

No. 5. The Lord's Prayer – The fulfilling of the will of God.

The third item we pray for in the Lord's Prayer is 'Your will be done on earth as in heaven'. Just as in last week's notes on 'Your Kingdom come' we discussed the coming of God's Kingdom has already begun, so with today's subject we have, similarly, Heaven touching Earth. How then should we pray it? How should we apply it to the great sweep of human activity across the earth and also to our own particular circumstances? On how many levels can we make this petition?

In addition, this prayer can be divided into two main elements. It has both passive and active elements; would you agree? There are times when, accepting God's will be done, we are not required to be active. Sometimes we are called to accept what is His will, which can be uncomfortable, even distressing for us personally and/or for those we love. Perhaps some in your group may feel able to share some of their own examples? Where does faith fit into this? Do such instances affect your prayer life?

Passively accepting God's will (perhaps against what seems sensible or logical) can also be positive and ultimately amazingly beneficial. Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26: 42), submitted to His Father's will despite the suffering, and Daniel's three friends (Dan.3: 16-18) demonstrate a terrifyingly courageous submission to the will of God. Do you have examples of positive outworking when God sent you in what seemed to be the most unlikely direction?

It is the active element that is the challenge Jesus is referring to in today's passage.

Read Matthew 21: 28-32 (it will help understanding to read verses 23–32 – although we concentrate on 28-32).

Jesus confirms to his audience that the Temple hierarchy have given the correct answer, but in so doing, have exposed their own hypocrisy towards John the Baptist's ministry and teaching, and by inference, their hypocrisy to the will of God. And this is the great challenge to us too. How do we make sure we are responding to Jesus, allowing Him to confront us at any point where we have been like the second son and said 'Yes' to God while in fact going off in the other direction?

In heaven our Father's will is done gladly, willingly, completely and joyfully. So, we pray for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven. Is that what people see in us as we witness to be followers of Jesus here on earth?

Prayer: *May your guiding hand be on our thinking, may the way we live, all that we do and say be pleasing before you. May there be a foretaste, a 'touch of heaven' about our lives, our decisions and our communities here and now under the pressures and in the ups and downs of earthly living. Amen.* John Belham