

November 2022

Dear Brethren:

In the sample prayer that Jesus Christ used as a template to teach His disciples in addressing our Heavenly Father, He instructed:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:9–10) [emphasis mine throughout].

So following an admonition to show respect and reverence for God—*hallowed be thy name*—the very next instruction is to pray for the will of God to be accomplished in all things. This includes support for God's Master Plan to bring His Kingdom *to this earth*, as well as for His will and purpose to be accomplished without exception *upon this earth*, just as His will is being accomplished in every way within His heavenly realm. These are easy words to utter, but not an easy concept for human beings actually to accept and to embrace in hearts and minds. Are we any different? To what extent do you actually agree with God?

How completely do any of us truly agree with God concerning the way that He is performing His Work? We easily claim that we believe God is perfect. We recite in rote fashion that we agree with everything that He is doing. Even if we do not understand many details, who among us would ever challenge the character of God or assert that His will—His purposes and methodologies—are in any way lacking or defective? Which ones of us would ever call God to task for "forgetting" something important in His dealings with man? As those claiming to love and to agree with Him, surely none of us would ever be so foolish as to cast doubt upon His choices to either do or not to do something at any time. Or would we? We strongly believe that we can affirm to God in our prayers that we desire His Kingdom to come to this earth, and that we agree with *every aspect of the means that He is using to accomplish that Plan*, both upon this earth as well as in heaven. We think to ourselves, "Check, got that one covered," as we move on to the rest of Christ's sample prayer format.

But if that is actually true, what is the real evidence of it? Is there any way for us each to evaluate the substance of our sincere agreement with God and His will?

### **Thy Will Be Done—Truly?**

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

God knows it, and as the called of God, we also can know it about ourselves, if we are willing to be honest and to avoid wrapping ourselves in misplaced esteem.

Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he (Deuteronomy 32:3–4).

Rather than asking if you agree with this declaration *in principle*, how about asking instead, in what ways have you ever shown that *you do not agree* with this assessment of God, His character, and His individual choices in your life?

When a loved one dies—husband, wife, child, or parent—leaving you lonely, heartbroken, perhaps even imperiled financially, do you still agree that God's action *not to save* was a good one?

When you suffer from illness or personal injury, having your quality of life stripped away in an instant—and when God does not intervene in "a timely way" to restore your physical well-being and independence—do you still feel in your heart that *God's choice not yet to grant your request* for healing is perfect and glorious? If God's will is to keep you in that disabled condition for the time being, do you still magnify His name and sing His praises? Or do you harbor resentment and frustration in your heart, even if it is something that you do not utter out loud? *Thy will be done*. Do you really believe and agree with that—always?

### **Job Is Our Example**

There was likely no more devoted a servant of God who endured as much sudden and comprehensive loss as Job. In one single day he lost all of his children, all of his wealth, and all of his substance (Job 1:13–19). And then he lost his own physical health as well! Why? God is the One who called him perfect in his physical obedience!

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, *a perfect and an upright man*, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? (Job 1:8)

All too many ministers in the past have tried to *negate this declaration of God* and to claim that Job was actually guilty of "secret sins," like pride and haughtiness, for example. But if that were true, then Satan would surely have pounced upon it and pointed out that sin to God. But Satan did not do that, because he had no evidence of any such sin in Job! His

only recourse was to admit that Job had indeed been perfect "up until now," but to then assert that it would be different if God did not always bless him so much (verses 9–11). There was no past error in Job's behavior. He did everything that God required of him. Against all of the false accusations of his "friends" which came afterwards, God confirmed at the end of the story that *they had all been wrong* to condemn Job as hiding some "secret sin" which was the "real cause" of his suffering. That was simply not true! And yet, *this perfect God* allowed Job to suffer incredibly.

How did Job respond when God first permitted *all of his blessings* to be taken away in one colossal, nightmarish day?

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD*. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly (Job 1:20–22).

Yes, in spite of catastrophic loss, his reply was, *blessed be the name of the Lord!* The righteousness of God is never subject to questioning or revision based upon events that transpire in our lives. He deserves to be thanked, praised and lauded *at all times*, no matter what we experience in this world.

Job's problem came later, after the trial *persisted* for so long, exacerbated by his excruciating misery as a result of head-to-toe boils. He did indeed have something to learn, because God wanted from him more than just "fearful obedience." God wants to be *loved and appreciated*, and that was what Job actually lacked. He feared God, believed God and made sure to obey God, but he had not yet come *truly to love and to appreciate His Maker!* At the end of the trial, this is what actually changed. Job finally saw himself in contrast to God and His perfect, loving character, and *that revelation* is what changed his whole way of viewing his Eternal God (Job 42:1–6).

So Job's suffering had a purpose in the perfect plan of God. But it was a purpose obscured from any human detection *until God chose to reveal it*. This glorious God will also deal with us in similar fashion at given times, because the purpose of our existence upon this earth is not just to have "good lives" now. It is to build glorious, godly character into our minds!

In light of that example, what about us? Again, are we truly supportive of God's purposes and methodologies, at all times? Or like Job, if we do not receive a specific answer from God within our own predetermined timetable, might we also begin to question "the fairness" of God? Many have done precisely that.

## Giving up on God

Hardly any would ever admit that they have given up on God, but by their choices under pressure, that is exactly what the evidence shows in many instances.

How many have come into God's true Church, but have not become motivated as much by seeking the Kingdom of God as in gaining "physical blessings" in this life right now? They read and take to heart God's promise to bless His people. If we obey the Ten Commandments, if we tithe correctly, and if we keep the Sabbath and Holy Days appropriately, we count upon God's promise to set us apart from this world and to spare us from all of the evils that result from practicing sin.

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: *And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee*: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. *Thou shalt be blessed above all people*: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee (Deuteronomy 7:11–15).

The Bible is replete with promises like this one, assuring us that if the called of God are serious in putting Him absolutely first, He will pour out upon us a great bounty of blessings. So many over decades have come into God's Church, applied themselves to trying to obey these Laws, and then waited for the delivery of the promised rewards. And even though there are thousands of examples of inspiring physical blessings and interventions in the lives of church members, there are also many examples of ones who continue to struggle under serious burdens of body and mind. They acknowledge that they are weak, requiring daily the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sins, but they also point out that they have made significant changes in their lives, as a testament to their "belief" in God and their desire to please Him. So when they continue to be plagued with certain serious trials, or else when something catastrophic occurs to themselves or within their families, the immediate question becomes, why? "I have tried to obey God and follow this Way of Life. I know I am far from perfect, but God promised us mercy. I do not feel like I am near to God, because for whatever reason, it seems like my prayers are falling on deaf ears."

Have any of you felt like this? Have any of you been rocked by doubt because things did not work out in a particular way for you? Have you ever started second-guessing your spiritual choices?

Maybe God is not really with me after all. Maybe I am not being blessed because I am in the wrong church. Maybe I need to change churches in order to find the affiliation that brings the blessings I am seeking. Maybe there is nothing to this "commandment-keeping" after all. Maybe I would be just as happy or more so by following what comes naturally to me in the world. Why knock myself out to make these sacrifices if I am not getting anything in return? Maybe what I was taught was actually true, but maybe God has just rejected me and I am without hope. Maybe I need to take care of myself the best way I can and just give up on seeking some future reward. Maybe I just need to take a break for the time being.

Now then, if one of God's children is truly in the wrong affiliation, perhaps that is why he is not being blessed. Or even if she is a "member" of a legitimate remnant body with the blessing of Jesus Christ, perhaps she is still harboring idols of mind that are keeping her under a curse. If so, the solution may truly lie in acknowledging a wrong orientation and starting to put out that idolatrous thinking. But what if that is not the issue? What if God, for reason, chooses to subject some of us to a trial like that of Job? Is our conviction in what we are doing so strong that nothing will make us doubt or reconsider our spiritual path?

Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?  
*Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him (Job 13:14–16).

Job's "own ways" were the ways of righteousness, obeying God day by day. He was asserting that no matter what God permitted him to endure, he refused to "recant his religion" or begin to turn to the flesh. Even if he did not understand "why"—and as we have shown, even though he expressed doubt in God's fair treatment—he was still committed to holding to his faithful course *no matter what*. Would that be true of all of us? Or, in the midst of serious trial, are we subject to wavering in our faith and second-guessing our past choices?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height,

nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:35–39).

If that is your personal conviction as well, then no matter what God might permit you to experience in this temporary life, your confidence in Him will be unwavering, and you will endure any circumstance with absolute confidence in the plan and purposes of God. You will indeed be one who can pray sincerely, "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10). But if not, then any wavering or second-guessing is evidence of giving up on God to some lesser or greater degree.

### **Mammon Is Not Your Goal!**

Unlike ancient Israel, God's promises to you are not just physical in nature. Israel was given no promise of an eternal reward in God's Family. That first covenant at Mt. Sinai was all about physical blessings to a physical nation—nothing more! Nowhere in that covenant was a promise of immortality. That covenant was merely *the type*, foreshadowing God's purpose to offer *a much better covenant* to mankind through Jesus Christ.

Oh yes, obedience to God's physical Commandments is absolutely required for our salvation, because those Laws are the very personification of Jesus Christ and His perfect character, and He has made them a proof of our respect for God (John 14:15). Rejection of that spiritual Law is rejection of God. But the New Covenant is the one that promises Sonship in the God Family. Keeping the physical laws will absolutely spare a human being from the greatest amount of pain, suffering, heartache and sorrow in this world right now. God's Laws are real, and those who respect them avoid incurring many of the built-in curses to bodies and minds that automatically befall the ignorant and the rebellious.

But those called into the true Church of God today are not here to try to have "the best life possible" physically for merely a temporary period of time. Unlike ancient Israel, God has offered each one of us an eternal reward! Therefore, God wants us to seek that eternal reward most of all. This physical sojourning is merely the proving ground to build spiritual character by the miracle of the Holy Spirit to transform our minds to be like the very mind of Jesus Christ!

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11–14).

Why should we be zealous right now of good works? Just so that we can have happy and peaceful lives in the flesh for a few years? No! Our focus is to be on the reward that Christ is bringing with Him at His Second Coming. A reward that we will enjoy forever and ever!

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, *abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Peter 2:9–12).

Yes, giving in to fleshly lusts (breaking the Commandments) brings upon ourselves and our families immediate curses which rob us of our quality of life. But beyond that, holding firm in respecting those laws of God—no matter what God may allow—is a testament to the fact that our hope is in a reward to come, not in a temporary blessing that ends when we go to the grave. And trusting God, no matter what, is the very best way to prove that you have real faith in God's promises, and also to set an example in this world to non-believers.

If you are willing to die (for example), even though man's modern medicine could save you, there is no greater testament to what you care most about. The world seeks to prolong physical life by any means necessary. If you think like the world, you will be tempted to take yourself out of God's hands and *save yourself* in a crisis. God has many ways to give us the chance to prove that we have faith in Him, and lots of them include enduring affliction without compromise of His commandments. If He always gave blessings to the obedient, then our enemies would be able to claim—just as Satan did about Job—that our obedience was merely an act of self-preservation, not a manifestation of real love for God. So when we are willing to endure physical deprivation and put God first, it helps prove that our true love is not found in the mammon of this world, but in the hope of eternal salvation to come. Those who truly believe God, will endure whatever He permits and refuse to doubt Him or to turn from Him:

Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised (Psalm 113:1–3).

If you are one who truly believes that Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to us in this age, and that His promises of an eternal reward in the Kingdom of God are sincere, then you can be one who uses the gift of His Spirit to be transformed in mind by a miracle, learning to set your hopes upon that great spiritual reward, no matter what trials and deprivations may be part of your training program today. In that case, you are one who sincerely can say:

. . . the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; *blessed be the name of the LORD* (Job 1:21).

Yours in Christ Jesus, with all love and devotion,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Jon W. Brisby