

DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

February 11-15, 2008



February 11, 2008

Thy Will be Done...¹

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*"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."*²

In heaven, God's will is accomplished joyously, absolutely and without reservation, for the angels instantly do his bidding and obey his word.³ The third petition of the Lord's Prayer seeks that this would also be the case here on earth.

We are praying, in part, for God to enable us to know and obey his revealed will. 'Lord, help me to know what you want me to be and do and give me the grace and ability to do it!'

It also seeks that this would be the case in the lives of others. Every intercessory prayer for specific individuals or situations falls under this heading. It embraces petitions that love, justice, righteousness, peacemaking, etc. would flourish on planet earth. Whenever we ask that good might prevail, we are asking for God's will be to done in that situation.

It is also a prayer that God would enable us to submit to his will even when the 'why' of it is hidden. When his life was devastated by tragedy, Job declared, *"The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*⁴

This is not passive fatalism, but a faith filled embracing of the will of God as right and good.

¹ "In the third petition, which is, *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*, we pray that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven." *Sh. Cat.*, Q. 103

² Matthew 26:42 (TNIV)

³ Psalm 103:20

⁴ John 1:21 (TNIV)

February 12, 2008 **“Give us this day our
Daily Bread”¹**

*“Keep falsehood and lies far from me;
give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.”²*

In the midst of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us to ask God for the provision of our daily needs. The Christian faith is holistic in its approach to spirituality. The ordinary, earthly matters of everyday living may be as filled with God’s grace and power as the most exciting ‘mountaintop’ experiences. *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”³* We are to live all of life as unto the Lord and we are to understand that our daily food and other necessities are a matter of great importance.

‘Daily’ reinforces our utter dependence on God. Everything we enjoy in life is a gift from him. And if we lift up such petitions on a daily basis, it stirs us up to thankfulness and contentment.⁴ If we need to depend upon God for the most essential things, it teaches us to discern between ‘needs’ and ‘wants’. God provides the former and discerns when the latter are in our best interests.

“Give us this day our daily bread” bids us bring to God every sort of personal need that we have: for food, clothing, shelter, relationships, guidance, strength, wisdom, the power of the Spirit – whatever we may need to live thankfully and faithfully before God. As a loving parent God cares about these things too.

¹ “In the fourth petition, which is, *Give us this day our daily bread*, we pray that of God’s free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.” Shorter Catechism, Q. 104

² Proverbs 30:8 (TNIV)

³ 1 Corinthians 10:31 (TNIV)

⁴ See Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

February 13, 2008 **“Forgive us our
Trespasses...”¹**

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”²

A singular problem with modern Christianity is the tendency to take God’s grace for granted. We have nailed down the idea that, but virtue of Christ’s death, we have absolute forgiveness from God when we accept Christ as Saviour. Our sins past, present and future will not be counted against us on the Judgment Day. We have Christ’s “imputed” righteousness and we can be confident of life eternal.

But the confession here is not ‘salvation-confession’. We do not lose our salvation every time we sin, but it is still a real problem. We sin against God on a daily basis. We do things that hurt others and disappoint our heavenly Father. We violate his righteousness. This messes up our walk with God. It creates a relational barrier and inhibits our spiritual life. It needs to be dealt with by confession and receiving God’s forgiveness.

Jesus likened it to foot washing: *“Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean...”³*

Daily reflection, confession and asking for God’s grace cleanses us and facilitates God’s transforming work in our lives.

¹ In the fifth petition, which is, *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*, we pray that God, for Christ’s sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.” Short. Cat. Q. 105

² 1 John 1:9 (TNIV)

³ John 13:10 (TNIV)

February 14, 2008 **“...as we Forgive Those
who Trespass against Us”**

*“For if you forgive others when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”¹*

Although we would like to dodge its implications, the Bible is clear: God forgives us as we forgive others. Again, this is not about eternal salvation. It is about the relationship which we have with God as we journey with him day by day. Our daily transgressions harm that relationship and we need to deal with them. But God makes it plan that forgiveness – being in ‘good space’ – with him is not possible if we harbour unforgiveness toward others.²

In a human family, it is not really possible to be in a great relationship with mom or dad while we are at loggerheads with our brothers or sisters. An inability to forgive others leaves impediments to our relationship with God and affects our spiritual life.

Forgiveness is not a matter of letting someone else get away with wrongdoing. It means that we are letting go of our need to retaliate, see revenge or even the score. Unforgiveness is like a fishhook that ties us to the event or the person who wronged us. Being willing to forgive enables us to be set free from that wrong. We can leave it with God as righteous judge to deal with the other person. The matter is transferred from our ‘to do’ list to God’s.³

However we understand it, the implication is clear. As we pray we need to seek God’s forgiveness and we need to freely forgive others.

¹ Matthew 6:14 (TNIV)

² E.g. Matthew 18:23-35

³ Romans 12:19

February 15, 2008

**“Lead us not into
Temptation...”¹**

“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;”²

The Bible makes it clear that we cannot blame God when we fall into sin. We cannot claim ‘the devil made me do it!’ nor can we argue that it is God’s fault for each of us *“is tempted when you are dragged away by your own evil desire and enticed.”³*

However, we also need to understand that nothing happens to us except by the sovereign will and determination of God.⁴ Though Job did not know why he was being tried and tested, God was in control of the situation. Peter did not just happen to be recognized by the servant girl; God had ordained it and knew what would test his faithfulness to Jesus.⁵

If God uses such situations to refine our faith, why do we pray not to be exposed to them? In part it may be so that we do not take a light view of it. Praying in this way reminds us that we are weak and we need God’s grace. It puts us on guard and makes us watchful. It is perhaps a prayer for spiritual discernment that we might ‘see through’ situations to perceive their true significance. And it may be a reminder to us that we should do all in our power to avoid temptations: if you are tempted by gambling, don’t hang around casinos!

¹ In the sixth petition, which is, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*, we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.” Short. Cat., Q. 106

² James 1:13 (TNIV)

³ James 1:14 (TNIV)

⁴ See Psalm 135:6; Eph. 1:11; Job 1-2

⁵ Mark 14:66-70