

VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #58, Lord's Day 47

The Hallowing of God's "Father" Name



The John Knox Institute
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Sermon #58 Lord's Day 47

The Hallowing of
God's "Father" Name

Psalm 145, verses 1 to 3
Question and Answer #122

i. Introduction and Review

- 1. By Pursuing the Knowledge of His Name**
- 2. By Magnifyng the Works that Reveal His Name**
- 3. By Living a Life that Honors His Name**

Introduction and Review

Beloved congregation, last week we began with the exposition of what is known as “The Lord’s Prayer,” which is really the disciples’ prayer, a prayer that Christ taught his disciples when they asked him the urgent question, “Lord, teach us how to pray.” And how graciously Christ responded by giving them this remarkable prayer. As we have pointed out to you already, Christ never intended that that prayer alone would be prayed, that we would continually repeat this prayer verbatim, even though it is very appropriate, at times, to pray that prayer, also at our dinner tables, and during family worship. And of course, as we have pointed out to you, Christ meant this prayer to be a paradigm, to give us a structure, to highlight for us what the essential components of prayer must be that is pleasing to God. And of course, what makes it so powerful is that these words came from the very lips of God himself, God manifest in the flesh. It is the living Word who gave us the written words of a prayer that is to be the pattern for our prayers.

And so, last week, we considered the wonderful address of that prayer. The Catechism told us plainly that Christ commands us to address God thus: “Our Father, which art in heaven.” and then follow six petitions. The first three petitions focus on God. So, the obvious—and I hope to unpack this a little bit more later—the obvious point Christ is making is that a true prayer begins by focusing on God, and secondly on us. And so, Christ is teaching us that our prayer must focus on God’s name, must focus on God’s kingdom, and must focus on God’s will.

And then come the three petitions that pertain to our own wellbeing. And surprisingly, the first of them is a prayer for our daily bread. But we'll see, when we get there, that we need to view that petition in light of the first three. So even though the language of that petition focuses on our physical needs, our daily bread, it has a very spiritual context, because in those first three petitions, Christ gives us the agenda of the Christian life. The agenda of the Christian life is that we seek to honor God's name, that we promote the coming of his kingdom, that we desire to live in obedience to his will, and to do that, we need our daily bread. We need our daily needs met, so that we can fulfill what God calls us to do in this world. And then, of course, it deals with the reality of sin, the need for forgiveness, and the need to be kept from it.

And so, with God's help tonight, we're going to focus on the first of the six petitions, "Hallowed be thy name." So let's turn to Lord's Day 47 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

Question #122: *Which is the first petition?*

The Answer is: *"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—that means, evil spoken of—but rather honored and praised on our account.*

And so, in this petition, we have *The Hallowing of God's "Father" Name*. And I deliberately chose that formulation, because the pronoun "Thy" refers to "the Father"—"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name" (Matthew 6:9); so, *The Hallowing of God's "Father" Name*. First of all, by pursuing the knowledge of his name. It says, *First, rightly to know Thee*. Secondly, by magnifying the works that reveal his name—to *sanctify, glorify and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed*. And thirdly, by living a life that honors that name—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*.

So, *The Hallowing of God's "Father" Name; By Pursing the Knowledge of His Name; By Magnifying the Works that Reveal His Name; and, By a Life that Honors His Name*.

1. By Pursuing the Knowledge of His Name

Please open your Bibles to Exodus 34, verses 5 through 7, an extraordinary passage from the Old Testament Scripture, which is so foundational for the Old Testament Scriptures. This is God speaking in response to Moses' petition, Moses who prayed, "Shew me thy glory," that I may know thee (Exodus 33:18). And then God said to Moses, "I will show you my glory" (verses 19 to 23). And then, here, God responds. And notice how God's speaks of his name, that's what we're focusing on tonight—God's name. Verse 5, "And the LORD"—capital letters; the name of God's good pleasure; God's gospel name—"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD"—singular. "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will be no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:5–7). So the reason I read this well-known passage to you again, is that God clearly shows us in this passage what is meant by his "name." And so, this makes crystal clear that, by means of his name, God reveals who he is. Boys and girls, we need a name to distinguish us from other people. God does not need a name to distinguish him from other gods, for there are no other gods. God has given himself names throughout his Word to reveal who he is.

And so, actually, what's happening here is that God (reverently speaking) spells his name. And he spells his name by giving all of these attributes that describe him. But it's important to realize that he uses the singular when he proclaims the *name* of the LORD. Because even though God, here, gives us a variety of his attributes, we must always remember that God is all of his attributes together. In other words, God is not compartmentalized. No, he is all of his attributes at all times. And yet, God clearly reveals himself in a multifaceted way, to show us the profound depths of that name, to show us the multiple facets there are to his divine being; that God is such a God that none of his attributes ever contradict each other. All of his attributes function within him in perfect harmony. And that's why there appears to be a contradiction in this revelation. He says, "Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, *and that will by no means clear the guilty.*" So it seems as if God says that on the one hand, he's a forgiving God, and on the other hand, that he will by no means clear the guilty. And so, we see embedded in this, we see the mystery of the cross. The cross reconciles this. It is as if God wanted to reveal to Moses, "The very fact that I am a gracious God and a merciful God, and abundant in goodness and truth, that I forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, should not be mistaken as if I am a God that makes light of sin." And so, then he balances that, if you will, by saying, "I will by no means clear the guilty"—there is no way that I can compromise myself. And then, you see the wonder—and we'll come back to that in a moment—the wonder and the wisdom of the cross. It's because of the cross that all of this fits together, that a God, who can by no means clear the guilty, because of the cross, because of Christ and his finished work, can be a very gracious God. And so the name of God, what Christ is referring here to, the name of God, the names of God that are sprinkled all through Scripture, are the revelation of his character and of his attributes.

And so, what does it mean then to hallow God's name? It means that we are to honor what God has revealed of himself. We are to honor that. We are to worship what God has revealed of himself. That means we are to use his name correctly. We are to use his name in conformity with all that he has revealed of himself in his Word. That's why the Catechism wisely says that hallowing God's name means that we ask for grace to rightly know him—rightly know him.

Before I get there, let me first make a few comments on the very fact that the "Father" name, the "Father" name of God is the specific focus of this petition. And that "Father" name, as I pointed out last week, that "Father" name is God's name above every name. There is no name that so gloriously and so magnificently reveals who God is. And so, we are to hallow his name, first of all, as being the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be, as the Father of his only begotten Son, as the Father of the Son of his love. That's what we need to recognize in the very first place. As I've said repeatedly, and I will continue to repeat it, that this is what God's being is all about. In God's eternal purposes, everything revolves around his Son. The Father is absolutely Son-centered. In all that he does, he is moved by the love that he has for his only begotten Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person. Everything the Father does is because he loves his Son, and his goal is to glorify his Son. That's what, first of all, that "Father" name refers to. That "Father" name refers to the everlasting reality of who God is within himself. It points to that magnificent love relationship that we call the Trinity; that love relationship between the Father and the Son, who are united in the Spirit, as the bond of love that unites them.

And secondly, we are to hallow that "Father" name, as being the Father of all who are in Christ. God wants to be honored as such. And the eternal Father of his Son is also the Father of all those who have been redeemed by his Son. He wants to be known as the Father of his people. That's what we tried to point out last week. That's why the Christian should never hesitate to address God by that precious name. That's why the idea that addressing God as Father is only reserved for very

advanced Christians is simply not true; and it is contrary to the Word of God. God is delighted, as I said last week, he is so delighted when his people honor him as such. He is so pleased when we draw near to him and call upon him by that name. Because that is his desire. That is his eternal desire. That to that end, he quickens his people with the Spirit of adoption, and that Spirit so works in the hearts of God's children to lead them to a correct knowledge of who God is in Christ. God longs for that, that his people so understand the gospel, that they call upon him, "Abba, Father," oh, that sounds like music in his holy ears. That's why, as I pointed out last week, and I've quoted this passage often—that's the point Jesus makes when he says to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and my God, and your God" (John 20:17).

And so, the "Father" name of God is his preeminent name, as I've said before. That's why, in his High Priestly Prayer, in John 17, verse 6, he says, "Father, I have manifested thy name to the men that thou hast given me." That name reveals the heart of God, and it reveals the character of God. That's why the authors of the Catechism say, not just "Hallowed be Thy name" that we know him; no, we must *rightly* know him. So, in other words, the implication of that statement is that, if we don't know him rightly, we are not going to worship him rightly. So, if we worship a god of our imagination, rather than the God of revelation, we are actually worshipping an idol, rather than the God of Scripture. Listen to what Jesus said to the woman at the well of Samaria, in John 4, verses 22 and 23. He said, "Ye worship ye know not what." In other words, you don't know what you are worshipping. You are worshipping ignorantly. You are misguided in your worship. You don't know what you are worshipping. And God forbid that that would be said of us, that we would not be worshipping God in conformity to his Word. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit"—and listen carefully—"in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." So what Christ is saying is that true worship is, first of all, spiritual in nature; and secondly, it is a worship that is informed by truth, the truth of his Word, the truth of what God has revealed about himself. And that should be our yearning and our desire. And so, that's what Jesus is saying. The very first thing you need to pray, when you seek the countenance of God, you need to ask, "Hallowed be thy name." So instruct me, so guide me, so illuminate my mind, my understanding, that I might bring honor to thy name, and especially to this magnificent "Father" name of God.

And therefore, beloved, it should be obvious that to know the Father rightly is to know him as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son. As a matter of fact, the Father cannot be known apart from his Son. "No man hath seen God"—John 1:18—but he "which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Oh, that text is so profoundly significant. And so, John is saying there, moved by the Holy Spirit, that God is not knowable apart from his Son. God can only be known in his Son, as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son. And that's precisely what Christ came to do. He came into the world that, through him, we might know the Father, because he is in the bosom of the Father. He knows the heart of his Father from the inside-out, and he reveals in himself and by his Word who his Father is. That's why, as I've said many times, that why Jesus said, in John 14, that "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (verse 9). Matthew 11, verse 27, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father," Jesus said, "neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Again, emphasizing that it is in and through him that we may know the Father. That's why, in his High Priestly Prayer, he said—well known words—he said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (verse 3). And therefore, when, by grace, we focus on God's Son, and when we honor God's Son, and when we worship God's Son, we are worshipping the

Father. And so, to honor his Son is to honor his Father supremely.

That's why, that's what the Catechism implied last week, is that when God's children address God as their Father, they are honoring his Son, and they're honoring his work. When we truly understand what that means, when we draw near to God, "Our Father which art in heaven," the Catechism said that we rightly and immediately recognize that we can do so on the basis of the finished work of his only begotten Son.

So, congregation, I realize that these are profound realities, but we must come to a fundamental understanding of it. Any view of God outside of his Son, apart from his Son, is a misrepresentation of the character of God. God the Father can only be known in his Son. It's in the Son that the eternal Triune God becomes knowable. It's in his Son that God draws near to man. He created us in the image of his Son with the capacity to know God as he has revealed himself in his only begotten Son. And therefore, to know the Father rightly, to know God the Father rightly will be the eternal pursuit of heaven. That will be the glory of heaven. That will be the unspeakable joy of heaven. Because Christ, our Emmanuel, will forever be our Prophet, Priest, and King. Christ, as our Emmanuel, will forever unveil the glory of his Father. In glory, God's redeemed people will behold the glory of the Father in the face of his only begotten Son. And as our Emmanuel, he will forever lead us to fountains of living water. As our Emmanuel, he will forever lead God's people deeper and deeper into the heart of God, in an everlasting journey that will never end. And so, all through eternity, God's redeemed people will know the Father in his Son, because it is in the Son, that the Father will forever dwell in the midst of his redeemed people.

Does that excite you? Is that something you long for? Is there a yearning in your soul to so know God? That's why Jesus said, "Father, I pray that those whom thou has given me that they may be where I am, that they may behold my glory. That they may be where I am." That's the future of the people of God. Oh, my friend, do you know something of that longing? Is it your desire to rightly know God, to know him as he has revealed himself in his Son?

That means that praying that prayer obligates us to use all of the means that God has given us to rightly know him. That means we have to be diligent students of Scripture. That means we have to be always in the Word. It is only through that Word that we can acquire a right knowledge of God. It is through that Word, which John calls "the record," in 1 John 5, verse 11, he calls it "the record" the Father has given of his Son. And so, God has give us his written Word, so that we might know his Son. Because if we know his Son, we know him; the record he has given of his Son.

That's why it is the obligation of the Christian to be diligent students of the Word of God. And again, this underscores the fact that being in the Word is not optional for a child of God. It's a holy obligation. We can't pray this prayer, "Hallowed be thy name," and then not avail ourselves of the means that enables us, by the Holy Spirit's illumination, to rightly know God. And how many Christians have experienced this, and I hope that's true for you and me, that God is so delighted when we prayerfully and faithfully feed upon his Word? Because he so desires to make himself known. That's why, when we diligently study the Scriptures, when we take time each day to be alone with God, to be alone with his Word, and to pray in our closet, "Oh, Father, make thyself known to me through thy Spirit," he so delights to hear that. And that's why, you see, when we diligently and prayerfully study the Word of God, it will result in a fruitful prayer life. Those two belong together. They belong intimately together. Because the more we study God's Word prayerfully, the more our prayers will be an echo of that Word which we study. And so, the two reinforce each other. A diligent study of Scripture results in a healthy prayer life; and a healthy prayer life motivates us to study the Word of God even more. And so, the prayer that Moses uttered, "LORD, shew me thy glory," Lord, that I may know thee, that's a prayer that so honors the Father, that so pleases him.

And that should be our prayer every day as we open the Scriptures—“Lord, my desire is to know thee. My desire is to know more of thee. My desire is to know thee rightly.”

And that’s why we have to use the means of grace so faithfully, so that, guided by the Spirit, the Spirit, who alone knows the deep things of God—Paul writes this, in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 11, “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” He knows the deep things of God. And he is able to reveal to us who God is in Christ. He is the one who can guide and teach us, that we may grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because only in that way will we rightly know God.

What’s also very important, congregation, is what Christ is teaching us here, to pray fruitfully, we must not begin by focusing on ourselves. And I’ve mentioned this before, and I’m slowly but surely learning it myself. How profitable it is that rather than looking at yourself, rather than being deluded by our fickle feelings, our feelings which are all over the place; there are days when our soul is tender, and our heart is warm, and when the tears flow easily, and then we foolishly believe deep down in our hearts that we now really have a better chance, if I may use that word, that God would hear us than when we come to our closets when we feel cold, and our hearts seem so hard. But then, rather than focusing on our present state at that moment, Christ is saying, don’t focus on yourself, but focus on your Father. Begin by hallowing his name.

And congregation, what a blessed exercise that is, to consciously begin to worship God for who he is, to echo his Word, to begin to focus on his Fatherhood, to come to him in the name of his Son by pleading upon his Word. So rather than focusing on yourself, it is to look outside of yourself. And if I may, I can say from experience, that it’s happened to me countless times, that I would enter my closet so discouraged about myself, when by God’s grace, I sought to do this, to hallow his name. And so often, it would change my whole disposition. That’s what we need to do. We need to begin by focusing on who he is. That’s the remedy for our cold-heartedness. That’s the remedy for our sluggishness—Hallowed be Thy name.

Well, we have to move on.

2. By Magnifying the Works that Reveal His Name

Secondly, it says here, that we are *to sanctify, glorify and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy and truth, are clearly displayed*. Some of our older children will know that this is a listing of some of God’s attributes, just as we read in Exodus 34; so, by magnifying, by honoring the works that reveal his name. Because, congregation, there’s a very fundamental truth that is woven throughout all of Scripture, that *God does what he does because he is who he is*. Let me repeat that: God does what he does because he is who he is. That’s why we have abundant record in Scripture of God’s deeds. Because, by his deeds he also reveals himself. By his deeds, he also affirms who he is. And so, when he made a pathway through the Red Sea for the people of Israel, he demonstrated powerfully to them that he was their God. Powerfully he displayed his might, and his majesty, and his lovingkindness by so remarkably delivering them from the bondage of Egypt. God does what he does because he is who he is. In Psalm 25, we read, “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way” (verse 8). So why does God teach sinners in the way? Why does he cause his Word to be preached to us? Because he is good and upright. God does what he does because he is who he is.

And so, just very quickly, there are four categories of his work. First of all, there’s the work of creation; secondly, there’s the work of providence; thirdly, there’s the work of redemption; and fourthly, also the work of the Holy Spirit. Very briefly, each of these:

First of all, God reveals his name in *The Realm of Creation*. Psalm 19 is that remarkable Psalm

that begins this way: “The heavens declare the glory of God;...Day unto day uttereth speech” (verses 1 and 2). So, what that is saying is that the whole realm of creation, the whole universe, in all of its magnificent splendor, is one overwhelming statement about God. God speaks, the psalmist says; God speaks, and that speech is heard everywhere day unto day. “The heavens declare the glory of God.” Then, when we connect this to God’s Son, to the Lord Jesus Christ, then we look at Hebrews 1, verse 3, where the Apostle says that Christ, as God’s Son, he is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” That’s why in Ephesians 3, we’re told that everything in heaven and earth is named after him. And so, when God created the universe, he created it by his Son and for his Son. Creation is the work of the Father who loves his Son, and who created a universe, who created a creation that would reflect the glory of his only begotten Son. The heavens declare the glory of him who is the brightness of his glory; created for the Son, created by the Son.

Well, we know that this creation which was perfect is now severely damaged. Creation that is marred by sin, creation is subject to God’s curse. “For we know,” Paul says, “that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22). And so, sometimes we talk about the beauty of creation, but we have to realize, congregation, what we’re seeing is what’s left of that; is what is left of that creation after God judged it with the flood. And so, when we look at the world map, what a fragmented world it has become. Two-thirds of our globe is still under water. Now God speaks also in the realm of creation. And so this world of ours today, our world today, the post-flood world today, bears the mark of God’s justice, one of the attributes that are mentioned here. And so, as a result of God’s judgment upon that first world, we have an unstable atmosphere, and we have an unstable crust. And so every tornado, every hurricane, every violent storm, every earthquake, every volcanic eruption is a statement about God’s justice, is a reminder to this world that this world is under judgment. God has judged this world already. And so, when our forefathers would say that when there is a thunderstorm, they would say that God speaks, they were correct. God does speak. If this world was not under judgment, there would be no thunderstorms. There was no such thing prior to the flood. So, all of these calamities that come upon man—the earthquakes, the violent earthquakes, the lethal earthquakes, these hurricanes, these tornadoes, these incredible outbreaks—all of that is a reminder that God is a just God, who has already judged this world once, and who will judge this world again. That’s why the future that awaits the people of God is a blessed future indeed, for there shall be a new heaven, and there shall be a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. Open your Bibles, please, to Ephesians 1, verse 10, which states that so beautifully. “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ”—“all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” Because the Father who created the world by his Son and for his Son, will create that new heaven and that new earth, by his Son and for his Son. And notice how the Apostle, inspired by the Spirit, is saying that everything will come together in him. He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him. And so, God’s only begotten Son, our Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23),¹ will forever be the centerpiece of that new heaven and the new earth. So *The Work of Creation*.

Secondly, *The Work of God’s Providence*. The God who created this world for his Son, he also preserves it for his only begotten Son. Why else would God still sustain this fallen and broken world of ours, but for the sake of his Son? Because all those for whom he gave himself have not yet been redeemed. The wickedness of this fallen world is so overwhelming and so profound that it’s because the Father loves his Son, and he loves what he has accomplished, and he loves all those who have been purchased by his Son, that he refrains himself from bringing final judgment to this

¹ “Emmanuel” is a Hebrew name that means “God with us.”

world. And so, he's providing for this fallen world. He's preserving this fallen world for the sake of his Son. Because the Father loves his Son, and he loves all those who have been chosen in the Son, who have been given to his Son, who have been redeemed by his Son, and who must be brought to a saving knowledge of his Son, and until that's accomplished, God, for the sake of his Son, will provide for all that happens in this broken world of ours. And so, also *The Work of Providence* is a remarkable statement of who God is.

And then, of course, the revelation of God's name in *The Work of Redemption*. I have to be brief here, because it speaks about God's wisdom, and the highest manifestation of God's wisdom is revealed in the cross—the cross of Calvary; the cross which is at the very center of God's eternal purposes regarding man; the cross, in which all of God's attributes come together; the cross, which displays the wisdom of God. Paul says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23). So God's wisdom in redeeming sinners, because the God who redeems is the Creator, but the Creator purposed to redeem fallen sons and daughters of Adam through his Son, that Son whom he gave in the fulness of time to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Oh, God's wisdom, God's supreme wisdom in redeeming sinners—we behold it through the prism of a crucified Christ. That's what Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 23.

And then, we have *God's Work Through His Spirit*, the Holy Spirit, who is the chief executive of the Trinity. All of God's works are by his Son and achieved through his Spirit. And especially, the marvelous work that he does in saving sinners—regeneration, sanctification, preservation. Again, that deserves a whole sermon, but I can only be brief here. That amazing work of God when the Spirit of God takes hold of a sinner dead in sins and trespasses, and he grafts that sinner into Christ. And he then begins to work in that sinner. He unites us to Christ, and then the life of Christ begins to flow into that fallen sinner. And then that life that the Spirit grants, the life that he works within the heart and soul of that sinner, that life that flows out of Christ is attracted to Christ. And that's why, when the Spirit get ahold of a sinner, the outcome of that work will always be that that sinner will be drawn to Christ, and will embrace Christ by a saving faith. And so, the believer is someone who embraces Christ by faith over and over again—the Christ to whom the Spirit has engrafted him or her. Again, the life that flows out of Christ is directed towards Christ, and is focused on the Lord Jesus Christ. But also the work of sanctification, because not only does he graft us into the Son, and gathers us to be a people for the Son, but he also conforms us to the image of God's Son. For that's the purpose for which we have been predestinated. And he also preserves God's children for God's Son. That's why his work can never miscarry. That's why his work cannot fail. That's why Jesus could say so confidently that, "Of all those whom thou has given me, I have lost none" (John 18:9). And the Spirit sees to it through his mighty and marvelous work in regeneration, in sanctification, and preservation, that all those for whom the Son has given himself in the fulness of time, they shall ultimately land on the shores of eternity.

3. By Living a Life that Honors His Name

And then finally—and my time is gone—it says, *And further also*—and hopefully you can make the application yourself, *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*. This should be self-evident, that hallowing God's name also means that we have to direct our lives so that we honor that name, that we honor what God has revealed of himself, that we honor his precious Word. Oh, the harm that is done until this day by those who

profess the name of Christ and live lives that contradict it! I have met far too many in my lifetime. I've met people in my travels, who said, "I grew up and I got so turned off by the hypocrisy that I saw in my church, people who were one way on Sunday and lived totally different in the week, that I got done with it. I got so turned off to Christianity." What a dreadful thing! That's when God's name gets blasphemed. And the world watches us. When you profess the name of Christ, the world watches us. Years ago, I worked for a greenhouse for a while, and there was a man there, he was a rather arrogant man, and he was always watching me. And he finally said to me, "Don't you ever cuss?" I said, "No." And one day it was so hot, it was about a hundred and twenty degrees in the green house, it was so hot. And he said to me, "You're still not cussing?" He was watching me. He was watching me. He was trying to figure out whether I finally would cross the line, and I was very, very aware of it. And I'm not saying this to put a feather in my cap, but I'm saying this to give an illustration. The world watches us. and our obligation as the people of God is to honor his name also by our conduct. We have to do it in thoughts, words, and actions. That word "thought", congregation, that means that for a true Christian, spiritual discipline begins here. Spiritual discipline begins in our mind. Spiritual discipline means that we deal with sinful thoughts. Because if we don't deal with sinful thoughts, pretty soon it will become sinful words and sinful deeds—thoughts, words, and deeds. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink," Paul says, "or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31–32).

So, the bottom line is this, that we must live lives, if we profess the name of Christ, we must live lives that honor the living Word by honoring his written Word. You see, that's the Christian life. We cannot claim to love the living Word, and not honor his written Word. When Jesus said, "If you love me, you'll keep my commandments," he's saying precisely this (John 14:15). That's why we need to be a people of the Word, to be governed by that Word, to abide in that Word. And again, I want to emphasize that it begins at home—at home, where there can be no pretense. At home, we need to be readable epistles. At home, a wife should be able to see in her husband that he loves Christ, and vice versa, and parents in their children, and children in their parents. Christianity begins at home. It's in the crucible of the family that we have to prove ourselves as the people of God. We have to be readable epistles. Your and my life needs to be a testimony that we honor God, that we honor his Word, that we honor his Son. That's what it means to hallow the name of God.

And so, congregation, let's take this home, and let's reflect on it. A very short petition, but the meaning of it is so profound. May we bow our knees and say, "Lord, grant that I might rightly know thee, that I may sanctify, glorify, and praise thee and all thy works; and enable me to so order and direct my life, my thoughts, my words, my actions, that thy name will not be blasphemed because of me, but rather be honored and praised on my account." Amen.

Let's pray.

Our gracious God, how worthy thou art. But also, at this moment, we would hallow thy magnificent name, by honoring thy Son, whom thou hast given a name above every name, thy son, of whom thou didst declare, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Lord, grant that we too may be well pleased with him, and that, by grace, we may honor thy Son, and thus, honor thee, our heavenly Father. Lord, teach us how to pray. Bless the instruction we have been able to give tonight, and may it bear fruit in our hearts and lives. Forgive all that was done and said amiss. Go with us in this new week. Bless the labor of our hands. Bless our children and grandchildren. Keep us from unexpected and unprepared death, and gather with us again on the following Lord's Day, where we hope to commemorate the blessed resurrection of thy Son, who, by his resurrection, was declared to be the Son of God with power. We ask it in his name. Amen.