Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Plan of Prayer, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 6:10
Code: 2238

The Plan of Prayer, Pt. 2
Thy Will be Done....

I'd like to invite you as I have for the last six weeks to turn with m to Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 to 13 as we consider the next in our series in the Disciple's Prayer, better known to most of you as the Lord's Prayer. In our study through the Book of Matthew we have come to this particular portion going along verse by verse, paragraph by paragraph, which of course is a very familiar passage, one that anyone who is at all familiar with the church or been raised in the church or attended has come to know because it is recited so very frequently. And yet as I have begun to study it, having known it so well from my childhood I have discovered insights and truths and thoughts that I never perceived to be here or anywhere else in the Bible for that matter. It has opened up many, many new dimensions for my own understanding, I only wish I could I share with you a tenth of what I'm discovering but time does never permit me to do that so I file it away for some future place where I can inject it in another passage at another time. But I have been so enriched in this study. Let me read to you again verses 9 to 13so that you'll have the prayer in mind. "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."

For six weeks we have been learning how to pray. This prayer is recorded in the Gospel of Luke in answer to the question of the disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray." I believe it is the standard for prayer, I believe it is the pattern; it is the framework that gives us insight into how we are to pray. When God told Moses to build a tabernacle, God in Exodus 35 gave him a pattern and I believe when Jesus tells us to pray here He gives us the pattern. You don't build a house without a plan, you don't put together a design without a blueprint, and I believe this is the blueprint for prayer, this is the pattern, this is the skeleton; this is the structure. I really don't believe that we are tied to the words so much, I don't think the idea is just to recite the words although the words are true and lovely and good, but I think the idea is that this is the structure on which we build our prayer life. Keep in mind that the main thrust that we've been seeing in this prayer is that it focuses on God and not us. Jesus in Matthew 5:6 and 7 is confronting the false religious system of the Pharisees and the scribes.Their praying among other things was inadequate.

And so in chapter 6 beginning at verse 5 He begins to attack their prayer, and He attacks it basically overall on the fact that it is self-centered. They prayed parading before men that men might see how pious they were. They wanted nothing to do with private prayer; they wanted only to be involved in public prayer which put them on display. They made as the very heart of their prayer their own will and their own selfish desires, and thus they engaged in vain repetition, the constant badgering of God that was characteristic of the pagans who were trying to appease or to force their god into response just because of their constant harangue. Their prayers were characterized by a sort of an egoism that says God You'd better listen because I have some interesting information that You could use. As if God was not already omniscient, and so their prayers were self-centered like James says, "They ask to consume it on their own lusts." And so Jesus turns that all around and He says, when you pray yourprayers should be God-centered. And we have learned that the proper way to pray is to begin with a concentration on God, the introduction, "Our Father, who art in heaven," postulates God, it affirms God not only that God is but that God is loving, that God is a Father, and that God as loving Father will have loving desires for His children which He can meet because He is a Father in heaven which means the eternal resources are at His disposal for the granting in behalf of His children. And so we are then coming to a holy God, to an Almighty God, to a righteous God, to a sovereign God, to the great God of the universe and yet He is a loving Father. And so we come not in fear but in joy, we come not wondering whether He can provide what we need but knowing because He's in heaven He has the resources of eter-nity at His disposal. And then as we have introduced ourselves into His presence we begin to be concerned about Him, and so the first three petitions are "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come." And "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Forcing us to see that before we ever get to "Give us, forgive us, and lead us," we must deal with God. Prayer begins with Him, with His holy name, with His kingdom and with His will.

We've seen even as we follow through all of the elements of the prayer that they focus on God. Even the petitions that relate to us, "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, and lead us not into temptation," really depend on God, don't they? It is He who must give, it is He who must forgive, and it is He alone who can lead us, in the proper place. The whole prayer focuses on Him. We saw for example, "Our Father, who art in heaven," that's God's paternity, "Hallowed be thy name." That's God's priority. "Thy kingdom come." God's program. "Thy will be done," God's plan. "Give us this day our daily bread." God's provision. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." God's pardon. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." God's protection. And finally God's pre-eminence, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." So that prayer then is primarily an act of worship, it is an engagement in the process of sanctification. Prayer is not to change God, prayer is to change us. That is so important, so very important.

Now for our study this morning we come again to the petition, "Thy will be 'done in earth, as it is in heaven." This is the fourth state of the third petition, the first petition, "Hallowed be thy name." And the second petition, "Thy kingdom come." And the third, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

This is essential beloved; that in our prayers the bottom line is God's will be done. We never desire to usurp His will; we never desire to change His will, to force His will, to be conformed to some thought of ours.

Amy Carmichael said, "And, shall I pray to change Thy will my Father, until it be according to mine? But no Lord, no. That shall never be, rather I pray Thee blend my human will with Thine." She was right. Prayer is not to bend God to my will but to bend my will to God. And so "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." His will is already done in heaven, isn't it? The angels do His will. In fact this week I had the interesting thought, I think I'll look at my Bible and see how the angels do God's will. "Because if we're going to know how it's to be done on earth we need to know how it's done in heaven. Now without going into all of the verses because that would be a, a series In itself, I came up with about eight words that I see as the way the angels do the will of God.

First of all without wavering or unwaveringly, there's never a discussion. It's not the way it is on earth neces-sarily the Lord prods and pokes and maybe we get moving sooner or later but in heaven it's an unwavering commitment to do His will. Another word that characterized the angels doing God's will is com-pletely, completely, there are no other alternatives, there are no gaps, there are no omissions. Another word that I found was sin-cerely, they are eager, they seem to be standing waiting for the next command so that they can hurry to accomplish whatever it is. And I guess that brought me to the word willingly. You know how many will's there are in heaven? One. "Thy will be done in earth, as it is (where?) in heaven." There's only one, there were two once, but that second one got kicked out. There's only one, and so that the angels do it willingly, because it's the only will there is. I believe another word that characterized the way the angels function is fervently. They are very aggressive in doing God's will. And then the word readily, and then the wordswiftly, and then the word constantly. And I guess it could all be summed up in Psalm 103 verse 20 which says, "Ye his angels, that do his commandments." "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," means that in earth it should be done without wavering, completely, sincerely, willingly, fervently, readily, swiftly, and constantly. That's the way the angels do it in heaven.

Now, you say, that's well and good I'm committed to that. But what does that mean? What does it really mean? Well it means as we saw last time that the bottom line in your heart is that God's causes are the thing that concern you. Let me give you a little statement you might kind of underline in your thinking, I think it's a key statement. The death of self is the beginning of a true prayer life, the death of self is the beginning of a true prayer life. Only when self dies does true prayer begin, because when self is alive self will dominate and that is not prayer. True prayer is dominated by His name, His kingdom, and His will, not ours. And thus did David say, "I delight to do thy will, 0 my God." And thus did Jesus say, "My food is to do the will of him that sent me." His name, His kingdom, His will, to be done in earth as in heaven. His name is hallowed in heaven. His kingdom is come in heaven, He rules supreme. But not on the earth. And His will is done in heaven, and so should it be done here.

Last week we looked at the negative aspect of this, to say in your prayer

"Thy will be done," has a negative connotation and I pointed out three things that it does not mean, number one, it doesn't mean bitter resentment, it doesn't mean that you just say, oh Your will be done I can't fight it, You're too big. I give up, as if God was sort of a cosmic killjoy, goes around saying, there's one having fun, get 'em. That God is committed to raining on everybody's parade. Bitter resentment that the inevitable, fate, is going to take over anyway.

Secondly to say "Thy will be done," does not mean passive resignation, that's the sort of indifference that says, well whatever will be will be, there used to be a song called Que Sera Sera, whatever will be will be, that's the way it is, you can't fight it. Passive resignation. I think bitter resentment is based on a lack of knowledge; I think passive resignation is built on a lack of faith. You don't really believe God, can change things or will do what you ask Him if according to His will.

Thirdly, the negative that sometimes creeps into that is what I call theological reservation, some people just say, "Thy will be done," and they file it in their theological box. Listen, if your theology has caused the elimination of your persistence in prayer you've got a bad theology. I had a fella say to me one time, well I really believe that even your sin is God's will, God is actually involved in causing you to sin, after all He's sovereign. He had such a dominant view of the sovereignty of God that he had, God responsible for everything, in a direct sense. Theological reservation has sucked the life out of a lot of prayer. If you've come to the place: where your theology and your perspective on God has brought you to a point of indifference in prayer then your theology isn't biblical.

Now granted, God is sovereign and how your prayer life fits in o that is a very difficult mystery that I can't explain, but the issue is obedience, and that's got to be part of your theology too, and persistence as our dear Lord prayed three times in the garden persistently calling out to God. And as He gave illustration of those who came and prayed with persistence, so are we to-pray that way. So negatively we don't say "Thy will be done," with bitter resentment, we don't say it with passive resignation, and we don't say it with some kind of theological reservation that just sort of categorizes everything in that area. In fact I think we closed last time by saying, when we say "Thy will be done," that that kind of a prayer has at its very heart really an attitude of rebellion, doesn't it? When we say, "Thy will be done," we're not just falling over dead. Like Jesus said in Luke 18:1, "We ought to pray at all times, and not faint." We're not just fainting under that, we are resisting some things, we are rebelling against the world in it's falleness. We are saying, Your will is not being done in this world, Satan has too much power here, Your will is not being done in the hearts of men they are turning their back on You, Your will is not being done in my life and the life of other believers who are living in disobedience. And we are rebelling against the world in its falleness, we are rebelling against the rejection of Christ, we are rebelling against the disobedience of believers.

David Wells said, and I think it's well spoken, "To come to an acceptance of life as it is, to accept it on its own terms which means acknowledging the inevitability of the way it works is to surrender a Christian view of God." God doesn't accept it the way it is or He wouldn't be busy changing it. He wouldn't say that He came into the world to destroy him that had the powerof death if He wanted to tolerate death. He wouldn't make a millennium in which there was the absence of disease if He wanted to tolerate disease. He wouldn't wipe out every tear in eternity if He wanted to tolerate sorrow. No, we will not accept things the way they are. When we say, "Thy will be done," we rebel against the world in all its falleness and the sorrow and the sin and the disease and all the things that come as a result of sin.

Now I told you last week, that these are not the specific will of God though He has permitted them to happen in order that sin might run its course in those who desire to see it fulfilled. But that's not the expression of His loving will for man, "Thy will be done," does not accept what is. And I think the classic illustration of this is Jesus, Jesus didn't come into the world and say, when He went into the temple in John 2, Zechariah said He'd come suddenly to His temple, and when He came to the temple at the beginning of His ministry He didn't go in and say, well, look what's going on, well, it's the will of God, it's the will of God and walk away. He rebelled, everything inside of Him rebelled. He was indignant, He was furious, He was angry with righteous wrath, He made a whip, He started flipping over tables, He started chasing people out, He started lashing at people. He not only did it once in His life but He did it twice. They got out of there fast. They were in there to make money and if they left it without any, imagine the fury that Jesus unleashed. Why? Because He wouldn't accept the status quo, because He wouldn't tolerate the way it is. He wouldn't tolerate the way it is in sorrow and sin and sickness either, that's why He died, that's why He healed people, that's why He raised the dead to stop the tears, and to bring Himself glory. He didn't accept the world the way it was, and neither should you and neither should I. Our prayers should be "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." Now Jesus was no fatalist even though He knew the end from the beginning, that amazes me, it amazes me, and that's something of the tension that I hold in my own mind that Jesus knew the end from the beginning and yet never accepted the status quo, when it was the manifestation of sin, He fought it, He never resigned to it, He sought God's will. You know I, I have to believe that when He went and communed with the Father night after night in the garden He really believed it would do some good. He really believed there was some benefit.

I think we get so comfort-able in our society, because the status quo as it is is pretty comfortable for us, right? Now it's getting less comfortable in America and it may get less and less comfortable, but for a long time we have been so comfortable and I think in many cases that has really had a tremendous, dramatic effect on the churches prayer life. About 25 Korean pastors walked in the lobby of the office building the other day, and I was coming back from teaching a preaching class at the seminary, and I walked in and here were these 25 or so Korean pastors all sitting there, and the man walked up to me, Mr. Koe and he says, ah, we want to speak with you. And I was kind of surprised,

they want me to come to Korea you know, to do a Pastor's Conference over there, but they said; we want to ask you questions. And I said, okay, go ahead, and so he stood by me and they said to me uhm, how you make church big? And you know, I said, I don't make church big, uhm, and I explained to them that we believe in just teaching the Word of God and not promoting things and we let God grow His own church, and I told them a reporter said to me one time, Don't you have a great desire to build the church? And I said, no I don't because Christ said He'd build the church and I'd rather not compete with Him, an so we're part of what He's doing, see. So, and they went all, o yeah, oh amen, amen, you know, and they liked that, see? So the they said to me, how long, how many hour you study? And I said, well I study and I gave them this hours everyday four, five, six hours a day I study the Word of God. And then one mentioned to me, ahh, your people study? I said, well I hope they study. Then one man said to me, ah, how many hour you pray everyday? He got me, see? Your people, they pray many hour? And I said, we have a sickness in America, it's called comfort. You know the people in Korea have gone through a lot with the encroachment of communism, with the terrible disasters that came when other nations came in and killed them and slaughtered Christians. I told you the story of one man who told me that the Japanese came and cut off the thumbs of his father who was a leader in the church. But you see they've been put in a place where they were forced to pray. And you know I, I kind of feel we've gotten so far away from that in our own culture that sometimes I pray for things that'll come upon us to drive us to that place because ... not because I, I, I feel God needs us to pray but because I feel we need to be more dependent on Him.

You know I was thinking about this, I may have mentioned it to you last week but I was thinking, why do we pray so little for the church? You know Grace Church has problems, we've been through a lot of things lately too, a lot of heartache, and we have problems. And uhm, it seems to me that we don't really pray as we should for the church. And somebody might say, well what we need is ... and I ... people have said this, we need a prayer seminar, and I say, it isn't bad technique, it isn't technique. We say well, we need to teach them what the Bible says, and I don't even think it's that. I think we know what the Bible says. Well, people have weak wills**.** No, because they really get turned on about some things. Well, it's a lack of con-cern; well I don't even think that, you know what I think the bottom line is? I think we don't pray enough because we don't really be-lieve it matters. I don't think we think it'll make a difference anyway. And the point is it's because we perceive it as making a difference in our circumstances rather than making a difference in us, see? Prayer is not to change my circumstances nearly so much as it is to change how I relate to them. And in my prayers I draw nigh to God and in worship to Him as I say, "Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done," I am drawn into conformity to His blessed person and then no matter what my circumstances are they be-come different because I bring different attitudes to them. And I do believe that even beyond that God does change circumstances, I've prayed for people and they've been saved, have you had that experience? God not only chooses those to be saved but He chooses the methods that He uses, and sometime we're part of that method. James 5:16 says that, "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Listen, impotence, impotence in prayer leads us however unwillingly to strike a truce with what is wrong. We have lost our anger, we have lost our passion; we've lost our

indignation. We don't storm the throne of God as Beaderwolf used to say, God loves to have a hero come with a heroic faith. We don't storm the gates. And so we saw last time that prayer must be rebellion.

Now, when we say, "Thy will be done," in a positive sense, what do we mean? We talked about the negative last time, what about the positive? What are we really saying? When we say, "Thy will be done."? Let me share with you that there are three distinguishing terms of God's will that I think will help you to understand this. When you say, "Thy will be done," what are you saying?

Number one, is what I call God's will of purpose, God's will of purpose. And by the way these are my terms, and I just tried to find some handles that you could get a hold of to see some distinctions. Because when we say, God's will, it's such a big blanket and then people say, well His permissive will and ah, His directive will and this and this and this. Let's see if we can get some terms to get a handle on what we mean. Number one is God's will of purpose, I like to use biblical words, God's will of purpose.

Now by this mean the vastness of God's all inclusive, comprehensive, tolerating will. This is the consummationof everything, this is the will that absolutely embodies all of the earth, all of heaven, all of hell, and in all of this His will is being done. In other words in this massive concept of His will of purpose is encompassed the allowing of sin and sin running its course, the consummation of the ages, the establishing of the kingdom, the eternal state, and everything encompassed from heaven to hell and everything in-between, this massive comprehension of God's will of purpose.

For example Jeremiah 51:29 says, "For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed." There's no question that this is being done, there's no question that the plan of the ages is on its track, there's no question that God is working out His ultimate purposes. For example in Isaiah chapter 14 there are some verses that are just very, very essential verses in understanding the concept of God's will. In Isaiah 14 verse 24 it says, "The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely (here it comes, now watch this, it's loaded with rich theological meaning, surely) as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." When God thinks a thought, something is going to happen, when God purposes it'll come to pass. Verse 26, "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall annul it?" In other words God has these massive purposes that are coming to pass, that do happen.

For example, it is not God's directive will for people to be ill but it is within His purpose to allow that illness to accomplish His own ends, it is not God's directive will that death enter the human stream and people die but it is within His comprehensive purpose that He use death for His own end and His own glory. This is the broadest term, God's will of purpose. We know that "All things work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his (what?) purpose." In other words though

God doesn't will evil, God takes the things that happen in our lives, puts them together for good because that's His purpose. It's the all encompassing concept. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 9, I want you to think with me now because this is going to help you to have some categories. In Ephesians 1:9, "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good purpose which he purposeth in himself." In other words here he's talking about salvation, the incredible forgiveness, redemption which is in part of God's great encompassing purpose, then be goes on to talk about the Jew and the Gentile being one, "The dispensation of the fullness of time, gathering in all together in one in Christ, in heaven, and earth. Which is according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will." God's great purpose for a redeemed people, for a unified church, for a body of saints for eternity, that's His purpose. And so it refers to the eternal plan. Keep that in mind, God's will of purpose.

Now you say, John, do we pray in regard to this "Thy will be done."? Yes, yes. How? Let me give you an illustration, in Revelation 22 verse 7 Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly." Verse 12 Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly." Verse 20 Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly." Now that's His purpose, that's the consummation of His Eternal plan. You know what John's response is in the final verse? "Even so, (what?) come, Lord Jesus." How do we pray in accord with His will of purpose? By joyously getting involved in the anticipation of the accomplishment of His own divine ends, see? That's a great way to pray. Oh Lord, I know someday You're going to call out Your church and You're going to bring back Jesus Christ to take us to be with Him, may it be Lord, may it be. It's going to happen, it's inevitable, He thought it, He purposed it, it's in the plan, it'll happen. And yet we pray about it in the sense that we join in a joyous anticipation of that great hour. Do you ever get tired of living in the flesh? Do you ever get tired of the physical body? Do you ever get tired of the anxiety of this world? Don't you ever long in your heart for the day when you know the freedom of the sons of God, when you're like Christ and you can dwell in eternal glory with Him free from all the things that this earth brings upon us? I do. And so sometimes my prayer will say, Lord, I know You're going to do it and I just want to let You know You get my vote, go ahead, do it. The sooner the better. That's praying according to the will of purpose.

Secondly, God has a will which I'll call the will of desire, His will of desire. Now rather than a, an all encompassing plan we're narrowing down to a heart's desire, a heart's desire. You're like that, you have an overall plan you know you, you work out a plan for your life and a career and you plot it all and you chart it all and you have a wa ... and then it narrows down to those personal desires that you have within that. And not everything that happens in your life is a personal desire, but somehow you try to fit it into the plan, so you stay on track. And so it is with God, He has a will of desire, and you know something? This is not always done, at this point God is in some sense unfulfilled and I hate to use that term because it's a ... it's such a human term and it isn't really true of God but we're tying to use an anthropomorphic statement to give you an understanding. In other words there are things that God wills that just don't seem to happen, they're His desires but men reject them.

For example, Jesus desired that Jerusalem be saved, in Matthew and in Luke 13:34 He said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I want to gather you, but you won't!" And in John 5:40 He said, "You will not come to me, that you might have life." And Jesus wept. He wept. And back in Jeremiah chapter 13 you know ah, God says, I'm going to judge you and when I have to judge you, "Mine eye will run down with tears." You see God desires ... according to Peter it says, "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." "God, our Savior, Who will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." I believe it is the heart's desire of God, and yet there are going to many there who say, "Lord, Lord, and he says, depart from me, I never knew you." I believe He desires all to be saved but I don't believe all will be. And that's the mystery folks of how you have an absolutely sovereign God and yet you have volition. I don't understand how that comes together. I believe that God's desire is that people be saved, I believe Jesus even wept over people that He knew would never be redeemed, else why would He weep? And His tears show His desire. And so He has a will of desire.

There's a third will, I call it the will of command, the will of command. And I believe this is related to Christians. I believe the will of purpose is related to the whole universe and takes in everything, and that's where you have the trials and the suffering and the sorrows and the sicknesses all blended together and brought out to, to good ends for God's eternal purpose, and in that big will. But that encompasses the universe. Then I have the concept of His will of desire and I'd like to confine that to the unbelievers, I think that the will of desire is that longing in the heart of God that the Gospel be taken to the world, it's the will of desire. And now you come to the will of command and I think that's for Christians, because it doesn't do God any good at all to command unbelievers to do His will, because they have no capacity, right? The will of command, it is the ardent desire of the heart of God that we who are His children obey Him completely and immediately with a willing heart. And so listen beloved, when I say in my prayer, "Thy will be done," what am I saying? I'm saying, oh God, fulfill Your purpose in the world, oh God, bring it to consummation, God take every struggle and trail in my life, every pain and anxiety, every sorrow, every sickness, every death and somehow reverse those things that are the result of sin and fit them into Your eternal plan by Your infinite mind. And when I say, "Thy will be done," I'm also saying, Oh God, there's people in my life and people around this globe that don't know You; I pray that somehow the Gospel would penetrate their hearts.

That's His will of desire, and then thirdly I have to say, and Lord about Your will of command I pray that I might be obedient, and I bring it right down to me. Do you remember I told you there were three ways to bring the kingdom? Number one was through conversion, "Thy kingdom come." When Christ comes in to reign in a heart. Number two commitment, when a believer lives according to righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit the kingdom comes into his life in fullness. And thirdly in His second coming, the kingdom comes to earth; I see the same three things here. His will of purpose embraces the ultimate end and the coming again and the setting up of an eternal kingdom. His will of desire embraces conversion, and His will of obedience embraces the idea of commitment

in my life. As Peter said so well with John in Acts 5:29, "We ought to obey God rather than men." As Paul said in Romans 6, "Look you've yielded yourselves servants to God now you are to obey the one to whom you yield yourselves as servants." We are to be obedient.

In the magnificence of the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm, O God, make me to understand the way of thy precepts, I have chosen the way of faithfulness, I set thy ordinances before me, I will run in the way of thy commandments, teach me 0 Lord the way of thy statutes, I will keep them to the end, I will find my delight in thy commandments, Thy statutes have been my songs, I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast given me life, Oh, how I love thy law. The heart of obedience. And so as we pray "Thy will be done," we are embracing conversion, commitment and His coming again.

But, you know it's hard to pray this way, did you know that? It's hard to be preoccupied withGod in yourprayers and there's one basic reason because the major sin of the human heart is what? Pride. It was the first sin. Lucifer, Isaiah 14 says five times, I will, I will, I will, I will, I will, and that was the fall of Lucifer. For the first time in the history of God there were two wills, two wills. It is multiplied from there, and now there are at least four billion on earth, and still only one in heaven. It was one to one, now it's four billion to one. And you know something? Only one of those wills is righteous, every other one is corrupt, every other one**,** and that doesn't even include all the angelic fallen host. There's only one will and that will beloved is done in heaven, and it needs to be done on earth but pride always stands in the way, always. You say well, how do you deal with that, how do you get pride out of the way? Well, I guess you have to go to Romans 12, don't you? "I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living (what?) sacrifice." Self--denial, humility. "Which is your reasonable service. And be not con-formed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye might know what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, (what? will of God." Do you see until you lay your life on the altar, until you're a living sacrifice, until your will is dead, God's will can't be manifest.

You say, what's a living sacrifice? Well it's very different than what you might think. Take Abraham, Abraham took Isaac, strapped wood on his back, marched him up to Mount Moriah, all the way up the mountain Abraham must have been say-ing to himself, this is very strange God, You've told me to go up there and slay my son on the altar and yet my son is the fulfillment of Your covenant. You tell me to lie him and thing ... on an altar and kill him, doesn't make sense. But you know it's on of the greatest illustrations of a living sacrifice in the world because Abraham went all the way up there, put Isaac down, strapped him down and lifted the knife and was ready to plunge it into his heart. If he had of done that Isaac would have been a dead sacrifice but Abraham would have been a living one, why? Because Abraham would have crucified all his own dreams, all his own hopes, all his own ambitions, all his own goals, all his own desires. He literally would have died to himself, in obedience to God. The question is not can you die for Christ, the question is can you live selflessly for Him? That's the question. And if you can then you can know His good will.

And so the thing that always stands in the way of praying for God's will is our own will, and when you learn to pray like you should pray in conformity with His will, you'll find you'll change dramatically. Prayer then is a sanctifying grace, it changes us. We don't pray to manipulate God, we don't pray to get God to do what we want, we don't pray with incantations and public demonstration and vain repetition just to try to put on a show, we go into God's presence; we want to hallow His name and bring His kingdom and fulfill His will because in so doing we enter into conformity to His blessed person. I guess I could summarize it all and say this prayer is a means of progressive sanctification. John Hanna says this, and it's great, "The end of prayer is not so much tangible answers as a deepening life of dependency." Isn't that great? That's it. Oh, the answers will come but the dependency is the issue "The call to prayer (he says) is a call to love, submission and obedience. The avenue of sweet intimate and intense fellowship of the soul with the infinite Creator." End quote. And so we are to pray, "Thy will be done in earth," and by the way, the earth is us, right? Is us.

Can I illustrate that to you from Philip Keller? Graphic illustration. He lived in Pakistan as a boy, and I'll close with this, but I want you to get it, it's powerful. Philip Keller lived in Pakistan as a boy, and he was reading in Jeremiah 18:2 and he came across a verse that said, "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words." And he got kind of curious about the potter and what lessons the potter had to teach and so he went down to the potter's house in the city in which he lived and this is what he wrote, "In sincerity and earnestness I asked the old master craftsman to show me every step in the creation of masterpiece. On his shelves were gleaming goblets and lovely vases and exquisite bowls of breathtaking beauty. And then crooking a bony finger toward me he led the way to a small dark closed shed at the back of his shop, and 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 down beside the black nauseating hole, with his long thin arm he reached down into the darkness, his slim skilled finger's felt around amid the lumpy clay searching for a fragment of material exactly suited to his task. I add special kind of grass to the mud he remarked and as it rots and decays its organic content increases the colloidal quality of the clay, and then it sticks together better. Finally his knowing hands brought up a lump of dark smelly mud from the horrible pit where the clay had been trampled and mixed by his hard bony feet. With tremendous impact the first verses of Psalm 40 came to my heart, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay." As carefully as the potter had selected the clay so God had selected me.

"And then the great slab of granite cut from the rough rock of the high Hindu Cush Mountains behind his home began to whirl quietly, it was operated by a very crude treadle like device that was moved by his feet very much like an antique sewing machine, and as the stone gathered momentum I was taken to memory in Jeremiah 18:3, "Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheel. And 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." And then he goes on to tell how

that "all the while that the wheel was turning with the clay he kept dipping his hands in the water and then he would mold the clay and then he would dip them in the water and mold the clay and never could he mold without the water because it would stick to his hands and it would ruin it, and so his hand always had to be wet," and he said, "it was fascinating to see how swiftly but surely the clay responded to the pressure applied through those moistened hands, silently, smoothly the form of a graceful goblet began to take shape between his h ands, and the water was the medium through which the master craftsman's will and wishes were transmitted to the clay, his, (his) will was actually being done in earth through the water and immediately," he says, "I thought of the water of the Word which is God's agency for doing His will in earth. When God touches my life," he said, "He touches me with His Word, it is the water of the Word that expresses the will of the Master and finds fulfillment in fashioning man into His choice.

Suddenly, to his astonishment he noticed the w heel stopped. Gently the man reached in and picked out a piece of stone, and then he began to spin it again and stopped it again, and reached again to pick out a larger piece of stone, and he noticed now t hat with the tenderness of his hand he could feel every rough spot, every stone, every small gain of sand. The two he had taken out were too large and the goblet was marred, and so he reached to it and crushed it in his hands." Keller said to him, "Oh, that's sad, what will happen to that? Oh, he said, I'll make it into a common finger bowl. He said, it'll never be a goblet? He said, no, it's too scar red. And I thought again of Jeremiah 18:4," says Keller, "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter." Seldom (says he) did any lesson come home to me with such tremendous clarity and force, why was this rare and beautiful master piece ruined in the master's hands? Because he ran into resistance, it was a thunderclap bursting in my mind, why is my Father's will, His intention to turn out truly beautiful people brought to nought again and again? Because of our resistance, because of our hardness? Despite His best efforts and endless patience with us and besides the water of the Word applied to us we end up nothing but a finger-bowl. The sobering, searching, searing question I had to ask myself in the humble surroundings of that simple potter's shed was this, am I'm going to be a piece of fine china or a fingerbowl? Is my life going to be a gorgeous goblet fit to hold the fine wine of God's very life from which other's can drink and be refreshed, or am I going to be a crude fingerbowl in which passers-by will simply dabble their fingers briefly then pass on and forget about it? It was one of the most solemn moments of all my life, and I prayed, Father, Thy will be done in earth, in clay, in me, as it is in heaven."

What about you? Keller goes on to tell that when the potter finishes his work, while its still spinning he takes a long thread and he just pulls it through the bottom and it cuts it, and he says, I thought of being separated unto good works. And then the potter takes it and places it in an oven and through hardship it's finally finished. Beloved, God wants to do His will in you, God wants to make you into that beautiful goblet, but because you resist you're a fingerbowl. And instead of being used for the fine wine of God's great purposes you're something people dabble their fingers in and pass by. And the key thing is are you willing to let Him do His will in the clay of earth, as it is done in heaven?

That's the heart of your prayers. Let's pray.

Father you have been good to us through all our 1ives since we have known Christ. We have been the recipient of every good and gracious gift and this morning You have given us another one, the privilege of worshiping You and sharing together in Your precious truth. May we accept this good gift and not misuse it, oh God, drive us to the place of prayer, that we may seek Your coming again, that we may seek conversion in the hearts of the lost, the fulfillment of Your will of purpose and will of desire, and that we may fulfill Your will of obedience, Your will of command as we hear and obey Your precious Word that we might be nonresistant to Your hands, to the water of the Word as they form us for Your use. Make us vessels fit or the Master's use. In Christ's name. Amen.

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