

Psalm 143
2 Chronicles 20
Habakkuk 3

“Thy Will Be Done, on Earth as It Is in Heaven” February 8, 2009

124. Q. What is the third petition?

A. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. That is: Grant that we and all men may deny our own will, and without any murmuring obey Thy will, for it alone is good. Grant also that everyone may carry out the duties of his office and calling as willingly and faithfully as the angels in heaven.

Psalm 143 shows us how we may pray “thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Psalm 143 begins by showing the contrast between earth and heaven:

*Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy!
In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness!*

Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you.

You can see how David once again begins his prayer with the theme of “hallowed be thy name.”

This is all based on God’s faithfulness and righteousness.

No matter how righteous you may think you are,
no one living is righteous when he stands before God.

But then David turns to the reason why he praying –
the reason why he seeks mercy:

*For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground;
he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead.
Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. (v3-4)*

But David remembers God’s kingdom –

God’s mighty deeds, the wondrous works of salvation that God has done:

*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done;
I ponder the work of your hands.
I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.*

When I spent the summer in Eritrea, I learned what a parched land looks like.

East Africa is very similar in climate and terrain to the land that David knew.

It is hot and dry and can go for months without rain.

Water is precious.

When I came back to Philadelphia, my eyes were stunned by the *green*.

And when David refers to himself as a parched land,

he is saying that God's judgment has withered him—
or at the very least, God's withholding of blessing.

Because water is a blessing from God.
And David longs for the living water that flows from the living God.
Psalms 42 and 63 develop this theme even more.
I pant, I thirst, for the living God!

And that's why David prays.

What about you?
Do you thirst for the living God?

Jesus said "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst." (John 6:35)

What does this mean?
Haven't we all experienced the parched land?
Times when our souls pant and thirst for the living God,
and yet we feel as though we dwell in a barren wasteland?

Let's keep going in Psalm 143, because we will find the answer to this question:
Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails!
Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit.
Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust.
Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Before you can take this prayer and make it your own,
you need to see that Jesus took this prayer and made it his own.

Even Jesus reached this point – when he said, "I thirst."
Yes, in one sense he was referring to the fact that he was thirsty!
But this is in the context of his greater thirst,
expressed in his cry of dereliction –
"My God, my God why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus cried out to his Father,
but in spite of his cries, he did go down to the pit!
But while he went down to the pit,
he was not like those who go down to the pit;
because unlike them, Jesus heard the Father's voice
in the morning of the third day – the first day of the new creation –
and Jesus heard in the morning of your steadfast love,
and he was raised up from the dead!

There is a sense in which we share in the sufferings of Christ –
even tasting for a time of his dereliction, his abandonment.
But that means that even our thirsting – even our longing to know Christ –
is a participation in him.

But what does all this have to do with praying for the will of God to be done?

David explains this in verses 9-12

Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge!

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!

Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!

For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life!

In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble!

*And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies,
and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul,
for I am your servant.*

In the midst of trouble, in the midst of trial, in the midst of everything going the wrong way –
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Notice that for David, this is not a passive resignation to *que sera sera*, whatever will be, will be!
NO!

When you pray, “thy will be done”

you are *not* saying “I don’t care – you do whatever you want.”

Rather, you are praying,

“what is happening is *not* your will and we *want* to see your will be done on earth –
even as your will is done in heaven!”

Notice that there are two parts to David’s prayer for the “will of God.”

1) Deliver me from your enemies

2) Teach me to do your will

Your will is for my enemies to be destroyed!

How do I know this?

Because I am your servant!

Remember what we saw last time about Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple?

Solomon distinguished between himself as the “servant”

and all God’s people as “servants.”

God’s promise to his servant, David, was that he would bless David’s son,

and adopt David’s son as his own son –

and therefore David’s son rules over God’s kingdom.

So when David prays that God will cut off his enemies and destroy his adversaries,
he is praying that the kingdom of God would come!

He is praying that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven!

And so the way that we pray Psalm 143,
is that God would destroy the enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ.
We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God –
we pray that God's will would be done on earth!

“Thy will be done” is not a prayer of resignation,
it is a prayer calling upon God to *act*.

But of course, it is also a prayer that God would teach us to *do* his will.
Jesus is the Son of David, the servant of the Lord, who did this perfectly.
And because we have been united to him,
when we pray “thy will be done”
we are praying that God would teach us to do his will.
that we and all men may deny our own will,
and without any murmuring obey Thy will, for it alone is good

We are praying that the Spirit of God would lead us on level ground,
that we might know and do that which God has commanded.

Our case study of the prayer “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”
comes from the Prayer of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20.

It has only been about 70 years since the death of Solomon,
but the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites no longer fear the house of David.
And even as Psalm 143 says,
“Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails!
Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit!”

And so when Jehoshaphat, whose name means “God will judge,”
hears that “a great multitude is coming against you”
he *was afraid and set his face to seek the LORD,*
and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

And the people responded and came to seek the LORD.

Do you remember what Solomon had prayed?
“And listen to the pleas of your servant and of your people Israel,
when they pray toward this place.”

Jehoshaphat remembers what Solomon had asked,
and he remembered also what God had said in response:
If my people who are called by my name humble themselves,
and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways,

then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.
(2 Chron 7:14)

And so Jehoshaphat does what God called the Son of David to do:
He stood in the house of the LORD and he prayed.

*O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven?
(Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name!)
You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.
In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.
Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel,
and give it forever to the descendents of Abraham your friend?
And they have lived in and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying,
If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine,
we will stand before this house and before you –
for your name is in this house –
and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.*

Notice that Jehoshaphat recites the history of God’s faithfulness to his people.
But not just some random piece of history!
He chooses that particular portion of history that is most relevant to the situation.
First, he recites how God promised the land to Abraham’s seed.

You might say – yes, but God also promised the blessing to the nations –
why does Jehoshaphat not mention that part?!!

He does.

After all, how is the blessing to the nations couched?
“I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who curse you.”

The blessing to the nations is contingent upon the nations blessing the seed of Abraham!

And I can assure you that the Ammonites and Moabites
were not coming to bless Jehoshaphat!

Furthermore, Edom, Moab and Ammon are all Abrahamic peoples!
They are family – and they ought to know better!

But second, he recounts the establishment of the temple,
and he echoes the prayer of Solomon.

In short, Jehoshaphat is saying, Okay God, you said this is what we were supposed to do.
So we’re doing it!
You said to bring to you all of our prayers in whatever trouble we faced –
to bring it to you, and put it in the light of heaven.

After all, that's what Jehoshaphat does.
He takes the very real peril of the moment
and he sees it in the light of the glory of God.

*And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir,
whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt,
and whom they avoided and did not destroy –
behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession,
which you have given us to inherit.*

Again, Jehoshaphat recounts the history,
and because he now knows who God is, who he is, and what his problem is,
he is able to pray:

*O our God, will you not execute judgment on them?
For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us.
We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*

This is the point.

Jehoshaphat is praying, "Thy will be done."
I am doing your will – because you said that we were supposed to pray.
So now, O God, please do whatever it is that you are now supposed to do!

This is not a passive "que sera sera" – do whatever you want!
When you pray "thy will be done"
you pray that with expectance, because you *already know* what God's will is.

You just don't know how he's going to do it!
Jehoshaphat doesn't know how God is going to deliver them.
It's still possible that the deliverance is going to come *after*
rather than *before* the invasion of the enemy.

But then the Spirit of the LORD comes upon Jahaziel, one of the Levites,
and he prophesies that *the battle is not yours but God's*
and if they will but go out to their posts in the morning,
then they *will not need to fight in this battle.*
Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf.

And so they praise God and go out to their posts,
and Jehoshaphat even puts singers out in front of the army
who sing Psalm 106 (or maybe 136 – there are several Psalms that start that way –
but it would appear to be the same Psalm
that Solomon had sung in the temple in chapter 5-7)

So there is nothing passive about Jehoshaphat's approach.
He has been commanded to stand,
but rather than stand around and wait,
he starts the celebrating early!

*And when they began to sing and praise,
the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir...*

What sort of ambush?
Apparently they started fighting amongst themselves!
It took four days for the men of Judah and Jerusalem to collect all the spoil.

And you hear in verse 29 that
*The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries
when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.*

When you pray, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,"
you are praying that the nations would fear the LORD,
because the will of God is that every knee would bow
and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

We are praying that while we do not know what to do,
our eyes are on you.

*To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!
Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he has mercy upon us. (Ps 123:1-2)*

So let me ask you:

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