

Marc Roby: We are resuming our study of theology today by continuing to examine soteriology, the doctrine of salvation. We are currently discussing the doctrine of sanctification and, more particularly, the means of grace. We have been examining the topic of prayer for some time and are currently examining the Lord's Prayer. Last week we looked at the Lord's Prayer's preface. So, Dr. Spencer, are we moving on to examine the first petition in that prayer today?

Dr. Spencer: Absolutely. But before we go into that, I think it would be good to read the whole prayer again. We are currently looking at the version found in Matthew 6:9-13 which says, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."¹

Marc Roby: And, as you noted last time, the prayer begins with the preface, "Our Father in heaven" and then goes on to six petitions. The first of which is, "hallowed be your name."

Dr. Spencer: Yes. And the word "hallowed" is interesting. It isn't a commonly used word, but to hallow something is to set it apart for holy use or to view it with great respect. Question number 101 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What do we pray for in the first petition?"

Marc Roby: And the catechism's answer is, "In the first petition, (which is, *Hallowed be thy name,*) we pray, that God would enable us, and others, to glorify him in all that whereby he makes himself known; and that he would dispose all things to his own glory."²

Dr. Spencer: We have said a number of times that God's purpose in creation is the manifestation of his own glory. And the answer to the first question in the Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever."³ So, as the catechism points out, this first petition in the Lord's Prayer is asking God to enable us, and others, to do just that. To fulfill our God-given chief purpose in life. And it asks that God would enable us to do that in everything we do.

Marc Roby: Which, I might add, is also what we are commanded to do. In 1 Corinthians 10:31 the apostle Paul writes, "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Dr. Spencer: And, as you indicated, that verse is a command. The main verb is in the imperative mode in the original Greek.

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² *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, op. cit., pg. 44 (English updated slightly)

³ *Ibid*, pg. 5

But getting back to the first petition of the Lord's Prayer, it is completely theocentric – meaning God centered. There is no focus on mankind or mother nature here. It is the prayer of someone who has truly been born again and is fully committed to God.

Marc Roby: Jesus himself told us, in Luke 14:26, that “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”

Dr. Spencer: That is an impossible standard for us to meet. Which is why we must pray for God to help us to do better, and then also pray for forgiveness when we fail. But it is the desire of all true Christians to live that way. We *want* to do what is pleasing to God and brings him glory.

G.I. Williamson brings up an interesting point in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism's answer regarding this first petition. He writes, “God's name already *is* holy, so how can it be hallowed? ... God is already absolutely glorious, so how can we glorify him? ... What [the first petition] must mean, therefore, is that we can be of service to God as he manifests his own glory.”⁴

Marc Roby: And so, being painfully aware of our own weaknesses, we ask God to help us be of service.

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. He gives gifts to every one of his children and we are to use them for the good of the body of Christ. We are to exhibit the same kind of sacrificial love toward each other that Christ displayed when he went to the cross. Jesus told us in John 13:34-35, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Marc Roby: And in loving each other in this sacrificial way, which is what is new about this command, we will help manifest the glory of God in this world.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that's the point. Christians are to live differently. There is to be a selfless quality to the Christian life. Our goal is not our pleasure, it is to manifest the glory of God. And given the fact that we are all selfish in our natural estate, we need to ask God to help us overcome this sin.

This is the heart of true Christianity. Love toward God and love toward one another. And when I say “love” here, we must reject the world's sappy, emotional view of love, which has everything to do with what *I* get out of a relationship, and replace that view with the biblical idea of sacrificial love, which has everything to do with what the *object* of my love gets out of the relationship. You quoted 1 John 4:10 last week and it bears repeating because it gives a biblical definition of love. It says, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

⁴ G.I. Williamson, *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1993, pg. 215

Marc Roby: We can also look at one of the best-known verses in the entire Bible, John 3:16, where we are told that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Dr. Spencer: I think people are so familiar with that verse that it often fails to have the impact it should have. God so loved the world that he *gave* – think about that. God didn’t *get* something wonderful by loving us, he gave. And what did he give? He gave his one and only Son. There is no greater love than that. But that is what we are called to do. We are to love God and others with a self-sacrificing love.

Marc Roby: And we certainly need to pray for help to do that. Do you have anything else you would like to say about the first petition?

Dr. Spencer: Yes, although not about the first petition alone. The first three petitions are: hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Williamson points out that “It is important to notice the order of the first three petitions. They are concerned with God’s name, his kingdom, and his will.”⁵

Marc Roby: In other words, they all have to do with God, not man. The first three petitions are all thoroughly theocentric as you noted earlier about the first one.

Dr. Spencer: That’s right. And quoting from Williamson again, he wrote with regard to the first petition specifically, that “It is impossible to think of anything that goes more completely contrary to fallen human nature than this first petition. The natural man could not possibly begin a prayer with this as his foremost thought. ... But if true religion is there in their hearts, this will be the basic foundation: their deepest desire will always be that God’s name would be hallowed, that is, regarded and treated as holy.”⁶

Marc Roby: That statement is certainly applicable to all of the first three petitions. It is impossible for the natural man to put God’s interests first.

Dr. Spencer: Because the natural man suppresses the truth about the God of the Bible as Paul tells us in Romans Chapter One. The natural man may claim that he believes in a god, but it will be a god of his own making. A god he can control. A god who allows him to sin, or allows him to earn his own salvation by doing good works.

Marc Roby: Yes, and those so-called good works will also be defined by man.

Dr. Spencer: Very true. Real, biblical faith in the only true and living God, the Creator of all things, begins with a deep sense of our own sin and creaturely inability to save ourselves. We must be convicted of our hopeless condition outside of Christ. We must be brought to the same place as the Philippian jailor when he cried out to Paul and Silas, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” as we read in Acts 16:30.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, pg. 216

Marc Roby: In other words, we must know the bad news before we can receive the good news.

Dr. Spencer: That is exactly the point. Satan wants us to go through life distracted by all of the daily pleasures, pains and concerns of normal life. He wants us to be completely successful at suppressing the truth that God exists, that God created us, that we are sinners deserving of his wrath, and that we will soon die and face judgment.

Marc Roby: Satan essentially keeps using the same old lie that he used in the Garden. Adam and Eve had never seen a person die, so Satan assured them that God was lying. Satan said to them, in essence, even if you disobey God, “You will not surely die!” (Gen 3:4)

People today know that they will die, but Satan tries to keep us from thinking about that and then updates his lie by saying, in essence, “There is no judgment. When you die, you simply cease to exist.”

Dr. Spencer: Or else he tells us that God is love, so everyone will go to heaven in the end. There are many versions of the lie, but they all amount to the same thing. He is telling us that God is a liar, that sin has no consequences.

But God has so constructed the world that we have to be willfully blind to reality to believe that we can sin with impunity. Sin has consequences in this life, so we should logically conclude that it has consequences when we die too. Death does not allow us to escape the consequences for our sin, it merely means we face the final judgment.

Marc Roby: That’s an unpleasant thought.

Dr. Spencer: Which makes it easier for Satan to help us suppress it. We have a natural tendency to want to move on to other matters and ignore the truth. But, getting back to the Lord’s Prayer, if a man has been born again, he has been convicted of his sin and his need for a Savior, and he has been granted the gift of faith to understand and believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world. And, given the reality of that new situation, that new life, he can pray this prayer.

It is his deepest desire, as Williamson put it, to see God’s name hallowed. And we could add that it is his deepest desire to see God’s kingdom come and his will be done.

Marc Roby: And so, the first three petitions in the Lord’s Prayer, quite appropriately, deal with what is the greatest desire of a truly born-again person.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, they do. And it is now time to move on and look at the second of those petitions; your kingdom come. I like what the Westminster Shorter Catechism says. Question 102 asks, “What do we pray for in the second petition?”

Marc Roby: And the catechism’s answer is, “In the second petition, (which is, *Thy kingdom come,*) we pray, That Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be

advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.”⁷

Dr. Spencer: And as is usually the case, the catechism packs a huge amount of information into a short answer. We must first define what is meant by a kingdom in this regard. A kingdom can refer to either a given region or area or it can refer to the rule that is exercised over that region. In this context, the region or area is the entire earth, so what is emphasized is the rule.

Now, when the catechism says that we are praying for Satan’s kingdom to be destroyed, it is referring to the power Satan presently has in this world. We are told in 1 John 5:19 that “We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”

Marc Roby: Yes, that verse clearly implies the existence of two kingdoms on earth. There are the children of God, who are part of God’s kingdom, and yet there is another kingdom as well since the whole world, which refers to all those who are not God’s children, is under the control of the evil one.

Dr. Spencer: The idea of two different kingdoms is present throughout the New Testament. The phrases “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God” occur ninety-six times in the New Testament in the 1984 New International Version we are using. But we also see expressions that refer to Satan’s kingdom. For example, we read in Ephesians 2:1-2, “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”

Marc Roby: And, clearly, the ruler of the kingdom of the air is the devil.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. He is the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. We see both kingdoms mentioned also in Colossians 1:12-13, where Paul prays for Christians asking that God would strengthen us so that we can give, “thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves”. Here the kingdom of God is called both the kingdom of light and the kingdom of the Son he loves, while Satan’s kingdom is referred to as the dominion of darkness.

Marc Roby: That doesn’t sound good. But it is perfectly fitting. Jesus told us, in John 10:10, that Satan, “comes only to steal and kill and destroy”, which is not a good kingdom to be a part of.

Dr. Spencer: It isn’t good at all. And that is why the catechism says that when we pray for God’s kingdom to come, we are praying that Satan’s kingdom may be destroyed. Now, we must note that Jesus Christ has already defeated Satan. God allows Satan a limited rule for a limited time, but he also restrains him sufficiently to allow the church to grow until every single person whom God has appointed to eternal life is saved. We see this pictured, for example, in Jesus’ parable of the weeds.

⁷ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2012, pg. 44 (English updated slightly)

Marc Roby: Yes, let me read that parable. We find it in Matthew 13:14-30, which says, “Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Dr. Spencer: That is a very instructive parable. We should first note that Jesus explicitly says it is about the kingdom of heaven. He says, “The kingdom of heaven is like” and then goes on to give the parable. Also, we don’t need to wonder about how to interpret the parable because Jesus explained it for us. We are told in Matthew 13:37 that Jesus told his disciples, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.” And the Son of Man was Jesus favorite way of referring to himself. He then went on, in Verses 38-39, to say that “The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.”

Marc Roby: And in the age in which we live, both the wheat and the weeds are growing in the same field, which is the world.

Dr. Spencer: Yes. But, praise God, he restrains the devil so that Christians, who are represented in the parable by the wheat, are never destroyed. This world seems like an incredibly evil and terrible place at times, but it is not nearly as evil and terrible as it would be if Satan had free reign. His kingdom is entirely under God’s control, which should be a great comfort to Christians. God guarantees that his church will prosper until all of the elect are saved.

Marc Roby: That is wonderful. I don’t think we have time to look at the next part of the catechism’s answer, so it will need to wait until next week. Therefore let me remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to info@whatdoesthewordsay.org and we’ll do our best to answer.