

# OpenTheo

## Matthew 6:9 - 6:13 (Part 3)



### Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this exploration of Matthew 6:9-13, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of understanding the main focus of prayer as the advancement and expansion of God's kingdom, rather than just praying for personal concerns. He reminds us that while Jesus introduced the kingdom to the world, there are still those who are not citizens of the kingdom and confirms that God's will is not always done on earth as it is in heaven. Gregg encourages Christians to strive for a sanctified and obedient life, as the progress made by individual Christians contributes to the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

### Transcript

At this time, we will continue our exploration of what is usually referred to as the Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew 6, verses 9-13, with which I'm sure most of us are quite familiar. But familiar or not, I'll go ahead and read the whole prayer, because I want to talk about its basic parts and see how they fit together. It's necessary for us to see the whole thing in order to understand the parts in relationship to each other.

So, we read now in Matthew 6, verse 9, Now, Jesus here teaches us to pray, because we would not naturally know how to pray if he did not do so. Now, people do know instinctively that they should pray. And even the atheist, I think, can often be caught praying when he is in great danger and he realizes that his only help must come from above and beyond himself.

And many times, even atheists or professing atheists have been known to cry out to God. But it's one thing to know that we should pray. It's one thing to cry out in desperation.

It's another thing to know how to pray. For example, in Luke's version of this prayer, there is a different context. In Luke 11, it says in verse 1, It came to pass as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, that one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John, meaning John the Baptist, also taught his disciples.

So he said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father in heaven, and so forth. The very

prayer that we read over in Matthew 6. Notice Jesus gave this prayer when the disciples said, Lord, teach us to pray. And so Jesus says, Well, okay, I'll give you some instructions here.

Now, if we did not have his instructions, it is implied we would pray, but not correctly. We would pray, but our priorities would not be right in prayer. And certainly we can see that that is true in many prayers, even of Christians today, who, although Jesus taught us to pray, our prayers do not always follow the pattern that he gave.

For example, what comes first in your prayers? What's the first thing you ask for? I'm asking the question not assuming that I know, because it may be that your prayers are everything they should be. But I suspect that there are many listening who, when they pray, they pray for the things they want for themselves primarily. If they feel dutiful about it, they might pray for some other things that don't seem so self-concerned.

But still, the motivation to pray often arises when we feel or sense a need for something that we don't have and that we don't know how to get, and so we cry out to God and ask for it. But if we don't feel a need for something for ourselves, a lot of times we don't have the same incentive to pray. And therefore, our prayers often take on the form of just sort of like a gift list, such as little children make up to give to Santa Claus.

You know, here's what I want, and hand God the list. And the list always is, I want one of these, and I want one of these, and this would make me happy, and so forth. The purpose of prayer, according to Jesus, is directed in a different focus.

There is nothing wrong with praying for the things we need, and that is clear from this prayer. But there are other things that take priority. There is a greater concern to the Christian in prayer than simply that my rent is paid, or that I have all the food and clothing I need, or even beyond that, luxuries and toys and gadgets and things that I really want, or just to be set free from sickness or from other trials.

We do have the right to pray for such things as we believe are in the will of God, and God does care about the things we need. But the main focus of prayer is not on that. And this is seen by what Jesus places first.

Once you say, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, we come to the very first actual request for something. Now, what we request initially has nothing to do with us personally, although we certainly benefit, as does the whole world and the whole church, from the fulfillment of this request. The first thing we are to ask is, Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, after this, you've got, Give us this day our daily bread. We are authorized to pray for things we need, but notice the first priorities in prayer are not what I need or what I want. It is what God's kingdom needs for its advancement.

Now, what is God's kingdom? Well, God's kingdom, what does the word kingdom mean? The word king is obviously at the core of it, and dom, D-O-M, is short for dominion, the king's dominion. What is the king's dominion but the realm over which he rules, those subjects who are subject to him? Well, the kingdom of God is therefore the realm over which God rules the subjects over whom he rules, which of course are his people, those who are disciples of Jesus. And to pray for the advancement of his kingdom is to pray that God's rule will expand to be more universal than it already is.

Now, we do anticipate a time when Jesus will return and the kingdom of God will be universal and unmistakable because all his enemies will have been put under his feet and there will be no evidence of any resistance any longer. And that is not the way things are now. However, his kingdom does exist now.

Jesus established his kingdom at his first coming. He told that to those who demanded of him. In Luke 17, 20, they demanded, when shall the kingdom appear? And he said, well, the kingdom doesn't appear observably.

It does not come with observation. Men will not be able to point to it over here and say, oh, there it is, or over here it is. But he says, the kingdom of God is in your midst or is within you.

And so he indicated that the kingdom had already come, but they hadn't observed it. Now, it has not yet come in its universal aspect. And Jesus told a parable to clarify that.

In Matthew 13, he told about the wheat and the tares. The tares are a kind of plant that is not edible, but resembles wheat in the early stages of its growth. And in the 13th chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, The kingdom of God is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while he slept an enemy came and sowed tares in his field.

So when the tares began to grow and the wheat began to grow, they were both seen there. And some very observant servant of the man said, Hey, someone has sown tares here among your wheat. Shall we go pluck them out? He says, no, too dangerous.

The wheat and the tares look too much alike. You might accidentally pull up some of the wheat along with the tares. Let's wait until the harvest season.

At that time, the difference will be evident. And then we'll go through and we'll pull out the tares and then we'll gather the wheat. Now, what Jesus said later about explaining that is the field is the world and the good seed are the children of the kingdom.

That would be, of course, the disciples of Jesus. He said the bad seed, the tares, those are the children of the wicked one. And so in the world at one time, there's growing side by side, children of the kingdom and children of the wicked one.

And that means that although Jesus has introduced his kingdom into the world and there

are now citizens in it walking around, some of them listening to this broadcast as I speak, yet also probably some listening to this broadcast as I speak are children of the devil, people who are not children of the kingdom. That is to say the kingdom of God exists in this earth, but it does not have full sway over this earth. There are still two kingdoms in tension, the kingdom of darkness and its citizens and the kingdom of God and its citizens.

But Jesus said at the end of the age in the harvest, he will send out his angels and they will gather out all the things that are contrary to his kingdom and then his seed, his children, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. What he's saying is at the second coming of Christ, Jesus will remove all of those persons in the earth that are not in his kingdom and all that will be left will be the universal kingdom. All who are left will acknowledge Jesus as king and be his followers.

So what Jesus teaches about the kingdom of God is this. He had and did establish the kingdom of God at his coming. He began to recruit, as it were, some of the initial participants or subjects, and they were his disciples.

Once he left, his disciples began to evangelize and gather more subjects into the kingdom of God. But not everyone came, so as the kingdom of God grew in membership, the kingdom of darkness remained in the world and to this day, 2,000 years later, we still have it so. The kingdom of God is still growing as the gospel is preached, but the kingdom of darkness still is here.

There are wheat and tares growing together. But at the end of the age, when Jesus comes back, he will remove the tares. All those who have not submitted to Jesus Christ will be taken out, and then the kingdom of God will be universal and unchallenged, and all that will remain will be those who are subjects of the kingdom, said Jesus.

Now that being so, what do we mean when we say your kingdom come? Well, in one sense, the kingdom has already come, but in another sense, we anticipate its fullness, we anticipate its universal manifestation, and of course, that will take place when Jesus comes back. Now, Jesus himself seems to explain what is meant by your kingdom come by, I think, expanding on it with the next line. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus is saying that the will of God, of course, is already done in heaven. There's no one in heaven challenging him. The devil used to, but he's been cast out, according to Revelation 12, and according to John 12, 31.

Jesus, before he went to the cross, said, Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out. He meant the devil. And in Revelation 12, we read of a war in heaven between the dragon and Michael and their respective armies, and it says, and the dragon was cast out of heaven.

This happened at the cross. So, God has no one challenging him in heaven today, because Jesus has won the final victory over Satan, and he's been cast out. So, in heaven, God's will is certainly done always, without challenge.

This prayer is that God's will will be done on earth, even as it is done in heaven. That means as universally as in heaven. Now, notice the implications of this request.

First of all, it indicates that God's will is not automatically done on earth, as it is in heaven. God's will is done in heaven. That's a given.

But it is not a given that God's will is done on earth. That is what we pray will happen. God's will is not today done on earth, as it is in heaven.

I'm not saying that God's will is not in any sense done, but we're to pray that his will will be done on earth universally, even as in heaven his will is done universally. And that will, of course, only transpire, I believe, when Jesus returns. So, in one sense, when we pray this prayer, we are praying for the coming of Christ.

At least, that's how I take it. There are those who are called post-millennialists, and they believe that the kingdom will come before Jesus comes back, and that he will reign over the earth through the church. It's not my desire to refute that at this point.

Both the post-millennialists and myself, who are not, I'm not a post-millennialist, we both agree that a time is coming, whether it will be inaugurated by the coming of Christ, or whether it will be brought about by the preaching of the gospel, is where the point of disagreement would be. But we both believe there is a time coming that has not yet arrived, when God's will will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. And that is what we're to pray for.

As God's will is done more on earth, the kingdom of God has taken more ground. Because, really, what does it take for God's will to be done on earth? It takes either people who are resisting him now, either have to die, or they have to change and stop resisting him. They need to obey God.

They need to become willing servants of his. They need to do his will in their lives, as well as his will being done in the big cosmic picture. Now, some people believe that there's no possibility of anyone resisting God's will.

They suggest that, you know, to suggest that God's will can't be done on earth until people submit to him as willing servants of his, they say that would suggest that God is not sovereign. However, the Bible makes no such statement. That is to say, the Bible does not say that God's sovereignty is somehow challenged by the fact that men must agree to come to him in order for his will to be done in their lives.

And the Bible makes it very clear that God has a will for people that is not always

fulfilled. For example, in 2 Peter 3, it says that God is not willing that any should perish. Verse 9, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Well, okay, what is God's will? It is his will that no one should perish. Some people do. His will is not being done universally.

He says that he wishes that all should come to repentance. Do they? No. Then his will is not really being done on earth as it is in heaven, because in heaven there's no one perishing.

In heaven, everybody there has repented, if they were sinners at all, because the angels perhaps never sinned. But the point is, there is a will of God for humanity that is not done completely at the moment. Now, there are some who still have problems with that statement, and they would say, well, when the Bible says he's not willing that any should perish, it really means he doesn't want any of the elect to perish, and certainly the elect do not, and therefore God's will is done.

However, the Bible indicates that God's will is not always done among the non-elect, because everyone, according to Scripture, God wants all men to be saved. For example, in Luke chapter 7 and verse 30, we read of some specific people whom God willed one thing for them, and they rejected his will and thwarted it. Now, some people have serious problems suggesting that God's will can be thwarted by man, and in the big picture, in the macro, of course man cannot thwart God's will.

But in terms of God's will for your life, it is entirely possible to thwart his will. He wants you to be holy, but you may not be. He wants you to abstain from fornication.

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5, this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you abstain from fornication. Well, some Christians commit fornication. They shouldn't, and it's not the will of God, but God's will is not always done.

In Luke 7.30, we have an example of some people who did not do the will of God for them. We read, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by John the Baptist. Now, what did Luke just tell us? Luke just told us that the Pharisees and the lawyers were not baptized by John the Baptist.

In this action, they rejected the will of God for them. Now, they were not the elect, but God wanted them to be saved. He wanted them to be baptized by John the Baptist.

He wanted them to repent, but they didn't. They rejected the will of God for them. It's quite obvious.

The Bible does not teach that God's will is always done. Jesus said in Matthew 23 to

Jerusalem, he said, How many times I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not. What was Jesus saying? He said, His will, he would.

The word would means I willed. It was my desire. His will was to gather all the people of Jerusalem to himself, to salvation.

But he said you would not. And guess what? Not all of them came. Most of them didn't.

So, we can see that God's will is not always done in the lives of individuals. Now, I believe that God's will in the big picture, in the overall scene, is done. In the sense that God controls history in its broad movements.

And history will go exactly where God determines it will. He's got ways of making sure of this. For example, the Bible says he directs the hearts of the king.

In Proverbs 21.1, the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. And just as the rivers of water, he directs it wherever he wills. Likewise, the Bible says in Daniel 2 that God raises up kings and takes down kings as he wishes.

So, in terms of political movement and national destinies and international progress and geopolitics and so forth, the Bible indicates that God is in full control of that situation. But when it comes down to the micro issues of will this man turn to God or will this man resist God, that apparently isn't always something that God takes full charge over. And he allows people some choice in that matter.

And sometimes people make a choice that he disagrees with. And that he wishes they had not made. And they reject his will for them.

This is stated clearly in the verses we mentioned and many others that we don't have time to list at this time. It's a little bit like people on a passenger ship, let's say on a journey across the Atlantic. Suppose you are on a cruise to Europe from New York.

And on this cruise you have the opportunity all day long to do largely what you want. You can play shuffleboard. You can swim in the pool.

You can catch some rays out on the deck. You can go in and have some drinks at the bar. You can listen to the music.

You can read your Bible. Or you can have an affair with somebody. You can do good things or bad things.

You have quite a variety of things you can do. But none of the things you do change the destiny of that ship. Because the captain is at the helm of the ship and he is determining its course.

The ship will get where he wants it to get. You see, all the choices in the world made by the passengers will not determine whether that ship gets to its destiny or not. That is controlled by an authority above themselves.

But they still have the right to, within the confines of the movement of that ship, they still have choices to make. Some of these choices could be disastrous. They might commit suicide.

They might jump ship. You know, that's the important thing to note. God's kingdom and God's plan for history is going to be fulfilled.

The ship is going to get to the port that God has selected and nothing can stop it. The question of whether you'll be aboard that ship or whether you'll miss it is very much up to you. You see, a passenger on the ship can't determine whether the ship will get to its destination or not.

But he can certainly determine whether he'll be on the ship when that happens. And same with the kingdom of God. God's kingdom will come.

God's will is someday going to be done on earth as much and as universally as it is in heaven. The question for you is, will you be a part of it? Or will you reject the will of God for you? The important thing to note here is that Jesus assumes, and you can't miss the implications in this prayer, when he says, pray this, God, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It's clear that God's will is not done on earth as in heaven now because we're praying that that'll start happening.

Secondly, it doesn't happen automatically. It is to be brought to pass through prayer. It is by the prayers of God's people as well as their obedient actions of evangelism and making disciples and being obedient to God in their own lives.

It is through these means that God's will is to be done on earth to a greater degree than it is now. There is a lot of ground to cover. There are many people to reach with the gospel.

There's a lot of progress to be made by individual Christians in coming into a more sanctified life, a more obedient life. God's will is not even done in my life as it is in heaven right now. Fortunately, my life reflects his will more now than it did years ago, but I still have much ground to take, and so do you, I would wager, and so does the whole world.

So the world is a long way from where God wants it to be, but we are to be praying, and therefore it must be partly at least through our prayers that this will come about. Is that what your vision is when you pray, or do you just want to escape this world? Do you really have a vision for God's will being done on the earth as completely as it is in heaven? If Jesus teaches us to pray for that, is that not at the same time teaching us to



anticipate that? That someday as the result of our prayers and our obedience and God's working throughout history, that a day will come when God's will is done on earth completely, all the time, without challenge, without rivalry. That is a glorious future.

That is the manifestation of the kingdom of God in its fullness. The kingdom is here now, and it is advancing every day by the preaching of the gospel, but we pray that it will not only advance further today than it was yesterday, but that it will ultimately be the one universal reality the world over, and that God will be glorified throughout the world without competitor or rival. We'll continue our study in the Lord's Prayer next time.

I hope you'll join us.