

Session 3

October 28, 2018

## A PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Matthew 6:10-11a; James 4:6-10,13-17

In the model prayer, Jesus moved His disciples from revering the *name* of God (“Our Father in heaven, Your name be honored as holy”), to submitting to the *will* of God (“Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”).

The concept of God’s will is not easy to understand. Simply put, God has a plan; a purpose that He is carrying out for His ultimate glory and according to His good pleasure. We might call that the *determinate* will of God (see Ephesians 1:3-11; Acts 2:23). But within this “decreed” plan there is a *permissive* element. That’s where God expresses His perfect plan for us but takes into account our failures. For instance, His will is always that we not sin...but yet we do. It’s important to understand that our failures never catch God by surprise or alter God’s determinate will.

This week’s lesson does not deal with *understanding* the intricacies of God’s will, but rather with *submitting* to it. James, the brother of our Lord, pointed out the most important steps in submitting to God’s will.

**An attitude of humility (vv. 6; 10).** Verse 6 is nearly a direct quote from Proverbs 3:24: “He mocks those who mock but gives grace to the humble.” Humility is the opposite of pride. I teach my students that there is really only one sin...pride. It was pride that got Lucifer kicked out of heaven (see Is. 14: 12ff); it was pride that got Adam and Eve kicked out of the Eden (see Gen. 3: 1ff). And it’s pride that we fight every day of our lives. Like Lucifer in heaven and Adam and Eve in the garden, we too want to be God. And that’s the essence of pride. The word “resist” means to “set up against.” Those who attempt to access God with fists clenched hard and chin held high will find themselves pushing against a door that simply will not open. On the contrary, those who recognize their sinful condition and come to him in humble submission receive His tender mercies. King David acknowledged this truth, when he said, “A broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Ps. 51:17).

**Submission to His Person (vv. 7-10).** A genuine attitude of humility will lead to active submission. “Therefore, submit to God” has three important truths. First, it is an imperative (command), not an option. This reminds us that even the humble must confront their pride. Second, it is in the middle voice, which means we do this for ourselves. God will certainly humble us, but it’s always better if we do it before He has to! Third, before we submit to His plan, we must submit to His person. In verses 8-10, James tells us *how* to submit to God. The process involves such things as actively pursuing God, confession and repentance in regard to our sin, an undivided allegiance to Him, godly sorrow, and genuine contrition.

**Submission to His plan (vv. 13-16).** We are very good at planning out our lives! We are all about setting milestone goals and trying to turn them into reality...all in the name of “success.” As James points out, this too, is an example of pride, for at least three reasons. First, because we are not God, we certainly can’t tell the future. To predict even tomorrow is only a guess. How then can we plan out our lives? Second, such boasting is God-less. That is, such plans neglect the

greater will of God, by not even including God in the process. That's what James means when he suggests that we should say, "If the Lord wills..." Finally, such boasting is pure arrogance. The original language reflects not only arrogance, but a rejoicing or celebration in that arrogance. How misguided it is to think that we—whose lives are as wispy, frail, and short-lived as vapor—could orchestrate our own successes?