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## The Lord's Prayer, the Pastor's Prayer

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heart and one mind the new song: "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."<sup>112)</sup> Then

From sorrow, toil, and pain,  
And sin we shall be free,  
And perfect love and friendship reign  
Throughout eternity.

Milwaukee, Wis.

C. AUGUST HARDT

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## The Lord's Prayer, the Pastor's Prayer

### The Third Petition

The pastor prays to the Father: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." His privilege and duty is to understand the meaning of this petition and to convey it to his congregation. If he fails in this, he is incompetent; if he is incompetent, he should either acquire knowledge or return the shepherd's staff to Jesus. The knowledge of God's will is indispensable to faith and life. To attain this sufficiency, the faithful pastor strives earnestly to ascertain the meaning of this petition. That pastor was the devil's servant who said to an afflicted parishioner: "Don't worry about God's will. It is absolute and unsearchable. You cannot change it anyway."—To understand this prayer, simply pray it. Pray it as a child prays it to our Father. Let the Spirit interpret the meaning.—Our pastoral obligation is to declare unto our congregations all the counsel of God. Acts 20:27.

Because this prayer is the petition for the grace of obedience and submission, it has been designated as the difficult petition. To our sinful flesh each petition, including the Fourth, is objectionable. The Third Petition may seem at first repellent. We study it, and we find it interesting, then attractive, then invaluable, then indispensable. We may stumble as we approach it, but it lifts our heart and soul to joy and unending bliss.

It is always in place to ask, What is the Father's will? We search for a definition of the concept *will*. We consult scholastic philosophy, St. Thomas, Dun Scotus, Kant, also William James, and the modern psychologists. They tell us that will is a faculty which can be analyzed as, first, the sensing of and approach to alternatives, second, the examination of these, third, the choice of action; that will can be influenced and controlled by conscience, intellect, emotions, appetites, by the material and the

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112) Rev. 5:9, 10.



immaterial. But we find all their definitions incomplete and unsatisfactory; for the exalted mystery of the Father's will cannot be solved by the study of the human will, which is and remains the "inferior mystery."

It has been proved before this that philosophy cannot exclude theology when it endeavors to formulate the concept of *will*. Sound theology arrives at knowable facts in the realm of will independently of philosophy. Honest searchers admit that the will of man is molded by the divine will or by the will of its opposition. The will of the believer is that God's will be done; the will of the unbeliever is that the will of the devil, the world, and the flesh be done. The unbeliever can repeat this petition only hypocritically. The believer wills God's will because God wills that he wills it; the unbeliever wills the will of the opposition because he himself and the opposition will it. Erasmus may have done a great deal of thinking, but Luther did a great deal of believing. See how he stands in the armor of God! See how he swings the sword of the Spirit! See how his sound theology conquers unsound intellect! Luther is the invulnerable giant because he knew, proclaimed, and executed as God's instrument the Father's will. Let us greet with respect the great minds working in their own secular field. But when they wish to pollinate positive theology with negative philosophy, we can respect neither them nor the weeds they garner.

Inasmuch as intelligent people know what is meant by the term *will*, though unable to define it, the observations just made may seem unnecessary. However, some theological students are inclined to approach the mystery of the Father's will from the philosophical angle in the hope of analyzing its functions on the assumption that human willing reflects divine willing, just as the astronomer studies the picture of the remote object reflected in his telescopic lens, which he assumes to be true and correct. This course is hopeless. The finite cannot embrace the infinite, and man cannot fathom divine depths nor soar to the heights of God's sanctuary. We cannot know anything of the Father's act of willing, nor of His will, beyond the Father's revelation of His will. Turn to Jesus. Read, believe, thank Him for the incomparable word of comfort of John 6:37-40. And turn to the Holy Spirit, who "searches all things, yea, the deep things of God." He leads us with Paul to the very brink of those deep things, not that we should plunge into the depth and perish or fret and worry about the secret things that belong to the Lord, our God, but that we should stand in awe and confidently and cheerfully worship Him and commit our way, our will, to Him. For our knowledge, joy, and comfort the Father has revealed that His hidden will is con-



cerned with our salvation, for instance, in predestinating us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, Eph. 1:5, 9. He has not revealed to us how His will elected some without passing the others by. Human logic frets. Faith believes. When the pastor prays this petition, he does not fail to include in *Thy will* the hidden will of the Father.

In his *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology* Dr. A. L. Graebner submits the following excellent definition of God's will: "Will is an attribute of God, inasmuch as He consciously prompts His own acts and is intent upon the execution of His purposes, the accomplishment of His desires, the realization of His counsels, and the fulfillment of His ordinances." We suggest that the diligent pastor read *Christliche Dogmatik*, F. Pieper, pp. 556—560. We quote from those pages the following: "Weil Gott in seiner Majestaet oder als der absolute Gott uns Menschen voellig unbegreiflich ist, so leitet die Schrift uns an und fordert damit von uns, Ursache und Wirkung in Gott zu unterscheiden." This is one reason why sound theology arrives at knowable facts in the realm of will independently of philosophy, as we stated above. This is also the reason why the children of God may pray this petition with a view to the divine attributes. We can appeal to God's attribute of goodness and to His attribute of love, grace, kindness, and mercy. Luther has these attributes in mind when he designates God's will as "His good and gracious will." Under this petition Luther also mentions the negative will of God. God does not will what the devil, the world, and the flesh will; for these oppose His will.

Theologians distinguish between the attributes of God's will as follows: *voluntas revelata* and *v. abscondita*, *v. gratiae* and *v. conditionata*, *v. antecedens* and *v. consequens*, *v. absoluta* and *v. ordinata*, *v. irresistibilis* and *v. resistibilis*. This distinction is Scriptural. However, Scripture speaks everywhere of the will of God in the singular. We pray that God may execute His purposes, that is, that He may bless His own in the sense of all these petitions and save them from all distress according to His grace. Since this implies His judgment upon the opposition, we pray that He may visit according to His justice all iniquity and thwart the plans of the enemies. As we observe the attributes of God's will, we are able to answer questions which rise insistently: Does God will this terrible world war? Does God will the division of the visible Church into many denominations? What is God's will with respect to our congregations, with respect to our Synod? What is God's will with respect to the present appalling parent and juvenile delinquency? Does God will the influence of the Church on politics? Why must some holy innocents suffer hunger though they pray the Fourth Petition? Is it God's will that I suffer? Why



does God save me? Why does He will to bless me? Let us thank God that many such questions are asked; but let us thank Him more for the gracious revelation of His will, the answer to our questions, and for His warning and protection against the opposing will.

By His grace His will is our will. Is it not? Inasmuch, then, as His will is our will, we pray in this petition for His execution of our own will as far as it is identical with His will. But is our will God's will? Always. This terse answer is correct if our will proceeds from faith and not from the flesh. And God wills, does, and performs our will. Matt. 7:7, 8; Ps. 145:18, 19; 1 John 5:14; John 16:23; Matt. 21:22; 6:6; Ps. 37:5. Our prayers are answered. And take to heart the following illustrations: Matt. 8:2, 3; 15:21-28; Acts 12:5-10; Gen. 18:23-32. The will of God and the will of His children form a perfect circle.

Yet we are sometimes fearful because the will of God also subjects us to trials and afflictions. We know that these may become very severe. Though the Word informs us that His consequent will strikes only the ungodly and never extends over His children, yet judgment must begin at the house of God, 1 Pet. 4:17. Even then their will conforms to God's will, for they suffer according to the will of God and commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator. 1 Pet. 4:19. The Christians have tribulation in this world; but according to God's will they are cheerful. John 16:2, 3, 33. At a time when unrighteousness prevails, as in war, persecution, riots, instigated by the devil and executed by the world, the children of God are in the position of just Lot. But the Lord did Lot's will in saving Zoar in his behalf. Gen. 19:19-22. There is a Pella for every Christian, for the good and gracious will of God provides the way of escape, 1 Cor. 10:13, also when His children are afflicted by His judgment upon the ungodly.

The Christian who undermines his health or spends his money foolishly or otherwise acts against reason has no right to blame God's will when the consequences of his folly trouble him. The Crusaders cried: "God wills it! God wills it!" Then they attributed their later afflictions to God's will. We thank God that upon repentance we have God's good and gracious will as our comfort against the issues of our folly. Where God has not revealed His will with respect to our earthly affairs, He wants us to use our intelligence and reason, not an absolute, tyrannical, or even destructive self-will. The Christian plans, chooses, decides; but he commits his way to the Lord for His blessing.

The pastor prays this petition. He prays it with respect to his own person. He knows that God wills his justification and



final salvation in Christ. Ezek. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:4. He knows that God wills his growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:2. He knows that God's will is his sanctification, 1 Thess. 4:3. He will turn to Jesus, John 6:37-40, to believe, to appreciate, to glorify the will of God toward and in him. He will read often Matt. 6:24-34. He will repeat the Catechism from beginning to end. He will prepare for a peaceful departure.

The pastor will pray this petition with respect to his office. God wills that the person called to be a pastor be a pastor in fact. God expressed His will through the call extended by the congregation. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6. For no other office has God given as many directions as the ministerial office. The pastor will profit by a rereading of his call and of the form for the ordination and installation of a pastor. The Scriptures quoted there inform him how the Lord wills him to be, what the Lord wills him to do, what He wills him to avoid. The duties are heavier than those of a king: the responsibility is greater than that of any other office in the world. The will of God requires of us faithfulness in every task, not merely sincerity: faithfulness to Him and His cause in doctrine and life. As a star in the right hand of Jesus, Rev. 1:20, is not the pastor to shine? As an angel, Rev. 1:20, is he not to inform those to whom he is sent? As a shepherd, is he not to lead and to feed the flock? In fact, all the terms and titles descriptive of his office, do they not reflect the will of God? God has given the pastor specific instructions with regard to his person, qualifications, equipment, personal life, family life, official activity, fraternal intercourse.

"Art thou willing and ready to take upon thee the charge of this congregation, and to perform faithfully all the duties of thy ministry? Wilt thou preach and teach the pure Word of God in accordance with the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and adorn the doctrine of the Savior by a godly and holy life?" Our answer is still: "Yes, with the help of God." Hands of blessing were laid upon us. Solemnly the petition rose to the heavenly Father: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Then the knowledge, now also the experience, that God's will has appointed us to be fellow sufferers with Christ. The utterances of the heavenly Father on the sufferings of the pastor are the great gems of invigorating comfort. One pastor may seem to bear more tribulation than his brother. No faithful pastor is *kreuzesscheu*. He does not desire to alter God's will except by the groanings of the Holy Spirit, who creates that mutual, joint will of God and the pastor. In his deepest distress, as the hart pants after the waterbrooks, utterly exhausted, the pastor waits meekly and courageously for



**The Father's Appointed Hour**

How often, Lord, have I entreated Thee	1 Thess. 5:17
That Thine appointed hour speedily may come,	John 2:4
Which is to heal my grief and hidden sorrow:	
The hour that lifts the burden or that calls me home!	2 Tim. 4:18
May it not be today? Must I wait till tomorrow?	
Weak is my lifted hand, sore is my bended knee,	Heb. 12:12
And still I wait for Thine appointed hour.	Ps. 42:11
I try in patience to possess my soul	Luke 21:19
While Thou in wisdom hidest power.	Is. 54:7, 8
My heart beats harder, shorter comes my breath	Ps. 42:1
Since this affliction cast me low.	
I pray Thee, keep my spirit whole,	
Restore my former cheer, uphold my faith,	
Renew that daily, gushing shower	
Of strength, while I must wait for Thine appointed	
hour.	
Would I complain? Forbid it, Lord,	
As long as Thou dost grace afford	
That I may flee to Thee, who art my Tower.	Prov. 18:10
And, Lord, it is not I who pray	Rom. 8:25-28
With ceaseless importunity:	Luke 11:5-13
The Spirit helpeth mine infirmity.	
His mind is known to Thee.	
Then hear the Spirit, Lord, who pleads for me.	
His groanings Thou canst not decline.	
I now resign my will to Thine.	Luke 22:42
Soon comes the happy day	
When I and mine will thank Thee for Thine hour. Amen.	

Do we pastors often open our Bible at 2 Cor. 6:1-10? Do we always keep in mind the solemn promise: "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." John 12:26. Do we appreciate the purpose of the Father's will in our ministerial trials as it is set forth in that matchless passage 2 Cor. 1:3-6? We faint not. 2 Cor. 4:1.

A pastor must be watchful and so fix his eyes on the will of God that he himself does not become a castaway. He will fight and subdue the "other law," which is the will of his own flesh, and by the grace of God he will break and hinder it. Rom. 7:14-25. It is the pastor's old Adam who whines and murmurs in dissatisfaction, who meddles to engineer calls, who is green with jealousy, red with anger, black with the soot of slander. "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men,



but to the will of God." 1 Pet. 4:1, 2. If we thus fight the good fight of faith against the flesh, the will of the world and of the devil is also weakened, broken, and hindered. The pastor prays: Let me earnestly endeavor Thy good pleasure to fulfill. In me, through me, with me, ever, Lord, accomplish Thou Thy will.

Matthew and Luke agree in the form of this petition word for word. The article, too, is used to qualify a qualified word (A. T. Robertson). In this petition it stands in opposition to the will of the enemies, as Luther points out. The will of God is in itself complete; but it is accomplished in us by a series of repeated actions of God from day to day to our last day, and in eternity, as the aorist γενηθήτω indicates. The article occurring in the phrase ἐν τῆς γῆς qualifies the earth as a place, field, or sphere apart from heaven, and it includes our earthly conditions of space, dimensions, time, resources, and all mankind. Οὐρανῷ appears without the article. To me this indicates that in the endless spaces above the earth the will of God is unopposed, as it certainly is in the presence of God's visible glory, among and by the holy angels and the sainted. The devil has no allies ἐν οὐρανῷ. In the same manner, with the same intensity and zeal, ὡς, the will of God is to be done on earth to the glory of His name and the welfare of His kingdom. The will of God in Christ is the bridge which connects His throne on high with our thrones as priests and kings, and this petition sparkles forth from its pastoral facet a joint interest and fellowship among οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι ἐν οὐρανῷ. Then why must we engage according to God's will in controversy while there is no controversy in heaven? There was controversy in heaven until the devil was cast out. As soon as the devil's will is broken and hindered completely here on earth, controversy will cease here as it ceased in heaven. The aorist γενηθήτω will terminate and be replaced by the perfect when and where in time and on earth the dear children of God love the Father's revealed will more than themselves and one another, as in eternity and in heaven they will all know God's will and will also love one another. While we pray for the specific will of God which designs our salvation, we ask also for temporal blessings, which promote that good and gracious will of God.

The will of God is indicated by the context. His will is that we pray; that His name be hallowed and that His Kingdom come; that we eat under shelter and in peace; that we rejoice daily in His forgiveness of our sin. He wills our deliverance from all evil, and He wills our eternal salvation.

Our time in this world is too brief to allow us ever to interrupt our praying of this powerful, indispensable petition, which is the Lord's Prayer, the pastor's prayer, *in nuce*.

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