

“Hallowed Be Thy Name”
(Matthew 6:9)

Introduction: Jesus tells us that if we have truly believed in Him, we have entered into a new relationship with His Father. Because of what He has done, the Father no longer stands in front of us as a Judge ready to condemn us. He no longer threatens us with His judgments for failing to live up to His righteous standards. Christ has removed that judgment which we have deserved through our sin. He has paid the debt by offering Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Christ has even covered our nakedness with His perfect robe of righteousness. We had no righteousness in the sight of God. All we had was sin. But Christ became a man and kept His Father’s law perfectly for us. And when we believe in Christ, this righteousness becomes ours, and it makes us acceptable to God. And because Christ has done all this, because He has changed us by His grace, the Father has also received us as His own sons and daughters. He has adopted us into His family, so that we can now come to Him as a child comes to his Father. We can come knowing that when we do, we will be received by Him. We have a heavenly Father who is willing to listen to us, and One who is willing and able to help us.

But Jesus also reminded us that even though the Father has adopted us into His family, this doesn’t mean that He is any less holy or exalted. He is still the unlimited God, and we are still His limited creatures. When we come to Him, we must still come with meekness and fear. We must still reverence Him and treat Him as holy. This is what Jesus continues now to teach us in the first request of this prayer. He says that when we pray,

We must pray that we and everyone else would treat God as holy.

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father who art in heaven, *hallowed by Thy name,*” or to put it more simply, we are to pray, “*May Your name be regarded as sacred.*”

I. First, I would remind you that the Bible says that if we and everyone else were simply left to ourselves, we would not treat God as He should be treated.

A. Now how should we treat Him?

1. Well ask yourself this question: If you lived in a great country, which was ruled by a wise and mighty king, who was feared and respected throughout the world, and this king summoned you to appear before him, how would you treat him?
 - a. Doubtless you would show him the courtesy of coming before him in the very best condition that you could. You would wash and groom yourself and put on your best change of clothes, so that you would look your very best.
 - b. You would also polish up your manners and be careful to speak only in the most polite and courteous way.
 - c. And you would be careful to show the king certain gestures of respect, such as bowing when he enters the room, and saying, “Your majesty.”
2. Now if you would be this careful to show respect to an earthly king, how much

more should you do for the heavenly King?

- a. God should be treated with far more dignity and respect than any man.
- b. Multiply your response to the earthly king by a thousand, and then that by a thousand more, and you will begin to see how reverently you should treat God.
- c. But yet the Bible reminds us again and again that this isn't how men treat Him. Why not?

B. It shouldn't be a mystery to you why those who are outside of Christ don't treat God as they should.

1. The problem is that their hearts are full of sin.
 - a. Sin is a very powerful thing. It is a potent evil. And it never takes a rest.
 - b. It continually turns people away from God, rather than to Him. It makes them hate God, rather than love Him.
 - c. Sin must be a terrible evil, for when man looks at the most beautiful Being in all the universe through its eyes, he doesn't see anything lovely; he doesn't see anything desirable, he only sees that which he hates.
2. But you might wonder whether they can really see God at all? Isn't it true that most people living today don't believe that God is real?
 - a. It is true that many people deny that God exists. But God tells us that everyone knows that He does exist. They cannot be alive and not know it.
 - b. This is why Paul tells us in Romans 1 that God pours His wrath out on fallen man continually.
 - c. God reveals Himself to every man, everyday, everywhere in the world. He is constantly showing them His everlasting power and His limitless divine nature. Even the smallest blade of grass has its story to tell of the One who made it. No one in the world has any excuse not to believe in God. Even Helen Keller, who was born blind and deaf, who never saw the sun rise nor heard the voice of another human being, had enough of God's revelation to convince her that God existed.
 - d. But yet knowing God, man still hates Him. They hate Him because of their sin. But this is exactly why they do not honor Him as God.

C. But if we would examine our own hearts and lives for a moment as Christians, we would also need to confess that we don't treat God as we should. Why is this?

1. The fact is that we have a very similar problem. We still have sin in our hearts.
 - a. Yes, there is grace there. The Holy Spirit is actively at work in our hearts, if we are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. But there is still sin in there too. There is so much sin, that if God did not help us, we would not honor Him at all.
 - b. Paul realized that he had this weakness and that he needed God's strength. And so he wrote to the Corinthians, "And such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are *adequate in ourselves* to consider anything as *coming from ourselves*, but our *adequacy is from God*, who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:4-6).

- c. David expressed the same thing in Psalm 51, where he cried out to God, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; *then* my tongue will joyfully sing of Thy righteousness. *O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Thy praise*” (vv. 14-15). David knew that he could not praise God on his own. He needed God’s help.
2. This is why, left to ourselves, we would be as weak and helpless as the unconverted man when we try to give God the kind of glory and honor that he deserves. We cannot do it. We need help.

II. What should we do then? Since it is true that unconverted men don’t honor the Father, and we don’t give Him the honor that we should, Jesus tells us to pray that God would bring this about.

- A. Now notice what Jesus says here. He says that we should pray that the Father’s *name* would be regarded as holy. Why doesn’t He tell us to pray that the Father Himself would be respected in this way?
- 1. Actually, He does. This is what He means by regarding His name as holy.
 - 2. A name is a revelation of who and what a person is.
 - a. When God tells us His name, it is one of the ways that He tells us about Himself.
 - b. For instance, the name God, which is *Elohim* in Hebrew, reveals God as the One who made all things. He is the God of Creation. His name *Yahweh* tells us that He is the One who is the same no matter how many years go by. He is the One who will keep His Covenant. He will keep His Word to all generations, to those who love and fear Him.
 - c. In other words, His name points to Him.
- B. Therefore, when we pray that God’s name will be regarded as holy, we are praying that God Himself will be treated as holy. We are praying that God will be regarded as very special.
- 1. This is why it is such a terrible sin to break the third commandment.
 - a. The Lord tells us, “You shall not take *the name of the Lord your God* in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain” (Ex. 20:7).
 - b. This commandment is broken whenever anyone uses God’s name in an empty or irreverent way. If you take an oath or make a vow in God’s name, you are calling God to bear witness to the truth of what you are saying or to the truth that you are going to keep your promise. If you don’t, then you have used His name in an empty way, and you have dishonored Him. And, of course, if you use His name for a swear word, you have used it irreverently. You have profaned it, or lowered it to the level of trash. This also greatly dishonors God. The Lord says that He will punish all who treat Him like this.
 - 2. But how many times have we dishonored God, by making empty vows or by making empty promises? How many times have we lied or broken the promises

we have made to God? How many times have we used His name as a common swear word? How many times, in other words, have we failed to treat God as holy, and lowered him to our level, or lower, rather than putting Him where He ought to be and bowing before Him?

- a. I would venture to say that all of us have many times. And God has been faithful to punish us for this, hasn't He? If we are His children He has. God disciplines all of His children, so that we will learn to do the right thing. And you know this morning, if you are His child, that His discipline does exactly what He says it will. It straightens you out and makes you walk in the paths of righteousness. Praise God that it does.
- b. But realize that the judgment for your sin of not loving Him or honoring Him has not been paid for by you, but by Christ. He carried your guilt on the cross and took it all away, so that His Father's justice would be satisfied and so that you would be set free from His wrath. This is the same blessing that He offers to all men, if they will only turn from their sins and embrace Him by faith.
- c. This is what He offers to those of you who are outside of Christ this morning. If you recognize that your life does not honor God, if you do not see the gracious hand of God upon you, chastening you for your sins, if you see your need of Him, that you are still under the guilt of your sins, come to Him. Answer His call and receive His forgiveness. It is only through Christ that you may be saved.
- d. But for those of you who do know Him, pray that God's mercy and love would so fill your heart, pray that His Spirit would so fill your soul, that you would reverence Him and treat Him as you should.
 - (i) Pray that you would not only treat His name as holy, but also all the other ways in which God reveals Himself.
 - (ii) Pray that you would treat His Word as holy. Pray that you would treat His worship and His sacraments as holy. Pray that you would treat His works in history as holy.
 - (iii) Pray also that in everything you think, that in everything you say, and that in everything you do, you would bring honor to Him. Pray that you would grow in your personal holiness, for in being holy, you will be better able to reverence God as holy.
- e. But also pray that God would so pour out His Spirit upon the earth, that everything which dishonors Him now would be removed.
 - (i) Pray that the Lord would bring about the destruction of atheism. The only reason that anyone can write such ungodly bills as those two which are in the State Assembly now is that they don't believe that there is a God in heaven. Pray that God would break through their self-deception and reveal Himself to them as a God who will judge their evil deeds, unless they repent and turn to Christ. Pray that this country will be kept by God from slipping into even greater and greater unbelief.
 - (ii) Pray also that the Lord will give strength to His church so that we might get His truth out to others. Pray that the great darkness of ignorance

which is in our land would be removed and the light of His Word would again shine forth in all of its brilliance.

- (iii) It is only God's truth, when He is pleased to make it powerful by His Spirit, that can turn a society such as ours around and back to Himself. Let's pray that God will do so.
- f. Lastly, learn from the order in which Jesus places this petition that when you pray, you should pray for these things first.
- (i) Anything else that we might ask for is not nearly as important as the glory of God.
 - (ii) So let us learn to set aside our own comfort and well-being for the moment to give God what is rightfully His. We will find that when we finally get to our needs, they will not be so great, nor so important after all.
 - (iii) May the Lord grant to us His wisdom through His Spirit this morning. Amen.