

Battle of the Wills Matt 6:9-11

If we were to summarize the experience most of us have felt while praying, it is passionately failing to place a square peg in a round hole. We keep seeking new ways to make the square fit, but each attempt leaves us feeling more frustrated and embarrassed. We have discovered so far from scripture, and we will build upon today that this square peg is our will. They never seem to fit when we try to force our will into God's plan.

Prayer is the lifelong pursuit of conforming our desires to God's will for His glory and our joy. The question the disciples wanted to know from their Master was, how is that accomplished? The religious hypocrites of the day saw prayer as a platform to gain the praise of others. Jesus warns that those who seek the recognition of others will receive their reward, a fleeting tribute. Jesus also warned about vain repetition as if God needs to hear your requests with passionate dedication before he will respond. God doesn't need to be convinced that your will is a good idea.

Matt. 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

These are the last instructions from Jesus before he launches into how they should understand how to pray. Think of it this way; he knows what you need. Therefore, you should pray this way so you, too, can learn what it is you need.

QUESTION: Who has thought this teaching from Jesus was discouraging? Has anyone struggled with why they should pray, knowing God already knows everything?

The foolishness of our hearts thinks we know what is best for us. We do not. Otherwise, Jesus would have moved on to the next question. Instead, our kind and loving savior stooped down as a gentle and compassionate brother and said...

*Matt. 6:9 Pray then like this:
"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.*

Heidelberg Catechism (1563)

122. What is the first petition?

...magnify and praise you in all Your works, in which Your power, goodness, justice, mercy and truth shine forth; and further, that we so order our whole life, our thoughts, words, and deeds, that your name may not be blasphemed but honored and praised on our account.

Jesus begins teaching the disciples that the very first request they make to their Father is that His name would be upheld and separated because of its value above all other names. Ask your Father that his name raises to the most extraordinary and significant part of your life.

“It is of unspeakable advantage to us that God reigns and that he receives the honour which is due to him.” - John Calvin.

Can we say our heart's greatest desire, which pumps energy into our spiritual veins, comes from knowing that God's name is being brought to the highest level of divine praise among every tribe, tongue, and nation?

QUESTION: Why do you think you struggle to see God's glory as an “unspeakable advantage” to our daily lives?

We disagree with Calvin that to hallow the name of God is for our most significant advantage? We don't know how to match our sinful desires with God's glory. We run to prayer when our house of cards is about to crumble. Then we need God's help to protect what we have built. It never sounds ridiculous in our minds, but when we stand back and observe our actions, our desires are full of self-preservation and self-promotion.

Listen to how Paul described the aim and focus of his life:

Phil. 1:20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul believes his joy is found in accomplishing God's will in life or by death. This would perfectly flow with Jesus' teaching on prayer.

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

98: What is prayer?

Prayer is offering our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will.

QUESTION: How does this help clarify how and what we pray for?

For thousands of years, Christians have always seen prayer as the way we form our desires into the will of God.

What are the results of our lives according to James:

James 4:1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you?

James 4:2 You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

When our passion is God's glory, our actions follow. We no longer fight to preserve our will because we champion God's glorious will. We always have answers to prayer because we

know that we always need to ask so that God, through us, would glorify himself. When we fail and run back to our desires forsaking His name's glory, how is it God deals with us?

James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

We are not called to try harder, work harder, or be better. We are called back into His grace. Back to where we started. Back with empty hands. Fear is not how we approach prayer but in grace with great expectations. We know God will accomplish His will, and we have the joy of bringing Him praise as it unfolds. This type of life becomes our energy source; it becomes our spiritual "food," as Jesus referenced in John 4:34.

QUESTION: How does this help you pray while suffering or heartache? How do you pray for others when you see them suffering?

QUESTION: Why do you think it is essential that we pray this way in the presence of each other?

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PRAISE, PRAYER, AND CONFESSION:

- What can you offer to the Father in glory?
- What is a sin you need to confess?
- What is a burden we can carry?
- What can we take to our Father in prayer?