

## **The Priority of Prayer**

Matthew 6:9

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What a joy it is again this morning to draw your attention to Matthew chapter 6 in our study of God's Word. Matthew chapter 6, looking at the disciples' prayer in verses 9 through 13. I'd like you to follow along as I read again this wonderful pattern for prayer and as we enter upon our study this morning. Matthew 6 beginning in verse 9, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Most people focus on prayer only in response or reference to how it works, not what it is for. We tend to be very much pragmatists. Prayer for us has become a means to an end and that end is usually a selfish one. One person said, "Men usually ply their prayers like sailors do their pumps when the ship leaks." That's generally true. Prayer is sort of a last ditch effort. It's kind of like a spiritual parachute. You're glad it's there; you hope you never have to use it. Prayer has a way of being given the wrong perspective because we see it our way instead of God's way. But as we've been learning in our study of the disciples' prayer given by our Lord here as a model for all prayers, prayer is not primarily for us. It is for God. Prayer is not so much to gain for us what we think we need as it is to give to God an opportunity to manifest His glory. Prayer is for God. Only incidentally and as a by-product, is it for us.

If we never gained anything from prayer but the communion with God that prayer really is, that should be sufficient to make prayer a constant thing. Imagine the reality when you pray of entering into the very throne room and communing with the living God of the universe. And you have understood some gift so marvelous that if that were all there was to prayer it would be sufficient to draw us to pray constantly.

Chrysostom, the early church father, has beautifully said, "A monarch vested in gorgeous habiliments is far less illustrious than a kneeling supplicant ennobled and adorned by communion with his God. Consider how august a privilege it is when angels are present and archangels throng around where cherubim and seraphim encircle with their blaze the throne of God, that a mortal may approach with unrestrained confidence and converse with heaven's dread sovereign, oh what honor was ever conferred like that?"

How inestimable is the privilege of entering into the throne room of God, surrounded by the hosts of His heavenly angels to commune in simplicity and with rapt attention with one who is devoted to us. If prayer were nothing more than that, it would be sufficient to draw us to it without ceasing, but prayer is more than that. Prayer is more than just the privilege of communing with God. Prayer is the opportunity for God to display His glory. Prayer gives God a vehicle by which He can demonstrate

who He is. An old saint put it something like this, and I think it's beautifully said, "True prayer brings the mind to the immediate contemplation of God's character and holds it there until the believer's soul is properly impressed." Let me read it again. "True prayer brings the mind into the immediate contemplation of God's character and holds it there until the believer's soul is properly impressed."

Prayer is to impress you with God, much more than it is to impress God with you or your needs. You don't pray because you want God to think you're holy, and you don't pray to get what you can get or get God to give you what you want. You pray rather to allow God to be on display. That is why we go back to our key verse in John 14:13. Jesus said, "If you ask anything in my name, I will do it, in order that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Why will God hear your prayer and answer? In order that the Father may be glorified. Prayer is ever and always, first and foremost, a recognition of God's majestic glory and an act of submission to it. All our petitions, all our passions, all our supplications, all our requests, all our needs, all our trials, our problems are all subject, look back at the prayer again. To His name, verse 9, and His kingdom, verse 10, and His will, verse 10. All prayer begins there. Then you have in verse 11, give us, verse 12, forgive us, verse 13, and lead us. But the giving, forgiving and leading of us comes only when God is put in the prior place.

True worship begins with God. True worship is forgetting self and glorifying Him. Unfortunately, most people think of prayer as an effort to bring God into line with their own desires, and this is a very predominant movement today in the church. People are claiming things on God, staking claims on what God has to do, going into God's presence affirming that God must do this.

I've been listening to two, particularly on television and there are many others, but these two seem to be leading the parade. They both come out of the same mold they inadequately interpret the Scripture, and they tell people to demand things from God. By their faith they are to demand that God does this and demand that God does the other. One of them was saying the other night that if you're a spirit-filled Christian you should never know a day of illness in your entire life. You demand that from God by your faith, that He keep you well.

This kind of thing is just an extension of what has been a common approach to prayer, only now its run rampant; that is that prayer is all about demanding things from God on your conditions. And whether we like to admit it or not, in many cases that's the way we pray. That's not anything new, by the way. I have to show you an illustration from Genesis just to show you how old this kind of praying is. In Genesis 28 verse 20, "And Jacob vowed a vow," he's a patriarch now, "Jacob vowed a vow, saying," and here's his vow, he's talking to the Lord. "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go," in other words if God will stick around and go my way, do what I want, "and give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God."

Now how do you like that for a conditional prayer? God, You want me on Your side? Fork over the following. "And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house, and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give a tenth unto thee." I'll even be a tither. I'll even give money if You'll do what I ask You. That wasn't a spiritual vow; that was a carnal vow. God You do what I tell You to do, and then I'll let You be my God. That isn't how you pray. You're not in the prior place of prayer. You don't go to God in prayer demanding anything, commanding God, affirming that everything you say you have you have. That isn't true. I hear these fella's promise that all the time, "If you just believe you have it you have it!" That's baloney. That isn't true. That's playing games with people's minds, and playing games worse with God's sovereignty.

Prayer has as its purpose the uplifting of God, the setting of God in His rightful place, the manifestation of His majesty, and His sovereign will, and we bring all other items into concourse with that. Prayer is for God. That's why we've outlined the prayer this way, "Our Father, which art in heaven," that's the paternity of God. "Hallowed be Thy name," that's the priority of God. "Thy kingdom come," that's the program of God. "Thy will be done," that's the purpose of God. "Give us this day our daily bread," that's the provision of God. "And forgive us our debts," that's the pardon of God. "And lead us not into temptation," the protection of God. "For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen," the pre-eminence of God. The whole of the model prayer focuses on God. And precisely does this deal with the issue at hand when Jesus gave it. For the Pharisees and the scribes and the Jewish people who followed their teaching had taken prayer from what God intended it to be, a vehicle for His display, and they had made it into a manmade perverted traditional exercise by which they drew attention to themselves. They used their prayers hypocritically to show how spiritual they were. They assumed that in their prayers they were informing God of things He didn't know, at least that seems to be implied in the prior text. And they actually went into vain repetition like the heathens did, as if they could badger God into giving them what they demanded. They had created a kind of prayer that was illegitimate, perverted, substandard, non-scriptural. Jesus then in confronting them here sets the record straight.

In chapter 6 Jesus said, your giving is not according to God's standard. He says, your fasting is not according to God's standard. And here in this section, your praying is not according to God's standard. Now let Me set it right; here is how prayer ought to be. Verse 9, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." Not the way you've been doing it. Here is the way to pray, not self-centered, self-righteous prayers, but prayers that focus on God. And He begins with God's paternity, "Our Father, who art in heaven."

Now we saw that last week, didn't we? The first recognition is that God is our Father, *pater*. He is our Father. The Aramaic would have been *Abba*. He is our daddy, a term of great intimacy, a term of personal warmth, a term that belongs in a family. God is not a distant ogre. God is not some kind of a cruel, capricious, immoral being stepping on those who are His supposed subjects, but He is a loving, tender, caring Father. And at His disposal all the treasures of heaven, for the behalf of His saints that His name may be glorified. Our Father then means that God is going to hear because He cares, "Our Father who art in heaven," means that when He cares, He can meet the need because He has unlimited eternal resources. God is a loving Father, that's where the prayer begins. And, beloved, all prayer begins with that, that God does care. When you go to pray, you start by the recognition that God really cares. You don't have to badger God. You don't have to bang away and do something to get Him to respond. You're not like the prophets and priests of Baal who were taunted by the prophet Elijah. "Maybe your god is asleep or maybe your god is on a vacation or maybe your god doesn't care." Your God does care, is not asleep, and He's there waiting for you to enter His presence because He's a loving Father.

He is best illustrated in that character in Luke 15, verses 11 to 32, where you have the story called the prodigal son. That's a bad title. It is not the story of a prodigal son. It is a story about two sons of a loving father. The story is the loving father, who could forgive a son who stayed home and was self-righteous, and could also forgive a son who left home and was unrighteous; who could forgive the one who stayed around the house and tried to do all he could to gain the favor of his father, and just as soon as he could forgive the one who was desolate and living in immorality in a pigpen. The loving father. And he forgave them both and he offered them both all that he possessed. And that's

the story that God is the Father who cares for His sons; be they religious or irreligious, be they moral or immoral, be they self-righteous or unrighteous. He cares. He cares. He's a loving Father.

And so that all prayer begins with a recognition that God cares, and this is a model for every prayer. This isn't a prayer to be recited; this is a model for every prayer. And you begin with the recognition that God not only cares, but because He's in heaven He has the resources to fulfill His care.

Paul Tournier, the great Christian doctor tells a lot of stories in his *Doctor's Case Book*. One little vignette that I thought was interesting says this. Tournier writes, "There was one patient of mine, the youngest daughter in a large family, which the father found it difficult to support. One day she heard her father mutter despairingly, referring to her, 'We could well have done without that one.'" Tournier says, "That is precisely what God can never say. He is a loving Father to every one of His children." You know God said to Moses for example, "I know thee by name. I know thee by name."

Do you know that the Bible has genealogy after genealogy after genealogy, and people always wonder why all those list of names? Why all those list of names? Names after names after names. Why does God bother with all those names? Well whatever His specific purpose in each genealogy, the overall purpose I think that comes through to me is that God wants people to know that He knows them, by name. Later on the wonderful statement is made that, "Not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father knowing it."

Dr. J.F. McFadden used to say, if you take that out of the Greek and put it in the Aramaic, it says, "Not one sparrow hops without your Father knowing it." He doesn't just know when a sparrow dies; He knows where a sparrow lands and lights when it hops. He cares about little things. He knows your name. He's a loving Father. So "Our Father," then is God's paternity.

Secondly, God's priority. And that's what we want to see this morning, God's priority. It's in the phrase in verse 9, "Hallowed be Thy name." Now that is the first petition you'll notice. That is the first request, "Hallowed be Thy name." And the first request is on God's behalf, before you ever begin to pray for you, you begin by praying on Gods behalf. "Hallowed be Thy name." That's the first petition. The second petition is, "Thy kingdom come." The third petition is, "Thy will be done." And then you can say, "Give us," "forgive us," "lead us." And then you come back full circle, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." Prayer always begins with God's priority.

Arthur Pink says, "How clearly then is the fundamental duty in prayer set forth. Self and all its needs must be given a secondary place, and the Lord freely accorded the preeminence in our thoughts and supplications. This petition must take the precedence for the glory of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things."

"Hallowed be Thy name," puts God in the prior place. Even though He is my loving Father, even though He cares to meet my needs, and even though He has heavenly resources to do that; my first petition is not on my own behalf it's on His. "Hallowed be Thy name," is a warning against self-seeking prayer, at the very start. God has the priority.

Now I suppose if you're like I am and you've been raised in a church, you've said, "Hallowed be Thy name," a lot of times in your life. You've fumbled through the Lord's Prayer again and again and you've heard the word "hallowed" and the concept of "Hallowed be Thy name," but I wonder if you

really know what it means. This is such a phenomenal phrase, "Hallowed be Thy name." Do you understand what it is? What is implied in its meaning? Is it sort of an official thing like, long live the king, "Hallowed be Thy name"? I think not. When Jesus says, "Hallowed be Thy name," here, He says something that's so full and so rich that it's inconceivable that I could ever exhaust what it means in this or any other ministry, because it encompasses all of God's nature, and all of man's response to His nature. It isn't a casual bit of religious routine. It's not just reciting some words that are nice thoughts about God. It is way more than that. It opens up a whole dimension of respect and reverence and awe and appreciation and honor and glory and adoration and worship for God. The concept of name, you see it there, "Thy name?" is not restricted to a title, not restricted to a title.

Today we think of somebody's name and that's all it is, a name. And it really doesn't mean much other than a name. We even say, what's in a name? My name is John. John means God's gracious gift. Frankly, that's debatable to a lot of people. There's really nothing in that name. There are a lot of people named John who could care less about God. We don't have that concept in our minds but we need to go back and think through the term name as a Hebrew sees it.

Now the Jews had such a sacredness attached to God's name that they had gone overboard, and they were concerned about not saying the word that was the name for God while they dishonored His person. Isn't that amazing? They were very busy dishonoring His person, disobeying His Word, destroying His truths, but they were trying to hallow His name, just the name itself, the letters that made up the name. For example, you may remember that in your Old Testament particularly you read the word Jehovah, Jehovah. There's no such word as Jehovah in Hebrew. Although it appears all throughout the Old Testament there's no such word. You say, well where did it come from?

Well the name of God in Exodus, He said, "I Am that I Am," is Yahweh, Yahweh. The other familiar name for God is *Adonai*, which means Lord, the Lord God, Yahweh, *Adonai*. Now, the Jew didn't want to say that. He wanted to be holding the name of God sacred, but he had reduced it down to just the name; not God's person and will. And so a Jew wouldn't say Yahweh. In fact, if you go into an orthodox circle today in Hebrew and were to say that word, you'd probably get stoned. That's true. They won't say that. So you know what they did? They took the consonants out of Yahweh. They took the vowels out of *Adonai*; they put them together and came up with Jehovah, which is a non-word. They made it up so they wouldn't have to say the real word that is God's name, but what superficiality! For while they were so careful not to say the name, they constantly blasphemed who He was. Now, what our Lord is teaching us here in hallowing the name is that we respect God for who He is, not just His name, as a name. It's an all encompassing concept.

Now let's look at it for a minute. In biblical times, we'll look first of all at the name, and then we'll look at what it means to hallow. In biblical times, the name was more than a title. In 1 Samuel 18, and there's so many illustrations. I'll just give you one so that you can have something to go by. In 1 Samuel 18, and verse 30 it says, "Then the princes of the Philistines went forth; came to pass - " just listen, " - after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul." Now David got a good reputation with the people. He behaved himself more wisely than Saul and his servants, "so that his name was much esteemed." Now they weren't esteeming the letters in his name. His name being esteemed meant he, himself, his name standing for who he was, his name being esteemed. We say that today, well so and so has made a name for himself. So and so has a good name. We mean there's something about his character that is worthy of our praise. The name then stood for the whole character of the person revealed. The name was the personal and incommunicable character of the individual.

I'll give you an illustration of this. If you go back to Exodus chapter 34 you'll find that it's clearly indicated to us. Now Moses is having a little discussion with God about His glory. He wants to be sure that God is with him. He wants to be confident that God is there. And so in verse 18 of 33 he says, "Show me Your glory God." Don't give me a job that I can't do without You here, and I want to know You're here by visibly seeing Your glory. The Lord says okay. Now He shows him His glory. Then you come down to 34:5, Exodus 34:5. "The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord." Now the Lord comes down and proclaims His name. Now what did He say? Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord, Lord over and over? What do you mean He proclaimed His name? Verse 6, "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed." Now here in verse 5 it says He proclaimed His name. In verse 6, it says He proclaimed this. Therefore whatever He says in verse 6 is the equivalent of His name in verse 5. He proclaims His name here. Well, look what He says, "The Lord, Lord God." Does He stop there? No, "Merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, who will by no means clear the guilty." That means He is a holy just God. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children." He's a God of judgment and so forth.

Now do you get the picture? God says, I will proclaim My name. Here's My name, "merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness, truth, keeping mercy, forgiving iniquity," et cetera, et cetera. In other words the name of God is the composite of all of His attributes, do you see? All that God is is embodied in His name. And hallowing His name is not having some kind of a fetish about speaking the word God or Lord. It is hallowing all that God is in terms of His nature, His attributes.

For example in Psalm 9:10 the Bible says, "Those who know Thy name put their trust in Thee." Did you hear that? "Those who know Thy name put their trust in Thee." Now, if we take the concept of name just to mean the word, does everybody who knows the word God trust in Him? Of course not. That's absurd. But those who know Thy name, those who perceive the fullness of who You are trust in You. Listen beloved when the blinders come off, and you see God for who He is, you will trust Him. That's the essence of what it means in Psalm 9:10. "Those who know Thy name will put their trust in thee." Those who really understand His character will trust Him.

If you were to see the Psalms, you could go through the Psalms and chart this all the way through. It's repeated again and again. For example, in Psalm 7:17, "I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High," the name being all that He is. In, further in the Psalms, just over in Psalm 102, there's a verse, verse 15. It says, "So the nations shall fear the name of the Lord." Well they don't fear the letters. They fear the embodiment of all that God is. In Psalm 113, verse 1 and following, a most helpful passage. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord." Now listen, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Verse 3, "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the nations. Who is like unto the Lord, our God."

In other words all that He is is cause for His praise. This is true in many other passages of the Old Testament. It's characteristic of Isaiah in at least three different places to praise the name of the Lord. In Psalm 20, verse 7 it says, "Some boast of chariots, and some boast of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God." But the key verse to understanding the concept of name is John 17:6, John 17:6. Jesus said, listen, "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me." Now listen, Jesus said I have manifested Your name. What did He mean? I have revealed who

You are.

John 1:14, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory – " what? " - the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In other words, He manifested God. "Philip, have you been so long with me, and do you not know if you have seen me you have seen the Father?" Jesus then is the embodiment of the name of God. He is the manifestation, the human disclosure of all that God is. That's what His name means."

So a name is not a title, a name is a total. A name is the whole person. Putting it into plain terms, we might begin to pray this prayer this way, "Our Father, who loves us and cares for us, and who has in heaven supplies to meet our every need; may Your person, Your identity, Your character, Your nature, Your attributes, Your reputation, Your very being itself be hallowed." That's what it's saying. This is not some glib phrase, "Hallowed be Thy name," thrown at God periodically in a ritual. This is a way of approaching God continuously to understand the fullness of who He is and to hallow Him for who He is.

Now the very names of God in the Bible, and there are many of them, help us to understand this. God is given so many different names. Each of His names expresses some part of His character. For example, God is in the third word in the Bible called *Elohim*, "In the beginning God." *Elohim* is the Creator God, in the word *Elohim* we see His creation. He is to be hallowed as a Creator. The song writer has put it so well, "I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise, and that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies. I sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food. He formed the creatures with His word and then pronounced them good. Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed where e'er I turn my eye; if I survey the ground I tread or gaze upon the sky. Creatures as numerous as we are subject to Thy care. There's not a place where we can flee but God is present there." Everywhere. He is seen as the Creator.

The Bible calls Him *El Elyon*. In Genesis chapter 14 verse 18 and 19 it says, "Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, *El Elyon*, possessor of heaven and earth." He is Creator God. He is possessor God. He is the sovereign ruler over all the universe. The Old Testament calls Him, *Jehovah-Jireh*, the Lord will provide, *Jehovah-Nissi*, the Lord our Banner, *Jehovah-Rapha*, the Lord that healeth, *Jehovah-Shalom*, the Lord our peace, *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, the Lord our righteousness, *Jehovah-Sabaoth*, the Lord of hosts, *Jehovah-Shammah*, the Lord is near, is present, the Lord *Jehovah-Mekoddishkem*, which means the Lord sanctifieth thee.

All these names speak of His attributes. The Bible calls Him by so many terms, showing the fullness of who He is. But the greatest name that God ever took, the greatest name by which God has ever been designated in history is the name the Lord Jesus Christ, which means the Lord, Savior, King. That's His greatest name. And as the Lord Jesus Christ He drew to Himself many other names, the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the Way, the Truth, the Life, the Resurrection, the Good Shepherd, the Branch, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lamb of God, and on and on. All of the names of God touching on various attributes of His blessed majestic person, so that when we speak of God and His name we are not talking about a title we are talking about the fullness of who He is. As you read Isaiah 9, "A child shall be born; his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Prince of Peace, The Father of Eternity," all designations of His nature.

That's why Romans 1:5 says, "We preach the gospel, that nations may believe, for the sake of his name." Third John 7 says, "We sent out preachers to preach for the sake of His name." Not just the

title but all that He is. No wonder the hymn writer wrote, "O could I speak the matchless worth. O could I sound the glories forth which in my Savior shine. I'd soar and touch the heavenly strings and vie with Gabriel while he sings in notes almost divine. I'd sing the characters He bears and all the forms of love He wears, exalted on His throne in loftiest songs of sweetest praise I would to everlasting days make all His glories known."

So we understand "Thy name," to be as full as God is in His own being, to hallow His name is to perceive Him in the fullness of who He is. But what does it mean to hallow? What does it mean to hallow? We think of the word hallow, what do we think of? Halloween? Somehow it got contracted into that. What do we think of? We think of some cloistered halls, ivy covered walls, long robes, dismal chants, halos, musty dim churches, mournful morbid music, and other tired traditions. Hallowed is an archaic word, I grant you. Translators of the various versions of the Bible have kept it because of its familiarity, but I wonder if we know what it even means, hallowed.

Let me tell you what it means. It comes from a Greek verb *hagiazō*. That word is a very important word in the Bible and it's used repeatedly. The noun form of the word is *hagios* which means holy. Holy be Your name. That's what hallowed means. Now, basically it has two meanings that are possible. It is never used in as far as I know in secular Greek, but has many uses in Biblical Greek so we can fill in its meaning very easily. It has two basic ideas, one, *hagiōsunē* or *hagios* can mean to make an ordinary thing extraordinary; to make a common thing uncommon by bringing it into contact with something extraordinary and uncommon.

Now, that is its use in 1 Peter 1:16 where Peter says to you and to me, "Be ye holy." What does that mean? It means that we're unholy to start with, but by coming in contact with One who is holy we can be made holy. So *hagios* then is to make something unholy holy by contact with that which is holy. That's its first meaning. Is that its meaning in this passage? Are we making God holy when in our prayers? Are we saying, now God I know You're unholy, I know You're common, ordinary, but by this prayer I want You to be made holy? No. That is not its use here.

There's a second way it's used in the Bible, many times this way in fact more times. And that is, it is used in this reference to treat something or someone as sacred, to hold something or someone as set apart and holy, to regard someone as separated. In other words, in the case of men, it is to make something holy. In the case of God, it is to regard Him as holy. When you say, "Holy be Your name," you are not saying the same thing as when I say to you, "Be ye holy," right? I'm saying to you get your life in line with God, and may His righteousness become yours. But when I say to God, "Holy be Your name," I am saying may Your name be regarded and made manifest as holy, and that is the way it's used here. We don't make God holy. We simply petition that He be revered and regarded as holy.

Now the basic idea of *hagiazō* or *hagios* is very simple. What does it mean to be holy you're saying? We say hallowed be Thy name. We say, holy be Thy name. What's the difference? Well the idea of holy is different. It's different. It means to be different. Now, not everybody who's different is holy, but everybody who's holy is different. You understand that? All right. A lot of different people aren't holy, but holy people are different.

The basic idea is different. It means a different sphere, a different quality of being. That is why God is called the Holy One. He is in a different sphere. He has a different quality of being than our life. It's used, for example, in Exodus 20, verse 8 where it says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

What does that mean? The Sabbath day ought to be different than every other day. There ought to be one day different than the others. In Leviticus 21:8, it tells us that the priests were to be holy. They were to be different than other men. They were set apart to serve God. Holy means to be set apart, to be different, to have another sphere of living, to exist in another quality of being. That's basically what it means to be holy. God lives in another sphere. God exists at a different level. God is separated from us. God is uncommon, extraordinary, unearthly, separated from sinners, holy, undefiled, the Bible says. He is holy, apart from us.

Now, out of this comes the idea of reverence. When we pray this first petition is saying, we are to speak to God in terms of reverence. May Your person be revered is what we're saying. Let me give you an illustration. Go back in your Bible to Numbers, the fourth Book in the Bible, Numbers chapter 20. And this is a very, very helpful illustration so that you can see this. In Numbers 20, we find that the children of Israel are in the wilderness, and they're getting very thirsty and there isn't any water. Verse 2, "There was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together unto Moses and against Aaron." Notice that they immediately were against their leaders. They blamed them for their lack of water. "And the people strove with Moses, and spoke, saying, 'Would God we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!'" Who wants to die of thirst now? "Why have you brought us into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die here? And wherefore have you made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us unto this evil place?" Is this the plan? "It's no place of seed or figs or vines or pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink. And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell on their faces; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take your rod, and gather you the assembly together, thou, and thy brother, Aaron, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth its water. And thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock. So thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.'"

Now God said, Moses, you just get that rock, get over beside that rock and speak, and I'll bring water. Well, verse 9, "Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock. And he said unto them, 'Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?' And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice." What did God tell him to do? Speak. What's he doing here? He's hitting the rock twice. And by the way, God didn't make the whole congregation pay for Moses sin, so "water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and the beasts also. And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron." Listen to this. "Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me - " that's the same word in the Septuagint, *hagiázō*, to see Me as one to be revered, to be revered, to be honored, to be glorified, to be set apart, to be obeyed, because you didn't do that, " - in the eyes of the children of Israel, you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And you know he never entered the Promised Land because he hit that rock.

Listen, Moses was saying, well I don't know. The last time this deal was done, I hit the rock. I don't know whether God can do it if I don't hit it. And Moses was also wanting to affirm in the minds of the people that he was the hero. And so just to speak to the rock would so much glorify God, Moses figured he'd hit it a few times so they'd associate the power with his rod and his right arm. He was stealing the glory from God. He was disobeying God's command. He was not reverencing God. He did not, it says in 12, sanctify God. He didn't hallow God. He didn't reverence God. He didn't pay God His due honor by his unbelief, his disobedience, and his irreverence. To hallow God's name, what does it mean? To hold His matchless being in reverence so that you will believe what He says, so that you will obey what He says.

Chrysostom said that the word to hallow is equivalent to *doxazein*, which means to glorify and to honor. Origen said it is equivalent to *hupsoō*, which means to exalt or lift on high. Others said it is equivalent to *eulogein*, which means to bless or to praise. In other words it is to exalt God. John Calvin put it this way, "That God's name should be hallowed is to say that God should have His own honor of which He is so worthy, so that men should never think or speak of Him without the greatest veneration."

Now, do you get the picture? Hallowing God's name, seeing His name as all that He is, and being reverent in His presence. Now, this I think, comes after "Our Father," because it's a protection against something. Too much "Our Father," too much *Abba*, too much Daddy turns into sentimentalism. And we drag God down, and we make God into a nice kind of a, a buddy-buddy, and we've done that in American Christianity to the point where it's a real problem. People talk to God in such low level concepts and terms that they don't really do justice to His hallowed name. We've got the Daddy part down pretty much. We think God is the big Daddy that we ought to approach, and He's going to give us everything.

Listen, the Jews were very aware of this and so was our Lord, that's why after "Our Father," *Abba*, He says, hallowed, holy, revered is Your name. Jews were conscious of this when a Jew called God Father, he almost always immediately added another title after that to balance off his thinking. I read through some of the Jewish prayers this week and over and over again I found this, "O Lord, Father and Ruler of my life. O Lord, Father and God of my life. O Father, King of great power, Most High and Almighty God." In the *Shemoneh Esrai* which is the eighteen prayers a Jew had to pray everyday, this is the way they began every one of those prayers, "O Father, O King, O Lord." In the ten penitential days at the time of the Day of Atonement the Jews prayed a thing called the *Abinu Malkenu* and when they prayed through this 44 times they said this, "Our Father, Our King, Our Father, Our King, Our Father, Our King," because they never wanted the concept of God as limited as theirs was of God as a Father to cause them to be sentimental about God who was also a majestic sovereign King. And so they guarded carefully the issue of sentimentalizing God.

In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart." He uses the same word *hagiazō*, reverence God. Treat God as holy, treat God as separated, extraordinary, uncommon, worthy to be adored and praised and glorified. What is it to hallow? It is to set apart from everything common and profane; to esteem, to prize, to honor, to reverence, to adore as divinely and infinitely blessed the true and only God. And you cannot speak of God in earthy terms. You cannot drag God down to the street talk. God must have titles that are fitting for His power and His holiness. How easy it is in our lifetime to go through it saying, "Hallowed be Thy name, Hallowed be Thy name," and have no idea what we're even saying.

The truth of such a petition is that God is to have the rightful priority place. My heart longingly seeks to have Him glorified, honored in every situation, every circumstance and every relationship. Jesus said, "Father, honor your name in me." In John 12, that was His goal.

Now, that's what it means to hallow His name. But how do you do that? How do you do that? The most important part of what we want to say comes now, so listen. This is the practical. How do we hallow His name? What is this prayer really saying? What are we really asking when we say, "Hallowed be Thy name,"? How can I know that prayer is answered? How can God's name really be hallowed? Because it's a petition that I'm asking for Him. "God let Your name be hallowed," and the

implication is through me. "Let Your name be hallowed in my life. Let Your name be made holy in my life, in my presence." How?

Are we just saying don't use His name in vain? Not just that – that, but not just that. Are we saying be sure you say in your liturgy, your prayer and your acts of worship "Hallowed be Thy name,"? No. Although it's not wrong to say that. That's not the issue. How do you really reverence God? How can God be hallowed in my life? I'm going to give you four points, and I want you to follow the progression.

Number one, we hallow His name when we believe He exists. We hallow His name when we believe He exists. Hebrews 11:6 says, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is." You can never honor God; you can never exalt God unless you believe God exists. That's where it all begins. And by the way the Scripture never tries to prove that. Do you know why? Because God is self-evident. He is self-evident. God is axiomatic. An axiom is something that doesn't need to be proven. An axiom is what stands against which other things are proven. God is an axiom in the Bible. God is never proven. Every-thing else is proven as it relates to God. God is the axiom. God is self-evident. The Bible writers never seek to prove it they just believe it, and you'll never hallow God until you believe that He is.

Sir James Jeans, the astronomer, said, "No astronomer could ever be an atheist." Kant, the philosopher who had a lot of strange views, at least had this right. "The law within us and the starry heavens above us drive us to God," he said. God is self-evident in man and around man, and we begin to hallow God when we believe that He exists. But it doesn't stop there. You can believe that God exists and still not hallow His name.

There's a second thing. You must hallow His name by not only knowing that He is, but by knowing the kind of God that He is. Did you get that? Oh, there are many people who say, "I believe in God," but they don't hallow His name because it's not the God He really is. True doctrine about God and true teaching from God are reverence for God. False doctrine about God and false teaching about God are irreverence. We think that you take the Lord's name in vain when you say "Jesus Christ" or "God" or something like that. You know you take the Lord's name in vain every time you think a thought about God that is not true of Him. Did you get that? When you doubt God, when you disbelieve God, when you question God, and why He did something you are taking His name in vain, because that is not true of His character, of His name. So that you can hallow God's name when you believe that He is only if you believe that He is who He really is. Illicit wrong thoughts about God do not hallow His name.

Origen, the early church father said, "The man who brings into his concept of God ideas that have no place there takes the name of the Lord God in vain." Now I imagine in the Greek period of time they had all these gods that were just really far off field from the true God. They had invented gods and, of course, their gods had battles and their gods fought wars and they had quarrels and they had lovers coming on and off all the time. They had hatred. They seduced each other. They committed adulteries and immoralities and perversions and atrocities. All of the gods that they capriciously created had these problems because anytime men invent gods, their gods turn out like them, see? And so to say to a Greek, you have to hallow your gods, you have to exalt your gods, you have to reverence your gods would be ridiculous. Their gods were as vile as they were, but not the true God.

Some have tried to do the same thing with the true God. Some taking their cues from pagan sources

have tried to say that God is cruel, that when God drown Pharaoh's army, He was a savage God, that when God did what He did to the Canaanites, He was a savage God, that when God punished certain nations, He was very cruel, vindictive and harsh. Why even Job fell into that sin in the 30th chapter of Job and the 21st verse when he was trying to figure out his dilemma. He said these words, "Thou art cruel to me," to God.

God is accused of being unloving. God is accused of indiscriminately banishing people to an eternal hell. God is seen as a national ally of Israel who goes around slaughtering other people whimsically. Listen, when you think wrong thoughts like that about God, when you don't understand who God really is, you have not hallowed His name. In fact, John Wesley listened to a lot of these critics one day and finally said, "Your god is my devil. I think you've got them reversed." To allow into your conception of God things that are wrong and unworthy of God is to irreverence His holy name. And you know Christians you can do this not only by thinking wrong thoughts about God, but by being ignorant of the right thoughts. Because if you're ignorant of what God is like, then you're going to doubt Him when He does things. You're going to question Him when He does things. You're not going to trust Him. You're going to be disobedient, and you're going to cause others to be repelled from God, and in all of that you are irreverencing God.

In order to hallow His name you must believe that God is. You must be aware that He is who He is, but you want to know something? Even if you believe that God is, and even if you believe that He is who He is, you might still not reverence God. Because there are a lot of people who believe, and a lot of people have a right theology, but they don't hallow God.

There's a third point. We hallow His name, listen, when we are constantly aware of His presence. Knowing that He is, and knowing who He is, and bringing that into consciousness so that we, living everyday of our lives, give place to God is hallowing His name. In Psalm 16:8, David said it, "I have set the Lord always before me." I see everything through God. God is my vision. That's the key.

What about you? To reverence God is to live in His consciousness. For most of us, our thoughts of God are spasmodic. Would you agree to that? Sometimes very intense; sometimes totally absent. Some days, sometimes like now we think about God a lot, and you'll go out of the service and think about God for awhile. And then you'll go through a long period of time, maybe a whole week and think very little about God. Spasmodic. But to really hallow His name is to draw conscious thoughts of God into every daily thought into every daily word, into every daily action. Do you see God everywhere? Do you hallow His name in your living? Is He made manifest constantly, everything you do, everything you say, everywhere you go, do you see God manifest?

One of the modern devotional poets is Henry Ernest Hardy and he wrote this called *The Mystic Beauty*. He touches on the idea. "O London town has many moods, and mingled 'mongst its many broods a leavening of saints. And ever up and down its streets, if one has eyes to see one meets stuff that an artist paints. I've seen a back street bathed in blue such as the soul of Whistler knew; A smudge of amber light where some fried-fish shop plied its trade, a perfect note of color made. Oh, it was exquisite. I once came through Saint James' Park betwixed the sunset and the dark, and oh the mystery of gray and green and violet! I would I never might forget that evening harmony. I hold it true that God is there if beauty breaks through anywhere, and His most blessed feet who once life's roughest roadway trod, who came as man to show us God still pass along the street."

Saint James Park, a fish shop, a back street, an amber light, he sees God. God consciousness, not

spasmodic but constant. No, to hallow God means that we must believe that He is, that we must believe that He is who He is, and that we must be constantly aware of His presence. But, you know something? You could do all three of those things and still not reverence God if you didn't do a fourth.

Here it comes. You ready? The finale. We hallow God's name when we live a life of obedience to Him. That's the final key. You cannot come to the fullness of hallowing His name unless you obey Him. To say, "Oh yes I believe that You are. I believe that You are who the Bible says You are. Oh yes, God, I'm aware of Your presence in my life," and then to disobey cuts off the capability of a person to reverence His name. You see the prayer is not just that God's name be hallowed in heaven. It's not just that God's name be hallowed around the world. It's that God's name be hallowed in me. This is this folks. Get it. This is the prayer that says, "God may I be a vehicle for Your holiness?" That's where prayer begins. Before you start asking for what you should get you need to ask for what you should be. Do you see?

Luther's catechism, the question was asked, how is God's name hallowed among us? The answer: when both our doctrine and our life are truly Christian. When you have the right thoughts of God, and you do the right deeds from God you are hallowing His name. The first part of this prayer is, "God, teach me the truth, and help me live it." "Hallowed be Thy name," means in me God. Manifest Your holiness by my right knowledge of who You are, and my right living in response to it. That's why 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." That's the way we're to live.

Matthew 5:16. I already said it, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven." "Hallowed by Thy name," means God be on display through me. Let the light shine through me so that they may glorify You. How do you do that? How do you obey in that way? How do you really let God be made manifest? By living in obedience to His Word. The Bible says we glorify God by confessing Him as Lord. We glorify God by confessing sin, we glorify God by faith. We glorify God by bearing fruit. We glorify God by praise. We glorify God by contentment. We glorify Him by proclamation of His truth. We glorify God by evangelism. We glorify God by sexual physical purity, 1 Corinthians 6. We glorify God by unity. And it goes on and on, all the ways that we can demonstrate the majesty and the glory of God so that others in seeing us will make the right judgment about who God is, and be drawn to Him.

Gregory of Nyssa wrote this, "A man who leads such a life will oppose fortitude to the assaults of the passions. Since he partakes of the requirements of life only as far as is necessary he is in no way softened by the luxuries of the body, and is an utter stranger to revelry and laziness as well as to boastful conceit. He touches the earth but lightly with the tip of his toes, for he is not engulfed by the pleasurable enjoyments in its life, but is above all deceit that comes by the senses. And so even although in the flesh he strives after the immaterial life, he counts the possession of virtues the only riches. Familiarity with God the only nobility. His only privilege and power is the mastery of self, so as not to be a slave to human passions. He is saddened if his life in this material world is prolonged. Like those who are seasick, he hastens to reach the port."

And then Gregory of Nyssa prayed this, "May I become through Thy help blameless, just and holy. May I abstain from every evil; speak the truth and do justly. May I walk in the straight paths shining with temperance, adorned with incorruption, beautiful through wisdom and prudence. May I meditate upon the things that are above and despise what is earthly, for a man can glorify God in no other way

save by his virtue, which bears witness that the divine power is the cause of his goodness.”

“Hallowed be Thy name.” Is His name hallowed in you? That’s the beginning of your petitions when you pray. Let’s bow together.

I’m reminded, our Father, of the Psalmists words, “Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.” May this congregation, oh Lord, hallow Thy name. May they so live that others may see their good works and glorify their Father, who is in heaven. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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