

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series: The Lord's Prayer
Number: 5
Text: Matthew 6:10
Date: May 19, 2013 a.m.

Pastor/Teacher
Gary L.W. Johnson

The Lord's Prayer: The Third Petition (Part I)

The most recent evidence that Evangelicals in large numbers are being taken captive to the spirit of the age (which is what Rom. 12:1-2 refers to - having their minds shaped and molded by the world) appeared in the *Christian Post*. The article was by David Thompson, an ordained Assemblies of God pastor and carried the title "Why I Believe Pastors Should Support Jason Collins." Thompson began by issuing a strong reprimand. "Chris Broussard, sports analyst for ESPN, recently commented on NBA player Jason Collins' announcement that he was a homosexual. Broussard, and many other evangelicals, believe people who engage in same-sex relationships are living in 'an open rebellion to God.' Now, theologian John Piper has also taken Broussard's side, claiming his statements were 'solid steel.' I disagree. Many of us faith pastors are and should be proud of Jason's bravery and commend him for his courage. Broussard's and Piper's statements, and the like, are wreaking havoc in our churches' pews, destroying families, and ultimately placing a banner of hate and hypocrisy over the front doors of our conservative faith churches." He went on to call those who agree with Broussard and Piper hypocrites. He then made this stunning statement. "What many people don't realize is that Broussard's and Piper's opinions are not the opinions of faith pastors, many who call themselves 'conservative.' In my own conversations with other faith pastors about my book, *Over Coffee*, I have found a very different attitude prevailing. A greater majority of conservative faith pastors are welcoming gay couples in the Kingdom of God alongside all of the other unchangeable human circumstances in our churches." Thompson concludes by demonstrating how this mindset now controls his interpretation of scripture. The reality is that some of us faith pastors are finding ourselves more and more at odds with Broussard's and Piper's opinions. We have listened to theologians, politicians and our leadership makes blanket statements over the years regarding homosexuality. But in the pews, our world is a very different place. In the pews we are faced with the actual people who are gay and strive to follow Christ, their family, their friends and others who are part of the community at large. My interpretation of Genesis shows me that God's very first moral rule is that "man should not be alone." (Gen 2:18) In my opinion, when we force gay people to be alone, we are in fact encouraging a life of sin for gay people who may not be gifted with celibacy. God himself created us to need relationship. I believe gay couples can best meet God's intention for them by coupling with another gay person in the same or similar circumstance. In the end, many gay couples live with the same godly challenges as any other couple: monogamy, commitment, long-suffering, financial stewardship, deciding who will take the garbage out. I feel you cannot bottle up the God-created human need for relationship and intimacy. Those of us in the pastorate actually know this. Just like trying to dam up a river, the pressure will continue to build until the water finds a crack and finally wreaks utter devastation. Instead, providing gay people with the ability to live in an open relationship with another person in the same context will provide the relationship of commitment, love, and intimacy they need. We take the same approach for divorced people, even though technically they will be living in adultery (Matt 19). In the end, we can still uphold God's intention of marriage while allowing gay and divorced couples to live in God's intention to the best of their abilities. It's time for our denominational leadership, our theologians and our teachers to consider how we have denied the grace of Christ for gay couples. It's time for us faith pastors to stand up and tell others what we know, that this life is not about asking people to live the perfect Garden state ideal. This life is about coupling God's best intentions for

us with our best abilities. The good news, our Christian faith, the message of the Scriptures is that we are free from the obligation of perfection to the law. Instead, we are released in the grace of Christ to live within our best abilities to love God and each other as ourselves.”¹ Peter Jones gave this quick response: “What did we expect from theologically-illiterate “conservative faith pastors” for whom “experience” is the overriding criterion and who seem to have no clue about the Bible’s fundamental worldview that defines existence, what we at TruthXchange call Twoism? Indeed the homosexual issue exposes the incredible long-standing weakness at this level of the Evangelical movement, so that vast numbers of “born again” people will finally join the pagan movement without even knowing it is happening. Watch what will happen. Many Evangelicals, with “faith pastors” and “faith churches” will become 21st century liberals, preaching a watered down “faith” that goes easy on sin and eliminates the Fall. On the other hand, biblical orthodoxy that defends the Creator/creature distinction and all the other God-created holy distinctions (such as male and female) and preaches a Gospel of both grace and repentance, will be dismissed as a bizarre periphery of “hateful” hard-liners. That, of course, is the perfect scenario for persecution. A small-enough marginal group, easily treated as troublemakers of multicultural social peace, can then function as convenient scapegoats when things begin to implode—as they certainly will.”² Thomas Oden laments, “We have blithely been assured that in theology – just as in corn poppers, electric toothbrushes, and automobile exhaust systems – new is good, newer is better, and newest is best.”³ Much of what passes for evangelicalism is often characterized by a cliché-ridden superficiality that, at its core, is pragmatic and sentimental. It is because of their desire to be perceived as “relevant” and “practical” that these modern day evangelicals display an open hostility to traditional orthodox Christianity; not only in doctrine, but as seen in David Thompson’s case, as the outworking of doctrine into practice. All of which to say theology *does* affect how we live. Open-view theists like the late Clark Pinnock contend that Augustine, Anselm, Luther, and Calvin need to be discarded because they have led the church astray by teaching that God is sovereign!⁴ Most Christians acknowledge (quite apart from the influence of Augustine and Calvin) that the Bible *does* teach that God is sovereign. “Job says that God can do anything He wants to do, Isaiah says that God actually does everything He intends to do, and Paul says in Ephesians 1:11 that He ‘works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will.’ We can only conclude that ‘the mind of the Spirit’ is totally uniform throughout the Bible on this issue (see I Corinthians 2:6-16). When Jesus wanted to emphasize that God’s control of the details is total, He chose illustrations drawn from trivially small facts in our common experience. He said that God numbers all the hairs of our heads (Matthew 10:30) and that not even a sparrow falls out of the sky without God’s being involved (Luke 12:6-7). Had the Lord lived in the twentieth century, He might have said, ‘God’s exhaustive sovereignty extends to both the position and the velocity of every subatomic particle from the last electron in your fingernail, to the least particle of cosmic dust on the farthest edge of the most distant galaxy; ‘I, the Lord, do all these things’ (Isaiah 45:7). But you are worth more to Me than any number of subatomic particles.’ The Bible goes out of its way to include in God’s control the decision-making functions of the human mind. In II Thessalonians 2:11 Paul says that God will send the wicked ‘a powerful delusion’ in order to prepare them for judgment. In I Samuel 16, God sends an evil spirit to torment the wicked Saul and bring him to the brink of insanity. In I Kings 22, God invites an evil spirit (or is it just a perfectly good angelic being who agrees to obey God?) to deceive King Ahab by lying to him through his prophets. The result of this deception is Ahab’s mortal wounding at Ramoth Gilead. The writer notes laconically that some unknown soldier let off a bowshot ‘at random,’ and the arrow found a chink in Ahab’s armor. The soldier was not even aiming straight, but Ahab bled to death that evening, as predicted. His last political act had been to take the time to persecute Micaiah, God’s prophet. The wicked, it seems, die the way they live. More positively, Paul tells us that as the believer grows in grace, God both induces the right decisions and causes them to be done, once they are induced (Philippians 2:13). Without this degree of control and interference, we would never manage to get sanctified.”⁵

THY WILL BE DONE

The next aspect of the Lord’s Prayer is a petition concerning God’s will. As Bishop Ryle observed long ago, “We here pray that God’s laws may be obeyed by men as perfectly, readily, and unceasingly, as they are by angels in heaven. We ask that those who now obey not His laws,

may be taught to obey them, and that those who do obey them, may obey them better. Our truest happiness is perfect submission to God's will, and it is the highest charity to pray that all mankind may know it, obey it, and submit to it."⁶ The divine will Jesus has in mind is God's *preceptive* will. God's *decretive* will is what He purposed and ordained to occur from eternity past. It can neither be known in advance, unless God has revealed it in Scripture, or thwarted. God's perceptive will, on the other hand, consists of His precepts, His commandments, all those things set forth in Scripture that are our responsibility to fulfill. It is to be our prayer, says Jesus, that what God has declared should happen, does happen.

A. The Decretive Will of God

In Latin, this is called VOLUNTAS DECRETI or VOLUNTAS ABSCONDITA, God's secret will or the will of His sovereign decree. This is not subject to change. It cannot be known to God's creatures and is an important aspect of God's sovereignty.

B. The Preceptive Will of God

Known in the Latin as VOLUNTAS REVELATA, this is God's revealed will as made known to us in Scripture. This is captured in the prayer of Augustine. NOBIS A DEO PRECAMUR OBEDIENTIAM – we pray that we may willingly obey God's revealed will.⁷

CONCLUSION: Thomas Manton, one of my favorite Puritan writers, made this helpful observation, "It is the truest liberty to be subject to the will of God. Then, 'when the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free indeed,' (John 8:36). How doth the Son of God make us free? Not *from* duty, but *for* duty. He that lieth under the dominion and power of any sin is a very slave. But then are we free indeed, when we are loosed, not from a due subjection to God, but from the power of the devil. It is not liberty to be free to do what we please, good or evil; but the more determined we are to good, the more freedom – for that is a liberty which comes nearest to the liberty of God, who is a most free agent and yet cannot sin. Such a liberty is in God, Christ, and the angels in heaven: Surely they do not live a slavish life that are ever praising and lauding of God. It will be the greatest pleasure in the issue to deny our own will and do the will of God. The more we are enlarged for this, the greater is our happiness. Then we have the happiness of the spirits of just men. None among men have greater happiness than glorified saints, yet none have less of their own will. Why should we account that a bondage which is part of our happiness? In heaven, glorified spirits there are not complaining of any burden, yet they have no will of their own, but they will and nill as God doth."⁸

ENDNOTES

¹ <http://www.christianpost.com/news/why-i-believe-pastors-should-support-jason-collins-95271/>

² <http://theaquilareport.com/scapegoats-anyone/>

³ T.C. Oden, "on Not Whoring After the Spirit of the Age" *In No God But God: Breaking With the Idols of Our Age*, eds. Os Guinness and John Seel (Moody, 1992), p. 195.

⁴ C. Pinnock in *Unbounded Love: A Good News Theology for the 21st Century*, eds. C. Pinnock and R. Brow (IVP, 1994), p. 9. Elsewhere Pinnock declares that God is "sovereign over His sovereignty" and has decided not to be sovereign! Cf. his *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Baker, 2001), p. 92.

⁵ Cf. R.K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong with Freewill Theism* (IVP, 1996), p. 195.

⁶ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels I* (rpt. Baker, 1977), p. 52.

⁷ Richard A. Muller makes this helpful distinction, "VOLUNTAS REVELATA DEI: *the revealed will of God*; viz., the will of God concerning human obedience and human salvation that is revealed in the law and the gospel, as distinguished from the VOLUNTAS ABSCONDITA, the hidden will of God, which is the ultimate divine purpose underlying the VOLUNTAS REVELATA, the unsearchable judgments, and ways of the infinite mind of God itself (Romans 11:33). The distinction is similar to that between the POTENTIA ORDINATE and POTENTIA ABSOLUTA and between THEOLOGIA ECTYPA and the THEOLOGIA ARCHETYPA insofar as all three distinctions arise out of a theological concern for the divine transcendence, and are virtually identical with the distinction between VOLUNTAS SIGNI and VOLUNTAS BENEPLACITI, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from the Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Baker, 1985), p. 333.

⁸ *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton I* (rpt. Maranatha Publication, 1975), p. 131.