

Sermon, October 1, 2017 – Seventeen Sunday after Pentecost
Ask, Seek, Knock- Prayer Sermon Series.

Theme 3 - Praying With One Will Various Verses



Dear Friends in Christ,
Once again we continue with the series on Prayer.

We have the need to pray, as a congregation, as families, as individuals. But prayer sometimes is misunderstood, or misused. We do talk to God, but of course we don't have God physically next to us or in front of us that we can talk to face to face. But since he isn't, people have managed to come up with a few different ways to express themselves to God so that they think they are impressing Him, or thinking that that is what God wants. Just watch...(video)

Today's theme then has to do with what God desires, praying with and in his will.

So far in the previous theme we have learned that in Christ we do have the power to pray with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Also, we learned three words, the biblical principle of prayer in three words: Know, Accept and Trust. **Knowing** that He will indeed answer every believing prayer done in faith. **Accepting** that the answer that He gives to our prayers; and **trusting** that the answer God gives is the very best answer that we could receive.

Now what does it mean to pray according to God's will? First, as we learned last week, it means to pray like Jesus did: "Your Will be done." That's the bottom line of our prayer. And it also means that whatever we pray for, be done in accordance with God's will. That is, that we be of one will with God, and with one another. In other words, the prayer that works is based on God's promises, on God's will, so we need to know what God's will is.

Knowing God's will is not easy, is it? but as the video showed, in the Lord's Prayer Jesus left a as a model of prayer that reflects God's desire and we asking God for his desire to happen in our lives.

Now, not being of one will with God, will be like a house that is divided against itself. Jesus said, it will not stand! This is what happened as the writer of the Gospel of Matthew tells us: "...A demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?"²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons."²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (Matthew 12:22-26.)

To his accusers Jesus shows that it is impossible to be from Beelzebub (Satan) and to cast out Beelzebub's agents, the demons! It's impossible to be on both sides of the fence. Sure, but what does it have to do with prayer?

The Undivided Heart

There is a lesson, and that is, we should not approach our Lord in prayer with the heart of a Pharisee! We should not angrily reject Jesus and His words and then expect a shower of blessings. We should not continually fight His will and at the same time pray, "Thy will be done." It can't be done.

Ok, then, so whose prayer will be heard and answered then? Because we are lifelong sinners! And like the Pharisees in our Gospel reading for today, we ignore, challenge, or deny Jesus authority.

Ideally, we should always approach the throne of grace with an undivided heart, but the good news is that God receives our prayers even when we are far from ideal. Actually, that is when we need His help the most, to help us understand that there are times when our wills conflict with God's will for us.

There are times also when we even question whether God has our good in mind. But he does, he always has our good in mind, even if we don't see it. How are we then to know that he has our good in mind? His Word, his word shows us God's promises and desire for us his people, in fact for all.

But so that we begin to explore his desires and begin to be of one will with him, I would like to focus on two of those desires that we find in God's Words.

First, God's word shows us the need for repentance so that in repentance we would seek his forgiveness so once forgiven we would begin a deeper communion with God. Think of these words from Psalm 51:10–12, say them with me please... "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit."

Create a clean heart of God!! God desires that we would have a clean heart. So whenever we pray for forgiveness, is that then being of one will with God? Absolutely because that is his desire that we would come to repentance and receive forgiveness. That's his plan, through Jesus. That's his promise. Through the prophet Jeremiah God said: "I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart." (Jeremiah 24:7),

And not only is it his promise, but that He himself causes that change. Just as he promised! He said through another prophet, the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 11:19) "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh."

All through Christ! As Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 5:17–19) "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

That's the first step in being of one will with God. That's how the heart begins to become lined up with God's will, that's how the heart stops being divided. Soon

thereafter an undivided heart begins to grow in love, devotion, and loyalty towards God, and love towards fellow Christians. That's what Jesus taught us as he shows us the second purpose.

And that second purpose is found in the Gospel of John (John 15:5, 12–16) where Jesus says: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” Now that sounds really good, but there is more, Jesus continues: “¹² This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”

Now this promise will go hand in hand with another one: (Psalm 37:4) “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

“Delight yourself in the Lord!” What does that mean? It means that we are abiding in Christ. That we have been recreated in Christ! That we are covered with Christ! And that we live in God's word, not only by his word, but in his word.

That we are now “...a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for –God's—(his) own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9–10) the apostle Peter tells us.

That newness then not only brakes our divided heart, brings us into harmony with God, but also brings us into harmony and of one will with the people of God with our brothers and sisters, always seeking and finding ways to share the light of Christ to a lost world, and bring many more into his kingdom. An undivided heart is never partial or pursues the things of the world, but the things that really matter, heaven.

Team Effort

Now, it is true, if only, if only we could always be of an undivided heart always. Unfortunately as we said earlier we live in this world of sin and corruption and spiritual disarray. Keeping of one will is difficult, or is it? Actually keeping an undivided heart, praying in one will, is a team effort. Yes! As you see when we are in Christ two wills are made one, or, more precisely, our will becomes aligned with God's. And it happens because the spirit of the person who prays and the Spirit of God both cry out in prayer, practically with one voice as the epistle to the Romans teaches us: (Romans 8:26–27). “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ²⁷ And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because^[a] the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

In addition, Christ Jesus Himself stands at the right hand of God the Father, constantly praying for us.

So, with Christ praying for us and the Spirit praying with us—even shaping our prayers, expressing what we can't—gives us sure confidence to keep on praying that

our prayers will be in accordance to God's will. Therefore we can pray "Your will be done"

But "Your will be done" is not for us to get what we want, but a means for God to lead us to desire what He gives. Is not about us, but our need, and remember what God does, he knows best about our need.

If we show love toward God, He will give us anything we want, right? Not exactly, but if we are able to delight in God and His gifts, that is proof that He is already changing our hearts and giving us new desires, helping us to want Him and wanting what He desires for us. Therefore we out, we need to know more of God's promises through His word, we ought to, we need to know more of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Sin divides our hearts, we become double standard people. With our lips we might be worshiping God but our hearts might be far. We can't pray like that. But thanks be to God for he is the one who aligns our hearts to him through Christ. He is the one who through His word and the work of the Holy Spirit, we become of one will with God and with one another.

Now, when we pray asking God's will to be done, we do so because we know that he is instilling in us a desire to love him, he is the one who instills in us the desire to talk to him, and instilling in us the desire to know, accept and trust. For he know better.

So, as we conclude this meditation, I would like to echo the words of Paul as he prayed for the Colossians: (Colossians 1:9–10) "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

In his name, amen.