

THE FIRST PETITION

Psalter No. 241 st. 5, 6, 7.
Read Psalm 89: 1-18
Psalter No. 289 st. 1, 2.
Psalter No. 288 st. 1, 2, 3, 4.
Psalter No. 195 st. 3, 4.

XLVII. LORD'S DAY.

Dear hearers!

One element, yea, the chief element of the misery which sin has brought upon man is the fact that he is entirely unable to answer to the purpose for which God created him. That purpose is the glorification of God's Name.

Is that not the great design of all God's works? You will recall what our Instructor taught us in the sixth question of the Catechism.

(1) "That he might rightly know God his Creator." And does he know God now? Certainly not. The most religious people in the days of Paul erected an altar to the unknown God. No, my hearers, the god, which the natural man devises in his heart and in his mind, is not the true god. Even if that person has enjoyed good Biblical instruction he can still devise only a caricature of God. By nature we do not know the eternal living Jehovah.

(2) "That he might heartily love God his Creator," that is, that he might love the Lord, as the highest good above and before all people and all things, and that he thus would cherish a strong desire to live with that dear Being, and that in tender piety he might live before God all the days of his life according to the will of God, and thus reveal his love to God in his deeds. And does man do so? He does not.

(3) The purpose of creation also was "That he might live with Him in eternal happiness to glorify and praise Him."

And now study man in that light. Does he answer to that purpose? He does just the opposite.

(1) He has an aversion, a hatred against God. He does love a god, a god whom he himself made and chose. But the Holy and Righteous God Who would rather cast the entire creation including man into perdition than have the violation of even one of His attributes go unpunished, that God he hates.

(2) And does he glorify that God and sing praises to His honor? Habakkuk says (ch. 1:16) that they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag. Certainly, man can put forth extraordinary effort, and deny himself if he himself gains fame, honor and applause thereby. All man's undertaking, all his advancement leads but to the glorification and idolatry of self.

Truly, grace, almighty grace is absolutely necessary to make man answer to his purpose, that the glory of God would become the first and highest desire and need of his soul. But after he has received grace, then, yea, then he heartily agrees with the petition that now requires our attention.

You will find our text in Matth. 6: 9 (b)

"Hallowed be Thy Name."

Upon this ground our Catechetical instruction is based as you will find recorded in the Heidelberg Catechism:

XLVII. LORD'S DAY.

Q. 122. Which is the first petition?

A. "Hallowed be thy name"; that is, grant us, first rightly to know thee, and to sanctify, glorify and praise thee, in all thy works, in which thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed; and further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions, that thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account.

Dear hearers!

The previous Lord's Day we meditated with each other on the impressive address of the prayer that the Lord laid upon the lips of His disciples and hence of all His people: Our Father, Which art in Heaven.

With the help of our Heidelberg Instructor we showed you the rich significance of this address, and how childlike fear and liberty, and confidence and reverence are incited by that address.

It is a great blessing when we may call our Maker our Lord and God, but it is a much greater blessing when we may call Him "Our Father."

It is precisely God's fatherliness that causes the soul to melt in holy reverence before that dear Being. To know and embrace and confess Him as Father, as our Father and as my Father is the need, the striving and the prayer of everyone who is born of God.

That address of prayer is sometimes compared to the court of the sanctuary. Then the prayer is the sanctuary itself.

Now we wish to enter that sanctuary and consider successively the six petitions.

In former years men have combined the six petitions thus:

The first three can be taken together so that we consider God as a Father Whose honor must be promoted, as a King Whose kingdom must be increased; and as a Lord, Whose Will must be performed.

Then they also combined the other three in which the child of God prays that he may live on earth to the glory of his Father; that he may conduct himself as a faithful subject of His kingdom and that he may be a willing servant in performing God's will.

In still earlier days men combined them thus:

Hallowing God's Name refers to the Father, and the fourth petition being related to it asks that as father feeds and maintains his children so the Lord would do for us, His children.

The petition "Thy Kingdom come" refers to the Son Who was anointed as King over Zion. Then in the fifth petition we ask of Him the forgiveness of our guilt, considering Him as the one in Whom we have redemption through His blood.

The petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" refers to the Holy Spirit, Whose particular work it is to promote the will of God, that is, our sanctification. Then the last petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" is directed to the Third Person, Whose particular work it is to lead us into the land of uprightness and in the truth.

Thus in this prayer we have the address to the Father through the Son in the Holy Ghost.

Let us now consider the first petition of the Lord's Prayer. This petition concerns the hallowing and glorification of the Name of the Lord.

Dear hearers! When we hear of the Name of the Lord, the question of Rev. Hellenbroek naturally arises in our mind, "Doth God also stand in need of names as men do, since there are none like unto Him? We people need names to distinguish us from others who are like us. And because God has none like unto Him. He needs no name to distinguish Him from others. When therefore Jacob in Genesis 32 asks Him for His Name, the Lord answered, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My Name?" It is as if the Lord would say, "Is there then another besides Me who is as mighty, as gracious and as good as I am? In Proverbs 30 the question is put: "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" And no creature can answer that question. For was not God from eternity, so that there was none to give Him a name. Here we would cry out with Jeremiah (ch. 10:6) "Forasmuch as there is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy Name is great in might."

And yet He accepted names. Which names He accepted, and why He did so, and what the significance of those names is we have told you before, and we shall not repeat that now. We would only remind you that the Lord accepted various names in His Word to help our infirmities and to make Himself known unto us.

When in the first petition we speak of God's Name, we think of God Himself.

Thus the deeply led man after God's heart understood it. In Psalm 20: 1 he says, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble, the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." Him whom the poet first calls "the Lord," he next calls "the Name of the God of Jacob." Thus we also read in Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Calling on the Name of the Lord is calling on the Lord Himself.

By the Name of the Lord we think especially of all God's attributes and perfections and all those things in which it pleased that invisible and incomprehensible Being to reveal Himself to us.

Thus by the word Name we mean His majesty, glory, eternity, wisdom, omnipotence. His goodness, all-sufficiency and the riches of His grace and whatever more attributes and perfections are found in that incomprehensible and unfathomable Being.

The Lord Himself was pleased in His great mercy to call out His Name before the ears of Moses His servant as we read in Exodus 34: 5 and 6. "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth'."

The Messiah promised in Psalm 22:22 "I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." And He has done so as we see in John 17:6 "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world."

Some men think especially of the name Father, hence of the name with which Christ taught us to address God: as our Father.

Hallowing that name consists in revealing, praising and glorifying those perfections. Just as justifying God means declaring that God is just, so hallowing His Name means giving Him by word and deed the glory due unto His Name. Hear what the Spirit of the Lord says by the mouth of Isaiah (ch. 8:13): "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread."

Thus the dear Lord hallows Himself when it pleases Him to manifest His perfections, as when He comes to His people with blessings of good, so that even strangers see and know that He is the Lord when He shall be sanctified in His people before their eyes. See Jeremiah 33: 7-9.

Thus He also did by delivering and avenging His people from their enemies, as in the days of Ezekiel (ch. 38: 22, 23). Then they could sing, "He sent redemption unto His people; He hath commanded His covenant forever: holy and reverend is His Name."

Christ hallowed the name of the Lord. As prophet He preached His perfections in the great congregation. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained My lips, O Lord, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within My heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation. I have not concealed Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth from the great congregation." Thus we hear Him testify in the fortieth Psalm.

Also as priest He sanctified God in perfecting His mediatorial work. How that dear Jesus sanctified His Father already in the

Counsel of peace, and in Bethlehem, and in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, and in Joseph's garden. Then He glorified God by justice and sanctified Him by righteousness, for did He not when approaching His terrible suffering pray, "Father glorify Thy Name"?

Also as king He sanctified His Father by causing nations to submit themselves unto Him so that from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same His Name should be great.

Also by the angels His Name is sanctified. Hear what the prophet Isaiah saw and heard of this in that striking vision which he describes in Isa. 6:3, "And one cried unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Also by the glorified children of God in heaven His Name is glorified. See what the exile on Patmos writes about it, (Rev. 15: 3, 4) "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou alone art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest."

Yea, all creatures magnify God's Name, for the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech or language, where their voice is not heard." And hear also the jubilation of the poet, "Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, all His angels: praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon, praise Him all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the Name of the Lord."

His Name must also be hallowed by His people. To them comes the admonition, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Pet. 3:15).

For that purpose the Lord chose, purchased and redeemed that people unto Himself. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." To that end the Lord causes the fir tree to come up instead of the thorn, and the myrtle tree instead of the brier, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." (Isa. 55:13).

Also the people chosen by God and purchased by Jesus must hallow the Name of the Lord, that is, they must praise and glorify God and ascribe greatness to Him. Thus Moses speaks in His testament and song of praise, (Deut. 32:3) "I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God." It is also called singing praises to God. Hear how David and his people

sing in the glorious hymn of deliverance (Ps. 9:2) "I will be glad and rejoice in Thee, I will sing praise to Thy Name, O Thou most high."

The singers of Israel hallowed the Name of the Lord when from the temple they caused these words to reverberate over Jerusalem, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake." (Ps. 115:1).

Hallowing the Name of God, that is what the Apostle incites the Corinthians, and hence also us, to do, "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Indeed, dear hearers, we would hallow God's Name if in every thing we gave thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus over us.

And this we do not do. God's people of both Old and New Testament did not hallow God's Name, nor do we. The Lord has always complained about His people because they did not do so, however much he roused them to do so by judgments and blessings, and by sending His servants the prophets. Even when the Lord called to them, "Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto thee," yet they did not sanctify Him: "My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me."

And neither can we do so. At one time, yes, then man could and did hallow God's Name. Then it was as child's play for man, then he knew God perfectly and walked with God as a friend with his friend. That was in the state of innocence.

But since that great and dreadful profaning of God's Name by our first forefather, by Adam in Paradise, since that covenant breach, that terrible outrage, we cannot hallow God's Name. On the other hand, we can profane it, and we do, that is our nature. We are dead in trespasses and sins, and hence we profane all that is God's: His covenant, His land, His house, His sabbath, His word, His service, His people, His servants, His Name and His remembrance. It has all been profaned by man, and is still daily being profaned by the natural man, and alas, also by us.

An act of God must take place within us. The Spirit must minister and work in us with heart-changing and heart renewing grace. Then a desire is aroused within us to hallow God's Name. Then it grieves us that we have profaned His Name so long and so much. Then hallowing His Name will be our choice, our delight and our aim.

And when we become aware that in and of ourselves we can not, it becomes our earnest prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." Yea, child of God, the Lord must first sanctify Himself to us and in us. Only then does hallowing the Lord become a heartfelt and urgent need. Without heart renewing

grace we can never pray this prayer aright, "Hallowed be Thy Name." For we must remember that this really is a prayer.

When we say, "Hallowed be Thy Name" we are not expressing a wish. It is not a matter that we wish for the Lord. With those words we do not merely mean to say, "Dear Lord, we wish it so sincerely, we would so gladly have Thy Name be magnified praised, glorified and hallowed." No, indeed, it is a prayer.

Hear what the Instructor says of it in his answer to Question 122. "Hallowed be Thy Name," that is "*Grant us.*" In this petition God's child falls upon his knees before the Lord. He wishes and desires to hallow the Name of the Lord, but he cannot; therefore he asks the Lord to so work in him that he might hallow that Name, or do so better than before.

Dear child of God, must we not always go to the Lord as a poor, impotent person, who has nothing and can do nothing unless the Lord first gives it to us and enables us to do it.

According to the inward man we so earnestly desire that the Lord should be honored and feared before and above all, but now we must begin with, "Lord, *grant*, work it in us Thyself.

"Grant us" "that we." My hearers, there are many people who complain that others profane the Name of the Lord. They desire that others should hallow God's Name, yea, that God should sanctify Himself. And, certainly, that is very well. But it is not right that they thus overlook themselves. That is why in the prayers of those people you often hear "grant them" that they may hallow Thy Name," and rarely, "Grant us" and hardly ever, "Grant me."

And now it is evident from the explanation of our Instructor that hallowing God's Name must begin with "us," with "me," and therefore we go to the Lord saying, "Give us" "that we."

Dear hearers, you need not fear that God shall not sanctify Himself, for He always does so. Whatever He does, or does not, is for His Name's sake, or for the glory of His Name. Neither need you pray that the angels or the redeemed in heaven may sanctify God, for they will and can do nothing else. And Satan and his vassals in hell and on earth can do nothing but profane, curse, and blaspheme God's Name.

Therefore we pray "Grant us that we may do so." To that end it is above all necessary that we rightly know the Lord. Hence the supplicant asks for this first, "Grant us, first, rightly to know Thee."

Immediately you feel that an unregenerate man can not pray this truthfully. "Grant us, first, rightly to know Thee," for he feels not the least need to know God. The spark of innate knowledge of God that he has he would rather quench. That is the aim of thousands in our days, to quench all consciousness of God in themselves and in others. "There is no God" he tries to make himself and others believe.

It is true there are others who are not as hostile toward the knowledge of God. They even seek to increase that knowledge in school, at catechism, in church and by searching God's Word. Yea, there are some who by using the means have advanced quite far in that knowledge. They can speak, sometimes preach even orthodox sermons on God's being, names, attributes and works. And that is praiseworthy. We wish that everyone and all nations possessed this knowledge of God and were zealous to increase it.

But the true knowledge of God is not only theoretical, but also experimental. The experimental knowledge goes deeper, is more tender, more lively, and more blessed. The Holy Spirit must teach us that experimental knowledge of God, and we obtain it by heavenly lessons and by secret communion with God. And now it is a pity that so many people are content with an objective knowledge of God and feel not the least need for the experimental, more intimate knowledge. Such people do not hallow God's Name, but insult Him. If I know someone superficially and show no desire to become more closely acquainted with him, and to learn to know him better, such a one may be insulted. And it certainly is an insult to the Lord when we feel no desire to learn to know Him as He is known to salvation by His intimate friends.

But is it not sad that there are converted people who think the little experimental knowledge which they have of God is enough, so that they do not make the least effort to learn to know Him better, as He has revealed Himself in His Word. That is why those precious volumes that deal with God, His being, the three persons, His Names, Attributes, etc., those volumes by reading which we may learn to know God, have so little value, are read and reread so little. It is also an insult to the Lord when you have so much time for everything and then some, but not for increasing your knowledge of God and of things divine, prayerfully and with the help of the Holy Spirit. You will understand therefore the prayer "Hallowed be Thy Name" should be combined with the searching of God's Word. And thus it is with that supplicant whose praying of "the Lord's" prayer is acceptable with God.

But the Instructor proceeds: the prayer: "Grant us rightly to know Thee" is followed by the prayer: "Grant us to sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works."

The true supplicant first desires rightly to know God, but then also to glorify God in His works. God's perfections, His power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth are clearly displayed in works, both those of nature, such as creation and providence and in those of grace, that great work of redemption.

It would take too long to explain and prove all this. Neither is this the place for it, for we are now considering prayer, and in prayer, explanation is out of place. Elsewhere the Instructor has

spoken of the works of God and how God's perfections are clearly displayed in them.

But to be able to sanctify, glorify, and praise God in His works we must know God's works, and observe God's perfections displayed therein. And here, too, we find a two-fold cause for sorrow.

There are so many who zealously investigate the works of God, especially His works of nature. They would measure the waters with their fist and seek to measure the extent of the heavens, the mountains and hills they would weigh, and would study the courses of the stars. They study the lives of creatures from the smallest insect to the largest beast and from the mustard seed to the leaves of the Lebanon.

Alas, they do not see God's perfections in them, they finish in the creature, in matter. Poor materialists, worshippers of dust! How terrible your end shall be, unless you are yet converted to God!

But there are also children of God who have no desire to study the works of God. They sing of the heavens which declare God's glory, and of the firmament which shows His handiwork, but what those heavens declare they do not notice. They sing, "Great works, Jehovah, Thou hast wrought," but in what that greatness and the wisdom of God's design consists they know nothing about, they do not make the least effort to find out. Some even think it an honor that they know nothing of it, yea they consider it an especial mark of their piety that they do not trouble themselves with those external things. If they have some feeling of grace in their heart they are satisfied.

But the acts of such, or rather their neglect and their argumentation do not please God. If man, and especially the child of God, does not sanctify, glorify, and praise Him in His works, who will? The lifeless creatures, the birds of heaven and the beasts of the field do it unconsciously. Man, and especially regenerate man should do it. God's people, when in a proper frame do so. Therefore he prays, "Grant us that we, that I, may sanctify, glorify and praise Thee in all Thy works." But then he also studies those words and suits the action to the word and sings, and we shall sing with him, Psalter No. 288 st. 1, 2, 3, 4.

"Further also, that we may so order and direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words, and actions, that Thy Name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account."

Is it not most fitting that we direct our whole lives, our thoughts, words and actions to that one great end, namely, that God be honored and praised?

Notice how much obliges us to do so. What are we worthy of? What have we merited? We deserve all manner of calamities and miseries, we are hellworthy creatures. Count your sins if you can.

And those are sins committed against the highest majesty of God. Do not our sins bear witness of the greatest ingratitude, indifference, and wickedness.

And what did He give us? Instead of condemning us to hell, He gave us His Son, His only Son, the Beloved of His bosom. And with Him He gave us all we need for this life and for our salvation, for time and eternity, for body and soul. Yea, He gave us a thousand times more than we need.

And, child of God, what did He do to you? Begin from the moment when the Lord, while passing by many persons who were more suitable, arrested you in your sinful way with a sovereign and almighty hand. Consider how He wrought within you to make that choice not to be repented of; how He blissfully urged you to leave the paths of unrighteousness and become a traveler on the way of understanding. And recall all that befell you on that way and all that you were given to experience, how He showed you your lost condition, but also showed you the way of salvation in a crucified and glorified Christ; how through the Spirit of faith He wrought faith in you, etc. Remember your way from Shittim to Gilgal, do you not see all God's perfections shine forth which are displayed in all God's works, and which the Instructor lists here.

And then consider to what God destined us. He destined us for His heaven, to be of the family, to be a companion of His Holy Child Jesus. And should we then not direct our whole life, our thoughts, words and actions that God would be praised? Should we not sanctify such a God in our hearts, praise Him before the people and glorify Him? Though everything and everyone kept silence in heaven and on earth, we should still cry out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name."

God's children can at times be very sad because God's Name is profaned so often round about them. Alas, the world cannot and will not do otherwise. One day God will call those blasphemers, cursers, Sabbath-breakers, those atheists and materialists to account. Let this be a warning to you and let this consideration, with the Lord's blessing, lead you to conversion before He cause darkness and it shall be forever too late for you.

God's people can also be very sad because God's Name is so often profaned by them, by their murmuring against the acts of God, by complaining about God's ways, and by conniving with unbelief. They profane God's Name by their ingratitude in prosperity, impatience in adversity and distrust regarding the future. Alas, how sad it is, to love God so sincerely, to wish heartily for the hallowing of His Name, to consider Him so worthy; and then to become aware that we profane Him continually, yea, that we cannot do otherwise. Oh, miserable man that I am.

But God's people can also be very sad because God's Name

is so often profaned because of them. When the world notices their ambition, their cupidity, their lust for power, their worldliness and covetousness, the bitterness of one and the vanity of the others, the stumbling and halting and falling of God's people, is then the Name of God not blasphemed because of them?

Oh, people of God, how necessary the prayer is: "Father, which art in heaven, grant us that we may so order and direct our lives that Thy name may never be blasphemed, but rather honored and praised on our account."

What a rich reward that prayer gives! Our selfish prayers God does not hear, but this prayer He surely hears! And if He does so, we are happy. His honor is our salvation. How entirely different it would be in our heart. in our home and in our community if God's Name were hallowed, yea, the world would be a paradise.

God grant that the sanctification of His Name may begin with me and with you and may be propagated by the Spirit of God.

And one day it shall be so. Now there is much within us and round about us that profanes God and therefore grieves us, but one day we shall hallow, glorify and praise God eternally with a reborn soul, in a reborn body on a reborn earth. Therefore we shall continue to pray:

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name. Amen.