it is realized in heaven itself. So that on earth his will will be done and that same kind of manner, perfectly and flawlessly in the spirit of his people. And for God's will to be done on earth it is accomplished through us, the body of Christ. I mentioned before that Ephesians chapter 1 speaks of the body of Christ as the physical manifestation of Christ here upon the earth. In fact, it is the only manifestation of which the world will see of God they will see of Christ. And they see because they see a physical body, which is his church, his bride, and that's the physical manifestation of God here upon the earth. Now, we're not God. But it manifests God. We are the body, where Christ is the head. And so for his will to be done here on earth he's going to do it through us, his people. That is when Christ went back up into heaven, he commissioned his church and he say, *All authority now has been given to me in heaven and on earth, now go, I'm empowering you to do what I've called you to do*. So for God's will to be done here on earth it's

going to be done through his church, not the elect angels. So when we pray this prayer request, we're praying that God would enable us with the grace to know his will and to do his will. To make us strong, to give us boldness, to keep us from sinning, to keep us from falling, to advance his kingdom, to overcome darkness, to be discerning between the worldly things and those things that we need to be about, and to hate those things and to love these. Because it is through his people that his will will be realized here on the earth, and that's what we're praying.

But why do we need to pray this? And the comparison shows us the need for this request. There are two reasons, though they are distinct they are closely connected together, and we pray this because there are two evils that are warring here upon the earth. First of all, there is an internal evil, the inner man. It is because of our total inability, our total depravity, to do any good apart from the grace of God that we need to pray this prayer. See, in and of ourselves, we are not able to do that which we would even desire and want to do. Is that not what Paul is lamenting in Romans 7? "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find." We are utterly unable to know the will of God or to do the will of God unless he reveals himself and his will to us. Because of our depravity, we have suppressed the truth and we have become children of lies. And yet we're constantly faced with temptations in the weakness of flesh here on the earth that will continue to tempt us away from God. So when we are praying *Lord, thy will be done*, we are praying in connection with that second prayer request, *bring me more under the reign of Christ. Keep me, Oh Lord, from falling. Show me your will, because I in myself cannot figure it out. I am easily deceived because of the inner man. Lord, save me from myself*. See, we're not even able to do that which we say we even want to do apart from the grace of God.

But we also don't even think correctly. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned." See, we can't even think correctly apart from the grace of God. That is why we are to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we need God to expose our blind spots, our weaknesses, our rebellion, our hard hearts, so that we might cheerfully do his will on earth amidst a sinful world in a manner that his elect angels do it in heaven. There's not a single person here that is exempt from being deceived. There's not a single person here that does not have blind spots going on in their life right now. And that is why we need to pray this prayer, if God's will will be done here like it should be.

But there's also another reason why we need to pray. Not just because of the internal battle that we face that we do not see nor understand because we think ourselves all too well, we think of ourselves better than we ought, and we do not depend and trust upon him enough. But there's also something else that's warring here upon this earth. Not just internally but externally. And that's the external world, which sets itself against the will of God. Now, this is important because this earth is a fallen battleground. This is where the good and evil are battling it out. Heaven is perfect, and the earth is not, yet. But there is a great promise and hope even in this, that as heaven comes down and the kingdom of God extends, that God's will eventually will be done, exactly perfectly even here on this earth. But the earth is a focus of spiritual battles that are displayed throughout all of heaven. And God is doing something behind the scenes to manifest his perfections in ways, even to the invisible world, that we cannot comprehend. Upon this world there is a system of thought and a worldview behind everything that goes on here. And this is a

worldview that has been taught and trained by the evil one, who is considered the god of this age or the prince of the power of the air. And that is why there is such an antithesis between Christians and the world. And why there always will be until this prayer request is ultimately and fully met and complete.

That's why John 15, as Jesus was meeting in that upper room with his disciples, he says, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Folks, do not love the world. That is not your place. That is not your worldview. That is not your hope. This is not your home. This is not where you lay up for yourselves treasures and earthly things. That's why John commanded again, in his epistle, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Now, why do we need to pray this prayer request? Because we've got an internal battle going on and we have an external battle going on, and apart from the grace of God it is well-nigh hopeless. But that's why we need to pray. So for God's will to be done, it's going to be done through his people. And apart from this prayer request, his will not be done here on earth. Apart from prayer we will not know the will of God. Apart from prayer we will not do the will of God. We can't even fight in our own strength. That is why Paul warns us of that great spiritual battle, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." And then he goes on to tell us about the armor of God. And so we stand in the strength of Christ. And apart from Christ you will lose your soul. You will lose your battle. You will lose everything. Now, for God's will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven, prayer is mandatory. Now, I confess, there's mystery here. I don't know how this works. But it's mandatory. The more you understand this fact the more important your prayer life becomes because prayer is the primary means through which God's will will be accomplished here on this earth. And you're going to have to believe that.

I must say, when you think about our lives, we like the things that are visible, the things that are tangible, the things that we can handle. But there is a world out there just as big, if not bigger, and just as populated with moral beings that we cannot see. And yet, we've got to believe the word of God here for us to engage in the tenacity of the kind of praying for his will to be done.

An elder is called to minister in the word and in prayer. And I confess to you, the prayer part is the most difficult part. Because you pray and you pray and you pray for people, and often times you don't see the outward change. But you really don't know what's going on in the heart over long periods of time. And so you have to just trust the Lord, that he's doing something that you're not seeing. That's he's going to manifest himself in ways only he knows. But without prayer, the will of God is not going to be done on earth here as it is in heaven. And that is why it is a mystery to us that he's called us to pray and called us to a people of prayer. It even says his house, his temple, is called a *house of prayer*.

That is why prayer is a much broader term that we often give it. When we sing our Psalms, we're singing prayers. Music is praise and music is prayer. Praise is prayer. Worship is prayer. Our lives should be prayerful and without ceasing in these kinds of activities. We are to always be watchful in praying that we enter not into temptation. Prayer is a part of our defense. It's also a part of our offense. And yet the kingdom of God is extended through his people as his people

pray. Because prayer is what energizes the outward. And it's what makes the outward things victorious. It's what makes your marriage victorious, and your children victorious. It is the grace of God that he has given us a means to that through prayer, that we trust in the promises of God, and we pray for them to come to pass. And as we engage in this ethereal mystery of some activity our God is moving, and our God is working already before we ask those things. I don't know how that works. We don't change the will of God in what we pray. But as God engages our spirit with his, we pray according to his will in such a way that the very things that we ask do come to pass in a direct answer to prayer - that if we did not ask them we would not have them. But it's a powerful medium of which we need to exercise and give our diligence to.

But lastly, let me encourage you to pray this prayer the right way. And to pray this prayer the right way, you need to pray this prayer in a trustful acceptance. Quite often God's will is undesirable to us. Or it's inexplicable to us. And it can be one or both of those at the same time. It's undesirable because it seems threatening because it can be painful. And sometimes it seems inexplicable or it is inexplicable because we don't understand why God would require that of us. And that's why this becomes a difficult prayer request - to pray it the right way. There are various dispositions of our spirit in which we can pray this prayer, but only one of them is correct. You know, it's possible to pray this prayer request with a kind of bitter resentment inside. We realize there's no escaping the will of God for us in a particular difficult circumstance. We have fought it, and still God presses it upon us. And inside we begrudgingly give in. It's like the little boy who didn't want to obey his father. When his father gave him a commandment, he fought it to the place where he finally obeyed. And his dad came up and said, *Now, Son, aren't you glad you obeyed?* And the son says, *Well, no, not really, but you're just bigger than I am.* In other words what he's saying is *If it were up to me I wouldn't have done it.* And sometimes that's the way we pray *Thy will be done. Father, thy will be done. You're bigger than I am, so I'm just going to obey you.* And it's kind of a bitter resentment. And that is not the right way to pray this prayer request.

There's another kind of way, a disposition or attitude of our heart, in which we can pray this prayer request and that is with a stoic resignation. In the ancient Greek world, there were stoic philosophers that believed that everything was determined by fate. They believed that it was already a purpose and a plan for everybody's life, with all of the tragedies build in. And the only way to be truly happy, then, is to come to the place where you just don't care. You just accept what comes to you. So their method there was the first thing that you need to do is to be resigned to a broken cup. And then you need to be resigned to a torn row. And then you need to be resigned to the death of your favorite horse so that when, finally, a loved one dies you simply will not care. This is the only way to cope with the difficulties of life according to the stoic resignation.

And there's some ways and aspects of our disposition that we can pray this way, *Thy will be done here on earth, Lord.* You can pray this prayer request with the kind of stoic resignation where you wearily admit defeat. And that kind of praying is joyless. It's resigned, of a great acceptance of things, and that's not the right way to pray. See, when you pray, *Thy will be done here on earth as it is in heaven,* it requires you to go through some sufferings. It requires you to go through trials. It is through tribulations that you will press into the kingdom of God. And if they did that to your Savior, they're going to do this to you. You're living in a foreign, hostile

place. A place that does not love you. And yet a place that God has left you for a very particular purpose to do his will. And just like Jesus, who's life upon this world was considered a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But it was for a time, and there was joy before heaven.

So the last way that we are to pray this prayer, and the only right way to pray this prayer, is with that Christ-like manner of trustful acceptance. That's why the author of Hebrews says that Jesus is the author and the finisher of our faith. You don't think about the Son of Man who had to trust in his Father to carry him through the pains of death, and into the place of the cross, and even trust that he would raise him up three days later. And that's why he is the author, he is the pioneer, he is the one that has gone through this for us, trusting his heavenly Father even when the circumstances were difficult and hard. And like Christ prayed in the garden, as he had drops of blood, of sweat dropping down upon him, in great agony. And he prayed, Father if this cup cannot be removed, I pray it. But nevertheless, Thy will be done. Thy will be done. It was not with a bitter resentment. It was not with a stoic resignation. It is with trusting acceptance that he prayed for God's will to be done.

It was painful. We're not saying it's not painful. We're not saying you're not going to go through trials and difficulties. We're not saying that he's removing you from all of these things. No. In fact, he has decreed it for his Son and he's decreed it for the church. There is coming a time in which all of these things will be brought to light, and the glory that will be revealed is going to far-surpass the tribulations you'll have to go through on this earth. And it's only in the light of that glory that you have the strength to live through those sufferings with this trusting acceptance. Through the pain. Through the suffering. Not a stoic resignation. Not a joyless grey acceptance of this particular lot for your life to the will of God. No. And see, that's why it's so difficult for us - this trusting acceptance.

You know, trusting God when circumstances are difficult is not an easy thing for us. See, we know that God is sovereign. We know that God is control of all things in life, and even in every event that happens to us. But that very fact can make it sometimes more difficult to accept his will and to pray this way. Because in our thinking we say, *Well, God is in control. And because I know this, then why did this happen to me? Why now? Why, God?* And so, it's difficult to trust God in difficult times. In fact, it's more difficult to trust the Lord than to obey a clear commandment of his. I know in order to obey a commandment you have to trust the Lord. But when you have a commandment you have something that's ethical and generally you recognize the reasonableness of that commandment. But what God sometimes desires of us seems completely unreasonable. Commands have boundaries that are inflexibly fixed. But, often, circumstances in which we are asked to trust God seem to have no boundaries. It's like we're groping around in the unknown. And it's in those circumstances we come to the place where we can trustingly do God's will as we pray this way.

But there's an encouragement in the text. Encouragement in the text that, so far, has led us up to the place in which we've come to this third and most difficult prayer request. Because there's a lot of revelation that has already been revealed to us before we got there, you have to stop and remind yourself this, *Whose will is this that we are praying to be done?* And the answer that we've already come to - this is a heavenly Father's will. This is your Father's will for you. The

previous prayer request talked about the imagery of the reigning Sovereign, but never forget that Sovereign who is over all is our Father. A loving, caring Father.

The apostle Paul refers to himself, more than any other way, as a bond slave of Jesus Christ. And you know what? That is a position that we are all to take. We can speak of ourselves that way. We are bought with a price. We are not our own. But that balance to that - that is not how God addresses us. He calls us *sons*. He calls us his *children*. Jesus says I am not ashamed to call them my brethren. God says we are accepted in his beloved Son. God refers to us as joint heirs with his own Son. And God informs us that everything he does for his Son he does for us. So this is the will that we are asking to be accomplished here on this earth. And if our head has gone through the hedges with all of the suffering, certainly the body can make its way through joyfully as well. Because we serve a heavenly Father, and it is his will that we desire.

But remember, we have already learned about the will of God from this prayer. Remember, we pray for God's rights first and foremost. We pray for his name to be hallowed, for his kingdom to come, and now we pray for his will to be done. And all of that presses upon every one of our needs, does it not? Someone says, *That sounds selfish*, criticizes God, then he puts himself first and we shouldn't be. But folks, if God did not put himself first, there would be no goodness in this universe. The very best thing for us all is for God to maintain his rights first and foremost. And the only salvation of this universe is if God maintains his rights first. The only comforting fact we have is that the one being and the only one alone in this universe - he is the only one that will never compromise his righteous character. And folks, you finally know somebody like that. You've been longing and searching all your life for someone like this. You've wanted that mentor to help you in life. You've wanted that person you can look up to. And now you have found, and you know a perfect mentor, a perfect person. And by maintaining his rights, he stays perfect for himself and for you.

Now, remember things that you already know about God. God is all-wise. And in his wisdom, he always chooses what's best for you. But secondly, he's also loving. And so he deliberately chooses what is best for you and he wills it. But third, he is also very powerful. He's all-powerful. And he has the ability, and he exercises his law so that you realize it comes to pass. Not only does he, in his wisdom, know what's good, but in his love he manifests it. But in his power, he makes it to become realized in your life. So what is that prayer request, *Thy will be done on here on earth as it is in heaven*? What does that say about us?

Well, you know something? When you pray the next prayer request, *Lord, give us this day our daily bread*, do you think that that is the will of God for you? Do you know that it is the will of God for God to give you your daily sustenance, and to clothe you with the very essential things that you need for life? There may be a very rare and a special occasion for a higher purpose where there may be a very minute exception to that, but for a higher reason. But overall, that is very true. And every one of you here can testify that it was the will of God for him to clothe you, to feed you, and to lavish upon you grace upon grace. And you can testify this day that God, for all of your life, has met that particular prayer request in your life. Because you know why? It was his will to do so.

You know what else is God's will? And by your own testimony? And by your own profession? That he forgives your sins. It is the will of God that he forgives your sins. And so, as you begin to pray, *Lord forgive us of our sins*, it's his will. It's his will. Yeah. It's also his will for you to forgive your neighbor of the sins that they've committed against you. And to lead you not into temptation, but to deliver you from evil? Guess what? That is his will. So when you are praying, *Thy will be done here on earth as it is in heaven*, it's already being accomplished. But you need to have a spirit and disposition of trusting acceptance when that will is difficult. When he desires to lead you through the valley of the shadow of death for his name's sake.

But as he leads you in his will to combat the spiritual forces of darkness, and to advance his great kingdom here on earth so that his name and his perfections might radiate with all of the splendor and the glory due to him, we need to have this trusting acceptance of that fact. Especially in those occasions where it is painful and difficult. Not with a stoic resignation, not with a bitter resentment, or when it's just inexplicable and we don't understand. Because you don't see all the things happening behind the scenes. You don't see all of the world that God has created that is really here but is invisible. You don't know how the manifold wisdom of God is being made known to his angels and how they're learning. But what you do need to do is trustingly accept the will of God. And pray that it would be done perfectly in your life, and through you, and ultimately here on this earth as it's in heaven. And the more that's going on behind the scenes than you can see. But guess what? Everything that God leads you through is for your good - everything for his children. In fact, he has said no good thing will I withhold from those who love me. Everything that happens to us. Yes, there's going to be painful and sorrowful times and occasions. But everything is for good, and it's for a higher end to bring him glory. But it is always with our good.

Nathan Brown was a pioneer missionary to Burma, a difficult land. He wrote a poem. He committed it to heart, and he carried it with him wherever he went. And it said,

"And shall I pray Thee change Thy will, my Father,
Until it be according unto mine?
But no, Lord, no; that never shall be, rather
I pray Thee, blend my human will with Thine.

I pray Thee hush the hurrying, eager longing,
I pray Thee, soothe the pangs of keen desire,
See in my quiet places wishes thronging --
Forbid them, Lord, purge, though it be with fire.

And work in me to will and do Thy pleasure,
Let all within me, peaceful, reconciled,
Tarry content my Well beloved's leisure
At last, at last, even as a weened child."

And there is the spirit of the prayer that we should be encouraged in as we pray for *Thy will to be done here on earth as it is in heaven*.