

VI. The Lord's Prayer in Biblical Perspective  
"Petition #3: 'Thy Will Be Done'—*Deo Volentes*"

Matthew 6

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This is the word of God. Matthew 6:5–15.

**5** "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **6** But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. **7** "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. **8** Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. **9** Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

**10** Your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

**11** Give us this day our daily bread,

**12** and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

**13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

*(For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever,  
Amen. – this is omitted in some manuscripts)*

The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God abides forever. May God bless this His Word to the heart of His people.

I think I can safely say without being guilty of preacher exaggeration that I do not believe a week has gone by in my ministry life that somebody did not come to me and say, "Pastor I need some help about God's will for my life." What about God's will for one's life? Some say, "I need to make a decision about a job, about dating someone, about college, about the military service, about a car, about a house. Pastor can you help me understand God's will for my life?" What is absolutely amazing is that the Puritans will write hymns like William Williams wrote in the 1700's that said, "Guide me O thou great Jehovah" where they would sing and pray about God's guidance but when I went back through the sermons of John Owen, John Flavel, John Brown, John Newton, (I think one needed to have the name "John" to be a Christian preacher back then), none of them were on how to know God's will for one's life. Today it seems like there are many sermons preached on how to know God's will in one's life. Why is that and why did they not preach that back then even when they would pray for it and sing about it?

One may want to put a sign up in front of this sermon that says, "Danger, you may get totally reconstructed in how one thinks about following God's will for one's life." It may be a reconstruction time as we look at this third petition. When one studies God's Word remember that every word and every order is important. There is a reason that this is the third petition and not the second one or the first one. But there is a reason that the first petition and the second petition end up in this one. When Jesus

starts teaching us to pray He knows we were built to pray, that we have been praying and that we have been disciplined by the world to pray and so before He teaches us to pray He teaches us how not to pray. He says, "Don't pray like religious hypocrites or like superstitious pagans. Put off those prayers but when you pray, starting praying, and pray, this way." He then gets us started praying.

The first thing He teaches us is how to begin prayer with an invocation of adoration..."Our Father who art in heaven." I can come intimately and familiarly yet reverently to the thrice holy God. "Thou art in heaven"...intimacy yet adoration as one comes to God. Then He says, "Now here are your requests." The first one is "Hallowed by Your Name." There is a reason this is the first request and every other request flows from this one. The reason is that my supreme passion in life is that Christ is glorified, exalted and honored. If Jesus is lifted up then He will draw all men to Himself. The key in my life is to glorify and enjoy Him forever. If that is to be done, what needs to happen?

It is petition two, the rule and reign of the Gospel of grace, the Kingdom of God must extend throughout the whole world. Men and women following Christ where their businesses, their job, their family, their neighborhood make a statement for Him in how they conduct themselves in life as they are spreading and spreading the rule, reign, Word and love of Christ which will bring the Kingdom throughout all the world. If I want God's name to be hallowed, lifted up, then the Kingdom must spread. If I want the Kingdom to spread then now we come to petition three. Here is where the rubber meets the road.

Am I willing to say, submit and embrace, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"? When Christ centered disciples make that prayer request they want others to see them with contentment in God's will and they see a commitment to obey God's will. They pray that others see a worshiping people who give God thanks and who not only love life, but seek to give God praise along with committed intentional obedience. Hear again this passage in Matthew 6:9, 10, "**9 Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. 10 Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**

In this phrase "Your will be done" God's will is God's will but the Bible teaches that God's will has two sides. One side is what is known as God's decreed will, His purposed will. Sometimes it is called in the Bible His secret will that unfolds in life. So what is God's secret will? Go read a history book. That is God's secret will as it unfolds in life. A man came into a restaurant one time and saw a Christian guy sitting there reading a newspaper. The man said, "What are doing there?" The guy said, "I'm catching up on God's will." The other side of the coin is God's revealed will, His command will, His precept will. How does one know God's secret will? God's providence unfolds it. It is encountered in one's life. How does one know God's revealed will? It is in His Word. When one embraces God's secret will one is never called to violate His revealed will.

Here is an example of this from the Bible. In Deuteronomy 29:29 before Moses dies he sends them into Israel and says to them, "*The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that **we may do all the words of this law.***" So God's secret will is something one experiences in life and God's revealed will is what is in His authoritative teaching, His

Word and why do we have that? We have it so that “we may do His will” that His will would be done. To find out God’s secret will, read a newspaper, read a history book or just live life.

I had an appointment last Friday and I thought I got up to leave in plenty of time. I got on highway 280 and ended up 30 minutes late to my appointment. Somebody had picked that moment I got on 280 to transport a two and a half lane wide generator toward Birmingham going seven miles an hour. I realized this is God’s secret will for me. Now God’s revealed will refers to how I am supposed to respond to this. So when I passed the truck driver hauling this load I smiled and said, “Hi there.” There are certain gestures I am not supposed to make. There are certain words I am not supposed to say. I am supposed to be content. “God you are doing something here in my life so I want to respond to that.” God’s revealed will deals with what and how I do something. God’s secret will is what I am encountering and I am supposed to be content in it.

To illustrate this further one needs to look at 1 Thessalonians 5. In this chapter Paul is speaking to the church of Thessalonica which is undergoing persecution and some are being put to death for Jesus Christ. As they are experiencing persecution Paul concludes this Epistle by saying this to them in 1 Thessalonians 5:15–18, **15** “*See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*” Obviously the will of God in this passage is referring to His secret will that has now unfolded in their life for at the sake of honoring Jesus Christ they have been called to a station. The station is persecution to honor Christ. He does not say give thanks *for* everything but He does say give thanks *in* everything. He tells them to “Rejoice always.” He wants their response in the midst of encountering God’s secret will to be praise to God.

To illustrate the other side of the coin one needs to look at 1 Thessalonians 4:1–3a; **1** “*Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk (how to live) and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. 2 For you know what instructions (the Word of God) we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 3 For this is **the will of God**, your sanctification.*” God’s will is that one pursues holiness in life. A believer has a perfect holiness that has been given to them which is their salvation in Jesus and now because that believer loves Jesus they are to pursue holiness and sanctification. Then Paul wants to be very specific about what the believer is to do in their pursuit of holiness in the verses that follow. 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7, **3** “*For this is **the will of God**, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*” He picks out the example of the God given desire for sex in which He says this is not to be done in immorality. It is to be done in the context of marriage with purity, purity outside the marriage, chastity outside of marriage now make the right choices according to God’s will. Which will is He talking about here? It is God’s revealed will, what has been written out for us.

“God, we want Your will to be done, secret and revealed, on earth as it is in heaven.” Who is doing God’s will in heaven? Angels are doing God’s will in heaven. So as His disciples He is telling us to pray for and commit to doing God’s will on earth the way the angels are doing God’s will there. So how do the angels respond to the issue of God’s will? There are a lot of texts in the Bible that give the answer to this but here is one of them that kind of pulls it all together for us. Psalm 103:20 says, “*Bless the LORD, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word!*” The angels are blessing the Lord which is another form of worshipping the Lord and they are doing His Word, His will. Have you ever heard someone say, “That old guy is down to earth”? Christians ought to be the most down to earth people in the world. They ought to be putting down to earth the way the angels live in heaven, contentment and rejoicing in the midst of encountering the adversities, trials, sufferings and the blessings ending up by saying, “God give me the grace to give You glory.”

So how does one know His revealed will? To know God’s secret will is through His providence and one is to respond with contentment, rejoicing and worship through God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit in one’s life. To know God’s revealed will is to be in His Word and one’s response is to do His Word not for salvation but for one’s Savior. His doing got one saved and now that one is saved one needs to do His will here the way it is done in the heavens.

So if that is what this phrase means in the Lord’s Prayer how can one practically embrace that in their life? How can this Prayer be understood in its purpose and what it reflects in one’s heart desires? Here are three practical takeaways that will help one in this area. Here is the first one. To bring this prayer into one’s prayer life and therefore into one’s life the first thing one learns from this request is the purpose of prayer is not to line God up with one’s will but to line one up with God’s will. Prayer is not an instrument or a leash where one pulls God into doing what one wants. It is not something that if done in just the right ritual, or just the right way then one can manipulate God for whatever it is they want in life. The disciple’s prayer, the Lord’s Prayer is an instrument to line the one praying up with God’s will and declare their greatest joy which is for His name to be hallowed through the spread of His Kingdom as one does His will on the earth even as the angels do it in the heavens. What a challenge!

I see that and realize that in my life. We pray about everything. What do you want to make known to God? God loves for you to reason with Him. I remember when certain members of my family did not know the Lord and I would pray “God if you do this in their life, here is what I see is going to happen. God I think you need to do this.” I think God loves that but by no means did I think when I was going through that that God was in the heavens going, “Oh my goodness, I didn’t think of that.” I know God knows everything but God delights in us bringing to Him our heart, our passions, what we think ought to happen, where we think it ought to go but how He loves for you to say, “But You’re my Father and it’s not my will I want done. I trust You my Father. It’s Your will I want done. So God, not my will but Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Thy will be done.

Much of the Christian life is a battle of the wills and what is trying to be brought across here is “God I want Your will to be done.” Here is where I am going to drop a bombshell if I can word it appropriately. I believe our being consumed with sermons

and lessons on “how to find God’s will” is because we are trying to traffic in God’s secret will. We are all trying to know God’s secret will. One may think, “Which side of the street should I walk on to be in God’s will today? If I make the wrong choice I’m going to be out of God’s will.” Here is the key. A Christ centered disciple not only knows the point is not to get God lined us with their will but to get themselves lined up with His and that the will of God is channel markers and not a dot to try and hit. Here is God’s secret will. Here is God’s revealed will. Does one need to know God’s secret will? No, one just needs to respond to it with praise to God. How does one do God will? One does His revealed will which is in His Word. One may say, “Well, pastor who do I marry?” A response would be, “A Christian.” One may say, “Is he the right Christian?” A response would be, “Is he spiritually committed and able to lead you to the next level for Jesus Christ? Is he committed to love you as Christ loved the church?” Another one may say, “What college should I go to?” A response would be, “Why are you going? Who are you going to learn from? What are they teaching you?”

Our decisions in life are not reading Christian “tea leaves” so to speak. I knew this guy when he had to make a decision he would put his Bible on the window pane and opened the window. The next morning what ever page the Bible was blown to he would take his finger, circle it and wherever his finger landed he would read that verse and say, “Okay what is God telling me?” Now I do not know if this true or not but I heard one guy had put his finger on a verse and it said, “Judas went out and hung himself.” He said, “That can’t be right” so he put the Bible back up on the window and the pages blew some more. Then he put his finger back down and it said, “Go ye and do likewise.” He said, “That can’t be right” so he did it again and this time it said, “What you do, do quickly.” That is superstition and that is not the way one finds God’s will.

One time I was reading about a lady who was wondering if she was to go to Israel or not and she went home and saw somebody had called. The last three numbers that called were 7-4-7 and the flight she was going to take to Israel was 747 so she said, “That’s God’s will I’m supposed to go to Israel.” Goodness gracious just go buy a rabbit’s foot if you’re going to do that. That is not the way you find God’s will. Any decision you make in life that takes you out from obedience to God’s revealed will is not walking in God’s will. The channel markers stay in obedience to God’s revealed will and stays content and trusting in His secret will as you encounter it.

One may say, “What about fleeces Harry?” I am not into fleeces either. One may say, “Well, Gideon had one.” He had one because he did not believe God’s revealed will. Someone may say, “I’m going to put out a fleece and that is if the traffic lights from here on out are all green then I’m supposed to do this.” Gideon’s fleece was not a statement of faith; it was a statement that he did not have faith and it was God’s kindness to work with him in his lack of faith. God is kind to us. He will even work with us through our superstitions sometimes. So what do we need to do? We need to know God’s Word. The key is to know and do the Word of God. The key is to respond to God’s revealed will and walk in that with contentment in His secret will as He works in our life. Put the channel markers down in your life. “God help me process this so I honor You. I respond to it. I will follow You and let me be obedient to Your revealed will.”

One may say, “What branch of the military should I go in?” A response may be “Why are you going in the military? What are you going to do in the military? What kind

of soldier for Christ will you be in the soldier of this army?" Another may say, "What job should I take?" Here is a perfect example of this. I met a guy one time who said to me, "I don't know if I should take this job or not. I'm going to go check the school in the area, the shopping center, the housing market." He wrote me about a year and half later and said, "Pastor, I'm out of God's will. I should not have taken this job." I said, "Why?" He said, "My family is falling apart." I said, "Friend, I don't think the issue was the fact that you took this job. I think the issue was how you made the decision. You kept trying to read all the circumstances of life and you forgot God's revealed will." What did he forget? He forgot church. He checked out everything about the area except church. He got there and there was no preaching of the Word, no church to fellowship with, no people to work with. In God's providence we were able to step in and bring some people to him and in God's providence actually got a church established there. The point is that when you make decisions you want to make them according to the precepts of God's revealed will and not get obsessed with knowing God's secret will. If you make the choices of life consistently in obedience to God's Word then join the Marines, the Navy, the Air force because it does not matter. What are you going to do when you are there? How are you going to live for Jesus when you are there? Always make decisions not in violation to God's revealed will but in conformity to it and God will walk you right through life.

A son of this church Jay Kynard went to be with the Lord when he was 34 years old. This place was filled with business men and women from all over the world at his funeral. The person who gave the eulogy gave us the key why. When Jay Kynard was faced with decisions in life he did not try to read tea leaves. This is what he told everybody; do the next right thing. What is right from God's Word? Do that and trust the Lord. In all of my relationships and all of my responsibilities what is the next right thing to do?

The second takeaway poses this thought. Obviously in the phrase "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" shows that God's will is not done the same on earth as it is in heaven. So why is that? The second thing to understand is that the adversary to God's will on earth is "my" will. My will becomes more important than God's will. Adam was instructed by God how to respond to life. "Don't eat from that tree." His wife came and said, "Eat the tree." The judgment that came upon Adam said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife..." (Genesis 3:17). It was her will that became supreme and not My will and your will Adam became her will. One may say, "Harry when does my will bring me into conflict with God's revealed will?" It happens whenever anything or anyone takes the place of God's place of affection and allegiance in one's life. Our heart is constantly trying to manufacture an idol. It could be drinks, sex, money and whenever our will goes after that idol with affection and allegiance it brings us into conflict with God's will. Here is a hint. The hint is you have to know God's will and do God's will.

Another hint is to never put Jesus at the top of your list of priorities in life. One may think I have just made an error by making this statement. No, because Jesus is the list. One does not put Jesus at the top of one's life. He is your life and then Jesus will help you make the list from His Word. It is not "God, family, church, country, job..." No it is Jesus, my all in all. "Jesus, would you help me arrange my life with proper priorities? You are my life. Nothing else." Here is how you can get out of God's will. It

is when your family becomes more important than God's glory or when your children become more important to you than God's glory or when your marriage becomes more important than God's glory. It is then that you will make decisions outside of God's will. Whenever anything in idolatry rises up as a competitor for your affection and allegiance to Jesus Christ then your "will" will take over and God's "will" will be dismissed.

Here is one more scripture that shows God's promise and the problem. Psalm 32:8 says, "*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.*" That is God's promise. He says, "Here is My revealed will. I will give it to you and I will guide you in it." So what is the problem? Psalm 32:9 says, "*Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.*" This is the problem. Do not be a horse or mule but follow Jesus and trust Him. Jesus gave us an insight into this. When He was in the garden He was agonizing and sweating blood and then He said, "Father if there by any way that this cup can pass from Me then let it pass from Me, yet not My will be done but Thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39).

I am not telling you it is easy to follow God's revealed will in challenges of life. Jesus literally sweat blood over it. I am not saying it is comfortable either but I am saying that the key is to know and do God's will. Our will becomes supreme when something or someone comes ahead of our devotion to the Lord. Our devotion to the Lord must be full and complete. Jesus I love You so it is not my will but Your will.

One may be saying, "Pastor I made a wrong choice here, I made a wrong choice there and what should I do?" This leads into the third and final takeaway. Following God's will when one gets out of God's will is not an issue of Map Quest, it is GPS. What do I mean by that? There is this point I need to hit and if I miss that point then I need to back up and get on the right path. That is what Map Quest offers. It tells one to turn right here, turn left here, turn right here etc but when a person makes the wrong turn they have to go all the way back here and start over again. Now if one made the wrong choice and say did not marry a Christian they do not go back and start over again. It is GPS. I do not have one but I took a trip with a man who had one and we used it on this trip. Sure enough I missed a turn. Have you ever noticed that it seems like they always use a female voice? It really makes you feel right at home when you are driving. Well, when I missed the turn the voice says, "Recalculating, recalculating." That is the way God works. When one makes a wrong decision, recalculate. This is called grace. God is so gracious. When we falter, when we fail, when we get off course, we go to Him, we confess, we repent and God says, "Alright, recalculate. I'm going to get you back on course." So how does one then deal with that one they married outside of God's revealed will? God's revealed "will" will tell one how to deal with that. God's Spirit will empower one to bring them back to where they need to be. His grace is sufficient but you have to keep your eyes on Jesus.

What is now called Taiwan used to be called Formosa before the end of World War II. By the end of World War II it was liberated from Japanese control. To set up the next steps a Marine division was sent over to Taipei, the capital of Taiwan but as it had been liberated the harbor had not been cleared of all the mines that had been planted. This preacher who was a Marine at that time records what happened. He said, "We stood outside the harbor and a ship came out and guided us into the harbor. I

noticed that our captain stayed right on that ship and on the right was a marker and on the left was a marker. He stayed right on that ship until he got through that harbor.”

That is what I am trying to tell you about God’s will for your life. On the left side is God’s secret will. “God help me to stay in the channel marker and in everything give thanks to You even when I have to process it and it is difficult.” On the other side is God’s revealed will. “Father, I want to make decisions in obedience to Your will and I’ve got a Captain ahead of me leading me, Jesus the Author and Pioneer of my faith. I am keeping my eye on the harbor, hallowed be Your Name. Your glory is my objective. May Your Name be lifted up as Your will is done throughout the earth.”

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the moments together in Your Word. Thank You for the privilege to exalt Your Name. Father step one in the will of God is that we would come to Jesus as Lord and Savior and then Father as people come and commit their life to Jesus give them confidence that even when they are encountering the adversities of life You are working in their life, and even when they are dealing with the issues of life You will guide them with Your Word and it is trustworthy. Father as the angels worship You in the midst of all of Your perfect will and as the angels seek to do Your revealed will may it be done on earth in such a manner with us with praise and obedience. God, may Your Kingdom spread and may Your Name be exalted for Jesus sake, Amen.