

Thy Will Be Done

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Date: 30 August 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to Matthew in chapter 6.

Matthew chapter 6 and we're considering the Lord's prayer. So let's read again the Lord's prayer together. Where Jesus says in verse 9, After this manner, therefore pray ye, Our Father which 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, the power and the glory, forever. Amen. But particularly the words that we're looking at this evening, the words of verse 10 where Jesus teaches us to pray, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Thy will be done. Thy will be done. Do you know it was the late R.C. Sproul who said, The whole concept of the will of God is central to the Christian life and our understanding of the Bible.

[1 : 22] The whole concept of the will of God is central to the Christian life and our understanding of the Bible. But you know, what is the will of God?

And how do we understand the will of God? How do we discern and determine the will of God in our lives? And you know, we often hear or even use the phrase God willing or DV, which is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase, Di ovolente, which means God willing.

But what does that actually mean? What are we saying when we say God willing? What are we praying about when we pray Thy will be done? And why does Jesus ask us to pray that God's will would be done?

Is God's will not always done? And you know, what is free will? What do we actually do? We actually have free will. What do we mean by free will?

Or is it really just God's will and not really free will? You know, there's some of the questions that I like us to think about this evening as we come to consider the third petition in the Lord's prayer, Thy will be done.

[2 : 35] Because as you know, we're studying the Lord's prayer and we're seeking to understand the petitions which Jesus gave to his church in order to help us follow the Lord's prayer and ultimately frame our own prayers.

And as we've discovered so far in our study, the opening words, our Father which art in heaven, they're the preface. These words are the preface to the Lord's prayer.

And they teach us that we're to come to God as little children and we're to pray to God the Father through God the Son by the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Then following the preface to the Lord's prayer, there are six petitions in the Lord's prayer with the first three petitions focusing upon God's glory and the last three petitions focusing upon God's grace, which means that as a whole, the Lord's prayer is all about God's glory and God's grace. The Lord's prayer is all about God's glory and God's grace. Therefore the first petition of the Lord's prayer is hallowed be Thy name.

[3 : 45] And that teaches us that we're to regard the name of God as holy. God's name is to be hallowed and that when we pray, we're to seek to glorify God's nature and glorify God's name.

And the second petition of the Lord's prayer, which we consider last Lord's day is Thy Kingdom come. And that petition teaches us that we're to pray that the kingdom of hell will be abolished, that the kingdom of heaven will advance, and that the kingdom of holiness will appear.

Thy kingdom come. But then this evening we're considering the third petition of the Lord's prayer. Thy will be done.

And I'd like us to think about this under three headings. Three headings that relate to God's will. The decree of God's will, the declaration of God's will, and the discernment of God's will.

The decree of God's will, the declaration of God's will, and the discernment of God's will. So first of all, the decree of God's will, the decree of God's will.

[5 : 02] You know, in a monarchy, it's the will of the sovereign. It's the will of the king. It's the will of the supreme ruler that has priority. And you know, that's who God is.

God is revealed to us in the Bible as the king in his kingdom. He's the king of kings and the Lord of lords. He's Lord over all. He's sovereign.

And he rules and overrules in every area and aspect of this world. Because as the Bible says, he's enthroned on high.

And his throne is from everlasting to everlasting. And his throne is a throne of holiness, righteousness, and judgment. Therefore, it's not the will of the people that has priority.

It's not the will of the individual that has priority. It's not the will of a congregation that has priority.

It's not even the will of a minister or elders or a presbytery or a denomination that has priority.

[6 : 02] It's the will of God that has priority. Because he's our sovereign. He's our king. He's our supreme ruler. He's the one who reigns over heaven and earth.

And so when we speak about the decree of God's will, we mean that as our king, whatever he commands to come to pass is according to his sovereign decree.

And you know, this is what the the Catechism explains to us in question seven. The Catechism says, the decrees of God are his eternal purpose.

According to the counsel of its own will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. And so the decrees of God's will in which God has commanded and willed to happen, everything to happen from all eternity.

These things have happened according to God's will. And then the Catechism, it actually goes on to explain that God executes his decrees. He executes his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

[7 : 18] Because in his work of creation, as monarch, as king, as sovereign, God has decreed, God has willed the universe into being.

You know, when God issued his sovereign decree, let there be light. You know, his command was instantly and immediately obeyed by all the elements and atoms and molecules.

And as Genesis one explains, when God said, let there be light, there was light. And you know, whenever God issued his decree of let there be, you see it throughout the whole of Genesis one, whenever he issued the decree of let there be, there was an instant and immediate obedience to God's command.

God decreed it and it was done. And that's because the decree of God's will is unchanging. It's unalterable and it's unstoppable.

You know, we even see that in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus, who was God's creation, he had been dead four days.

[8 : 29] The comment is that his body was stinking. His body had been imbibed and yet it was decaying. And what we see in John 11 is that when Jesus, who is king in the kingdom of heaven, when Jesus willed that Lazarus would be resurrected, when he issued that command, Lazarus come forth.

Lazarus came out of the tomb. He didn't disobey. Lazarus responded immediately and instantly to the sovereign decree of King Jesus.

The God man decreed it and it was done. But you know, as sovereign king, God has not only executed his decrees in his works of creation.

He has also executed his decree in his works of providence. And again, the catechism. The catechism, my friend, it's a wonderful document. And you know, we will do well to memorize it and have it at our fingertips or know it in our heart.

The catechism again affirms to us that God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, powerful, preserving, ungoverning, all his creatures and all their actions.

[9 : 44] In other words, nothing happens in this world by luck or by chance. There are no chance meetings. There are no random events. Nothing takes place by accident because everything that happens in this world, it has been decreed.

It has been commanded. It has been willed according to the divine providence of God from all eternity. It has been decreed by God from all eternity.

And you know, that's why we use the word providence because the word providence means seen beforehand.

For every providence which takes place in this world, right down to the smallest detail, God has seen it all beforehand.

And he has seen it all beforehand because he decreed it to take place beforehand and he decreed it from all eternity. You know, that in my mind raises a question, doesn't it?

[10 : 51] Did God know that the coronavirus would take place in 2020? Yes, he did. Because God saw it beforehand.

From all eternity, God decreed that the coronavirus would take place in 2020. Therefore did God decree the deaths of all these people?

Yes, he did. You know, my friend, God even decreed the death of his own son. Because you know, it was in an eternal covenant of redemption that it was there that it was agreed and decreed between God the Father and God the Son.

It was agreed and decreed that God the Son would become man. And in the Persian of Jesus Christ, he would die condemned on a Roman cross in the place of sinners, sinners like you and I. Again that's what the Catechism refers to. The Catechism describes the death of Jesus as a special act of providence.

[11 : 55] It's the providence of salvation. It's a providence, something that was seen beforehand, a special act of providence where God decreed he would save a people for himself.

It was a special act of providence. And you know, that's what Paul picks up on in Ephesians 1 where he encourages the church by reminding us that we have been saved.

We've been redeemed not according to our will, but according to the counsel of God's will. Paul says God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heaven.

He places in Christ because he chose us in Christ. We were elect in Christ. We were predestined in Christ says Paul, and we were predestined from before the foundation of the world according to the purpose of his will.

And Paul he goes on to say that God in time, God in time has made known to us the mystery of his will through the cross of Jesus Christ.

[13 : 02] And through that cross and through the preaching of that cross, we have obtained an inheritance according to the counsel of his will.

And you know, this is why Peter could also say God is not willing that any should perish. God is not willing that any of the elect should perish.

God is not willing that any who have been decreed to be saved from all eternity should perish. But that all of them, every single last one of them should come to repentance.

And that's what Jesus affirms too. He said this is the Father's will. That I should lose none of them that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

My Christian friend, you are a child of God tonight and your salvation is safe and secure tonight because through a special act of providence, God decreed from all eternity that you would be his.

[14 : 19] You would be his. But you know, God not only decreed when, where and how Jesus would die. He has also decreed when, where and how both you and I will die.

Because you know, the Bible reminds us that from all eternity, God has decreed the day of our birth and the day of our death. The Bible reminds us that to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven, a time to be born and a time to die.

And that season is appointed and decreed by God because it's appointed unto man wants to die.

And after that, the judgment and you know, even the day of judgment has to be decreed from all eternity.

For as Jesus said, no one knows the day nor the hour, not even the angels of heaven nor the sun, but the Father only. And if the day of our death has been appointed, if the day of judgment has been appointed, Jesus says, therefore, you must be ready.

You must be ready. And my friend, the only way for us to be ready is by listening and obeying the declaration of God's will.

[15 : 38] The declaration of God's will. That's what we see. Secondly, the declaration of God's will. So we see the decree of God's will. But secondly, the declaration of God's will.

You know, we said earlier that in a monarchy, it's the will of the sovereign. It's the will of the king. It's the will of the supreme ruler that has priority.

And because God is our sovereign king and he is supreme ruler in heaven and on earth, his will is priority. And as our monarch, God has made his will known to us because God's declared will is God's declared word.

God's declared will is God's declared word. In fact, in a monarchy, the word of the sovereign is law. That's why both governments in Westminster and Hollywood, they govern the nation on behalf of and in the name of our sovereign, the Queen Elizabeth.

And they instill and implement laws in order to rule and regulate our behavior because in a monarchy, the word of the sovereign is law.

[16:50] But you know, for Queen Elizabeth, she knows in her own heart that she is subject to a greater sovereign who rules over and over rules her sovereignty.

Therefore as the greater sovereign, God has instilled and implemented laws in order to rule and regulate our behavior because the word of the sovereign is law.

And you know, we have received the word of the sovereign. We have received God's law in the form of the Ten Commandments. God has made his will known to us because God's declared will is God's declared word.

God's will is God's word. Therefore, if we want to know God's will for our lives, then we must read God's word. And you know, my friend, you look at the Ten Commandments and they're saying to us, this is the will of God for your life.

You shall not have any other gods before me. This is the will of God. You shall not carve or create any idol or bow down and worship it.

[17:56] This is the will of God. You shall not take the Lord's name in vain. This is the will of God. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. This is the will of God. Honor your father and your mother.

This is the will of God. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not covet. This is the will of God. My friend, God's declared will is God's declared word.

Therefore if we want to know God's will for our lives, then we must read God's word. We must read God's word. But you know, unlike God's decreed will, which is always obeyed, and it's obeyed in earth as it is in heaven, to the point that not even a dead Lazarus can disobey God's decreed will. But you know, God's declared will, which is his word. God's declared will can and is disobeyed. And it's disobeyed because we have all been given a free will.

But you know, as Martin Luther pointed out to Erasmus in his work, the bondage of the will, Luther said that until we come to Christ, our free will is actually in bondage.

[19:18] It's in bondage to sin. And you know, it's our sin and disobedience of God's declared will, God's word. It's our sin and disobedience of God's word that creates a clear distinction between earth and heaven.

Because you know, God's declared will, which is God's declared word, it's always obeyed in heaven. God's declared will is obeyed by the angels and the archangels and all the saints who have passed into glory.

They always obey God's will in heaven because there's no sin in heaven. And because there's no sin in heaven, they've been brought into conformity with God's declared will, God's law.

They glory in the law of God. They glorify God and they enjoy him by their obedience to God's declared will.

Therefore in heaven, there's no conflict. There's no conflict between the creator and the creation. There's no struggle between the sovereign and his subjects because in heaven, they always obey God's will.

[20:32] But sadly, the same can't be true about what happens on earth because God's declared will, God's word, it's not always done in earth as it is in heaven.

For as sinners, we reject God's rule, we contest God's commandments, we dispute God's decrees, we stand up to God's sovereignty and we sin because we think that we'll find joy elsewhere.

We think that we'll find joy outside of God's declared will. We think that we'll find joy in pleasure.

That's why sin is so appealing and attractive and alluring.

But you know, there's a vast difference between joy and pleasure. In fact, there's an eternal difference between joy and pleasure because you know, my friend, we were created.

Our chief end, the reason we exist and the purpose for our life is that we find joy in God's declared will. Our purpose in life, our chief end is to find joy in God's declared will because as we said earlier,

God's glory is our priority.

[21 : 46] He's our sovereign, he's our king, he's our supreme ruler in heaven and on earth and God's declared will, found in God's declared word is that we glorify him and enjoy him forever.

As you know, that's what the first catechism teaches us, that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. And you know, although it's a catechism that we learned as a child, it's something that we need to keep on learning, isn't it?

Because in order to glorify God and to enjoy God, we must obey God's declared will. We must obey God's word. We must seek and strive to submit to God's will rather than declaring our own will.

My friend, that's how we glorify and enjoy God forever. And you know, it's interesting that those in heaven, they are always glorifying, they're always enjoying God because they're obeying God's will. That's why we regard the final state of salvation as glorification because it's in heaven that we're glorified. And it's in heaven that we glorify and enjoy God in all its fullness.

[23 : 07] But you know, that process of glorification, it begins here on earth. The process of salvation to fully and completely glorifying and enjoying God, it begins here.

It begins with our election, our predestination, our regeneration, our justification, adoption and sanctification, the process toward the fullness of joy and glory.

It begins here when the Holy Spirit makes us willing to submit to God's will.

Because you know, my Christian friend, there was a day in your life and there was certainly a day in my life where we were unwilling to obey God's declared will.

We were unwilling to obey God's word. There was a day when we had no care or concern for God's commandments. There was a day when we didn't want to glorify God. We didn't want to enjoy God.

[24 : 09] But when the Holy Spirit began to work in our heart and in our lives, he not only convinced us of our sin and misery, and he not only enlightened our minds and the knowledge of Christ, but he also renewed our will.

He renewed our will. He made us willing in a day of his power to the point that we came to submit and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ on earth as it is in heaven.

And you know, that's what we're praying for in the Lord's prayer. That's what we're praying for when we pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We're praying that not only we ourselves will be made willing to submit and surrender to God's will, but also that those around us, in our homes and in our families, in our community and in our country, that they will be made willing in a day of his power to submit and to surrender to God's declared will.

Because you know, my friend, it's only then, it's only then that we'll begin to glorify God and enjoy him in all its fullness.

It's only when we're made willing and have that renewed will that we want to glorify God and enjoy him in all its fullness.

[25 : 31] It's only then that we'll begin to possess that heavenly atmosphere on earth. That heavenly atmosphere on earth.

You know, it was once said about the Puritan, Richard Sibbs, that he was a man who earnestly sought to live according to God's will, God's word.

And you know, he had such a heavenly atmosphere. He had such a desire to glorify God and to enjoy God. He had such a heavenly atmosphere about him that he was known as the heavenly Dr. Sibbs.

The heavenly Dr. Sibbs. You know, there was actually a poem written about Richard Sibbs describing his heavenly Christian character conduct and conversation.

The poem was, let this just praise, let this just praise be given to that blessed man that heaven was in him before he was in heaven.

[26 : 33] Heaven was in him before he was in heaven. You know, it's a beautiful description of a Christian, a Christian who wants to glorify and enjoy God on earth before they reach heaven.

My friend, when we pray, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. We're praying that more and more people will submit and surrender to God's declared will.

We're praying that they will taste heaven while on earth. And so we've considered the decree of God's will and the declaration of God's will.

But then lastly, we see the discernment of God's will, the discernment of God's will. Now discerning God's will in our lives, it's very important.

But as you know, it's also very difficult. And it's made more difficult when we ignore God's declared will, God's word. Because as we said, God's declared will is God's declared word.

[27 : 37] And God's declared word, which is the Bible, and as the Catechism describes, it is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Therefore, if we want to know God's declared will for our lives, then we must read God's declared word. If we want to know God's will, we have to read God's word.

But you know, I often hear people saying to me that, well, God told me to do this. Or I believe that God is directing me here. Or this is God's will for my life.

But you know, and I want to be clear on this. If what we believe to be God's will, if it contradicts, confuses or conflicts with God's declared and revealed will, which is God's declared and revealed word, then it's not God's will.

It's not God's will. If what we believe to be God's will, if it contradicts, confuses or conflicts with God's declared will, then it's not God's will.

[28 : 48] And the reality is we're probably acting according to our own will or being directed by our thoughts or our feelings or our emotions or what other people say.

And that can be very misleading. But you know, I'm a firm believer that we should have a scriptural warrant when we're discerning God's will.

We should have a scriptural warrant when we're discerning God's will. And you know, we see that in the example of the reformer, Martin Luther. He was someone who believed in the importance of God's word directing our mind, our heart and our will.

And from his experience with the Roman Catholic Church, Luther saw what happens when we act according to our will and not according to God's word.

And Luther said, feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the word of God, not else is worth believing.

[29 : 49] Therefore when we're discerning God's will, we should seek to be directed by God's word. Because you know, if we're fed up with our job, or if we've fallen out with somebody at work and think we should move on, or if we fancy a new challenge, you know, that doesn't necessarily mean that God is telling us to do something else.

You know, that's not living according to God's will. That's wanting to make our will God's will, which is not glorifying at all to God.

Now I know that the Bible doesn't have direct verses that tell us to apply for a new job, or get married, or have children, or move house. There are no direct verses that even tell you to apply for the ministry, or go to the mission field, or serve the Lord in some capacity.

But you know, God's word does speak to us when we seek God's will in prayer. God's word speaks to us when we seek God's will in prayer.

In fact, when it comes to discerning God's will, I believe that we should be reading not just one book, but three books. Not one book, but three books. And we'll call these three books the Book of Power, the Book of Providence, and the Book of Prayer.

[31 : 10] Three books, the Book of Power, the Book of Providence, and the Book of Prayer. The Book of Power is of course the Bible. It's the only rule to direct us. Because God's declared word is God's declared will, which gives us guidance and direction in our lives.

God's word gives us direction. But you know, alongside the Book of Power, we must also read the Book of Providence. Because as we said, none of the circumstances or situations in our lives, none of them are there by chance.

There are no random events, no random phone calls, no random illnesses, no chance meetings, because God has sovereignly ordained every little detail in our lives, and He uses every little detail in our lives to cause us to correspond and conform to His will.

Which is why we need to read the Book of Prayer, the Book of Power, the Book of Providence, and the Book of Prayer. And in the Book of Prayer, we're enabled to discern God's will.

We're enabled to discern God's will through prayer. Not that our prayers are going to change God's mind. Or not that our prayers are going to alter God's will. In fact, it was Arcee Sproul who said, no prayer uttered in human history ever changed the will of God one bit.

[32 : 31] Because His will never needs to be changed. If He is sovereign, His will doesn't need to be changed. Because as we said, God's will has been decreed from all eternity.

And you know, some might respond and say, well, what's the point in praying then? If we can't change God's will or if we can't change God's mind, what's the point in praying? Is prayer not futile? If our sovereign God knows what we're going to ask before we even ask it, and our prayers won't change anything anyway, what's the point in praying? But you know, my friend, prayer does change things. It certainly does. Because prayer changes our will to submit and surrender to God's will.

That's what happens when we're praying. Prayer is changing our will to submit and surrender to God's will. And that's what we're praying for in the Lord's prayer when we pray, Thy will be done. [33 : 38] We're praying that we will be encouraged and enabled to submit and surrender our will to God's will. And you know, that's what the leper discovered, wasn't it?

That's what the leper discovered when he came to Jesus with his debilitating illness. He submitted and he surrendered his will to God's will because he said to Jesus, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean. And Jesus said, I will be clean. And that's how we should frame our prayers.

Lord if you're willing. Lord if you're willing. You know, I always remember my mother speaking about the Reverend Norman MacLeod, who was the minister in Kalanish.

He was also Reverend Kenny I. MacLeod's father. And my mother would often say that Reverend Norman MacLeod, he would conclude his prayers by saying, answer our prayers if it please the Lord.

[34 : 46] Answer our prayers if it please the Lord. You know, he prayed knowing that every request he made to his sovereign king, it was subject to his decreed will, not to his will, but to God's decreed will.

Answer our prayers if it please the Lord. And you know my friend, and with this I'll close, if there's ever a conflict between your will and God's will, which will do you think should give way?

Whose will must prevail? And of course Jesus is teaching us in the Lord's prayer that the will of our sovereign must prevail because to go against the will of our sovereign is sin.

And you know Jesus, he practiced what he preached because when he was in the garden of Gethsemane, you remember he was there on his knees, sweating as it were, great drops of blood. And he was sweating because of the prospect of being made sin for us. He was sweating at the prospect of the cross before him. And yet he submitted and he surrendered to the will of his father, confessing, not my will, but thine be done.

[36 : 07] Not my will, but thine be done. There was by doing the Father's will that Jesus knew that there was joy set before him as he went to endure the cross.

Jesus, by doing the Father's will, he knew that there was joy set before him as he endured the cross. My friend, that's what it is to pray thy will be done.

Not that we get what we want, but that we'll be encouraged and enabled to submit and to surrender to God's sovereign will.

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O heavenly Father, may I give thanks to thee for thy will. We thank the Lord that thou art the God who has decreed things from all eternity.

[37 : 15] And some of these things are hidden from us. That even the day of our death is hidden from us and the day of judgment. But we thank the Lord that despite not knowing these things, thou art the one who has declared thy will to us in thy word.

Thou hast made thyself known. Thou hast called us to live according to thy word. And that thy word it is the only rule to direct us on how we may glorify God and enjoy him forever.

And Lord, we pray that we would submit and surrender our lives to thy will and to thy way and that we would walk in thy paths, that we would seek to bring glory to thy name.

Help us, Lord, when we want our own will and we want our own way. Help us to conform to thy will and to do all things to thy glory.

O forgive us, then we ask. Guide us in the week that lies ahead and help us, Lord, in every providence to know that the Lord in it, a God who is sovereign, a God who is there in the detail, who is ruling over and overruling in every area of our lives.

[38 : 27] Do us good and we pray, go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 40.

Psalm 40, we're singing in the Sing Psalms version and we're singing from verse 7 down to the verse Marked 10. Psalm 40 at verse 7.

And in Psalm 40 is a Messianic Psalm. It's a Psalm which speaks very clearly about Jesus. And particularly verses 7 to 10, it's Jesus here speaking about the cross and submitting to the Father's will.

And that's what we're singing about in these verses. Verse 7 says, then I declare, this is Jesus declaring, then I declare, Lord, I have come. It's written off me in the scroll, that's in the Bible. I want to do your will, my God. Your law is in my heart and soul. In the assembly when it met, your justice I proclaimed abroad. I did not seal my lips at all.

[39 : 34] You know all this about me, Lord. I did not hide within my heart your saving grace and righteousness. In the assembly I proclaimed your steadfast love and faithfulness.

So Psalm 40 in the Sing Psalms version from verse 7 to 10, to God's praise. Then I declare, Lord, I have come.

It's written off me in the scroll. I want to do your will, my God.

Your law is in my heart and soul.

In the assembly when it met, your justice I proclaimed abroad.

[40 : 46] I did not seal my lips at all.

I did not hide within my heart your saving grace and righteousness.

In the assembly I proclaimed your steadfast love and faithfulness.