

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 24, 2010 Hallowed Be Thy Name

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Dear Radio Friends,

We have begun looking together at the subject of prayer from the point of view of Jesus' own instruction in the Lord's Prayer. You can find that prayer in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Last week we considered the introductory address of the Lord's Prayer: Our Father which art in heaven. Today we will begin to look at the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. There are six of them. And they divide nicely into two groups of three—the first three dealing with God, His name, His kingdom, and His will; and the second three dealing more directly with our needs.

As we begin to look at the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, let us remember that our prayers should include more than just petitions and requests. We should also make prayers of praise and adoration. In our prayers we should be expressing our thankfulness to God for all that He has done. Our prayers should include confessions of sin and of our unworthiness.

But also prayers may include petitions. It is a wonderful thing that we can make requests known to God and that Jesus teaches us to make petitions in our prayers. Really, we do not deserve anything from God. And we do not deserve to be heard by God. But the wonder of prayer is that, through Jesus Christ, we can make our requests known to God and He is ready to hear us in our needs.

The first petition that Jesus teaches us to make in our prayers is this: "Hallowed be Thy name." As we come to this first petition, you might be thinking that this is rather abstract and distant from your life, that it is not very practical. But that is not true. Even though the first three petitions have to do with God, they are yet, in a very real sense, for us. When we pray for the hallowing of God's name and the coming of His kingdom and the doing of His will, we are praying these for ourselves—that *we* hallow God's name, that His kingdom may come to and in *us*, and that His will may be done by *us*.

To understand this petition, we have to understand what it means to be holy, what the name of God is, and how God makes His name holy.

To be holy is to be set apart in purity. It is to be separated from things that are common and ordinary in order to be devoted to God's service. There are many examples of this in the Bible. Old Testament Israel was separated by God from the other nations to be a people holy unto the Lord. One of the twelve tribes of Israel, the Levites, were set apart from all the other tribes to offer sacrifice and worship to God. The tabernacle and the temple in the Old Testament were set apart as holy buildings for the worship of God. And in the center of them was the Holy of Holies—a room where God dwelt in the Ark of the Covenant and in the shining cloud.

Still today God sets things apart to be holy to Himself. The New Testament word for the children of God is "saints," which means "holy ones." In I Corinthians 6:19 our bodies are called the "temple of the Holy Ghost." When Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, the angel Gabriel called Him

"that holy thing." God has set aside one day in seven as a holy day of worship to Him. So you see what it means to be holy—it means to be separated from the ordinary and the sinful in order to serve God.

Now, when we say that God is holy, we are not saying that He needs to be separated from the ordinary and the sinful. God is already separated. He is holy. This is the essence of who He is. The holiness of God is not just that He is without sin, though there is certainly an ethical aspect to the holiness of God; but God's holiness refers to everything that distinguishes and separates Him as the Creator from His creation and from fallen man. The holiness of God refers to the infinite distance between God and us. The holiness of God is the sum total of all His glory and perfection. In Exodus 15:11 it is put this way: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

Now, what is the name of God? The Bible gives God many names. You can probably think of some of them: Jehovah, Lord of hosts, the Rock, and many more. There are many names also given to Jesus. He is called the Lamb of God, the Star out of Jacob, and even the name Jesus—He shall save His people from their sins.

Those are the proper names of God. But when the Bible speaks of the name of God, it refers not just to His titles, but to all His revelation. Everything that tells us something about God is the name of God. The Bible, the promises of the Scriptures, all truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, all God's works, all God's words, the creation—all these things are included in the idea of the name of God. We could say that everything that is associated with God and that tells us about Him is His name.

And all of this centers in the revelation that God gives us in His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the revelation, the making known of the name of God. In His prayer of John 17 Jesus says, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world."

Now, what is a name? Today many people say that a name is really not that important. It is just a tag or a title. Shakespeare once said "that which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet." And there is certainly something to that. I suppose it would not matter what my name was or what something is called. That would not change me or the thing. But a name can also refer to one's reputation. If someone says bad things about your name, or about the name of your business, that affects your reputation. So here, we are praying for the reputation of God in the earth.

That helps us to understand what is called the "problem of this first petition." God's name is already holy. So how can it be hallowed or made holy by us? Can we make God's name more holy? Can we add anything to the glory and the excellency of God Himself? And the answer, of course, is No. We cannot do that. In Psalm 8 the psalmist says, "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth." In Jeremiah 10:6 we read, "there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might." It is perfectly clear that we cannot change the holiness of the name of God or add anything to His name.

So, what we are asking in this petition is that God's name be recognized as holy in the earth. We want God to be known and honored and praised by men for who He is and for what He is as God. That is what Jesus is teaching us to pray here. And you see now how practical this is.

How does God answer this prayer? How does He make His name holy?

One way that God does this, and this is the most important thing, is through the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ and through sinners believing in this revelation for their salvation. Jesus says in John 14, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." The important word there is "truth." When sinners believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and put their faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for sin, then they are honoring the name and the revelation, the truth of God.

So the first petition is a prayer for missions and evangelism—that the nations, that people in all the earth, might give God's name its place of honor by believing in the gospel of His Son.

There you have one way that this petition is very practical. We are praying that people everywhere may honor the name of God. You probably live in a community where there are many unbelievers. Or maybe you are one of those unbelievers. This is our prayer for you and this is our prayer for your city, for your community—that God's name might be honored in you and where you are. In Psalm 83:18 the psalmist puts it this way in a prayer: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."

How is that reflected in the life of an individual? What does that look like? What do I experience when God answers this prayer? I think we can break this down. There are three ways that God answers this in the life of the individual person. The first thing that God does in answer to this prayer is that He gives His Holy Spirit to a person. You see, the problem, the thing that stands in the way of our recognizing the holiness of God and His name, is our sin. In Psalm 24 David asks: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place?" His answer is: "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." If we know ourselves, this is exactly our problem. We have filthy hands and impure hearts. We are as unholy as God Himself is holy. And as we encounter the holiness of God we are first filled with a deep despair because of our sinfulness. But you see, what God does is that He sends His Holy Spirit to dwell in us, to make us holy, to separate us to Himself. And the despair because of our unholiness is itself a work of the Holy Spirit and a recognizing, in the heart of the sinner, of the holiness of the name of God.

Second, God answers this prayer in us by giving us a spiritual knowledge and desire for growth in knowledge of His name. The first petition is a prayer against ignorance. We cannot glorify God if we do not know Him. People are busy in our world learning and gaining knowledge about the names of all kinds of people and things—of heroes and companies and products and countries—so that they can glorify those names and say good things about them. But there is a name above all names that is little known and little studied and little pursued. That is the name of God. In this petition, we pray against the prevailing ignorance of God in this world. And if we are praying this with integrity and sincerity, we will ourselves be studying hard to know more about God's name and revelation from the Scriptures.

A person who has little interest in the Bible and spends almost no time studying it is not being honest when he prays the first petition. For this prayer means: help us to know Thee, O God. Those who pray this sincerely will be committed to the spread of biblical teaching and to growing in the knowledge of God themselves. We are praying, "Lord, open the eyes of ignorant men and women to

Thy truth revealed in Scripture." We pray it because we know that we cannot ourselves open the eyes and minds and heart of others. Only God can do that, by His word and Spirit. And so we pray for the spread of the knowledge of God.

Then there is one more way that God answers this petition in us. That is by making us holy as He is holy. As Christians, we carry with us the name and the reputation of God. What is your name? I am not asking what your parents or your friends call you. But this: Are you known as a Christian by others? Is that the name that people would give you? Are you identified by others as a Christian, as one of God's children? Well, then, God has put His name on you. What do you do with the name of God? What do others see of the holiness of God in you? This is what we are praying here, that God would make us brighter lights to bring glory to Him in this earth.

And so, in praying this petition, you ask God to make you more holy. Ask Him to make you more holy in your actions. Do not use the members of your body to do those things that are shameful and unholy. Instead, use your feet and use your hands and use your entire body to bring glory to God, for the spread of the gospel, to show acts of kindness, to behold the glory of God.

Ask God to make you more holy in your words. Do not curse or use bad language that profanes the name of God. Instead, use your mouth to praise God, to speak about spiritual things, to tell others of the glory of God. Ask God to make you holy in your thoughts. Do not fill your mind with violence and impurity. Instead, use your mind to think about the lovely and the pure and the right and the excellent things of God's name and revelation.

Ask God to make you holy in your emotions. Do not be angry and bitter and spiteful and self-pitying. But love the things that God loves, and be gentle and meek and patient and kind.

Ask God to make you holy in your desires. Do not long after the things of this material life. Do not make earthly recognition and glory your goal. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and pray for yourself for a holy zeal for the name of God.

In short, ask the Lord to make you holy in all things, in all the things that you do and say and think and feel and desire.

And let this petition take priority in your prayers and in your life. O Father, hallowed be Thy name. When we get to heaven, we will not stop praying this prayer. There God's kingdom will have come perfectly, there God's will is going to be done without fault, all our needs will be met in heaven, all our sins overcome. But we will still sing and pray with the angels and the church triumphant for the honor of God's name. That will be heaven—an eternal song of praise to God.

Let us pray.

Father, great is Thy name in all the earth. Thy glory is above the heavens. We have just a small beginning of understanding it. Lord, make Thy name holy by causing us, and men and women everywhere, to worship Thee and to believe in Thy name as that is revealed in Jesus Christ Thy Son. We pray this for His name, and for the honor of Thy name, Amen.