

# World's Greatest Prayer – Surrender – Thy Will Be Done

Rev. Perry J. Fruhling, St. Mark's Faith & Life Center, 10 Feb 2008

Grace to you and peace...there is the story of a pastor who got to heaven after a long and blessed career. The pastor noticed that he got a nice small cottage in heaven, but right next door was a Taxi Cab Driver who was living in a mansion. The pastor inquired to St. Peter about it and St. Peter explained: while people slept through your sermons, people actually prayed while he drove!

Today we're going to continue in our series as we go through The Lord's Prayer. God says the key to peace is prayer. In **Philippians 4** God says, "*Don't worry about anything. Instead pray about everything and the peace of God will rule your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*" You can either worry or pray as you go through life. Then the question becomes, what do we pray? Of course, God gave us a model. We call it the Lord's Prayer. It's actually seven prayers. For seven weeks we're going through this prayer phrase by phrase and we'll look at the second phrase today. There are three ways people most often get anxious or stressed...

1. When your **circumstances are uncontrollable**. You feel helpless.
2. **When people around them are unchangeable**. They won't cooperate. Have you ever tried to change somebody who didn't want to be changed? That's stressing. Have you ever done a little personal improvement plan on your husband, wife, or kids and they won't get with the action? The fastest way to get stressed out is try to change somebody. You can't even change your own self most of the time.
3. **When problems are unexplainable**. You can't figure out why something doesn't work. That is stressing. That causes anxiety.

Today we're going to look at what to pray in all three of those situations: the Prayer of Surrender. **Matthew 6:10** "*May Your kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" This may be the most misunderstood phrase in the Lord's Prayer. What does it mean "Your kingdom come?" and "May Your will be done"? What is God's kingdom? It is the rule and reign of God in the world. It's all that He wants to do. Where is the kingdom of God? It is wherever Jesus is allowed to be king. Since Jesus is king in heaven right now the kingdom of God is in heaven. When Christ's will is done here, the kingdom of God is on earth. And Jesus says, "When I'm king in your heart, the kingdom of God is within you." So the kingdom of God is wherever Jesus is allowed to be king. Actually the second phrase, "Thy will be done" explains the first phrase, "Thy kingdom come." God's kingdom is wherever God's will is done. So if God's will is being done in your life, that's where the kingdom of God is. What does it mean to pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done"? It means three things.

1. **I accept God's plan**. Instead of my own plan for my life I accept His purpose, His will for my life. Part of this – and a big part of it is something that is very difficult - is accepting the things that you can't change. There are a lot of things in your life, in fact most of the major things: You didn't choose your

birth or your death. You don't choose what other people do to you. You have to accept the things that can't be changed. Of course, you change the things you can but what about all those things you can't change? How do you have peace when you're frustrated by something that's unchangeable? Worrying doesn't work. That certainly doesn't give you peace. Resenting what you can't change, feeling guilty about what you can't change in the past, having a pity party about what you can't change won't give you peace. All of those things you don't like in your life – I don't like the parents I got, I don't like the way I look, I don't like the talents I've been given – all those things, you can't change them. There's only one thing that will work when you can't change something. That is this – acceptance. I must accept God's will in my life. *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."* Not everything that happens in your life is God's will. I'm not saying that. But you say, "God, I want Your will in my life when there's things out of my control and I can't change them."

Paul understood this. In **Philippians 4** he says this ***"I've learned to be satisfied with the things that I have and with everything that happens."*** [How many of you can say you've learned to be satisfied with everything that happens? I couldn't raise my hand on that one.] Paul is saying, I have learned to be content, to be satisfied with the things I have and everything that happens. ***"I know how to live when I'm poor and I know how to live when I have plenty. I've learned the secret of being happy at any time in everything that happens. I can do all things through Christ because He gives me strength."*** Notice first the amazing thing about this verse. Paul wrote it when he was in prison. He's in Rome, chained to a guard in a dungeon and he's saying, I've learned how to be happy no matter what's going on in my life. He couldn't change his circumstance but he said I've learned to be content. Notice three things: First, this accepting of God's plan is a learned experience. You are not by nature a contented person. Neither am I. By nature we are discontented. God says contentment is something you learn. You learn to accept the things you can't change. Second, it's a choice. Paul says I choose to be happy in spite of my circumstances. Third, he says it's possible only through Christ's strength.

You need to learn this first step of the Prayer of Surrender, that I accept God's plan even when I don't understand it. Why? Because the truth is most of the things that happen in your life God doesn't explain why they happen. Explanations never comfort us – they give us wisdom, but not comfort...and we probably wouldn't understand the explanation if God gave it to us...Instead God is saying, "Are you going to trust Me even when you don't feel Me? Are you going to trust Me even when you can't see Me and hear Me? Will you accept My plan, My wisdom, My love, My goodness even when there's nothing emotional? You don't feel any goosebumps; you don't feel anything special in your life. Will you trust Me when I am silent?"

Jesus prayed that prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The night of his betrayal, he kneels down and begins to sweat drops of blood and says God, what I'm about to face is miserable...if there is a way God, let this cup pass...but then he adds, not my will, but your will be done... God wants you to

pray when you're in those situations - that's when you need to pray the Prayer of Surrender. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. "God, I don't know what's going on in my life. I don't know where You're taking me. I don't know where I'm going to end up. But I'm going to say this even in advance. Thy will be done." That is the Prayer of Surrender.

Millions of people pray the serenity prayer on a daily basis. But did you know that the serenity prayer has been edited? Most people only know the first three lines. The actual prayer has eight more lines and that's where the power is: *"God, grant me the serenity to accept the thing I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time, Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace, Taking as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it; Trusting that You will make all things right If I surrender to Your will So that I may be reasonably happy in this life And supremely happy with You forever in the next. Amen."* The rest of the passage explains a whole lot about the first. You're not going to have the serenity of the serenity prayer unless you pray the rest of it. Notice the words "accepting", "trusting", and "surrender" and then "the pathway to peace". Those are the three things that bring peace. Accepting, trusting and surrender.

- 2. I surrender to God's control.** I don't just accept His plan; I accept what God wants to do with me. We don't like this word "surrender". Surrender means raising the white flag, forfeiting the game, saying, "I've lost. You've won." Surrender sounds too much like another word we hate: "submission". We don't like either of those words. But it's the only pathway to peace. "I surrender to Your control, God." Every morning you get up you make a decision, who's going to run your life? You or God? Whose agenda are you going to follow today? Yours or God's? Who's going to be calling the shots? You or God? Sometimes you and I think we know better. We say, "I'm going to make up my own rules." It means that we're probably justifying something, rationalizing. And you know what rationalize is...rational lies. Rationalize means I tell with my head what my heart says is wrong, what I know in my heart is wrong. The Bible says in **Psalm 37:7** *"Surrender yourself to the Lord and wait patiently for Him."* That's the key to peace. What happens if we don't do it? **Romans 8:6** *"If a person's thinking is controlled by his sinful self, there is death. But if his thinking is controlled by the Spirit, there is life and peace."* How do you get life and peace? By being controlled by the Spirit, by surrendering yourself to the Lord and waiting for Him. Obviously in a war with God, you're going to lose. Your arms are too short to box with God. So whenever you fight God and say, "I'm going to do what I want to do instead of what You want me to do," you're going to have anxiety, stress, depression, worry - everything except peace. If you want personal peace, the book of **Job, chapter 22**, tells us how to get it. *"Stop quarreling with God. If you agree with Him you will have peace at last and things will go well with you."* God says, "I want to bring you peace but you've got to accept My plan and you've got to surrender to My control because I am God and you're not."

The greatest barrier to this, what keeps us from surrendering our life totally to God is resentment - resentment against God. We blame God for those disappointments. We become upset with Him because life hasn't turned out the way you wanted it to. And that underlying resentment keeps us from totally surrendering to God. Some are still resentful because of the parents God gave them. Some of you are disappointed in your marriage. Some become resentful about a handicap or a birth defect or a business you've started and failed or a marriage that failed or the fact that you're not married and you're still single. That's when the prayer, "God! Thy will be done! Thy kingdom come. I accept Your plan. I surrender to Your control" becomes vital.... Because the war with God is keeping you from peace.

I have been bedside with many people as they've taken their last breath. And the power of the Lord's Prayer is a blessing that can't fully be described or understood. Down in Texas I had the opportunity to be with a family who's loved one was in a coma. I spent time with the family, prayed with them and then began to pray the Lord's Prayer. As we prayed, I thought I heard something, and as I looked up, the loved one in a coma was praying along with us. I was reminded of the power of the prayer and the words..."thy will be done..." even in death, even in dire circumstances, when we accept God's will for our lives, we have a joyful hope in the Lord.

- 3. I trust in God's care.** I trust in His care that if He guides me He is going to provide for me. The Bible says this in **Isaiah 26:3** "*You, Lord, give true peace to those who depend on You because they trust You.*" Your life is never going to be problem free. IAS is a reality of life. **IAS – it's always something!** If it's not one thing it's another. Your life is like a big aircraft carrier and the problems are like planes out there circling, lined up, waiting to land. You have ten, twenty, thirty planes waiting to land on your deck right now. So just about the time you get one in and you get that problem solved number two plane moves up to number one position and number three moves up to number two. The moment you get number two landed, number three is now number one. You have to learn how to have peace in spite of your problems and in spite of conflict.

By the way, why do we have so many problems in the world? Three reasons: Martin Luther talked about them in the small catechism: (the devil, the world, and our sinful selves). 1) A fallen world. In a nutshell, Adam choked. Adam blew it. He sinned. Sin entered the world and we live in an imperfect world ever since; because sin is in the world, people do things that are wrong and you suffer as the result. 2) You have an enemy. His name is Satan. Satan wants to mess your life up and destroy you. He wants to make you ineffective as a child of God. 3) Your own poor decisions. You make a lot of dumb decisions, dumb choices and so do I. Most of the problems I bring on myself.

And sometimes problems are nobody's fault. Sometimes God just allows them for a different reason. One time Jesus was walking down the street and His disciples saw a man who was born blind. The disciples said, "Lord, this guy was born blind. Who did something wrong? Was it his parents who did wrong,

who sinned? Or did he sin?" That's such a contemporary approach to problems. Today when you get a problem you say it was either caused by my parents or by me. It's either blame your parents or blame yourself. So they said, Who caused this problem, my parents or me? Jesus said, **John 9:3** "*Neither. This happened so that God's power could be displayed in this man's life.*" Sometimes you're going to have problems that aren't caused by the sin of others, your own sin, or by the devil. Some problems God allows in your life so that God's power could be displayed in your life. There's a great promise that goes with the prayer of surrender. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. If I pray that and live that what does God promise? **Matthew 6:33** "*God will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern.*" What is the kingdom of God? His will in your life and His will in the world. If you say, Thy will be done and you live that, He says I'm going to take care of all your needs.

Patrick Hughes story (on video) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qTiYA1WiY8>

Patrick was born blind and unable to walk, but has become a member of the University of Louisville marching band. When asked about his limitations, he says "God made me blind and unable to walk...big deal? But he gave me this gift of music and has allowed me to meet so many new people in my life."

I accept God's plan for my life, I surrender to God's control for my life and I trust God's care for my life. Then God says I'm going to take care of all your needs. Are you really at peace today? Or is there turmoil going on in your heart? Are you experiencing anxiety and turmoil and stress over some area that has not been yielded to God? Question: What in your life do you need to surrender? I don't know what it is but you do and God does. Aren't you tired of being at war with God? **Romans 6:13** "*Give yourself to God. Surrender your whole being to Him to be used for His righteous purposes.*" He wants you to live your life with purpose and meaning. He wants you to surrender your whole being to Him, saying, "God, I want to live for Your plan. Thy will be done in my life and on earth as it is in heaven." Prayer...