

Thy Kingdom Come

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1 Thy Kingdom Come

Derek Prince preached this sermon some time in the 80s, I would guess.

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1.1 Transcript

If I were to ask you here whom do you consider the most influential kind of person on earth, I suppose you might think of various different answers.

Probably your mind would turn to political leaders such as George Bush or Mikhail Gorbachev.

Or, others, men of science.

Or, maybe even military commanders.

But I don't believe that they are the really influential people.

I look in a completely different direction.

As I understand it, the most influential people on earth today are those who know how to get their prayers answered.

Because, they can release the omnipotence of God into situations which goes far beyond anything that the wisest or most powerful human being can do.

So, I want to speak to you in this message on certain requirements for getting our prayers answered.

But first of all, I just want to read to you three statements from the New Testament about what prayer can do.

The first is found in Matthew 21:22.

Jesus Himself is speaking and He says:

"And all things whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."

Notice, all things that you ask in prayer you will receive.

There's no restrictions.

There's just one condition-believing.

The condition there is faith.

And then we turn to John's gospel, chapter 15 and verse 7.

And again we have the words of Jesus to His disciples:

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you."

Another version says "ask what you desire and it shall be done for you." Notice there what you desire.

There's no other restriction, but the condition is if my words abide in you.

In other words, if we pray according to God's word.

And one final Scripture in the first epistle of John, chapter 5, verses 14-15:

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him [that is, in God], that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him.

There again it says whatever we ask.

But again there's a condition attached, it's according to His will.

So if you take those three passages together, you'll find that the scope of prayer is unlimited.

Nothing is excluded.

But, the conditions are threefold: faith, according to God's word and according to God's will.

And they go together because God's word reveals God's will.

And we know that when we're praying according to God's will we will get what we pray for.

So I want to deal in this message with what I consider to be the basic requirements for praying that kind of prayer, for making you a person who can change the course of history.

I don't know whether you're aware, but in the light of recent events in Eastern Europe, the overthrow of the Iron Curtain, the release of political liberty inside the Soviet Union.

In 1987 the church in Russian, which was looking forward to its one thousandth anniversary, set aside the month of January for prayer and fasting.

I believe if you look for the real cause of the dramatic political changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it's not in the decision of politicians, it's in the prayers of God's people.

I'd have to say, and I trust you'd agree with me, that if that amount of authority has been committed to us as believers in Jesus and in the Bible, we are really foolish if we don't make use of it.

I think we're negligent.

I think God is going to call us to account if He's committed that kind of authority to us and we don't appreciate it and make use of it.

Now, for the conditions that I want to speak about I want to turn to the sermon on the mount.

And particularly, to the 6th chapter.

I want to take the first part of what is familiarly known to Christians around the world as the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:9:

"In this manner therefore pray..."

I don't believe He means that we've always got to use precisely those words-although they're beautiful words.

I believe He set forth a pattern of the way we ought to pray.

And typically, it's very concise but very complete.

I only want to take the first two verses, verse 9 and verse 10.

I believe they contain the key to effective praying.

I hope I can put this key in your hands and you can walk out of this meeting with a key that will unlock the omnipotence of God.

Let's just read those familiar words.

I'm reading from the New King James Version.

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

First of all, we address God as Father.

That makes all the difference.

We're not praying to some remote unknown deity, some impersonal force; but we're praying to a person who has made Himself our Father through Jesus Christ.

You see, the mechanistic view of the universe that it's just a series of material explosions and causes leaves a person very lonely, lost in the vastness of the universe which he doesn't understand and can't control.

I always think of a friend of mine, a well known Catholic Charismatic speaker.

If I gave you his name it would be known to almost all of you-incidentally, he was recently here in New Zealand so I'm giving a lot away.

And, he told me years back he was in one of the slums of the big cities of the United States and it was late in the evening, it was getting dark.

It was a cold, windy evening and the dust was swirling up around him.

He was standing on the corner of the street and he felt so lonely and so weak.

Then it came to him just to use one word and he repeated again and again, "Father, Father, Father," addressing it to God.

The more he repeated the word Father the stronger and more secure he felt.

And just reinforcing that one relationship to Almighty God as his Father completely changed his whole outlook on his situation at that moment.

For me, my background is in philosophy and I studied for a good many years the various theories about the origin of the universe.

I never could find one that satisfied me intellectually.

Then I started to read the Bible in desperation.

I thought at least it can't be any sillier than some of the other theories I'd heard.

I didn't believe it was divinely inspired or unique, I just said I'll treat it like any other book, start at the beginning and read it through to the end.

I did that when I went into the British Army in 1940.

So, I took a Bible with me, planning to read it through when I was in the army.

And of course, I had plenty of time because I spent the next five and a half years in the British Army-not by my choice.

I always recall the impact this made the first night I was in the barrack room with twenty- four other new recruits.

I didn't think anything about it, I just sat down and opened up the Bible.

The other soldiers began to look at me and they realized I was reading the Bible and an uneasy hush fell on the whole barrack room.

I couldn't believe that one book would have that much effect! And the thing was I baffled them all because when I was not reading the Bible I didn't live the least bit like people who regularly read the Bible.

However, through reading the Bible I met the author.

And once I met the author the book made the most wonderful sense to me.

I found in the Bible the answers that I had not found in philosophy.

I found a description of the beginning of things that explained me to myself.

That was what really mattered.

When I read the description of creation of man in Genesis chapters 1, 2 and 3, it explained what was going on inside me.

See, my favorite philosopher whom I studied, I read every word he ever wrote in the Greek language, was Plato.

One of Plato's pictures was the human soul was like a chariot drawn by two horses-one black and one white.

The white horse was always trying to go upwards, the black horse was always pulling the chariot downwards.

And really that was so true to my experience.

I didn't get any further but when I read the description of the creation of man I saw man comes from two sources.

He's from the dust of the earth below but he's from the breath of Almighty God above.

And there is in every one of us something of a tension between what comes from above and what comes from the earth.

But God shows us in His word how to resolve that tension and bring our lives into harmony.

I can't go into that tonight but I just want to testify that the Bible made the most wonderful sense to me, it explained me to myself.

I had a totally different view of the universe from that time onwards.

When I met the God of the Bible I knew that there wasn't some impersonal force, some big bang that just brought the universe into being; but I came to understand that there was a Father and that the real power behind everything is the love of God.

And one thing the Bible never explains is the love of God.

It tells us God loves us, it never tells us why God loves us.

The one unexplained fact in the universe is the love of God.

We just have to receive it, we'll never understand it.

Why God should love us passes our comprehension but the good news is He really does.

And so, Jesus says when you start to pray to God, the first word you use is Father.

In the English translation it comes out "our Father," but in the Greek "Father" comes first and then "our." So the first thing you do when you pray if you know God as Father through Jesus Christ is approach Him as Father.

And then the word our is important because most of us are extremely self centered and when we pray we tend to pray, "Lord, bless me, help me, heal me." Jesus reminds us, "You're not the only child God has.

He's got a lot of other children and they're all important to Him.

It's important to Him that you care for your brothers and sisters." And then the next phrase is "hallowed be thy name." That expresses an attitude of reverence, of worship.

And so after we've acknowledged God as Father we need to adopt an attitude of reverence.

I have to say that in many sections of the church today that's sadly lacking, the approach of reverence to Almighty God.

God doesn't want us terrified but He does want us reverent.

And something happens in our spirit when we let that attitude of reverence express itself in our prayers.

And then we come to the first two, if you could call it, petitions.

And these are the ones I want to deal with.

"Your kingdom come..."

And then:

"... your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

And notice we don't begin by praying for what we need.

That follows:

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses..."

But that's not where we start. We start with God's purposes, what's important to God.

See, through the fall man was shut up in a little prison called self.

Natural man is self-centered, his life focuses on himself.

How can I get what I want?

Who's going to help me?

What do I get out of this?

That's a prison.

But through the new birth and through the grace of God we can be released from that prison of self-centeredness and enter into a relationship with God where what God wants is more important than what we want.

And when you pray that way you're beginning to grow wings, you can move out of the natural level.

Praying is not going to God with a shopping list, did you know that?

After all, Jesus said your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

You don't have to tell God what you need.

What's important is that you get into such a relationship with God that you know when you do tell Him you're going to get it.

Establishing the relationship is much more important than giving God a list of what you need.

So, the first thing we are directed to say is "Your kingdom come." That's tremendously important because what we're doing is aligning ourselves with God's purpose.

God's ultimate purpose in this age is very simple in its essence-the details may be complicated.

But the essential plan of God is simple: to establish His kingdom on earth.

And notice Jesus says on earth.

That's God's first priority.

All through the history of this age from the time that Jesus died and rose again until now, God's priority has never changed.

Millions and millions of Christians pray the Lord's Prayer and never realize what they're praying for. When we say "Your kingdom come," we are aligning ourselves with what God wants done in the earth.

You see, ultimately the only real, practical solution to the needs of humanity is the establishment of God's kingdom.

We hear a lot today about a social gospel, meaning that we need to care for man's physical and material needs. I agree.

I believe all Christians should be concerned with the physical and material needs of our fellow human beings. I believe that's the expression of love.

If you love people you'll be concerned about their needs.

But, I don't believe that it's in our path really to meet the needs of humanity as a whole.

The church has been here nearly 2,000 years and the needs in many cases are greater now than they've ever been at any time in human history.

40,000 children under the age of five die every week on the earth today, mainly of malnutrition, unsanitary conditions.

And yet, if all the money that was spent by the nations on military armaments were made available, it would be abundant to establish hospitals, clinics, safe water supplies in every nation on earth.

The problem is not the resources are not available, the problem is that human greed and fear and hate cause the resources to be misdirected.

Now don't misunderstand me, I'm not preaching pacifism, I'm just pointing out that the root of the problem is in human nature.

And personally, I don't believe that man by himself or the church by itself is ever going to resolve the material and practical needs of humanity.

It's only one thing that can do that.

What is that?

The establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

See, I claim to be a practical person.

I don't want to be just a visionary or a dreamer.

I tell people many times the Holy Spirit is the most practical person on the earth today.

If a thing is not practical it's not spiritual.

I believe the establishment of God's kingdom is the only practical solution to human need.

The people who preach what's called a social gospel are presenting a dream.

Their motives may be good but to suggest that by merely focusing on man's material needs we can resolve them is not true.

There's only one hope for humanity.

Ruth and I travel widely and we've been to a lot of places where people are desperately poor and in need and in ignorance.

If you've never been outside this beautiful nation you probably have a very faint picture of the needs of humanity in many, many nations across the earth.

And, they are not being met.

In many cases they are increasing.

Poverty, deprivation, hunger.

They're not less.

If anything, they're more.

I'm not a pessimist.

I believe there's a solution but I believe it's God's solution.

And, it's a practical solution.

It's the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth.

I don't believe anything else is going to do it.

God is a great realist and His love for humanity causes Him to make priority number one the meeting of the needs of humanity through the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth.

I hope you understand me.

Now, we need to have a little clarity about the way the kingdom is established.

This is a subject which is of great interest to Christians at the present time.

First of all, the kingdom is defined in its essential nature by Paul in one simple verse in Romans 14:17:

The kingdom of God is not food and drink; but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

I want to point out two things.

First of all, righteousness comes first and without true righteousness there will never be true peace.

The world today is talking a great deal about peace and many sections of the church are praying for peace.

That's a good prayer but bear in mind without righteousness peace will never come to this earth.

God says twice in the prophet Isaiah there is no peace to the wicked.

I meet many Christians who want peace and joy but very often I find they've omitted the fact that they only come as the results of righteousness.

Righteousness is the first expression of the kingdom.

And any attempt to achieve peace without righteousness is doomed to frustration.

Personally, my understanding of Biblical prophecy is that there will come an antichrist, a satanically inspired ruler.

And he will promise peace and will seem for a very brief moment to achieve it.

But Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:3:

When they say peace and security, then sudden destruction comes upon them without warning.

So the pursuit of peace bypassing righteousness is foolishness.

So it's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

The only power that can impart those things in their true nature is the Holy Spirit.

Somebody said the limits of the kingdom of God are the limits of where the Holy Spirit is present.

Where the Holy Spirit is not present you cannot have the kingdom of God.

Now, the first way that the kingdom comes is inwardly.

Jesus told the Pharisees of His day the kingdom doesn't come by watching and waiting for it externally.

He said the kingdom of God is within you or among you.

There's no kingdom without a king.

So if we want the kingdom we have to welcome the king.

And many of you here in this meeting know from experience that when the King comes in He bring His kingdom with Him.

But to want the kingdom apart from the King is to deceive yourself.

So, there is an individual experience of the kingdom of God that every true believer can have who makes Jesus unreservedly king.

And that means displacing self from the throne of your heart and placing Jesus on that throne.

And when you do that then the kingdom of God sets in.

Righteousness, peace and joy.

But Jesus also said the kingdom of God is within you.

I believe there's a corporate expression of the kingdom which is in the true community of believers which is called the church.

Not some man-made institution but the fellowship of those who've made Jesus king in their own hearts and lives and relate to one another on that basis.

I believe that it's the responsibility of the church in any place to model the kingdom of God, that by our attitudes and our relationships and the way we live we challenge the world with a glimpse of the kingdom.

And, people should be able to look at the church and say, "So that's what the kingdom of God is like." Righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

I tell you that where the church demonstrates these things, the hearts of men and women are nearly always open to the truth of the gospel.

But if the world doesn't see the kingdom in the church, why should the world believe our message.

Probably they will not.

Let me just suggest one very practical and important way in which we can model the kingdom and it's a way that today is somewhat controversial.

The fact of the matter is that today truth is controversial.

Isaiah wrote about a time when truth has fallen in the street and righteousness cannot enter.
And we're not far from a time like this in many parts of the human society.
But Paul said to Christian married couples:

"Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church."

And I tell husbands that's not a recommendation, that's a commandment.

You are commanded to love your wife.

You don't have any options.

And furthermore, it will do you a lot of good when you do it.

Some of you may have seen that book which has rather a lengthy title, Husbands, Do Yourselves a Favor, Love Your Wives.

It's true.

But the other side of it is:

"Wives, submit to your husbands as the church is submitted to Jesus Christ."

If you put the first two statements together I see it this way, that every Christian married couple should be a prophetic message to the world.

When the world looks at Christian married couples the world should say, "I understand that the way that man loves his wife is the way Christ loved the church.

And, the way that woman relates to her husband is the way the church relates to Christ." Would you like to be prophetic?

I think all of us, in a way, would have an ambition to be somewhat prophetic.

Well, a committed Christian couple can be prophetic.

You can be a message to the world.

This is what the kingdom of God is like.

If there's one place that the kingdom should be demonstrated first and foremost, it's in the believer's family.

And if there's one place that Satan is attacking today, it's the family.

Because, it was designed by God to represent the kingdom and Satan wants to blur and obscure and eliminate the message of the kingdom.

He's afraid of the kingdom because wherever the kingdom is established his power is come to an end.

So there are two primary ways in which the kingdom can come invisibly.

In the individual heart and life of the believer and in the corporate fellowship of the true church.

And, not least, in the Christian home.

But, that's not the ultimate.

The ultimate is the visible establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

And the visible kingdom requires a visible king.

Only when the King Himself has returned visibly and in person can the true kingdom of God be established on earth.

And personally, I have to say I feel it presumptuous for the church to suggest that we can do the job and finish it off without Jesus.

The Bible says that we should be eagerly longing for His appearing.

It says that in many different places.

I would like to ask you this evening, are you eagerly longing for the appearing of Jesus?

If not, why not?

A friend of mine who is a preacher has a rather droll way of expressing himself.

He said when Jesus comes back the church should do something more than just say, "Nice to have you back." Believe me, brothers and sisters, things are going to happen on earth between now and then that will make us desperately anxious to see Him back.

God is going to arrange that.

So that's the primary purpose of God, the establishment of His kingdom on earth visibly with a visible king ruling over it.

And everything that God does is directed toward that.

And until we make that our priority, we are not really aligned with the will and purpose of God.
See, that's why that's the first thing that we are required to say after acknowledging God as our Father.
We are required to align ourselves with God's purpose.
I tell people this: Prayer is not a way for you to get God to do what you want.
A lot of Christians think it is.
It may work out that way but that's not its purpose.
Prayer is a way for you to become an instrument for God to do what He wants.
All right?
I think I'm going to say that again.
Prayer is not a way for you to get God to do what you want.
Prayer is a way for you to become an instrument for God to do what He wants.
And when you become aligned with God's purpose you're going to pray prayers that are irresistible.
There'll be no power, human or satanic, that will be able to resist the outworking of your prayer.
And then Jesus said one more thing:

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Do you believe that's possible?

Do you really believe that when we pray rightly in any given situation God's will can be done as completely here on earth as it's being done in heaven?

I do.

It doesn't mean everything is perfect on earth but it means in any given situation God's purpose and solution can be perfectly worked out.

Do you believe that?

You see, you'll pray differently if you convince yourself of that.

But, if you say to God, "Your will be done," do you know what you're saying?

Not my will.

So that's the second essential requirement that you renounce your own will wherever it conflicts with God's will.

And I want to tell you this, God's will is best.

Most of us have let the devil make us afraid of God's will.

"Oh, if I embrace the will of God it means suffering.

It means denial, I'm going to have to give things up." It could happen that way but I read in Revelation 4:11:

All things were created for your will [or according to your will].

And I've pondered on that verse many times, partly because there's a song that's put out by Scripture in Song on their first major album.

They did Revelation 4:11 as a song.

And it particularly blessed me and so I pondered on that verse many times.

I was thinking it over sometime back and I suddenly realized that there could not be anything better than God's will.

God's will is the best way for anything to be at any time.

So, don't be afraid of embracing God's will.

But, you do it without knowing what it'll involve.

When Ruth and I were preparing for these meetings, theoretically we were resting in Hawaii but actually we were battling the forces of Satan.

We came to a point where both of us, I think we were on the floor, said, "Lord, we embrace your will without any reservation whatever.

Whatever you will, we embrace." And I think God was kind of squeezing us, putting pressure on us, to bring us to that place of total surrender and embracing of the will of God.

And there comes a relief when you do that.

You don't know exactly what you're praying for but remember, you've got a Father who loves you, who's omnipotent, who always wants the best for you.

It's foolish to press your will against God's will.

His will is best.

As I look back over nearly 50 that I've walked with the Lord, again and again I thank God for the times that He didn't let me have my way.

I can see situation after situation, if I'd done things the way I wanted, it would have been disastrous.

I thank Him.

I thank God for the prayers He's answered, I also thank Him for the prayers He didn't answer.

He knows what is best.

So there are the two, I would say, attitudes, the two ways you have to align yourself to become an effective pray-er, to be able to pray the kind of prayers that will change nations, change situations, change families.

I look back on my own walk with the Lord and I can say to the glory of God I can see several points in the history of the last 50 years where history was changed by my prayers.

I have a book, I don't know whether it's available, called Shaping History Through Prayer and Fasting.

And in it I give about four or five specific examples of history changed when I prayed the will of God.

I was saved in Britain in the army in 1941 and just a few weeks later I was sent overseas with my unit to North Africa.

I spent the next four and a half years in the Middle East.

And during that time my unit took part in the longest retreat recorded in the history of the British Army, 750 miles, from a place called El Agala in Tripoli, to the well known place in Egypt, El Alamein.

I can tell you it's somewhat depressing to be retreating continually for 750 miles, particularly in a very barren and unattractive desert.

And there I was, newly converted, I hadn't had any opportunity to attend church.

All I had was the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

I thought to myself I ought to be able to pray about this situation intelligently.

I knew I didn't know what to pray.

So I said in my naive way, "Lord, show me how you want me to pray." And the Lord gave me a specific answer which was this: "Lord, give us leaders such that it will be to your glory to give us victory through them." I was less than a year old in the Lord when I prayed that prayer.

I prayed it consistently.

And then the command of what was then the Eighth Army was changed and Montgomery took over by a series of strange accidents which I can't go into in detail.

He was not destined to be commander.

And Montgomery at that time-I read an article just recently in a British newspaper on the 100th anniversary of Montgomery's birth in which it says that no British general in human history has ever conducted a more brilliant campaign than Montgomery conducted at that time in North Africa.

Do you know why?

Shall I tell you why?

Because I prayed.

Do you believe that?

Can you believe that God will do things for you.

Now I know there were other Christians in Britain praying.

And after the battle of El Alamein, which was the turning point of the war in that area, had been fought, I was with my unit's lorry in the desert somewhere and there was a little portable radio on the tail board of the lorry.

There was a newscaster giving an eyewitness account of the scene at Montgomery's headquarters the night before the battle of El Alamein was fought.

And he reported how General Montgomery came out and called together his officers and his men and said, "Let us ask the Lord, mighty in battle, to give us the victory." And when I heard that, I don't know whether you know what heaven's electricity is like, some of you do, but it went right through me from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet.

God spoke to me inaudibly, "That's the answer to your prayer." See, to be able to pray like that is worth more than all the fortune in this world.

A person who can pray like that is more influential than the general who wins the victory, the government that controls the general.

Now I haven't always prayed that kind of prayer.

Sometimes I've got bogged down in my own little petty concerns and my limitations and I got praying, "Give me, help me, bless me, heal me." There's nothing wrong in asking God to heal you but it won't really produce the divine result until your whole attitude and motivation is aligned with God's purpose in the earth.

See, God's not going to change His purposes.

If God and I are out of harmony, guess who's going to change?

There's only one option.

I have to change.

And living out of harmony with God, especially if you're a Spirit baptized believer, is painful.

How many of you would agree to that?

Don't put your hands up! Sit on your hands at that point.

But how can we be in harmony?

The answer is align with God's purpose.

And the first two key steps are there at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Lord, I'm not praying for my own interests or what I think is important, I'm praying for the thing that's important in your eyes, the thing that really is the solution- the coming of your kingdom.

And then, Lord, I submit my will to you personally.

Your will be done.

And where your will and my will clashes, Lord, I say not my will be done.

I will tell you that there will always come a point in the life of every believer where we have to say not my will but yours be done.

And it's often extremely painful at the time.

But the end is always blessed.

I see some of you smiling and nodding your heads.

You've found it for yourself.

And then in Matthew 6:33, Jesus gives one more direction which is the outworking of what we've already discussed.

How many of you know what Matthew 6:33 says?

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Get your priorities right and you really don't have to spend a lot of time praying for your personal needs.

God will take care of your personal needs if you align with His priorities.

As I say, I've been a Christian almost 50 years.

It's hard to believe.

I've been responsible for this ministry which really is a worldwide ministry for at least 10 years now.

We marvel continually at how God supplies our need.

We don't have any big resources, we don't have any millionaires that lavish their fortune on us.

Most of the people that support this ministry are comparatively humble people.

And most of them ask for really no recognition.

And yet I'd have to say-and here's the members of our staff here-God has never failed to supply our needs once.

And continually we have to reach out in faith.

We don't wait until the resources are there and say now we can do it.

We say if this is what God wants us to do, we'll do it and trust Him for the resources.

Years ago I was preaching to a group of young people in the States on how to arrange your life in line with God.

I said-it was a risky thing to say but I said, when I go into a store I don't ask can I afford this, I ask is this what God wants me to have.

Because, if God wants me to have it I can afford it.

Well, about six of those young people went out after the service was over to a restaurant across the road to get a little supper.

I heard this from them personally.

And they began to look at the menu and say what can we afford?

And one of them said let's do what the preacher said and just decide what does God want us to have and order it.

I mean, I'm glad I wasn't there because I would have been trembling.

So they did that and when they wanted to pay the waiter said, "That gentleman over there has just paid your bill!" But listen, don't do it unless you have the faith.

Do you know what will happen?

You'll spend your evening washing greasy dishes.

Now, one more vital question and we close this message, which is how can I discover God's will?

And I want to turn to one of my favorite passages, Romans 12, and very briefly outline the steps to discovering God's will.

As I understand it, they're all here in Romans 12:1-8.

We don't have long but I'll go through it briefly.

Paul begins with a therefore in verse 1, and many of you have heard me say when you find a therefore in the Bible, you want to find out what it's there for.

And this therefore is because of the previous 11 chapters of Romans in which Paul has outlined the whole message of God's mercy and grace.

And he says In the light of that, what should we do, how shall we respond?

And the answer is:

Present your body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God...

That always blesses me, the Bible is so down to earth.

A lot of us would expect something super- spiritual, you know.

After all this glorious unfolding of the grace of God, "God, what do you want?" "I want your body." You see, when He gets our body, He gets the contents.

He is so wise.

So He says, "Present your body to me a living sacrifice." Why does it say a living sacrifice?

Because Paul's contrasting it with the Old Testament sacrifices which were first killed and placed on the altar.

But Paul says don't kill your body and place it on the altar, place a living body on the altar.

When a sacrifice was placed on the altar it no longer belonged to the person who offered it, it belonged to God.

So God says place your body on my altar as a living sacrifice and from now on you don't own it.

I own it.

You don't make the decisions as to what will happen to your body, I make them.

You don't decide where you're going to go, you don't decide what you're going to eat, you don't decide what you're going to wear, those are my decisions, my responsibility, I take full responsibility for your body.

And I'll tell you, He's much better able to look after our bodies than we can.

You can't lose by putting God in charge of your body.

But it has to be a genuine surrender.

And then the next verse says:

Do not be conformed to this world [or this age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

You see, to discover God's will you have to have a change in your thinking.

Your mind has to be renewed.

And God can do that but He will not do it until He has your body.

He says present your body, then I'll renew your mind.

And when your mind is renewed you can discover the will of God.

You can't discover it with your old unrenewed mind.

Lots of people get saved and I suppose they get to heaven at the end but they never discover God's will in this life because their mind is never renewed.

And then Paul says in the next verse (Romans 12:3):

I say through the grace given to me to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

So the renewed mind is not proud, it's not arrogant, it's not self asserting.

It is humble, it is sober, it's realistic.

The first day you walk into the bank to work, don't expect to sit in the manager's chair.

See, that's unrealistic.

You come into the kingdom, don't expect to be an apostle on day one.

Be willing to be an office boy, empty the wastepaper baskets.

You know, in the spiritual life, you know the way up?

It's down, that's right.

The lower down you go the higher up you end.

And then Paul says in effect, and I'm not going to read the verse but he says you're not going to make it on your own.

You're going to have to be part of the body of Christ.

And God has given you a measure of faith, a proportion of faith, suitable to your place in the body.

So, you have to find your place in the body and when you find your place you'll discover that you have the faith that you need for that place and for that function.

You see, my hand works wonderfully well as a hand but if I try to walk on my hands I get into trouble.

Because, my hand is designed to be a hand and not a foot.

Lots of Christians are feet trying to be hands or noses trying to be ears.

And if you have a continual struggle for faith in your Christian walk it's almost a sure guarantee that you're trying to be something God didn't design you to be.

Because, basically the life of faith has tests and problems but it flows.

It's not a continual struggle.

And when you find your place in the body your allotted proportion of faith that God has given you will make you successful in that place.

And then finally Paul says, in closing this little simple outline, when you're in your place in the body, God will give you the gifts you need for that place.

A lot of people just are interested in spiritual gifts, and I agree, they're exciting.

But they are not to be sought in detachment from the body.

Because until you know your place in the body you don't know what gifts you'll need.

My experience has been that when I get in the right place I have the right gifts.

I remember when God thrust me into the ministry of deliverance, helping people to be free from demons, a certain friend of mine brought his sister, a married woman, for deliverance, to my first wife and me in a hotel somewhere in Colorado.

And she sat there and she was a picture of misery.

She obviously had problems.

I looked at her and I opened my mouth and I heard myself say, "You need to be delivered from..." and I named about eight demons.

And then I thought to myself how did I know that?

And then I realized God had given me the word of knowledge.

Why?

As an ornament?

No.

Because I needed it to be effective in the place that He put me.

But remember that the key, the initial move, is to present your body a living sacrifice to God.

That's a definite experience.

And as I close this message I want to challenge you.

Have you ever really handed over the control of your body to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Have you really said, "God, it's yours.

It's at your disposal, do with it what you want." And if you haven't, there's no better time than now to make that decision.

Shall we pray together just for a few moments?

I don't want to pressure anybody but it would be unfair to close this message without giving you an opportunity to respond.

If you've heard tonight something about what God requires of you, a condition you haven't fulfilled and you want to fulfill it, you want to align yourself with God's purposes and God's priorities, and you say, "God, here I am.

Here's my body, I place it on your altar." If you feel God prompting you to make that decision, we want to help you.

Very, very simply, just ask you to do one thing to indicate your decision, just stand to your feet where you are in your place as an act of surrender to God.

Say, "I take my hands off and I hand myself over to God and His will." You want to make that decision, stand to your feet wherever you are.

Bless you.

Now this is a very serious decision and I don't want to pressure you into making a decision that you'll go back on.

God doesn't expect you to be perfect from this moment onwards but He does expect you to be sincere and wholehearted.

So, if you really have decided that this is the night that you're going to put your body on God's altar, I suggest that you say this simple prayer out loud after me.

You're not praying to me, I'm just giving you the words with which you can approach God.

It'll be very brief and very simple, it doesn't have to be a long prayer.

You say these words:

"Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you that on the cross you died in my place to save me from my sin and to make me a child of God.

And in response to your mercy, Lord, I now present my body to you.

I lay it upon the altar of your service as a living sacrifice.

From tonight onwards it belongs to you, Lord, and not to me.

I thank you you receive this sacrifice because I offer it to you through Jesus. **Amen.**"

Now just continue a few moments just quietly thanking God.