

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
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Text:	Matthew 6:9; John 17		
Date:	July 31, 2016 a.m.		

The Lord's Prayer: The First Petition

Lords Day 47

Question 122. Which is the first petition?

Answer: "Hallowed be thy name"; that is, grant us, first, rightly to know thee, (a) and to sanctify, glorify and praise thee, (b) in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honoured and praised on our account. (c)

(a) John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Jer.9:24 But let him that glorifieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. Jer.31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Jer.31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Matt.16:17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. Ps.119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (b) Ps.119:137 Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments. Luke 1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, Luke 1:47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, Luke 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; Rom.11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom.11:34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Rom.11:35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? Rom.11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (c) Ps.71:8 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day. Ps.115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). The third commandment is to be taken with the sentence in the Lord's Prayer in which Jesus admonished His disciples to pray, “Hallowed be thy name” (Matthew 6:9). That petition adds a positive dimension to the negative cast of the Old Testament commandment. The name of God represents the nature of God. Consequently, to dishonor that name is to dishonor God, and the hallowing the name means honoring Him. Since the various names of God represent His many praiseworthy attributes, we hallow His name when we

honor some aspect of His character. Calvin says, “We must, in my opinion, diligently observe the three following points: First, whatever our mind conceives of God, whatever our tongue utters, should savor of His excellence, match the loftiness of His sacred name, and lastly, serve to glorify His greatness. Secondly, we should not rashly or perversely abuse His Holy Word and worship mysteries either for the sake of our own ambition, or greed, or amusement; but, as they bear the dignity of His name imprinted upon them, they should ever be honored and prized among us. Finally, we should not defame or detract from His works, as miserable men are wont abusively to cry out against Him; but whatever we recognize as done by Him, we should speak of with praise of His wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. That is what it means to hallow God’s name.”¹

I. WHAT DOES "HALLOW" MEAN?

In Greek, the word *hagiazain*, is derived from the word *hagios*, which is generally translated *holy*. *Hagiazain* is practically nonexistent in secular Greek, but in biblical Greek there is ample material to define its meaning. The word, Morris points out, “belongs almost exclusively to biblical Greek, or Greek influenced by the Bible. It occurs 3 times in Matthew, out of a New Testament total of 27 (6 times in Hebrews is the most in any one book). It is used of ‘sanctifying’ objects set apart for use in worship in the temple and the like, and when used of people, it signifies that they have been consecrated in some way to the service of God. Further, the logical subject of sanctifying is God alone and not man...God’s name is as little hallowed by man as His kingdom comes or His will is done...When God’s deity is revealed to man in the mystery of worship (cf. Isaiah 6:3), then God is sanctified to him.”² The word has two basic meanings. *First*, it means to make an ordinary secular thing holy, by certain rituals or by bringing it into contact with things that are holy. That is obviously not the meaning here. Nothing that man can do can make the name of God holy in that sense, for that would imply that, to start with, the name of God is *not* holy. But *second*, *hagiazain* means to treat as holy, that is, to *hold sacred*. To hallow a thing is to regard and to treat that thing as holy and sacred. But what does that mean? We can best come at this from remembering the meaning of *hagios*. *Hagios* is the adjective meaning holy; but the basic idea behind it is the idea of difference. That which is *hagios* is different from ordinary things; it belongs to a different sphere of quality and of being. That is why God is supremely The Holy One, for God supremely belongs to a different sphere of life and being. It may be well that of all the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, this prayer that God’s name should be hallowed is the petition to which most people would find it more difficult to attach any definite and precise meaning, if they were asked what they meant when they were praying it. Let us begin by tracing the various translations of this petition, which different translators have offered. These translations fall into four groups.

A. There are the translations which use the word *hallowed*. This is the oldest translation of all. It goes back to Alfred the Great: “*Sic gehalyed dhin noma*”: and to Wycliffe: “*Halewed be thy name*”. This word *hallowed* then came down to us via Tyndale, Coverdale, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the KJV and the Revised Version. It is in the modern versions of Ronald A. Knox and of E.V. Rieu; and it is the word which is used in the New English Bible. From the first of the translations to the last, this word *hallowed* is used. It has a long and honorable lineage, and even the most modern translators have felt there was nothing better. The English Standard Version, the New International Version, the New Revised Version, as well as the American Standard Version and the New American Standard Version follow this tradition.

B. There are the translations which use the word *holy*. Typical of them is Weymouth: “May thy name be kept holy.” And in one form or another this is the translation of C. Kingsley Williams and of the Twentieth Century New Testament. It is the alternative translation of the Amplified New Testament: “Hallowed (kept holy) be your name.” As

we shall see, this translation is indeed very close to the original. The Living Bible has “We honor your holy name,” And *The New Living Translation* (an updated edition of the Living Bible) has, “May your name be honored.”

C. There are the translations which use the word *sanctified*. Typical of this translation is the Douai-Rheims version, “Sanctified be thy name.” This is also the word used by Schonfield in the Authentic New Testament. This translation is not really different, for, in fact, all that it does is to use the latinised form of the word *to hallow*. *The Jewish New Testament* (translated by David H. Stern) follows this as well with the expression, “May your name be kept holy.” *The Jerusalem Bible* has, “May your name be held holy.”

D. There are the translations which go, as we might say, a little further afield to find a rendering. Moffatt and Goodspeed use the word *revered*: “Thy (your) name be revered.” Kenneth Wuest uses the word *venerated*: “Let your name be *venerated*.” J.B. Phillips uses the word *honoured*: “May your name be honoured.” Eugene Peterson *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary Language* has this rather strange offering, “Reveal who you are.” Heinz W. Cassirer is a very accomplished Jewish classicist and philosopher who taught for many years at Oxford, converted to Christianity, and then devoted himself to translating the New Testament renders the verse this way: “May your name be treated as holy.” See his *God’s New Covenant: A New Testament Translation*.

In John 17:6 it highlights the significance of the name of God. “*The name, revealed by the Son*. In reference to all of his followers, Jesus says to the Father, ‘I have made your name known’ (NRSV). In the Old Testament, the expression ‘your name’ is used in a special way. It does not refer simply to the name by which a person is addressed. It means the whole character and nature of the person, insofar as it can be known. In Psalm 9:10 we read, ‘Those who know your name will trust in you.’ This does not mean that those who know that God is *called* will trust him; it means that those who know what God is *like*, those who know the character and the nature of God, will be willing and glad to put their trust in him. Again the psalmist enlightens us at this point by saying, ‘Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God’ (Ps. 20:7). The name of God signifies God himself – his perfections, his attributes, his character, his revealed self. In the Old Testament Jehovah manifested himself to his people by various names such as Jehovah-Jireh, ‘The LORD will provide’ (Gen. 22:14); Jehovah-Ropheka, ‘The LORD your Healer’ (Exod. 15:26); and Jehovah-Tsidkenu, ‘The LORD our Righteousness’ (Jer. 33:16). By his name, God is made known. Through his revealed name we learn who God is. We also learn that he is jealous of his own holy name. How that name has been ignored, misrepresented, and blasphemed! So it was a glorious mission for Christ to come and manifest that name. Jesus counted it his highest glory to manifest that name to his own. Ignorance of that name is man’s ruin, and knowledge of that name is man’s salvation.

“In Psalm 22:22 we read, ‘I will declare your name to my brothers.’ These words, taken from what we call a messianic Psalm, indicate that the Messiah would declare to his fellowman what God is like! This, of course, Christ wonderfully and perfectly did so that the promise of Isaiah 52:6 was fulfilled, ‘My people will know my name.’ Jesus has revealed the Father – his grace, his love, and his holiness.”³

CONCLUSION: Abraham Kuyper, that great Dutch theologian and statesman, declared that, “God’s name must be *hallowed*. And all indifference to the Name of the Lord is irreconcilably opposed to this hallowing of the Name of our God.”⁴ In none of His works has God more eminently displayed the hallowing of His name than in the work of redemption. This brightest exhibition of God’s perfection, argues Herman Witsius, is displayed in the Gospel, “There, His love toward the human race, His wisdom, kindness, power, truth, justice and particularly the attribute of which we are

now speaking, holiness, shine with surpassing brightness. His holiness appears in making provision for restoring to sinful man that image of Himself which had been shamefully effaced. His holiness appears in refusing to do this until he had expressed His abhorrence of sin, not only by the plainest language, but by deeds, by *exemplary punishment*. His holiness appears in requiring that, in order to the sanctification of His elect, the punishment should be endured by His own most holy Son, who freely offered Himself for that purpose, and in so impressive a manner, that the display of the strictest justice and purest holiness filled heaven and earth with amazement. His holiness appears in raising His Son, after the completion of His sufferings, from the dead, and *crowning Him with glory and honour*, by which it was made evident that the holy sacrifice of His Son was pleasing in his sight. [Finally], His holiness appears in transforming those who had been redeemed by the blood of his Son to His glorious image, *that He might be the first-born among many brethren*. These and similar views, there is reason to believe, were present to the mind of Christ when, immediately before proceeding to give full satisfaction to Divine justice, He broke out into these words: *Now is my soul troubled* by the contemplation of those dreadful sufferings which await me. *And what shall I say?* I should wish my feelings to be universally known, but it is difficult to find words to express them. *Father – save me from this hour*. If it be possible, let my sorrow pass away from me. *But for this cause came I unto this hour*. I know that these sufferings must be steadfastly endured. My office as Mediator was undertaken on the express condition of paying that price, to satisfy thy justice, and redeem my elect. And I retract not the condition. Therefore, *Father glorify thy name*. Display thy holiness and justice in the sufferings which I now cheerfully present myself to endure. But display those attributes likewise in setting me free, and in justifying my people, when satisfaction shall have been offered. *Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it*, by many evidences of my perfections in the government of the universe, and, latest of all, by giving thee to the world by the preaching of the gospel, and by the performance of those astonishing works by which the truth of the gospel has been confirmed. *And will glorify it again*, by accepting thy satisfaction, and by bestowing on thee and on thy people its righteous fruits. The amount of the whole is, that in the work of our redemption, the name of God is hallowed or sanctified in a remarkable manner. In this manner God sanctifies Himself.”⁵

¹ As cited in J.M. Boice, *God the Redeemer: Foundations of the Christian Faith II* (IVP, 1978), p. 72.

² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1992), p. 145.

³ P.W. Comfort and W.C. Hawley, *Opening The Gospel of John* (Tyndale, 1994), pp. 268-269.

⁴ Abraham Kuyper, *To Be Near Unto God* (rpt. P&R, 1979), p. 285.

⁵ H. Witsius, *The Lord's Prayer* (rpt. P&R, 1994), p. 191.