

June 23, 2013

The Third Petition

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What does this mean?

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

1. Look at Martin Luther's explanation of the Third Petition. What is the relationship between this petition and the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer? Share a Bible passage that supports your answer.
2. Look again at Luther's explanation. What is the relationship between this petition and the Second Petition of the Lord's Prayer? Share a Bible passage that supports your answer.
3. In the Third Petition, we are asking that God's will be done. What do the following passages tell us about praying that God's will be done?

"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you" (John 15:7).

"In the same way the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Romans 8:26).

4. According to the following passages, how is God's will done in heaven and on earth?

"Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word" (Psalm 103:20).

"[God] works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (Ephesians 1:11).

5. According to the following passages, who tries to prevent God's will from being done? Give examples of how each tries to do this.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him" (Matthew 4:1-3).

"Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

“The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17).

6. Choose the best ending(s) to complete the statement. Explain your choice(s). We can carry out the will of God in our lives . . .

(a) . . . if we pray and focus on spiritual matters.

(b) . . . if God helps us by defeating what opposes his will.

(c) . . . if we try hard enough.

(d) . . . if God strengthens us and keeps us firm in the faith through Word and sacrament.

7. First John 5:14 reads, “This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.” In other words, God promises that he will listen to and answer our prayers. Explain why God’s will might be such that he answers our prayers by saying,

Yes!

No.

Not yet.

Luther said:

“No one is ready to believe how much the devil opposes and obstructs their [the first two petitions] fulfillment. He cannot stand having anyone teach or believe the right things. It torments him unspeakably to see his lies and atrocious deceptions . . . exposed. . . . Like a furiously angry foe he, therefore, rages and lashes out with all his venomous might.” (Tappert, p. 428.)

Closing Prayer

Your gracious will on earth be done just as in heaven around your throne, that patiently we may obey throughout our lives all that you say. Curb sinful flesh and every ill that sets itself against your will. Amen. (CW 410:4.)

At home

Memorize the Third Petition and its parts.

See below for answers:

(1) God's will is that his name be kept holy (First Petition; see Jeremiah 23:27,28 and 1 Peter 2:15).

(2) God's will is that his kingdom come to all people (Second Petition; see John 6:40 and 1 Timothy 2:3,4).

(3) If we are going to pray that God's will be done, we need to study God's Word so that we know his will. Because of our weakness, we also need the help of the Holy Spirit as we pray.

(4) In heaven, God's will is done by his angels. On earth, God's will is done as he plans, even "without our prayer."

(5) The devil, the sinful world, and the sinful flesh try to prevent God's will from being done. Examples abound (for example, they lead us to doubt God's Word and promises, lead us into grievous sin, and lead us into idolatry).

(6) (b) and (d) are the best answers. We cannot overcome and defeat the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh by our own power or abilities. Christ, however, has already defeated these three enemies through his life, death, and resurrection. By faith, his victory is ours! Through his Word and the sacraments, he strengthens our faith and enables us to fight the good fight.

(7) God always answers our prayers according to what he, in his wisdom and love, knows is best for our spiritual and eternal welfare. At times he may, therefore, answer our prayers as we have asked. At times he may answer our prayers by saying no, knowing that what we have requested is not best for us. At times he may have us wait for our prayer to be answered so that he might give us additional blessings (patience, heavenly mindedness, and a greater dependence on him).