

HALLOWING GOD'S NAME

"Hallowed be thy name." Matthew 6:9.

Last Sunday I spoke of the new and beautiful name, "Father," by which Christ taught us to address God when we draw near to Him in prayer. This morning we shall consider the first petition in the prayer itself. In it our Lord teaches us to pray for grace enough to honor that new name by thought, word and deed.

No one can truly pray until he can say, "Father"; that is, until he has come to know Him through faith in Jesus Christ and has been born into the family of God. Realizing that we are the children of God and that we are in His presence, Christ said that our first desire and petition should be: "Hallowed be thy name."

What, then, does that mean? In the language of the Old Testament, to hallow a thing was to set it apart ceremonially as something especially august and sacred. The temple enclosure was hallowed ground because it was set apart from all other ground as the one spot sacred to the ministrations of the priesthood. The vessels of the temple were hallowed because they were so set apart for sacred purposes. Their use for common purposes would have been profanation. As used here in the Model Prayer, the word conveys the same idea, to sanctify or to revere. In this connection Augustine said, "Can God be holier than He is?" No, of course not, but our conception of Him may and should be holier than it is.

What does the term "thy name" signify? At that time the Jews commonly referred to God Himself as "The Name." Whatever you may think or say about the Jews, and however great and numerous their failures, there was one thing in which they were most commendable and that was their sense of the greatness and the majesty and the holiness of God. They had such a consciousness and appreciation of these things that it had become an actual custom with them not to use the name "Jehovah." They considered that very name to be so holy and sacred, and that they were so small and unworthy, that they dared not pronounce it. So they often referred to God as "The Name." That was simply their way of avoiding the use of the actual term "Jehovah." What a contrast with some today who either ignorantly or wilfully call God "You," as if He were just a "buddy" of theirs! How thankful I am that the God Whom I worship, love and serve is above my level and more than a "Hail fellow well met."

When we pray that God's name may be hallowed, we are requesting that His glory may be revealed thereby and that we may be enabled to esteem and magnify Him agreeably thereto.

The revelation to our souls of the truth that the Creator is our Father brings us before Him in reverent worship. While recognizing the vast importance of reverence, we cannot help but realize that its absence is one of the outstanding characteristics of our day. We are short on many virtues, but in none are we more utterly poverty-stricken than in reverence. Even one as far from being a Christian as Irvin Cobb declared that if we were to examine the bump of reverence on the head of the modern man, we should find it to be a dent.

We need a greater reverence for the name of God. We need a greater reverence for the Word of God. We should come to the Bible with a reverent spirit like our Saviour had for the Old Testament. We are in great need of reverence for the house of God. When our Lord was here in the flesh, religion was at a low ebb. Once when He came to the temple, His very soul was whipped into a tempest. The voice of worship was drowned by the clank of coins, by the bleating of sheep, by the lowing of cattle, by the howls of the herdsmen and by the shrieks of the money changers. He looked about with amazement and grief that changed into hot anger. In substance, He remarked, "This is My Father's house. It is to be a place of prayer. It is to be a place where the soul meets God and comes to understand

Him. But, you have made it a den of thieves." In the heat of His indignation, He overturned their tables and flung their money on the floor and then chased them pellmell into the street.

This petition, "Hallowed be thy name," stands first in the Model Prayer as if to teach us that we must come before God with reverence and godly fear. There is no true prayer without reverence or without a deep sense of God's perfect holiness and our utter unworthiness.

What is meant by God's name? By God's name is meant His essence. It is the expression of Himself. It means all that is true of God and all that has been revealed about Him. It means God in all His attributes, God in all that He is in and of Himself, and God in all that He has done and is doing.

What is meant by hallowing God's name? To hallow is to set apart a thing from the common use to some sacred end. To hallow God's name is to set it apart from all abuses and to use it reverently. Hallowing God's name is to give Him high honor and veneration. We hallow God's name when we trust in it. "We have trusted in His holy name" (Psalm 33:21). We hallow God's name mentioning it only with the highest reverence. We hallow God's name when we have a high esteem for and appreciation of God. We hallow God's name when we give Him spiritual worship. We hallow God's name when we ascribe the honor of all we do to Him. "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name" (Psalm 96:8). We hallow God's name by obeying Him. How doth a son more honor his father than by obedience to him? "I delight to do thy will, O my God!" (Psalm 40:8). We hallow God's name by adoring His works, which are bound in three volumes--creation, redemption and providence. We hallow God's name when we lift it up in our praises. His name is so excellent that it deserves to be hallowed. "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9). We pray, "Hallowed be thy name," and by that we mean, "Let Thy name be honored and magnified by us." Hallowing God's name certainly involves obedience to His will. It is a gross inconsistency to extol the authority and character of God while disobeying His commands.

As one would expect, this pattern prayer reveals the true order for praying. It falls into two parts; the first having to do with God and His Kingdom and the second, with us and our needs. How clearly, then, is the fundamental duty in prayer set forth here. Self and all its needs must be given a secondary place, and God must be accorded the preeminence in our thoughts, desires and supplications. As in life, so also in prayer, the same command applies--"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). With Christ first things always came first. The glory of God was always the master petition in the prayers of Christ. His wishes were always kept in a subordinate place. It was ever "God first" with Him. "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." That is the true order in prayer--God first. But we oftentimes reverse the order. Our prayers are usually occupied mainly with our own wants, comfort and needs. We approach God either to thank Him for benefits we have already received or to implore still further benefits, such as food, raiment, health, happiness, safety and comfort. We do far more of the latter than we do of the former. In our praying, so often it is a case of "self first." Even in the holy place of prayer most of us think first of ourselves and of our own desires and needs. That is one reason why our praying is not more effective. Our first thoughts should be of Him. Above all personal interest and selfish advantage stands the glory of God. Before requesting daily bread, forgiveness and deliverance comes the prayer that God may have the glory due unto His name.

God revealed Himself to the Children of Israel under various names. These names are important because they are revelations of God's nature and character. Every name applied to God means something, tells us something about Him and throws light upon His nature. The names of men mean little, or their meaning has no relation to their character. They are mere labels. But, it is different in the case of God. Every name applied to Him is significant. It expresses some aspect of His character. So all of the names of God are keys to His character.

God has been revealed to us in nature. While watching his sheep in the still and starry night, the Psalmist saw God in the arching sky and sang, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (Psalm 19:1). I can see God's mark on the sky and the sea, on mountain and flood, on flower and tree. When I look at the great and beautiful mountains I cannot help remembering that it was God Who planted them there. When I look at the great, wide, deep and angry ocean, I remember it was God Who placed it there. "He measured the waters in the hollow of His hand. He has placed bounds for it which it cannot pass." When I see the lightning flash, I remember that the lightning is His messenger. When I hear the thunder roll, I remember that it is His voice. When I see the birds of the air, I remember that not one of them falls to the ground without God knowing and permitting it. When I see the lilies of the field, I remember that God clothes them. Oh, yes, the world speaks of God.

God's name has been revealed to us more plainly in the Bible. In this Book you have one name for God following another, and with every fresh name came new light. It was a great event in the history of men when God announced by His servants a new name for Himself. It is in Jesus Christ that we find the full and final revelation of God's name and character. God could not fully reveal Himself through nature. He was not fully pictured for us in a Book. It was only in a life that God could fully reveal Himself, and that full revelation He gave in the life of His Son. It is by looking at the Lord Jesus Christ that we discover the real character of God. Christ taught us to honor God's name and character as revealed in Himself by our thinking and our living.

It has pleased God to reveal Himself by different names, each of which enshrines precious truths that reveal fresh possibilities for us in Him. There cannot be an emergency among believers to which some name of God does not apply. Let us examine some of these names and their meanings.

I. Primary Names.

1. God.

The Hebrew equivalent is El, Elah or Elohim. It means the "Strong One." It occurs 2,570 times in the Old Testament. God is stronger than anybody knows or even thinks. The glorious thing to remember is that His strength is at our disposal for daily living. You can do your work and carry your burdens in your own strength, or, realizing your weakness, you can ask God for His strength. When God used this particular name for Himself, He was giving the people a sense of His might, His strength, His dominion and His power.

2. Jehovah.

This name is the most frequently used one in the Old Testament. It occurs there 6,823 times. It means the "Self-existent One."

3. Lord.

Used as a name for God, Adonai, which is translated Lord, occurs approximately 300 times in the Old Testament. This name reveals the relationship which God sustains toward His creatures and what He expects of them. It means that He is our Master and we are His servants. As we walk in the pathway of obedience to Him, He will meet our needs. "But my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Philippians 4:19).

II. Jehovistic Names.

By this we mean those names which were compounded with the name "Jehovah." As the years passed by, many variations of the name "Jehovah" were used by God's people. These compound names reveal God as meeting every need of man. Some of these compound names are:

1. Jehovah-jireh. Genesis 22:13-14.
By this name Abraham came to know God on Mount Moriah when he offered up Isaac in complete obedience to the will of God. It means "The Lord will provide." Jehovah is a God Who always provides. For lost sinners who had no claim on Him He provided a Saviour. As believers in Him we have a claim on Him because He is our Father and we are His children. He has given us all spiritual blessings, of which at least 49 are mentioned in the Scriptures. He knows our needs and provides for our necessities.
2. Jehovah-rapha. Exodus 15:26.
This name means "The Lord that healeth thee." Occurring between 60 and 70 times in the Old Testament, it means to heal, to cure, or to restore. While the context shows that it refers to physical healing, it also includes the deeper meaning of spiritual healing.
3. Jehovah-nissi. Exodus 17:8-15.
This name means "The Lord is our banner." A banner was a sign of deliverance. The name means that we cannot wage warfare against Satan in our own strength alone. He is too strong for our unaided strength. God will protect us, defend us and take care of us. We have no right to try to take that privilege away from Him.
4. Jehovah-shalom. Judges 6:24.
This name means "The Lord is our peace." God is the source of peace. "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22). The only people who have peace are God's children. We get peace by reconciliation with God through Christ. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).
5. Jehovah-raah. Psalm 23.
This name means "The Lord is our Shepherd." Everything the shepherd is to the sheep and far more, Jehovah is to His people. The privilege of intimacy with the shepherd can be enjoyed and should be cultivated by the Lord's people.
6. Jehovah-tsidkenu. Jeremiah 23:6.
This name means "The Lord is our righteousness." God requires righteousness and we do not have it, so He has provided it for us and offered it to us. We can receive it as a free gift.
7. Jehovah-shammah. Ezekiel 48:35.
This name means "The Lord is present." It signifies God's abiding presence with His people under any and all circumstances. "Lo, I am with you all the days" (Matthew 28:20).

III. A Secondary Name.

Almighty God--El Shaddai. Genesis 17:1-2. This name means "The God all-sufficient." Shaddai occurs 48 times in the Old Testament and is translated Almighty. It is derived from the word "shad" which means a woman's breast. It signifies one who nourishes and satisfies. When applied to God it means the One Who is mighty to nourish and satisfy. El Shaddai means God the breasted One; the God Who is enough; the all-sufficient One.

Doubtless you have seen a person try to care for a restless and fretful child. Finally, the mother would say, "Give me that child." Immediately after she took it and hugged it to her breast, it got quiet. It did so because it was where it was. The mother rests the child, strengthens the child, nourishes the child and satisfies the child. So, the God Who is all-sufficient wants to pour Himself into our lives, to rest us, to strengthen us, to nourish us and to satisfy us. He can satisfy us here as well as He can satisfy us in heaven. He meets our every need.

How then may we hallow God's name? By cherishing worthy ideas of God, by the trustfulness of our lives to the uttermost and by our obedience. If you want to honor God and hallow His name, obey Him promptly, cheerfully and absolutely. Those who have hallowed His name throughout the ages have been renowned. How renowned was Abraham for his faith, Moses for his meekness, David for his zeal, and Paul for his love for Christ! If we will bring honor to God's name, He will honor us. "Hallowed be thy name."