

## Sermon 27, Pray Like This, Pt. 2: "Hallowed Be Thy Name"

"there His name is great, where He is named according to the greatness of His majesty."  
--Augustine

"This makes it clear how man's free collaboration with the divine impulse of grace is to be understood. It cannot possibly be a matter of combining two 'competing' partial causes. Rather, God and free will are each to be regarded as total causes, albeit on two levels which must be strictly separated from one another: God is the primal cause, human freedom the secondary (and thus at the same time immediate) cause of all the acts it performs: as itself human freedom effects that which God has in advance made it capable of . . ."--Thomas Marschler

Make us to live so that all things may glorify Thee through us. For "hallowed" signifies the same as glorified. It is a petition worthy to be made by man to God, to ask nothing before the glory of the Father, but to postpone all things to His praise.--Chrysostom

<b>The petition</b>	<b>Prays for</b>	<b>Which is</b>
Hallowed be Thy Name	God's glory	Our ultimate desire
Thy Kingdom come	Our blessedness	Eternal life glorifying God
Thy will be done	Our obedience	The way to eternal life
Give us this day	Our physical and spiritual sustenance	Help towards eternal life
Forgive us our debts	The removal of sin	An impediment to eternal life
Lead us not into temptation	The prevention of sin	An impediment to eternal life

Ultimate good: God's glory

Subsidiary good: Eternal life with God

Achieved by: obedience, forgiveness, removal from temptation— Thomas Aquinas

**Proposition:** To hallow God's name is to make known as holy everything God uses to reveal Himself.

- I. God's Name Is Everything He Uses to Reveal Himself
  - A. It Stands for God Himself, Psalm 20:1
  - B. It Stands for God's Self-Revelation
    - 1. Names, Lev. 22:32
    - 2. Titles
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- II. Hallowing God's Name Is the Opposite of Profaning God's Name
  - A. To Profane God's Name Is to Make God Look Despicable, Psalm 74:10
    - 1. Profanity
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    - 4. Wrong Worship
    - 5. Making God's Honor Secondary
  - B. To Hallow God's Name Is to Show God's Worth and Holiness, Isaiah 29:22-24
- III. God Hallows His Own Name
- IV. Our Prayers Must Begin by Hallowing God's Name, Matthew 6:9c

Our Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man? A. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." Yet Jesus does not begin His famous prayer, which is surely the most-prayed prayer in history, with a request for God's glory. Aren't we all about God's glory as Christians? Isn't that what we should be longing for above everything else? Of course it is. But in this particular petition, Christ in His infinite wisdom chose to focus on a particular facet of God's glory. This is the facet of Holiness. God's holiness is His being set apart from common use to a particular, special purpose — the purpose of glorifying Himself. God exists for God! God's holiness, then, is simply another way of saying that. Holiness is not just moral purity; holiness lies in the goal, the dedication, the thing for which something exists. The altar of burnt offering was holy because it was created specifically to worship God. God is holy because He exists for Himself, set apart from common use to a particular purpose of making Himself look good.

With that background, then, we understand why Jesus told us to begin our prayers with a request relating to God's holiness instead of God's glory. God's holiness is an inextricable part of God's glory. God would not be glorious if He were not holy. But because God is holy, He is glorious. Because God is set apart to glorifying Himself, He is glorious.

Why should you listen to this sermon? Above all, I would say, because so little of our prayer time is devoted to praising God. How many of your prayers start by asking that God

would make Himself look good? How many of you make Him look bad, whether by what you say or what you do? If you don't care whether God looks bad, this sermon will tell you that God severely punishes those who profane His name. If you do want to make God look holy, this sermon will instruct in why you should do that and how you can do it.

What I hope to show you today is that you must think of God as holy, praise God as holy, and show God's holiness by your words and actions. You must live in such a way that the holiness of God is obvious, and you must pray in such a way that you continue to make it obvious. Will that be easy? It depends on how diligently you have trained and controlled your thoughts. Do you habitually regard God as holy in your heart? Then it will be easy. But if you don't already do that, it will be hard to start. We are all born unholy, all born profane, and we have a hard time thinking in terms of holiness. So that's why we need this sermon. We must hallow God's name — and yet so often, we don't have a clue what “hallow” even means. So let's dive into this first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

### **I. God's Name Is Everything He Uses to Reveal Himself**

Before we talk about “hallowing,” we need to talk about God's name. What is God's name? Well, the philosophers tell us that a name is something that refers uniquely to one particular person or object. A true name applies to only one individual. What is God's name? His name is Jehovah, or Yahweh. No other person has that name. Only God can rightfully be called Jehovah.

But God's name is much bigger than His personal name. When Jesus says, “Hallowed be thy name,” He is referring to what we might call one's “good name.” I could say, “The News-Record published an article on Harvest that absolutely trashed our good name.” What would you all think? That the phrase “Harvest Reformed Presbyterian Church” had been shown to be misspelled? Of course not. You would think that the newspaper had said bad things about our church. You would think that the newspaper had ascribed evil to us in some way, such that those who read the article would think that Harvest is a bad place.

Well, that's what God's name means. It doesn't just mean “Joe” or “Bill” or “Jehovah.” It means His reputation.

#### **A. It Stands for God Himself, Psalm 20:1**

We can see this in Scripture, where David says, “May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you” (Psa 20:1 NKJ). There “Yahweh” is put in parallel with “the name of the God of Jacob.” God's name is God Himself. If we want to hallow God's name, then we want to hallow God!

But how can we make God holy? How can we set Him apart more than He actually is? We can't. We can only interact with His reputation. We can change how we think about Him and how other human beings think about Him. To hallow God's name is not to change something within God Himself, then, but rather to change something about His “good name.” It's to give Him a good name. It's to make Him look good to a watching world.

## **B. It Stands for God's Self-Revelation**

We need to think about the arenas in which we do this. What factors affect God's reputation? How is God's name manifested to the world?

### **1. Names, Lev. 22:32**

The first way we can think of is the names we call God. How do you refer to God on a daily basis? Probably as "God," "Heavenly Father," "the Lord," "Jesus," "Christ," and some combination of these. Do these names give honor to God? Do they maintain His reputation? Yes, they do, assuming you use them reverently.

### **2. Titles**

But what about titles? God's titles are a way that He makes Himself known to us. He reveals who He is by the titles Scripture ascribes to Him. Think about Mr. Obama. His title is "The President of the United States." That title honors him, whereas the title "our Dear Leader" mocks him as a petty tyrant and brutal dictator, along the lines of Kim Jong Il.

So what about it? Does your speech hallow God's name by the titles you give Him? Do you call God "the man upstairs"? "The big man in the sky"? Do you refer to Him as "Lordy," or sing songs that make people think that Jesus is your boyfriend? Or do you refer to God as "The LORD of Hosts"? "The true and living God"? "God Almighty"? "The Lord God Omnipotent"? And the many other respectful, honoring titles found in Scripture?

Does your speech make God sound holy and exalted, or like just another average guy? Do you talk about God in such a way that everyone who hears you knows that you have the utmost respect and honor for Him?

### **3. Attributes**

God reveals Himself in His attributes. The fact that He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth tells us a great deal about Him. The fact that He is omniscient and knows whatever has been, is, will be, and could be tells us yet more about His character. Or consider His statement to Moses, where He said that His name is "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation" (Exo 34:6-7 RSV). These things, too, tell us about our God. They reveal who He is.

Do you believe in these attributes? Do you honor God for them? Do you declare that He is holy on account of them? Do you worship and praise Him for all of these things, and more? If I listened to your prayers for a day, would I hear you glorifying God for these attributes? Would they come up in your prayers, as you disciplined your children, as you led family worship around the dinner table? All of these attributes are part of God's name. You don't have to deny them to dishonor His name; you simply have to ignore them, drop them, fail to mention them. How are you hallowing God's name with respect to His attributes?

#### **4. Ordinances**

God's ordinances reveal Him to us. These are the rites, the acts of worship, which He requires from us. He has ordained that we come together and worship Him by hearing a greeting, a call to worship, singing His praise, hearing the reading and preaching of His word, praying to Him, taking His sacraments, and receiving His benediction. That's why we do those things. All of these things are summarized under the word "ordinances."

How does the worship God requires tell us about Him? It tells us that He is spiritual, and that He requires our spirits to be engaged in what we're doing. It tells us that He is rational, and that He works through the understanding to reach the will and affections. It tells us that He is merciful, and that He wants to fellowship with us in a way that we can understand and attain to.

Is your worship such that it hallows God's name? If someone could listen to your thoughts during worship, would he see you hallowing God's name? Do you think arriving late proclaims how holy God is? What about dressing in a very casual or even slovenly way? Does that tell people watching, "I think God is set apart and deserving of the very best I can offer. I want to make God look as good as I possibly can. I want to demonstrate His holiness by the way I worship Him." But does your dress, your behavior, and your wandering mind say, "This God is so holy that I am in awe of Him and His presence with us"? Or does it say something different?

#### **5. Word**

God's word reveals who He is. By listening to what He says, we can understand what He loves, what He thinks, what drives Him and what moves Him. We see that God loves the fatherless and widow, that He hates double standards, that He hates things that damage and kill His people, that He loathes evil. We see how holy He is, that He hates sin so much that He must punish it; He will never acquit the guilty. Indeed, everything we read in the Bible tells us about God.

Do you use the Bible in a way that honors God? For example, do you show your regard for His holiness by paying attention to all of His commands? When He commands you to keep the Sabbath, do you do it? When He commands you to live chastely, do you do it? When He says that you ought to do everything without murmuring and complaining, do you do it? Do you treat God's word as if it is truly the Holy Bible? How attentively do you listen to it? How closely do you read it? Is a word from the Bible really and truly the final word on how you're going to live your life? Or is it just one suggestion among many? If an exchange student from Saudi Arabia who had never even heard of the Bible came to live with you for a semester, would she conclude that you had the highest reverence and respect for this book because you knew and loved the author? Or would she simply be bemused by how the Bible seemed to gather dust under a stack of remote controls on your end table?

#### **6. Works**

God reveals Himself in His works of creation, providence, and redemption. We can see His hand in nature and in history, as well as in the spiritual transformation many of us have personally experienced. Perhaps some of you have siblings who do not know Christ. Compare your life with your sibling's. You were probably raised in a similar fashion, and you have similar genetic

makeup. Yet your life looks very different from that sibling's. Why? Because of God's work in you. When you read history, do you see the hand of God at work? When you study biology or physics, do you see the hand of God? Do you see God revealing Himself as a God of order? Do you see His righteous wrath against sin, allowing sinners to go their own way? Do you "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" (1Pe 3:15 NKJ) when you are thinking about these things? Do you have an increasing regard for the holiness of God as you study what He has done? This is not optional in the Christian life. You must be aware of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works — these are all part of God's name. Together, they are all facets of God's reputation. and you must regard them as holy and behave in such a way that people can see that they are holy.

## **II. Hallowing God's Name Is the Opposite of Profaning God's Name**

Well, that's what God's name is — everything that He uses to make Himself known, or everything that contributes to His reputation.

### **A. To Profane God's Name Is to Make God Look Despicable, Psalm 74:10**

But as we think about hallowing God's name, we should think about the opposite of hallowing — that is, profane. "Hallow" is an older English word for "holy." We use it today pretty much only in the name of the holiday on October 31, the day before All Saints' Day. In older days, that holiday was called "All Hallows' Day," using the native English word "hallow" instead of the imported Latin word "saint." The day before, of course, is the "eve," and All Hallows' Eve became Halloween. With that background, we can understand that the opposite of hallowing something is profaning it. What does it mean to profane? To make something look despicable. To take something holy and drag it through the mud. To take something sacred and cheapen and devalue it until it is worthless. Thus, pornography profanes sexuality and sexual intercourse. Wanton dumping of poisons — environmental pollution — profanes rivers and lakes and the earth itself. And using God's name in an unholy way profanes God's name, makes God look despicable and worthless. The Psalmist cries out, "O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?" (Psa 74:10 NKJ). To blaspheme or to profane is, again, to make God look bad.

#### **1. Profanity**

The obvious way to do this is by profanity — literally using God's name to express surprise, or anger, or pain, or whatever. Thus, you hear people say "O God" when they are told that a loved one was just killed in a car wreck. You hear people say, "Jesus Christ!" when someone cuts them off on the road. If you ever use God's name in this way, as a swear word, then stop. That is a sin! The third commandment warns you that God will not hold you guiltless if you take His name in vain.

But many Christians are in the habit of profaning God's name with minced oaths. These are thinly disguised references to God — "Gosh" or "Golly" instead of "God." "Jiminy Christmas/Cricket" instead of "Jesus Christ." "Jeez" or "Sheesh" instead of "Jesus." "Dang" and "Darn" instead of "damn," and "Gol-darn" and "doggone" instead of "God-damn." If you speak

like this, then you are guilty of profaning God's name. Every time you open your mouth and say "Hallowed be thy name," you are only condemning yourself, because you are the very person who is profaning God's name! Stop swearing. Stop cursing. Stop using minced oaths. You may be a blasphemer "lite," but you're still a blasphemer as long as you continue to speak in that way. This is not a "small sin." This is not a minor issue. God didn't put it in the third commandment for nothing. God didn't make it the first petition in the Lord's Prayer for nothing. You have a huge responsibility to use your tongue for good. If you ever have used it in the past to take God's name in vain, repent right now, and begin to habituate yourself to speaking in a way that honors the true and living God.

## **2. Bad Theology**

Yet, another way to profane God's name is by bad theology. If you misrepresent God, then you are dragging His name through the mud. For example, if you say that God does not judge unrepentant sinners, then you're saying that ultimately, He approves of evil, or at least that He doesn't enforce His laws against it, which amounts to the same thing. On the other hand, if you say that God punishes people you don't like just because you don't like them, then you are also misrepresenting Him. My father serves the board of the North Weld County Water District in Colorado. A few years ago a church bought a water tap for its new building outside Windsor. The water district charged them the going rate for the tap, plus the amount it cost to build a water line to their building from the pipeline at the road. The church decided it wasn't going to pay, and when the water district contacted them to ask for money, the church leader said, "You have no right to charge us for this water tap because we're a church. If you come after us for this unpaid bill, God is going to get you," or words to that effect. The other men on the district board called Dad and said, "What should we do? What if God really does get us for trying to get our money from this church?"

Dad responded, "We should not be afraid of bad theology."

You see, brothers and sisters, that church was profaning God's name. They were making God look bad by implying that He doesn't pay His debts. The non-believers working at the water district could have gotten the idea that Christ taught Christians to shaft people. But that's not what Jesus taught at all!

So how do you profane God's name? Do you charge Him with wrong when your spouse dies? When your child dies? When your bank account is emptied by scammers? When your house burns down or your mother is killed in a freak scuba diving accident? When horrible things like that happen to you — and they will — what do you say about God? Do you continue to trust Him? Or do you say that He must not be there or that He must not be good? Beware of bad theology. It has slain its ten thousands.

## **3. A Wicked Life**

Well, if you claim the name of Christ and give yourself up to evil, you make Jesus look bad. That should be obvious. The story I just told about the church in Windsor illustrates this. But there are many other ways to be an evil person while claiming to be a Christian. Think of the verbally

abusive wife, who is constantly running her husband down with her words and telling him what a lousy person he is — perhaps because he doesn't lead in family worship, or isn't as wonderful as her father, or doesn't live up to the standard set by Mr. So-and-so. Yet that same woman comes to church, participates in multiple Bible studies, and sees nothing wrong with her behavior. What does that kind of lifestyle say? It says that God doesn't care about our speech. It says that being a follower of Jesus doesn't require you to be kind to your closest loved ones. But that's totally false. Jesus demands that we be kind, patient, and forgiving, and that we do not hold people's sins against them or judge them by the standard of some other person we know.

#### **4. Wrong Worship**

Bad worship, too, is a way of blaspheming God, of profaning His name. If you worship without engaging your mind, or without paying attention to what you're doing, or without any intention of responding in obedience, repentance, and faith, then you are profaning God's name. You're tuning Him out, as it were. Now, how respected do you feel when you're talking to someone and that person makes it clear that he's not listening? How honored do you think God is when He's talking and you're not listening?

#### **5. Making God's Honor Secondary**

Or, simpler than all of these things, you can simply let God's honor drift to the back of your mind. If what you want right now is more important to you than God's glory, then you are not hallowing His name. If you are more concerned with your favorite sports team or your retirement account or your child's grades than you are with whether God's name is being hallowed, then you are not hallowing God's name. You're doing something quite different.

Is God's honor secondary to you? It should be primary.

#### **B. To Hallow God's Name Is to Show God's Worth and Holiness, Isaiah**

##### **29:22-24**

So, positively speaking, how does one hallow God's name?

Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob: "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, Nor shall his face now grow pale; 23 But when he sees his children, The work of My hands, in his midst, They will hallow My name, And hallow the Holy One of Jacob, And fear the God of Israel. 24 These also who erred in spirit will come to understanding, And those who complained will learn doctrine." (Isa 29:22 NKJ)

You hallow God's name by fearing Him, by understanding the truth, and receiving God's instruction. This comes about when you begin to catch a glimpse of His mighty works.

Do you want to know whether you are making God look good? Well, I ask you: do you fear Him? Do you accept His instruction, both from this pulpit and from your own devotional reading and by listening to and reading other pastors and authors? Do you shun all these things that tend to His dishonor? Brothers and sisters, fear God. Honor Him. Listen to Him. That's how you hallow His name.

### **III. Only God Can Hallow His Own Name**



But though we have all these ways to hallow God's name, we must not overlook the obvious here: we pray and ask God to hallow His name because ultimately, He is the only one who can do so. We can contribute; we can do our best to show that His name is holy. But only He can, in the final analysis, bring people to acknowledge His name as holy. So ask Him to hallow it.

#### **IV. Our Prayers Must Begin by Hallowing God's Name, Matthew 6:9c**

Well, finally, how do we apply all this to prayer? In our prayers, we must begin by praising God and magnifying Him. We need to extol His holiness, and of course His other attributes as well.

How do your prayers begin? With your needs, or with God's holiness? What proportion of your typical prayer is taken up with praising God and trying to tell Him in some tiny measure just how great His name really is? Are you a hallower of God's name, or a profaner of God's name? Are your prayers calculated to make God look good, or to make yourself be well-provided for?

I can't tell you how many prayers I've heard that simply cut to the chase and ask God for something. Make your prayer different. Begin by hallowing God's name and asking Him to hallow it.

And remember this: God preeminently showed Himself holy in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was holy in everything He did. God's holiness was seen at the cross, where Jesus was punished for your and my violations of God's holiness. That's how seriously God takes holiness. That's how important it is for you to hallow His name. His own Son had to die because God is so holy. Do you think that that holiness might warrant you dressing up a little for church? That it might warrant you eliminating minced oaths from your speech? That it might mean that you need to pay attention during worship? But more than that, it means simply this: that you are forgiven and welcomed in, and that in Jesus Christ God has already hallowed His name. Your very existence as a Christian hallows God's name. So let's hallow His name — for that. “Father, thank you for manifesting your holiness by saving me.” Can you say that? If you're a child of God, you can. Say it, and live like it. Amen.