

Call to Obedience
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Thy Will Be Done

The great Jewish physicist Albert Einstein once said something like this: "We need to be able to reduce everything to its smallest form, but not beyond that." There are times when we need to do this with Christianity. We must know our roots, we must know what is at the heart of a matter or our knowledge remains frighteningly superficial and distorted. So let us begin a graduated reduction of *the faith once delivered to the saints* (see Jude 1:3). If I had to reduce the whole Bible to four documents for Christian living, I would select these four:

- 1) The Ten Commandments, because they tell us of the holiness of God.
- 2) The Sermon on the Mount, because it answers the question: how shall we live?
- 3) The Lord's Prayer, because it answers the question: how then shall we pray?
- 4) First Corinthians 13 because it answers the question: how then shall we love?

But suppose you press me for further reductions. I would then choose the Lord's Prayer out of the four documents listed. This is the only prayer Jesus taught us to pray. It could have been a long one, for there is much to be prayed for. But here Jesus reduced all prayer to the point at which any further reduction would be hazardous.

So in this prayer we are first told how we are to relate to God: that God is our Father and not some stranger who cannot be known and is hiding in outer space. Although He is also a Judge, Administrator and many other things, He always prefers for us to think of Him as the One who "*hath begotten us again unto a lively hope*" (1 Pet. 1:3). We have a filial relationship with Him.

"*Hallowed be thy name*" means that He's not an ordinary father. It means that He is holy, and He expects us to maintain a holy relationship with Him.

Next, we come to the first petition, which is a twin petition. This petition is like a tuning fork. Each of the two prongs resonates in the other. It is through their relationship that we get the right tone: "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done*" (Matt. 6:10). You can't get the kingdom of God without doing His will and you can't do His will without getting the kingdom.

So at the heart of Christianity is "***thy will be done***". That is the grandest, loftiest petition that can be prayed. No prayer is valid without "*thy will be done*" being its principle component. All prayer outside of that is selfish. What the atom is to the scientist, what seed is to the farmer, what the letter is to the writer, "*thy will be done*" is to Christianity.

Christianity is nothing more nor less than doing the will of God. Jesus said, "*My food is to do the will of him that sent me*" (John 4: 34). The will of God contains within it everything that goes with the Christian life: confessions, repentance, rebirth, faith, love, purity, obedience, holiness, patience, long-suffering, praise, evangelism, etc. Everything in Christianity is to be found in "*thy will be done.*" "*Thy will be done*" is Christ-likeness.

This finding and doing the will of God is a matter of life and death. Doing God's will must be taken seriously, for Jesus said, "*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 7:21). There will be no kingdom of heaven for us unless we do the will of God. How serious is that? At any one moment we either crucify our will or God's will. Because self-will will never take one step after Jesus, it has to be crucified. Therefore self-denial is the missing link which connects every believer to victorious Christian living. Jesus said to the multitude: "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Luke 9:23). Jesus died on the cross to save us, but we have to die on our cross to follow Him. If we don't follow Him we are none of His.

"*Thy will be done*" means that we must give up our agenda. For every hour of the day God has a plan for us as He had one for the Son of God. It is not up to us what we do with our Sunday afternoons. It is up to Him. It is not up to us who we invite for Christmas dinner. It is up to Him. It is not up to us whether we purchase new furniture. It is up to Him. Of course, we must not be anxious about these things, but we must be sensitive to His still small voice. We must literally learn to walk in His will. And by so doing, we find ourselves in His kingdom, which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). When I see a Christian, I expect him to do the will of God. Because of God's abounding grace we can do the will of God - always.

Conversion is only the beginning. We have to understand that although at conversion all sins we have committed have been removed as far as the east is from the west, yet there remains within us what Paul calls the sinful nature, the carnal nature, the old man (Rom. 8:7; 6:6). The carnal nature resists doing the will of God. John the Baptist said, the *axe must be laid to the root of the tree* of sin, the sinful nature, the old man (see Matt. 3:10). In brief, after we have been saved, there is a further work to be done in our hearts (Heb. 6:1). The root of sin has to be dealt with. Self-will must no longer be allowed to have its way. We must be sanctified. Paul said to the Christians at Thessalonica, "*this is the will of God, even your sanctification...*" (1 Thes. 4:3). Until we are sanctified, our ability to hear the voice of Jesus is impaired. Jesus wants to lead us by His inner voice. He said in John, "*My sheep hear my voice... and they follow me.*" (John 10:27). There can be no following without hearing. Because we can't hear, we are disconnected from God and so we devise our own agendas, and our church programs fall short of what Jesus wants. We walk in the flesh and our work, which may look religiously beautiful, comes to death. Jesus said, "*every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up*" (Matt. 15:13). Only what is a God class? Only what is of God has life in it.

What prevents us from hearing the voice of Jesus, from getting into God's will? Again, it is the old man, with all his evil members such as pride, jealousy, murmuring, unforgiveness, bitterness, resentment, greed, selfishness, a judgmental, critical and analytical spirit etc. These things plug up our spiritual ears. These fruits of the flesh choke the spiritual life out of us. We need sanctification. We need tuning up and tuning in. Sanctification begins when we lay ourselves on the altar of sacrifice, and it continues as we deny the self-life, every step of the way. So as we follow Jesus in self-denial the carnal nature will be crucified out of us and His divine nature will be resurrected within us. Hallelujah!

We need to learn to wait upon God. The psalmist said *"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him."* (Ps. 62:5). Waiting upon God means taking time each day to get quietly before Him. It is as essential to the spiritual body as breathing is to the physical body. In waiting upon God He will tune us up. The Lord will bring certain weaknesses, faults and hidden sins to our attention. We will confess, repent and be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Through this process the Lord will break us, and bring us into His marvelous chamber of humility and gentleness. Through this process we are tuned in. Here we learn what it means to abide in Christ, to come into harmony with God. This may take weeks and months or longer. Continual fine-tuning will go on all of our lives. When we are tuned in, we are ready to receive specific instructions, as the early Christians did; as to who we are to visit, where we are to go or what we are to say. We will come to that *perfect and acceptable will of God* (see Rom. 12:2), into Christ-likeness, into actually walking with God as the patriarchs, prophets and apostles of old walked with God. Finally notice the sequence by which the apostle Paul has laid this all out for us by saying: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and **perfect, will of God**"* (Rom. 12:1,2).

Again, if I were forced to reduce all Christianity into one phrase beyond which any further reduction is detrimental, it would be *"Thy will be done."* Jesus made this the first and principal petition for all Christians. Let us pray for it, aspire to it and live by it.

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