

THE LORD'S PRAYER Chapter 2 The Address

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Transcript

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Chapter 2

The Address

"Hallowed be Thy name"

Matthew 6:9

"Hallowed be Thy name" is the first of the petitions of Christ's pattern prayer. They are seven in number, and are significantly divided into two groups of three and four respectively: the first three relate to the cause of God; the last four relate to our own daily concerns. A similar division is discernible in the Ten Commandments: the first five teach us our duty toward God (in the fifth, the parents stand to the child in the place of God); the last five teach us our duty toward neighbors. Our primary duty in prayer is to disregard ourselves and to give God the preeminence in our thoughts, desires, and supplications. This petition necessarily comes first, for the glorifying of God's great name is the ultimate end of all things. All other requests must be subordinate to this one and be in pursuance of it. We cannot pray aright unless the glory of God be dominant in our desires. We are to cherish a deep sense of the ineffable holiness of God and an ardent longing for the honoring of it. Therefore, we must not ask God to bestow anything that would contradict His holiness. "Hallowed be Thy name." How easy it is to utter these words without any thought of their solemn import! In seeking to ponder them, four questions are naturally raised in our minds. First, what is meant by the word hallowed? Second, what is signified by God's name? Third, what is the import of "hallowed be Thy name?" Fourth, why does this petition come first? First, the word hallowed is a term from Middle English used here to translate a form of the Greek verb *hagiazō*. This term is frequently translated "sanctified." It means to set apart for a sacred use." Thus, the words "hallowed be Thy name" signify the pious desire that God's matchless name might be revered, adored, and glorified, and that God might cause it to be held in the utmost respect and honor, that its fame might spread abroad and be magnified. Second, the name of God stands for God Himself, calling to the mind of the believer all that He is. We see this in Psalm 5:11: "Let them also that love Thy name [that is, Thyself] be joyful in Thee." In Psalm 20:1 we read, "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," that is, may the God of Jacob Himself defend thee. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Prov. 18:10), that is to say, Jehovah Himself is a strong tower. The name of God stands for the Divine perfections. It is striking to observe that when He "proclaimed the name of the Lord" to Moses, God enumerated His own blessed attributes (see Ex.

34:5-7). This is the true significance of the assertion that "they that know Thy name [that is, Thy wondrous perfections] will put their trust in Thee" (Ps. 9:10). But more particularly, the Divine name sets before us all that God has revealed to us concerning Himself. It is in such appellations and titles as the Almighty, the Lord of hosts, Jehovah, the God of peace, and our Father that He has disclosed Himself to us. Third, what thoughts did the Lord Jesus intend for us to entertain in our hearts when He taught us to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name"? First, in the widest sense, we are to plead thereby that God, "by His overruling providence, direct and dispose of all things to His own glory" (The Westminster Larger Catechism). Hereby we pray that God Himself sanctify His name—that He cause it, by His providence and grace, to be known and adored through the preaching of His Law and Gospel. Furthermore, we pray that His name might be sanctified and magnified in and by us. Not that we can add anything to God's essential holiness, but we can and should promote the manifestative glory of His holiness. That is why we are exhorted thus: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name" (Ps. 96:8). We do not have the power within ourselves to hallow the name of our God. Yet Christ instructs us, by putting an imperative, passive verb in our mouths, to command our Father, saying, "Let Thy name be hallowed!" In this mandatory petition, we are taught to call upon our Father to do what He must do, according to the tenor of the words that He spoke through Isaiah: "And concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isa. 45:11)! It is because God's name must be hallowed among His creatures that our Master instructs us so to pray. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Since our God has so clearly stated His mind, every true believer must desire the hallowing of God's name among men and must be determined to advance the revealed glory of God on the earth. We are to do this especially by prayer, since the power to accomplish this great end resides only in God Himself. By prayer we receive the empowering of the Holy Spirit to hallow and glorify God in our own thoughts, words, and deeds. By praying, "hallowed be Thy name," we beg that God, who is most holy and glorious, might enable us to acknowledge and honor Him as such. As Manton forcefully expressed it, In this petition the glory of God is both desired and promised on our part; for every prayer is both an expression of a desire and also an implicit vow or solemn obligation that we take upon ourselves to prosecute what we ask. Prayer is a preaching to ourselves in God's hearing: we speak to God to warn ourselves—not for His information, but for our edification.

Alas, that this necessary implication of prayer is not more insisted upon in the pulpit today, and more clearly perceived in the pew! We but mock God if we present to Him pious words and have no intention of striving with our might to live in harmony with them. For us to hallow or sanctify His name means that we give God the supreme place, that we set Him above all else in our thoughts, affections, and lives. This high purpose of life is antithetical to the example of the builders of the tower of Babel, who said, "Let us make us a name (Gen. 11:4), and of Nebuchadnezzar, who said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). The Apostle Peter commands us to "sanctify the Lord God in [our] hearts" (1 Pet. 3:15). An awe of His majesty and holiness should so fill our hearts that our whole inner beings bow in entire and willing subjection to Him. For this we must pray, striving to obtain right views and a deeper knowledge of Him, that we may worship Him aright and serve Him acceptably. This petition not only expresses the desire that God sanctify Himself in and through us, enabling us to glorify Him, but it also voices our longing that others may know, adore, and glorify Him. In the use of this petition we pray that the glory of God may be more and more displayed and advanced in the world in the course of His providence, that His Word may run and be glorified in the conversion and sanctification of sinners, that there may be an increase of holiness in all His people, and that all profanation of the name of God among men may be prevented and removed (John Gill).

Thus, this petition includes the asking of God to grant all needed effusions of the Spirit, to raise up faithful pastors, to move His churches to maintain a Scriptural discipline, and to stir up the saints to an exercise of their graces. Fourth, it is now obvious why this is the first petition in the Lord's Prayer, for it provides the only legitimate basis for all our other requests. The glory of God is to be our chief and great concern. When we offer this petition to our heavenly Father, we are saying, "Whatever comes to me, however low I may sink, no matter how deep the waters be through which I may be called to pass, Lord, magnify Thyself in and through me." Mark how blessedly this spirit was exemplified by our perfect Savior: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name" (John 12:27, 28). Though it was necessary for Him to be baptized with the baptism of suffering, yet the Father's glory was Christ's great concern. The following words beautifully summarize the meaning of this petition: O Lord, open our eyes that we may know Thee aright and may discern Thy power, wisdom, justice, and mercy; and enlarge our hearts that we may sanctify Thee in our affections, by making Thee our fear, love, joy, and confidence; and open our lips that we may bless Thee for Thine infinite goodness; yea, O Lord, open our eyes that we may see Thee in all Thy works, and incline our wills with reverence for Thy name appearing in Thy works, and grant that when we use any one of them, that we may honour Thee in our sober and sanctified use thereof (W. Perkins).

In conclusion, let us point out very briefly the uses to be made of this petition. (1) Our past failures are to be bewailed and confessed. We are to humble ourselves for those sins whereby we have hindered God's manifestative glory and profaned His name, such as pride of heart, coldness of zeal, stubbornness of will, and impiety of life. (2) We are to earnestly seek those graces whereby we may hallow His name: a fuller knowledge of Himself, an increase of holy fear in our hearts; increased faith, hope, love, and worship; and the right use of His gifts. (3) Our duties are to be faithfully practiced, that there may be nothing in our conduct that would cause His name to be blasphemed by unbelievers (Rom. 2:24). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

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