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

**Prayer as Worship**
Scripture: Matthew 6:9-10
Code: 80-30

Prayer As Worship

For this morning, I'm going to take a digression, if I might, away from our study of 1 Timothy and I'd like you to turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 6 verses 9 and 10. This, of course, is a very familiar portion of Scripture known to many people as the Lord's prayer. It probably better would be titled the disciples' prayer. And the reason I'm taking a bit of a break from our study of Timothy is two fold, I think. One, it seems to me that we have been along time in Timothy, many months now, talking about ministry and the ministry of the church and the role of the pastors and leaders of the church and the servants in the church, the deacons, the deaconesses, and all of that. We've really been talking about the pragmatics of ministry.

And I think the Lord just impressed upon my heart that we needed to take at least one Lord's day and look back at the whole matter of worship. We don't want to be too pragmatic in the sense that we lose the focus of what we're all about, and that primarily is a matter of worship.

The second reason, not only was the sensitivity to balance some of the teaching about pragmatics along with the perspective on worship, but in my own personal life over the last year and a half or so, I have seen God answer prayer in more mighty and evident ways than ever in any other time in my life. And so I've been sort of concerned about this whole matter of prayer and evaluating my own prayer life and what prayer is really all about recently. We ran the series on the disciples' prayer on radio and had a wonderful response to that.

Because of those kinds of things on the positive side, I just felt that we ought to look back at the disciples' prayer and sort of regrip some of the great truths that are foundational in the matter of prayer that relate to worship. But not only was I motivated on the positive end, I was also motivated on the negative side as I often am. As I listen to what's going on in the Christian world, as I hear various preachers and teachers, as I read various books, as I try to sort of put my finger on the pulse, if you will, of what's happening in Christian circles, I see an ever increasing movement that all of us are probably somewhat aware of in this matter of the prosperity gospel and positive confession that is really very, very threatening to the purity and the sanity of the church. It seems as though television and Christian radio, Christian television, churches are literally getting more and more and more people who are buying into the fact that prayer is simply a way for you to get what you want...that God is obligated to deliver the goods to you.

I turned on the television last night, on came a man name Kenneth Copeland, you've probably seen. He said, "Write for this little book if you want to know how to get health and prosperity." And when someone doesn't have that it's because they haven't cashed their check in...that's what they advocate. It's all there for you. God has to deliver. He's put Himself in that position. All you've got to do is name it and claim it and it's yours.

The bottom line problem with this is makes a tremendous reversal in the role of God and man. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign and man His servant. The "name it and claim it" theology and the prosperity gospel teaches that man is sovereign and God is his servant. And we are in the demand position and the command position and God is in the role of the servant who must deliver.

Now admittedly we live in a very indulgent society. We live in a very self-centered and selfish society. We live in a materialistic society. That...the waves of that society have washed ashore on Christian theology. And the prosperity, health, wealth, name-it-and-claim-it mentality which says you demand from God and God has to give it is nothing more than a spiritual justification for self-indulgent sin...nothing more. That kind of praying is no praying at all, it is a perversion of prayer. In fact, it does what we are forbidden to do in Scripture, it takes the name of the Lord in vain. It is irreverent. It is Satanic. It is anything but biblical, anything but virtuous, anything but godly, anything but directed by the Holy Spirit.

And I think for us to understand what's going on, we need to sort of relook at this whole matter of how we are to pray. And the focal point of that comes in these words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 6. "After this manner therefore pray, 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, or so let it be."

When Jesus teaches us how to pray, and this is the model of how to pray, beginning and end of that prayer focuses on God...hallowing His name, praying that His Kingdom come, praying that His will be done. And then the few petitions that are listed there followed by "Thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever, amen." The focal point of the prayer then is on the glory and the Kingdom...the honor of God, the extension of His Kingdom. Everything has to fit into that context so that all prayer in a sense is controlled by the Kingdom, by the glory of God. And this, I think, is really basic to our prayer life.

In fact, in John 14, Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son," John 14:13. Whatever you ask in My name, I'll do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Prayer begins and ends not with the indulgence of man, but with the glory of God...not with the building of my empire, but His Kingdom...not with getting what I want, but doing His

will...not with the elevation of my name but with the hallowing of His name. Everything in prayer revolves around who God is and what God wants and how God is to be glorified. And that is the sum and substance of proper praying. And any praying that is self-consuming, that is self- indulgent, self-aggrandizing, that seeks whatever I want no matter what God wants, any praying that makes God have to deliver to me because I have demanded it takes His name in vain, sins violently against the nature of God and against His will and Word.

And when these people come along with this "name it and claim it" kind of praying and say that God wants you healthy, wealthy, prosperous and successful and they appear to be spiritual, know this...they are not spiritual for their preoccupation has not to do with the extension of the Kingdom and the glory of God's name but with the extension of their own empire and the fulfillment of their own desires. We must understand that. The error of this is not a peripheral error, it is an error at the very heart of Christian truth, namely the nature of God is attacked.

You go back into the Old Testament and pick out, for example, three prophets who were in dire situations. Starting in Jeremiah chapter 32, Jeremiah is in prison. He is trying to preach to a nation of people who will not hear. They want to shut his mouth. They are not interested in anything he says. Ultimately they throw him in a pit. They want him shut up. He has really no measurable success in his ministry. One of his prayers is given to us in Jeremiah 32 and I would like you to note this, at the end of verse 16 he says, "I prayed to the Lord." Here's his prayer, notice the absence of any personal requests.

"Ah, Lord God, behold Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and outstretched arm and there's nothing too hard for Thee. Thou showest loving kindness unto thousands and recompenses the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them, the great, the mighty God, the Lord of hosts is His name. Great in counsel, mighty in work, for Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men to give every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings, who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day and in Israel and among other men and hast made Thee a name at this day. And hast brought forth Thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror and hast given them this land which Thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. They came in and possessed it but they obeyed not Thy voice, neither walked in Thy law. They have done nothing of all that Thou commandest them to do, therefore Thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them."

In other words, here is a man in great distress, a man in great loneliness, a man in despair in terms of ministry insofar as the people have not heard what he has said. But the preoccupation of the heart of Jeremiah is to extol the glory, the majesty, the name, the honor and the works of God. There is no preoccupation with his own pain. There is no preoccupation with his own circumstance.

In Daniel chapter 9, Daniel also in a very difficult situation, caught in the transition between two great world empires, representing a dispossessed people in a foreign land, cries out to God in prayer in chapter 9 verse 3, "I set my face to the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sack cloth and ashes and I prayed unto the Lord my God and made my confession and this is what I said," and here is how his prayer begins: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him and to them that keep His commandments, we have sinned," and on he goes. And again, the initiation of prayer comes with an affirmation of the nature and the glory and the greatness and the majesty of God. That is always the godly perspective...God, You're in charge, God, You are glorious, God, You are holy...whatever I pray then is prayed in line with that, that God may indeed be glorified.

Jonah who is in the middle of the belly of a fish, an absolutely inconceivable place, chapter 2 verse 7 says, "I remembered the Lord and my prayer came in unto Thee and to Thy holy temple," and here was his prayer, "I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay what I have vowed, salvation is of the Lord," that's a funny prayer when you're in the middle of a fish. But the Lord spoke to the fish and it vomited out Jonah. It was a prayer for the glory of God. It was, "Thank You, God, for who You are, bless You for Your salvation, Your delivering power." There was no pleading and begging. And there was no claiming, naming and claiming anything. Simply extolling the character of God. And that's the heart of what our Lord teaches us in this prayer.

Let's look at just those first two verses and the four initial elements of prayer that give us the focus on prayer as an act of worship. Prayer is primarily worship. It is godward, it is not to get for me, it is to allow God to be glorified. I have to see that in my prayers. My prayers are not primarily for what I can gain but for the glory of God.

First of all, God's paternity, that is that God is Father. "Our Father who art in heaven," this is the basis--by the way--of our boldness in prayer. We go to God because He is not our King only, He is not our monarch only, He is not our judge only, He is not our creator only, but He is also our father. And that beautiful expression gives us the sense of access and the boldness to come intimately into His presence as a son or a daughter would come to the presence of their own father.

Isaiah 64:8, "Now, O Lord, Thou art our Father, we are the clay and Thou our potter. We all are the work of Thy hand." That's the recognition. Lord, You made us. You gave us life. You gave us birth. You supply our resources. We belong to You through the link of common life through faith in Christ. We're Your children. And when I come to God in prayer, I come first of all to one who is my father. Very different than the pagans who came to a vengeful angry violent unfair unjust cruel jealous envious man-made deity whom they had to appease. We don't have to appease God, we come to our loving father.

And in Matthew chapter 7, do you remember verses 7 to 11? "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you and everyone that asks receives and he that seeks finds, and the one who knocks, it shall be opened." Why? Why is that so? Here's an illustration. "What man is there of whom if his son asks bread will he give him a stone? If he asks a fish, will he give him a snake? If you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

In other words, our confidence and our boldness in coming to God with whatever is on our heart is based initially on the fact that He is our Father. He is our Father. This was a new revelation in many ways to the Jews when Jesus said this. They saw God as Father only in a national sense. "Our Father" is a very uncommon phrase in the Old Testament, it only appears 14 times. "My Father," that is an individual expression of a person to God as his personal father never appears in the Old Testament. If God is seen as father in the Old Testament, He is seen as the father of a nation, not an intimate loving father of an individual.

It's not until Jesus came and revealed God as the intimate loving Father that He really becomes one to whom we can say, "My Father." And the Apostle Paul says we can call Him "Abba Father" which means "papa...daddy," Romans 8:15, Galatians 6:4. Those are terms of endearment, terms of intimacy. And so He is our Father. Jesus called Him Father over 70 times in the New Testament. Every time He prayed He called Him Father, with one exception and that was the time when He was separated from Him on the cross bearing sin and then He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The intimacy was lost in the moment of spiritual death, spiritual separation. But Jesus comes back and says, "God is My Father and God is also your Father." He says that in John 20 verse 17...you remember the statement? He said this, "Touch Me not," to Mary, "I'm not yet ascended to My Father but I go to...but go to the brethren and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." He's not only My Father, He's your Father.

So, in our prayers we are going to a God who is our Father, our loving Father. And we can go with a sense of intimacy. We can go with boldness and confidence as a child would go to his father. No fear is there.

This was news not only to the Jews who saw God as very separate and a Father only in a national sense, the Jews who wouldn't even name the name of God....whenever the name of God came along, they had a blank...they wouldn't even speak it. They were so distant from God and God had become so fearful to them. But you add to that the Greco-Roman world and the culture there and you'll find they had the same ideas. The gods that they created were gods who were absolutely beyond any concern with mankind. They..the Stoics, for example, famous philosophical group among the Greeks and the Romans, had decided that the essential attribute of God was apathea(?), that means apathy, that God was essentially apathetic, not in the sense of the English word, apathetic

means indifferent. Apatheain the Greek means more than indifferent, it means incapable of feeling anything, without any pathos, without any feeling, without any emotion. And they said because man feels love and hate, because man feels joy and sorrow, because man feels contentment and anger, man is volatile and all the problems of life are bound up in man's ability to feel the range of emotion. Therefore God cannot be a victim of those things. So in order to set God apart from the struggle of man and make Him greater than man, He must be a God who is absolutely apathea, beyond feeling anything. And so the Stoics said God has not the essential ability to experience any feeling at all. But Jesus said that's just not true. You can go to Him as your loving Father and He responds because He cares. He is not passionless, emotionless or unfeeling.

The Epicureans set another attribute that they thought was the primary attribute of God and that was the attribute which is the word ateraxia(?). It means perfectly serene and perfectly calm. And it's the same idea. They said that if God were involved in the affairs of the world, God would be as upset as everybody else is. So for God to maintain His serenity, He must be absolutely incapable of feeling anything that would disturb His permanent state of calm. So they had postulated that God was some kind of a feelingless passionless emotionless serene personality that had no feeling at all, no matter what was going on in the world. And the Jews really felt that God was so far away they couldn't even speak His name. Jesus burst on the scene and begins to talk of the intimacy with which men and women can know God.

Two more modern examples I read about, Thomas Hardy who asked what possible use prayer could be to anyone, because when you pray, all you're praying to is...and he said this, "The dreaming dark dumb thing that turns the handle of this idol show." For him God was some dreaming dark dumb thing. And Voltaire's final verdict on life was "a bad joke, ring down the curtain, the farce is done." And H.G. Welles(?) in one of his novels painted a picture of a man who was defeated by the stress and strain and tension of modern life. His only hope was trying to find fellowship with God and the man said this, "I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the Milky Way or shaking hands with the stars." God's unfeeling, indifferent.

Albert Einstein was interviewed on one occasion. He was asked if he believed in a God. He said there is definitely a cosmic force that's created things. But he said we could never know Him.

But that's just not true. That's just not true. God is not emotionless. God is not utterly detached. God is seen to us, I believe, in Jesus Christ to carry all the passion that could ever be carried...to weep, to know sorrow, to know joy, to know pain, to know all of human emotion and thus He is a loving Father who understands what His children endure. And we go to a God who does not need to be appeased, but who embraces us as His own. That settles the matter of fear. That settles the matter of fear. I'm not afraid of God because Jesus Christ has made me acceptable with God, I'm not afraid of Him, I'm His child now. He's adopted me into His family.

You may have read the most significant of all Greek legends, supposedly, is the legend of Prometheus. Prometheus was a deity in the pantheon of gods of Greece. And in the days before man possessed fire, they said life was very difficult, no fire, no warmth...no cooking and so forth. So in pity one day, Prometheus decided to take fire out of the realm of the gods and give it to men as a gift. So Prometheus brought fire down and gave it to man on earth. And Zeus, the king of the gods, was absolutely furious that he would do that. He wanted to keep man in a very low and humble state and not have fire. So he took Prometheus and he chained him to rock in the middle of the Adriatic Sea. And he was chained to that rock, you may have heard of Prometheus Bound, and during the day he was suffering from the exposure to the elements, heat, the sunlight, so forth. And at night, the cold of the night. And beyond that, Zeus was so furious with Prometheus that he sent a vulture to tear out his liver. But it kept growing back and every time it grew back, the Greeks said the vulture came and tore it out again.

And you say, "What's the point of all that? Who wants a God like Zeus?" That's typical of the ancient kind of gods. They are vengeful, they are jealous. They're angry. Typically all across the world, false religions with false gods have deities that must be desperately appealed to to appease their anger. That's typical of all cultures...where there are false gods. But God is our Father. That settles the matter of fear.

It also settles the matter of hope. It also settles the matter of hope. Things will change because a loving father will do what a loving father needs to do. If we ask Him for bread, He won't give us a stone. If we ask Him for a fish, He won't give us a snake. But whatever we ask, He will do that for His loving children, if it fits within His will. That settles the matter of hope. We can live in hope in this world because we know our God is a loving Father. It also settles the matter of loneliness. We may not have a friend in this world as we would like to have a friend, but we have in Him a friend that sticks closer than a brother. We have in Him a Father who will never leave us or forsake us. There is an intimacy of love that takes away any loneliness. A believer can be without human resources and have the presence of God and be sufficient.

Fourthly, it settles the matter of selfishness. Notice what it says, "our Father." And it says "our daily bread" in verse 11 and "our debts" and "our debtors" and "us into temptation," and "deliver us from evil." The point is that all of our praying embraces a family. We're not just alone in this, we have brothers and sisters who also are the children of God. And whatever we ask must embrace them as well. In other words, I'm not saying, "God, give me what I want...I want it no matter how it effects everybody else."

I don't know how it is in your family, but in our family we try to do things for the children together. And if one of our children came for a request and wanted something particularly from us, we would perhaps feel right about giving that to that child only if we somehow were able to do something equal

for the other children.  There's a sense in which part of being a parent is embracing the fact that no child exists in isolation from the other children but all are a part of a family.  And so, my prayer life simply is not "I want this...I demand this...Give me this," but my prayer life is, "Father, You have a lot of children, whatever You think is best for me as one of those children, here's my request."  It settles the matter of selfishness that He is our Father, not just mine.

It settles the matter of resources also in our prayer life.  It says "our Father who art in heaven."  He's not bound to earth.  He's not limited by the limitation of earth.  We are used to a declining...a declining amount of resources.  We hear all the time that the natural resources of this world are diminishing.  And that's true.  We understand the law of entropy that things are winding down, that everything is moving toward disintegration.  We understand what it means to use up something.  You buy the box full and in a week the box is empty.  We understand that.  You pour out the bottle and the bottle is empty.  But in terms of spiritual and eternal resources, that doesn't even exist.  There is the pouring out of all resources and the diminishing of none.

Now I don't understand that, I just believe that.  So when we go to God with our need, the fact that He is in heaven, that is supernatural, beyond the diminishing resources of this world, means the matter of resources is a settled issue.  Whatever we...whatever we need to receive from Him by His purpose is available.

It also settles the matter of wisdom.  You remember the line, "Father knows...what?...best."  And when I go to God as Father, I have to acknowledge that He knows best.  It also settles the matter of obedience.  A father is to be obeyed, even Jesus obeyed the Father and that's part of the father/child relationship.

So, when I pray "our Father," what I'm really saying is, "God, I recognize that I'm Your child.  I recognize that You love me and I have an intimate access to You.  I recognize that You have absolutely unlimited resources which could be used at my disposal.  I recognize that You have a family larger than myself who has needs.  I recognize You're going to do what is best for me.  I recognize that I need to obey You.  And I recognize that whatever You do, You know best."  And that's how prayer begins.  It begins with an affirmation of the fact that God is my Father, that means resources, that means obedience, that's the heart of it.  All the resources are there.  And the call to obedience is there as well.

The Bible says that God knows when a sparrow falls.  I remember reading J.E. McFadden who said that the book of Scripture, when it says a sparrow falls, if you look at the Greek really means more than falls, it's not just that God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground in the sense of death.  The word really means lights.  And he says it's better to translate that, "God knows every time a sparrow hops."  Nothing escapes the knowledge of God.  Every time it hops on the ground, a little sparrow is known by God, He sees it and He knows it.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

And God who is the God who knows everything about the little sparrow is the same God who knows everything about His beloved children. And that's why one man said, when we say "our Father" we know we are not lost in the crowd. There's intimacy there. We're not pleading to some great sovereign deity somewhere who is apathetic, but to a loving Father.

But we must recognize in praying to Him as a Father that He has a right to give us what He wants because Father knows best. And we are responsible to obey Him because He is our Father. So, prayer begins then with the recognition in general that we're going to a loving father with unlimited resources who knows best to whom we must obey.

Let's go to the second thought in this prayer, not God's priority...God's paternity, but God's priority...God's priority. Verse 9, it says, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Here is the first petition, the initial statement was simply the salutation in prayer, here is the first petition. And the essence of this petition is worship. God, the first thing I pray is that Your name be hallowed.

I was reading last night the biography of Arthur Pink, a great teacher of God's Word. One of the things that he said is very, very, very related to this and I think practical. He said, "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, desires and supplications. This petition must take the precedence for the glory of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things. Every other request must not only be subordinated to this one, but be in harmony with and in pursuance of it. We cannot pray a right unless the honor of God be dominant in our hearts. If we cherish a desire for the honoring of God's name, we must not ask for anything which it would be against the divine holiness to bestow," end quote.

So our prayers are controlled, first of all, by a recognition that God is Father. Secondly, they're controlled by a recognition that God's name is to be hallowed. Now "name," what does that mean? "Hallowed be Thy name." That simply means all that God is...all that God is. In those days the name of someone was in a sense the sum of who they were. It's still that way to some extent. My name is more than just a name, it really sums up who I am. If someone says to you, "John MacArthur," there's an image of all that I am in that name. And so it is with God. God's name is the sum of all that He is. Christ's name is the sum of all that He is. And the name stands for the nature, the attributes, the character, the personality of God. And so, what this petition is saying is, "Father, may Your person, Your identity, Your character, Your nature, Your attributes, and Your reputation be

hallowed."

Now what does it mean to be hallowed? Well, it simply means to set apart as sacred. When we think of hallowed halls, we usually think of some cloistered halls, long robes, dismal chants, halos, musty dim churches, morbid music, tired traditions. Hallowed means to be set apart as sacred. May Your name be set apart as sacred. The word hagiazo(?), to treat as sacred, to hallow, has a synonym, dixazo(?) from which we get the word "glory." It means to glorify or honor.

Another writer, Origen, said that it also is synonym with hupsoowhich means to exalt or lift on high. Lift on high Your name, exalt Your name, honor Your name, glorify Your name, may Your name be elevated as sacred. That's a very, very basic part of prayer. Lord, whatever honors You, whatever glorifies You, whatever exalts Your name, whatever lifts You up...you see, that's the antithesis to the kind of praying that's so popular today which says lift me up, give me this, give me that, make me prosper, make me successful. The whole idea is...God, may You prosper, may You be glorified. Whatever that means, the name of God, elohim, creator. The name of God, el elyon, God Most high, Jehovahmeaning I am that I am; Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide; Jehovah-nissi, the Lord our banner; Jehovah-ropha(?), the Lord that heals; Jehovah Shalom, the Lord our peace; Jehovah- roi, the Lord our Shepherd; Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness; Jehovah-tsabaoth, the Lord of hosts; Jehovah- Shammah, the Lord is present; Jehovah-meqaddeshkem, the Lord who sanctifies; all that He is is wrapped up in all of His name. And when we say "hallowed be Thy name" we are saying God be glorified.

The purpose of every prayer you ever offer is that God be glorified, exalted, honored, lifted up, whatever way He can be. And this, by the way is a protection against abusing the sentimentalism of "Father." To say "Our Father" and "our Father" alone might be a little bit dangerous. You might overuse that idea of father. And then "Abba Father...papa...daddy," you might understand that intimacy but not understand the balancing and the balancing is, "Yes, You are my loving Father, but hallowed be Your holy name." No Jew would ever say "Father" without adding something. So in the prayers of the Jews, here are some examples, "O Lord, Father and ruler of my life...O Lord, Father and God of my life...O Father, King of great power Most High, Almighty God..." And the famous daily prayers of the Shemina(?) Esra(?), "O Father, O King, O Lord," the fatherhood always balanced with those which represent His awesomeness.

On the Day of Atonement there are ten penitential days that surround that one day. And the Jews pray the great "Abinu Malkainu(??) which is the Our Father, our King, and they pray it 44 times, "Our Father, our King...Our Father, our King..." If you only know God as Father, you might lose a little bit of balance. God is also your King. And He has a holy place and He deserves that holy place and His name is to be lifted up and exalted in every way.

Now how do you do that? How do you pray in such a way as to exalt God's name? By simply praying for His glory to be done, for His glory to be accomplished, for His honor. My prayer is, God, that You would do this if it brings You glory. You might be praying about a child. You might be praying about a situation in your family. You might be praying about a job. You might be praying about a physical problem. Lord, whatever will bring You glory, do that...do that. Whatever will lift Your name, whatever will cause You to be glorious, to be exalted, whatever will draw people to see You as the true God, that's the issue.

And I tell you, in this contemporary name-it-and-claim-it theology, that is not the true God. It reminds me what John Wesley said to a critic of Christianity, he said, "Your god is my devil." The kind of God who is a utilitarian genie who has to knuckle under to everybody's commands is not the God of the Bible and you have not glorified His name, exalted His name and lifted Him up, you've pulled Him down. And the error of this is to strike a blow at the very nature of God. It is to take God's name in vain. It is to be irreverent. It isn't just bad theology, it is gross irreverence, fearful irreverence.

As Luther's catechism says, "How is God's name hallowed among us?" Answer: "When both our doctrine and our life are truly Christian." In other words, God is glorified when my life reflects the truth of God's Word, when my doctrine reflects the truth of God's Word. In other words, I believe rightly about Him and I live rightly in submission to Him.

So, when I say "hallowed be Thy name," I'm saying God glorify Yourself. And what do I mean by that? Put Yourself on display. And how's He going to do that? Through my life. Put Yourself on display through my life, whatever that means to me in life or in death, in poverty or in wealth, in sickness or in health, whatever it is. Put Yourself on display through my life, that's that prayer.

Nietzsche supposedly said, "Show me your redeemed life and I'll be inclined to believe in your Redeemer." Show me God. Where are people going to see God? Through us.

Gregory of Nyssa many years ago in the early church preached a sermon on the kind of person who hallows God's name, who lives to the glory of God, who lives to honor God, to lift God up. And he said this of that person, "He touches the earth but lightly with the tip of his toes, for he is not engulfed by the pleasurable enjoyments of this 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 be prolonged, like those who are seasick, he hastens to reach the port of rest."

That's the way to live. We're not living here to get prosperous in this world. And the one who lives to the glory of God, the one who hallows the name of God wants God to be glorified, God to be exalted. And he is more concerned to pray about the glory of God than he is about his own situation, his own

glory, his own prosperity.  He wants only to strive after the immaterial and not be engulfed, he said, by the pleasurable enjoyments of this life.

The one who glorifies God is more consumed with the things that dishonor God, more consumed with what's going wrong in terms of the world and how it treats God than how he is being treated.  That's why Psalm 34:3 says, "O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together." That's what prayer's all about.

Thirdly, prayer is not only a matter of recognizing God's paternity and priority but God's program. Verse 10 says, "Thy Kingdom come...Thy Kingdom come."  Here is a prayer for the advancement of God's Kingdom.  This marks every true man and woman of God through the history of the kingdom. The greats of God's Kingdom, the saints of the ages have been people who greatly were concerned about the advancement of God's Kingdom, not the building of their own empire, not the padding of their pocket.

I was asked the other day how to evaluate a very well-known, a very high profile Christian leader in America, a man whom I respect as a person.  He said, "How do you evaluate that man?"  I said, "Well, I think there are two primary ways in which I evaluate the character of a man I don't know personally.  Number one way is, how long do good godly people stay with him?"  In other words, he's at a level of leadership where he has a lot of folks working around him.  How long do good and godly people stay with him?  That's the measure of his character.

"And secondly, how much of his success winds up in his own pocket?"  If good and godly men stay with him for a long time, that means good and godly men find in him a man of like mind.  And if after much success he appears not to be having indulged himself excessively, the indication is that his preoccupation is not for building his bank account but for building the Kingdom.  Those are the kinds of questions you have to ask.

In my prayer life and your prayer life, the bottom line is not how's it going to help the empire of John MacArthur, the enterprise of John MacArthur, the efforts of John MacArthur, but how is it going to help the Kingdom expand.  That's the bottom line.  In fact, the Talmud said that prayer in which there is no mention of the Kingdom of God is no prayer at all.  How's it going to advance the Kingdom? And so He really is saying here that the words would read, "Let the...really, the Greek would be ordered this way...Kingdom, let it come...Kingdom, let it come."  Turn it loose, God.  Build Your Kingdom.  That's the heart of our petition.  We're not praying just about the success of our enterprise. We're not to be praying just about our little family and its particular needs.  We're not praying just about our church or our state, and we're looking at an election coming up on Tuesday and I'm sure we've been praying about that election and what is going to happen.  We're thinking about things on the national level and praying for the leadership of the nation and so forth.  But that's not the sum of our prayers.

In all of that, the bottom line is, "Lord, just let Your Kingdom come." That's all. That's the big picture. Not our petty kingdom, Your Kingdom.

That's a perspective that's very helpful in the ministry so that you don't begin to pray only for your own little thing, your own little world, your own church, your own radio ministry, your own tapes, your own college and seminary, your own little enterprises. But what you really pray for is that the Kingdom would come however and in what way and through whom ever God would want it to come.

What do we mean by that? What is the Kingdom? It's a common phrase. First of all it's simple enough to say the kingdom is simply the sphere of salvation in which Christ rules. Yes, there's a sense in which God is the universal King of the whole universe and He rules the whole universe all the time always has, always will. But what He's talking about here is not the universal kingdom, so much as He's talking about the Kingdom of Christ that rules in the hearts of the redeemed. It's really a prayer for salvation of lost people. Let Your Kingdom come through conversion of lost souls.

The Kingdom, Jesus said, is in your midst. It's in you. The Kingdom is the sphere where Christ rules. And where does Christ rule? He is the ruler in the heart of every one who has put their faith in Him, right? He is my Lord and King, He's your Lord and King, that's His Kingdom. His Kingdom will come to earth in the millennium. His Kingdom will fill the universe in the new heaven and the new earth. But even then the Kingdom will still be the sphere of His rule in the hearts of men through salvation. And the prayer is this, whatever advances Your Kingdom, O God, whatever advances the elements of the Kingdom mentioned in Romans 14:17, the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy and the Holy Spirit, whatever will bring Christ to set up His Kingdom on earth to be all glorious, let it come.

In other words, this name-it-and-claim-it theology is so myopic, it's so self-indulgent, it's so small in its thinking, all it sees is me and what I want. And it has no thought for the greater cause. Lord, advance Your Kingdom if that means I lose everything. That's the issue.

Francis Havergogh(??) beautifully wrote the following verse to Christ. "O the joy to see Thee reigning, Thee my own beloved Lord, every tongue Thy name confessing, worship, honor, glory, blessing brought to Thee with one accord. Thee my Master and my friend, vindicated and enthroned, unto earth's remotest end, glorified, adored and owned." Now there's the prayer of a true saint. I'm not concerned about me...I want You to be honored and You to be glorified and Your Kingdom to be extended to the hearts of men across the earth so that everywhere You are glorified, adored and owned. That's a prayer as Jesus taught us to pray.

The centrality of prayer then is worship. We go to a loving Father, but that means we accept that He knows best and in obedience respond to Him. And in our prayers the first thing to be concerned

about is His glory.  The second thing to be concerned about is the extension of His Kingdom.

And the third thing is His will be done, God's purpose.  Verse 10, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."  We know His will's done in heaven, right?  Because everybody who didn't do His will in heaven is...what?  Out, the fallen angels, they were kicked out.  "Thy will be done."  That means, "God, do Your purpose."  I never pray a prayer without saying, "Lord, do Your will."  And I don't feel hesitant in praying that way.  That's all I want.  I don't want anything that isn't God's will.

Somebody said to me, "What would happen if all of a sudden you had to go off all the radio stations?"  Fine, if that's God's will, that's fine.  I don't mind.  I don't need anymore to do.  And doing less might be kind of nice.  And they pursued the question.  I've been asked that before...what would happen if the Lord just took away your ministry?  Fine.  If the Lord wants to take it away, He can take it away.  I'll borrow from Job...the Lord gave, the Lord takes away...what?  Blessed be the name of the Lord.  He doesn't need me.  And if He decides to make a change, that's fine because I don't want to do anything that isn't His will.  I don't have any personal agenda.

I'm often asked, "What are your goals for ministry?"  I really don't have any, I just want to wake up in the morning and do what I have to do that day and trust God that He's leading me.  But I don't have any big agenda of things to try to accomplish.  I just want to do God's will and I want to stay in the position of doing it.  That's not something I'm resigned to.  There are some people who say, "Thy will be done," only they say it like this, "Thy will be done," bitter resentment, I know You're going to do what You're going to do.

Omar Khayyam wrote that famous little poem, "But helpless pieces of the game He plays," speaking of God, we're helpless pieces of the game He plays, "Upon this checkerboard of nights and days, hither and thither moves and checks and slays and one by one back in the closet lays."  Tragic view of God.

So, there are those people who grit their teeth in bitter resentment and say "Thy will be done," fatalistically.  And that's not what we mean by that.

Then there are those passive people who just sort of resign, "Well, if that's what You're going to do, God, so be it."  And they go off in a corner and suck their spiritual thumb and pine away, moan and groan because of how tragic it is.

And then there are those whose "Thy will be done" comes out of their theology.  They're the hyper-Calvinist types, you know.  Who think God's bigger than them, so what's the use anyway.  Everything's going to be the way it's going to be.  It's another kind of fatalism.  The first is sort of a philosophical fatalism, the second is sort of a "poor me" fatalism, and the third is kind of a theological fatalism.  But I don't believe saying "Thy will be done" means we just give up.

I like what David Welles said, he said, "In essence, petitionary prayer is rebellion. It's not rebellion against God, it's rebellion against the world and its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal. It is in this its negative aspect, the refusal of every agenda and every scheme, every interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God."

And I can pray rebelling against the way things are, rebelling against evil, rebelling against sin, rebelling against God being dishonored. I'm not going to accept that. I'm not going to strike a truce with what is wrong. I'm not going to even lose heart. I'm going to be like the souls under the altar, "How long, O Lord, until You're going to do something? Lord, glorify Your name, exalt Your name." I can pray to God, "Do this, Lord, I plead with You to do this because it dishonors You. Change this circumstance, bring glory to Yourself, bring the honor to Your name." I have no problem with that, being bold.

But at the same time, whatever God brings I have to accept. And I do not accept it bitterly and I do not accept it passively. And I do not accept it simply as some theological thing. I accept it as His will. And not only that, it's His best. For now...and you say, well sometimes that doesn't seem right. Sure, because you can't see everything, right? You can't see everything. You just don't have the big picture.

In the days of the Covenanters in Scotland, terrible things were happening to those very devout men and women. The government, by the most savaged means, was trying to crush the Covenanters out of existence. One of them, probably the most famous and one of the greatest of all was Richard Cameron. They captured his son. In order to harm him, they took his son. And the son was known for notably deft hands. So in order to punish his father, they cut off his hands and sent them both to the father in an act of incredible cruelty.

Richard Cameron when receiving those hands recognized them at once, as any father would recognize the hands of his own son, this is what he said, "They are my son's, my own dear son's, but it is the Lord's will and good is the will of the Lord. He has never wronged me." See, that's a worshiping heart that sees beyond his son, beyond himself to the holy purposes of God, to the will of God, to the Kingdom of God, to the glory of God so that even though God is My Father and loves me, and even though if I ask Him for bread He won't give me a stone, and if I ask Him for fish He won't give me a snake, even though God has resources unlimited to give at my disposal, those things are given when they will give Him glory, when they will extend His Kingdom and when they will fulfill His will. And so, my prayers are always controlled by those things. That's how Jesus taught us to pray.

So, the end of prayer is not so much tangible answers. The end of prayer is a deepening life of dependency and the end of prayer is a greater sense of being a part of God's Kingdom and what God

is doing.  Prayer is where I sign in to get on duty to do what God wants to do for His own glory.

Now when I've gotten that all in order, then I can say, "Lord, give us this day our daily bread."  Then I can ask for my needs and nothing more than needs are there.  "And, Lord, forgive us our debts, or sins, as we forgive others."  First I ask for my needs to be supplied.  Secondly, for my sins to be forgiven.  And thirdly, "Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil."  The third thing I ask is, "Lord, protect me."  We pray for needs.  We pray for cleansing.  We pray for His protection.  But all within the contexts of His glory...it ends in verse 13...His Kingdom, His power, that's the focus.

And so, prayer is worship.  It's worship.  And anything less than a worshiping prayer that gives God the right to be God, glorify His name, extend His Kingdom and do His will is not prayer at all.  It may be called prayer.  It is not prayer.  It is merely an exercise in self-indulgence.  And anything that assumes, any theology that assumes that God has to give you what you demand, is taking His name in vain, is irreverent and is dishonoring God immensely by assuming Him to be other than He is.  And as I said at the beginning, the error of this theology is that this theology makes man God and God man.  Man becomes the sovereign, God the servant.  Not so.

So, when we pray, we pray in this way, Jesus said, that God might be honored.  Let's bow together.

Father, we thank You for such a clear word to us.  We never want anything that isn't Your will for us.  We don't understand all the mystery of that.  And we do believe that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much, we believe you answer prayer.  And if an unjust judge when continually beseeched would do right, how much will a just Savior do for those who love Him?  And if a man asleep will finally open the door to someone who knocks and knocks and knocks, even though he opens it out of anger, how fast will You provide what we need who are a loving Father?  Yes, Lord, we believe our prayer will be answered.  Even as we read in the Psalms, "I cried and You answered me." But, Lord, help us to know and to pray that the answer must be in line with the sacredness of Your name, the extension of Your Kingdom and the wonderful reality of Your will being fulfilled.

To that end we pray even for this morning that as a result of our worship together, Your name will be made sacred, lifted up, exalted and glorified.  Your Kingdom would be extended as some would even today open their hearts to Christ.  Your will would be done.  Thank You for the confidence, Lord, that when we put You in the rightful place, our needs will be met, cleansing will be provided, protection and guidance will be our lot.  We could ask nothing more and do not ask anymore than that.  Whatever good gifts You choose to give us, we accept with thanksgiving.  For Jesus' sake we pray these things.  Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).