

The Lord's Prayer Part 3 (Matthew 6:10)
"Thy Will Be Done, on earth as it is in heaven"

Read Matthew 6:10

Intro: Here we arrive at the second petition. The Westminster Confession addresses it in WCF #192.

WCF #192 reads like this:

Question: "What do we pray for in the third petition?"

Answer: "In the third petition, (which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,) acknowledging, that by nature we and all men are not only utterly unable and unwilling to know and do the will of God, but prone to rebel against His Word, to repine and murmur against his providence, and wholly inclined to do the will of the flesh, and of the devil: we pray, that God would by His spirit take away from ourselves and others all blindness, weakness, indisposedness, and perverseness of heart; and by His grace make us able and willing to know, do, and submit to His will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven."

What is the will of God?

1. There six or seven different meanings to the word "will" in scripture but there are only two that are common to the study of God's will.
 - a. The first is called the "sovereign, secret will of God". This is unknowable to men by the nature of its privacy. God has never intended for his hidden will to be accessible to men and He keeps it within the confines of His own mind. Those things that God has willed to come to pass but He has chosen not to share are quite frankly none of our business.
 - b. The Scriptures summarize this well in Psalm 115:3 – "Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases."

"When God closes His mouth, I will desist from inquiry" -John Calvin

- c. The second is called "revealed will of God". This is also commonly referred to as God's prescriptive will, which we understand to be

revealed in the law and the gospel. This is where He prescribes the duties of man, and reveals how we can enjoy His blessings.

- d. Jesus is not telling us to pray for God's hidden will to be done because His hidden will by nature has to come to pass. It is absolutely certain. Rather He is telling us to pray that God's revealed will would be done through our active obedience.
- e. This follows in line with the same attitude Jesus had in John 14:15 when He said, "If you love me, keep my commandments". Having immediately followed "Thy kingdom come" we are reminded that we are to be about the labor of manifesting the kingdom and will of God here on the earth until the consummation of His kingdom. We are to hallow his name, submit to His kingdom, and do His will.

Man Lacks the Ability to Do the Will of God

1. It is one thing to acknowledge that man must be obedient and do the will of God, but it's quite another to discuss man's ability to be obedient. Herein lies the heart of the debate. Does man have the capability to incline himself to obedience to God? (also understood as the concept of a free will)
 - a. The story told in the holy scriptures is one where God consistently establishes boundaries that reflect His moral character and upon calling men to be obedient to those commands, is met with consistently hostile, rebellious disobedience.
 - b. If man was truly capable of being obedient to the will of God, then why hasn't outside of Christ actually achieve it?
2. This topic was of such importance to Martin Luther that when he began to write a response to a theological nemesis named Erasmus on the subject of man's "free will" he wrote these words,

"I hold that a solemn and vital truth, of eternal consequence, is at stake in this discussion; one so crucial and fundamental that it ought to be maintained and defended even at the cost of life, though as a result the whole world should be, not just thrown into turmoil and uproar, but shattered in chaos and reduced to nothingness." Bondage of the Will pg. 90

- a. Erasmus was making the case that man by nature had to be free in some sense to choose obedience to God or else all the instances where God had externally called us to obedience didn't make any sense.
- b. In other words, why would God painstakingly lay out all these laws and precepts, promises, etc... if He knew that man by nature man had no ability within himself to respond to them favorably? This is a good question and one that still gets used in Pelagian/Arminian debates today.

Deuteronomy 30 and Other Diatribes

1. Here's an example of one of the verses Erasmus used from scripture to make his point about man's free will and God's expectations in relationship to it.

Deut. 30:11-17 - "For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it."

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in His ways, and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it."

- a. Luther says, "that man by the words of the law is admonished and taught what he ought to do, not what he can do, that is, that he is brought to know his sin, but not to believe that he has any strength in himself."
- b. There are many passages that speak similarly which use words like choosing, turning away from, or keeping, "If thou shalt choose", "If thou shalt turn away from", "If though shalt keep", etc... but in no way do any of these passages reveal anything about a man's ability to be obedient to the commands God has given him.
- c. The knowledge God is conveying in the passages is not the power we have to comply but rather it exposes our own short coming. Remember

the law by nature reveals our sin because when we try to follow the law we find ourselves breaking it more and more.

2. Luther responds to this by discussing these laws and precepts, “the commandments aren’t given inappropriately or pointlessly; but in order that through them the proud blind man may learn the plague of his impotence, should he try to do as he is commanded.” Luther speaks here from experience. Earlier in his life he remarked that it wasn’t until he had resolved himself to be a more moral person that he realized how much he sinned. The more we pay attention to God’s standard of goodness the starker the contrast is to our own depraved nature.
 - A. Romans 7:7 – “yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin”. Paul wouldn’t have known how covetous he was if God had not revealed his standard on it. So much so that he goes on to say that his own jealousy was dead apart from the law and with the knowledge of it his jealousy came alive. Our sin fluoresces under the light of the law. It’s hidden and invisible to us until God quickens our hearts and opens our eyes to its existence.
 - B. It’s like living in a filthy house that reeks of trash and becoming accustomed to it. Only those that know more pleasant environments could tell you how awful your living conditions are. The law isn’t opposed to grace but rather it is a form of grace that sheds light on how unacceptable we are to God and how incapable we are of pleasing him.
 - C. Knowledge of sin on its own only makes things worse, no man can will himself out of it.

Man’s Tendency Is to Complain and Reject the Will of God

1. Men can only make a choice according to their strongest inclination at the moment of choosing. This means we are only capable of choosing what we want most when it’s time to decide.
 - a. The concept of total depravity speaks to this. Man’s nature was changed completely by the fall and now his desires are only for his own will to be done.

- b. This naturally leads to complaining and grumbling when we think of God's providence. We pray that God's will be done but then we have anxiety and frustrations when our prayers aren't answered.
 - c. If we truly want God's will to be done and we pray this, why then do we get so angry at God when he chooses not to answer us favorably according to our own will. Is this not what we have asked of Him?
 - d. The truth is that unless a man's nature is changed, he will never truly desire the will of God.
 - e. How often do we find answers in prayer that are contrary to the scriptures but in accordance with our own will?
2. The ways of the Holy Spirit are complex and difficult to discern.
- a. John Flavel once said, "The heart can be false and you wouldn't know it, it might be false and yet you still be convinced of your own integrity and righteousness."
 - b. Solomon Stoddard also remarked that "hypocrites are often more confident than many saints". Solomon's grandson, Jonathan Edwards, went on to write that pride is the secret language of the human heart.
 - c. How true is this when it comes to the reasoning we use when exercising our own will.
 - d. When we sin, we are always making a statement to our creator that our way is better than His and we would rather be obedient to our nature rather than His.
 - e. When we grow angry and frustrated at His providences, our heart is speaking it's native language pride, rebellion and hostility towards our maker.
3. We see a supreme example of this in Isaiah 14 where sinful man's finest ruler proclaimed five "I wills" as a declaration of war against God almighty.
- a. We would know nothing of this example if God had not been pleased to reveal it through His prophet Isaiah.

- b. Isaiah 14:12-17 - “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”
- c. This is who Jesus referenced when he spoke to the pharisees. Remember, the pharisees were the most conservative religious leaders who couldn’t fathom their hearts were misguided and rebellious towards the will of God. Jesus spoke of their father in John 8:

“You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Praying “Thy Will Be Done” Isn’t Just About God Exerting His Will on His Own, but Rather His Will Being Done Through Man’s Active Obedience

1. It recognizes both a superior righteousness both in God’s nature and the obedience he requires on the earth.
 - a. Obedience to the will of God is so foreign to our sinful nature that Jesus goes to great lengths in His sermon on the mount to teach us what doing the will of God looks like. He teaches us what obedience His sovereignty is supposed to look like.
 - b. He teaches us what Godly character looks like when reflected in our attitudes. This is what is commonly referred to as “The Beatitudes”. Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are those who are persecuted. He tells us to rejoice in these things.
 - c. He teaches us our job as salt and light in the world. He teaches us about man’s relationship to the demands of the law. He reveals sin is a matter of the heart and not just physical action.

- d. He teaches us about divorce, oaths, revenge, loving our enemies, generosity, prayer, fasting, the importance of setting ones mind on eternal things, anxiety and distrust in God's providence, etc....
- e. Everything Jesus taught us here is a reflection of what God's will looks like when it's being actively obeyed.
- f. When we are being obedient, God's will is being done.

Why is Obeying the Will of God Required and Necessary on the Earth?

1. As our creator and source of all blessings, obedience is owed to Him. It's necessary because He deserves it from us.
2. Because God has revealed through His written word that His design is to make us not just knowledgeable of His will but also doers of His will. What He has revealed in scripture is intended to enliven and awaken our sense of duty to Him. This is unavoidable for those who receive faith in Jesus Christ.
3. Obedience to the expressed will of God displays evidence of the Christian's sincerity and strength of His faith.
4. Obedience to the expressed will of God advances to gospel. How has God continued to build up and advance the interests of His kingdom since the birth of the church? By the power of His Holy Spirit and the ones who profess faith in him publicly. The church can only flourish when God's will is being done, God's will being done looks like a bunch of obedient Christians.
5. How else does one show that His love for Christ is obedient if not through active obedience. (Example: Lordship salvation and counterfeit love for Christ)

John 14:21 – “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

6. Thomas Watson says “Everyone would be thought to love Christ; but how shall it be known but by this? – Do you do His will on earth? We do not honor the ruler if we hate His laws. It is a vain thing for a man to say he loves Christ’s person, when he slights His commands. Not to do God’s will on earth is a great evil.”

If the Idea of a Fallen Nature Is True, What Hope Does A Man Have That He Could Achieve Obedience?

1. Because of a man’s corrupt nature, he can never offer perfect obedience, this is why we need Christ.
2. The Christian though unable to do the will of God perfectly has been given a new nature and a new set of desires, this allows him to do the will of God sincerely.
 - a. When you set out to be obedient to the will of God for the sole purpose of glorifying God alone, then although not perfect, what has been offered up in faith is acceptable to God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
3. The Pharisees had the outward appearance of obedience but were wicked in using the law for personal glory.
4. Jehu was obedient but for selfish gain. God often uses the abilities he has given men to achieve His own will, but their hearts are not obedient, and they are still judged for their sins. In Hosea 1:4 God looked upon the obedient actions of Jehu no better than that of a murderer because of the selfish nature of his compliance.
5. Obedience for the Christian should ring out with the tone of 1 Peter 4:11 –

“Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

“As It Is in Heaven”

1. Let us not forget here that we were given an example of a place where the residents are obedient to God. This is a stark contrast from what we experience here with frequent disobedience.
2. What does obedience in heaven look like? It looks like Revelation 4 where the 24 elders cast their crowns at the feet of Christ. The crown is a symbol of the greatest honor and yet they throw them at the feet of Christ. This is their way of showing Him that everything they do is for His glory.
3. The last part of catechism 192 characterizes the attitudes that walk alongside obedience in heaven as an example of what our own attitudes should look like. These are humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, as the angels do in heaven!

Conclusion:

1. To pray for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven, is to pray that God gives us as sinful creatures the ability to not only accept His hidden will in all things, but that He also gives us the ability to carry out His will here on earth by changing our sinful desires for our own wishes into obedient desires that keep His glory at the center of everything we do.