

Matthew 6:5-13

Lessons From the Doxology

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen – v. 13b

We must begin the conclusion to the Lord's prayer by acknowledging yet another difficulty. This difficulty is not like previous difficulties we've considered which required interpretation in the broader context of the Bible. You recall that we spent time dealing with the meaning of *lead us not into temptation*. We had to eliminate some ideas that we know that text does not mean. God does not do the work of the devil and there's no need for us, therefore, to pray that God won't do the work of the devil. On the other hand God certainly does subject the followers of Christ to trials and so there's no point in praying to be exempted from that. What we pray for is that God will uphold and sustain us in our trials and protect us from those circumstances that would cause us to bring reproach to the name of Christ. I think we find a positive expression of the meaning of *lead us not into temptation* in Ps 56:13 *For thou hast delivered my soul from death: [wilt] not [thou deliver] my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

I didn't refer to it in our study last week but I think another good cross reference to this petition can be found in Lk. 22:31,32 in which Christ says to Peter: *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* And after Christ's example we do well to pray for ourselves that our faith fail not. So the difficulty in this petition is overcome by comparing scripture with scripture, all the time keeping in mind the character of God and Christ.

The difficulty we face with the second half of v. 13 is a technical difficulty that has to do with whether or not this doxology even belongs in the New Testament. It's a textual difficulty. Some English versions place the words in italics or brackets to indicate that there's doubt about the genuineness of the words. Other English versions omit the words altogether and instead place them in a footnote and explain that the words aren't found in a number of ancient Greek manuscripts that some Greek scholars esteem as the best manuscripts.

The thing to keep in mind is that the manuscripts that have been discovered and that exist today which can be dated to earlier than the 4th century – these most ancient manuscripts not only vary greatly from the vast majority of all the Greek manuscripts but they also vary greatly from each other. In other words – the older they are the more different they are from the vast body of Greek manuscripts.

Let me add, since I'm on the subject, that the 4th century functions as something of a dividing line. After the 4th century you find so much more precise agreement between manuscripts that the Anglican Greek Scholar Fenton John Anthony Hort was convinced that there must have been some official textual revision conducted during that time period by the church even though there isn't the slightest trace of evidence in church history to suggest such a thing. What does appear evident from the 4th century on is that God in His

providence brought to the attention of men through textual discoveries a largely unified Greek text.

It is for this reason that our denomination uses the Authorized Version of the Bible. It's not that we favor the high literary quality of this English version – it's not that we regard this version as the one and only Bible the way some extremists reason. We adhere to the Authorized Version because we believe it is founded on the best Greek text – the text that has the widest and most varied sources of support spanning several centuries and several geographical locations.

So it is with the utmost confidence that Christ Himself gave us the doxology of this prayer that we turn to this text this morning in that confidence. To those who remain unconvinced that this text belongs in the New Testament because they've been swayed by the highly subjective and speculative scholarly fads of our day which seem to specialize in omitting parts of the Bible – I would refer you to 1Chron 29:11 where at the very least you'll have to agree that we find a fitting doxology that seems to be the foundation for the doxology of our text: *Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.*

I think you'll see in the course of this study that this doxology serves a very important function that is crucial not only in this model prayer that the Lord gives us but in the whole matter of prayer in general. Remember that the Lord's purpose in giving his disciples this prayer as a model was to guide them to the practice of prayer that would enable them to avoid putting on shows for men and would instead lead them to close in with God. And let me remind you again that such a thing doesn't happen automatically. Nor does such a thing happen by merely repeating the words of this prayer.

In order to shut every distracting thing out and then shut ourselves in with God, certain things have to take place that are given to us in this doxology. Let's look at it then realizing that every word is important *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* And in analyzing this doxology I want to call your attention to:

The Purposes This Doxology Serves

The first purpose I would draw your attention to is that:

I. It Provides Occasion to Affirm Our Faith

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. What are we dealing with in these words? It seems, doesn't it, that Christ considered it very important that those who approach God in prayer become keenly aware of who it is they're approaching. And the theology behind this doxology should serve to keep that awareness before our eyes and before our hearts.

We come to God who rules over all. I like one of the definitions that is given in a Greek lexicon that says of the word *kingdom* it refers to the royal power of Jesus as the triumphant Messiah. It is certainly true that God the Father has conferred on His Son the authority to rule over this world and over this universe.

We think of Christ in His 3-fold offices as our Mediator – He’s our prophet, our priest, and our king. It was because of His successful accomplishment as our priest that He became our king. I remember years ago when I still lived in the Chicago area it was during the Michael Jordan era of the Chicago Bulls. If you know anything about basketball then you know the name Michael Jordan. He led the Bulls to 3 consecutive NBA championships – a feat which if I’m not mistaken, had never happened in the NBA – not for 3 consecutive terms. And after Jordan accomplished this feat he retired. He tried for a little while to play Baseball but that didn’t work so well and then he came out of retirement and led the Bulls to 3 more consecutive championships. He is rightly regarded as the best one to ever play the game and even with all the talented players that still rise to stardom today I don’t believe anyone can compare to Michael Jordan.

I remember when Michael Jordan came out of retirement and the Bulls started to rise to the top again. The city of Chicago was thrilled. The dynasty of the Bulls would be extended. And such was the hype and hoopla that surrounded this man that a poll question was issued by one of the news radio stations in Chicago. The poll question was this: *Do you think Michael Jordan should be the king of the universe?* The question and the response to it was one of those deliberate exaggerations that expressed the enthusiasm for the return of this great athlete and there was an acknowledgment of what his accomplishments in the world of sports had been.

We are taught in the Lord’s prayer to do something similar but something that is far greater and certainly more important and which is no exaggeration at all. *Thine is the kingdom* we confess. And in that confession we should, with more enthusiasm than sports fans who become excited over the skill of a man to do something as insignificant as get a ball to go through a hoop – we should, with much greater enthusiasm, gladly acknowledge that the kingdoms of this world have been conquered by Christ. We join in heavenly worship when we, like the great voices of heaven confess in the words of Rev. 11:15 *The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*

And our reverence and awe and adoration are all the more increased when we reflect on the truth that His kingship has been awarded to Him by virtue of the successful accomplishment of His atoning death. And so we read this description of Christ in Heb 1:3 *Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

This is what should fill and thrill our hearts when we confess our faith in prayer – *thine is the kingdom*. This world does not come under the authority of any so-called super power

nation – much less does it come under the authority of a group of nations dedicated to promoting socialism and communism. It is our God who rules reigns. The kingdom of heaven is His. And there is nothing in this world that escapes heaven's dominion. This is why we go to God in prayer – *thine is the kingdom, and the power* we read next.

Our God and our Savior possesses not only the authority, but the power – the power to advance His kingdom. He demonstrated His power when He overcame the combined forces of heaven, earth, and hell, from Calvary's cross. We like to think along these lines when we meet around the Lord's table. Christ's death was not merely the endurance of all the terrible sufferings that were brought to bear upon Him. Throughout the course of those sufferings He was actively involved in executing His office as a Priest. He was presenting Himself to God – He was making intercession for those He represented.

There's a detail given to us in the gospel of Mark that reveals His power. We read in Mk. 15:37-39 *And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.*

Do you see what compelled the centurion to make that confession? It was the fact that at the very point when Christ should have been overborne by death and unable to cry out anything – that Christ instead revealed the power of His death by the volume of His cry. *Thine is the power* we confess.

We can also bring the application of His power to our own experience. How is it that you gained a saving interest in Jesus Christ? Was it because you had some semblance of spirituality about you? Was it because you were a little wiser than the rest or because you had some sort of spark of life within you that flared up when the gospel was presented to you?

You know the answer. *There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one* (Rom. 3:10-12). You were as dead in trespasses and sins as Lazarus was dead on day 4 of his time in the grave.

And it was the power of God's word and the power of God's Spirit and the power of Christ's love that called you from spiritual death and brought you into spiritual life. Why do we go to God in prayer? Why do we ask God to do the things that are beyond our capabilities? It's because we know from His word and we know in our experience that *thine is the kingdom and the power*. We know, don't we, that it takes His power being wrought in our hearts to enable us to hallow His name. And we know that it takes His power to advance the cause of His Kingdom in a world that is dark and full of sin.

Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. This last phrase *and the glory* is what bolsters our confidence that God will hear and answer prayer. It is not for our promotion or our aggrandizement that we seek the advancement of His kingdom. It should

be because we are taken up with Him that we pray the way we pray. It is because we ask the question in wonder and awe the way Moses asked it in Ex 15:11 *Who [is] like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who [is] like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful [in] praises, doing wonders?* It is our desire to promote His glory that moves us to pray for great things to be done in keeping with His glory. And it needs to be our experience in prayer that we be taken up with His glory.

And it is just here that I must pause long enough to pose the same challenge to you that I felt challenged by myself in this study. Why is it that prayer, more often than not, seems hard? We know we're supposed to pray. We're aware of our duty but doesn't it seem time and again to be a forced chore that we'd just as soon skip? We won't actually come out and say that the whole thing is a waste of time – we're too orthodox to admit that – but in terms of the immediate effect that prayer has upon us don't we have to admit, at least in our hearts to ourselves that it doesn't really bring any benefit to our hearts and lives except to placate our consciences a little bit by being able to say we've done our duty?

Why is that? What makes it hard? What causes it to become such a forced effort? In trying to answer these questions let me just state here that I believe that the opening words of this prayer as well as the closing doxology are the most important parts to the prayer. But in our experience of prayer the things that gain most of our attention are the petitions. We are burdened for things – we're burdened for people we know – we're burdened for our children – we're burdened over the terrible spiritual condition of our country. And so the things that become most important to us are – hallowed be thy name – thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And then our hearts become dominated by what we need on a personal level and so our thoughts are – give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And by placing the focus of our time in prayer on what we need and what we desire it becomes easy to go to prayer and to rise from prayer without any other thought. And when this kind of distorted approach to prayer becomes a habit then over time prayer becomes a burdensome chore.

The opening words – *Our Father which art in heaven* and the closing doxology *for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory* I believe are designed by Christ to hedge us in to the reality of God – the reality of His greatness – the reality of His sovereign rule – the reality of His power and might and glory – and the reality of our relationship to Him. Apart from these realizations I think it's fair to say that prayer becomes unreal. God consciousness must permeate our praying and this is why we need to not merely utter the words *Our Father* – but we need to be taken up with *Our Father*. And our hearts need to be filled with the reality of His authority and might and splendor and eternity.

This doxology, then, becomes an expression of our faith and it's faith that bridges the gap between a forced duty and blessed worship. It's faith that can take us from the realm of uttering words into the air and bring us instead into the very presence of our God and King. This doxology, then, serves the purpose of allowing us to affirm our faith and in so

doing – we become aware of God – aware of Christ – aware of the glorious privilege that is ours to approach the One who rules over all and possesses all power and might and glory. Would you consider with me next that this doxology also serves another purpose.

II. It Teaches Us To Make Our Case before God

Would you notice with me the first word of the doxology – *FOR* – *for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* There is a connection made by this word to what precedes. And I think the reference is to all the petitions that precede the doxology.

We pray for the Lord's name to be hallowed. And the reason we believe His name can and will be hallowed is because He rules over all – *For thine is the kingdom.* And He has the power to work in our lives in such a way that we will advance in our sanctification. This is what hallowing God's name amounts to. We live more and more unto Him and we die more and more to the world and the flesh.

This hallowing of God's name is not something that comes naturally – it takes supernatural power. But we go to God in prayer because He has the power – *thine is the kingdom and the power* – we reason. And we add to our argument that the hallowing of His name in our lives is in keeping with His glory. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.*

When His name is hallowed in our hearts then we become better equipped and better motivated to reflect His glory. *Lord, let your name be hallowed in my heart that I may glorify thy name in this world. My chief end, Lord, is to glorify thee, and so I pray that thy name will, by thy power in the authority of thy sovereign rule, let thy name be hallowed all the more in my life.*

Do you see how you make your case before God for God to hear and answer your prayer? This is a common theme in our prayer meetings. And at the risk of sounding redundant I need to remind you that a preacher's task, at times, is to become a broken record – one that is stuck on repeating a segment again and again and again. And so I'll remind you again that Spurgeon devotes an entire sermon to this point. The name of his sermon is Order and Argument in Prayer. He takes for his text Job 23:3,4 in which Job says *Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

In this doxology Christ is teaching us about the kind of arguments we can use when pleading our case before the throne of grace. Spurgeon lists a number of arguments in his sermon. He refers to the attributes of God, the promises of God, the great name of God, as well as the sufferings of Christ.

It is the attributes of God, in particular, that Christ is teaching us to plead. His attributes, of course, are what give us confidence in His promises. We pray for His Kingdom to advance and we pray with the confidence of knowing that He has promised to build His Church and that He possesses the authority and the power to execute His promise. We also

know that since He has revealed His purpose through His promise that it is becoming to His glory to hear and answer the prayer of His people for His Kingdom to advance.

We pray for our sins to be forgiven based on the truth that *thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever*. Why did the kingdom of heaven invade this world? Was it that Christ would put down the rebellion against His Father? There is certainly a sense in which that's true but there's also the sense that Christ set up His kingdom to prevail by making the way for rebellious sinners to be reconciled to Him and His Father.

So it is in keeping with the purpose of His Kingdom that Christ forgives sins. His miracles proved that He had and has the authority as God and King to forgive sins. This is the great benefit that is everlasting in duration and a truth that carnal minds overlook and fail to appreciate. There are those that note Christ's authority and power to heal diseases and so their focus shifts to their own diseases. If Christ healed people then surely He can do it now. And it's true that He can but the fact is that His kingdom was established in this world to accomplish something far greater. *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee* – He said to the paralytic who had been laid in front of Him. And then to prove He had the authority to forgive sins He ordered the man to rise and take up his bed.

The benefit we draw from that miracle today is the benefit of knowing that as our sovereign ruler Christ has the authority to forgive sins today. The power of His atoning death paved the way – and isn't it a blessing to dwell on the truth that Christ's authority and power are forever and ever. The duration of forgiveness is the same as the duration of His rule. Isn't it good to know that we can also appeal to His glory for the forgiveness of our sins? *For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory*. And where was His glory manifested more than on the cross?

This is where we must do battle in prayer perhaps more than on any other front. Sin is an attack on God's glory. Sin is what robs God of His glory. Sin calls for God's glory to take vengeance. But Christ's atonement meets the attack and Christ's atonement brings glory back to Christ and the atonement satisfies the demand for vengeance so it is in keeping with His glory that God forgives sins.

You see, then, how Christ is teaching us to make our case before Him in prayer. We pray for His name to be hallowed; We pray for His Kingdom to advance; We pray for our daily bread to be give us and for our sins to be forgiven and that we be led not into temptation but delivered from evil. Why? Why will God hear and answer such petitions? Is it only because Christ gives us these petitions to pray? That certainly ties into it. We've been stressing the truth that praying in the will of God means praying the prayers that God gives us to pray.

But there's more to it than that. Christ not only gives us the petitions to pray – but He also gives us the plea by which we are to ground our petitions. They are grounded in the character and purpose of God. *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever*.

I trust, then, that as we finish this section of the sermon on the mount you'll be encouraged to pray. You need to pray with faith. You need to pray with God-consciousness in your praying. If you'll focus on who it is you're approaching and how you're related to Him and you'll take the time to contemplate the greatness of His person and the greatness of His purpose then you'll be enabled in the power of the Holy Spirit to know the reality of entering the very inner chamber of the throne room of heaven.

Others may be present – but you'll be more taken up with God than with others. And you'll avail yourselves of the great privilege of bringing your praises and petitions to the One who loved you and gave Himself for you. You'll be shut in with Him, taken up with Him, presenting your petitions and building your case to Him – and in the process knowing your own life transformed.

If you can establish this kind of praying patterned after the way Christ teaches us to pray then your life will soon reflect the kind of glow that Moses knew when he descended from the mount. May the Lord, then, teach you pray. May this portion of Christ's sermon so be stamped on your hearts that your prayer lives undergo a gracious and glorious transformation that will make the place of prayer the blessing that Christ means it to be.