

Lord's Prayer

They Will Be Done Matthew 6

R o g e r
S i m m s ,
hitchhiking
his way home,
would never forget
the date-May 7. His heavy suitcase made Roger tired. He was anxious to take off his army uniform once and for all. Flashing the hitchhiking sign to the on-coming car, he lost hope when he saw it was a black, sleek new Cadillac. To his surprise the car stopped. The passenger door opened. He ran toward the car, tossed his suitcase in the back, and thanked the handsome, well-dressed man as he slid in the front seat.

"Going home for keeps?"

"Sure am," Roger responded.

"Well, you're in luck if you're going to Chicago."

"Not quite that far. Do you live in Chicago?"

"I have a business there. My name is Hanover."

After talking about many things, Roger, a Christian, felt a compulsion to witness to this fiftyish, apparently successful businessman about Christ. But he kept putting it off, till he realized he was just thirty minutes from his home. It was now or never. So, Roger cleared his throat, "Mr. Hanover, I would like to talk to you about something very important." He then proceeded to explain the way of salvation, ultimately asking Mr. Hanover if he would like to receive Christ as his Savior. To Roger's astonishment the Cadillac pulled

over to the side of the road. Roger thought he was going to be ejected from the car. But the businessman bowed his head and received Christ, then thanked Roger, "This is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."

Five years went by, Roger married, had a two-year-old boy, and a business of his own. Packing his suitcase for a business trip to Chicago, he found the small, white business card Hanover had given him five years before. In Chicago he looked up Hanover Enterprises. A receptionist told him it was impossible to see Mr. Hanover, but he could see Mrs. Hanover. A little confused as to what was going on, he was ushered into a lovely office and found himself facing a keen eyed woman in her fifties. She extended her hand, "You knew my husband?"

Roger told her how her husband had given him a ride when hitchhiking home after the war.

"Can you tell me when that was?"

"It was May 7, five years ago, the day I was discharged from the army"

"Anything special about that day?"

Roger hesitated. Should he mention his witness? Since he had come so far, he might as well take the plunge. "Mrs. Hanover, I explained the gospel. He pulled over to the side of the road and wept against the steering

wheel. He gave his life to Christ that day"

Explosive sobs shook her body. Getting a grip on herself, she sobbed, "I had prayed for my husband's salvation for years. I believed God would save him."

"And," said Roger, "Where is your husband, Mrs. Hanover?"

I don't know if you've ever "He's dead," she wept, struggling with words. "He was in a car crash after he let you out of the car. He never got home. You see-1 thought God had not kept His promise." Sobbing uncontrollably, she added, "I stopped living for God five years ago because I thought He had not kept His word!

Sadly, we hear stories from a number Christian friends who have prayed and have been disappointed that their prayers were not answered.

They may even get to the point where they say, "I'm not going to pray anymore. I'm not sure that there's a God out there.

If there is, I'm pretty sure he's not interested in me and what matters to me."

We have seen that a large part of the disappointment our friends may have in their prayer life has more to do with their ignorance about the meaning and purpose of prayer as Jesus describes it the two times he taught his disciples to pray. We are anxious to tell Jesus what we need but in the Lord's Prayer Jesus indicates that before we pray about our daily bread we need to do something else. We must pray to the Father about the Father. Pray about the person of the Father, "hallowed be thy name," pray about the plan of the Father, "thy Kingdom come" and pray about the purpose of the Father, "Thy will be done." Particularly, in Luke 11 Jesus implies "pray this way and you can begin to pray with the effectiveness and the power that you see in me as I pray." So, in this message our question is, when we pray, "Thy will be done," what should we mean by that?

Why Some Pray Thy Will Be Done?

Wrong perspectives about praying for God's will:

1. GOD ISN'T LIKE SOME CAPRICIOUS CHECKER

PLAYER WHO MOVES THE PIECES THAT AFFECT OUR LIVES WITH NO RHYME OR REASON TO HIS DECISIONS.

Omar Khayyam said that God is the great checker player in the sky. We don't see the checkerboard. We don't see the pieces. We just know that the pieces are being moved somehow, and we have no clue what God is doing. That perspective has been reflected in the pagan religions. The gods of the Greeks and Romans were capricious. They didn't care about their worshippers. Furthermore, these pagan gods had no real concern about the well-being of mortals. But if you gave the right kind of sacrifice, maybe they might do something to help you.

Our son was a missionary to Mongolia. Most Mongolians are Buddhists. While visiting our son we have seen several "mother trees" along the countryside. Mongolians decorate these trees with blue ribbons. Buddhists come to these trees and leave sacrifices to their gods with the understanding that the gods don't care about them. They don't love them or have no real interest in them. But if

maybe they give an impressive enough sacrifice, perhaps then these fickle gods might show them favor.

Some Christians see this phrase, "Thy will be done," and might be deluded into thinking, we need to bribe God so that our will becomes His will. Of course, that's not true at all. God isn't some capricious being in heaven who is playing checkers with our life, and we have no clue what he's doing. He is our Father in heaven who loves us. Jesus reminds us that an earthly father isn't going to give a stone to a child that asks for bread. What's more, he insists that our heavenly Father loves us more than any earthly father could. So, we can get out of our heads, this notion that God is some checker player and we have no clue what he's doing.

Like Mrs. Hanover, we may find ourselves on an occasion saying, "he's so disappointed me, he obviously doesn't care about me. There's no sense praying anymore." When that thought plays in our head we must say, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!"

2. WE "PRAY THY WILL BE DONE" AS OUR WAY OF SAYING WE DON'T EXPECT GOD TO ANSWER OUR PRAYERS.

We see evidence of this view in Acts 12. In that passage, the early Church gathered together to pray for the release of the Apostle Peter. He had been in jail. While they're praying that God in his strength and power would intervene on behalf of Peter and that Peter would be released from prison, there was a knock at the door. Rhoda, the servant, went to the door. To her amazement and joy she found Peter standing there. She rushed back to the group that was praying and said,

"Peter's at the door!" These early Church leaders who had just experienced Pentecost, who had seen the resurrected Christ, said, "no, it can't be true! Sure, we are praying for Peter's release but he can't be at the door. That would be too incredible."

You think, "My goodness, what was their problem?" Their problem was they were praying, but they really didn't believe it could possibly be God's will to grant their request.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon in his booklet, *Effective Prayer*, asserts often we pray, but because we don't expect God to do anything, we attach the phrase, "if it be Thy will." Charles Haddon Spurgeon insists we need to know what the will of God is. Then, when we know what the will of God is, we must wrestle with God in prayer until He touches us. Like He did with Jacob when Jacob wrestled with the angel of God until He blessed him.

We don't have to say, "if it be thy will," if we know what God's will is! That begs a rather important question. If it's true that we can know what the will of God is, "What does the Bible declare is the will of God?"

Why We Pray "Thy Will Be Done"?

1. TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD'S COMPREHENSIVE WILL (JEREMIAH 51:29)

As theologians discuss the will of God, they suggest there are three aspects to the will of God. First, there is the comprehensive will of God. The comprehensive will of God is going to happen no matter what we do or pray. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1 reminds us that

before the foundation of the world, God decided to send his son Jesus down to Earth to die on the cross. Also, before Creation He knew that He would send his son Jesus yet a second time to reclaim the world and usher in the eternal Kingdom. It doesn't matter whether we sin, whether we disobey God, whether we think God doesn't exist. Those two events are guaranteed to happen. So, when we pray about the 2nd coming of Christ, we don't need to pray that it will happen. Our praying that doesn't make it happen. It's guaranteed already. Thinking and praying about God's comprehensive will should be very comforting to us. No matter how awful our present world is, we know for certain that our loving heavenly Father controls our future!

2. TO ASK FOR GOD'S COMPASSIONATE WILL

Secondly, theologians would say there is also the compassionate will of God. Nothing in this category is guaranteed. In my Greek New Testament, I looked up every phrase that is translated "it is the will of God that..." So, again if we know what is the will of God we have no need to add the phrase "if it be thy will" to these requests.

In 1 Timothy, 2:4, we read it is the will of God that every man, every woman, every child be saved, that they enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Is everybody one day going to be in heaven? No, not everybody is going to be in heaven. Depending upon your theology, if you're a Calvinist or a Reformer or have a Lutheran background, you can say, we made a decision collectively as a people in the time of Adam and Eve to disobey God. By virtue of our own choice, we're destined to hell. God didn't make us go to hell, we're destined to hell. God in his mercy still can choose to come to us in the form of the Holy Spirit of God and draw us to himself. But it is His will that all be saved.

Or if you're more Armenian in persuasion, like most Methodists groups, the church of the Nazarene etc., you would say, God offers the free gift of eternal life to every one of us. We can say, no, thanks, I don't want your free gift. But whatever your theology, the point is still the same. It's God's will for us to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There are a whole series of verses in the New Testament. (see e.g., Jn.

4:34, 6:39, 40; Gal. 1:4, Eph. 1:5, 9, 11; 1 Tim. 2:4)

So anytime I'm praying that someone come to faith in Jesus Christ, I don't have to say, "if it be thy will." It is God's will for all to be saved!

In addition to that, there are a series of other verses that according to the New Testament, declare it is the will of God that you be sanctified. You say, "what is sanctification?" It's the process whereby Christians day by day are becoming more like Jesus Christ. Is that guaranteed for every Christian? Is every Christian in their life and their life experience becoming more like Jesus? Guaranteed? The answer is no, it's not true. Christians can disobey God; they can walk away from God. We can stifle the work of the Spirit of God in our life and choose not to grow. But hopefully we will choose to grow and:

1. Give generously 2 Cor. 8:5
2. Be filled with the Spirit Eph 5:17
3. Bare fruit Col 1:9
4. Be sanctified 1 Thes 4:3
5. Give thanks in all things 1 Thes 5:18
6. Do good 1 Pet 2:15
7. See Christ's glory Jn 17:24

So, when I pray for my children or for a friend to grow in Christ I don't need to add "if it be thy will." It is God's will for all of us to become more like Jesus.

What was most striking for me when I identified every time the phrase "it is the will of God that" is what the Scripture says about what may or may not be the will of God. This list, in my opinion, covers what we most often pray about.

Know What May or May Not Be the Will of God:

1. Visiting friends in another town Rom 1:10
2. Enjoying rest and relaxation Rom. 15:32
3. Making money on a business venture Jas 4:15
4. Suffering 1 Pet 3:17, 4:19
5. Realizing personal plans Acts 18:21

So, in Romans chapter one, the Apostle Paul tells the Romans that if it be God's will, he hopes someday to come to be with them. By implication, Paul says, I don't know if it's God's will for me to go to Rome any more than we can say, we know certainly that it's God's will for me to go to Denver or Detroit or Des Moines. It might be God's will for that to happen. Similarly, in James 4:25 the brother of Jesus, says that when you're going to a town and you're starting a new business, you don't know that it's God's will for your business to be successful or for you to make a lot of money. So, you do need to add the phrase "if it be thy will" when you are praying for God to bless you financially. Sadly, I have heard many Christians say "God told me He would bless my business so I could give more money to His kingdom work." More often than not those claiming to

hear this word from God ended up losing all their money and in some cases, money from Christian friends whom they guaranteed that they would repay.

Similarly, we have no guarantee when we pray about our earthly plans. Paul in Romans 15:30-32 prays that as he comes to Judea that the pagans in Judea will accept him and everything will go well. But he was arrested and was sent to Rome in jail. Also, he prays that the Christians would respond positively to the collection that he took for the folks that were suffering because of the famine in AD 50 in Jerusalem. But we know from 2 Corinthians, several Christians accused him of fraud. So that prayer didn't quite work out for Paul. Lastly, Paul prays that he might be able to come to Rome and get some rest and relaxation in Rome. He went to Rome all right but ended up in a Roman jail.

Finally, Peter says, you don't know if God might want you to suffer. (1 Pet 3:17, 4:19). So, the things we tend to pray about: our job, our health, our economic well-being, all fall into the category of what may or may not be the will of God.

So how should we pray about those concerns? You do know that when you pray about your job or you pray about your family, it is God's will for everybody that you know at work to come to know Jesus as their Savior. It is God's will for everybody that you know to grow in Christ Jesus. You say, "how does that impact how I pray?"

If you're praying for a new job, our tendency is to pray for the job where we can make lots of money. Good luck with that perspective

because you don't know if that's God's will. But if you get two job offers, let's say one is in your hometown and the other is miles away, how do you decide which to take it. If you're praying for God's will, there are a couple of questions you need to ask. Which job could I take where I'd be in a better position to impact people who don't know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior? Because that's the goal of God for you. Which job can I take where I can have a platform so that I can encourage people to day-by-day become more like Jesus Christ? You pray thy will be done that way, and you'll demonstrate you understand what praying according to the will of God means!

3. TO SUBMIT TO GOD'S COMMANDING WILL

So, there is the comprehensive will of God that's going to happen no matter what. There is this compassionate will of God where God wants us to be saved and to grow in Christ. Finally, there is the commanding will of God. The great commands of Scripture summed up in the Ten Commandments and in books like the book of Deuteronomy chapter 28 and 30,

and in Leviticus Chapter 27, lay out this principle. If we obey God's moral precepts, these commands that we see summed up in the Ten Commandments, then God will show his favor in our life. That's a general rule. If you disobey and you don't do what God says, then don't expect the favor of God. Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 27 use stronger terminology: "expect cursing in your life."

Perhaps you have heard the hymn:

Trust and obey, trust and obey.

For there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

That's the premise behind the commanding will of God. If we do what God tells us we're supposed to do, summed up in the Ten Commandments, then we should be able to expect evidences of the blessing of God in our life.

Author Philip Keller, visiting in Pakistan, read Jeremiah 18:2, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." So, he and a missionary went to the potter's house in that city. In A

Layman Looks at the Lord's Prayer [Chicago: Moody, 1976], pp. 90-96), he writes, "In sincerity and earnestness, I asked the old master craftsman to show me every step in the creation of a masterpiece.... On his shelves were gleaming goblets and lovely vases and exquisite bowls of breathtaking beauty. Then, crooking a bony finger toward me, he led the way to a small, dark, closed shed at the back of his shop. When he opened its rickety door, a repulsive overpowering stench of decaying matter engulfed me. For a moment I stepped back from the edge of the gaping dark pit in the floor of the shed.

"This is where the work begins," he said, kneeling beside the black, nauseating hole. With his long thin arm, he reached down into the darkness. His slim, skilled fingers felt around amid the lumpy clay searching for a fragment of material exactly suited to his task. "I add special kinds of grass to the mud," he remarked. "As it rots and decays, its organic content increases the colloidal quality of the clay. Then it sticks together better."

Finally, his knowing hands

brought up a lump of dark mud from the horrible pit where the clay had been tramped and mixed for hours by his hard, bony feet. With tremendous impact the first verses from Psalm 40 came to my heart ... "He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay." As carefully as the potter selected his clay, so God used special care in choosing me.

He walked, clay in hand, over to where a huge, round slab of stone stood in the center of his shop.... The great slab of granite, carved from the rough rock of the high Hindu Kush Mountains behind his home, whirled quietly ... but what stood out most before my mind at this point was the fact that beside the potter's stool, on either side of him, stood two basins of water. Not once did he touch the clay without first dipping his hands in the water. The water was the medium through which the master craftsman's will and wishes were transmitted to the clay. His will actually was being done in earth ... a most moving demonstration ... that my Father's will and wishes are expressed and transmitted to me through the water of His own Word. It is the water of the Word-the expressed will of God-that finds fulfillment in fashioning me to His will.

Suddenly, to Keller's astonishment, he saw the wheel stop. Gently the man picked out a piece of stone, and then later he stopped it again and picked out a larger piece. With the tenderness of his hand he could feel every rough spot, every stone, every small grain of sand. The two he had taken out were too large, and the would-be goblet was marred. So, the potter crushed it in his hands. In dismay, I turned to my missionary friend and

asked him in a hoarse whisper, "What will the potter do now?" The question was passed on. Looking up at me through eyes now clouded and sad, he replied with a sorrowful shrug of his tired old shoulders, "Just make a crude finger bowl from the same lump."

The sobering, searching, searing question I had to ask myself in the humble surroundings of that simple potter's shed was this: "Am I going to be a piece of fine China or just a finger bowl? Is my life going to be a gorgeous goblet fit to hold the fine wine of God's very life from which others can drink and be refreshed? Or am I going to be just a crude finger bowl in which passersby will dabble their fingers briefly then pass on and forget all about it?" It was one of the most solemn moments in all my spiritual experiences.

So then, if we are praying "thy kingdom come" how will that change the way we pray?

1. We will remember what the will of God is and what may or may not be the will of God.

a. My salvation and the salvation of others is always the will of God. Also, it is always God's will for me and others to grow in Christ. When I look for a new job or a new place to live, do I ask how I will be able to influence others to Christ or help them grow? Are those questions considered in my job search? If I am praying thy will be done, they should be!

b. Getting a job in a particular city, making money, enjoying rest and relaxation may or may not be the will of God for me. Knowing that should at least reduce my frustration when God does not always answer those prayers. Be honest. How much of your prayer

life can be reduced to praying "give me this day my daily bread?" Do you regularly confess sin? Do you ask God to convict you as you read the Bible or pray? Do you pray for those who don't know Jesus? Do you pray for your neighbors? Do you pray for the advancement of the kingdom through missionaries you support or through your church?

2. We will remember that God has a sovereign plan that often is shielded from me. Thus, I may not

understand why God allows certain seemingly negative events to occur. But because he is the Potter and I am the clay, I need to trust that He knows what is best for me and not get frustrated if I, like the Apostle Paul, have some thorn in the flesh that doesn't seem to go away. Three times Paul prayed for his thorn in the flesh to go away.

But God advised him, "My grace is sufficient for you!" The message to Paul clearly was that he would be made strong through his weakness.

That is a tough message to accept but Jesus also advises his followers that if we are living for Him, we should expect persecution. (Matthew 5:10-12)

Nowhere does Jesus promise His followers that we will have the "cushy" life. Instead, He promises that we can have an amazing role in implementing His will on Earth. Is that what you want? It all starts when we begin to pray, "thy will be done!"

