

Your Will Be Done

9 "In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matt. 6:9-13)

Do you remember the fairy tales in which the genie, or the fairy godmother or some creature appeared and gave the person three wishes? As a boy, I thought to myself, if I am getting three wishes for absolutely anything, my first wish is going to be for an unlimited amount of wishes. If I can have anything I want, the first thing I want is to remove the limit on how many wishes I get. But somehow, in the stories, the hero never thought of that, probably because unlimited wishes would soon become a tiresome story.

But many people have the idea that prayer is really just like that. Prayer is where you ask God for your wishes, except you don't have as much of a guarantee that it's going to happen. Some cults have gone further, and they teach that you can guarantee that you get your wishes. They say that faith is a kind of force, a sort of power, which if you use correctly, God must submit to you. The proponents of this heresy have been saying for years that if you are poor, or sick, or in any kind of pain, it's because you have spoken words of unbelief, and so created your reality of poverty. Now, they say, if you speak the words of faith, you can command a different reality, and they say, even God must submit to you.

Well aside from being vile blasphemy, this is just old-fashioned witchcraft. In those practices, you shape reality and command the spirits with certain incantations, spells, verbal chants. The Word-Faith cult is just the grandchild of 19th century ** Kenneth Copeland and Kenneth Hagin point to T. L. Osborn and William Branham

But leaving aside the distortion of what prayer is, we come to the genuine article here, as the Son of God Himself teaches us what prayer is, and how to pray. We've been seeing each line of the Lord's Prayer represents a subject in itself, a section. Our Father is the opening, where we speak of our relationship with God through Jesus Christ, glorying in the Gospel. Hallowed be Your name is where we adopt the posture of humility, and make God's priority our priority. Your kingdom come is where we align ourselves with God's program for the world, and pray for the spread of His gospel, and the return of His Son.

We come to the fourth petition, and it couldn't be more different to the idea that you can command God to do your will. "Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.

This first half of the prayer is entirely God-centred. We focus on God's gospel, on God's glory, on God's rule, and now we come to God's will. So what are we praying, when we pray, "You will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"?

Let's take it apart by first asking two questions: what is God's will, and how is God's will done in Heaven? We'll then be able to answer the question, what is meant by "your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven"

I. What is God's will?

You'll often hear people say, "God-willing" or "Lord-willing" we'll do this. Some say, "we'll do such-and-such, please God". But just like God's kingdom, God's will is a fairly complex concept in

Scripture.

God's will has more than one part to it. To see that, consider this question: Was it God's will for Jesus to die on the Cross? From one angle, God willed it. First John 4:14 tells us the the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief.

But from another angle, God did not will it. Acts 5:30 has Peter saying to the Sanhedrin: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree." *Murdered*. Jesus was murdered. Is it God's will that people be murdered? No. The sixth commandment is "You shall not murder". So, was it God's will that Jesus die on the cross?

And you can multiply this question across the Bible. Was it God's will that Israel rebel and be punished? Was it God's will that the world sink into sin, and the Flood destroy the whole earth? Was the tragedy of the Holocaust God's will? Is the AIDS epidemic God's will? Or as you think about personal tragedy an dpain in your life, Was it God's will that that happen?

The Bible teaches that there are at least two sides to God's will.

First, there is God's sovereign will. This is the will by which God brings to pass all that happens, either actively, or permissively. The Bible clearly teaches that in one way, everything that happens, happens because God has either actively caused it, or because He has passively permitted it.

Ephesians 1:11 tells us how many things happen according to God's will: according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Jesus told His disciples that God's control extends to the smallest thing: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. (Matt. 10:29)

33 The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision *is* from the LORD. (Prov. 16:33)

Every act, every event that occurs, every thing that exists does so by the sovereign will of God. God causes it actively, or God permits it passively.

Second, there is God's perfect will. This is the will that reflects God's nature and desire. For example, 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that The Lord is... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

14 "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. (Matt. 18:14)

Now since we know that people do perish, but God is not willing that they should perish, this is a different aspect to God's will than His sovereign will. This is what God, according to His holy and loving nature, desires. According to this will, God does not desire murder, rape, theft, malice, idolatry, fornication, deceit. God does desire the holiness, happiness, peace, joy and blessing on His creatures. We see this perfect of God's will in the commandments of Scripture. Every commandment and prohibition in the Bible is God's communication of His will of perfection. We understand what it is that God loves by what He commands us to do, and what He forbids us from doing.

How do these two wills relate? What we know is that God's sovereign will allows and includes things which His perfect will does not desire. Why? Because of a greater, larger, and more ultimate plan, which will maximise the joy, glory, and happiness of God and His people. The Bible speaks often enough about a bigger plan, which will ultimately look more like His perfect will.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18)

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

9 and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, (Eph. 3:9-11)

But the path to the place of maximum glory, joy, and happiness in this universe is very complex. God has filled His universe with creatures who have been granted freedom of choice, who are responsible moral agents. God could have made creatures without that, but He sovereignly chose to bring into existence a universe where His creatures would rebel, and bring upon themselves the consequences of that rebellion. But God thought a universe filled with pain that He would redeem was better than no universe at all.

We know what this is like. To pull a bee sting out of your child's hand means inflicting pain to bring about less pain. To remove the pain of a cavity or infection in a tooth, the dentist must bring more pain. The process of getting a good result often involves elements that are not pleasant in themselves. Whether its baking, or making a tapestry, or building a house, or writing a program, things can look pretty messy, ugly and unpleasant in their unfinished state.

But what the Bible assures us is that that is what is happening now.

2Co 4:17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

1Pe 4:13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

God works together all things, good and evil, in His sovereign will, as He moves history along to its place of consummation. That place is one day when, according to Revelation 21 and 22, Heaven and earth unite and become one. That links us then to the way Jesus qualifies the request, "as in Heaven, so on Earth"

II. How is God's will done in heaven?

Heaven is the abode of the saints and angels, where they dwell and experience the manifest presence of God. Now I want you to take what we know from Scripture about the angels and the redeemed, and picture how is God's will done in that place.

God's perfectly will is done immediately. When the angels or the now sinless saints know what God desires, their will comply without question. No debate, no discussion, no objections break out in Heaven. No one tells God that His suggestions have been duly noted, and will be reported to the subcommittee on Saints and Angel's Welfare, for further deliberation.

A Sunday School teacher once asked a group of small children, "How is God's will done by the angels in Heaven?" The first child said, "They do it immediately." The second child said, "They do it diligently." The third child said, "They do it always." Fourth "With all their hearts". Last, a small child stood up and said, "they do it without asking any questions."

God's perfect will is done zealously. In Heaven, there is a holy zeal for God's will. What God loves is what those in heaven love, and what God hates I what those in heaven hate. That means those in Heaven fervently, zealously, cheerfully carry out God's will.

God's perfect will is done perfectly. No one introduces his own modifications and changes what God commands. There, no one has sinful inclinations, making him lazy, or selfish, or half-hearted, or self-serving.

Now what we've just described is a place where God's sovereign will, and his perfect will are

perfectly united. There, God does not cause or permit anything painful or displeasing to Himself, because there there is no sin, no evil, no corruption. In Heaven, God is not working through and around the curse, and sin, and fallenness, and rebellion. What do you think that place is like, where God's perfect will of holy love is perfectly, zealously, immediately and unfailingly done. It's a place of exceeding joy. It's an eternal weight of glory. It's exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think.

In the Heaven, we see no tension between what is going on, and between what God desires. The descriptions of Revelation 21 and 22 describe a place of perfect beauty, joy, and holiness. There is no longer sorrow, sickness, pain, disease, sin, or death. Every element of what grieves God but which He permitted, is gone.

That perfection helps us to understand what is going on in this prayer request.

III. What are we praying for?

First, we are asking more of God's perfect will of desire to come on Earth. Your will be done here, as it is in Heaven. The way that your sovereign and holy will meet and unite in Heaven, so let it be on Earth. The divide between your will of sovereign decree and your will of perfect desire that is felt on Earth: bridge that divide, narrow that gap.

What would that look like? Man's greatest need here is salvation. We are praying for conversions, for people to be saved, and discipled, churches to be planted. When that happens, we see the curse of broken families driven out. Marriages repair. Parenting strengthens. Depression, anger, anxiety, guilt, bitterness are replaced with Christlikeness. As more people are saved, Christlikeness is seen in the workplace, in the arts, in law, in the economy, in politics, in the sciences, in the academy. No, we do not usher in the kingdom, but we become salt to preserve the world from total corruption. We become light to prevent them from falling into utter darkness. And to the degree that people are born again and changed by the Spirit, it is as if shafts of light from Heaven light up the darkness.

Now certainly, we can pray too for other aspects of the curse to be held back, for sickness to be healed, for tragedy to be averted, for great problems to be solved. But we are in the habit of praying first for the symptoms of living in a cursed world to go away, instead of the cause of living in a cursed world. The reason our world is filled with suffering, misery, and pain is because of sin. The beginning of God's perfect will uniting with a sovereign will is more people being saved, less sin and its consequences. It's only as people become like those who are in heaven, by being saved, that Heaven begins to change Earth.

Now here is where people get tied in knots about God's sovereign will and His perfect will. If what happens is what God ordains, how does my praying make a difference? But Jesus is here teaching that prayer changes things. When we pray that God's perfect will change things here, then that may become part of God's sovereign will. God has ordained that the prayers of His people are part of the means that bring about the end.

George Muller began praying for the salvation of five unbelievers in 1844. He prayed every day, and 18 months later, one of them came to Christ. He thanked God and went on praying. Four years later, another came to Christ. He thanked God and kept praying for the other three. Six years later the third came to Christ. He kept praying for the other two for the next 42 years, till he died in 1898. It was after Muller died, that those two came to Christ.

This is the first thing we are praying for. Father, let more of your perfect will be seen and felt by conquering more hearts to yourself.

Second, when we pray your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven, we are seeking His perfect will. Not only are we asking that God's perfect will be done, we are agreeing and volunteering to be part of that. That's the heart of Christ.

Have you ever noticed what the attitude of Jesus was towards God's perfect will. At the age of twelve, when he went missing, and his parents finally find Him in the Temple, His response to Mary was, 49 And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Lk. 2:49)

Years later, when Mary and his brothers and sisters were trying to get to Him, Jesus told the crowd 48 But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" 49 And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matt. 12:50)

One one occasion, when His disciples asked if He had eaten, Jesus responded "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. (Jn. 4:34)

When people accused Him of being self-seeking, He often responded by speaking of His Father's will.

30 "I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me. (Jn. 5:30)

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. (Jn. 6:38)

7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come-- In the volume of the book it is written of Me-- To do Your will, O God.'" (Heb. 10:7)

Here's the heart of Christ. I seek to do your perfect will at all times.

Now, let's be honest. We fear that. Dr. William L. Pettingill was an American pastor of the early 20th century. He once said "Most people don't want to know the will of God in order to do it; they want to know it in order to consider it."

Why? Because lingering in our minds are the echoing words of the Serpent, "If you do God's will, you will miss out on another life. A better life. If you just seek His will, He's the only one who will be pleased, but you won't be."

A.W. Tozer: "If a man chooses the will of God he is not denying but exercising his right of choice. What he is doing is admitting that he is not good enough to desire the highest choice nor is he wise enough to make it, and he is for that reason asking Another who is both wise and good to make his choice for him. And for fallen man, this is the ultimate use he should make of his freedom of will. Tennyson saw this and wrote... Our wills are ours, we know not how; Our wills are ours, to make them Thine. There is a lot of sound doctrine in these words—"Our wills are ours, to make them Thine." The secret of saintliness is not the destruction of the will but the submergence of it in the will of God. The true saint is one who acknowledges that he possesses from God the gift of freedom. He knows that he will never be cudged into obedience nor wheedled like a petulant child into doing the will of God; he knows that these methods are unworthy both of God and of his own soul. He knows he is free to make any choice he will, and with that knowledge he chooses forever the blessed will of God."

"I'm really scared to embrace God's will. It might mess up my life." What kind of God would wait for you to surrender to Him to mess up your life? If He's all-powerful, which He is, He wouldn't have to wait for your surrender to mess up your life. If He's all-good, which He is, He would gain no pleasure or delight from messing up your life. On the contrary, no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. It is something very perverse in us that thinks the best will for my life is my own, I had best keep God at bay.

"What might happen if I seek God's will for how do be a mother?" Exactly. What might happen? Why not pray, your will be done in my motherhood as perfectly as your will is done in heaven.

"What might happen if I seek God's perfect will for how to run my business?" Exactly. Who knows what might happen?

"What might happen if I seek God's perfect will for my career, for my studies, for what I read and watch and listen to, for who my friends are?"

*O Will, that willest good alone,
Lead Thou the way, Thou guidest best;
A silent child, I follow on,
And trusting, lean upon Thy Breast.*

*And if in gloom I see Thee not,
I lean upon Thy love unknown—
In me Thy blessed Will is wrought,
If I will nothing of my own.*

When you are not willing, ask God to make you willing to be willing.

Third, when we pray your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven, we are submitting to His sovereign will.

We know that God's sovereign will will be done. But since we have already asked that it be as close as possible to the undiluted perfect will of God in Heaven, since we have actively sought His perfect will in our own lives, we now also state that we are satisfied and content with what God brings to pass. That's the heart of Christ.

39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*." 40 Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? 41 "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak." 42 Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." (Matt. 26:39-42)

We are stating our satisfaction with the wisdom of God in causing and permitting what comes to pass. What comes to pass here is going to include pain and trial, and suffering, and what we do here is say, your will is still best. You are good enough, wise enough, knowledgeable enough to know the best means to achieve the best ends.

Your will be done, if it means the cancer. If it means the lost loved one. If it means the heartbreak. If it means tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword.

We pray, your will be done on earth. God's sovereign will is not always unmixed, but it is always infallibly done, like it is in Heaven.

This is what gives you contentment and hope, even when the process is not pleasant. It's what the hymnwriter meant when he wrote:

What God ordains is always good:
His will is just and holy.
As He directs my life for me,
I follow meek and lowly.
My God indeed in ev'ry need
knows well how He will shield me;
to Him, then, I will yield me.

What God ordains is always good:
though I the cup am drinking
which savors now of bitterness,
I take it without shrinking.
For after grief God gives relief,
my heart with comfort filling
and all my sorrow stilling.

When we pray like this, we can thank God for saying no to some of our prayers. Amy Carmichael, the missionary to India, used to pray as a girl that God would change the colour of her eyes from brown to blue. And every morning she would wake up and look in the mirror expecting them to change. Years later, in India, she would disguise herself as an Indian so as to go to the Temple and rescue girls from temple prostitution. She used coffee on her skin, and wore Indian clothes, but had she had blue eyes, her disguise would have been foiled. Years later, her children remarked, we know why God said no to that prayer, so that she could be useful to Him and save lives.

One of the Puritan Prayers in the Valley of Vision says this, "I thank Thee that many of my prayers have been refused. I have asked amiss and do not have, I have prayed from lusts and been rejected, I have longed for Egypt and been given a wilderness. Go on with Thy patient work, answering 'no' to my wrongful prayers, and fitting me to accept it. Purge me from every false desire, every base aspiration, everything contrary to Thy rule."

When all is said and done, God's sovereign will is going to happen, and God's perfect will is the best thing that could happen. Why arm wrestle with the One who cannot lose, and if He were to lose, would mean less joy and peace for you? Why seek your own will, when your own will is not the best thing, nor can your will prevail over God's. This is why Jesus tells us to start our day, and to end it, with the idea: Lord, not our will, but yours be done. Let your perfect will done so perfectly in Heaven, be done on Earth. Begin with me. I want your perfect will. And I submit to your sovereign will.

So imagine if God came to you and said, "Ill give you three wishes." Do you know what the right response would be? "Lord, I don't need three wishes. My one wish is that you would grant me and the world everything You wish."