

Your Will, Not Mine

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of aligning our prayers with God's will and trusting His wisdom in all circumstances.

Scripture: Luke 22:42, Psalm 37:4, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 55:8-9, Matthew 7:7, John 14:13-14, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6-7, James 4:3, 1 John 5:14-15

Topics: "Prayer", "Submission to God's Will"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of understanding prayer in the context of God's will, warning against superficial readings of Scripture that lead to misconceptions about prayer's efficacy. He illustrates that while believers are encouraged to ask God for their desires, they must ultimately submit to His wisdom and plan, recognizing that God's answers may differ from their requests. Miller points out that true prayer involves a deep acquiescence to God's will, as demonstrated by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. He encourages believers to trust in God's love and wisdom, understanding that what they desire may not always align with what is best for them. The sermon concludes with the reminder that the highest form of prayer is surrendering all requests to God, trusting in His perfect plan.

Transcript

Many people only half read their Bibles. They skim the surface, and fail to get the full, deep meaning of the golden words. They get but half-truths, and half-truths oftentimes are misleading. Even inspired sentences standing alone, do not always give the full and final word on the doctrine or the duty which they present. Frequently it is necessary to bring other inspired sentences, and set them side by side with the first, in order to get the truth in its full-rounded completeness. When the Tempter quoted certain Scriptures to our Lord, he answered, "It is written again." The plausible word in its isolation was but a fragment, and other words must be brought to stand beside it to give it its true meaning.

Many mistaken conceptions of the doctrine of prayer come from this superficial reading of the Scriptures. One person finds the words, "Ask, and it shall be given you;" and, searching no farther, he concludes that he has a key for the unlocking of all God's storehouses; that he can get anything he wants. But he soon discovers that the answers do not come as he expected; and he becomes discouraged, and perhaps loses faith in prayer. The simple fact is, that this word of Christ standing alone does not contain the full truth about prayer. "It is written again." He must read more deeply, and, gathering all our Lord's sayings on this subject, combine them in one complete statement. There are conditions to this general promise. The

word "ask" must be carefully defined by other Scriptures; and, when this is done, the statement stands true, infallible, and faithful.

One of the oftentimes forgotten conditions of all true and acceptable prayer, is the final reference of every desire and importunity to the divine will. After all our faith, sincerity, and importunity--our requests must still be left to God, with confidence that he will do what is best. For how do we know that the thing we ask would really be a blessing to us, if it came? Surely God knows better than we can know; and the only sure and safe thing to do is to express our desire with earnestness and faith, and then leave the matter in his hands. It is thus that we are taught, in all the Scriptures, to make our prayers to God.

But do we quite understand this? Is it not something far more profound than many of us think? It is not mere silent acquiescence after the request has been refused; such acquiescence may be stoical and obstinate, or it may be despairing and hopeless; and neither temper is the true one. To ask according to God's will, is to have the confidence, when we make our prayer--that God will grant it--unless in his wisdom he knows that refusal or some different answer than the one we seek will be better for us; in which case we pledge ourselves to take the refusal or another answer, as the right thing for us.

If we understood this, it would remove many of the perplexities which lie about the doctrine of prayer and its answer. We pray earnestly, and do not receive what we ask. In our bitter disappointment we say, "Has not God promised, that, if we ask, we shall receive?" Yes; but look a moment at the history of prayer. Jesus himself prayed that the cup of his agony--the betrayal, the trial, the ignominy, the crucifixion, and all that nameless and mysterious woe that lay behind these obvious pains and sorrows--might pass; and yet it did not pass. Paul prayed that the thorn in his flesh might be removed--yet it was not removed. All along the centuries, mothers have been agonizing in prayer over their dying children, crying to God that they might live; and even while they were praying, the shadow deepened over them, and the little hearts fluttered into the stillness of death. All through the Christian years, crushed souls, under heavy crosses of sorrow or shame, have been crying, "How long, O Lord! how long?" and the only answer has been a little more added to the burden, another thorn in the crown.

Are not our prayers answered, then, at all? Certainly they are! Not a word that goes faith-winged up to God, fails to receive attention and answer. But oftentimes the answer that comes is not relief--but the spirit of acquiescence in God's will. The prayer many, many times only draws the trembling suppliant closer to God. The cup did not pass from the Master--but his will was brought into such perfect accord with the Father's, that his piteous cries for relief died away in a refrain of sweet, peaceful yielding. The thorn was not removed--but Paul was enabled to keep it and forget it in glad acquiescence in his Lord's refusal. The child did not recover--but David was helped to rise, wash away his tears, and worship God.

We are not to think, then, that every burden we ask God to remove--that he will surely remove; nor that every favor we ask--that he will bestow. He has never promised this. "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." Into the very heart of the prayer which our Lord gave, saying, "After this manner pray," he put the petition, "May Your will be done." Listening at the garden-gate to the Master's own most earnest supplication, we hear, amid all the agonies of his wrestling, the words, "Nevertheless, not as I will--but as You will."

The supreme wish in our praying should not, then, be merely to get the relief we desire. This would be to put our own will before God's, and to leave no place for his wisdom to decide what is best. We are to say, "This desire is very dear to me; I would like to have it granted; yet I cannot decide for myself, for I am not

wise enough, and I put it into Your hand. If it is Your will, grant me my request. If not, graciously withhold it from me, and help me sweetly to acquiesce, for Your way must be the best."

For example: your health is broken. It is right to pray for its restoration; but running all through your most earnest supplication, should be the songful, trustful, "Nevertheless, not as I will--but as You will." You are a mother, and are struggling in prayer over a sick child. God will never blame you for the strength of your maternal affection, nor for the clasping, clinging love that holds your darling in your bosom and pleads to keep it. Love is right; mother-love is right, and, of all things on earth, is most like the love of God's own heart. Prayer is right, too, no matter how intense and importunate. Yet, amid all your agony of desire, it should be the supreme, the ruling wish, subduing and softening all of nature's wild anguish, and bringing every thought and feeling into subjection--that God's will may be done.

The groundwork of this acquiescence, is our confidence in the love and wisdom of God. He is our Father, with all a father's tender affection, and yet with infinite wisdom, so that he can neither err nor be unkind. He has a plan for us. He carries us in his heart and in his thought. The things we, in our ignorance, desire, might in the end work us great harm. The things from which we shrink, may carry rich blessings for us; so we should not dare to choose for ourselves what our life experiences shall be. The best thing possible for us in this world--is always what God wills for us. To have our own way rather than his--is to mar the beauty of his thought and plan concerning us.

The highest attainment in prayer, is this laying of all our requests at God's feet for his disposal. The highest reach of faith is loving, intelligent consecration of all our life to the will of God.

When a precious life hangs trembling in the balance, we should not, with all our loving yearning, dare to choose whether it shall be spared to us, or carried home. When some great hope of our heart is about to be taken from us, we should not dare settle the question whether we shall lose it, or keep it. We do not know that it would be best. At the least, we know that God has a perfect plan for our life, marked out by his infinite wisdom; and surely we should not say that what we, with our limited wisdom, might prefer, would be better than what he wants us to be.

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