

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 99

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 103: *What do we pray for in the third petition?*

ANSWER: In the third petition (which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven) we pray, that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 40C

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 29:29; Romans 12:1-2

Key Thought: *In the third petition we pray for the will of God.*

Questions:

- ☞ Can we understand all of God's will perfectly?
- ☞ How are we to know the will of God?

Prayer

Notes: After seeking the glory of God's name and the advancement of His kingdom, Jesus instructs us to pray for the will of God to be done "on earth as it is in heaven." This is the third petition of the Lord's Prayer. The question immediately faces us: "What is meant by the will of God?" It is necessary to understand that God's will includes every purpose of His heart from all eternity, and yet not all of God's mind is known or can be known by His creatures. This is why a distinction is often made between God's secret will and His revealed will. Moses tells us that the secret things—those things known to God in His eternal counsel—belong to Him alone, but what is revealed belongs to us and to our children. This means that there are certain things in the mind of God to which we are not privy. We cannot, for example, know the hearts of men, or determine who are truly among God's elect, or know the events of the future which are hidden in God's heart. We cannot understand the secret purposes of God that lie behind His actions in things that are often perplexing to us. We cannot grasp with our limited minds the fullness of certain doctrines, like the tri-unity of God or the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. In matters such as these, we are to remember that "the secret things belong to God." Our concern is obedience to that which is revealed. It is especially for conformity to the revealed will of God that we pray in the third petition. How, then, are we to know God's revealed will? Many take a mystical approach, arguing that God's will is discerned through feelings or impressions (i.e., "I feel led to do such-and-such"). Others take a more political approach, imagining that God's will is made known through majority consensus or the will of

a strong leader. The problem with both of these approaches is that they are subjective, or man-centered. The will of God is properly known through His objective revelation: the Bible. As we pray the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, we are asking God to deepen our understanding, obedience, and submission to His Word.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 40C

Scripture: Read 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 4:1-11

Key Thought: *In the third petition we are reminded of the excellency of God's will.*

Questions:

☞ Is there a difference between knowing, obeying, and submitting?

☞ Why is conformity to God's will something to be earnestly desired?

Prayer

Notes: In the third petition we ask God to “make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to His will in all things.” There is a progression in the words used by the authors of the *Catechism*. Knowledge of God's will leads to obedience which, in turn, leads to submission. At first glance, we might think that obedience and submission are synonymous, but there is a difference. Obedience may be mere conformity of behavior, but submission is humble conformity of the heart. The more we learn about God, the more clearly we are able to see why it is good to submit to His will. It is for this reason that we were created: to do the will of Him who made us. God's Word and His works everywhere show us the benefits of walking according to His will in all things, and the consequences of resisting it. When we conform to God's will, we have a good assurance that a work of grace has been begun in us, since no man naturally desires to submit to God. Conformity to God's will furthers the cause of His glory in the world, since He accomplishes His purposes by means of the obedience of His children. God's will is intended for our benefit, for He says, “What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?” (Deut. 10:12-13). In all of these things, conformity to the will of God makes us like Christ, who said, “Not my will, but Thine be done.”



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 40C

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 10:12-13; 12:32; 1 John 2:3-6

Key Thought: *In the third petition we pray for active obedience.*

Questions:

☞ What is meant by “active obedience”?

☞ What are the dangers of having knowledge without active obedience?
Prayer

Notes: Thomas Watson writes in his commentary on the *Catechism*, “We pray that we may do God’s will actively, subscribe to all his commandments, believe in Jesus, which is the cardinal grace, and lead holy lives. . . . This is the sum of all religion, the two tables epitomized, the doing of God’s will. . . . The knowledge of God’s will is not enough without doing it. If one had a system of divinity in his head; if he had ‘all knowledge,’ yet, if obedience were wanting, his knowledge were lame, and would not carry him to heaven. Knowing God’s will may make a man admired, but it is doing it that makes him blessed... The bare knowledge of God’s will is inefficacious, it does not better the heart.” John tells us that the sure mark of a true saving knowledge of Christ is active obedience to His will, and without such obedience, there can be no assurance. It was our disobedience which resulted in death, and it is Christ’s perfect active obedience to the will of the Father which brought us life. Those in whom Christ dwells, and they alone, are equipped with grace to actively obey the will of God. The obedience of the Christian is the obedience of Christ who lives in them. Those who know God’s will, but do not do it, only prove that they have no inward grace, and add to their condemnation. Therefore Watson continues: “Knowing without doing God’s will, will make the case worse. It will heat hell the hotter. ‘That servant which knew his Lord’s will,’ and did it not, ‘shall be beaten with many stripes.’ Many a man’s knowledge is a torch to light him to hell. You who have knowledge of God’s will but do not do it, how are you better than a hypocrite? Nay, how are you better than the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light? It is improper to call such Christians, who are knowers of God’s will but not doers of it. . . . Let us not rest in knowing God’s will. Let it not be said of us . . . ‘They knew what was just, but did it not.’ Let us set upon the doing of God’s will.”



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 40C

Scripture: Read 1 Peter 2:20-25; Hebrews 12:1-2

Key Thought: *In the third petition we pray for passive obedience.*

Questions:

☞ What is meant by “passive obedience”?

☞ What are the signs of resisting the will of God in affliction?

☞ How is the Christian to respond in times of affliction?

Prayer

Notes: “Passive obedience” means a patient submission to the will of God in affliction. It has been defined as “a gracious frame of soul, whereby a Christian is content to be at God’s disposal, and acquiesces in his wisdom.” This does not mean

that a Christian cannot be deeply affected by trials, or weep under afflictions, or even cry out to God in distress under adverse circumstances. All of these reactions are found among the godly in Scripture. But discontent with God's providence, murmuring at His will, fretful worrying, and self-justification are indications of a lack of passive obedience. As in the case of active obedience, Christ is our model and our source of enabling grace. When we pray for God's will to be done, we seek His grace to acknowledge His hand in our afflictions, as intended for our good and to justify God, rather than ourselves, and glorify Him for punishing us less than we deserve. In passive obedience, we remember the exhortation that says, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives" (Prov. 3:11-12).



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 40C

Scripture: Read Psalm 148:1-14

Key Thought: *In the third petition we pray for a heavenly disposition.*

Questions:

☪ What is meant by the phrase, "on earth as it is in heaven"?

☪ How is the obedience of the angels a pattern for us?

Prayer

Notes: In the third petition, we pray that God's will would be carried out "on earth as it is in heaven." In heaven, God's will is heeded by the angelic hosts. Their instant submission to God is to be a pattern for our obedience. Thus, we pray that we may submit to God's will completely, being careful to do all that He commands and to leave nothing undone. We pray that we may submit to His will sincerely, without mixed motives and seeking His glory alone. We pray that we may submit to His will willingly, with a heartfelt delight in pleasing the Lord. We pray that we may submit to His will fervently, like the fiery seraphims who literally burn with a desire to carry out God's bidding. We pray that we may submit to His will excellently, giving Him the best we have in the best manner we can. We pray that we may submit to His will immediately, without hesitation or doubt. We pray that we may submit to His will constantly, never growing weary in the service of our God and Savior.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.