

*Nevertheless, Thy Will
Be Done*

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

Every believer, at one time or another, has asked for something in prayer and never received the answer he expected. Whether it was for a loved one to be healed, for a financial need, or for the perfect partner in life, it *seemed* as though God did not come through. We don't realize how serious that charge is.

To even consider that God somehow defaulted on His promise to give whatsoever we ask in His name (John 14:14), is an attack against His character. To cover-up such an attack, we may look to ourselves and whimper, confessing that we really don't deserve God's attention anyway. But every rationalization ultimately impugns the nature of our Father in heaven and the sacrifice of His Son that made us heirs of His kingdom. It is the Father's pleasure to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32), and that includes everything in it.

While He lived on earth, Jesus, who had no

sin nature to be dealt with, was still subject to the Father's will. In the garden of Gethsemane, when it seemed as though He would not be able to accomplish the task for which He was sent, He prayed, "*Nevertheless...*"—regardless of how things *appear* to be, in spite of the impossible mountain before me—"...*Thy will be done.*" He trusted His Father implicitly and never doubted the outcome.

We have been made heirs, but unlike Jesus, we were estranged from our Father before we were saved. Now we are growing in sonship through the very things that bring us to our knees.

Chapter One

BEING COMPATIBLE WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Where does a child of God derive his power, his authority, and his provision? If I were to ask this, you would say to me, "From God," and, obviously, you would be right. God *is* the source, but how does a person come into a place in his life where he releases God's best, releasing the reality of God?

How does a born-again, blood-bought believer come to a place in his Christian experience where what God is doing and what the believer is experiencing are compatible? I want you to ponder this. For example, suppose you were married and your partner left you, saying, "I don't want you. I don't love you!" and you said, "I'm not going to accept that. I'm going to trust God. I'm going to believe God for our marriage." Then, what if that person divorced you and married someone else? Your feelings and

your heart were not compatible with what God allowed. You expressed faith toward God, and now there is a reason for being upset: Your partner left, divorced you, and remarried, and you respond to the situation by confessing, “The power that’s in the Bible was not there in response to my prayer.”

Perhaps you have prayed for somebody, and then you said, “God gave me a word that they’re going to be healed.” What if the person you’ve been praying for dies? Will your response be, “I can’t trust God any more. I heard from the Bible that he would be healed, and he died! I’ll never be able to trust the Word of God to speak to me again”? If that is the case, it is because your feelings and your experience are not compatible with what God promised regarding your prayers.

Pray According to God’s Will

Here’s a single man who announces, “I want that woman. *She* will be my bride!” He read the Scriptures until he found the verses that seemed to say he would get this woman, and he believes God gave him the exact date it would happen. “April seventeenth...God said!” Furthermore, he met someone in a restaurant who brought up something that was “right from heaven! That

confirmed it!”

But on May first, he reads the Word of God. (This time, “The Holy Spirit told me....”) So he asks the woman to go on a date, but she turns him down. The next thing he knows, she’s engaged and gets married to someone else. He feels cheated and defrauded by God; but worst of all, he can’t trust himself anymore. He says, “I thought I heard from God!” and he ends up seriously wounded in his emotions.

Now, what was happening in all these situations? What about when my first wife came down with leukemia, and our church was having all kinds of healings, but God didn’t heal her? In reality, I never claimed she was healed; I just prayed that she would be. That’s the difference. I *prayed* that she would be healed, but I didn’t *claim* that she would be. God is sovereign. My faith declared that unless God takes her, I will believe that she will be healed. That was my faith.

Don’t Presume Against the Promises

I want you to see that in the Word of God there is *always* a reason. I want you to avoid going through experiences like I’ve mentioned. That is the purpose of this message. I’m very

careful in my prayer life—I'm very careful in all my life—yet God could take me tomorrow. If He does, it will be His perfect will. I'm not living in immorality, so if He takes me, it will be because it is His will. That's my attitude, and I know that many of you have that attitude also.

The average Christian lives in measures of presumption against the Promises. It's different than when God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He said in Joshua 1:3, "Every place the sole of your foot will touch *will be yours*," but that land had been promised to Israel years before they actually took it; Canaan was theirs already.

Receiving a Rhema

The first principle to understand in this context is that I can't make a claim on a promise like that unless I get a *rhema*. (See John 14:26; Romans 10:8, 17; Ephesians 6:17.) A *rhema* is a specific verse or passage in the Word of God, revealed personally by the Holy Spirit to the believer in order to meet a specific need for the details of his life. I had better make certain it's a *rhema*, and if it is, folks, it will happen.

The second principle is that you can't get a personal *rhema* unless you read the Scriptures,

unless you are filled with the Spirit, and unless you are void of presuming against God because you want so much for something to happen.

Here's the third principle: The more subjective I am, even if I'm spiritual, the more I'll presume against promises. Do you see that? My subjectivity will cause me to presume against the promises.

The fourth principle is that God does have promises to give us and to bless us, providing we understand how to live in His power. Then we can understand what it means to have the power of God's life, which is what's missing in Christianity today.

The 'God Factor'

You have heard of people who pray for finances to go on the mission field. Without telling anyone about their need, someone sends them two thousand dollars, and they are able to go overseas. It's a miracle! Then you hear somebody else who says, "I'm going! I'm going!" but the money never comes in and it never happens. What's the difference here?

I would suggest *God*. I would suggest the 'God factor'. Now, the God factor is one thing, but it must be compatible with something that

God wants to do with me. The God factor must be compatible with what God is doing in my life. God is trying to do something with every single life, and He *will* accomplish what pleases Him at some point.

Chapter Two

POWER AND AUTHORITY TO BE LIKE CHRIST

I need to understand that God's will is to make me like Christ. This is His primary purpose for me on earth. Now, you've really got to be spiritual to grasp this: God's primary purpose for me on earth is to conform me to Christ's image, and *not* to answer all of my prayers, because answering all of my prayers would not make me like Christ.

In Psalm 106:15, God answered Israel's prayer and gave them meat, but He sent leanness to their soul. You see, He answered their prayer, but that was a terrible thing for them because it made them carnal. Imagine, *answered prayer making people carnal!* Our life with God is not just asking and receiving. It's asking and, in Hebrews 10:35-36, *waiting*. It's asking and letting patience be worked in us for indefinite periods. It is asking and then waiting upon the Lord,

being conformed to Christ's image while we wait.

The Sovereignty of God

A woman called me on our radio broadcast, and she asked, "Would you pray for my cat?" The studio audience laughed, but I said, "I sure will. I have a dog, and I know what you mean." Then I asked, "Is it a male or female cat?"

She said, "It's a female, and she's very beautiful."

I said, "Does the cat have a name?"

She said, "Yes. Lucy."

I said, "Dear God, I pray for Lucy, this beautiful female cat. I really mean it. In Jesus' name." That prayer was so powerful, the cat was healed within sixty seconds. I'd would rather that it had been a man, or a woman, or a child; but, for that moment, I guess it blessed her that God healed her cat. It's a true story! The woman lives outside of St. Petersburg, Florida.

I want you to see that you might as well sort some things out about the sovereignty of God; you might as well get this straight. God does what He does—and doesn't do other things—for one reason: that I will trust Him with all my heart and not lean on my own understanding.

If anything tires me out, it is when I counsel people, and then they lean on their own understanding. A beautiful lady came for counseling today for the first time. She was precious. She was frail, and she needed help, but she was fun to counsel. I don't mind frailty, weakness, or problems; but when somebody puts rationalization ahead of the communication of faith, it tires me out.

The Bible says, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). God wants to bring me to the place (and He has) and He wants to bring you to the place (and He probably has!), where you would confess to Him before the elect angels and the fallen angels, "Lord Jesus, I'm resting. I'm quiet. I'm peaceful. I'm trusting. And, though you slay me, I'm going to trust you. So, do what you want to do, but please be merciful and do the best thing for me." Can you see it? That's an attitude worth having.

The Power Source

Now I'm going to bring you into the heart of this message. In John 10:17-18, "Therefore doth

my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

Notice the first part again: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.” Power comes from laying down my life. Power does not come from taking up my life again but by keeping it down with the Cross.

Authority comes from laying down our lives. Laying down my life conforms me to the image of Jesus Christ.

I could say, “I will take up my cross daily.” And to that, God says, “If you will do that, I will give you special authority. Not special answers, not special promises, but special authority.”

Jesus derived His authority from laying down His life. Whenever He spoke, the people remarked at the authority of His doctrine: “When Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

In Matthew 26:53, Jesus was saying, “If I wanted to, I could pray to my Father for legions

of angels to come and deliver me right now, but I don't want that." The average person in His situation would say, "Please send legions of angels—and hurry!"

Chapter Three

NOT MY WILL BUT THINE

Jesus was so humble. He had the mind of God. Christians want so badly for something to happen, yet they don't have the mind of God. They become very frustrated when things don't happen according to their *preference*.

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15a). Now you know why the Lord Jesus Christ said so beautifully, yet with such conviction, in Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." I want to say something about this. This does not mean a person isn't saved. I have the Kingdom of God in me; however, there are lots of times when I don't enter into this kingdom. It's the same with you.

The original language in this text reveals something so interesting: "Except ye be *converted*." It didn't say "regenerated," did it? Ex-

cept you be converted as a little child, you cannot enter into God's kingdom. This means that you can't have the supply of God's kingdom. You can't have its authority. You can't have its power—that's what this means. But, it does *not* mean that you can't have eternal life.

Releasing God's Authority

He said, "Except ye become...as little children," and then in verse 4, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." The key to my pleasing God, the key to having Kingdom power, is *humility*—and that means conversion to humility. We must be converted to humility. Remember that humility means always placing God first—not thinking highly of myself, and not thinking lowly of myself, but just not thinking of myself. That's how we release God's authority.

You notice in John 10:17a, authority was released by Jesus' laying down His life: "Therefore doth my Father love me [in my humanity], because I lay down my life." We know the Father loved Jesus anyway, but He loved that especially. That was a special love. This is why the Word of God says, "whosoever will be great

among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all" (Mark 10:43-44). The greatest among you is the least, and the greatest is the servant of all. And then, in Mark 10:31, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first."

Authority in Godly Humility

I would suggest to you today that, if there is anything I have learned as a pastor, I have loved counseling sessions when God's people agree with God. They simply *agree* with God!—and that is precious. No matter what their situation happens to be, they have agreed with God.

Humility also means that I agree with God's character. If I agree with God's character and trust it, then I still have every right to ask and to believe, but then, to totally accept the grace and love of His character to preserve me and bless me in whatever happens. And I will know this: If what I want to happen doesn't take place then, in the meantime, I am being conformed to Christ's image.

The Word of God says, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward." And after you've asked God, you have need of patience, that you may receive

the promises (Hebrews 10:35-36).

God was saying, "I'm not going to give you everything you ask for, but I *am* going to give you patience. That means that I'm going to give you My character before I give you your answer, because if I were to give you your answer *before* I gave you My character, you would be a spoiled child!"

I was speaking with a very precious person recently about the issues of death. Everyone is going to die; no one will escape it (unless we are raptured). It is appointed by God when we should die, and the issues of death don't belong to people but to God (Psalm 68:20). They belong to God. I can't control the issues of death, and I can't control all the answers. I don't know why my dad died when I was three, why my first wife died in her forties, or why my brother died in his early fifties. I don't know why. But I know this: *It was God's appointed time.*

So God says, "He that shall humble himself shall be *exalted*" (Matthew 23:12). Do you know what that means? Promoted. Whoever humbles himself shall be promoted.

I *do* have that promise, and you have that promise. That's a promise for every child, man, and woman and for every marriage. That is a

promise to every Christian. It's an unconditional promise with the authenticity of God's immutable integrity: "He that shall humble himself shall be [promoted]."

Be Ready to Receive

Let's be honest. In this world of Christianity, do you realize how many shipwrecked lives there are because "God didn't come through"? All kinds of lives, shipwrecked because they didn't grasp the whole picture.

Here is a woman who lives with a man who isn't the best guy in the world; and though she prayed for restoration to a godly marriage, in this case, God never answered her prayer. In twenty-five years her husband has never gotten right with God; he's not even saved.

For fifteen years, this woman battled God because He never answered her prayer. She heard my message (more than once), that "if you are positive in your volition toward God and set Christ before your face, you will receive degrees of glory for every time your spouse is ornery to you."

Only in the last three years out of twenty-five has she been practicing that message. The fact that this character, who is such a thorn in

her flesh, was in her life will be the very reason she receives the Morning Star Decoration (Revelation 2:26-28)—and she finally understands it! She will have the Morning Star Decoration for living with the very terrible husband that she has and for remaining faithful to the truth. Her situation became the means for her to receive the prize—not that God wants her husband to be that way; but because he is, she will receive great recompense of reward.

CONCLUSION

“Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed” (Isaiah 66:5).

1 Peter 5:5 says “be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” Isaiah 66:5 says we “tremble” at God’s Word. The Hebrew word for tremble is *chared*, and it means that they responded with holy reverence and a readiness to receive. Contrast that to Psalm 50:17, “thou castest my words behind thee.”

Chared has a further meaning: It speaks of one who holds the Word of God in the highest regard, above anything that’s going on in his life, and who enters into careful consideration with great motivation of heart, humility, mental concentration, and great faith in the character of God. That is what it means to tremble at God’s

Word.

The Father knows our needs. He will send those answers, and we can ask that He would. But as we continue to humble ourselves before Him, we shall be exalted, and that is a direct promise to all.