

indignity of rejection and the pain of the cross. Jesus, nevertheless, submitted his will to God's.

[Matthew 26:39, Luke 22:42]

For us, submitting ourselves to God's will is not usually so costly. God is a good and loving father, he desires good things for us, and while he is willing to discipline us, his purpose is to lead us into a good place where we rejoice in him and where our lives bring him glory.

Submitting our will to his, is an act of obedience, but also an act of faith, trusting that God's will and purposes for us are good.

Just as the angels in heaven, who obey God perfectly, enjoy immense privileges by being so close to him, so we too enjoy the privileges of God's favour as we stand in obedience to him.

As we surrender ourselves to God and rely on him, we can approach him with ever greater confidence for the meeting of our needs.

Over the next three weeks we start looking at the final three petitions, three petitions that relate to us and to our immediate wants, the first petition relating to our practical needs.



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BIBLE CLASS

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Reflections on The Lord's Prayer

"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"

Last week we saw how the knowledge of God as our father leads us beyond the immediate desire to honour and glorify him, to the desire that his kingdom be fully and perfectly established.

God is the sovereign ruler of all creation, and as such all that exists is part of his kingdom.

We saw, however, that there is another sense in which God has a kingdom in the world; that God has a Kingdom of Grace and a Kingdom of Glory.

The Kingdom of Grace refers to that kingdom made up of all believers everywhere, where God is loved, honoured and respected, and which is motivated by the desire to spread the gospel, and tell everyone about the free gift of forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

The Kingdom of Glory is that future time, when the work of God will be complete in the world, when God finally establishes his ultimate rule among all people everywhere, where Jesus Christ is fully recognised and respected and God's son and the saviour of the world.

So how do we transition from the Kingdom of Grace to the Kingdom of Glory? How will the work being done in the world today, develop, bear fruit and culminate in God's final glorious kingdom?

Today we look at the third petition which tells us of how God's kingdom will be finally established, and what the condition is for its appearance.

“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

The third petition seeks not only that God's will be done here on earth, but also the manner in which it's done; that is, in the manner it's done in heaven.

Here the prayer starts to get personal. While we have acknowledged that all the petitions imply a response on our part, this petition makes it absolutely clear. We cannot pray that God's will be done, unless we make it our greatest aim to do it.

If we are not ready to obey God's will, we are neither hallowing God's name, nor submitting ourselves for the work of the kingdom.

While, ultimately, God's will cannot fail to bring about his purposes, God's will cannot be thwarted in any final way, this petition invites us to surrender our will to his.

[Romans 9:19]

It is his will, not ours, that we pray will be done.

This petition then is twofold: that God's will be done on the earth, yes, but by implication, that God's will be done in each one of us, over and above the doing of our own will.

In so many ways our will stands in opposition to God's will, and surrendering ourselves and the apparent sovereignty of our own will is not easy.

This is the fundamental problem in human society today, that we have followed the desires of our own hearts, and not the will of God, as he has revealed it to us in scripture. Somehow we always think we know better than God.

And so this petition, that God's will be done, implies three important things: that we be given a heart to do God's will, that we have skill to do God's will, and that we have the strength to do God's will.

[Hebrews 13:20, 21]

The surrender of our will to God's will, makes us not mindless automata, but co-workers with Christ, for God, in the power of the Holy Spirit. We set aside our will for the sake of something altogether greater and more wonderful.

The establishment of God's kingdom is a work being done here on earth, by God's children, among men and women of every nation, and it is the following of God's will that makes that work fruitful and effective.

The final part of this petition, "on earth as in heaven" refers not just to the doing of God's will, but to the establishment of his kingdom and to the hallowing of God's name.

That is: let God's name be hallowed, on earth in the same manner as it is in heaven, let God's kingdom come, in the same manner as it is in heaven, and so too his will.

[Psalm 103:20, 21]

So, what is the manner in which God's will is done in heaven? How does heaven and the obedience of the heavenly host set a standard for us on earth today?

The answer to that, of course, is easy, the application of it, less so.

God's will is done in heaven immediately, joyfully and wholeheartedly. The angels in heaven obey God's word without argument, without seeking excuse, without muttering and complaining.

It is no wonder that we need to pray for God's help in doing his will in this way.

We do have, of course, Jesus Christ as our supreme example. Jesus obeyed God's will for him perfectly, even though it meant enduring the